Dipnetting for Bear Cubs - Harder Than You Think

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Jay Barrett/KMXT

Alaska Department of Fish and Game personnel, local officials with dipnets were all standing by in Old Harbor Wednesday to corral four orphaned bear cubs, but the guests of honor were noticeably absent.

The quadruplet cubs were orphaned last week when their mother had become a nuisance dump bear in the community and was put down by officials. The six-month old cubs, whose chances for survival on their own were slim, were facing the same fate until the Lieutenant Governor and Shell Oil won them a reprieve.

The bears needed to be captured by hand, as they’re too young and small to shoot with a tranquilizer gun, so Fish and Game’s Larry Van Daele and others organized a rescue mission for yesterday morning. But last night he said the bear cubs were nowhere to be found.

He speculated the hot weather might have kept them in the shade where it’s cooler, or, they may have met the fate of many bear cubs and were killed by adult male bears.

Van Daele said a trap of sorts was placed inside the electric fence around the Old Harbor dump and it is under surveillance in case the cubs come back. He said he and his team are on standby through the weekend to fly down and complete the rescue.