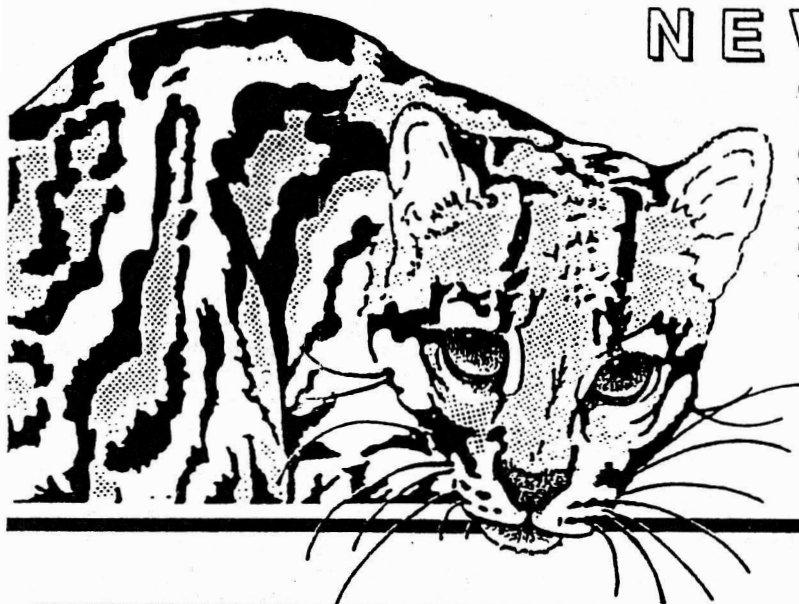
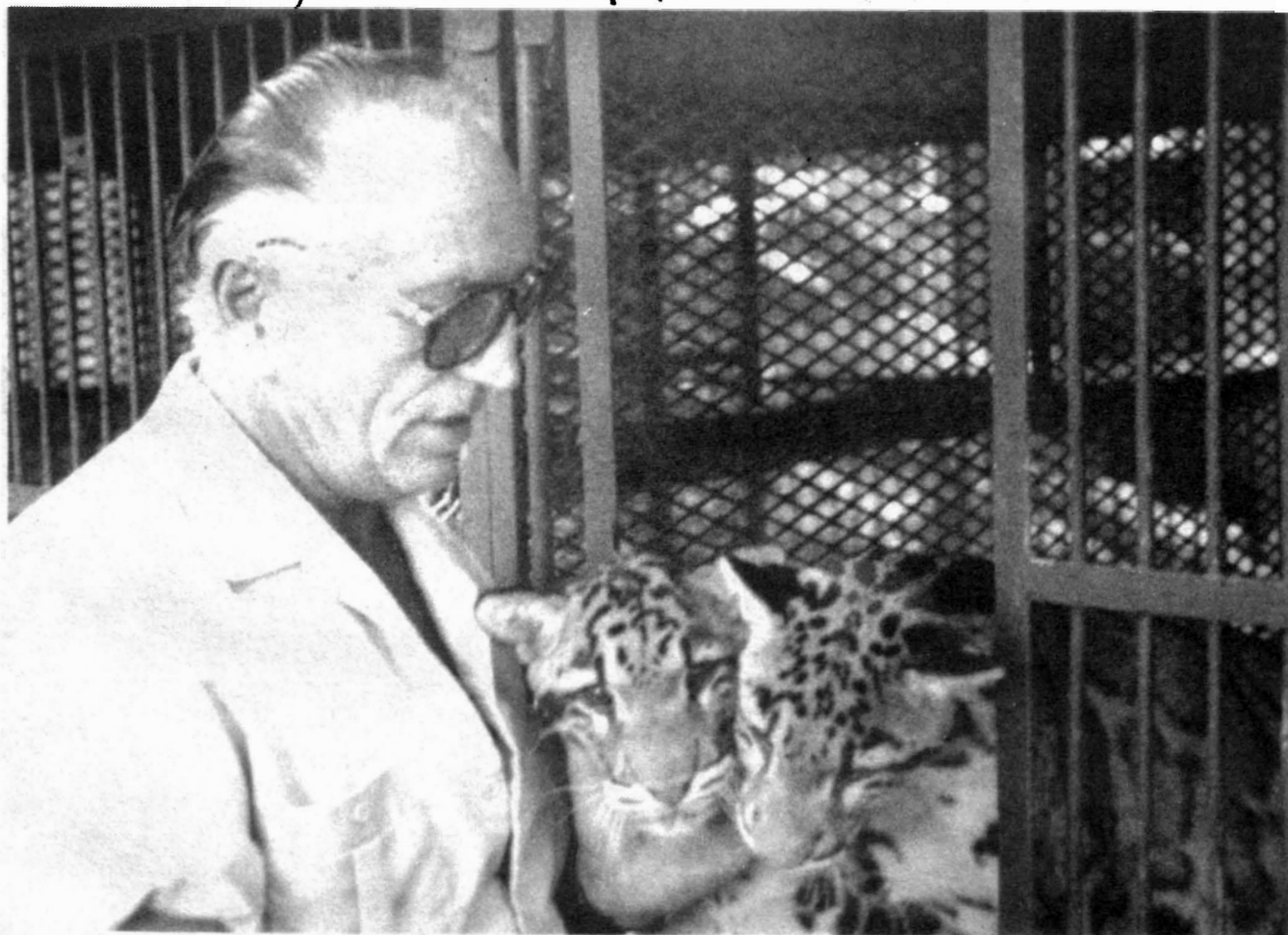


NEWSLETTER

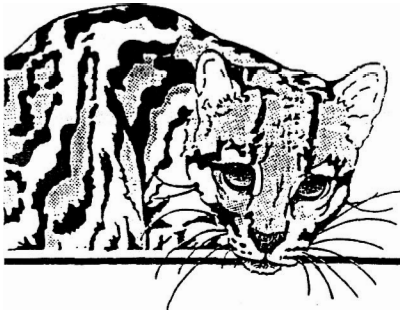


CONTENTS:

Introducing - New Board.	4
Cheetah Preservation Trust	5
Wild Revisits the West	7
How to Pill a Clouded	10
Three Florida Compounds.	11
Wildlife Detective Agency.	14
Confessions of a Lion Trainer.	15



ROBERT BAUDY with two of his yearling clouded leopards. The Culvers visited the Baudy compound along with two others on a recent trip to Florida - Bart writes about it on page 11.



L.I.O.C. Endangered Species Conservation Federation Inc.

This newsletter is published bi-monthly by the LIOC Endangered Species Conservation Federation, Inc. We are a non-profit (Federal I.D.# 58-9100616), non-commercial organization, international in membership, devoted to the welfare of exotic felines. The purpose of this newsletter is to present information about exotic feline conservation, management, and ownership to our members. The material printed in this newsletter is contributed by our members and in many cases, reflects the point of view of the person whose name appears on the article, rather than the point of view of the organization. The organization's statement of intent is contained in our by-laws; a copy of which can be requested from the Secretary/Treasurer. Reproduction of the material in this newsletter may not be made without written permission of the authors and/or copyright owner LIOC.

Since the newsletter consists of articles, photos and artwork contributed by our members, we depend on you for our material. We can only publish what you send us. Articles of all types concerning exotic felines are gladly accepted. We also have a Reader's Write column for letters or responses to articles. Please send all materials for contribution to the Newsletter editor.

Editor: Shirley Wagner, 3730 Belle Isle Lane E., Mobile, Al. 36619 (205)661-1342

Founder: Catherine Cisin, Amagansett, N.Y. 11930

Officers

President: Dr. John Perry, 6684 Central Avenue N., Fridley, MN 55432, (612)571-7918, 481-2673

Vice President: Suzi Mutascio, 2470 Eloong Dr., Mobile, AL 36605 (205) 471-5498

Secy/Treas: Lynn Culver, Rt 6, Box BC56A, Mena, Ark 71953 (501)394-5235

Life Directors

Ken Hatfield, c/o McKinnon Airport, Sandy, OR 97055 (503)668-8628

Ethel Hauser, 14622 N.E. 99th Street, Vancouver, WA 98622 (206)892-9994

Dr. John Perry, 6684 Central Ave.N., Fridley MN 55432 (612)571-7918, 481-2763

Shirley Wagner, 3730 Belle Isle Lane E., Mobile, AL 36619, (205)661-1342 eve.

Term Directors

Member Services: Barbara Wilton, P.O.Box 66040, Portland, OR 97266 (503)774-1657

Education & Conservation: Al Porges, 6 Westview Dr., Stoughton, MA 02702 (617) 344-4943

Legal Affairs: Mary Parker, P.O.Box 27334, Seattle, WA 98125 (206)363-0617

Advertising & Publicity: Katie Knight-Monteiro, 412 Matts Ln, Rt 3, Alvin Tx. 77511

(713) 331-2742

Branches

New England: Al Porges, 6 Westview Dr., Stoughton, MA 02072 (617)344-4943

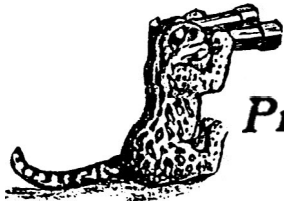
Pacific Northwest Exotics: P. O. Box 205, Gresham, OR 97030 (503)663-4673

Northwest Exotic Felines: Ethel Hauser, 14622 N.E. 99th St., Vancouver, WA (206)892-9994

Affiliates

World Pet Society: Jan Giacinto, Box 343, Tarzana, CA 91356 (818)345-5140

Animal Finder's Guide: Pat Hctor, Box 99, Prarie Creek, IN 47969 (812)898-2676



President's Perspective

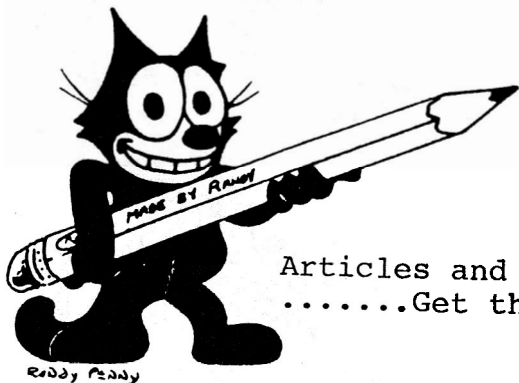
I would like to respond to comments on a previous Perspective. I want to make it clear that I'm not looking for the editor to be a paid position. I felt that it was important that people know what the effort was worth. The \$10.00 per hour figure is typical of what editors for professional trade journals are paid. Our organization has always depended on volunteers to accomplish what is needed. That is why our annual dues are one fifth of what any of my professional society dues are. (They have monthly publications too, albeit glossy with color advertisements.)

Can people in other parts of the country let me know how things are working out with the new USDA inspectors/regulations? I haven't had any problems here in the upper midwest, but don't know if that's typical or if the REAC inspectors are trying to be reasonable in general.

I'm seeing a lot of interest in Bengal Cats (Leopard Cat x Domestic hybrids) recently. Should we be soliciting contacts with Bengal Cat people? Also, I've read an article recently about some unscrupulous breeders selling broken patterned tabby's as spotted cats.

What do you think of the idea of soliciting articles by members or outside professionals (who would need to be paid probably), on specific topics? Do you think that it would be a good idea or not, and what topics should we try to get information on if we do solicit articles? Also, are there topics that should be addressed by speakers, etc., at Convention? If you have thoughts on Convention, please get them to Jeff Bellingham or Gerry Boyle quickly.

John Perry
President



Articles and photos for the Newsletter are always needed
.....Get the point?

INTRODUCING:



KATIE KNIGHT-MONTEIRO
Term Director,
Publicity & Advertising

Katie has been in direct, daily contact with captive wild cats since 1986. She began her experience with large predators by spending one year with an experienced rehabilitator, working with both hand-raised and abused bobcats, cougars, leopards, jaguars, foxes & wolves.

Since that time, Katie has hand-raised various wild cats and other smaller predators from cubs as young as one week old.

Throughout the last 5 years, she has been actively collecting as much care information and experience through sources private and public as possible. In early 1988 she resigned from her position as a Project Engineer at Rockwell International on NASA's Space Shuttle Operations contract and founded

ExotiCare. Through ExotiCare Katie teaches classes at the Exoticare facility on the care and handling of the large felines. She was formally educated at Parks College of St. Louis University and holds a baccalaureate of science in aerospace engineering with additional majors in mathematics and computer science.

LYNN CULVER - Secretary/Treasurer

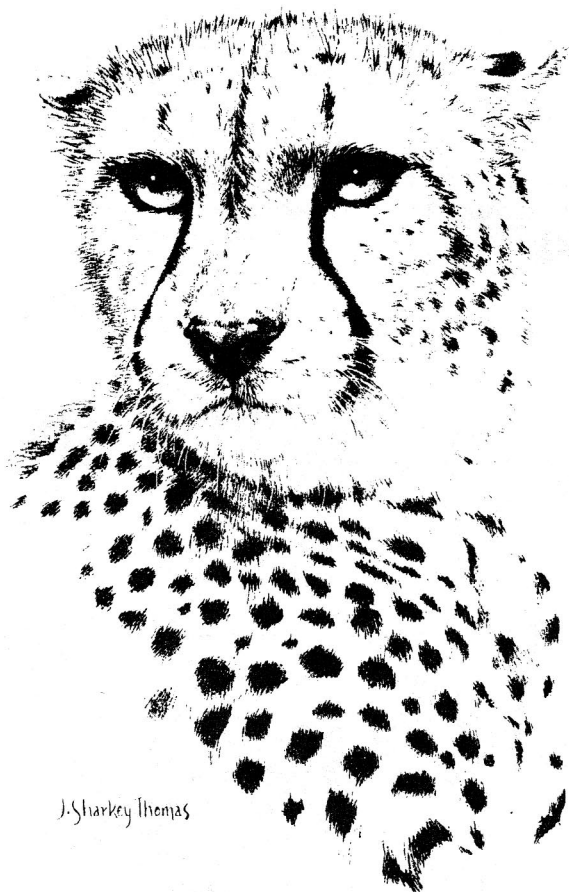
I joined LIOC four years ago. I have been involved with exotics for almost 6 years now and presently Bart and I are fulltime caretakers of seven cougars.

I have held the office of Secretary/Treasurer in the past for Southwest Exotic Animal People. I have a computer and am willing to put in the hours necessary to see that LIOC's finances and meeting reports are recorded and kept up to date.

Bart and I are deeply concerned for the many lifeforms that share this planet. We belong to many conservation organizations and it is our feeling that private individuals willing and able to care for captive wildlife play a necessary role in the safeguarding of their priceless genetic heritage.

I would like to see LIOC grow in services and members. The more we members give to LIOC, the better LIOC can service its members and felines.

CHEETAH PRESERVATION TRUST



The cheetah is facing a crisis. In captivity they have a poor record for successful reproduction. Of all the wild-caught animals in captivity, only 16% have ever produced. From 1956 until today, there have been less than 1,600 cubs born in captivity worldwide, and 31% of these cubs died before they were a month old. Of the surviving captive-born cheetah, only 9% have reproduced. Captive propagation of the cheetah is not successful enough to save this species from extinction.

And in Africa, wild cheetah suffer from a lack of suitable prey and habitat, both a result of human encroachment. Cheetah are destroyed by ranchers who feel they are a nuisance and that they kill domestic stock. They are valued dead as trophies or for fur coats. Game reserves, intended to be a safe haven for wild animals, ironically for the cheetah, have the opposite effect due to the forced competition from other predator species, most notably the lion and hyeana. These predators are opportunists and steal up to half of all cheetah kills.

Cheetah in Africa hold on in only two population strongholds: east Africa (Kenya and Tanzania) and southern Africa (Namibia, formerly called Southwest Africa). Cheetah experts Laurie Marker-Kraus and her husband Daniel will be travelling to Namibia in March of 1991 to begin a long-term management conservation plan. In the past trips to Namibia, the Kraus's developed a network of concerned people and organizations including the Rossing Foundation, the country's most important company. The Kraus's will work to protect the legitimate agricultural interests of Namibian ranchers by helping to teach new and cheetah-compatible ranching methods.

The Kraus's will begin by continuing a survey they began in October 1989, to determine cheetah distribution patterns, availability of prey and current livestock practices, feelings and experiences of the ranchers. Also planned are conservation education programs which stress the economic value of wildlife as a means of earning

CHEETAH - cont.

hard currency through the expansion of the tourist industry.

Laurie Marker-Kraus has been involved in all aspects of cheetah management from captive breeding and health care, to conservation work in Africa, to actually hand-raising a captive born cheetah Khyam and taking her to Namibia as part of a research project to teach her how to hunt in the wild. Laurie is the International Studbook keeper for the cheetah and the founding Director of the National Zoo's NOAHS center - New Opportunities for Animal Health Science, in Washington, D.C.

LIOC members interested in contributing tax deductible donations for this much needed study, or learning more about the Cheetah Preservation Fund, can write: The Cheetah Preservation Fund, c/o The International Wilderness Leadership Foundation, 211 W. Magnolia, Fort Collins, CO 80521

by; Lynn Culver



Dear Shirley,

Over the years, I have been honored to be involved with LIOC. Years ago I attended a convention in Orlando, at that time I had the opportunity to come in contact with the Douglas' ocelots. It was an experience I will never forget.

Ethel Hauser, a long-time friend, thought of me when Stan Sakowitz was having a problem with his F2 hybrid, Apollo. Apollo has outrageous bathroom habits and wasn't able to keep him in his apartment. Ethel knew I had recently lost my Safari, Geepurrs, so Stan contacted me and asked if I would take Apollo. Since I have outdoor accommodations I was very happy for the opportunity to care for him. He has adjusted nicely to the country environment. Thank you Ethel & Stan.

I would also like to thank Jean Hamil, Ethel and Lynn and Bart Culver for the tapes they sent me of their exotics. I have enjoyed them over and over again.

I am planning on going to the Las Vegas convention next year. I am looking forward to seeing old friends and meeting some new ones.

Also, since I am planning a future in Mexico, I was wondering if anyone could tell me the exotic picture there especially if there is any problem owning them?

Sincerely,
Mike Smith
32-881 Central St
Wildomar, CA 92395

The wild revisits the West

Cougars take on invading humans

By Jim Robbins
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

Montana game warden Mike Quinn was walking on the edge of thick timber near the town of Bigfork, searching for a cougar that had been stalking a horse. Suddenly he saw the big cat just a few feet away, crouched and coming at him.

Quinn backed away, drawing his pistol and talking to the animal softly, his eyes never leaving the cougar. He fired a round into the ground on either side of the tawny animal to scare it. But the cat kept coming and leaped at him.

"I dropped my handgun and fired my shotgun from the hip," Quinn, an 18-year veteran of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks said. "I shot it about a foot from the end of my gun barrel. The momentum carried the dead cat into me."

Until this year, such a tale would have been considered incredible. People have rarely seen mountain lions, let alone been attacked by one. But no one doubts Quinn's account.

The behavior of the once secretive mountain lion or cougar, has gone through a rapid and dramatic change. Throughout the west, lions have been coming down from mountain sanctuaries to the places where people live. At the same time, housing and commercial developments have expanded into what used to be cougar territory. The result has been tragedy.

In May, a 5-year old boy in Evaro, just north of Missoula, was attacked and killed as he played in the woods in his back yard. A Wyoming boy was attacked this summer by a cougar as he played on a beach in Glacier National Park. He survived. Dogs, cats, chickens, cattle and sheep have also fallen prey to the cougars.

Stories of run-ins with cougars abound. Cougars have been seen wandering four-lane highways in Fresno, California. Two teenagers riding horses in Montana saw a cougar kill their pet beagle. In and near Boulder, Colorado, 200 sightings of mountain lions have been recorded in the past two years, up from near zero in previous years.

Paul Beier, a wildlife researcher at the University of California at Berkeley who is studying mountain lion behavior and attacks in southern California, is among those who believe human expansion is at the heart of the problem. "There's been an explosion of homes, vacation homes, ski areas and the like in cougar habitat," Beier said. "there's a whole lot more people out there in cougar country!"

More attacks have been reported since 1970, when a comprehensive study of mountain lion attacks on humans was conducted in the U.S. and Canada than in the 80 years prior to that. Nine fatal attacks on humans have been reported in since 1890, five of them in the last 20 years. Of the 41 nonfatal attacks in the past century, 29 have been since 1979. Most attacks have been on children.

ATTACKS - cont.

In the last couple of years the number of cougars has also exploded a cyclical phenomenon based on the abundance of prey such as deer and elk. "There's a whole lot more cougars," Beier said. "And they're bouncing into people."

When a young cougar is old enough to be on its own, it seeks new territory. With the population of the big cats growing, the only place left to many juveniles is near or in urban areas, the specialists say.

Cougars, which can grow as large as 275 pounds, are extremely strong, with paws as thick as catcher's mitts. They are fast and agile and in one leap can cover more than 20 feet.

The attacks have caused fear. Some parents have built sheds for their children so they can be protected while waiting for school buses. Pet owners have put roofs on their kennels. The Boulder County Parks Department began a series of workshops to teach people how to live with their new wild neighbors.

"The urban adaptability of the cougar is brand new," said Michael Sanders, resource specialist with the Boulder County Parks Dept., "We're still learning how to deal with it."

Beier worries that the increase in attacks might lead to hysteria against the cats, though. "People need to remember that in one year there were 50 deaths from snake bites and 86 by lightning," he said. "Lions really don't kill that many people."

Reprinted from the Boston Globe
Contributed by Al Porges

YANKEES HALL CAUGHT WITH CUBS

New York Yankees outfielder Mel Hall faces possible fines for keeping two cougar cubs at his suburban home. But animal rights activists demanded Hall be charged with cruelty to animals and made an example of to halt the national trade in exotic pets.

Police and agents from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection confirmed Hall was arrested on a warrant. He was charged with two counts each of possessing potentially dangerous animals and importing wild animals without a permit.

Contributed by Al Porges
Reprinted from the Boston Herald

Now Available:
COUGAR DEVELOPMENT,
a 2 hour video.
Covers cougar
behavior and
growth from birth
to 29 months.
\$30.00



Lynn and Eugene Culver
Feline Researchers
U.S.D.A. Licensed

Rt. 6 Box BC 56A
Mena, Ark. 71953
501-394-5235

ANIMAL ACTIVISTS TARGET CIRCUSES

Ringling Bros. may be in for big changes. PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) has caused both units so much trouble that some claim there will be no cat acts on either unit by 1992.

Frankly, PETA can be fought, as Bobby Berosini recently proved in Las Vegas. Berosini was accused of animal cruelty of his orang-utans and was found innocent. One would think that the Ringling organization with its battery of lawyers would man a fight. Rumors have it that Clyde Beatty and Vargas will follow suite.

* * * * *

DID YOU KNOW?

The domestic cat is the only feline able to hold it's tail vertically while walking. All other feline species hold their tails horizontally or tucked between their legs while walking.

HOPE STILL EXISTS

Forestry workers have reported sighting a Manchurian tiger and cub in the wild.

The tigers were seen on the northern slope of Mount Changball in northeast Jilin province. Zoo experts estimated that only 80 such tigers were still in the region's wooded mountains in 1960. A 1987 aerial survey failed to find any trace of the tigers in China's wilds and it was thought to be extinct.

UPDATE:

All the cougars confiscated from the "shooting" farm in Oklahoma which we reported about in the Nov/Dec, 1990, issue of this Newsletter have been relocated to suitable homes. We thank each of you who inquired into this problem and offered to give them a home.

SAD NEWS

We regret to report the death of Patti Regan a few days before Christmas in an automobile accident. Damian has lost a very special partner, as Pattie shared his dreams of building a sanctuary in their new compound in Mississippi. At this times his plans for the future are uncertain.

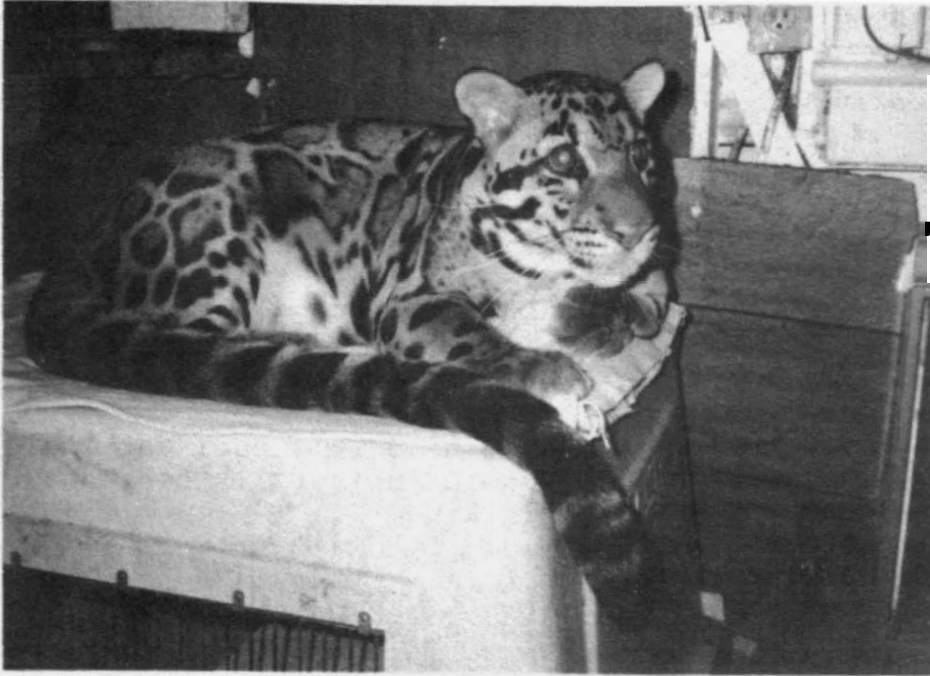
*

Our condolences also to Ethel Hauser who recently lost her brother.

*

And, of course, our thoughts and prayers are constantly with those having loved ones serving in Operation Desert Storm. We pray daily for their safe and quick return.

* * *



GEMINI

at 1½ years of age

HOW TO PILL A CLOUDED

Gemini has suffered from a persistent tapeworm problem even though he is an indoor cat with only an occasional flea. He's combed daily, especially his long, thick tail.

I finally got two "Cestex" pills at \$14.00 to worm him as the injectible "Droncet" wasn't working.

How do you get pills past those awesome canines? In sugar figs! I have a tree in the yard and he loves them. I froze some so I'd have them for future use, but Gemini opens the fridge door. One day he did so, got out the frozen figs and demolished them! I now tape the door closed.

Gemini's disposition is such that you can take meat out of his mouth - don't mess with his cottage cheese - he'll "kill" to keep it, growling, hissing and displaying those long canines! He also gets Nutrical daily, along with canned ZuPreem, egg yolk, some beef and ground turkey.

Whatta cat he is.

By BeeJay Lester

WILDLIFE DETECTIVE AGENCY - cont.

"If a family in Borneo kills one of these, it has its bills paid for 5 years. Opening a freezer door, Goddard revealed a heap of golden and bald eagles carcasses in plastic bags. The lab is the national repository for eagles killed by poachers, power lines, or anything else and gives them to Indian tribes for cultural and religious reasons.

The lab will store more than 50,000 pieces of property seized in wildlife cases. Goddard hopes to be able to loan the to states and agencies for display.

A VISIT TO THREE FLORIDA COMPOUNDS

Lynn and I field the year's first arctic express to visit my folks in Ft. Myers, Florida for Christmas, leaving our beloved cougars in the competent hands of our good friend, Alicia Smith. Lynn's incredible sagittarian luck held true to form, as we left the day before the storm began and returned the day after it ended. And we were also able to meet three prominent people in the cat world, on the spur of the moment.

Robert Baudy, whose compound is no longer open to the public, gave us a gracious reception and personal tour of his compound. The Savage Kingdom Rare Feline Breeding Center is shaded by magnificent live oaks and bedecked with flowering vines and shrubs characteristic of the vanishing 'real' Florida. We met some very friendly clouded leopards, beautiful snow leopards and Robert's very special white Siberian tigers. We heard interesting and informative stories of Robert's many "firsts" and the lessons to be learned from them. We certainly appreciate his candor and willingness to share hard won knowledge.

In Punta Gorda, we met another fascinating person, Peter O Caron, a native American, whose Octagon Wildlife Sanctuary and rehabilitation center is home to about 40 cats including cougar, lion, tiger, serval, leopard, ocelot as well as raptors, reptiles even hippos and elephants. Many of these animals were discarded after earning their owners considerable profits in show business. Peter consequently has some strong and outspoken opinions concerning irresponsible private owners as well as the hypocritical elitist experts whom he characterized as "Dr. Muckety, Buckety, Huff and Puff...etc. He really challenged us to prove that we were "real" animal people, a verbal version of the way indians used to make strangers run the gauntlet. I was proud to finally pass his test, and establish a friendship that I know will last. Peter is one of those dynamic people whose energy can motivate others to leave lucrative professions and devote themselves to a life of service, with the only reward being a place to sleep and a whole lot of self respect.



Tigress at Octagon
Wildlife Sanctuary

Compound is 40x80 with
guillotine doors and
double compartmented

VISIT - cont.

Last year Pete organized the American Indian Preservation Pow Wow, held at Lee Civic Center, in Fort Myers, Florida and attended by over 200 tribes. I have the highest regard for Peter Caron's dedication and I share his hopes that a revival of Indian culture can ameliorate the strange proclivity for destruction and death that is the inevitable result of an unremittingly competitive society freed of all natural control, but having no self control.

Octagon is financed entirely by donations which go immediately to the care and feeding of the animals who's only alternative is death. I sincerely hope that some of those donations will come from LIOC members, now that you know the address which is: 41660 Horseshoe Road, Punta Gorda, FL 33955.

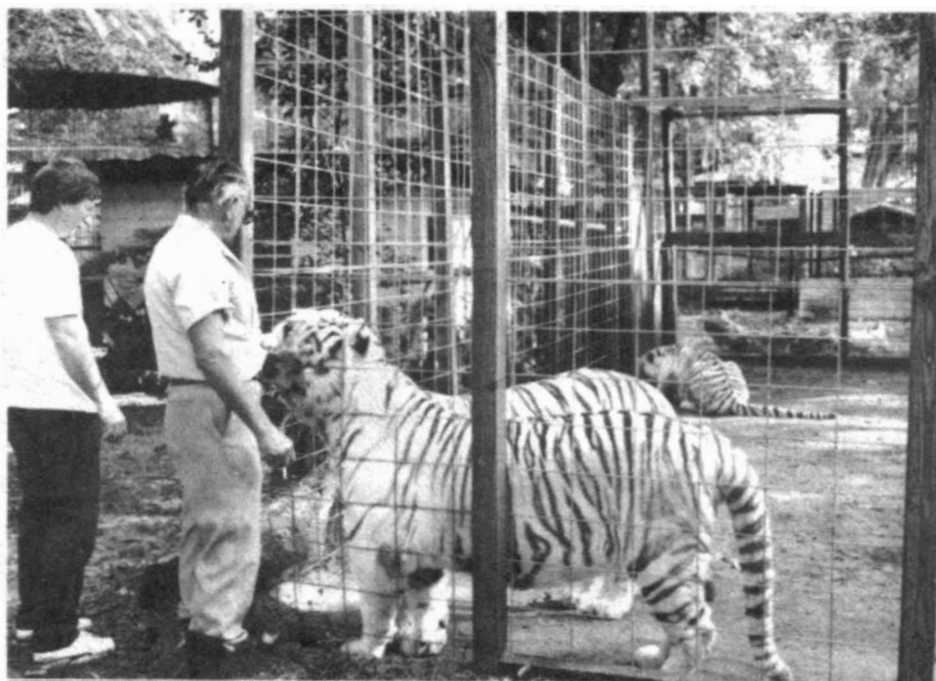
Just before we left, Peter suggested that the most knowledgeable expert on cougars is his friend, Frank Weed in Immokalee, near the Everglades. With only one day left in Florida, Lynn got on the phone and presto!, we had an appointment to visit Frank Weed the day after Christmas. Frank met us at the entrance of his jungle hideaway, and the first thing he said was "you know we're all crazy, don't you?" To which I replied "thank you very much" Frank and his charming wife, Ellen took us into their home like old friends. We met a number of cougars, black and spotted leopards, all with friendly dispositions. Frank showed us his setup to film cats in a natural outdoor setting, a privilege for which photographers paid handsome sums. **Frank showed us many magazine covers featuring his cats,** some of whom we had just met. Our discussion centered on the Florida panther situation, and Frank loaded us up with a large stack of information which will take awhile to digest. He and Robert Baudy are old friends and recognized experts on *Felis concolor coryi*, and between them represent the dissenting viewpoint on the Florida Game & Fish Commission's Florida Panther Recovery Program.

Perhaps the most remarkable thing we learned from Frank is that he is 78 years old and has more than 60 years experience with exotics. You would not believe it to look at him. For that matter, you wouldn't believe that Peter Caron has 35 years experience, or that Robert Baudy is 67 years young. These people do not look or act their age, and I sure hope that being around exotic felines has something to do with it. But it makes me wonder to whom will they pass the torch?

Who will be the pioneers of tomorrow? Each of these gentlemen, in their own way, lamented the future, saying that the things they did can no longer be done. Robert Baudy spoke of endless rules and regulations, of impossible insurance costs. Frank Weed says its a matter of time before the only animal living in Florida is homo sapiens. Peter says that the ability to care for animals is a talent that cannot be taught or conferred by a degree, yet is monopolized by degreed professionals. **We talked of the devastating results of the well intentioned but poorly implemented Endangered Species Act that has effectively torpedoed Noah's Ark.**

We are all being pressured to conform to the popular wisdom that the only way to love them is to leave them to die by the side of the road. Maybe we are crazy to seek intimate contact with nature on its own terms in the midst of a society committed to it's conquest and exploitation. Maybe we are crazy for carrying our love of nature to the extreme of giving sanctuary to its members, even while the vast majority of our kind loot and pillage their last retreats. But the more of these crazy people I meet, the more I feel I have found my lost tribe. There is a spring in their step, a fire in their eyes that burns nowhere else. It is the dignity, power, beauty and love of the animals themselves that keeps that fire from going out, that makes us say against all odds, "I will carry the torch."

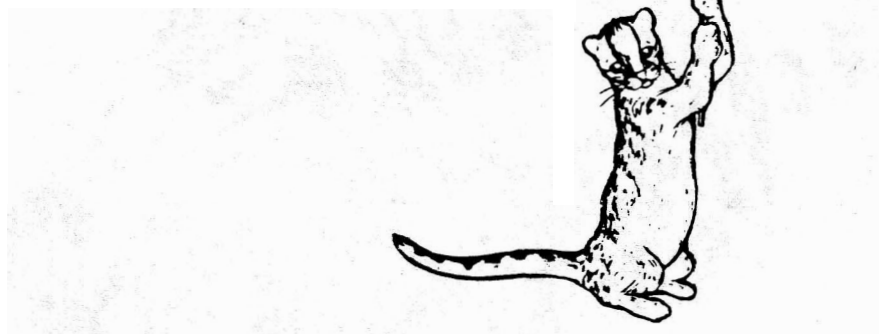
Bart Culver



Bart and Robert Baudy with his yearling, white Siberian tigers. These are Robert's own creation, a result of decades of selective breeding. They're big now, but they're NOT done growing!

THERE'S AN EASIER WAY

Contact Katie Knight-Monteiro for rates in LIOC's Newsletter (see page 2) - ads for services and products accepted, but only members may advertise cats for sale.



WILDLIFE DETECTIVE AGENCY

(AP) The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's new forensic's lab will be the first in the world to offer agents on the trail of ivory smugglers the kind of scientific sleuthing that police can call on in a murder case.

"We function very much like the FBI crime lab" said Kenneth W. Goddard, Director of the National Fish & Wildlife Forensics Laboratory. "We match a suspect, victim and crime scene together. The only difference is our victim is an animal." That makes the job tougher.

"We can't identify 90 percent of what we get." said Goddard. "Wildlife forensics is a brand new field."

"It wasn't until the endangered species act was modified to make these things felonies that it became worthwhile (for a defendant) to hire a lawyer, let alone a scientific expert," Goddard added. "I was trying to get guys to admit to what they had done and use that for prosecution."

While the lab has fingerprints and ballistics sections, most of its work is deciding if an endangered species was the source of the blood, meat, ivory, leather, suntan oil, shell, powder or feather that the agents gathered as evidence.

While there are techniques to tell whether a bloodstain came from a person or an animal, Wayne Ferguson, the chief serologist, is working on ways to extract DNA, the genetically coded material found in cells, to trace blood and tissue to an individual animal.

"I'm not sure if an animal is killed in the woods and hung in a tree for a long time, as they often are, whether DNA is maintained or whether it becomes denatured (broken down)," Ferguson said.

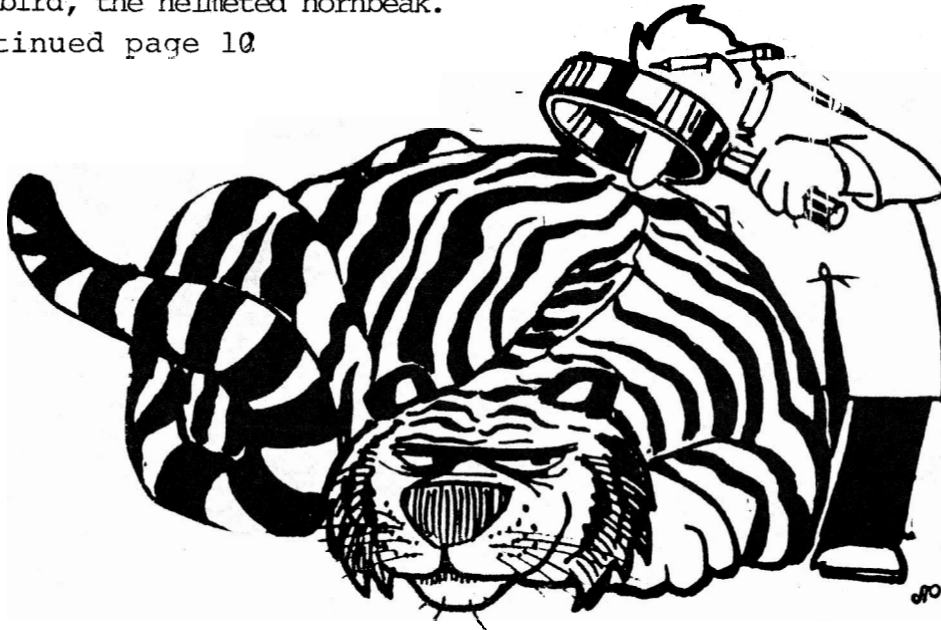
He's sending out tissue samples from a cougar stored in the lab freezer to see if other labs can identify the sex and species.

Looking at the dead cougar, Goddard remarked, "I used to dig up bodies in the desert, but there is far more emotionalism in this work than I ever found in police work. I find it very strange and I'm not sure I understand it.

Others are working on ways to distinguish Asian from African ivory. Though both were banned from the U.S. trade restrictions vary in countries that may call on the lab for help.

The temptation to deal in endangered species is great, particularly in Third World countries. A carved box for cocaine turned out to be hundreds of times more valuable than its contents, because it came from the carapace of an extremely rare bird, the helmeted hornbeak.

-continued page 10



Confessions of a Lion Trainer

By Kevin T. Patton

The whip and the chair, considered by many to be standard equipment of big cat trainers, have come to represent the cruelty and abuse that many believe are hallmarks of the animal training profession. When I first became an apprentice cat trainer, I had no intention of publicly exposing the profession for what it is. But my love of truth - and my love of cats - has prompted me to share what I have learned about how cats are trained for circus performances, what it does to them and what it does to the people who do the training.

After graduating from a university with a degree in biology and a certificate in education, and working concurrently for five years as a zookeeper at one of the nation's most prestigious zoos, I became apprenticed to a trainer of big cats. My new position was ideal; I worked with a trainer who had studied under some of the masters of the profession. I was put in total charge of the cats' care and I came at time when a whole new group of animals was being trained to join the act. It was a mixed act, composed of different cat species performing together in the same arena (the common term for a performance cage), so the opportunity to work with almost all the big cat species was mine. It was not long before I became immersed in the standard methods of modern circus training.

The first thing I learned was how to use a whip. Although many circus animal trainers use whips, all the trainers I know only use a whip in the very last stage of training. The whip merely functions as an extension of the trainer's arms, a necessity when working in an arena that is 45 feet in diameter. One simply cannot prompt a cat to stay on its seat or to move across a span of 20 or more feet without some way of indicating to the cat that the cue is addressed to it. The whip is like a walkie-talkie, popping the message "Yes. I mean you!" During early training, no other cats are in the cage, so the trainer can work close to the student cat and does not need a whip.

The pop of the whip is not harmful to the cat. In fact, a pop indicates that the tip of the whip has not made contact with anything, but is speeding through the air fast enough to cause a small sonic boom.



Confessions - cont.

The bad connotation of whip-cracking originated with some of the American cat trainers of the 1930's and '40s who adopted the "fighting style" presentation of performing lions and tigers. The goal of the fighting act was to make the audience believe that the trainer was risking certain death by braving a cage full of jungle killers, and that he or she deserved much applause for being able to exit the arena alive (regardless of the quality of the tricks presented). To this end, the trainer usually donned a safari-type outfit and, brandishing a shiny pistol with blanks, proceeded to make a lot of noise and hoopla to underscore the daring of his feats of bravado. The sound and ominous appearance of the huge cowboy-style bullwhip that commonly was used lent the necessary air of excitement to the fighting act style.

The fighting act gave us another image of big cat training that still persists: a chair must be used to defend oneself from the ripping claws and awesome gape of the ferocious beast. While chairs are rarely used in performances today, they were employed in the fighting acts to provoke the cat into a ferocious stance.

If you've ever watched a fighting act, you've seen that the cat with the chair in its face would wildly attack the brave trainer, while the other cats would sit calmly on their stools. By using a technique called "bouncing" a fake attack can be elicited from almost any animal. Bouncing is quite simple: invade the space of an animal and it will come after the aggressor. The reason why the other cats were relatively calm while their comrade was "attacking" was simply because they weren't being bounced at the time.

If someone waved the legs of a chair in my face, I certainly would slap it away, and would get mighty grumpy if that person persisted. I hardly consider myself a fearsome killer, but I might appear to be at the moment. Bouncing, then, was a way to induce the attack necessary to prove the daring of the trainer. The technique can be used with a broom, an umbrella, or even a stick of cotton candy. The idea of using a chair just happened to catch on before anyone thought of using anything else.

While chairs are not longer used for bouncing performances, they are used frequently in training - for sitting. The earliest phases of training a cat involve just being with the cat. The trainer and cat must learn to read each other, trust each other and work together. Often, the trainer accomplishes this by sitting on a chair outside the cat's cage while both he and the cat vocalize, and possibly touch, each other. Later, the trainer progresses to standing in the arena with the cat.

The fighting act is seldom seen today, having given way to the more civilized European style of presentation that was first made popular in this country by such legends as Alfred Court, Charly Baumann and Gunther Gebel-Williams. The European approach emphasizes the ability of the animal rather than the bravado of the trainer. The trainer of today would much rather the audience leave with a memory of what the cats did rather than what the trainer did.

UNDERSTANDING NATURAL BEHAVIOR

While the fighting acts certainly relied upon natural behaviors of big cats, the newer type act expands on that idea. Tigers, for

instance, are natural sitters and standers. When offered a tidbit of meat or an intriguing toy, they will naturally rise to a sit-up or even a full standing position as they swat their target. By using reinforcement methods, they can be taught to perform the behavior on command.

All trainers have their predilections toward certain types of tricks. Many let young cats have the run of the arena and watch for play behavior that can be turned into one or more tricks. I know of one lion that nearly taught itself to walk on top of a rolling barrel during playtime.

Each species of cat can do certain types of tricks better than other species. The ability to climb and jump is very important for wild leopards, so it is no wonder they excell at circus feats that require such skills. Pumas also do well at acrobatics, because their natural environment often calls for them to climb rock ledges, traverse fallen logs and perform other activities that involve good balance.

Lions are the only cats to form social groups in nature. They not only are more likely candidates for group tricks, but they also may socialize with the trainer allowing "close work" for such tricks as play wrestling with a cat. This social behavior can be a hazard however, when love triangles form. I certainly don't want a jealous lion behind me when I'm training or performing with the lioness in his life.

Tigers, while less sociable, are more approachable than pumas or leopards. Because of the tiger's more even temperment, its status as a good all-round athlete and its impressive appearance, it is the out and out favorite among cat trainers today. My own personal favorite is the tiger.

The easiest wild cat to train, and one that is not often found in circus acts is the cheetah. It is unlike the other wild cats, both physically (its claws don't retract) and behaviorally. Because cheetahs are relatively easy to handle, for thousands of years they have been trained in Africa and parts of the Middle East for sport hunting. The lion is often given credit for being the first wild cat to be trained for performance, but the cheetah was the first big cat to be trained by humans.

The smaller species, such as the ocelot, bobcat and margay, have been trained to perform in sidewalk circuses and small European shows but are more often seen in movies and television. All the smaller cats are just as agile and intelligent as their larger cousins, but are not easily seen in a circus ring or on a large stage. One of my favorite pupils was a bobcat named Apache that I trained to do some simple natural behaviors for a zoo's education programs. He would have been a natural in the performance ring, except he would have gotten lost in the sawdust.

OPERANT CONDITIONING

Operant conditioning, first articulated well by psychologist B.F. Skinner, is a method of self-teaching. The learner "operates" on its environment to produce desired result. In nature, successful

successful hunting behaviors are rewarded with the desired result - the prey. Unsuccessful behaviors are simply not rewarded and therefore are extinguished.

In the circus, the trainer formulates a behavior, or chain of behaviors, that the animal is capable of exhibiting, and then sets it as the goal, just as capturing prey would be a goal for a wild cat. By rewarding successively correct approximations of the goal, the trainer actually guides the cat to learn on its own. What is the reward? Raw meat is generally used as a reward for the carnivorous cats, administered as a small tidbit on the end of a stick to avoid accidental bites and to extend the range of the trainer's arm. The meat stick eventually is used without meat, once the cat has the behavior down pat. The reward is not removed at this point, just postponed until after the performance, the meat stick being a sort of promise of the reward to come. The cues given with a stick or whip stock during a circus show are the same motions made previously with the meat stick, although now much less exaggerated.

Another reward often used by the modern big cat trainer is that of vocal praise (reassuring tones of voice) and touch (big cats appreciate stroking as much or more than their domestic cousins). Of course, this reward can be given on the spot, and has the added benefit of reinforcing the rapport between human and beast.

While I was learning how big cats are trained, I also was learning the art of feline self-defense. The big cats are, of course, powerfully equipped to defend themselves. The meat-shearing teeth and eviscerating claws are not there for attacking humans or even primarily for defense. They are there to capture, kill and process items of prey. Unless a human gives the behavioral signs of a prey animal, such as running away, there is little danger that the cat will attack. The only reason a cat will attack a trainer (other than the predator/prey response) is because it senses a threat. The challenge then, for the trainer, is not to appear as either potential prey or as a threat.

The ability not to appear as prey is partly learned, partly knack. Lack of this ability in many people is why lion taming is not one of the most popular career choices. On the other hand, an overabundance of this ability in some people results in overconfidence and may lead to tragic circumstances.

The ability to avoid threatening a cat to the point of attack is very difficult. Some big cats sense that the slightest movement on the part of a trainer is a threat. This is sound evidence of the physical abuse of cats by the trainer not only would mean almost certain death (do you know anyone who could take on a big cat and win?), it also means that nothing remotely resembling a performance can be achieved with even slight undue provocation.

Some may counter that the cats can't defend themselves against abuse because they've been declawed or that their canine teeth have been filed. The overwhelming majority of circus cats have all their original equipment (a few that are trained to jump into their trainer's arms from a distance are declawed for obvious reasons.) But that fact alone does not answer the accusation. Even a declawed and canine-less tiger or lion is more than a match for the most powerful human opponent.

The positive effects of circus training and performance on lions and tigers is tremendous. Rather than facing a life of boredom and inactivity in a zoo or animal park, the circus cat can look forward to a life of changing environments, regular exercise and - perhaps more importantly - psychological stimulation. The cats I have worked with seemed to look forward to their practice and performance sessions. Like their counterparts in the wild, they sleep most of the time (which is, by the way, just as easily done in a small cage as in the middle of an African plain). And, like their wild cousins are roused into mental and physical activity on a regular basis. Because we must keep some specimens of wild animals in captivity so as not to lose their species forever, the circus life is the closest approximation of nature that I know of. Circus cats are prolific breeders, vigorous workers and live longer lives than they would in the wild.

What effects do circus animals have on people? For trainers who live with their charges, the interaction between man and animal assumes the mystical form that traditionally has compelled humankind to adopt pets. My life, and the lives of my colleagues, have been indescribably enriched by our contact with the big cats. There is nothing like the thrill of an affectionate hug from a full-grown lion or the friendly puff of a tiger greeting, or the purring of a panther as it rubs against one's legs.

No less thrilling are the effects of the circus-cat/circus-goer relationship. Cheetah researcher Randall Eaton once wrote that no one can appreciate a wild animal species and develop a desire to preserve it without personal contact with a living member of that species. Where better to experience the power, the agility, the intelligence and the beauty of the big cats than the only surviving place for performing groups of wild animals - the circus.

Big cat trainers are far removed from the image often promulgated by misinformed, albeit well-intentioned, animal activists. Trainers, like cat fanciers, find the rewards of knowing cats so compelling that they devote themselves to learning to live among them. The whip and the chair are not proof of violence and abuse; rather they are signs of communication. The world of the lion tamer involves a complex interaction between wild cats and humans who understand them, and invites all who watch to partake of the true beauty of nature.

* * *

Kevin T. Patton is the Chairman of the Division of Math and Science at St. Mary's College, and is working on his Ph.D. in zoo biology. He also finds time to carry out research in the problems of animals in captivity and still occasionally takes on brief wild animal training assignments.

Reprinted from Cat Fancy.





Our new Secretary/Treasurer, Lynn Culver with Tara and her cubs.
more on page 4