

Nevada wildlife officials implant microchip in bear cubs

By Jeff DeLong, Reno Gazette-Journal

How does one enter an occupied bear den?

Belly-down, face-first and with all due caution.

Nevada Department of Wildlife biologist Carl Lackey demonstrated his technique one day last week in the mountains west of Washoe Valley.

After first darting an irritated mother black bear with tranquilizer – an important step, that one – Lackey squirmed beneath a granite slab and into a den so confined he “couldn’t do a push-up.”

His instructions to a colleague were clear and spoken with emphasis.

“I’m going to have to go in head first and when I say pull me out, pull me out by my feet,” Lackey said. “And pull me out.”

After pushing aside the unconscious 130-pound mother bear, he was pulled free as asked.

Lackey emerged from the hole with the day’s true goal – three yowling, newborn bear cubs.

The cubs, two females and one male, four or five weeks old and weighing a couple of pounds each, were the scientific prize sought by Lackey and biologist Jon Beckmann of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

The biologists are working to gain a better understanding of survival rates of bear cubs in the wild, part of an ongoing

body of research that started in 1997 when increasing human-bear conflicts were first noticed in the Lake Tahoe area.

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