

BEAR VS DRUG DEALER

Submitted by: WDFW Officer Jim Nelson

Back in the summer of 2005, Officer Alan Myers and I were called about a large black bear roaming the streets of Clarkston. The bear was seen in the area of an elementary school and the parents and school officials were quite concerned for the student's safety.

We covered the area all morning, but were unable to locate the stray bruin. Later that same afternoon, after we had given up on finding the bear, it made another appearance. Again, we responded immediately to the area and this time, the bear was waiting.

As we arrived, we could see the bear running through yards and crossing streets, slowing traffic and generating large crowds of onlookers. The Clarkston Police Department had Officers on scene, as did the Asotin County Sheriff's Department.

We had local Biologist Paul Wik on standby and he responded with the necessary immobilization equipment and drugs. Our biggest concern was safely immobilizing the bear without having any of the public's safety jeopardized.

As we followed the bear through the neighborhood, it was climbing fences and crossing through yards and driveways. It finally disappeared into a back yard that was surrounded by 6 foot wooden plank fencing. We could peer through the gaps in the fence and it looked like the wandering bear had settled down to where we might actually get a shot at it with the dart gun.



I was standing next to a local Deputy waiting for Paul to make the shot. The Deputy decided to climb a set of stairs on the front of the neighbor's house to get a better vantage point. As he reached the top step, I heard him yell excitedly "Hey, you're under arrest.....felony drugs!" We all changed our attention to what he was looking at.

It seems that one of the neighbors had a very successful indoor marijuana garden growing in his home. Evidently he saw all of the activity outside his house, including large numbers of local

law enforcement officers approaching, and concluded that we were carrying out a drug raid on his residence.

In his panic to elude capture, he began ripping up his 4 ft. tall marijuana plants and throwing them over his fence. Unknown to him, there was a Clarkston Police Officer standing on the back of his fence and the plants began raining down on him about the same time the Asotin Deputy saw him start throwing them. Needless to say, he was quickly taken into custody and charged with multiple felony drug violations.

Biologist Wik made a good shot with the dart gun, and the bear too was taken into custody and removed from the neighborhood. I made sure that Alan and I got an honorable mention on the drug arrest since we concluded that “our bear” had been directly responsible for the dope grower’s capture. All in all a productive day for everyone involved.