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Bear selfies surprise researchers

Unexpected Elk Island Park resident weasels way into study

MARTY KLINKENBERG
Edmonton Journal

A researcher studying weasels in Elk Island National Park has made an unexpected discovery: there are bears in the 'hood.

Two black bears have taken selfies recently with a motion-sensor camera while nosing around bait left for fishers by Frances Stewart, a PhD candidate from the University of Victoria.

"The bears are a by-catch, but it is pretty neat to see them," Stewart said. "No one is really sure how many are around."

Less than an hour east of Edmonton, Elk Island is known for its herds of deer, bison, and, quite naturally, elk. Bears are extremely rare, however.

"We don't know if it is the same bear and it is just roaming around, or if there is more than one."

MARTHA ALLEN

"We expect maybe one or two to pass through each summer," Martha Allen, the park's ecologist, said. "They are not very common."

Three sightings have been reported by visitors in the last six weeks, Allen said, all in different parts of the park.



ALBERTA PARKS/ALBERTA INNOVATES
A black bear in Elk Island National Park noses around a bait station set for fishers.

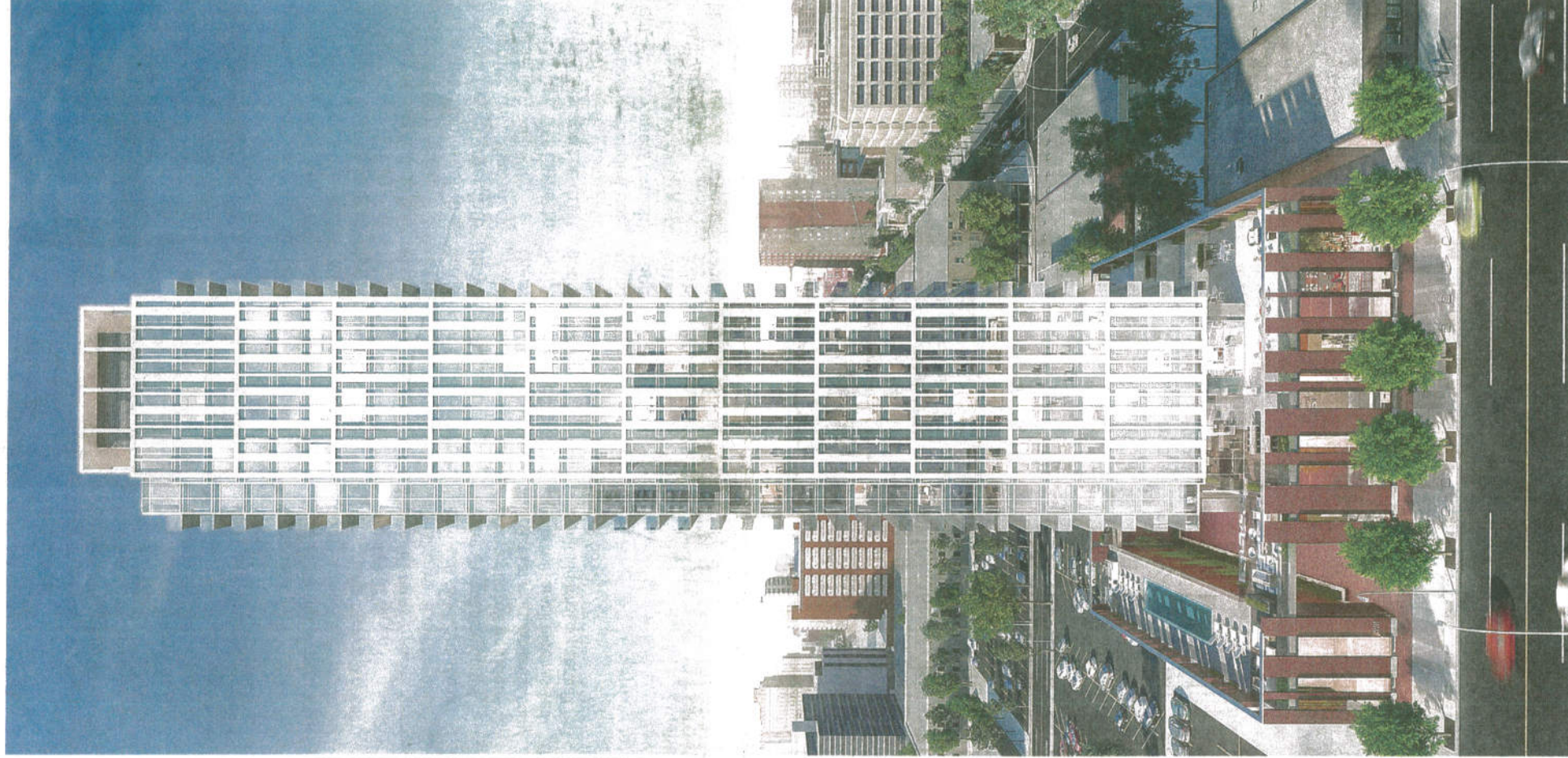
"We don't know if it is the same bear and it is just roaming around, or if there is more than one," she said. Making it a bit more puzzling is the fact that the park is surrounded by a fence that is more than two metres tall. That means the bear or bears had to find a hole in the fence somewhere, climb over it, or shimmy beneath it limbo-style.

Stewart said that based on size, it appears that two different bears have been captured on her wildlife camera. She won't be able to confirm how many there are until she examines hair samples this fall.

Samples are collected when animals rub up against strands of wire that are wrapped around a baited tree.

"If they left hair on the tree, I should be able to identify the individual bear, and determine how many times, and how often it returned," Stewart said. See BEARS page A2

'CONDO KING' REACHES FOR SKY WITH NEW HIGHRISE



SUPPLIED
Artist's concept of Jasper House, a condo building planned for Jasper Avenue and 106th Street. The 240-unit building will rival the 36-storey Pearl Tower in height. See story / D1

Stolen pendant held boy's ashes

Theft was like losing him again'

CAILYNN KLINGBEIL
Edmonton Journal

A family that moved to Edmonton for a new beginning following the death of their nine-year-old son in a Manitoba plane crash are devastated after a pendant that holds their son's ashes was stolen.

David and Crystal Pentecost are asking for the public's help to find the necklace, taken last week from a vehicle in central Edmonton just two weeks after the family moved to the city.

"It was like losing him again," Crystal Pentecost said Tuesday.

Their son, Dawson, was among four people killed Feb. 10, 2013, when a Cessna went down in a field near the community of Waskada, in southwest Manitoba.

Dawson was hanging out with his friends Logan, 9, and Gage, 10, when they asked him if he wanted to go for a plane ride with their dad, experienced pilot Darren Spence.

Dawson had never been on a plane before and phoned his father to make sure it was OK.

Later that Sunday afternoon, Dawson's dad, a volunteer firefighter, received a pager message that a plane had gone down. He rushed out on a snowmobile and was one of the first to find the wreckage. The pilot and all three children died.

Speaking Tuesday afternoon outside Edmonton Police Headquarters, Crystal Pentecost said Dawson's family members, including his three brothers, had cremation pendants made that contain Dawson's ashes. See PENDANT page A2