

LATEST RESCUE AT WFFT

"On Thursday 29th of April, the WFFT Rescue Team received an urgent phone call regarding a large bear being kept at a temple in Chumphon, Southern Thailand. The bear, we were told, had severe injuries to his feet due to overgrown claws, and was being kept in a very small cage.



Along with the Animal Planet film crew, who are with us until 8th May filming for the 'Human Nature' show, the WFFT Wildlife Rescue Team set off on the 4 hour drive to Chumphon to investigate the bear's case. Along with medical supplies with which to treat the bear on site, the rescue team also took a large cage, incase the temple's Abbott was willing to give up the bear to the care of WFFT.



Upon arriving at the temple, we found an extremely large adult Malayan Sun bear, who was grossly overweight. After speaking with the monks caring for the bear, we learnt that he had been in the cage for the previous 12 or 13 years, from when he was a small cub to the present day. We estimate the bear, named Torn, to weigh around 170kg, which is almost double what his recommended weight. This is due to a combination of a high fat diet containing lots of dairy products and lack of space to exercise.

The bear's weight however, was not the only problem caused by lack of room to exercise in. His claws, particularly on his back paws, had grown to the extent that they had curled inwards, puncturing the pads of his feet and eating into the flesh. The WFFT vet team had to operate on the bear immediately.

After sedating the bear, the vet team got to work using a saw to cut through the tough nails and remove the ingrowing ones from the paw pads. Some of the claws had grown over 1 inch into the skin, and the wounds were already festering. Removing the nails, the WFFT vet team cleaned the bear's wounds and bandaged his paws to offer him more protection from infection.



After convincing the Abbott that it was in the best interests of the bear to be handed over to WFFT, the Wildlife Rescue Team were allowed to load the bear into the cage, ready for travelling back to the WFFT Wildlife Rescue Centre. Being so overweight, it took many locals, monks and WFFT staff to move the bear, and even the cage was a tight fit for the massive bear, but eventually the team were back on their way with Torn.

Arriving back at the Wildlife Rescue Centre several hours later, Torn was unloaded off the truck and released into a small side enclosure. He is being introduced to a natural diet of fruit, something he has very rarely eaten in the past. So far, mangos and sweetcorn are proving to be his favourites, but to avoid upsetting his stomach too much due to such a drastic change of diet, he is still allowed a little yoghurt at the moment, only this time it contains his antibiotics!



Having being used to very little room for over a decade, and having paws which require veterinary monitoring, it is in the best interests of Torn to wait a while before he is finally released from the smaller enclosure he is in, into the large grassy enclosure he deserves. As a young cub, Torn was taken from his mother by poachers, and until yesterday - 13 years later - he had never seen another bear. It will take some time for Torn to realise that he is not a human, but in time we hope that he will be integrated into a group of fellow Sun Bears with whom he can share the rest of his life in peace."

More images of Torn's rescue can be found at:

<http://www.facebook.com/WildlifeFriendsFoundation?v=photos#!/album.php?aid=174562&id=28211827656>