



Special Guest:

Else Poulsen

President of the Bear Care Group and
author of Smiling Bears

Friday, June 26, 2015



Amanda Nicholson, WCV:

Okay, I think we're ready!!

Comment From Pat, NJ

Welcome to WCV Else. It is a pleasure to have you join us today.

3Comment From Sweetpea

Welcome Else to WCV and the moderated discussion



Chapin Hardy, WCV:

Yipee!

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Having read both SMILING BEARS and BÄRLEY'S STORY, I have these questions for Ms. Poulsen: What is the most unique enrichment she has seen used for bears? and Of all the bears she has worked with, which is the one she has felt the closest bond with and in what way? Many thanks to her for taking time to visit with Critter Nation and for being such a great friend to animals.



Else Poulsen:

I love enrichment that allows a bear to express normal bear behavior but I have to say that I have a weak spot for enrichment that allows a bear to truly relax like very comfortable hammocks.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•? *♥

Oh Yay! I made it! So excited to "meet" you Else! I read your book Smiling Bears even before it became a WCV book club reading. One of my fav books ever!

Comment From CarolinaGirl ♪•♪•? ♥

Hi Else and welcome to CN! I loved reading Smiling Bears and Barle's Story!

Comment From Guest

Welcome

Comment From Jersey Shore Amy

Welcome Else! Smiling Bears sure made me wish I had made different career choices!

Comment From ▼ Dave in Missouri ▼

Do you find older bears staying up in trees as much as the younger ones seem to do or is it more of a safe place for the younger bears? What would you do if you found yourself a little too close to a bear while hiking in the woods? Thank you for being here Else!

**Else Poulsen:**

Hi Dave, It's best to respond to the presence of a bear the way that bears respond to each when they meet and don't wish to engage each other: keep your eye on the bear while backing away. Turn to completely leave when you are a far distance away. I would suggest that you read Dr Stephen Herrero's book called Bear Attack to understand the nature of the attacks that he has researched. He will tell you that you will meet one of three different types of motivated bears i/ the minding his own business bear that leaves, ii/ the bear that cannot leave because he/she is protecting food or young, or iii/ the predatory bear.

**Else Poulsen:**

Hi again Dave, Bears, old or young will frequent trees when they need to and if it is convenient. Young and old bears find safety in tree, privacy, a convenient place to sleep, a cooler breezy place on a hot. The problem with being an older bear in a tree is that you have to find branches thick enough to hold your weight. Cheers, Else

Comment From Becky in SoCal

Welcome, Else. Thank you for joining us today.

Comment From Carol in Oregon

Welcome Else, from the West Coast.

Comment From CarolinaGirl ♡•••? ♥

Thanks for the cams today Brenda in honor of Else's visit and Jackie and Randy honoring the Cavalier's championship. (Is that you Big Bear??)

Comment From Virginiagal

A black bear is being blamed for killing two calves on a local farm. Is that likely? Thanks for you input.

**Else Poulsen:**

Unfortunately I cannot comment because I don't have enough facts in this particular situation. Bear predation is complex.

Comment From Mary E in NC

Welcome, Else - we're so thrilled to have you here today! I really enjoyed your book and am glad you're here "in person"!

Comment From Susan from NJ

what new behavior have you learned about bears that has surprised you?



Else Poulsen:

Hi Susan, I am always learning about bears. And some behaviors have surprised me. The most surprising to me was that bears have a sense of humor and there seems to be bear jokes. I have observed what I call throat diving where one bear crams his or her nose into the other's mouth in both brown bears and American black bears. Apparently -that is is very funny - if you are a bear.

Comment From rejoyce

LOL

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ٧•٩•? *♥

LOL! Throat diving. Love it

Comment From Carol in Oregon

How funny!

Comment From Cathy in Poquoson

Bear jokes! Wow!

Comment From katiesmom

Silly bears!

Comment From Janeinstpete

Throat diving! What a hoot!

Comment From Sweetpea

That is so precious!

Comment From Sharon in Fl

I am wondering what the reaction of the bear that is being throat dived is?

Comment From Guest

New bear movie DEEP THROAT

Comment From cwerb ٧•٩•? ♥ ٧•٩•? ♥ ٧•٩•? ٧•٩•? ♥ ٧•٩•? ♥ ٧•٩•?

that does not surprise me! their first priority after eating seems to be finding entertainment

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ٧•٩•? *♥

They smile Sharon :)

Comment From Izzy

First and foremost thanks for joining us Else this is fantastic! I was wondering if you could tell us about one of your most memorable bear encounters, and how this might differ from how people perceive bears?

**Else Poulsen:**

Hi Izzy, There are so many memorable bear encounters its hard to isolate just one. But I think I have to say that most bear behaviors are different from what was traditionally perceived. Bears are intelligent, sentient creatures with an agenda. Bears care about bear things that have nothing to do with the human agenda. We humans have to remember that and if we wish to live peaceably with bears we have to focus on their living needs not our own.

Comment From katiesmom

We have learned a lot about bears from being able to observe the ones that the WCV has had the past couple of years.

Comment From GN

i was advised not to tell any jokes of any kind.

Comment From katiesmom

Have seen them bump noses and go a bit of grooming - don't think we have seen throat diving

Comment From v-PA

Loved "Smiling Bears"!!! While visiting the Wildlife Center this week, will you be working with the non-releasable bear? I am hoping a happy enriched life can be found for her. If so, please tell us your impressions, experiences and her responses.

**Else Poulsen:**

Yes, I have met your non-releasable bear and we will be working with her husbandry routine to help her accommodate to long term captive care. The long term captive care of bears differs from the husbandry methods used to short term captive bears in rehab. In long term captive care one must develop a positive caregiver relationship, provide enrichment programming, and teach her normal procedures such as shifting from one enclosure to another when asked to, coming when she is called to come, and desensitize her to normal care procedures such as cleaning and feeding. Our objective here is to lower the stress levels inherent in captivity. We would like to place her in with a small group of bears elsewhere as American black bears are quite social. So glad you enjoyed Smiling Bears.

Comment From caleb (👁👁)

FOR MS. POULSEN: Welcome from our 19 special needs kids who use WCV critter cams and moderated discussion for education and enrichment. We read that you have much experience in designing and redesigning enclosures for bears and other animals. What is your professional assessment of the bear facilities at WCV? We are very proud of what we have available, of course. All our kids thank you for being here!



Else Poulsen:

Well you should be proud. Your new bear facilities are terrific and lend themselves to excellent modern behavior-based bear husbandry.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♡•••? *♥

Oh, so happy to hear there may be a new plan for our non-releasable bear!

Comment From tinksmom/MO

Great news for the non-releasable bear!

Comment From Becky in SoCal

We are very proud of the WCV bear facilities. We are so hopeful for the non-releasable bear.

Comment From Steph in Maryland

Questions for Else. 1. How/when did she decide to become a behavioral bear expert? 2. What is her most memorable experience? 3. What is her most scary experience? 4. How did she come up with the title "Smiling Bear" for her book? 5. Does she have a favorite bear (grizzly, brown, polar)?



Else Poulsen:

Hi Steph, 1. I don't think I ever made a conscious decision to become a bear husbandry and behavior expert. I was very fortunate that opportunities kept presenting themselves that allowed me to learn and practice what I was good at. 2. This is tough question because in getting to know bears there have been many exciting series of events such as learning that bear's smile and laugh, coming to understand that they have language, that they are very social, and that they are extremely intelligent and sentient. 3. The scariest and saddest moments for me with the bears I have worked with have been when I learn they have an illness that we cannot fix. 4. I thought about writing the book for many years before I actually wrote it. The title Smiling Bears always seems to have been there. It sort of says it all about bear behavior. 5. My favorite bear is the one standing in front of me that needs my help. Cheers, Else

Comment From Steph in Maryland

Question for Else. How does she begin a behavioral analysis on a bear?



Else Poulsen:

To begin an analysis you research a species natural history, personal history, and then evaluate whether or not their current environment allows that animal to express normal behaviors.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♡•••? *♥

Poor non-releasable! No wonder she escaped her enclosure to the perimeter to try to get to where the new cubs were. She wanted to socialize I'll bet!

Comment From Cathy in Poquoson

You are right, we are proud of WCV facilities - not only for bears but for all animals in their care!

Comment From ▼ Dave in Missouri ▼

Thank you for all of your help at WCV Else!

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•? *♥

Question for Else: First, I LOVED your book Smiling Bears. One quote there intrigues me. Can you explain more about this "Bears are true individuals who respond to their environment based on their own genetics, environment, and unique past experiences. They know they are bears, and have bear expectations, whether human raised or mother raised" What are bear expectations?

**Else Poulsen:**

Bears have a genetic expectation that their morphology and urges will match with their environment so they can express normal bear behaviors. Just like we humans have an expectation to live in an environment befitting our human sensibilities.

Comment From Pat, NJ

For Else - Not so much of a question as a comment. First of all, thank you for taking some of your precious time to spend with us at CN and WCV. We hope that you have found that the Wildlife Center of Virginia is an A+ facility and their care of the bear cubs is exceptional. I am sad to say I have not yet finished Smiling Bears due to recent cataract surgery, but after our book club discussion cannot wait to do so. After observing "our" cubs for these past months, it is easy to see how your love for them has led you to your life's work in research of these magnificent creatures. Thank you again for visiting with us and I look forward to our discussion on the 26th.

Comment From Elaine VA VB

Loved reading you book Smiling Bears.

**Amanda Nicholson, WCV:**

Not to make everyone exceptionally jealous, but it was amazing sitting in on the meeting today and listening to Else speak about bears. She was recounting some of the stories featured in Smiling Bears ... it was a great live telling of some of her experiences!

Comment From CarolinaGirl ♪•♪•? ♥

.....and you didn't record this??

Comment From Elaine VA VB

Welcome to Critter Nation Else Poulsen. Hope you enjoy your visit with us, and I loved reading your book, Smiling Bears. Maybe our little rascals will be an inspiration to you to be included in a future book. Ha.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

I am jealous, Amanda, and exceptionally too! ;-)

Comment From Pat, NJ

LOVE LOVE LOVE that picture!

Comment From Sweetpea

Oh My- That picture says it all. Thank you Else.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Thanks for the great picture, Amanda!

Comment From Candice VaBch

awwww so sweet

Comment From katiesmom

Definitely bear/human communication going on there!

Comment From Linda vb va

Tell us about the bear in the picture with you.



Else Poulsen:

I'd be happy to Linda. This is Gracie from the from Woodlands Wildlife Refuge. Gracie was a little adult pygmy bear that ad come in for rehab but was not releasable due to ongoing illnesses. Gracie has since passed on but I got to know her briefly during the Advancing Bear Care 2013 conference held in New Jersey. While there we built Gracie a hammock bed, a digging pit, and a number other enrichment items and furniture. She was real sweet heart. And Gracie is greatly missed by the good folks at the refuge.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Thank you, Else, for being a friend to Animals Asia too. I am a supporter too. The thought of what those bears suffer is mind boggling.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•? *♥

Oh that picture is wonderful! I wish Else could take our non releasable home with her! (kidding, but I feel so very badly for that dear bear)

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•? *♥

Can you describe more about what you mean by "sentient creatures with an agenda"? I am really interested in understanding that



Else Poulsen:

LOL you ask great questions Lydia. We are going to have to get together for coffee and have that chat. In short, bears are intelligent creatures, they have daily agendas or routines that they follow so they can attain food and breeding partners. Cheers, Else



Amanda Nicholson, WCV:

You guys have so many great questions ... as I mentioned a couple of times, we won't be getting into detail about her thoughts/recommendations about the bears here. We still need to process information, discuss things more with officials at DGIF, then we'll dispense more info as we know it.

I know you guys would love to keep Else chatting forever ... but I think we'll finish up with the questions that have come through already. We have a couple more to go, so stick around!

Comment From rejoyce

Which bear behavior do you think would be most surprising to people who do not know much about bears?



Else Poulsen:

Good question - I think people would be surprised to know that bears have a sense of humor and they are very funny. They smile and laugh. A bear laughs by opening his or her mouth like a muppet. No noise comes out but they do move their heads around when laughing.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ☺☺☺ *♥

Oh boy! I would LOVE to have coffee and chat with you Else!

Comment From Pat in WI

Thank you for chatting with us, Else. It's been fun as well as educational.

Comment From tinksmom/MO

LOL, Lydia is her daughters mother!

Comment From Rose in PA

So glad to "see" you Else. Smiling Bears is one of the best books I've read in a long time. What do you foresee happening to the bear species in general as we continue to encroach on their territory? What adaptations may be necessary?



Else Poulsen:

It's difficult to say. Since it is not likely that bears will be changing their behaviors then its up to us to change ours to accommodate them. We can begin by not having bear or wildlife attractants on our private property.

Comment From TJ

Ms Poulsen, What inspired you to write your books?



Else Poulsen:

I always felt very fortunate to have access to bears in my work. I felt that if others could get a feel for the behaviors of bears then they too would wish to conserve them. Thus I wrote Smiling Bears to hopefully inspire folks to protect and conserve bears and their habitats.

Comment From Lynda in AZ

Hold for Else: As an elementary school teacher/librarian, I was wondering if you ever thought (or would consider) of putting Barle's story (and the other bears) into a children's book in order to reach (and teach) the children. (I have a former 'non-reader' who fell in love with black bears-thanks to WCV-and is now a reader.)



Else Poulsen:

Thank you for asking Lynda. I had that discussion with my publisher. Barle's story - while inspiring - is also very dark at times. We felt that it wouldn't suit a child's book format. Perhaps we should rethink that.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ٩•٠•٠? *♥

You know my very fave in your book 'Smiling Bears' was the story of Miggy, who came into the zoo after being habituated to humans. Reminded me of our WCV bears. Poulsen did so much to meet Miggy's special needs. Awesome how Else subbed for the mother. The cracking nuts story made me laugh. And thankfully Else did not have to eat mealworms!



Amanda Nicholson, WCV:

Ooooh, she was talking about Miggy today! :)



Amanda Nicholson, WCV:

(Hang on, she's saying goodbye to Dr. Megan (DGIF) and Jaime (DGIF)).

Comment From sue in Maine

ooh! so glad Jaime and Else had time together. what a great gathering this must have been.

Comment From 33mama

A beary good time for sure!

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ٩•٠•٠? *♥

Wow! All the special bear folks converge! How awesome :)

Comment From Jersey Shore Amy

Too bad "Coffee with Else" was not an auction item!!!

Comment From Pat, NJ

Ms. Poulsen, you are truly a most extraordinary person. The only thing that would have made today's session with you even better were it with sound and video. We are so jealous of the entire staff of WCV being able to spend time with you and learning from you. Is another book in the works?

**Else Poulsen:**

You're very kind. I am currently working on textbook with two other editors on behavior-based bear husbandry for bear care professionals. It may be somewhat dull compared with actual bear behavior exposés. Sorry :)

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•♪ *♥

But great for the bear caregivers!!!!

Comment From Elaine VA VB

I really don't understand the term bear husbandry. Can you elaborate on it as it relates to the Non-releasable bear and to the cubbies?

**Else Poulsen:**

Bear husbandry is the care and feeding of captive animals. It includes housing, diets, enrichment programming, furniture, and training for veterinary procedures such as taking blood samples.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

I don't think learning about bear husbandry would be boring at all. I've already learned a lot from your other books and give zoos that I once thought were doing a good job a jaundiced look now.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•♪ *♥

I LOVED Miggy's story! And how Else responded to get through to her. Anyone here who has not yet read Smiling Bears---it is a MUST read! Most especially if you love watching the bear cam at WCV. Seriously!

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

I suspect that our time is nearly done. Thank you very, very much for spending some of your busy day with us, Else. I wish we could all sit down for a long chat together. Have a safe trip home.

Comment From ▼ Dave in Missouri ▼

Else, I love the behavior of Da Bears and have learned that all they really want is to have fun and be left alone by humans or whatever. They are so much fun to watch and learn from!

Comment From tinksmom/MO

Thank you, Amanda for bringing Else on board for the discussion, you rock!

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•♪ *♥

Else, you are awesome! I would love to spend a whole weekend chatting with you. Especially since I will be moving to the mountains in the future..and home of many bears so I am told!

Comment From Cathy in Poquoson

I think of the cubs at WCV as happy, laughing, playful bears.

Comment From 33mama

Else, thank you so much for spending time with us and at WCV. I'm sure your thoughts and comments will help WCV care for "our" bears.

Comment From tinksmom/MO

Thank you, Else for spending time with us. Welcome to CN!



Amanda Nicholson, WCV:

A HUGE thanks to Else for taking time to also appear on our moderated discussion in her very busy two days here in VA!

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪♪♪ *♥

I have seen the bears at WCV laughing! I know they laugh and smile. Especially the young ones at play I love them!

Comment From cwerb ♪♪♪ ♥ ♪♪♪ ♥ ♪♪♪ ♪♪♪ ♥ ♪♪♪ ♥ ♪♪♪

This has been fascinating. Thanks Else Poulson for everything you have done and continue to do for bears and for being here today.

Comment From Candice VaBch

Thank you Else and Amanda for such a great treat.

Comment From BarbG

Thanks so much

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪♪♪ *♥

So Amanda said you were talking about Miggy today. Miggy's story was my favorite. I cannot believe you showered her how to crack nuts and eat. I so admire you and your work. So gald you came to WCV..it is a very special place and I know they want to give the best care possible and are champions for the bears!

Comment From sue in Maine

thank you Else for your time for WCV's fans.

Comment From ▼ Dave in Missouri ▼

Thank you very much for being here Else! Very interesting!

Comment From katiesmom

Thank you Else for spending some tie with us. Enjoy the rest of your time at the Center and safe travels on your journey to the next stop.

Comment From Brenda from Virginia

Thanks for doing such a great job of coordinating our very educational session today, Amanda.

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•♪ *♥

Thank You Else! and please let me know where I can meet you for that coffee chat!



Else Poulsen:

I have to run so I can catch a ride into Charlottesville to catch a flight. It has been a pleasure to chat with you all. Thank you for participating in this event. And thank you for your tremendous support of the efforts of the Wildlife Center of Virginia.



Amanda Nicholson, WCV:

Thanks so much, everyone, for tuning in!

Comment From Sweetpea

Thank You Else for visiting on chat. :)

Comment From tinksmom/MO

Safe journey Else.

Comment From Kathy in NM ♥

Time sure went fast! Thank you, Else, for sharing your time with us!

Comment From CarolinaGirl ♪•♪•♪ ♥

Thank you Else for this time with you and also for all the discussions and knowledge you have shared with our friends at WCV. Have safe travels home.

Comment From ▼ Dave in Missouri ▼

Safe trip Else!

Comment From Lydia--PA ♥ ♪•♪•♪ *♥

This was GREAT! So glad I made it. Thank You Else and WCV. Safe flight wishes for you Else!

Comment From Cathy in Poquoson

Thank YOU, WCV, and Else for a wonderful afternoon

Comment From Carol in Oregon

Thank you for being here today, Else. I learned a great deal. Safe travels to you.

Comment From sue in Maine

thank you "AA" for being so good and so thoughtful of your fans.



Else Poulsen:



Just a quick photo of two bears playing at throat diving for fun.

Comment From CK in Pa

Thank you Else for the work you do and spending time here. I too enjoyed reading "Smiling Bears".

Comment From ▼ Dave in Missouri ▼

I have scrolling back to do!

Comment From katiesmom

LOL

Comment From tinksmom/MO

Oh my!

Comment From Terri from VA

Sure enjoyed the chat today. Thank you Ms Poulsen.

Comment From Carol in Oregon

Great throat diving picture.

Comment From katiesmom

Maybe the one is looking for fish???

Comment From CarolinaGirl ♡•x•? ♡

Guess that is fun if you are a bear!

