

Volume 48, Issue 4

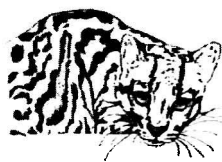
July/August 2004



Feline Conservation Federation



Feline Conservation Federation



This newsletter is published bi-monthly by the LIOC Endangered Species Conservation Federation, Inc. d/b/a/ as the Feline Conservation Federation. We are a non-profit (Federal ID# 59-2048618) noncommercial organization with international 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 reflects the point of view of the author but does not necessarily represent the point of view of the organization. FCF Statement of Intent

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Cover: Majestic white lions pose for FCF attendees at Siegfried and Roy's Secret Garden at the Mirage Hotel



Fred Boyajian's caracal Buckwheat was the center of attention at the hospitality suite during convention 2004.

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We extend special thanks to all our convention reporters; Jessie Clark-White, Michele Hoffman, Loreon Vigne, Ralph Renna, Tim Stoffel, Donna Coullhan, and to our convention presenters, Jona Jordan and Joe Maynard for their papers, and Phil Parker for use of his many convention photos. Thanks also to article contributors Rosa Jordan, Pat Webb and CeCe Dunne and also to Tom Harvey and Tim Stark for sharing photos of their facilities.

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2004 Lotty Awarded to Tracy Wilson

LIOC was nine years old when the May issue of the club newsletter announced Gene Brill as the official Lotty candidate. Members were asked "to signify their approval or make other suggestions known and start thinking about next year's nominee."

It was at the 1966 Long Island Ocelot Club's annual picnic in Amagansett New York during the weekend of September 10 and 11 that founder Catherine Cisin made the club's first presentation of the Lotty award to LIOC secretary Gene Brill.

Catherine is quoted in the 1966 Sept/Oct newsletter to say, "like all things in LIOC, the Lotty, which you all (including Gene herself) will shortly see for the first time -- was a work of love and devotion to the club. It is intrinsically greater, being the work of one of us, Brenda Duprey of Lenox Mass, a sculptress."

The first Lotty was a plaster cast with bronze patina molded in the shape of Brenda's ocelot Zapata. The inscription read "Lotty" LIOC's 1966 Award.

For several years the person who received the most nominations was awarded the club's Lotty and Catherine asked the members to refrain from choosing her. However in 1972, at the first ever Convention of LIOC held in Dallas, Texas the members could resist no more and Catherine was presented what she said called "the L.I.O.C. top award".

Shirley Wagner wrote in her May/June 1999 memorial to Catherine Cisin, "Catherine always admonished us not to refer to Lotty recipients as winners. You didn't win a Lotty, it was not a prize. It was the Club's way of acknowledging the service of those motivated solely by the desire to help the cats."

Originally a Lotty recipient was chosen by the entire membership of the Long Island Ocelot Club, however the selection process changed into what is still followed today. Only those previously so honored nominate and vote, making this award all that much more cherished.

Since the inception of the Lotty award, Brenda Duprey had been the craftsman responsible for the Lotty statue. At the 1978 annual LIOC convention board members felt that a little more then

"thank you" was in order and Life Director Roger Harmon presented Brenda a plaque in appreciation.

The twenty-one year old tradition was formalized by the LIOC board of directors when they approved the Lotty by-laws in 1987 and 1988, insuring the organization's highest award continue forever. This approval came from a distinguished lot, most everyone serving on the board were Lotty recipients including Shirley Wagner, Ken Hatfield, Ethel Hauser, Roger Harmon, Karen Jusseaume, Catherine Cisin, Carin Carmichael and Suzi Mutascio.

Previous Lotty recipients voted this year's honor to FCF's Conservation and Education Director Tracy Wilson. Last year's recipient, president George Stowers presented Tracy with the coveted ocelot statue. George told the convention attendees that Tracy has excelled in her position. George was so proud of the work Tracy had done to promote the FCF husbandry course. For the past three years and average of four classes per year have been held around the country, helping many learn about responsible husbandry. Tracy has also put countless hours into developing FCF's first ever in-situ conservation partnership with the FCF adoption of the Playa de Oro Reserve in Ecuador. Her dedication to this project has helped the stewards of this unique 25,000-acre jungle reserve protect the native species through ecotourism. She has also forged a working relationship with Jim Sanderson gaining FCF cameras for a camera trapping project, with long term goals to someday radio collar and study the native felines.



George Stowers presents the Lotty to Tracy Wilson. photo by Phil Parker

The Lotty tradition continues with thanks from Tracy Wilson

I would like to thank the past Lotty recipients of bestowing this great honor upon me. I was truly surprised when George Stowers announced that I was this year's Lotty recipient. I certainly did not expect it, so I was a bit shocked as the Lotty was handed to me. It is especially meaningful to me personally to be recognized for dedication to felines and the organization this particular year because I have faced several difficult personal challenges this year, and despite of those difficulties I have worked very hard to maintain my commitment to FCF and the cats. It was also a honor for George to be the person who presented the Lotty to me, as I can blame George for my start in this organization. It was George who pulled me, a new member, from the first husbandry course about 5 or 6 years ago and asked me to become an instructor. It was George who later nominated me to run for the Director of Education & Conservation and he has always been supportive of my ideas and projects since then, and has always offered his advise and guidance to me. So I owe a big thank you to George for helping me get to where I am today.

This Lotty statue, to me personally, symbolizes how the cats have saved my life. About 14 years ago, I was a victim of a very violent crime and nearly lost my life. As a result of that experience, I withdrew from my friends and family into a deep depression, and maintained a deep fear and distrust of people. The experience certainly crippled my social life, as I was unable to go anywhere alone and experienced panic attacks when I did go out in public. A couple of years later, in more of an effort to continue to withdraw from people, I began volunteering at a big cat facility. I have always been an animal person, surrounded by all kinds of animals my entire life, so it was only natural to be drawn to animals during times of emotional difficulties. I lived for my weekends with the cats, and didn't really care about much else.

I finally started to feel alive inside again. My only desire was to just spend time with these wonderful awesome creatures who I connected very deeply with. I ran to the cats to hide and get away from people. Instead, over the years, the cats have brought me back to people. They have taught me to trust again. The cats have brought wonderful people into my life that have shown me that there are caring trusting people out there.

Working with the cats made me do things that gradually forced me out of my protective shell. First, I had to learn to be an animal handler at public events. I had to deal with the public more and more. Many times I froze up in front of people, but it never failed for a tiger cub to bring me back

to attention and forget my personal fears and carry on. Eventually, I had my own cats and was doing my own educational programs for children. It was easy to work with children, as they are easier to trust and certainly not as scary to talk to, and much more forgiving if you make mistakes during your presentation. Later on, when George approached me about becoming an instructor for the husbandry course, you will never know what a challenge it was for me to get up in front of a room of strangers to speak. But by then, my passion for the cats and their well being had surpassed my fear and distrust of people.

I wanted to do something important to help cats be better cared for, and this was a wonderful opportunity that I could not pass up—even if the thought of speaking in front of strangers made me nauseous. Then I was encouraged to run for office on the FCF board, and being on the board certainly has presented me with a lot of times that I had to speak in front of a room of people, to travel to convention to be with people, to travel to teach husbandry courses and meet many more new people. I have had to speak at public venues to fight ban laws to be able to keep my cats or help others keep theirs. I have been put into all kinds of situations with people, on behalf of cats, that would have made me hide under my bed for weeks at a time 13 years ago. 13 years ago I would not even go to the grocery store alone. Now I have traveled to South America alone and into the jungle to help people I don't even know to save a habitat for cats. It is still very difficult for me to stand before an audience and do a presentation, but I remember a few years ago I could not even SIT in a room full of people as a member of the audience, much less stand before the room. So while I have plenty of room to improve as a speaker, I know in my heart I have already come a long way just by standing there. I am absolutely flabbergasted to this day at how much I have overcome, all at the hands of the cats. I haven't done these things because I wanted to, I did it because the cats NEEDED me to.

I never intended to set out and do the specific cat projects that I have done so far, in fact, I never even dreamed it, but I just followed my heart when an opportunity has come up to help cats and I made it happen despite whatever difficulties may have presented themselves. FCF has been and still is a wonderful vehicle in which to help cats and their owners, and I am very proud to have served FCF and the projects I have been involved in with FCF. My cats have taught me so much, they have healed me so much, and instilled so much passion in me, that my heart tells me to take advantage of every opportunity to do something to give back to the cats what they have given me..which is my life. How do you ever repay that kind of debt? Even this past year, which has had it's share of challenges for me, my cats have kept me going and never let my spirits get down. They are always there for me, helping me overcome whatever difficulties might come my way. I have come to accept that my soul is forever entwined with these awesome creatures, and I pledge that I will always be there for the cats, as they have always been there for me.

Tracy Wilson

Siegfried and Roy's Secret Gardens – It's no secret why we all loved that place!

It was an amazing experience being both my first time to visit the Siegfried and Roy Secret Garden and getting to meet all the wonderful members of the FCF family. I don't know what I enjoyed more. However, the animals housed at the S&R Secret Garden are something special to behold.

We arrived outside the entrance on a true Las Vegas scorching summer day. It was beyond hot, but armed with water bottles and cameras we all ventured forth into what we knew would be a special memory to have forever.

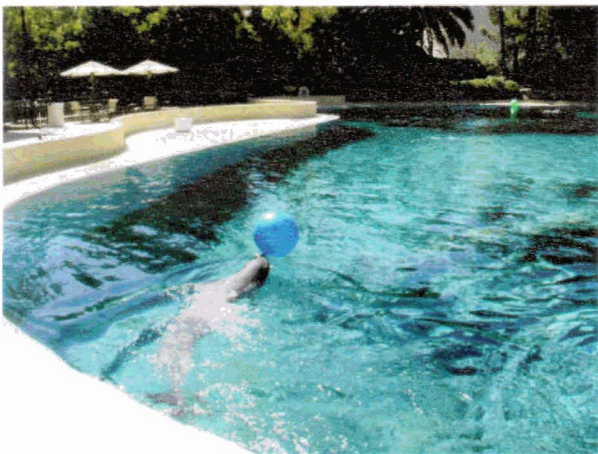


The first stop was the dolphins, they do not train their dolphins to perform tricks, they teach them very simple behaviors so that they can work with and learn from these intelligent mammals. We were told that this is a research

Siegfried, Roy & tiger statue photo by Phil Parker

facility and the dolphins were as curious about us as we were about them.

We were allowed to sit on the edge of the largest swimming tank and the dolphins came right up to the edge and "smiled" for all of us taking pictures. They flirted and played and charmed everyone there.



Off to the exotic cats, the one elephant, and of course, need I forget, the turkey that lived with the elephant. I know, but we can't always pick our friends!

The three white lions were beyond magnificent, what I presumed to be the Alpha of the three sat like Mufasa (from the Lion King) on Pride Rock overlooking his subjects. His two companions

on each side of the large rock he laid upon keeping their king safe. We commented on how gorgeous their manes were and we were told by the attendant that every day before they came on display they were all brushed and fluffed. Talk about a cool job! It was hard to walk away from these three and I can honestly say I have never been so emotionally moved and awestruck by the power, beauty and intelligence of a big cat before.

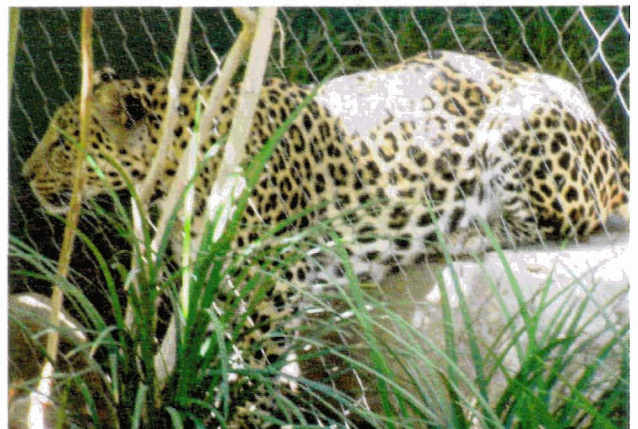


dolphin pool and white lions photo by Mindy Stinner

Next we ventured onto the two white tigers, they were beautiful, but sleeping. We watched for a few moments, but I commented to my companion that I could watch cats sleeping at home!

Then we saw the elephant, she is a Thai Ceremonial Elephant and her companion as mentioned before is a turkey, I would watch it if I was him he's across from the lions! The elephant was playing with her two large balls strung from trees she was enjoying them immensely and seemed to love the fact we were watching her play.

We walked through this tropical garden setting, with misters going full force and lots of shade and little benches to sit upon. It was beautiful and the heat of the day seemed to be forgotten as everyone whispered about the beauty of the place and how happy and well kept all the animals were.



leopard photo by Loreon Vigne

Then we spotted (no pun intended) the leopards hiding among the foliage in their enclosure. One was a sleep but the other was wide-awake and prowling around. Then, we had to laugh as the white tiger in the enclosure next to the leopards came and sat by the edge of his fence just in sight of the



leopard, enough to just really bother him. The leopard went to the edge closest to the tiger and they had a staredown contest—it was like being at home with my cats. I'm not sure who won, but the leopard casually drank some water and then seeming satisfied with himself he climbed a tree and draped himself majestically over a large branch.

One last stop was the female white tiger enclosure. One was sleeping (can't say as I blame her, I myself was ready for a nap).



The other had a large piece of sod and was dragging it around in the water, trying to drown her prey. We all laughed at her antics. She was so serious about this piece of sod that she would stick her entire head under the water and come up with it in her mouth, drag it to the other end of the pool and shake it about as if trying to kill it.

It was an amazing day followed by an incredible lunch at the MGM's Tropical Forest Café. I learned so much about the exotic cats (my specialty being the domestics), and everyone I met was so friendly and helpful I felt like part of the family right away. I thanked my friend Lynne Kawaminami for bringing me and introducing me to a group of people I hope to get to know better!

Michele Hoffman Los Angeles, California



Top left: Mitch Kalmanson talks with Harold Epperson and Bob Turner under the foliage shade of the Secret Gardens.

Bottom left: George Stowers, Reva Anderson, Tim Stoffel and Sara Schimke view the jungle inhabitants.

Top right: Entrance to the Secret Gardens

Middle right: One of the beautiful white male lions.

Bottom right: Thai Ceremonial elephant in her play yard.

all photos this page compliments Phil Parker

The Magic of Rick Thomas

By Jessi Clark-White

For many of us, the highlight of this year's convention was Rick Thomas. Rick's show was a synergistic blend of magic, dance, humor, and most importantly, TIGERS! The production served as a perfect introduction to the charismatic entertainer, who quickly won members over with his enjoyable and inspiring performance, engaging personality, and obvious dedication to his tigers.

One of my favorite illusions involved the problem raised when Rick is informed that flying his tigers to Japan will cost an enormous sum. He walks his full-grown tiger Morpheus into a transport crate labeled "Wild Animal" and slaps on additional placard reading "Extremely." Rick proceeds to fold the crate down to a fraction of its original size and replace the sign. When he's done, the shrunken crate reads "Extremely Cute Animal." The magician opens the door to the "Extremely Cute Animal" cage and produces an adorable white tiger cub. The cub was completely at ease on stage and refused to leave with the assistant handler, but readily complied with Rick's coaxing and trotted off at his side.

For those who didn't get the opportunity to watch Rick's show, he has a DVD for sale on his web site www.rickthomas.com that shows many of his illusions as well as some of his television appearances and other interesting material.

The only thing I found initially disappointing was the minimal time the tigers actually spent on stage. However, after hearing Rick speak about the reasons he utilizes the tigers less than he could, I emerged with a profound respect for his having made a conscious decision to avoid exploiting his cats, and not making them the basis of his show and his success. Rick sets an example that anyone who performs with animals would do well to follow.

Rick was the first speaker at this year's convention, and I think it's fair to say he stole the show. When he realized he had exceeded his scheduled time, we didn't let him even think of stopping!

Without a doubt the most touching moment of the convention was hearing Rick choke up as he described meeting the first tiger he bought for his show. Recounting the impact of being introduced to the magnificent 2-year-old tiger brought tears to his eyes, causing many of us to mist up in turn as we recalled the life-changing impact of our own first encounters with wild cats. There is truly no way to describe to an "outsider" the instant mark they can make on our souls and in our hearts, and at that moment I believe Rick earned the love and respect of everyone in the room.

Rick's concern for the comfort and well-being for his tigers led him to design a state-of-the-art custom transport trailer. It incorporates innovations such as sliding doors cage doors incorporating stoppers that prevent tails from getting slammed when a door needs to be closed quickly, horizontal bars to prevent the bruising and abrasion that vertical bars can cause, and of course air conditioning throughout. When it's time for

them to enter the theatre, Rick backs the trailer up to the air-conditioned backstage area so that the tigers aren't exposed to the temperature shock of moving from their cool trailer to the roasting heat of a Las Vegas summer. At home the tigers, all raised in Rick's house, enjoy such luxuries as \$250,000 swimming pool.

Respecting the cats and ensuring that his show does not exploit the creatures he shares his life with is central to Rick's performances. He has consciously avoided making the tigers the central focus of his show, ensuring that his performance, not that of the tigers drives his success and reputation. He wants to earn his own fame, not be carried to it on the backs of his tigers. He says that if he were ever forced to stop using big cats in his act, he would still have a successful career and the tigers would have a home with him for life.

When asked if the Siegfried and Roy incident had caused him to rethink his own show, Rick explained that his performance had been designed from the beginning with safety in mind. His tigers spend relatively little time outside their cages while on stage, and when they are out they are given a specific task to focus on, usually going from one cage to another. The cats aren't given the opportunity to become bored and let their minds wander to more dangerous activities. And once the tigers emerge, Rick says he ceases to be a magician and becomes an animal handler, focusing on the tigers and ensuring that he devotes his full attention to the safe handling on the animal while it's on stage. Rick also feels that he gains an extra margin of safety by respecting the natural behaviors of his tigers and not asking them to perform unnatural or stressful behaviors, saying, "you will *never* see Rick Thomas jump a tiger through a ring of fire."

The likable performer hasn't let success transform him into a spoiled celebrity. He drives his tigers to every show himself, and personally feeds and cleans up after his cats, believing that he doesn't have the right to appear on stage with them unless he puts in the time and effort to work with and bond to them every day behind the scenes. After the show he emerges to speak with his fans, sign autographs, and let people take their picture with him. Unlike many Vegas performers, he doesn't charge people for the chance to have a photo taken with him, and he was just as happy to sign programs as the merchandise for sale at his table.

Appearing for his fans hasn't been a matter of simply accepting praise from admirers, either. People who have a problem with his use of tigers in the show seize the opportunity to take Rick to task. He told FCF members about a woman who berated him for keeping his tigers in tiny cages, assuming that they lived in the boxes they appear on stage in.

While Rick says he has been fortunate in that his show has never been formally protested by animal rights activists, he has had to deal with some angry and misinformed show-goers. He told us of one time a spectator shouted "Free the tigers!" during a performance, causing Rick to bring the show to a halt for five minutes while he educated the audience.

The people who attended his show that day left with an understanding of how dangerous life in the wild actually is for the critically endangered tiger, which is considered a threat to humans in its natural habitat and whose carcass can sell for \$10,000. As he said, "I love my tigers. Why would I turn them loose in the wild to die?" Rick explained to the audience how captive breeding may be the only hope for these magnificent creatures, and he's proud to be a responsible part of that.

And as any experienced handler knows, some animal lovers just seem to have a death wish. Rick related one hair-raising incident that took place as he was walking one of his tigers. A man approached and demanded to pet the tiger. Rick declined and kept walking, but the man followed, insisting "Let me pet the tiger." Finally the flaming idiot person ran up to the tiger and was forcibly removed by a couple of Rick's assistants. I myself wouldn't mind having a couple of "assistants" around next time some intellectually challenged individual decides to insist that he's immune to animal teeth!

Rick says he hasn't been active in legislative matters. Although residing in Nevada, he designed his facility to meet California standards and relaxed, knowing that he had met the strictest standards in the country. An interesting side note: through an entirely unrelated chain of events (no, Rick, we aren't stalking you!) one of our members acquired Rick's *approved* California permit application. Through his recent contact with the FCF, he has become more aware of the threats and even asked Lynn Culver to keep him informed as he may work with us on legislative threats.

Rick set an excellent example for us in the way he addressed practices and organizations he disagrees with, making his points firmly but without attacking anyone. He spoke out against the practice of magicians renting tigers so that they can "look cool on stage," believing you must earn the right to appear with the tiger by putting in time and effort with the animal. He managed to do so in a way that acknowledged that some of our members may be involved in this type of activity (we aren't, are we?) and that he didn't want to attack them, he simply wanted express why he felt the practice was wrong.

He's also a superb showman, and watching him perform and speak holds many lessons for our members. We all need to become more aware of the impressions we make on people, and how to get our point across in a likable and even entertaining manner rather than a hostile one. As Rick showed us, sincerity and passion are *not* mutually exclusive of showmanship and skilled presentation.

Please join me in a warm welcome to our newest FCF member, Rick Thomas!

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History of The Exotic Feline Breeding Compound's Feline Conservation Center (EFBC/FCC)

by Joe Maynard, founder

At its inception, EFBC/FCC was intended only to be a privately run breeding and reproductive research facility. There was never intent to open or operate as a public exhibit facility (zoo). Today, 25 years later, it is governed by an active Board of Directors and maintained by a full time staff, along with a group of dedicated volunteers.

Prior to the Endangered Species Act (ESA), zoos considered animals a renewable resource. When one died they just acquired another one from any source including the wild. With the implementation of the ESA, replacing species as they died became more problematic, especially from the wild.

To address this issue, zoos began to concentrate their energies on captive breeding. It was soon realized that with some feline species, compatibility among pairs was going to present a serious obstacle. These compatibility problems, added with the fact that existing gene pools were declining, became the basis for starting EFBC/FCC.

Our intent was to provide a breeding environment that was secluded from the general hustle and bustle of everyday zoo life. To overcome incompatibility problems we would also conduct alternative reproductive research that included artificial insemination, embryo transfer, and intra-uterine insemination. We were quite successful with natural breeding of the larger cats. Some of our early assisted reproduction work began on golden cats in 1981 and clouded leopards in 1984.

We found that the tranquilization process seemed to produce an undesirable effect on the egg's ability to attach itself to the uterine wall. If this proved to be true it would decrease our chances of success. To test this theory we decided to hand raise some cats to accustom them to manual manipulation. Our intentions were to manually stimulate the cats to induce ovula-

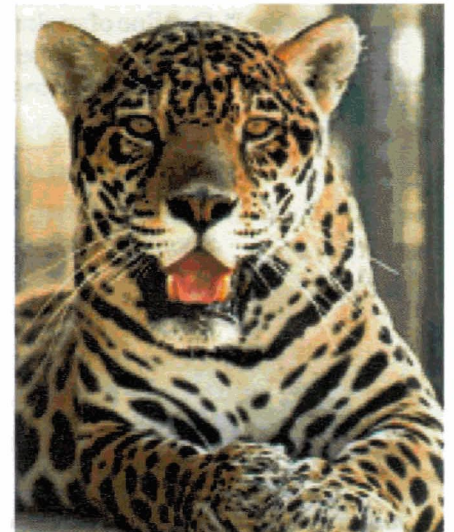


Top: sand cat

Middle: Amur leopard mom and cub

Bottom: Jaguar

Left: Fishing cat



tion and immediately inseminate them by hand using a syringe & catheter loaded with semen. If pregnancies occurred and cubs successfully delivered our theories would have proved correct.

As we were preparing to implement our study it suddenly dawned on us that these guys don't just breed once or twice a day, they breed 20 to 30 times a day. Whoops, where are we going to get enough semen to even begin to replicate a cat's normal breeding cycle?

At around this same time (1984-85), we were asked by Dr. Dave Wildt of the National Zoo if we would be willing to collaborate in a semen evaluation project. They indicated that our participation in their project would benefit them enormously since we had a large variety of species. This would allow them to collect many specimens, all at one location. We agreed to work with them.

Upon completion they presented their findings at the Tiger Symposium held at the Minnesota Zoo in 1986. We attended this symposium thinking this might give us an opportunity to meet some other people involved in cat breeding and quite possibly lead us to a source of semen for our project. Oh well, so much for thinking everyone would be willing to cooperate. A lot of lip service but no action! Not much different then, than now!!

At this point we determined that we would not be able to collect enough semen to go forward with our plans. With the demise of that idea other alternatives were explored. One that emerged was in-vitro fertilization. This approach did not require large amounts of semen but it did require new drugs, a better means of timing ovulation, and certainly more sophisticated equipment.

As luck would have it, while working on a clouded leopard AI project with a resident at U.C. Davis, it turned out that we needed more semen than the single male we had brought could produce. This meant getting another male to the university. The resident we were working with said he knew a vet student that lived in our area and would be willing to pick up another of our clouded leopards at the facility and bring it to U.C. Davis. This sounded like a great idea, and it saved me a lot of driving. That student turned out to be Patrick Morris. Pat was contacted and agreed to bring the cat to us. After a long day trying to capture the cat, Pat was finally successful and brought him to us. That was the beginning of a friendship that lasts to this day.

After Pat graduated from U.C. Davis he went to the University of Tennessee at Knoxville to do a residency. At the end of his residency he was asked to stay on as an associate professor at the university, which he did. Once he settled in to his new routine his interest in cats rekindled and he began to conduct research into in-vitro fertilization using domestic cats as models. They successfully produced a litter and when he and his team decided they were ready to put what they had learned to the test, Pat contacted me to ask if I would be willing to work with them and make our cats available for their project. Based on the results of his research, we felt that this was the approach we were looking for, so we agreed.

Pat and his team were using a new FSH (follicle stimulation hormone) called Pergonal. It was a human gonadotropin used in human fertilization programs. Their success with domestic cats was promising and we were all excited about the prospects of this same success with the wild cats. The species we chose was the puma. The reason for this choice was that this species was quite common and we could easily acquire as many as we needed. We felt the more females we implanted, the better our chances of being successful.

In four years of trials, from 1989-92, we were culturing good viable embryos. The implantation procedure was also quite successful, but sadly no babies born. We did manage to get pregnancies but unfortunately the females aborted during the last trimester.

We discovered one of the reasons they failed to reach term was that we were unable to provide progesterone support to the female during her pregnancy. Another problem discovered was that the females were acquiring a resistance to the FSH and their response to the injections were becoming inconsistent, which was limiting our ability to time procedures.

The only pregnancy that made it to term was in one of the associates working with us! Oh well, back to the drawing board! As for Pat, he went on to be one of the top zoo veterinarians in the world and is currently chief veterinarian at the San Diego Zoo.

An interesting note is that during this same time, the National Zoo's research team was conducting similar research on cheetahs and seemed to be getting better responses. Later, it was discovered that a contributing factor is that cheetahs are immune suppressed. Their cats were not building a resistance to the FSH as our cats were. When the National Zoo team expanded their program to include other species, they started experiencing problems similar to what we had.

Over the years EFBC/FCC has been involved in testing many new drugs for use in wild cats. We have sponsored research in Nordon's FeLV vaccine, Pergonal use in wild cats, PMSG use in wild cats, Yohimbine use as an antagonist to Xylazine, and Tolazoline as an antagonist to Ketamine. We have also helped the American Zoo Association's (AZA) Contraceptive Group with their research into reversible contraception of wild cats using melengesterol implants (MGA).

EFBC/FCC has freely worked with and/or assisted many researchers including the aforementioned semen evaluation by the National Zoo, and most recently in 2003 their IUI program with fishing cats. We have provided many DNA samples to Dr. Steve O'Brien and his staff at the National Cancer institute from our Amur leopards, North Chinese leopards, and jaguars.

EFBC/FCC has been a contributing member of the International Species Inventory System (ISIS) since 1981 and early on submitted little known data on clouded leopards and golden cats to their original physiological database. Although we are not a member of AZA, we do participate in most species survival plans (SSP) & population management programs (PMP) in which we hold

species. We also regularly submit data to all studbook keepers.

We participate in these programs because we feel that generally they are beneficial to the species as a whole and it is going to require the concentrated efforts of all organizations involved in conservation to be successful in our efforts to prevent extinction.

With our importation of Amur leopard and fishing cat founder animals, our participation in the Amur leopard PMP and the fishing cat SSP was critical to its success. EFBC/FCC also maintains a sizeable collection of Pallas' cats, many of which also are founder animals in the North American population. EFBC/FCC has provided quite a few jaguars to AZA institutions wishing to exhibit and increase awareness of this species.

Over the years the EFBC/FCC has formed close relationships with many zoos in the U.S. and abroad. The list includes such facilities as: San Diego Zoo, Henry Doorly Zoo, Audubon Zoo, Moscow Zoo, Singapore Zoo, and London Zoo.

With all of the activities going on at the facility (visiting researchers, animals coming and going) it was inevitable that it would start to peak the interest the people in the community. We began to get more and more requests to visit the facility to see the animals. We usually accommodated these request and this, through word of mouth, created more requests. We also began to get requests from schools, libraries, and service organizations to bring our cats for presentations. We did not have the resources, especially personnel, to accommodate all of these requests so we began to recruit volunteers. They were to escort visitors through the facility and do slide presentations throughout the community.

In early 1982 the idea was born that we should open the facility to the public on a full-time basis. This would be a serious commitment. Opening the facility to the public would require completely tearing down existing cages and rebuilding everything so it could safely accommodate visitors. It would also have a serious effect on our breeding programs. Constant noise from heavy construction does not create an environment conducive to successful breeding.

Due to the uncertainty of success, a compromise was reached and the facility was opened on a temporary basis. The time frame was six months. If the operation proved it could be self-sustaining, meaning that through donations or other means it could support itself, it would be permanently opened to the public. At the end of the six months it was determined that it could be self-supporting. In 1983 the facility filed for recognition as a public benefit organization and on November 3, 1983 was granted a tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) organization. This allowed it to actively seek donations to continue the commitment to make the facility available to the public on a full time basis

Visitation began to increase, as did donations. During the 1980's and 1990's the economy was doing quite well and donations were continuously being received. Construction began at a furious pace since we wanted to get back to doing what we were originally founded for, breeding. As we suspected, over the next 5 years our breeding plummeted. It seemed only the tigers, leopards, and cougars did not mind the construction and the noise.

At its peak, EFBC/FCC was hosting close to 100,000 visitors per year. Toward the end of the 1990's, the economy took a drastic turn for the worse and still has not fully recovered in our region.

We have managed to complete the majority of the main exhibit area and have started on the second phase. This will include a large exhibit housing tigers, jaguars, and a variety of small cats. It will also include an educational building which will display the many cat related items we have collected over the years. Hopefully the economy will recover soon and we can resume construction and finally complete this second phase.

EFBC/FCC hosts interns from around the world.

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The Pros and Cons of Vaccinations

Jona Sun Jordan DVM

The practice of vaccinating ourselves, our children, and our animals to prevent disease is the subject of a great deal of debate. Heated discussions arise over what to vaccinate with, when to vaccinate, who to vaccinate, and even whether to vaccinate at all. Every side has strong arguments for why their way is the right way and can show statistics and tell horror stories to prove their point. I am here to tell you that the bottom-line is that *there is no such thing as a risk free life*. Each one of us must make the decisions about who, what, when, where, how, and why to vaccinate ourselves, our children and our pets – and no matter what decision we make, there are risks involved.

In the past, veterinarians and clients alike demanded “standard protocols” like “Every cat should be vaccinated with every vaccine available for cats every year.” In reality, the world is much more complex than that. A more intelligent plan would be to create a vaccination protocol that reflects the fact that every animal is an individual with individual needs and tolerances. This is not really as complicated as it sounds. Here are the factors that I use to evaluate my patients need for vaccines:

1) Age:

- a) Young animals are protected by maternal antibodies in mothers milk as long as they are nursing. If they are bottle fed, they are at risk for developing disease until their immune systems are exposed to enough virus particles to develop their own personal immunity. Whether they get sick or not depends on numerous factors including nutrition, their own innate ability to respond to virus challenge, the number of viruses they are exposed to, and the potency of that virus. The goal in creating a vaccine virus is to take street virus and alter it to be potent enough to stimulate a response while not being potent enough to create illness. This is a delicate balance since statistically in any population there will be patients with stronger or weaker than average resistance to disease.
- b) Older animals have multiple challenges to their immune systems over the years which leave toxins imbedded in their bodies, as well as generalized weakening of all systems just from the normal wear and tear of living. A healthy older animal that has been vaccinated multiple times in the past may not need any more vaccines.



Jona Jordan, DVM at the FCF Convention. photo by Phil Parke

There is typically little or no information available on how long many vaccines last beyond the tested period. Running vaccine trials beyond a year or two is not only costly and depressing (remember to test a vaccine you must expose the patients to set amounts of street virus and see how many of them get sick and/or die), but it is also impractical because the vaccines themselves are changing rapidly. Vaccines from 10 years ago are pretty much obsolete now due to ongoing improvements in efficacy and safety.

2) Previous vaccination history:

- a) How many times has this patient been exposed to this vaccine virus in the past, and on what schedule? More is not necessarily better! Some breeders have been known to vaccinate their animals weekly or every two weeks – this is severe over vaccination, and has been shown to cause a number of problems including blood thickening from immune system protein complexes that can damage internal organs like the kidneys, failure of the immune system to fight off bacterial or fungal infections because it is too busy fighting vaccine “infections”, and increased risk of vaccination reaction – including death.
- b) Note: It is my understanding that there has never been a documented case of rabies virus infection in the US in a pet vaccinated at least twice, as an adult, by a veterinarian.

3) Reproductive status:

- a) Live virus vaccines are generally contraindicated in pregnant or breeding animals. Please note that males who are in breeding programs can pass live vaccine virus to the females they are breeding. Pregnant females should not be

exposed to other animals that have been recently vaccinated with live virus vaccines. (Killed virus vaccines cannot be passed accidentally from one animal to another).

4) Lifestyle

- a) Likelihood of exposure to street virus: Animals that are being shown or taken places where there are large numbers of other animals (parks, grooming parlors, shows, boarding facilities, day care facilities, shelters, etc) or where they will be touched by the public are at much higher risk for being exposed to street virus than animals that stay home in a restricted environment with few contacts to the outside world.
- b) Environment: Animals kept in clean and sanitary environments are exposed to fewer diseases than those kept in dirty environments – not only because more pathogenic virus/bacteria/fungus can grow in filth but also because these environments often damage the patients immunity. For example, the build up of ammonia in poorly cleaned and/or inadequately ventilated pens or cages damages the lungs making animals more susceptible to respiratory diseases.
- c) If an animals lifestyle changes, their vaccination plan should be re-evaluated in the light of the new risk level(s).

5) Genetics:

- a) Is there a history in the family or the breed of being extra susceptible to a particular disease? Is there a history in the family of having problems with any particular vaccine? If so, this should be a factor in your decision about whether or not to vaccinate. If you must vaccinate an animal that has had problems with vaccines before, that animal should be protected against reactions **before, during, and after vaccinating** by the use of antihistamines or homeopathic remedies.

6) General Health Status:

- a) Most vaccines include a disclaimer stating that they should not be used in sick or debilitated animals. I would expand this to include any condition that may be exacerbated by vaccinations. This would include any chronic disease like kidney disease, skin disease, recurrent infections, diabetes, autoimmune disease, immunodeficiency, inflammatory bowel disease, cancer, asthma, or allergies, and any inflammatory “-itis”

type disease like arthritis, thyroiditis, hepatitis, endocarditis, or gastritis.

7) Legal Requirements:

- a) In some areas the most life threatening risk is actually not from the disease, but rather from the authorities concerned with human health risks. This particularly pertains to rabies vaccination. A cat that bites someone may be more at risk of losing his or her life from rabies **testing** than s/he ever was at risk from rabies itself. Government officials are often more concerned with rules and/or liability than logic and it would be unwise to put your cat at risk unnecessarily.
- b) Some states may require vaccinations in order to license an exotic cat facility. Occasionally the PTB will allow the facility veterinarian to certify (in writing) that specific animals should be exempt from specific vaccinations for medical reasons. You should verify this (in writing, and get names) with the appropriate licensing agency.

I recommend putting together a spreadsheet to simplify evaluating the risk factors and appropriate vaccination schedule for every individual you keep so you can vaccinate accordingly. I understand that for some facilities this may inspire a few moans and groans, but it doesn't really need to be complicated. Once you've practiced thinking of each animal as an individual, it's a pretty simple process. And truthfully, if a facility has so many animals that they can't take care of them as individuals, perhaps they have too many animals!



Photo by Nancy Vandermeij

The Banquet of FCF Saturday Night, July 31

Everyone showed up in their finery to sit around round tables decorated with lion centerpieces which later were given away in a drawing allowing the lucky ones to take them home upon leaving.

The Photo Contest was next and we all ogled the myriad of fantastic photos that were laid out for all to see and vote on. The contest was won by Karen Povey whose picture of a Clouded Leopard won her a beautiful plate with a snow leopard depicted on its artistic surface.

The Reporter of the Year was Jessi Clark-White who won another cat plate for her fine work in writing interesting and informative articles in the FCF Newsletter.



Newsletter editor Mindy Stinner presents reporter of the year snow leopard plate to Jessie Clark-White

Kudos were given to all those that advertise in the newsletter many of whom traveled to the convention showing their wares and offering a great many of them for the auction.

A wonderfully framed print of a Jaguar was the target for a raffle, all proceeds going to the Playa del Oro project and this raised \$1140. A charming woman from Ontario, Canada, Sandra Nabetta, won and graciously donated it back for the auction where it went on to raise another \$135 for the cause.

Tracy Wilson was the new recipient for the Lotty Award this year and gave a heart-felt speech saying she was only doing what her heart dictated for the cats we all love. Her work at the reservation in Ecuador has certainly been helpful to the Playa de Oro mission of having a haven for wildcats within the large amounts of acreage set aside for this by the natives that live there, as well as her ongoing commitment to the conservation committee within the FCF and her help with putting on the Feline Husbandry Course all making her the obvious candidate for this prestigious award.

A baby caracal belonging to Fred Boyajian was the only exotic cat that attended the banquet, making the rounds with different folks holding the kitten, but the most memorable image was of Joey, the youngest person at the conference sitting at the table and gently stroking this marvelous creature with the huge tufted ears.

The meal was not served but was a buffet and we entered an adjacent room to get the food. Here we found mountains of fruits and vegetable arranged in an artistic and colorful display along with roast beef, delicious fish and chicken, pasta, rice, and just about anything your heart desired. No one could pass up the display of delicious cakes that were laid out for dessert.

Finally the auction was to begin and the auctioneer was as usual J. B. Anderson who dressed the part in his white tuxedo and flamboyant accouterments. His helper was Ana Cheek, who he called Vanna, as is the custom. She really looked the part in her leopard print tight fitting sheath as she displayed the many items with much flair.



Auctioneer JB Anderson dressed in tux, top hat, white gloves, cane and tiger furred slippers auctions off leopard print cowboy hat modeled by his lovely assistant Ana Cheek, a.k.a. "Vanna". photos this page by Phil Parker

The first item was a leopard print cowboy hat that sold for \$50. I just saw it at the Rain Forest Cafe for \$19.99 so you can see that things often got much more than they might be worth at first. A leopard back pack, a bottle of aged wine, a T-shirt with an array of exotic animals printed on it, a 14-carot



*Saturday night banquet. left to right:
Rich Freitag, Mary & Richard Hahn,
Judy Jezl. photo by Phil Parker*



*Tracy Wilson and Leann
Montgomery. photo by Fred
Boyajian*

Submitted by Loreon Vigne of Isis Oasis Sanctuarv

gold ring with a cat face and jeweled eyes, JB's now famous painting depicting him swimming in the lake with his pet jaguar, and on and on till toward the end of the evening everyone was broke and a lot of the merchandise began to go for way lower prices. There were many generous donations and money from the auction both silent and loud amounted to \$2880, which will go to fatten the coffers of the FCF account and will be used for aiding the club in its endeavors. All in all everyone had a great time, good food, and pleasant company.

At the end there was an announcement that the next convention would be in Miami, last weekend in July again!

Las Vegas Husbandry Course credited for saving the life of Savannah Kitten

I live in California and am in the lengthy process of applying for a restricted species permit to breed and exhibit Servals and Geoffroy's cats. I have Savannah's from F 1 female down to an F 5 fertile male. I believe I have the qualification to do this, however California is most likely the strictest state regarding these felidae animals and requires two full years hands on full time experience in a California permitted facility to qualify. The common slug is one of the animals on the restricted species list. Can one imagine going to a slug school in a permitted facility for two full years with hands on experience?

At the urging of Lynn Culver to attend the FCF Husbandry Course my wife and I attended the annual 2004 FCF convention in Las Vegas. Lynn suggested I do this because it certainly would help with my appeal, which was coming up in a few weeks. I took the course and was amazed with the education I really got. One point of interest was about the cat's droppings being runny for over 24 hours. My 12-week-old Savannah F 3 kitten started doing this and then stopped for a day and then started again for over 24 hours. I was also taught on how to check for dehydration by pulling up on kittens back of its fur and see how it rebounds back. The kitten appeared to be obviously dehydrated. Since the kitten was eating well I never took it into the vet earlier. This was on a Saturday and I had to insist on the vet seeing him then and not to wait until Monday. The kitten did have a virus and if I had not attended to this kitten at that time it would most likely have died. The kitten (Seesart) is doing fine now.

The husbandry Course is a very good course that all exotic felidae owners should take. It covers just about all aspects of exotics from the very small to the very large. I would recommend this course to anyone. I was impressed.

After reading an article in the FCF May/June magazine written by Jessi Clark-White titled *Media Influence on Public Perception of Exotic Cat Owners* I knew I had to meet her. Her article was extremely good and very informative. I met Jessi at the convention and asked her if she would come to my appeal hearing at the California Fish and Game Commission as an expert witness for me on the Serval. She never hesitated for a second and said she would if she could get off work. Jessi does not live in California. Jessi prepared an excellent presentation for me that was extremely good, in fact better and more informative than what my attorney had prepared.

My attorney knows legal procedures, and nothing about exotic cats. It was Jessi's knowledge and presentation about the Serval and captive breeding that really forced the whole procedure to be played on a more level playing field. The normal time for these proceedings is one hour. Our hearing took three and a half hours to complete. There were seven expert and character witnesses that talked on my behalf. The state was not able to refute anything that I or anyone else said at this hearing other than I did not have two full years working at a Serval school.

After a long time of describing these animals I asked if the state has anyone present who knows anything about the animals I was applying for; their response was no. I then politely told them that I resented the fact that people who certainly are not qualified to judge me are judging my qualifications as not being qualified. I must say that this statement did not go unnoticed.

Ralph R. Renna (209) 368-7412 (appleralph@aol.com)

Of Man And Lion

Patrick Webb

Lions are endangered whether they are on the “list” or not. The governments of Africa, that have the last of these beautiful creatures, have no real way to protect them. Heads of States of many countries, including our own, enjoy “the hunt”. It’s so “Great White Hunter” to bag the lion. It makes small men feel bigger when they can shoot a big male lion with a full mane.

Therein, is the problem. Pruning down mature males



MGM lion. photo by Phil Parker

(maned) may be the downfall of the species. The maned males are the mature males of a pride, which drive out the younger (related) males, and force a genetic “stirring”. Once a male leaves the pride, they wander. They look for a pride they can invade and take the Alpha (mature breeding male spot) and win the right to breed the females (queens/lionesses). This introduces the needed “genetic stir” that enables healthy genetically diverse cubs to be born. Sometimes young males will wander, looking for a new pride, as brothers and/or cousins, tossed out together, ostracized from their birth pride. They travel together and assist each other in kills. They even cooperate to take over a new pride, but only one will be the Alpha, running the other 2-3 related ones off, where they will continue their search for their own pride. Lions are unique in this manner, as other big cats live rather solitarily, and genetic diversity is a given. Solitary wandering cats mix up the genetics as they are all finding unrelated partners, by virtue of travel habits.

Lions need the prides to maintain the social structure that sustains their large size in an area where food is hard to get, and sparse, and diminishing as we speak. They can assist each other in the hunt, and share homepride duties, such as watching/protecting offspring from African wild dogs, and hyenas, who will kill and gobble up cubs like M&Ms.

So, when hunters make their kills based on the preference of pride Alpha males (for the manes), they disrupt the natural genetic “stir”. Young males do not end up leaving the pride. They don’t have to, with the “old man” out of the way. Males barely showing mane are free to breed mother and sisters. By the time they get maned, they too are hunted, as preferences of poachers and licensed hunters. That leaves again, another cycle of male offspring breeding back into the same genetic pool. Three generations of this (generations are short when 3 year old new-maned lions are pruned out) and the pool is so inbred that disease and sterility begins to emerge as natural weaknesses.

This makes a case for a moratorium on licensed and/or canned hunts. The only real way to make that happen is with the international treaties that protect animals from mankind. Their natural hunting grounds are very limited at this point, and all this “pruning out” of male lions make it an intolerable situation.

Having it legal to serve lion in restaurants in the USA, and a few other countries makes it a certainty that genetic diversity is stifled in the private owner/caregiver hands. The people who are engaging in breeding for profit have little concern for “genetic stirring”. They want maned males too, and will breed endlessly back into same bloodlines to enhance their efforts. They get good money for the meat, but the maned lion head is a BIG bonus. Looks good on a rug, or on a wall, some think. This being a legal operation ensures that no studbooks are kept, no thoughts about long-term species sustainability, or worries of making certain that viable healthy females are not over bred/inbred. What makes a person want to eat Lion anyway? I guess it goes back to ego. “I am a *real man*, I eat Lion”.

There also seems to be some deep psychologically rooted fear, as people realize they too, are a food source for another species. It’s hard for humans to see themselves as meat for a predator. The fact that we are lower on a food chain than another species is hard to swallow (excuse the pun). Maybe there is a deep-seated desire to remove these species from Earth, as a subconscious instinct to protect our own species. Having Lions legal to raise and eat, by humans, effects the endangered big cats as well. Endangered big cats can be slaughtered, and paper work is “modified” to turn them into lions. That makes the meat all legal. The black market readily accepts the big money by-products, such as taxidermy mounts, hides, claws, teeth, internal organs, etc. Closing this loophole, by making lions endangered, also stops the process of paperwork “modification”.

continued on page 37

Dear FCF members,

I want to acknowledge and thank all of our corporate vendors & sponsors for attending, supporting and donating to this year's very successful FCF Convention in Las Vegas, NV. After several years of little or no support or participation from businesses and corporations, last year (2003) we had great interest and response from several businesses and commercial vendors. This year (2004) FCF had 18 businesses donate, support and / or attend our FCF Convention. What a turnaround! These companies support and believe in FCF, FCF's conservation efforts and FCF's mission to help sustain private ownership. They helped sponsor our convention and donated merchandise for our auction that helped bring in hundreds of \$\$\$ to FCF.

As you are thinking of more and better ways to take care of your cats, improve your facilities and help FCF's conservation efforts, PLEASE, remember the people and their businesses that help support FCF and it's members.

Bobby Bean, Convention Committee Chairman

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As chairman of the Convention Committee, I just want to take time to thank everyone involved for helping put together such a great Las Vegas convention.

*I want to thank my convention committee of Kevin Chambers, Carolyne Clendinen, Harold Epperson and Kate Conner Kahn for working so hard putting together this convention.

*I also want to thank those that were not part of this committee, but were very important contributors as well. Tracy Wilson provided the great centerpieces for our banquet tables. Tim Stoffel delivered the many donated auction items. Reva Anderson and Jessica Bean were our gracious hostesses. Lynn Culver printed program guides and nametags. Carol Bohning taught the Convention Husbandry Course. JB Anderson, our incomparable auctioneer, worked along side Ana Cheek, the lovely "Vanna" all Saturday night. And our oh-so-prolific photographer, Phil Parker filled this newsletter with memorable images. I would also like to extend a very special thank-you to Sara Schimke who prepared a very important and informative lecture on lobbying, as well as my sincere apology to her that we ran out of time Saturday and had to bump her presentation. We are saving space in the September issue of our magazine to include Sara's important message to the membership.

*I wish to thank Lynette Chappel for gaining FCF a private early morning tour of the Secret Gardens, gratis to the FCF members.

*Thanks to our corporate sponsors for materials and auction items.

*Most of all, thanks to our FCF members that came to our conventions and set attendance records the last 2 years.

I was really impressed with the quality of our speakers.

I enjoyed the first rate show that Rick Thomas put on at the Tropicana Friday afternoon. But Rick made it obvious that he's not just a Las Vegas entertainer when he spoke Saturday morning. Rick definitely shares our passion for these magnificent cats.

Dr. Richard Patton (Nutritionist) did a great job explaining the basics of Feline Nutrition.

Dr. Jona Jordan (DVM) was excellent and very thorough in discussing the good and bad points of vaccinating our cats.

USF&W Special Agent Ed Dominguez was very patient and understanding answering questions and explaining "The Captive Wildlife Safety Act" to FCF.

Tracy Wilson (FCF) did a good job showing FCF the accomplishments at Playa de Oro.

Joe Maynard (EFBC-Feline Conservation Center) gave us a great slide show and presentation of what is considered by many conservationists, the leader in feline conservation.

Molly Hogan presented to us how she professionally trains exotic cats and other animals for Voluntary Medical Treatment, Public Education Programs and Husbandry.

*The number of new members has doubled in the last 2 years and is still growing at this impressive rate. This points to another record-breaking Convention next year in Miami. I am really excited about the future of FCF and hope you are also.

Bobby Bean

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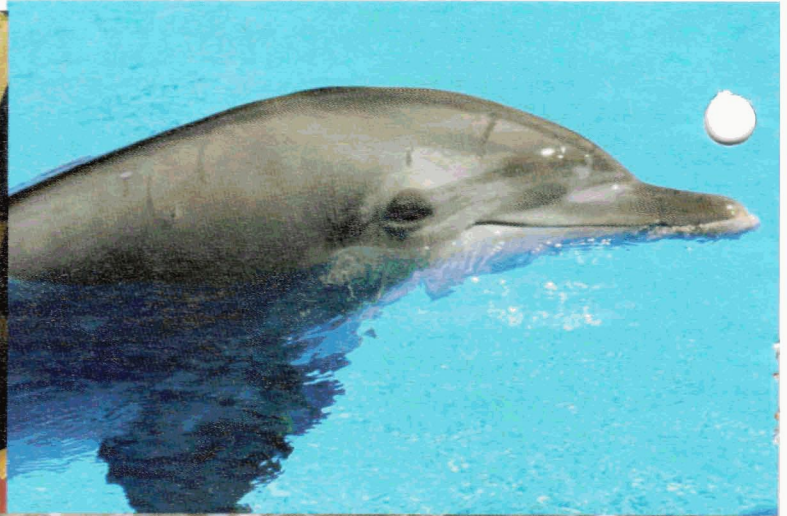
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Jasmine bobcat being held while CeCe appealed for her return

And this time you could drive a truck into my mouth it dropped that far. The judge continued, “I don’t know if it’s true or not, but stay away from the DEC! Don’t call him anymore.”

I had already made a boo-boo when I tried to show him my paperwork and a petition I had townspeople sign, setting it down on whatever that great wooden thing the judge’s big desk is called! I did that twice and he blared something at me. Now I was an open-mouthed idiot, tears streaming, he handed me a traffic form and told me to “try and ‘plea bargain’ with the D.A.”

So big plans to tell him my story shot down, I turned and cried and walked out. I think his wife might’ve felt sorry for me because when she came to the back to get me a copy of the ticket, I handed her a copy of an e-mail, where the officer says to call or write anytime with any questions. Truth is, I haven’t spoken at all to him since that day until after I had the permits. I had e-mailed him and left messages to find out anything about Jasmine, since I was in complete darkness about her.. I couldn’t stand the ‘not knowing’! This wasn’t an old sofa I was asking about, this was a being with feelings, and a right to be alive. A right to be with whom she loves most.

As the days turned to weeks, I sank even deeper into my own world, which at some points, I wasn’t sure I wanted to a part of anymore. Anyone who has children knows there are incidents in their lives where you can’t focus on anything but their safety. We had been through the death of an infant son, my mom and my dad all in a month’s time in 1984. So I know I can find determination in me to win Jasmine back. When you cannot control a situation...well.....there’s that AA saying that says “God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.” You know what? BULL#@\$ again. I decided I had to try and take control here, cause I couldn’t accept MYSELF if I didn’t!

I owe a special thanks to Debbie, ‘cause at some points her stern but caring advice made all the difference when I was about to give up. She’s heard me cry like a baby, curse like a trucker and helped me find myself through this horrible time. She was moral support even when, and I understand this, others were getting a bit fed up with my depression/obsession, throughout it all. Anyway, my friend Debbie, helped me understand some of the USDA forms I had to fill

out, and much more. , I just couldn’t seem to understand exactly what ‘specs’ were needed to comply for a living enclosure. I saw specs for monkeys to hamsters, but couldn’t quite the hang of exactly what I needed to do. She told me about perimeter fences, locks, flooring requirements so you don’t slide away on, and such. And my husband, having been diagnosed with cancer two years before, began to work around Jasmine’s existing enclosure. He had time, of course, but energy was needed. Since he had determination also, he found the energy to make it happen.

To get within USDA specs, with advice from our inspector and Debbie, a couple uh... improvisations were done. I needed to put up a large perimeter fence and I repaired computers in exchange for 3 rolls of chain link a neighbor had in their yard. Another example was fill dirt we needed because Jasmine’s primary enclosure is on a hillside. So as long as Don promised another lady that she could be first to see Jasmine when she is on exhibit, he was able to use his Blazer to go back and forth to shovel dirt into trash cans & buckets and fill enough land in so the perimeter fence would be far enough away. We needed to change the flooring because wooden floors are not ‘impervious’ to water. We were told we could lay linoleum down over it, but we looked in our yard and spotted our kid’s old swimming pool rolled up. What is more impervious to water than the outside of a pool? He measured it, cut it and laid it down. It turned out a far better floor than anything I could buy I think! It was non-slip, tough, thick and certainly easily washable with a hose! So when you’re in a bind, it’s amazing how a little imagination could pay off! The inspector was very pleased and in fact, with extra boards, Don even put up a ‘viewing deck’ that folks can view Jasmine from without having to get right up on her.

Jasmine’s Corner

Another part of what I felt is that it seemed no one had a heart so far. Don worked all his life, and now with a terminal cancer, his SSD check didn’t even allow medical coverage other than Medicare, so he hasn’t been to a doctor in over a year and half. You see, in the case of my husband’s particular cancer and where it was, how deep it was, the average life span is just about 2 years. So he’s already beaten those odds on his own. So up it all went around her existing outside enclosure. We sent in the application and they gave us a date within a couple of weeks. The second time the inspector came out, he was very happy with it all. Don did a great job and went above and beyond thanks to advice from our inspector and Debbie.

As we were now USDA approved, I now applied for NY’s permit. The folks at the Albany office were helpful and understanding, and actually expedited my application because they knew I was trying to re-acquire our Jasmine. Getting down to the wire, we presented all permits to the DEC local office, but we had been getting some last minute unknown hassles, like it would have been nice to be informed that you had to ‘resolve’ your court case before you can get her. If I had known that had to be done first, I



would have. I also didn't know, and apparently the judge didn't realize at the time, that the DA doesn't handle DEC cases, they 'prosecute themselves'. I learned this when I took a chance and paid a visit to the DA myself. He actually saw me that day I just showed up! He's a nice man, a cat lover to boot, and explained some of the law to me. (remember, this is the prosecutor, not the defense) He found a nice lawyer (pro-bono) who called the judge while on vacation, to explain what happened to him, and allow me to plead 'guilty!' whoa! As fate would have it, my daughter and I met the local judge on the street outside the post office, where he was about to send me out my 'fine'. He handed it to me in person, and while still on vacation, invited us to his house to take care of it so I could prove everything was 'resolved'. He himself thought I might already have had her back, because he also thought all I needed were the permits. He is also a very nice man, I think perhaps the lawyer got in a few facts I could not. And he gave me a very low fine. And a much needed receipt. I would've had to wait all this out on regular court nights, but words were passed, and his honor understood.

That done, and a bit more quibbling, and back and forth visits to the DEC, we were finally informed of her whereabouts! But then...(and here's the best part - where all the wonderful people who shared my story on the Internet lists come in!) Monday we learned that before we could actually get her, a \$650. boarding fee has to be paid off to the people watching her. Have you ever seen that movie 'vertigo'? Where everything is spinning around as Jimmy Stewart goes up the stairs? Well, that was my head.

But fine, beautiful people came to the aid of a stranger. that's not quite right is it? Let me say, we don't know each other, cause we obviously share traits many can't just get. I always loved animals, and I felt a relationship with them I didn't get from people. Until now. I was born & raised in a rather tough Brooklyn neighborhood, and although the family was as tight as it gets, strangers were just that ...strangers. I am having a difficult time coming together with my own feelings because I was so used to 'look the other way'. I was a bad kid, made bad choices and dealt with people who don't dare get close. That's the way I wanted it. So asking for help was an act of a desperate 'mom', and receiving it was and is a blast of a feeling I never knew existed!

Everyone made it happen for me. All of you. And I am a person now who has to step back and take a look and realize that there are people who are for REAL. The feline community pulled together like a 'good' hurricane, rallying around and WITHIN A WEEK made what was seeming to be a distant dream now, come entirely true! During the week I went to see Jasmine myself, and posted pictures on a web site. Her sweet face trying to lick me thru the fence and her cries of frustration as I walked to the car will never be forgotten either. I swear, Jasmine, I won't ever betray you again, I wanted to say.

Friday, August 13, and my birthday..... Lynn Culver, a wonderful caring person mailed me an incredible loan that arrived Friday morning. I began to see a possibility of making this happen today! We made phone calls and we met Debbie off the NY Thruway. She had her caracal, Tesha, with her. I got in her car while Don, my husband followed, and off we went. Debbie also loaned me money to pay the board fee and we drove out on a wing and a prayer.

We got there very late, but still my Birthday, and while my husband took care of the 'business end' of things, Debbie showed his wife her beautiful cat, which she was stunned such an animal could be so loving and cool about being rubbed and pet. Tesha is a great icebreaker, a loving animal who will quickly show affection to anyone who wants to show it to her. Never mind that once you've done that, her rather heavy butt will be on your lap, and if she wants to sit on you, oh well, she damn straight will. It took all of us to try and coax Jasmine in her carrier, but she would have none of it. Finally a push with a 'get in there Jasmine!' from Deb, and in she went. Jasmine met her match, I guess.

There are unsung heroes here. The feline community on the Internet was posting to help get Jasmine home. Great ladies and Great men with greater hearts sent donations to help me pay off the two loans and other expenses. Perhaps I can show a few out there that owning such animals, for certain people, is a Life Saver. You see my husband's changed today. He's never been able to play with Jasmine like I do, but he loves her dearly, and I can see the difference in his face. And when he talks. And in his strength.

If you are considering owning such a wonderful animal, whether bobcat, serval, cougar, etc....Please....take care to do it so this doesn't happen to you. I will let you know that probably not everyone should. You must be prepared fully to let the animal be itself. And you must have respect for it. This is no dog that will follow, tail wagging to your every command! If such an animal doesn't share mutual love and respect, then what you have is probably less than a public zoo.

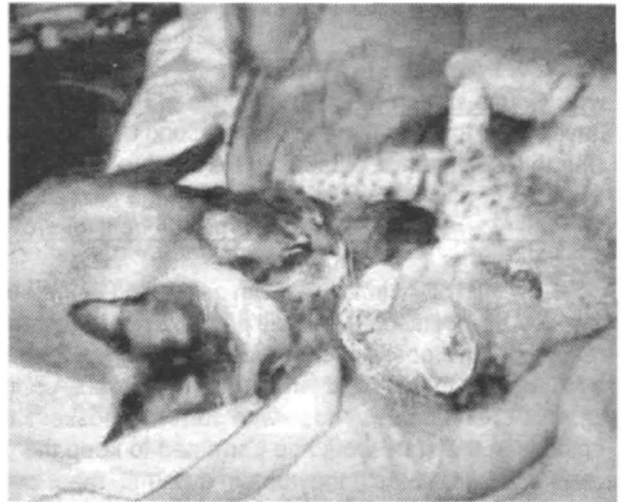
I can remember when Jasmine was just about 9-weeks old, we went to a vet. And she gave me the phone number of a lady she said has experience with them for advice. The woman on the phone had literally told me, "you might as well give her to me now, because when she is six months old, you will be looking to get rid of her." She claimed no amount of love will change things because she raised baby bobs for a local zoo, and they were



completely vicious and wild no matter what she tried. I politely declined her offer. I knew even then the proof would be in the pudding down the road. More than 3 years later, I know she did something wrong.

Jasmine's Home

We are getting easily adjusted to life as a family again. Jasmine knows that she was rescued by everyone. I swear, she knows it. No a little bird didn't tell me. From knowing her so well, she told me.



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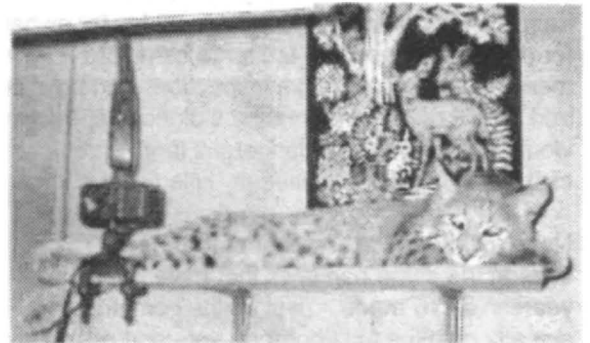


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Legislative Update

Ban law Proposed for Missouri. Web site:

www.house.state.mo.us. The House of Representatives have heard this bill; there is not a second hearing date yet. Use this site to find contact info for MO representatives. Sponsor of this bill is Mike Sutherland, the bill can be read at <http://www.house.state.mo.us/bills041/biltxt/intro/HB16271.htm>

Bill # HB1627 Limits the Possession of Dangerous Large Carnivores in Missouri. This bill prohibits breeding and restricts future possession of dangerous large carnivores such as lion, leopards, jaguars, tigers, cougars, panthers, cheetahs, and bears. Those who currently possess these animals in the state would be permitted to keep the dangerous large carnivores if they obtain a permit, meet certain animal housing and care requirements, and have the animals micro chipped. The bill provides for owner liability for damages caused by the large carnivore. Law enforcement officials would make inspections and possible seizure and forfeiture of the animal for violations of the law. The bill would allow owners of dangerous large carnivores to file a civil suit if the animal is illegally killed.

New York Legislature passes ban law. This legislative season the same ban laws that have been introduced four years in a row made it past all the committee hurdles and actually onto the full floor for a vote and passed on the final day of session before the summer recess. In a whirl wind of activity, lawmakers voted on more than 150 pieces of legislation in just 12 hours. And what is even more amazing to consider is that the NY legislature records a non-vote by any legislator as a “yes” vote. Follow up telephone calls to various legislators pledged to vote against any ban bills revealed that their failure to cast a vote in the less than 5 minutes of allotted time resulted in a vote cast in favor of the ban.

The feline community had been tracking these two Animal Rights bills, S905 in the Senate and companion AO2684 in the House for months and were caught off guard when the differences in the two pieces of legislation were resolved in a closed door meeting between bill supporters and industry lobbyists the day prior to voting. Major concessions were bargained and then the newly revised bill was re-numbered to 7616. Gone were the prohibitions for possession, breeding and sale of most wildlife species commonly sold in pet stores, leaving only the wild felines, primates, canids and some reptiles as prohibited species.

Many in the feline community, as well as by NY reporters investigated how this and other bills passed. A July 22, 2004 Capitol Bureau expose titled Capitol ranked worst in nation Albany — Report puts Legislature dead last among state governments for systematically limiting input from the public and rank-and-file lawmakers, stated in part: *As state leaders continued meeting behind closed doors Wednesday, a new report names New York's Legislature the nation's most dysfunctional — largely because most lawmakers are shut out of the process. “Neither the U.S. Congress nor any other*

state legislature so systematically limits the roles played by rank-and-file legislators and members of the public in the legislative process,” concluded the report released by the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law. In 11 of 14 categories, New York ranked worst or tied for worst, said Jeremy Creelan, the Brennan Center's associate counsel and an author of the report.

I spoke with PIJAC (Pet Industry Joint Advocacy Council) representative Mike Maddox to discuss gaining PIJAC support for a FCF letter to Governor Pataki requesting that he refrain from signing this legislation into law. Mike informed me that PIJAC has been involved with this bill since the beginning and negotiated the removal of all wild animals commonly sold in pet shops. When pressed for his written endorsement of the FCF letter to the Governor, he stated he has enjoyed a close relationship with the NY legislature and didn't want to “rock the boat, so to speak.” He voiced the personal opinion that wild cats were not pet animals.

Captive Wildlife Safety Act. The federal amendment to the Lacey Act signed by President Bush last December required the Secretary of Interior with the USDA to promulgate regulations in 180 days. A F & W representative spoke with FCF Las Vegas Convention attendees about this new legislation. The 180-day deadline is past and we were told to look for regulations to be published in the Federal Register in September. Presently, the amendment is not in enforcement, since the Act specifically states the act will not go into effect until regulations are approved.

The regulations will describe the parties to be exempted and the permit process for interstate transport of big cats. Once they are published in the Federal Register, the public will have a period of time to send in written comments on the proposals and then final rules will be published and the Captive Wildlife Safety Act will be enforced.

USDA POLICY ON HANDLING DANGEROUS ANIMALS. Federal Register, May 2004. Comments concerning the draft policy for the handling of dangerous animals lasted for 60 days ending on April 18, 2000. The USDA has published that they have determined that any clarification of the regulations should be accomplished through rulemaking and they are now providing notice that they will not be publishing or implementing a final policy statement on these issues. Should the USDA propose to amend the regulations and standards, they will initiate rulemaking and provide notice and opportunity for public comment.

CALIFORNIA AB 1857 prohibiting declawing or “arranging or procuring” declawing of non-domestic cats did pass on the Senate Floor on Tuesday, August 24. AB 1857 will go through the housekeeping process - enrolling and engrossing — to reach the Governor. In this second year of the legislative session, if a bill is delivered to the Governor before the Legislature adjourns, the Governor has 12 days to act,

General Membership Minutes 07-29-04

George Stowers gave the opening address

*Ban laws were introduced in Washington, Oregon, Minnesota and New York by AR groups. Laws were defeated in Washington and Oregon and passed in Minnesota and New York.

*Harold Epperson gave the treasury report..

*Leann announced mass mailings were used to increase members. A total of 105 new members have joined since 1-01-04.

*Tracy Wilson announced 3 husbandry courses were presented this past year in Florida, North Carolina, and at convention in Las Vegas. A fourth is scheduled this fall in South Dakota. USDA approved the husbandry class to be presented at a zoo in Arkansas per USDA's request, which was taught by Tracy. A laptop computer has been donated to FCF for husbandry course use. A newly formed conservation committee put together a conservation grant application for researchers and conservation related projects to apply to FCF for donations. The BOD approved the application. Request for persons interested in being on committee, contact Tracy or any board member. Attendees at the Playa de Oro reserve installed solar panels in 2004. Playa de Oro trips have been well attended, with 3 fully booked tours in 2004, and more scheduled for 2005 already. New trip fee is \$760.00 effective 01-01-2005 due to increased traveling prices.

*Lynn reported that Animal rights are lobbying to pass state and federal legislation. FCF members need to contact news media when they issue biased coverage and let them know our views and refer them to FCF and our web site. FCF members should become proactive instead of reactive.

*Carol Bohning taught the Convention husbandry course and had 21 in attendance. They were Fred Boyajian, Bobbi Brink, Sheri O'Brien, Joyce Cohn, Harie Cohn, Deeanna Croasmun, Pamela Fenlon, Richard Freitag, Eva Frycr, Richard Newton, Jeff Miller, Dena Werta, Richard Hahn, Dianne Johnson, Vic Johnson, Karen Kelly, Charles Mock, Debra Mock, Judy Sugden, Tina Tierney and Michael York. Richard Freitag was valedictorian.

*J.B. Anderson proposed a silent bid before actual auction. Officer candidates for the 2005/2006 term were introduced. President, Bob Turner spoke

Vice-President, Kevin Chambers spoke

Secretary-Treasurer, Harold Epperson spoke

Legal Affairs, Sara Schimke spoke

Legal Affairs, Evelyn Shaw given by Lynn Culver

Conservation & Education, Leann Montgomery spoke

Conservation & Education, Hope Bennett, not present

Member Services, Donna Verba given by Lynn Culver

Member Services, Liz Hatton, not present

Advertising & Publicity, Deborah Rabinsky, not present

Advertising & Publicity, Marcus Cook, not present

Life Director, George Stowers spoke

Life Director, Bobby Bean spoke

Life Director, Tracy Wilson spoke

Life Director, Lynn Culver spoke

Leann announced the formation of an Accreditation Committee

that will be composed of 5 members. Terms of the members will be staggered.

*Judith Sugden, Carolyne Kneip, Lorean Vigne and Jessi Clark-White offered suggestions and valuable comments regarding topics discussed.

FCF Contributes to Conservation Project

Below is the text of a letter sent by Tracy Wilson, on behalf of the Board of Directors and membership of FCF, accompanying a contribution to the camera-trapping and conservation work being conducted by Jim Sanderson. This conservation work has been covered in more detail in several recent issues of this newsletter.

August 19, 2004

Jim Sanderson, Ph.D.

Center for Applied Biodiversity Science

Conservation International

1919 M Street, NW, Suite 600

Washington, DC 20036-3521 USA

Dear Jim,

On behalf of the FCF board of directors and the our membership, I would like to present this donation of \$1000 to the Small Cat Conservation Alliance in order to help fund further camera trap research. We would like to help support your upcoming research in Kalimantan to find photo evidence of the Flat Headed cat, Bay Cat, and Marbled Cat and hope this donation will help purchase more cameras for your important work.

We would like to thank you for your ongoing support and advise to FCF in our camera trapping endeavors in Ecuador for the past year and a half. We are currently continuing our camera trap project in this area, and look forward to your continuing and assistance as we continue to search for the ever elusive margays and oncillas in this tropical rain forest habitat.

Sincerely,

Tracy Wilson

Director of Education & Conservation

Feline Conservation Federation

Blasts from the Past. . . .

Long Island Ocelot Club Newsletter Volume 31, Number 3 May/June 1987

In 1974 the Long Island Ocelot Club formerly adopted a constitution, by-laws and a board of directors. Roger Harmon served as Vice President. In 1978 he was elected Life Director. Roger also hosted the club's first official convention in Texas. Ken Hatfield was the Long Island Ocelot Club's first president, serving from 1974 to 1987. Fred Boyajian was elected to serve following Ken's tenure. The winds of change were blowing; legislation prohibiting private ownership of ocelots and other wild felines was passing in many states and a debate over what constitutes political correctness was brewing. This battle in semantics continues today. In Roger's resignation letter to the members he tells them it is time for him to step down and let others serve the club. He also offers his advice for the next generation.

A Word in Parting

Tradition is a fallacy in any argument; just because George Washington or our grandfathers did not watch TV is no reason why we should not watch TV. However, I am not arguing and TRADITION is extremely important, because by knowing about our history we can better prepare for our future. By learning from the mistakes of our past, we can avoid the same mistakes in the days to come. Making a mistake is no shame, but not learning from one is downright stupid!

LIOC is an organization that has grown out of LOVE and a desire to SHARE INFORMATION relating to the exotic feline - sharing lessons learned and various precautions" taken. LIOC was founded by a super little lady and her intense love of her exotic in her willingness to share with other owners information she had acquired. It follows only naturally that in any such arrangement, a kindred bond is formed that is unlike any other friendship formed.

Apart from all of the information I have gained by being associated with LIOC, I cherish the warm friendships I have collected. I have been privileged to hold memberships in a number of organizations from social fraternities, horticultural societies, equine organizations, and a number of honorary groups who have honored me in various ways. However, I can say without hesitation, I most dearly cherish the honors, privileges and the warm and lasting friendships I have found in LIOC.

Together we have weathered many changes and difficulties. I predict we will continue to do so. We are different from many of the organizations associated with animals in general, but exotic felines in particular. We need the help of some of the other organizations, but be assured they also need us. NEVER, NEVER, NEVER be ashamed to be referred to as a "PET OWNER". Never be ashamed to call this organization a "Club". We are what we are, and that is what we are. We have our differences, that is only natural. But there is love amongst us: love for our cats, love for each other.

The time has come for me to step down as a Life Director of LIOC and allow someone perhaps younger and wiser to take my place of honor. God grant that he or she will keep one eye on the past; to avoid repeated mistakes, and one eye on the future, to do what is best for the cats, and what is best for the "club". Doing this, I am sure they will serve you well.

A spirit of cooperation will gain all of us a bigger and better organization. I wish all the Board of Directors the very best of everything in the future.

Dr. Roger Harmon

L.I.O.C. Endangered Species Conservation Federation, Inc. Newsletter Volume 34, Number 5 September/October 1990

Why would anyone want to own a mountain lion?

The tremendous appeal of the Star Wars adventures for both children and adults is largely due to the Ewoks, Yoda, Chewbacca and all the other imaginary creatures from distant worlds who befriend and help the human protagonists. We seem to have a fascination with the idea of communicating with alien intelligence. We are eager, both in our imagination, and in reality, to brave the cold emptiness of space in hopes of finding such intelligence. Yet right here on our own planet there exists a myriad example of intelligence as alien as any from another world. And there is no peace between us. They have all learned to fear us as the most terrible monster on this planet. We behave as if we were the alien invaders, waging relentless genocidal war upon them all. Is this the attitude we will take with us to the stars?

I have made a friend among the aliens of this Earth. His name is Mercury. He is a mountain lion. We sit together in the twilight, watching the stars come out. He is teaching me to hear with the ears of a cougar, to see with the eyes of a cougar. I am teaching him the strange human custom of property ownership. He is my companion, he is my friend. The day is over. Another job well done. We have patrolled and marked our territory. He looks at me contentedly and actually hugs me. I think to myself THIS is Chewbacca. But this is real...

Why would anyone want to own a mountain lion? Because it is the stuff dreams are made of.
Bart Culver

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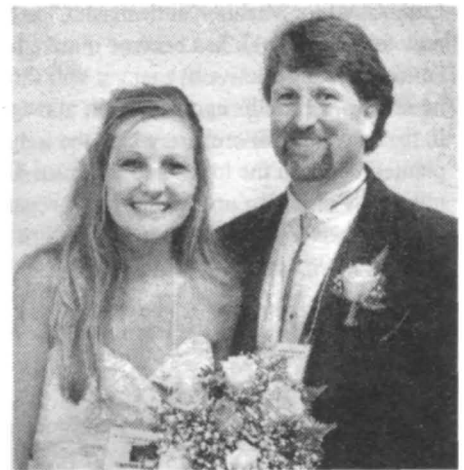
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Good Times in Vegas caught on film by Phil Parker



*Top Left: Sandy Masek, Joe Maynard, Bobby & Jessica Bean banquet night
Top Right: Caroline and Dan Kneip renewed their wedding vows at the Flamingo Chappel
Bottom left: Arlene Gofenna, Judy Jezl
Bottom right: Ralph Renna beside Judyjane Renna holding tiger cub in the hospitality suite*

A Few More Las Vegas Convention Memories



Bobby Bean, Jessica Bean, Reva Anderson and Caroline Kneip at the hospitality suite. photo by Phil Parker



Mary Roberts, Ray Beckley, Bill Boyajian & Sue Beckley banquet night. photo by Fred Boyajian

Playa de Oro Reserve Needs FCF's Support

Any FCF members out there who particularly want to spend time with a rambunctious young ocelot, helping teach him manners which will enable him to continue roaming freely about the lodge at the Playa de Oro Reserva de Tigrillos and hiking in the rainforest with guests?

I have just returned from the reserve, and can report that Little Chief (or Mishi—“little master,” as the staff calls him), now ten months old, has become quite a handful. He is entirely too destructive to roam at will through the lodge as he did a few months ago, and even manages to wreck havoc in the tropical fruit orchard which the lodge manager has planted between the lodge and the river. This he accomplishes by climbing up and out limbs regardless of whether they can bear his weight, which often brings him and the limb crashing down together.



FCF member Eric Barkalow visits with Little Chief ocelot at Playa de Oro Reserve

Little Chief's favorite thing, though, is to hike with his human friends in the rainforest, they on the trail and he slinking along, often unseen but always nearby, in the undergrowth. He also loves dashing up a 30-foot tree to get an overview of the landscape (or to prove he can do something his human friends can't?)

For an ocelot orphaned in infancy who very probably will never have the skills needed to go back to the wild, this is about as good as it gets: human-supported life in a rainforest like the one which, had his mother not been killed, would have been his natural habitat.

It is possible for Little Chief to have such a good life (and for other, better-equipped captive ocelots and margays to be returned to the wild here) because the local people, who own this 25,000-acre patch of pristine rainforest have promised to protect all species of jungle cats. They do hunt for their own table—they are, after all, hunter-gatherers, and there is little to eat other than what they take from forest or river—but exotic cats are protected.

In exchange, the community of Playa de Oro gets help from organizations like FCF to run their lodge. Recently FCF members donated a new commercial stove and donated the funds to put a new roof on the old military barracks which has been renovated and now serves as a jungle lodge.

Usually the lodge generates enough income to pay the wages of the local people who work at the reserve—salaries which average \$150/month, except for the director, who earns a whopping \$250/month (and this in a country where food, medicine, cars, and gasoline costs just as much as it does here). However, the normally good month of August did not generate enough visitors to cover operating costs—not after a 12-person tour group from England suffered a vehicle breakdown on its way to the riverport where it was to catch the boat and never made it. The lodge not only lost an income which would have covered the

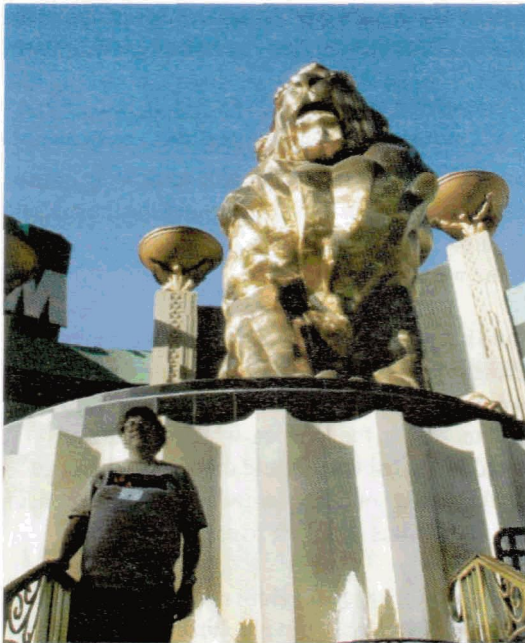
continued on page 35

MGM Lion Habitat

MGM studios, and later, the MGM Grand have had the lion as their symbol and mascot since nearly the inception of the company. This all stems back to one of the people behind MGM having run a zoo in Los Angeles back at the turn of the century. From pictures I have seen of this zoo, it was decades ahead of its time.

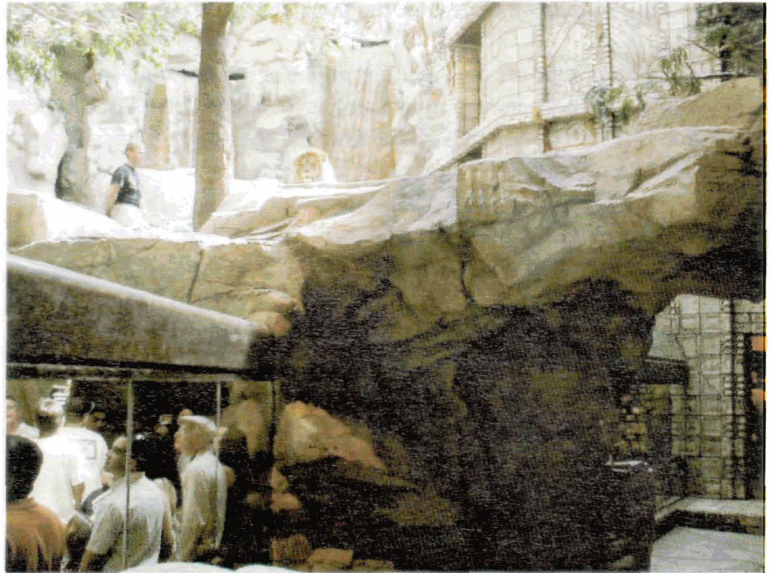
MGM Grand decided it was time to honor its mascot, the lion. So, it contracted with notable animal trainer and conservationist Keith Evans to build a lion habitat within the casino. Keith has been keeper of the royal line of 'MGM lions', dating back to the original 'Leo'.

Keith designed a beautiful facility that would be a perfect place to show off lions. It



has four waterfalls, all sorts of places for lions to play and rest, a Plexiglas tunnel for visitors to see lions on all sides of them, and two story high glass windows for the public to look into the habitat. The habitat is environmentally controlled, and is kept at 75 degrees and 55 percent relative humidity at all times. The air system is separate from the

smoky casino, so the lions always have clean air to breathe. The ceiling is a big skylight, so there is plenty of natural light during the day. Artificial trees add to the naturalness of the environment.

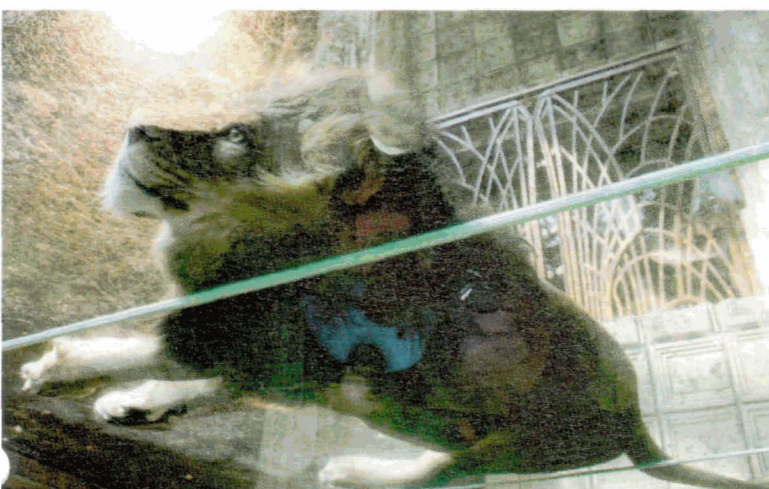


*Above: MGM Grand lion habitat. photo by Mindy Stinner
Below: lion handlers give the resident male a rub down. photo by Phil Parker*



Built at a cost of nearly 9 million dollars, the facility opened to the public in July of 1999.

A visitor to the lion habitat can expect to see anywhere from one to three lions in the habitat at any one time. Most of the lions used are females, as the males are harder to handle, and sleep more. Still, big males are exhibited, typically three times a week. Big males were present for our visit, but we visited during one of the normal timeslots for male lions. Contrary to what I was saying there, the males were not there just for us.



*Top: Tim Stoffel stands in front of the MGM Golden lion statue
Bottom: Lion lounges on the plexiglass floor above the walk-through visitor corridor. photos by Phil Parker*

The keepers, who also handle the lions at Keith's ranch, spend a lot of time in the habitat with their lions. They play games with the lions, pet and scratch them, and clean up after their 'messes'. Twice a shift, the lions are fed in front of the public. They use small balls of Nebraska Feline Diet, which they often stick

to the glass so the public can see the lions lick it off the glass.

Balls and other toys are provided for the lions to play with. But, sometimes, the keepers will invent games to play with the lions (or vice versa!) The lions also have rawhide chew toys, which they tend to promptly destroy.

But, lions are lions, and they need lots of 'beauty rest'. They also crave attention, especially from people. So, the lions often take their naps on the roof of the Plexiglas tunnel. The lions like this spot, as the people are below them, gawking at them!

Two shifts of lions are rotated through the habitat each day. The shifts are 5-6 hours long. The lions are checked over and shampooed (!) with Johnson's Baby Shampoo before their time at the habitat. There are no on-site lion facilities; the lions travel between Keith's ranch and the habitat in an air-conditioned van.

The keepers are expected to be highly trained, and a degree in animal behavior is preferred. Keepers work with a given lion from 'cradle to grave' so that they are bonded to each other. The lions generally choose their favorite keepers, and these are the people who then permanently work with them. Many hours are spent off-exhibit at Keith's ranch working with the lions.

Keith also donates part of the proceeds of the Lion Habitat to lion conservation projects.

The lionesses are kept together in 'prides', and the males in 'coalitions', as would be the case in the wild. Breeding is done, but it is carefully controlled.

Besides the habitat itself, the MGM Lion Habitat features an area where people can get photographs taken with cubs (when there are cubs, which is not real often.) There is an informational video running all the time in one public room of the habitat. Also, from time to time, a guide gives a public presentation about what is going on in the habitat, and also answers questions of the visitors. There are also a series of informational signs mounted on a rail that prevents people from getting too close to the glass. The sound of falling water, punctuated with occasional (authentic) lion roars is played through a sound system outside the habitat, even when there are no lions in the habitat. (The one or two times over the years that I have heard a lion actually roar in the habitat, it shook the huge plate glass windows!)

Additionally, there is a big lion-themed gift shop. This is 'lion lover overload'! T-shirts, trinkets, educational materials, plush toys (to half life-size), etc. are available there. The gift shop opens before the lion habitat itself opens, which is usually about 11 AM. It stays open until the habitat closes at 10 PM. The habitat is open 7 days a week.

After we left the Mirage, we made our way over to the MGM Grand hotel for lunch and a visit to the world-famous MGM Grand Lion Habitat. I had my own vehicle, and so I was able to beat most people over to the hotel, and then act as a guide.

The Rainforest Cafe was a delightful place for a 'cat-people lunch'. While we were waiting to be seated, many people in our group shopped the extensive gift shop just outside the restaurant.

The restaurant itself was exquisite. We had a banquet area on the second floor. We were surrounded by (artificial) foliage, and many different kinds of animatronics animals. From time to time, the animals 'came to life' and did their little act for a couple of minutes. Fish tanks of many different shapes and sizes displayed many interesting varieties of fish. From time to time, we would be interrupted by a 'thunderstorm'. There was thunder and lightning, artificial and real rain, and the trees 'swayed in the wind'. The 'animals' acted up, too! (The main level also features a star field ceiling that has an occasional meteor zip through it.)

Although service was a tad slow, the food was very good and well worth the wait. For dessert, they served an incredibly rich chocolate cake!

People then wandered down to the Lion Habitat on their own. We were treated that day to two really nice adult male lions. Although we thought the males were brought there especially for us, I later found out that this is one of their normal 'time slots' during the week.

There were two keepers in with the lions, who were actively playing with them. We picked a good time to go down there. The males were active and were moving around a lot. (They normally sleep more than the females, which are the lions usually featured in the habitat.) While this was going on, a guide told us through a sound system what was going on, and told us details about lions and their lives at the habitat.

I was absolutely spoiled that day! Both male lions 'Bora' and 'Motu' seemed to spend a lot of time looking right at me, even when I was in a crowd of people. Bora, especially, took special interest in me. The result was a very special time, and more proof that lions can pick out people who have a real heart for them!

We spent a good 45 minutes there, before having to move on to the Tropicana and the Rick Thomas magic show. A lot of people in our group also visited the wonderful gift shop next to the lion habitat. This is truly a lion-lovers 'department store', and has more different kinds of lion items than anywhere else I have ever been.

Keith Evans is the manager of the Lion Habitat, and supplies all the lions used there. The lions are rotated through the habitat in two 5 or 6 hour shifts a day. There are no on-site facilities for lions at the hotel. They are transported back and forth to Keith's ranch outside of Las Vegas. The ranch is home to 11 male and 18 female lions, most of which take turns in the habitat. (The story goes that the lions really like their time in the habitat. One lion however, liked the habitat so much he wouldn't leave! This lion is no longer allowed in the habitat as it thinks it's their space and theirs alone!)

From my limited dealings with Keith, he is a true cat person. He believes that lions and humans were meant for each other, and it is a fulfillment of our highest call of existence to be bonded to these marvelous animals! Keith also sees to it that some of the proceeds of the Lion Habitat are given to lion conservation projects.

Has the lion habitat been successful? Absolutely! I have never failed to see a considerable crowd around whenever there were lions present. People of all ages gather around to marvel at the King of Beasts. A great deal of 'ambassador work' is done there to educate people about the true nature of lions and their plight. They also get to see lions interacting positively with humans. This does more to counter 'vicious' stereotypes about lions than any books, websites, videos, etc. we can get into the public's hands.

There were some rumors circulating that the lion habitat might be closed and turned into a nightclub or poker room. Keith made sure that wouldn't happen, at least not for a couple more years. But, if you like the lion habitat, I think that MGM Mirage needs to hear from us about the value of the Lion Habitat.

Strange thing: On Saturday, I wore my 'official Lion Habitat Lion Keeper's shirt'. I got so many inquiries as to where that shirt may be obtained, that I purchased another one (they are for sale in the Lion Habitat gift shop) and put it in the auction!

Tim Stoffel

Las Vegas and FCF – what a wonderful experience!

Actually it was a great experience in all. I can't say if it met my expectations because I didn't have a clue WHAT to expect. Here is the Reader's Digest version.

I thought it was a great value for the money. Got a hell of a lot of stuff paid for with the convention admission price and the food that they put out for the "ice breaker", the dinner buffet and the breakfast the last day. (And the food was really good!)

The vendors that were in the meeting room were all VERY helpful and let me pick their brains at length about what they sold, why I would need it or want it, and the pros and cons of cat ownership.



*Secret Gardens topiary panther.
photo by Phil Parker*

Being a huge magic fan, I really enjoyed Field Trip Day. I was excited to go back to the Secret Garden. It's one of my favorite places in Vegas and I hope to get back on a day they have their new leopards out. (Before they are no longer babies.) To me, it is a very peaceful place and I spend hours there at a time. The kid in me was tickled to finally get to eat lunch at the Rainforest Cafe. Never had cake that good before!! The lions at the MGM are always interesting to watch. (And listening to the people who have never seen a big cat up close is always entertaining!) Seeing the interaction of the cats and handlers that obviously love the animals was what got me interested in exotic cats as a small child and the handlers are often in the enclosure at the MGM giving attention to the lions, and have always been pleased to answer questions.

Rick Thomas was fantastic. The Shrinking Tiger was an illusion I'd heard about for a while and was VERY eager to see. Little Morpheus was absolutely adorable!

The day of speakers was really educational. Hearing Rick Thomas talk was pretty much worth the trip alone. The feed guy has got me shaking in my shoes about ever being able to properly feed a cat of my own, but I learned a lot.

The dinner was good and the auction was funny. (I spent TOO much money at the auction).

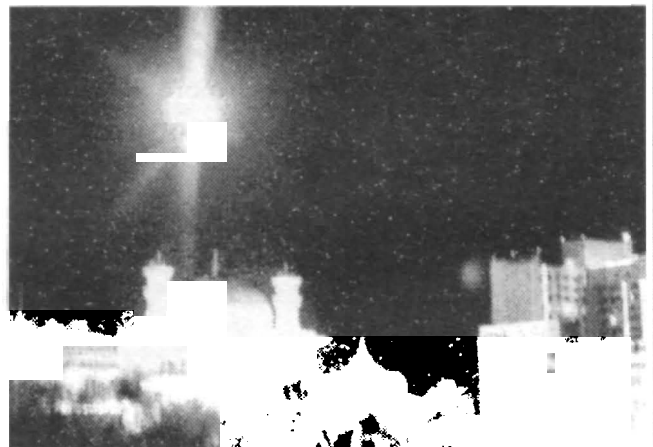
There were a lot of interesting people there with a lot of different viewpoints and that was very cool.

I left with more questions than I started with but that was good as I didn't even know WHAT to ask when I got there. Have a LOT to think about and was not scared off of the thought of eventually getting a cat of my own. (In fact, am more sure than I was that I either want one or want to WORK with them somehow.)

As for the rest of the Vegas experience. . . I am not sure if there is anything left to report that would be, ummmm, fit for human consumption. I'll just repeat the old adage "what happens in Vegas stays in Vegas" ;-)

I *would* travel for another convention that had special things that would interest me. The Siegfried and Roy thing is what motivated me to go to Las Vegas (but I am glad I went even though that didn't work out). The Miami convention holds promise of having a LOT of cats so I would (and in fact am) plan on going there. I want to pet a few to see if I have "fear" in person and to maybe see what kind of cat I'd want.

Donna Coullhan



Vegas under a full moon. photo by Mindy Stinner



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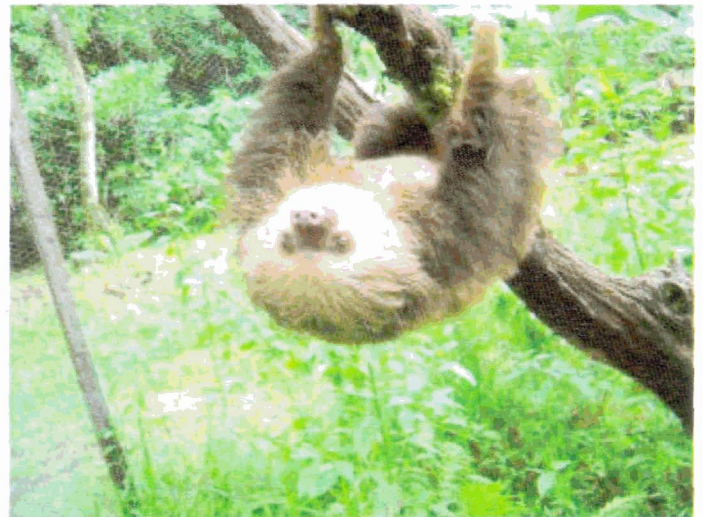
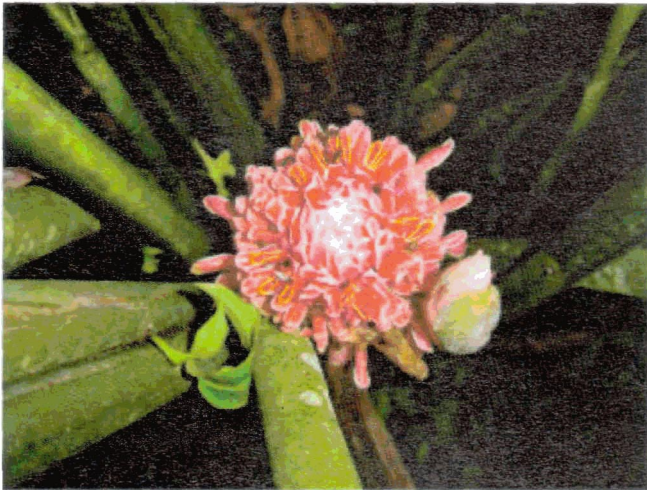
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Playa de Oro Reserve continued from page 30

month's operating expenses, but also was set back the cost of the food purchased for that large group, which was distributed and eaten, since there is no refrigeration and it could not be saved. If anyone out there feels inclined to help make up the August's \$500 shortfall, well, it's just about impossible to say how much that would mean to the people of Playa de Oro, who are trying so hard to make this habitat protection project self-sufficient, so that there continues to be this one safe place (perhaps the only one in all of Ecuador) for our beautiful exotic cats.

submitted by Rosa Jordan



Tree sloth hanging around

A Note from Tour Guide Tracy

We're a little concerned about going into the difficult winter months already behind with these problems of the summer. Anyone that would like to help the reserve out can send donations to the FCF treasurer, marked for Playa de Oro, and we will carry the donations down on our next few trips. You can also help out by going to visit the reserve—we have fully booked trips at the end of this month, and one in November, but the next available slots are in late January—so sign up now for your rainforest adventure!

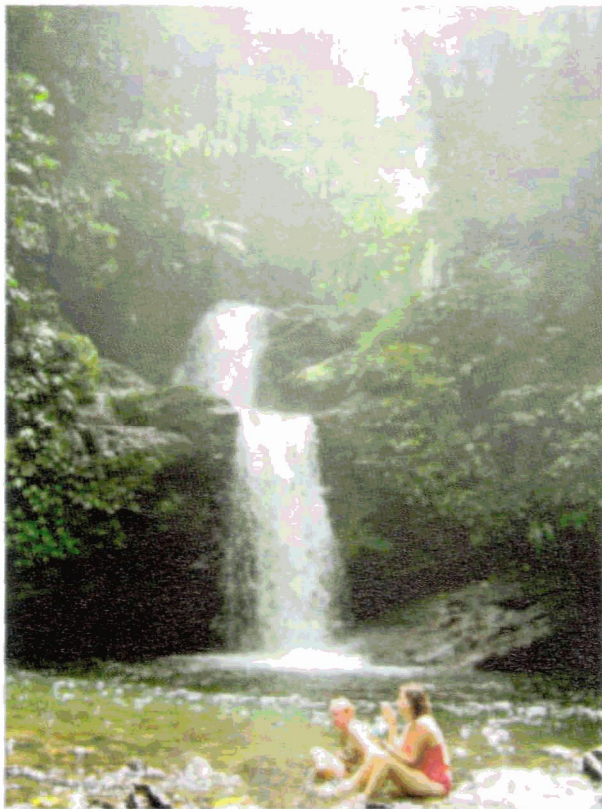
We're getting ready to leave on our next trip to the reserve next week, and I am looking forward to being united with Little Chief ocelot once again. I wonder after all that sucking on my neck that he did as a baby if he will remember me? We've got some training issues to work out with him and the staff—it seems a spoiled child has been allowed to run amuck and create all kinds of pandemonium. Don't you just hate it for me—spending a whole week in the jungle with an over friendly ocelot? I can't wait for our hikes together in the jungle, it will be amazing.

Hey, don't be jealous—you can go too!

You can send donations to the reserve or your trip deposits to:

FCF,
Attn: Harold Epperson
3310 Remington Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46227

Thanks for everyone's help and support, it is much needed! Stayed tuned for the next update about the reserve and Little Chief from me when I return in mid-September!
--Tracy



Rainforest photos by Eric Barkalow



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Of Lions and Man *continued from page 17*

Many proponents of banning private ownership of exotics have no idea of the death knell they are delivering to species that may thrive in the hands of private owners/caregivers. When claims of "15,000 big cats in private hands" sounds awful to a media driven public, it sounds like a concept that works, to me. It isn't a matter of banning; it's a matter of proper private exotic animal husbandry. Proper secure enclosures are the top issue (for both people and cat's safety). Then sustaining good healthy specimens, second to that (for life longevity and emotional enhancement). The issue is proper care, not banning. Look at it this way, when all of a species is extinct, in their natural homelands, private ownership may be the only way their species can survive.

Is saving them worth the effort? I think so. The argument that "they will never be able to go back into the wild" does not hold water. If you take an ordinary domestic housecat, and turn it loose in the woods, it will most likely survive. They find themselves grabbing up the lesser abled prey, and learning skills quickly that allow them to survive.

We, as mankind, have grown in numbers so large that we have removed the places these animals call home. As we displace them, we have a moral obligation (to some, even a religious obligation), to make good to them for what we are doing. Vigorous efforts to protect these species that we could exterminate with our own increasing numbers, shows good moral character as a species. If we are claiming this Earth, as mankind's domain or garden, then we need to also prove that we are capable gardeners.

There is always the inevitable species crash from overpopulation. It can be proven time and again, from observing deer in the woods, tigers in the jungle, even to bacteria in an incubated petri dish. The results are always the same. Resources are consumed, waste accumulates and the species crashes. How long can we continue to increase our population before we see this formula played out in our species? That could very well be the time that sanctuaried animals can return to the wild. The resources of Earth will greatly expand, from a crash in human population. Sad, but true.

All of this discussion is based on poor stewardship of man's existence on Earth. We can turn it around.

It's not too late, until it's too late.

We will know when that time has arrived, as we will see pandemic disease, war over the last of precious resources, and governments becoming increasingly restrictive. Governments of the "have" countries, will have to be very controlled, to protect it's citizens from the "have not" countries. This stranglehold form of government rule will create dissension within it's own citizenry.

No one is happy when things get real tight, right?

What we have to do, is evolve once more. We need to allow this occurrence to take place. It is definitely happening, we see the signs. I am not talking about a change in appearance of humans here, I am talking about a growth in enlightenment, wisdom, and temperance. We must understand, without forethought, that we do not need 4-5 offspring (or more) per family, especially if it's not economically feasible. We must realize that our population is living longer and causing an increase in numbers. We must think globally, but act locally. Not too terribly difficult for a properly evolved species.

We are all genetically connected. There is no need to procreate based on a concept of preserving a family gene pool. We are all of the same. To feel such a need to forward one's own family line, is a miscast thought of finding some sort of immortality. "I will live on, through my son". What a bunch of bunk. He will be no more of the same person as you, than the son of a total stranger. If that is a particular man's reason for progeny, maybe the offspring being so different is a good thing. Reckon?

I am not talking about a bunch of people all holding hands singing We Are The World (conceptually nice, though). I am talking about not having our own offspring. I am talking about surrogation. Substitution. Raising another's offspring who is less fortunate, and could use assistance. Or, substituting an endangered species as a life's work? Maybe that's what many people are doing by creating private animal sanctuaries, without thinking of it in those terms. Maybe this is a desire fueled by an ever-increasing presence of evolution. Possibly, there are inner stirrings driving our desires to do what's right, to protect our fragile blue planet, and all of it's offspring.

Let's not ignore those signs of wisdom. Let's not reject new concepts of care giving, whether it is human or animal. Knee-jerk law making, to satisfy loud minorities who think they have all the answers, is a possible resistance to a natural order of human evolution. Just because someone has a pretty face, or can remember lines (or use a teleprompter), makes movies, TV shows, political speeches, etc., does NOT automatically make them leaders in this evolution-revolution. They could though, if they are evolved enough, and truly care. Those who are making the effort could certainly use some assistance.

It is the thinkers, the compassionate ones, and the wise ones that speak of guidance for a new dawn of Earth. Listen to them. You will know in your heart, if their words are true.

FCF NEWS

Several exciting projects have been suggested by FCF members recently. Each project requires volunteers and member commitment. Please review these proposals and consider volunteering to develop these ideas into fully functional projects.

FCF PROMOTIONAL VIDEO. FCF needs to produce its own educational/promotional video to play in schools, community programs, boy scout meetings, etc - telling of the need for captive gene pools, the need for private ownership and the danger of total extinction if the AR and PETA agenda is followed. Video images are a powerful tool and there is nothing more convincing than seeing a well maintained privately owned facility, dedicated and responsible owners and their felines giving love and receiving love.

FCF POWERPOINT PRESENTATION Besides a video, another useful production would be a PowerPoint show that features the same captive husbandry message, available to our FCF educators for schools or other gatherings.

If you have video and audio dubbing equipment or computer skills and would like to get involved in developing either of these ideas contact Tracy Wilson, her phone, e-mail and address are on the inside cover page.

AMERICAN CATS COLORING BOOKS - FCF member and candidate for Advertising and Publicity, Deborah Rabinski, has approached the FCF BOD with a very exciting project she has begun working on, a conservation coloring book of Native American Cats covering the North, South and Central American species. Deborah has located an artist to develop the drawings and been in touch with a national corporation interested in granting funds to underwrite the printing of this educational project. She will be filling out the grant request for this project.

The coloring books will be a fun way to teach the importance of protecting wild habitats in the Americas, while also teaching geography and Spanish. With membership in each state this program can become nation wide. The FCF developed coloring book will help to unify our message in support of private

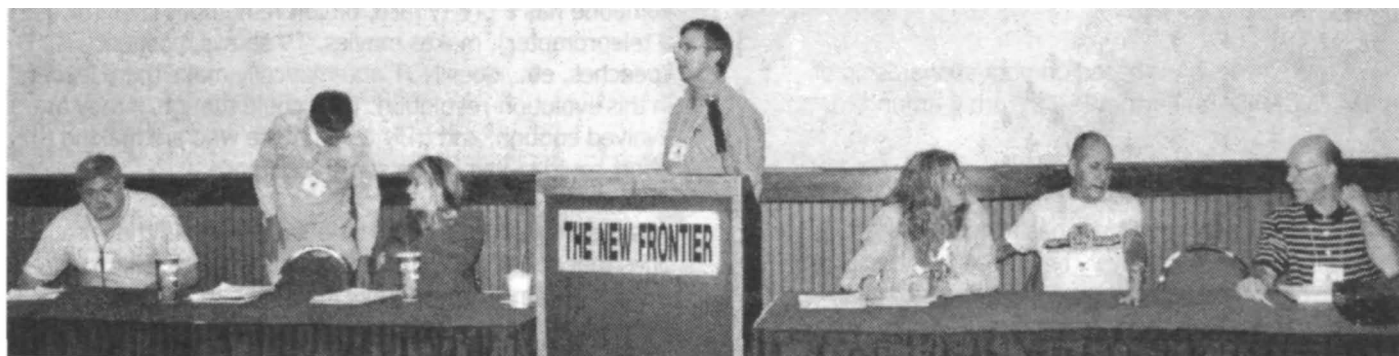
husbandry and the roll it plays in species preservation. The coloring books will be available to our established educators as well as those just developing a program. This educational tool will help FCF members counter the negative press that paints ownership of exotic cats as just self-centered weird, and crazy people by reaching the next generation of children and they in turn can help educate their parents about what they learned.

At this point in time, we are looking for volunteers to help develop the FCF written message for the forward and closing, and give input on the captions for the drawings and fine-tune the educational message. The coloring books will come with a teacher information package and a presenter information package also. Volunteers interested in helping can contact Deborah at deborah@enter.net, or call 610-820-3829

FCF FACILITY ACCREDITATION – at the FCF convention, much of the general membership meeting discussion was focused upon the FCF facility accreditation program. We are still accepting applications to serve on the 5-member board that will review applications for accreditation and we invite all our members who have extensive experience in feline husbandry and facility design to turn to page 15 in the May/June 2004 issue of our publication that covers how to apply for these positions. Once the five positions are filled they will process applications for accreditation.

State and counties often require accreditation in their newly approved exotic animal regulations, so there is a great need for this service. Now we have more exciting news and an even more compelling reason for this program. The FCF Board of Directors is working with representatives in the liability insurance industry to gain FCF Accredited facilities discounts on their liability insurance coverage. This is because FCF accredited facilities will have demonstrated a reduced liability exposure for insurers.

FCF NEWSLETTER EDITOR position is available. Mindy Stinner has raised the bar on the Federation's bi-monthly publication. She has informed the board that due to a doubling of the large cat population at her Conservator's Center Inc. facility, she has found it increasingly difficult to keep our magazine on schedule. If there are any FCF members interested in taking on the volunteer position of editor, please contact Lynn Culver. Adobe PageMaker is the software used. Lynn is available to assist any new editor with articles and formatting.



FCF Board of Directors left to right: Bobby Bean, Bob Turner, Tracy Wilson, George Stowers, Lynn Culver, JB Anderson. Harold Ennerson (Leann Montemerv not pictured)

This beautiful covered walkway leads you to Tom Harvey's Safari Zoological Park located in Kansas. Photos of a few of his animals are his white tigers basking in the sunshine, Siberian lynx and jaguar. Tom and his wife own and operate the zoo which features guided educational tours and lots of wonderful habitats.





Black leopard Boo Boo rough houses with white and orange tiger cubs at Tim Stark's facility Indiana.

Evelyn Shaw's serval Leola naps on the couch with her people.

Our favorite Ecuadoran ambassador, Little Chief grooms.

Momma ocelot Pebbles shows off twin kittens born at Tim Starks.

Boo Boo leopard on his house roof.

