

From: Steven C Amstrup <samstrup@pbears.org>

Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 12:56 PM

To: Durner, George M <gdurner@usgs.gov>

Cc: Miller, Susanne SM <susanne\_miller@fws.gov>; Atwood, Todd C <tatwood@usgs.gov>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: 2001 Den experience

Hi All, I can't add much to what George has said. After processing the cubs were put back in the den and the female was left to recover at the mouth of the den. Both cubs and the female were seen a few days later leaving the area, but exactly I cannot recall. And, then all were relighted a month later. And George has told you about the capture of the cub as a giant adult male.

SCA

Steven C. Amstrup, PhD.

Chief Scientist, Polar Bears International

On Jun 10, 2020, at 12:33 PM, Durner, George M <gdurner@usgs.gov> wrote:

Hi Susi,

Steve can provide you with the capture details, but I believe you're referring to a capture on 28 March 2001, not 6 April 2001. Steve can correct me if I'm wrong. Assuming you mean 28 March 2001, in summary Geoff and Steve visited an assumed abandoned but actually occupied den and Steve fell through the roof of the den causing the adult bear to burst out of the den and then run to the sea ice. The crew captured the adult on the sea ice. The helo then returned to the den, retrieved the two cubs and reunited them with their mother.

The family, including both cubs, was last observed almost a month later on 21 April 2001.

The male cub survived into adulthood and has been recaptured or biopsy darted as recently as 2018.

Let me know if you need additional information.

George

From: Miller, Susanne SM <susanne\_miller@fws.gov>

Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 6:54 AM

To: Steve Amstrup <samstrup@pbears.org>; Durner, George M <gdurner@usgs.gov>

Subject: 2001 Den experience

Hello Steve and George,

Long time, no connect! Hope you both are doing well.

Here at FWS we are reviewing some old PB den information - as part of an effort to develop incidental take regulations for the next 5 years. We have been going over some of the den info in our database, and there are quite a few records where some type of human interaction or disturbance occurred, but the final outcome of the interaction is unknown. So here is one that we would like to ask you about: it was an event that occurred on April 6, 2001 and the record says that your research team had been monitoring a den for some time, and assumed it was abandoned. "The previously visible exit had blown full of snow and Amstrup was probing the snow and digging test holes to locate the den in anticipation of entering and measuring it. Suddenly Amstrup fell through the den roof and realized the den was still occupied. Fortunately noone was hurt, but this bear demonstrated great tolerance of activities near and right above her den. It was not until the roof of the den collapsed and a researcher fell into the den that she emerged."

So my question is: what was the final outcome of the incident? Did she emerge with cubs? Did she abandon the den and/or her cubs as a result of the "break-in? Did she leave but return to den, or did she head for the ice with her cubs? Do you know if her cubs ultimately survived for at least a few months thereafter? I'm hoping the incident was unique enough that this info is still in your memory bank somewhere, and if so, you can help inform us about the outcome. I'm not even sure George was even there, but I figured the chances were good that you were!

Meanwhile, here in Alaska at FWS we are all still teleworking; our office is starting to "open up" slowly, and there is a chance we might get to do some of our fall monitoring in Kaktovik again this year, but it's

still a long shot for now. I am looking at retiring at the end of the year, after 30 plus years of federal service, most of them in the polar bear program, dealing with human-bear conflicts. Enough is enough!

Thanks for any info you can share, and hope you are having a safe and enjoyable summer.

Susanne (Susi) Miller, Wildlife Biologist, Polar Bears

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