



Contacts:

Kris Sherman: 253-404-3800; 253-226-6718 or kris.sherman@pdza.org

Whitney DalBalcon: 253-404-3637 or whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org

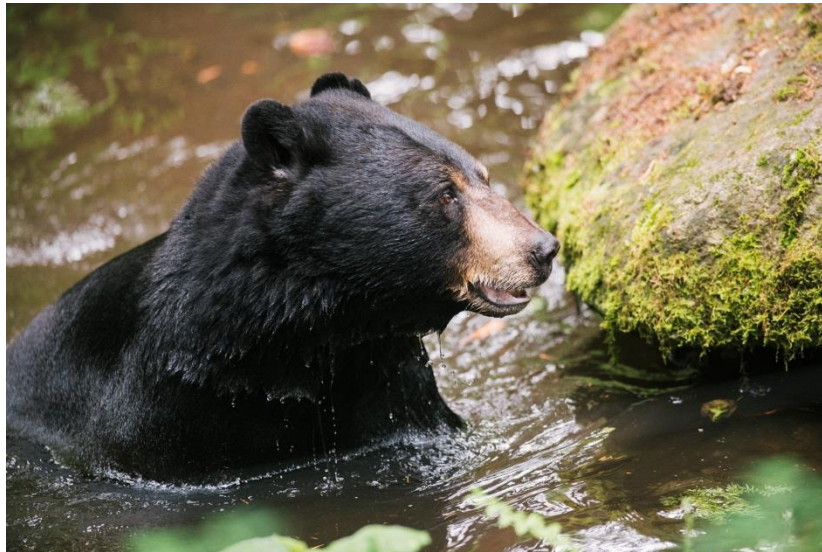
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 7, 2015

FERN CAN 'BEARLY' CONTAIN HER EXCITEMENT: NEW VIDEO SHOWS NORTHWEST TREK WILDLIFE PARK AMERICAN BLACK BEAR DRAGGING A TREE INTO HER POOL AND SPLASHING AROUND WITH IT

Find hilarious video of Fern and her private pool party here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPjow0r1toA&feature=youtu.be>

EATONVILLE, Wash. – When the usually cool Northwest is having a hot streak and it's so warm that people are trying to fry eggs on metal trash can lids, what's a furry black bear to do?



In this photo, Fern's brother, Benton cools off in the black bears' pool at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park.

Well, if you're Fern, an American black bear at Northwest Trek Wildlife Park, you just create your own private pool party. Or, perhaps just settle on a personal spa day in cool waters.

That's exactly what the 7-year-old, 200-pound bear at Northwest Trek, has been doing during what's shaping up to be a sizzling summer in the Puget Sound region.

But, wait! First, you have to find a pool toy. How about that tree top over there? That looks good!

In this video, shot June 18 just as the sun began to leave humans in a daily sea of sweat-stained clothing, Fern grabs a huge hunk of evergreen tree in her natural exhibit, drags it to her pool, jumps in, puts the tree between her teeth and commences with a hilarious playtime. She splashes with it, completely submerging the huge branch and then, at one point, pulls it up from between her legs, looking for all the world like she's riding a broomstick.

Keepers report that Fern and her brother, Benton, have both been enjoying the pool in their forested exhibit during the current heat wave. But while people might assign human-like qualities to these actions, (we admit, we did that in the paragraphs above), it's really ingrained activity that stimulates a number of natural behaviors in the bears.

Bears love to rub, claw and bite on trees, which are also bear communication posts, Northwest Trek keeper Angela Gibson says. So, not surprisingly, Fern liked the tree top keepers gave her as an enrichment item.

“Bears rub on trees to leave their signature and bite and claw at the trunk and branches to show how tall and strong they are,” Gibson explained. “Bears are especially attracted to cedar and will go out of their way to rub and bite on it. In the spring bears strip the bark of trees like hemlock and Douglas fir to feed on the sugary sap underneath.”

Fern and her brother Benton can be seen at Northwest Trek, a 725-acre zoo featuring native Northwest animals in Eatonville, Wash., just an hour’s drive southeast of Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

In addition to these playful black bears, Northwest Trek is home to a grizzly bear, wolves, coyotes, a cougar, foxes, Canada lynx, bobcats, beavers and dozens of other animals in natural exhibits along forested pathways.

Visitors also can take a 50-minute, naturalist-narrated tram tour through a 435-acre Free-Roaming Area that is home to American bison, Roosevelt elk, moose, deer, woodland caribou and other animals.

The wildlife is celebrating its 40th birthday July 17-19 with special enrichments for animals and activities and treats for visitors.

Northwest Trek is open from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

For more information, go to www.nwtrek.org.

###

Northwest Trek, accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums, is a 725-acre zoological park dedicated to conservation, education and recreation by displaying, interpreting and researching native Northwest wildlife and their natural habitats. The wildlife park, a facility of Metro Parks Tacoma, is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2015. It’s located 35 miles southeast of Tacoma off State Highway 161.