

# Wildlife: Friend or faux pas?

*A brief history of Bonner County's unique pets*

By Hannah Combs  
 Frank Clements was known Railway street car stopped and Special to the Readerfar and wide for his two pet sat unattended on the tracks, Courtesy of the Bonner County Historical Society and Museum deer, Babe and Buster. They one of Hunt's pet bears broke were a regular sight around out of its enclosure, climbed Sandpoint, pulling a cus- aboard the street car and ate Since the last of the snow tom-made buggy. Clements more than six pounds of butter melted, I have been scattering entered the dynamic pair into destined for local deliveries. small piles of birdseed around exhibitions around the North-When motorman Dick Turpin the lawn, trying to lure song-west, and as Bonner County returned from an errand, he birds to a newly established Historical Society historian "was thunderstruck at the au- birdfeeder. Every now and Dan Evans says, "Boy, could dacity of the bruin, but lost no then, a quartet of mule deer this guy tell stories." time in hastening to the car and stroll through and nibble bits Buster and Babe allegedly assisting the bear out one of the of corn from the piles of seed. could read, walk a tightrope side doors," according to the So sweet and fuzzy, I thought. and enjoyed listening to rag-local paper. Top: A young girl riding a custom buggy I felt like Snow White, a friend time music. Clements once told Local wild animal adven- pulled by "Babe and Buster." of all the forest creatures. a newspaper that he refused an tures may have become smaller



Then I planted a beautiful offer from a circus manager of in scale over the years, but they tulip, its blossoms a delicate \$50,000 for Babe and Buster, still abounded. In 1984, as a purple that stood out as a "the equivalent of \$1.3 million prank retirement gift, Idaho Photos courtesy Bonner County Histori- beacon of spring. The next today," said Evans. In 1915, Fish and Game transplanted 28 cal Society and Museum. morning, it was chomped to Clements set out with Buster eastern fox squirrels from Boi- the ground, bulbs scattered and Babe on a world-record se to former IFG commissioner haphazardly, a tender treat for expedition from San Francisco Pete Thompson's home in the wildlife interactions. We have the mangy, dastardly creatures to New York. It appears that Selle Valley. Seven years later, established healthier boundar- that dared to step foot in my they made it at least as far as the non-native species had ies with wild animals in recent garden. Sound the alarm, I Chicago, where Frank eventu-spread far and wide, thanks to years, thanks to ever-evolving cried. Dispatch the sentries. ally settled and began training few natural predators. Though research about animals' natural The villains will surely be back reindeer. Thompson defended the habits and habitats. We know to wreak havoc again. Equal to Clements as a squirrels, saying "I can't see how quickly non-native species Throughout our history, master of drama — both in her they do any damage," opinions introduction can disrupt an eco- we have had a tendency to cinematic work and real life differed, particularly among system. We've learned that we I'll stop channeling Snow dramatize animals, whether by — Nell Shipman kept several people whose gardens were shouldn't harness deer to our White, in the hopes that the reading fiendish motivations pet bears at Lionhead Lodge at munched on by the rodents. To-golf carts and fat bikes.



into hungry deer or putting the north end of Priest Lake, day, the "town squirrels" have As black bears come out of ground, in- costumes on our dogs. If you which she used in some of her traveled at least as far as Sagle, hibernation, we'll keep our gar- think that our obsession with film projects. The most famous though no one knows how they bage cans inside, so they forage humanizing and befriending bear-keeper of all, howev-hitched a ride across the Long for carrion instead of carry-out. they might say, natural habits. animals is a new phenomenon er, was Ms. Mary Matilda Bridge. We'll remember that the neigh- born of technology-aided bore-(Timblin) Hunt, who owned As entertaining as these borhood moose is a powerful Research courtesy of the dom, think again. In the early the Great Northern Hotel in stories may be, it is our re-and unpredictable creature and Bonner County History Muse- days of Bonner County, our Sandpoint. sponsibility to enjoy them as — for that matter — so are a

muleys will head back to high  
 instead of plaguing me with their  
 tulip-devouring mischief, or as

ancestors maintained quite the One-August day in 1910, relics of the past and not-add lot of our dogs, even the ones menagerie of wild animals when a Sandpoint Interurban to the canon of questionable wearing costumes. Idaho Fish and Game

um, local historian Dan Evans,  
 Bev Hill, the Seattle Times and

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