# Ricky the brown bear is released to run wild in Armenia

**Thursday 24 October, 2024**

A brown bear that was hit by a vehicle in Armenia and successfully treated at a bear rescue centre has been safely returned to the wild. The bear, named Ricky after comedian Ricky Gervais, spent two weeks at the Urtsadzor Wildlife Rescue Centre, managed by FPWC (Foundation for the Preservation of Wildlife and Cultural Assets) and International Animal Rescue (IAR), before being released high in the Armenian mountains earlier today. Taking part in the release was actor, animal advocate and IAR patron Peter Egan who named the bear after his good friend Ricky.

In an interview shortly after the release Peter described it as “exhilarating to see the bear bounding back to freedom” and subsequently commented on X: “This was exceptional to see this wonderful bear #Ricky released into the wild after being hit by a car and brought back to fitness by the amazing work done by @IAR_updates and @FPWC_Intl.”

There was no doubt as to how ‘wild’ the two year old bear was. Before he was set free, members of the rescue team returned to the safety of their vehicles, leaving one ranger from FPWC to open the transport crate. Thanks to careful planning, when the bear turned towards the ranger the man was able to climb into the pick-up truck which sped off with the bear close on its heels! Video of the bear’s release shows the heartstopping moment of the man-bear encounter.

Alan Knight OBE, President of International Animal Rescue, said: “There was careful preparation among the rangers before the crate was opened. When you release a wild animal, particularly one as large and aggressive as a bear, you can’t be too careful about people’s safety. In the case of Ricky’s release, the rangers discussed the best way to open the crate and stay out of his way and they decided to have the truck ready to move off should the bear come too close for comfort – which he definitely did!”

He added: “We’re delighted that Peter has chosen the name Ricky for the bear. Peter is a wonderful patron and has kindly put in a good word for us with Ricky on a number of occasions, leading him to support our work very generously. We’re hugely grateful to both Ricky and Peter for promoting and supporting our lifesaving work.”

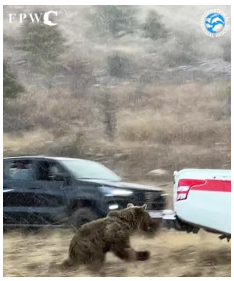
The release is a happy ending to a story which began two weeks ago when the bear was hit and injured by a vehicle late one night. The driver reported the incident and a joint team from FPWC and the RA Ministry mounted a rescue mission and brought the bear back to the rescue centre in Urtsadzor for treatment.

FPWC vet Harutyun Hovhannisyan described the bear’s condition and the treatment he was given: “The bear had a wound to his lower lip which we sutured at the scene of the accident. He didn’t have any broken bones, just a minor injury to one leg. When he was first brought into the centre he seemed disorientated and we kept him under close observation in case he might show signs of neurological damage but in fact he soon recovered. We vaccinated him and tested him for rabies and other diseases and after two weeks I was able to give him a clean bill of health.

“As a wild bear, he is naturally fearful of humans and whenever anyone approached the quarantine quarters where he was housed he would either cower in fear or launch himself at the bars. That’s what you want in a wild bear. The more they steer clear of human interaction the better.”

Alan Knight concludes: “It’s a joyful occasion when we’re able to return an animal to its home in the wild. So much of our work with FPWC in Armenia involves rescuing caged bears that have spent years in captivity and can never return to the wild. It’s heartbreaking. So the opportunity to rescue and release a young, healthy animal back into its natural habitat is very uplifting. We couldn’t do any of this lifesaving work without everyone who supports us and we’d love more people to join us! https://www.internationalanimalrescue.org/projects/armenian-bears

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