



Fall 2025

Issue #46

Favorite Neighbor

Devon Barone, Executive Assistant and Bear Coexistence Coordinator

Seven years ago, a baby bear was born under a house on Tahoe's west shore — one who would grow into a big, beautiful male with rich reddish-chocolate fur, dominant in his territory. But a year and a half into his young life, just recently dispersed from his mother and figuring out the world on his own, he was hit by a car, severely injuring his wrist. The young bear may not have listened to his body and Mother Nature the way many bears do and, without enough rest, his wrist never healed correctly. On certain days, when he's feeling stiff, he still shows his past in the form of a limp.

Because he has coexisted with mostly tolerant humans his whole life, he can sometimes be found resting on the side of the highway or basking in the lake's shallows at a public beach. We'll often receive a call that goes something like this:

"Hello, this is the BEAR League." "Hi, I'd just like to report an injured bear in the Tahoe Pines neighbor-

hood on the west shore, he's limping on his front right paw." "Is he pretty big and a dark reddish-brown?" "Yeah!" "That's Bernardo, it's actually an old injury — he was hit by a car when he was young and never fully recovered, but he gets around well! Thanks so much for letting us know, we'll come check on him."



Bernardo - photo by Devon Barone

I am fortunate to feel a personal connection with Bernardo (however one-sided). He's one of our neighborhood bears - the one I've interacted with the most. Soon after I moved up here last year, we accidentally spooked each other as I came around a corner on the BEAR League property. I regularly escort him away from the highway and haze him out of dumpsters or houses. Once, a volunteer and I found him squatting in an abandoned home. Unfortunately for me, he surely does not enjoy my presence as much as I do his. But that's just part of the "tough love" we must give our bears.

continued on next page



Recently, we received a call reporting Bernardo in the middle of Tahoe City, much farther north than we'd ever known him to travel. Between three of us, we managed to push him through the crowds on Commons Beach (yelling "Bear coming through!" to encourage safe passage), across the Truckee River, and finally into a safe patch of forest. Hopefully we intimidated him enough to think twice about a return trip – so far, so good.

While he has been known to break unwired single-pane windows of empty houses or push in flimsy front doors, and frequent campgrounds and picnic areas to snag unguarded coolers, we have never heard of him even bluff charging or attempting to intimidate anyone. He knows exactly how to seize the opportunities presented to him by those humans less adapted to bear country, without being overly disrespectful.

Knowing Bernardo is one of my favorite things about working with the BEAR League and living in Tahoe. The very fact that I'm leading a life in which I know a wild bear personally is a dream come true. Nearly every time we receive a call about him, it's because some kind human's care and empathy for creatures so different from themselves prompted them to contact us out of concern for his well-being. He also brings me the simple but powerful joy of regularly witnessing such a magnificent example of Mother Nature's finest creations - whether his handsome, expressive face looks at me as if to say, "Not this girl again..." or his big, cute bum waddles away from me into the forest as I lovingly yell, "Get out of here Bernardo!". 🐻

"Let us not forget that human love and compassion are equally deeply rooted in our primate heritage."

-Jane Goodall

New License Plate Frames!

BEAR League is launching a new bear awareness campaign to slow down and watch for bears while on the



road and we are asking for your help. If you would like to participate and help us promote bear awareness, please let us know. We are distributing these license plate frames at no charge to our members and friends. Unfortunately, they are cost-prohibitive to mail, but we have supplies with some of our volunteers around the Tahoe Basin. Please contact us and we will direct you where you may pick one up. We also will be attending both Earth Day events this coming Spring, (North and South Shores) and we plan to have a large supply there as well.

We envision having enough cars toodling around and displaying our frames on their rear license plates that visitors can't pull up behind very many locals without 'getting the message'.

Website & Social Media

The BEAR League website was redesigned last year so if you haven't yet seen the changes, check it out.

www.savebears.org

Our You Tube channel will continue to fill up with great bear videos that we create as well as many from our friends and associates. Find it and please SUBSCRIBE to:

www.youtube.com/@BearLeagueTahoe

Instagram: **www.instagram.com/bear.league**

Facebook: **www.facebook.com/SaveTahoeBears**

Would you like to volunteer?

For the past several years we have conducted a very exclusive Volunteer Training for just a few hand-chosen, promising candidates who will—upon completion—be warmly welcomed as one of our Bear Team First Responders. If you live at Tahoe or are here often and would like to be considered for next spring's class, please let us know.



Thoughts From the President

by Ali Van Zee



What are bears good for anyway???

If you ask any state Department of Wildlife (or Natural Resources), you'll get an answer similar to this: 'Hunting. Bears were put here for man to kill. They are a harvestable resource'. Huh??? Wait just a minute! If I remember my studies correctly, bears have been roaming the planet for about 20 million years, while humans (the *Homo sapiens* variety) have only been around for about 300,000 years. How does that even make sense?

It doesn't. Bears evolved to have specific jobs to do to help shape the habitats they call home and the wider environment around them. These eco-system engineers are what is known as a "keystone species". In other words, and in simple terms, if an ecosystem is healthy enough to support bears, all other beings will thrive, too. Let's look at how that works.

Nutrient cycling and recycling: Bears that fish (what bear doesn't??) move lots of marine (aquatic) nitrogen from salmon streams into the forest via fish remains and bear poop. That poop also contains seeds from the myriad berries, nuts and plants they eat and they're actually better at seed dispersal than birds.

Habitat remodeling (modification): Bears love to dig and scrape. By digging for roots and grubs, they turn over the soil - and as any gardener among us knows, that's so important to getting new plants to grow. This also contributes to greater plant diversity in their range.

Forest Clean-Up crew: Bears, being opportunistic eaters and masters of energy conservation, are also scavengers. Why use up energy to hunt a meal, when a carcass will do? By feasting on these and other waste, they help keep the forests clean.

Without bears doing the jobs they evolved to do, our forests would not be the beautiful places they are. We think these are compelling reasons to learn to respect them rather than fear and disdain them. But, what about when they wander through our neighborhoods?

With the plethora of primary residences around Lake Tahoe hosting a permanent population of about 55,000 and vacation homes and hotels hosting around 15 million visitors a year, Tahoe's bears struggle to find corridors of natural habitat that haven't been bisected by 'private property'. They can't wander through one without stumbling into the other. And many of those secondary residences don't have secure trash receptacles so bears have no trouble picking up the scent of Friday night's pizza. But just because they're coming to feast at the buffet of leftovers we carelessly put out for them doesn't mean they are dangerous. Study after study has proven that the more bears are around people, the more tolerant and comfortable they are with us. Of course, if they've obtained food, let's not try and take it away - they're stronger than we are- but they are far less assertive in town than in the forests. There's no need for fear; respect will do just fine.

continued on next page



And let's clear this up, too. On the rare occasion a black bear in California charges at you, panting and huffing and slapping the ground, it's an impressive display for sure. But it's not an "attack"! It's a tool they use that's meant to communicate YOU have made THEM uncomfortable. They will stop short of you to make sure you get the message. What should you do? Stand there. Then back away, say you're sorry and they will move away, too. Again, studies have shown that black bears can repeatedly "bluff charge" and never hurt anyone. But get the message the first time, if you please.

Bears deserve our respect and thanks for helping to make the natural world a better place. Next time anyone asks you, *"what are bears good for anyway?"* you now have the right answers to give them. 🐻

"Seeing what's been done to bears all these years, it's amazing they are so restrained. Most of them are still open and willing to be friendly with humans."

~ Charlie Russell

"Of course, a great deal of our onslaught on Mother Nature is not really lack of intelligence but a lack of compassion for future generations and the health of the planet: sheer selfish greed for short-term benefits to increase the wealth and power of individuals, corporations and governments. The rest is due to thoughtlessness, lack of education, and poverty. In other words, there seems to be a disconnect between our clever brain and our compassionate heart. True wisdom requires both thinking with our head and understanding with our heart"

~Jane Goodall

BEAR League Merchandise



Wear it...

Exclusive to the BEAR League, we now have Men's and Women's Sugar Bear t-shirts with artwork by Julie Mason.

Display it...

Proudly display your support with a license plate frame.



Share it...

Educate yourself or others with our beautiful brochures. Magnets and brochures available at various locations around town.



Scan this code to go directly to our website





Take A Bear To Dinner 2025

With hibernation just around the corner, soon it will be the time of year to *Treat a Bear to Dinner*...the most beloved fund-raising event for our dear BEAR League members. This year's party theme... (hint, hint)...When in Rome...

Watch your mailbox for your personal invitation to take a bear (or 10 bears) out for dinner! Can you just imagine that? And 'imagine' is exactly what this is all about because as we all know full-well---we don't actually feed the bears.

When you get your invitation and read the menu and think about how much fun the bears would have if this was real, you'll want to play right along....maybe like you did as a kid with your own teddy bears!

(If you are new to the BEAR League, and possibly confused about this, don't worry.... your invitation will explain everything. And if you still have questions, just give us a call).





From the Bear Den



Saving Hope and Bounce...by Ann Bryant

All across the US people have been following the harrowing story of Hope and Bounce, a Tahoe Mama Bear and her nine-month-old cub who live at South Lake Tahoe. Hope is just one of six other Mama Bears in a particular area who have entered homes to raid kitchens, most often via unsecured or open doors and windows. But for unknown reasons the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has targeted Hope with a death sentence---a 'shoot to kill' order. If, God forbid, they are successful in killing her the home entries will not stop due to the foraging preferences of all the other Mama Bears. One must ask, does the DFW plan to kill all of them?

BEAR League has known Hope since she was born. We also know her siblings, Mother and Grandmother. During the winter of '23-'24 we monitored a den cam we installed under a home where Hope had just given birth to her first cub, 'Decklan'. Our camera crew became very attached to her as we remotely watched her care for her tiny, precious cub from mid-January until they left the den in mid-April. Sadly, within a few days after emergence, a coyote killed Decklan before

she perfected her tree climbing skills. (This naturally happens sometimes, and we can't blame or be angry with the coyote). What is unnatural, however, is human self-centeredness, arrogance, apathy, fear and irresponsible actions being used by the DFW to justify

the deliberate killing of Hope.

This Buzz Issue's 'From the Bear Den' will focus on what the BEAR League is doing to try and save Hope and Bounce. Each day brings something new so there's no telling what will happen from the time this editorial goes to print, into the mail and reaches you. But we continue to post on our Facebook page any updates and our members are welcome to call or email us for current status.

We were notified of the 'shoot to kill' order in mid-August. Since then, we have been on a mission to keep Hope and Bounce alive while we also haze and chase them out of the neighborhoods and into the woodlands and meadows nearby. Less than a week after the death warrant was announced and was published in the local newspaper





and on our social media pages, we received a call from a distraught resident in Hope's neighborhood telling us the Mama and her cub were up in a tree and the Police, Fire Department and CDFW were there with guns. "Please hurry and get here, I'm afraid they are



going to kill her!" were the words the elderly resident frantically shouted over the phone. Immediately our volunteers were dispatched to the scene, and we sent out a call to nearby neighbors to respond to the location and respectfully be a presence and 'witness' what was happening. Dozens of people arrived. The plan to kill was aborted, clearly due to the presence of too many people watching.



The BEAR League team members went into high alert and stayed with the little bear family for the rest of the day and all night long, sleeping in the woods on the forest floor close enough to the bears to protect them.

(Prior to the 'shoot to kill' order going into effect the CDFW had set up several traps for Hope and Bounce, with the intent to kill if they caught her. But the BEAR League, with help from neighborhood residents, made short work of that plan and all traps were taken away before the bears went inside. BEAR League immediately jumped to the rescue and began our intensive hazing process to turn her behavior around).

After the media got wind of the Hope and Bounce story the people living in Hope’s home range began consistently calling us to let us know where she was and what she was doing. Thanks to these calls we have been able to spend many, many days and weeks with them...keeping them away from homes, out of trouble and aggressively hazing them into the wildlands where they can forage naturally on berries and pinenuts and are hidden from view from their would-be assassins.

There are days upon days now when the two bears don’t step foot into the neighborhoods; where homes entice them with kitchens packed full of endless and irresistible food sources. Our relentless non-lethal hazing seems to be working, so far.

If she does resume her preference for groceries, we have offered to pay for all the expenses to collar her with a state-of-the-art \$8,000 tracking collar and all other costs to bring her and Bounce far away into a distant wilderness area. We have also offered to pay for all transport and permit fees to bring her to an accred-



ited and spacious wildlife sanctuary, if the CDFW prefers that to giving her a chance to remain free. At this point they have said, “No, she will be killed, there are no other acceptable options”.

We cannot understand this mentality, other than the fact that DFW is and always will be a hunting agency and for them to show any compassion, respect or concern for individual bears is not compatible with their sole purpose---to promote bear hunting. We will continue to rally for Hope and Bounce---and all bears. Thanks for appreciating and supporting our work, dear members and friends.

A big thank you for the beautiful photos of Hope and Bounce. Credit goes to: Dave Fleishman, Kathi Zollinger, Joe Miner, and Randy Finley



“Hope is often misunderstood ... People tend to think that it is simply passive wishful thinking: I hope something will happen but I’m not going to do anything about it. This is indeed the opposite of real hope, which requires action and engagement.”

~ Jane Goodall



Never Underestimate a Crawl Space Invitation and Think It Will Never Happen to You

by Julie Mason, BEAR League Response Team Volunteer and Advisory Board Member

Last summer I was browsing through Facebook and came across a post from a woman who stated she just moved to Tahoe and admitted she was terrified of bears and asked where she should look for information about them. Many of the responses guided her to the BEAR League's website, so I reached out let her know that I was a volunteer for BEAR League and I would be more than happy to meet and educate her about bears. We met, chatted, I educated, and I did a perimeter walk around her new home to point out vulnerable areas. We also discussed, and I encouraged, electrifying her home. One vulnerable spot was a door to the crawl space, pointing out to her that this would make an ideal hibernation den for a bear.

We became good friends after that, and Candice is now a huge bear fan. She excitedly sends me pictures and videos of her bear encounters and enjoys watching them walk through her yard, etc. She loves our Tahoe bears and no longer fears them but instead embraces them as being a wonderful part of living in the Tahoe area. However, one day I got a frantic call from her "A bear tore off our crawlspace door! I think we have a bear under our house!". I jumped in my car and headed over there. I thought it odd since it was late August and bears weren't hibernating yet. Armed with a flashlight, I looked beneath her crawl space and confirmed there was no bear. I checked to see what might have attracted the bear; checked for rat poison, etc. but found that their food storage pantry was located right above the crawlspace door. "That must be it" I informed her. A handyman immediately appeared and busily started to fix the door. I told them that

simply fixing the door wasn't going to keep a bear out. Their response: "Oh yes, we are going to use more solid wood". My response: "The bear is going to just rip that off". They didn't believe me. The very next day Candice called, "The bear tore the door open again". I let her know I would be over, and I brought a bear mat to put down. We had a serious discussion about electrifying her home. We did another perimeter walk around the house, I set her up with electrical fencing professionals and she had bear mats placed down the next day and was wired within a week. Problem resolved and she feels much more at ease now. Kiddingly I asked, "Why didn't you do this a year ago when I suggested it when we first met?!!" With a sheepish smile Candice responded, "Well this house was built 20 years ago, it never happened before, and I didn't think it would ever happen to us". Lesson learned, they secured their home and fortunately no real harm was done. Future problems averted.

Compared to this situation:

BEAR League received a call late last winter from a person who has a second home in Tahoe at a very high elevation near a ski area. His handyman had discovered a bear under the house when he checked on his client's heating system that suddenly wasn't working. My volunteer partner, my husband and I headed over to assess the situation. We forgot our snowshoes so had a very difficult time walking around the house, but we confirmed there was a bear sleeping in the crawl space. Because of the enormous snow build up, probably a good 8+ feet surrounding the house, there was no way to electri-

continued on next page

fy the crawl space area at this point, nor the ability to put down a bear mat. The person was informed that because of the extreme winter conditions, there is no way to secure the crawl space, and the bear will just go back in once evicted. He was advised that at this point, it's best to leave the bear and just let him sleep there for only what would be another month. If we evict him, he will keep going in and out and he will simply cause more damage. The man was anxious, called BEAR League almost daily to ask for volunteers to go up and check his house and see if the bear was still there, etc. We did our very best to check on the bear often so we could put the homeowner at ease and let him know the bear was just sleeping now. We advised that when the bear comes out of hibernation, we will have volunteers meet with him to discuss how to secure his home come spring. It's simply too late – and too early – there is far too much snow. Securing your crawl space should have been done well before winter and certainly no later than the beginning of fall.

The man was unreasonably freaked out and far too impatient (and refused to 'let a sleeping bear lie') so he contacted the wildlife agency to set a trap to bait and kill the bear. Fortunately, his HOA immediately found out about the trap and demanded it be removed because it was against HOA regulations.

If he had thought ahead and secured his crawl space opening before the bear went in, it would have cost less than a few hundred dollars to secure it with electric fencing. But now, he was faced with thousands of dollars of damage to the heater, ductwork, insulation and pipes.

Moral of these two stories - be proactive, don't wait because you think "It will never happen to me". Secure your homes and crawl spaces BEFORE it happens to you!



"I think I'd like to be remembered as someone who really helped people to have a little humility and realize that we are part of the animal kingdom and not separated from it."

-Jane Goodall

Board of Directors

Ann Bryant, Executive Director

Ali Van Zee, President

Laura Seligman, Secretary

Peta Ross, Treasurer

Scott Bye

Bill Ferrall

Marlene Prins

Oliver Starr

Rick Van Zee

Advisory Board

Dr. Staci Baker, DVM

Ted Barone, PhD

Dave Fleishman

Fran Gerhardy

Julie Mason

Lynn Rogers, PhD

Steve Searles

Mark Smith

Steve Stringham, PhD

Mark Wilson

Rebecca Woodruff

Kathi Zollinger

Webmaster - IonBlade

Newsletter - Ginger Winters

Assistant Treasurer - Nancy Kiskis

Honorary Board Member - Marvin the Porcupine



For the Kids

with love from BEAR



“Teaching our children to love and respect wildlife is not just about preserving nature—
it’s about nurturing their sense of wonder, compassion, and responsibility. When they understand that
every creature plays a role in the balance of our world, they grow up knowing that protecting
it is both a privilege and a duty.”

Thank You

for your *year-round* support of our beautiful bears.
With enough people who care, we can make a difference.

*"Only if we understand, can we care. Only if we care, we will help.
Only if we help, we shall be saved."*

- Jane Goodall



**If you are already a member & have paid your annual dues,
why not share this membership offer with a friend?**

Just cut along the line and mail to address below.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

New Member ☐

Renewal ☐

Donation ☐

Please indicate the annual membership category you wish to support:

_____ \$35 Bear Cub

_____ \$500 Kodiak Bear

_____ \$60 Polar Bear

_____ \$1000 Grizzly Bear

_____ \$100 Cinnamon Bear

_____ \$2000 and above Spirit Bear

_____ \$250 Black Bear

The BEAR League needs your support -- Thank You!

We do NOT share our members names with anyone!

501c.3 tax exempt organization. Your donations are tax deductible. EIN 68-0468708

email Ann Bryant: bearsnsquirrels@sbcglobal.net

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SaveTahoeBears

www.savebears.org

P.O. Box 393, Homewood, CA 96141

(530) 525-PAWS (7297)

