

LTWC expanding beyond rehabbing animals



Emma could become Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care's first animal it keeps because with one wing it cannot be released into the wild. Photo/LTWC

By Kathryn Reed

Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care is in the process of getting its first permit to permanently care for an animal that cannot be released into the wild.

Emma – the bald eagle from Emerald Bay – came to the South Shore rehab facility last Halloween. She had a broken wrist and damage to her wing. Eventually the wing had to be amputated.

The center on the edge of South Lake Tahoe has been caring for animals since 1978. The goal is always to nurse the injured

animal back to health so it can return to its natural environment. For the few that have not been able to fully mend they've been sent to wildlife facilities that could care for them for the long term.

LTWC when it moves into its new headquarters off Al Tahoe Boulevard intends to have an area where animals that can't make it on their own will be housed. This will then become an educational component to the facility.

Emma is the beginning of that evolution of LTWC. For now she is still under veterinary care as she heals from surgery.

Ultimately it will be up to the federal and state wildlife agencies to grant a permit to the nonprofit to care for animals beyond the rehabilitation and release stages.

LTWC founders Tom and Cheryl Millham hope to move to their new headquarters – and out of their backyard – in the near future. Money is the stumbling block. About \$4 million is needed to be able to open the new site.

Incrementally they are building what is hoped to be a state-of-the-art rehabilitation and education facility.

Work on the 27-acre site started last year. At the end of June the entire underground infrastructure was completed. Foundation work should be done by Oct. 15, with framing of the 12 cages and main building starting next building season.



LTWC volunteer Alexi Haven explains to visitors what is going on inside the bear cage. Photo/LTWC

To keep the animals wild the public is kept away from them – except for the one-day annual open house.

Last weekend at the open house it was Emma who was the star – not the four bear cubs.

“Emma was the hit of the show,” Tom Millham told *Lake Tahoe News*.

“We started socializing her. People could take pictures of her,” Millham said of the eagle. “She will be our new ambassador for Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.”

A team of six volunteers is working to get Emma acclimated to people. There is a set schedule for feeding, which only consists of fish. She can be fussy at times, but is coming around to her new life.

More than 900 people attended the open house. The record attendance was 1,200 in 2008 when **Li'l Smokey** was at LTWC.

LTWC will be adding to its bear cub collection today when another arrives from Southern California. This will be the 86th bear to come to LTWC in the time that it has existed.

To donate or for more info about LTWC, go **online**.