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FCF

Feline Conservation Federation





Feline Conservation Federation

This magazine 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

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Cover: Colette

*Griffith's little geoffroy
has been good all year
and asks Santa to
bring lots of mice and
toys for Christmas.*

**Right: Machista is reading up
on the Playa de Oro Reserve in
preparation for his future as an
FCF ambassador ocelot. Read
his story on page 4**

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**The newly updated FCF web site
is available at www.felineconservation.org**



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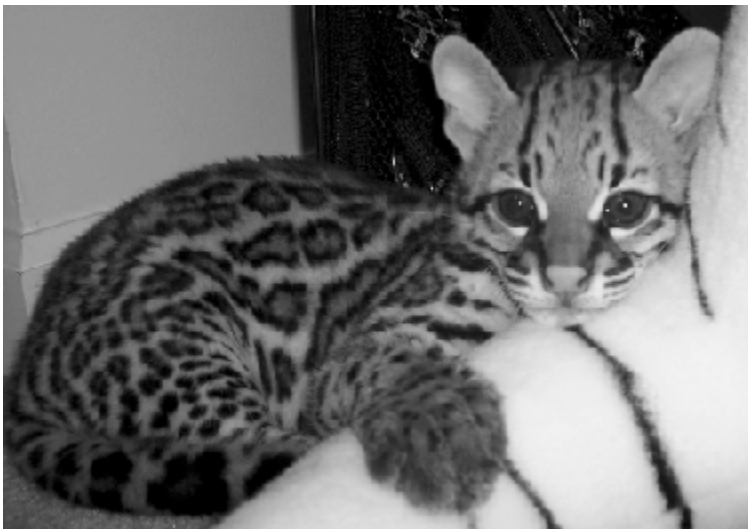
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Machista, an ocelot beginning

by Leann Montgomery

As I look down at the beautiful little ball of spots and rosettes curled up in my lap, I don't know how either of us survived the beginning. Those of you who know me well or have spent even a minimal amount of time around me know that for the past couple of years, I have been obsessed with ocelots. It started with a visit to Isis Oasis in Dec of 2001 for an FCF husbandry course. Having never been around an ocelot, I knew little about them or their dispositions. There were two five-week-old little boys in the house and they were tough. Even at 5 weeks they were muscular and full of machismo. Then there was Lotus, a 7-month-old female who would sit in your lap forever, sucking your finger. I was in love. One weekend with Loreon's cats, and I had to have one. I didn't know how but someday I would have one and I would name him Machista, which is Spanish for macho or tough guy.

Shortly after that visit, a membership application arrived from Tim. He had ocelots and he was in a neighboring state. With the memories from Isis Oasis still fresh in my mind, I called Tim and introduced myself and wanted to talk ocelots. As fate would have it, there was a pair of ocelots living an hour from me. I had to go visit. During my first visit, the female, Pebbles, accidentally hooked my lip with her claw and I bled. The second visit, she was a lot calmer. She sat down in my lap and purred as I stroked her head and then she promptly attached herself to my chin with her teeth. I don't remember it hurting but when I looked down at my sweater, it was covered in blood and she was still attached. I couldn't believe the jaw strength of this little cat. I thought she had taken out a chunk, but when I finally pried her off my face, there were only a few tiny holes in my chin. After only a few visits, Tim told me that if Pebbles and Bam Bam ever bred, he would give me one of the kittens. They were two and a half years old at the time and should have started breeding soon. Although I didn't know Tim that well at the time, I believed him when he said he wasn't into animals for money and that someone who wanted one bad enough to undergo regular abuse by an ocelot should have one. I had to believe him, he was really my only chance at having an ocelot. I think



that I am the only person who actually believed it. Over the past two years, Tim and I have become pretty good friends and I have reminded him and harassed him repeatedly about the promise he made during one of our first visits. Several times over those two years, we thought the ocelots might be breeding but were always disappointed.

When Tim called me at convention this year and told me that he was 95 percent sure that Pebbles was pregnant and that he had separated her from Bam Bam, I tried not to get too excited. I wanted to see her for myself and as soon as I returned from Vegas, I went to visit. Although she didn't really look all that pregnant, she did seem somehow different. We hoped and waited. They were seen breeding and she should have been due at any time. A couple of weeks went by and I began to give up hope. Then, a week before I was leaving for Playa de Oro, I got the call. The babies were finally here. (Your joke really wasn't funny, Tim) It almost didn't seem real. I had waited and wanted for so long. I considered canceling my trip to Playa de Oro. How could I justify leaving the country when something I had wished for, for so long, was finally real? I went to visit the kittens after a few days and they seemed great. Pebbles was doing an excellent job being a mother and after talking it over with Tim, we decided that he would just leave the kittens on mom while I was in Ecuador and I could pull him to bottle raise when I returned. I asked which kitten was mine. Tim said whichever one I wanted. Pebbles allowed us to take one of the kittens out of the box and hold him. At a week old, he was a perfect, squirmy, loud little ocelot. The other kitten stayed snuggled up next to his mom in the back of the box. Somehow, I knew that the kitten in the box whose face I couldn't even see was my kitten. And I told Tim that he was Machista. I left for the reserve feeling a little better about going on the trip. I can't really explain it but I just had this feeling that I couldn't shake, a constant nagging. While we were in Quito, I worried and emailed Tim constantly. The kittens were fine and every thing seemed perfect. I still worried myself sick.

continued page 6

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Machista *continued from page 4*

Luckily the Reserve is a magical place that's good for the soul. Once we arrived at our rainforest destination, my spirit was lifted and I was able to just be in the moment or think about the memories from my first visit to Playa de Oro. To me, it's a place as close to heaven as you'll ever be on earth. I thought about my old tabby, Stretch, who I believe traveled to the middle of the jungle to say goodbye on my last visit. As I was lying in bed listening to the jungle in the wee hours of the morning, I kept thinking that I really needed to stop listening and go to sleep. All I could think about was the hike to the waterfall in a couple of hours and that I had to sleep. Stretch came up under the mosquito netting and curled up in the bed beside me like he did at home. I put my arm around him and thought hmm, I guess I'm already asleep and dreaming. It seemed so real. At home, that same day, Stretch's kidneys shut down completely and my husband told him goodbye for me and that I never would have left if I had known. I would have wanted to say goodbye. Stretch gave me that in the middle of one of the most beautiful places of this existence. It seemed ironic that the last time I was in Ecuador I said goodbye to an old friend and this time, I was thinking about my new one who had just come into this world.

I enjoyed every moment of my time spent at the Reserve but the moment we returned to Quito, that sick feeling returned. I called Tim to check on the kittens since he hadn't sent any email updates during the five days we were at the reserve. Everything was fine. The kittens were all over the place and Pebbles was still being a good mom. I arrived home the following evening and called Tim to confirm that I would be picking Machista up the following morning. Tim asked if I would bottle raise the two kittens together. Of course I would. I got up early the next morning and called Tim to let him know that I was on my way. He was on his way out to pull them.

When I arrived at Tim's, he met me at the door with a worried look on his face. Something had gone terribly wrong in a very short amount of time. Overnight, the kittens showed serious signs



of illness. They were dehydrated and had diarrhea that was full of mucus. Machista was limp. Tim suggested I just take the other kitten who seemed okay and leave Machista there to be treated. No way was I leaving him. That was my kitten and if he was going to die, it wasn't going to be because I didn't do everything possible to save him. Both kittens were going directly to Dr. Slone. He's worked several miracles for me in the past and looking at Machista, we needed one badly.

At the vets office we drew blood and did x-rays. Machista's white blood cell count was through the roof. The second kitten's WBC was only slightly elevated. Machista had been the smaller of the two kittens since birth. He always seemed a little more

fragile. Assuming the kittens had a bacterial infection, the vet put them on amoxicillin and sub-Q fluids and I took them home to try to get them on a bottle. The first three days, they would eat nothing at all. I was giving them nutritional and fluids to keep them going. I didn't sleep at all during that time. I was so afraid that if I closed my eyes, Machista would quit breathing. There were several times that I picked him up and he wouldn't wake up. I thought he had slipped away. His breathing was so shallow that it was barely detectable. I would shake him and scream at him and cry like a baby. And finally he'd open his little eyes and look at me briefly before



closing them again. I'd hold him close to my heart with my face pressed against his little forehead and whisper to him with the tears still rolling down my face. "You are my Machista. I need you to live up to your name and be strong. I need you to know how much I love you already. I will do everything I can to get you through this. Just don't give up" And then Machista would purr for just a moment and sink back into a deep sleep. It was the only noise he ever made.

By the fourth day, they were beginning to take a very small interest in the bottle. Besides occasional vomiting, Inca, the bigger of the two brothers seemed to be faring pretty well. But Machista wasn't improving. We went back to see Dr. Slone and did a fecal culture which had to be sent off to the lab. After 4 days on Amoxi, he should have shown some signs of improvement if it was going to work, so we switched to Clavamox, which is a little more broad-spectrum than Amoxi. They were on Clavamox for several days and Machista still didn't show any marked improvement. The antibiotic was changed again, this time to Flagyl. Meanwhile, Inca was growing rapidly, increasing his formula intake, and becoming quite the little ocelot. I was beginning to get desperate for Machista. I didn't know how much longer he could hold out like this. I had to do something. At this rate, neither of us was going to survive this. I racked my brain trying to think of something I could do different. Anything that might make him feel better. In desperation, I took a hot washcloth and wiped down his face and front legs, which were a little yucky from all the antibiotics, nutritional, and vomiting, and then I licked his little face like his mom would have done. Surprisingly, it did seem to make him feel a little better. He was more alert than he had been and he ate a respectable amount of formula at his next feeding. Over the next couple of days he ate a small amount on a pretty regular basis. We were at least making some progress even if it was very slowly. I was still supplementing with fluids and nutritional.

The kittens were now 4 ½ weeks old. Inca was a typical kitten his age in every way. He was beginning to develop a mind of his own and couldn't sit still. It was hard to have him around and not think that something was seriously wrong with Machista. Machista didn't do any of the things that Inca was doing at this age. Mostly he just slept, which I longed to do. I hadn't slept for more than 15 minutes at a time a couple of times a day for two



straight weeks and it was beginning to take its toll. Luckily, I had good co-workers who covered my shifts for me during this time.

Even though it was earlier than I would have liked to, I decided to start offering Machista some solid food. Maybe he wasn't processing his formula. Maybe he just needed more. He never really had much of an appetite at all. I offered him some ground turkey with Mazuri supplement. He took to it immediately and refused the bottle completely. That same day, the culture came back from the lab and he was put on Albon, the fourth antibiotic. From there things started looking up. Within 24 hours, he had a fairly normal stool and the vomiting ceased. He began eating ground turkey twice a day and getting much stronger, but he was still way behind his brother. By now Inca was tearing through the house and tormenting my 100lb German Shepard. Machista had no coordination and still slept a lot. At around 7 weeks of age, it was time for Inca to go to his new home. Though I had grown really attached to him, I was looking forward to having one on one time with Machista.

When Inca's new owner came to get him, several times, she commented on how something must be wrong with Machista. At 7 weeks, he had no coordination. He couldn't walk more than a couple of steps without falling over, he wasn't vocal at all like an ocelot that age should be, and he seemed fragile. Like any proud mother defending her child, I insisted that he was going to be fine. I was the one who watched him for weeks on end to make sure he didn't quit breathing. I was the one who knew that any other kitten in his condition probably wouldn't even be here today. He is my Machista, my tough guy, and against all odds, he has lived up to his name.

At almost 14 weeks he's doing everything an ocelot his age should be doing or shouldn't be doing in some cases. He's the most amazing animal I've ever known. Thank you to Tim, for giving me such a magnificent gift, to my husband, Brett, for being so understanding and to Lynn, Bobby, Cheryl and Tracy for keeping me sane through this whole ordeal, but most importantly to Machista for never giving up.

Top left: Machista and his best dog-friend, Atlas

Below left: Machista and his stuffed buddies

Above right: Machista peers outside his livingroom tent

Left: Machista guarding Leann's husband, Brett



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Citizen Lobbyist and Animal Ownership

Cindy Jepsen, Capitol Resource

It's everywhere and growing! Across the nation a silent and ruthless giant has awakened with a vengeance and threatens your ability to own a feline and many other endangered and not so endangered species. Recently, the *Pioneer Press* in St. Paul Minnesota ran a story about a woman whose two dogs were impounded and are sentenced to death unless she can definitively prove that her dogs are not part wolf. A hearing is pending.

As federal laws have squeezed the interstate commerce of large cats, legislation that outright prohibits ownership is running rampant in state legislatures. This has especially been the case during the last biennium in Minnesota. Who is behind this legislation, and why, and what can you do about it? Those were the very questions asked by a disparate group of befuddled animal owners when legislation was first introduced in the Minnesota Senate in March of 2002. Wisely, this group quickly recognized that if they didn't act quickly they would all be doomed to accept a fate that would literally put many of them out of business.

“All Politics is Local” Grassroots coalition building is an essential first step. Seek out and find others who share your concern. Unite around a common issue and develop your message. Often, this is easier than it sounds. It requires a couple of people who are willing to step forward and spend the time on the telephone organizing a group. And time may not be your friend if you are reacting and responding to legislation that has already begun to unfurl within the legislative process.

In Minnesota, a group was quickly formed. They named themselves “Responsible Animal Owners Association of Minnesota” (RAOAM) and catapulted into action. Their message was simple: Regulate, don't prohibit. Proposed legislation will put our small family businesses, out of business. Single page handouts were developed that carried the message. And the group quickly dispatched themselves as citizen lobbyists and hit the hallways of the Minnesota House and Senate.

Your Voice Makes a Difference Don't Be Intimidated. For some, this is the first time you will be contacting an elected official. Many legislators will tell you there are few things they enjoy more than meeting with their constituents. You come from all walks of life, but the one thing you share is that you are the real “grassroots” voice and the true lobbyists for your issue. Remember, “All politics is local.”

United We Stand is how you spell success in this game. Sure you'll have disagreements along the way, but to win the group has to stay united. Put petty differences aside. This is war. Not everyone in the group is going to have the same agenda. Some folks will be individual animal owners, some will be breeders and some will be exhibitors. Remember, your strength is in numbers and it's important to go after the greater good. You may not be able to get everything you want in the first round. In successive years, you may need a second bite of the apple to build upon your earlier successes.

Building Political Capital Measure your odds. Will there be an intervening election? How will that change your strength and your opposition? Remember to support those who have supported you in your battle. Campaigns are run on money. Consider a contribution to your local legislator. If you can't contribute money, consider another form of support. All legislators need help in knocking on doors, distributing literature and displaying lawn signs. This is what helps you build political capital for the future and for your organization.

Organize, organize and organize You can't hide and hope the issue goes away once an ordinance or law is proposed because it won't. If you do nothing, you are doomed! Your opponents are strident idealists that want you out of business. You are all so busy with just managing the day to day whether you own a single cat or a number of felines as a part of a business. If your state or local jurisdiction hasn't already been targeted, it's only a matter of time. Certainly the trends around the country have convinced us that our opponents are persistent and their persistence eventually pays off. So can your persistence! Even if you only put together a loose knit association, you will have some infrastructure in place to launch you into action when it becomes necessary. Begin accumulating a nest egg to defray expenses. While there are many tasks that can be accomplished with volunteers and in-kind contributions, you won't be able to do everything without some funds.

Start establishing a relationship with elected officials now. Invite them to visit your facility. Demonstrate to them during these visits that you are a responsible animal owner. Have a recovery plan with necessary tools and equipment in place to capture an escaped animal. Consider sharing it with and training local animal control authorities. All of these things you can do now. It will support latter legislative efforts and it will demonstrate that you are reasonable and responsible and that legislation prohibiting animal ownership is brought forward by extremists. Explore models that have worked in other states and talk to these folks. People are always willing to be helpful sharing their experiences and successes and things they would have done differently.

Well Funded Opponents It won't take long to discover that your opponents are a well funded machine with deep pockets that have usually retained a “hired gun.” They may have put their most articulate “save the animals from stupid human creatures” believers out front to talk with legislators and to testify at hearings, but rest assured they are being coached and directed. Much of the testimony will be anecdotal, false and misleading, but you will be on the defensive to disprove their unsubstantiated claims. By taking some of the actions now that are mentioned above, you will have built yourselves a base of support that will dispel your opponents.

Lastly, don't dismiss the notion of hiring a lobbyist to represent your group. They are professionals who are intimately familiar with the legislative process and it is their job to know legislators. They can guide you through tough strategy decisions gathering votes along the way. You may think it's too expensive. Most lobbyists will work with small groups to devise a cost effective plan that will work for you. This may be a business expense for some of you. In the end, if this is your livelihood, it may be well worth the investment.

FCF Feline Facility Accreditation Is Now Available

The following questions and answers should help FCF members become acquainted with this new service so that they may take advantage and obtain FCF Feline Facility Accreditation.

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is defined in the dictionary as being an official recognition of meeting essential or specific requirements. The FCF Feline Facility Accreditation is a voluntary program designed to provide this certification to owners that excel in standards of feline facility construction and management practices. A safe, healthy cat is a direct product of good management, responsible husbandry, and continued learning. The FCF strives to provide information on responsible cat care and management through its accreditation, programs, and newsletter magazine. In developing its Accreditation program, the FCF has been especially concerned with the need for assuring high standards of animal care, husbandry, and protection of the animals and of the public. We believe that this objective is essential in the operation of collections of felines and that good conscience permits no higher priority. FCF Feline Facility Accreditation provides a seal of approval that the facility meets or exceeds the standards and is qualified to provide a safe and productive home for their cats.

What are the benefits?

There are several ways accreditation can benefit you as a cat owner.

Several governmental agencies have, or are considering, legislation banning the ownership of exotic felines. Many of these new laws give exemptions to facilities accredited by other private organizations such as AZA, TAOS, ASA, etc. FCF will be working with legislators to add FCF accreditation to their list of exemptions. All of these other accreditation programs were examined in formulating the FCF Feline Facility Accreditation program, and we feel that the FCF program exceeds them all in addressing the specific needs of caring for exotic felines. By having FCF accreditation, you are showing the legislators and general public that you truly are a responsible owner.

Accreditation can also be used as a learning process. The accreditation committee may give suggestions on how other facilities are doing things and how you might be able to improve certain areas. Every facility has the ability to improve and continually expand its knowledge of care and practices.

Another benefit is the prestige that goes along with being able to say that you have passed the standards of responsible ownership. It shows that you really care about your animals...how they are cared for, their safety, and the safety of the general public. This can help when it comes to sales, courting prospective volunteers or donors, getting exhibition contracts, or just bragging rights to friends that you are

considered to be among the top exotic feline facilities in the country.

FCF Facility Accreditation will also reduce liability insurance rates. Prime Insurance and Kalmanson Insurance representatives have acknowledged the increased safety assured in an FCF Accredited facility and agree to discount premiums to such facilities. FCF representatives are contacting other insurance companies to develop similar savings for our accredited members.

Who can be accredited?

Any facility that maintains exotic felines is eligible for accreditation, whether they own one cat or a hundred. Breeders, exhibitors, single cat owners, zoos, sanctuaries, etc. that provide high levels of responsible ownership can be accredited. The application process addresses specific areas for each type of ownership, not all of which will apply to every applicant. There are no different classifications of accreditation. If a facility ventures into a new aspect, such as off-site exhibition for example, there is no change in the accreditation, but the same high level of responsibility is required to be maintained in that area as well.

Is accreditation hard to get?

That all depends on how much you have already accomplished with setting up your facilities. The standards for accreditation are quite comprehensive, but they are obtainable by most everyone. The inspection sheet can be seen elsewhere in this issue. If you have a question about what is expected in certain areas, by all means, contact the committee and they will do their best to guide you. The committee is here to help you become accredited, not to keep you from achieving it.

What do I do to become accredited?

First, obtain a copy of the inspection form either by downloading it from the FCF website (www.felineconservation.org) or by contacting any member of the Board of Directors or accreditation committee. After reviewing the requirements and preparing all necessary documents and items required, you then need to obtain a licensed veterinarian of your choosing to perform the facility inspection. If you are a licensed veterinarian, you must contact another veterinarian to do the inspection. The cost of this inspection is set by the inspecting veterinarian and is paid for by the applicant. The inspecting veterinarian will then fill out the FCF Accreditation Form. The veterinarian is not evaluating the facility, he is simply observing and reporting what he sees. You then scan all of the labeled pictures, other documents, and the inspection form onto a CD-ROM, making 5 copies. For those without this capability, places such as Kinko's and Wal-Mart can do this for you. These 5 CDs, the original signed inspection form, and the processing fee are then mailed to either the FCF Secretary/Treasurer or the chairman of the accreditation committee.

What are the fees?

The FCF is initially offering this program for a very reasonable \$30 processing fee (\$75 non-FCF member fee). The FCF Board of Directors feels that accreditation should be affordable to all facilities and cost should not be a limiting factor. The BOD realizes that there are additional costs that are associated with getting accredited beyond the processing fee. While other organizations may charge many times more for accreditation, we feel that quality and credibility are much more important than the cost.

Is the information I provide on my application available for anyone to see?

All information obtained or involved in the accreditation process will be maintained in a confidential manner by the FCF, its officers, and the Accreditation Committee and will not be disseminated without the prior written consent of the applicant. The Accreditation Committee chair and the FCF Secretary/Treasurer will keep permanent copies of the application and related documents. The FCF may give out a list of facilities that are accredited, but all information provided on the inspection forms is considered confidential and will not be shown to anyone without the permission of the applicant. The only people who will see the information are the 5 members of the accreditation committee and each has signed a pledge of confidentiality.

What is the accreditation committee?

This is a 5-member panel appointed by the FCF Board of Directors. These persons possess considerable knowledge of all aspects of exotic feline ownership. Their experience encompasses first hand ownership of at least 25 species of wildcats. Their combined experience totals 125 years of working with exotic cats. The Accreditation committee's sole purpose and power is that of approving/denying accreditation applications; suspending, revoking, placing probation, and reinstating accreditation status; and making suggestions to the FCF Board of Directors for needed changes within the Accreditation program.

When are applications processed?

The accreditation committee will review applications on a bimonthly basis. Deadlines for submission of applications to the accreditation committee are Jan. 1, March 1, May 1, July 1, Sept. 1, and Nov. 1. The applications will be distributed to the rest of the committee by the 15th of that month. The Committee has until the 15th of the following month to review and approve or reject the application. The Committee will notify the applicant of the disposition of the application. If approved, the Accreditation is effective beginning the first of the next month (March 1, May 1, July 1, Sept. 1, Nov. 1, or Jan. 1). Renewals must be submitted two months before the expiration of the Accreditation. For example, if the Accreditation became effective March 1, the renewal must be submitted by January 1.

How long is accreditation good for?

Accreditation is good for one year and must be renewed annually. Once granted, accreditation will be renewed only if the conditions and practices continue to be maintained at

or above those levels required. Standards are subject to continuous review and enhancement, requiring increased levels of responsible commitment to achieve and maintain accreditation. Once accredited, a facility is expected to continuously advance its operation and constantly maintain, or surpass, all standards, policies, or guidelines adopted by the FCF.

What happens if I am not approved?

If an application is denied, the applicant will be informed on the area(s) of discrepancy and given 90 days to bring to improve them. The applicant then would need to bring these areas up to standard and have these changes verified by a licensed veterinarian in writing and submit this to the Committee. The Accreditation Committee will then review and approve or inform the applicant if further changes need to be made. The applicant may appeal the denial if he feels that there was some misunderstanding at any point in the accreditation process and submit proof to support their case. If the accreditation committee has received proof within 90 days, the application will be considered abandoned. After the 90-day period has elapsed, the same applicant shall submit an entirely new application and \$30 processing fee (\$75 non-FCF member fee), should they desire to continue to further pursue FCF Accreditation.

What if I need to get accreditation quicker than the normal time frame allows?

Should there be a necessity for accreditation to be expedited and granted before the normal two-month cycle, this option is available for an additional \$30 fee. Applicants wishing to use this option should explain the reason and the date they need the accreditation. The committee will then do its best to grant accreditation on or before the desired date. Renewals for expedited cases will be due as if the accreditation was granted along with the other accreditations granted during the same cycle. For example, if an expedited accreditation became effective January 20, it would expire March 1 of the following year and the renewal would be due Jan. 1.

Can accreditation be suspended or repealed?

Yes. If the FCF Accreditation Committee at any time finds reason to suspend the accreditation of a facility, it is the facility's responsibility to arrange and pay for a new inspection by a veterinarian to reinstate their accreditation status once the condition has been rectified. If re-inspection is not completed within 90 days of suspension, the accreditation is automatically revoked. Cost of re-inspection is the sole responsibility of the facility. There will not be fee for reinstatement until the original expiration date has reached.

Instances which may be cause for suspension, probation, or revocation include, but are not limited to: Failure to maintain standards of husbandry or facilities, conviction of any animal or wildlife criminal laws; Not having required federal, state, or local permits or licenses; or if any deception or fraudulent claim is discovered on the application/inspection form.

Meet the 5-Member FCF Accreditation Panel

Richard Freitag - Rich lives in Lexington, Kentucky where he has worked as Director of Marketing and Sales of Nebraska Brand products for 28 years. Nebraska Brand supplies carnivore diets to zoos, rehabilitation facilities, and private facilities caring for exotic cats, raptors, and wolves. Before working for Nebraska Brand, Rich worked at the Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange, NJ for 10 years as a Senior Keeper, Zoologist, and General Curator. He has hands on experience with 7 different species of exotic cats. His current job provides Rich with significant exposure to public and private facilities due to his travel and conference schedules. He has visited literally scores of feline facilities over the years.

Richard Hahn - Living in Thurmont, Maryland, Richard has had exotic felines since 1966 as an exhibitor and breeder. For the last 38 years, he has been the Director of the Catocin Wildlife Preserve and Zoo. Richard holds a BA degree in Biology and minors in Chemistry and Education. He has taught 7th, 8th, and 9th grade Science, worked as Director of Quality Control in a chocolate factory and as the Assistant Director of Quality Control in a pharmaceutical company before beginning his full time career as a Zoo Director.

Richard founded and was co-coordinator for 12 years of the International Herpetological Symposium, now in it's 29th year. He is a former professional member of the AZA serving as a member of its Honors and Awards Committee and is currently a member of the International Society of Zooculturists, the Feline Conservation Federation, the American Zookeepers Association, and the Southeastern Hot Herp Society. Richard has kept exotic animals since his teenage years in the Boy Scouts of America, and taught many about wildlife and wild places. He has have traveled extensively visiting public and private zoological facilities in the United States, Canada, Mexico, England, Germany, and the Netherlands. He holds state licenses in Maryland and Florida as well as USDA and USDI permits. He is familiar with animal regulations and standards of care in many different states.

Richard's hands on experience dates back to 1966 and he has bred lions, tigers, leopards, jaguars, cougars and fishing cats. In addition, he has successfully provided the husbandry for ocelots, bobcats, lynx, jungle cats, leopard cats, snow leopard, serval, caracal, jaguarundi, Geoffroy's cat, European wild cat (*silvestris*) and Asian golden cats (*temmincki*). His facility has averaged about 20 cats for the last 25 years.

Kevin Chambers - Kevin is from Shelburn, Indiana. He began breeding exotic felines in 1982. He owns and operates the Zoological Animal Reproduction Center, which breeds various species of wildlife in addition to the exotic cats. He was the first person to ever successfully breed Irkutsk lynx in North America. Over the years, he has had experience with over 130 different species of wildlife. Kevin

is a USDA and USF&W licensed breeder, broker, exhibitor, importer, and exporter. He has transported animals all over the USA and to/from over 20 different foreign countries, dealing with facilities from all aspects of exotic cat venues: research facilities, domestic and international zoos, private breeders, pet owners, entertainers, and exhibitors. He has visited many of the facilities seeing the various ways cat care is provided. He is a Zooculturist level member of the International Society of Zooculturists as well as being very active in FCF and the local 4-H youth organization. Kevin's present and past hands on experience with exotic felines includes over 300 cats; caring for and breeding Siberian lynx, Canadian lynx, Eurasian lynx, Irkutsk lynx, bobcat, Asian leopard cat, Amur leopard cat, caracal, serval, tiger, lion, snow leopard, cougar, black footed cat, Pallas cat, Geoffroy's cat, Scottish wildcat, African wild cat, and fishing cat.

Mitchel Kalmanson - Mitch resides in Maitland, Florida where he is the president of the Lester Kalmanson Agency, a specialized independent insurance agency, providing insurance, risk management and related services for entertainment, exotic animal theme parks and facilities, movies, and the amusement industries. He also operates World Wide Exotic Animal Talent Agency, which specializes in the placement of various domestic and exotic animal talent and performances around the world. In the course of his insurance business, Mitch has been retained by various agencies dozens of times to make exotic animal appraisals, perform on site inspections of facilities, and to serve as an expert witness in law suits regarding exotic animals.

A couple of his more notable accomplishments have been providing the insurance for the Super Bowl halftime show, being a member of the 1996 Giant Panda Team where he was responsible for the shipment and mortality insurance of two giant pandas from Shanghai, China to the San Diego Zoo, and was successfully retained to provide a written expert opinion as to the safety and quality of caging for a professional entertainer in Las Vegas with big cats in order to obtain permission to house the cats in the city.

Mitch is licensed by the state of Florida, the USDA, the USF&W as an importer/exporter, and holds several non-resident exotic animal licenses throughout the USA. He is a commercial member of AZA, FCF, Florida Federations of Fairs & Livestock Shows, Florida Association of Independent Insurance Agents, and a past Board of Directors member of the Animal Transportation Association. He has been involved with the transporting of various exotic animals to Asia and has traveled extensively, viewing animal facilities throughout the North America, Europe, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Brazil, South and Central America, the Caribbean, and parts of Asia. Mitch is known around the world as an expert in animal liability, mortality insurance, specialty agribusiness operations, transportation, valuation, selling, pen and compound design, and animal management of both domestic and exotic

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Where have all the South American Spots gone?

Jean Hatfield

I was asked to write an article comparing, in a way, the “old days” to today. That I, and others like me, represent the 70’s. Actually, Kenneth and I got our first exotic, Mittens the Margay, in 1961. Back then, importing was common, bad information was rampant - “feed your ocelot beef or horse meat” with no mention of vitamins or calcium. Pet shops couldn’t tell an ocelot from a margay from a leopard cat from a geoffroy. Many a margay of 3-4 months was sold as a 6-8 week old ocelot! There were no restrictions, no laws, just beautiful spotted kittens whenever you wanted one - with no one to help, to tell you what to do, how to care for it, guidance in any way. Then we found Catherine Cisin’s club, and other like-minded people.

Dave Salisbury formed the Florida Chapter of the LIOC and we found many more folks. We would have bi-monthly meetings and there would be 5, 6, 7 or more ocelots, 2-3 margays, a jaguarundi, a golden cat, and/or possibly a cougar or two. What a sight that would be! Spots everywhere, some cats outgoing and some shy. Back then not too many people had the “big” cats, some, but not a lot. Size-wise, an ocelot, margay, geoffroy type cat is a lot easier to handle!

opportunity to help contribute to the body of knowledge. Dr. Stephen Seager was researching artificial insemination back in the 70s. He spoke at the 1978 LIOC convention and was one of the first researchers in the country refining this process. He came to our facility and with Kenneth, tranquilized our black leopard male and did the electro-ejaculation process. Don’t know if it helped the doctor’s research much, but we found out why no black babies; he was sterile.

Cooperation between zoos and privates was rare, but did exist. For instance, I recall Lance Giller and his cheetah female. He took her to Crandon Park Zoo (Dr. Sampsell was one of the ‘exceptions’) to breed with their male. They were put into a small, temporary corral-type enclosure while waiting for the large area to be readied, as everyone KNEW they wouldn’t breed unless she had lots of room to run. Well, She didn’t know that - and produced 5 babies. I thought it rather comical, if I recall. The point, however, was that they allowed a private owner to bring his cat to the zoo to breed with theirs.



Historic Sept 1972 photo depicts Long Island Ocelot Club members Linda Price, of West Palm Beach, Mary Prince of Alaska, Mrs. Russell Francis of Sebring and Connie Hatfield of Fort Lauderdale

In 1968, Kenneth and I left Hialeah and moved to what was then “way out in the country” of Ft. Lauderdale. We did this because we loved the exotics and decided to breed them in captivity and therefore be able to screen prospective buyers and then give them all the help they’d need after they got this little critter home. And - as important, preserve the breeds and eliminate the necessity of buying from an importer/pet shop, which in turn would protect the species in the wild. Even though in those days, most of the books said ocelots wouldn’t breed in captivity, Kenneth felt they would. Which of course they did.

Captive husbandry knowledge was in its infancy and Ken had an

Then, the government in it’s infinite wisdom decided to “protect” these endangered species we were doing so very well with, thank you very much, which they have - right to the point of extinction here in our country. Loss of habitat is taking care of eliminating the wild populations.

First it was ‘No Importing’, then it was ‘No selling outside of your own state’ on the federal level, so that by the 1980s it became almost impossible to do anything with all the kittens other than within the breeder’s state. Then STATES started with all their ban/regulation laws. Here in Florida, we do have a reasonably workable permit law but it did start out with the requirement that a person spend 1000 hours in training. One Thousand hours.

That’s 125 8-hr days. Which is a LOT of weekends. At least, we do so far have the possibility of obtaining a permit; I just hope it remains that way. However many, many other states have just banned exotics altogether. And it seems to be spreading almost like a nasty contagious virus. Soon we in Florida may be the only place in the country where exotics are legal - now that is one scary thought!

So, what is a breeder to do? In our circle of breeder-friends, they placed what ocelots they could elsewhere and we took in the rest. That left basically my colony producing a few kittens (this was in the 1980s) but not too many as the number of appropriate homes in Florida

was limited. Most of our cats had been born or acquired in the 1960s & 1970s and by the mid-1980s I stopped keeping any young males or females - what was the point?? In the mid-1990s, my younger female was placed with another breeder, as I had no unrelated male for her. My oldest and last female just passed on in April of this year at age 21. It is so very, very sad to think of all the many cats we had. All the bloodlines we had. All gone. Without even looking up records, I can sit here and think of at least 10 totally unrelated lines of ocelots and 3 of margays of just my cats; who knows how many there actually were.

Today I believe there are 4 or 5 breeding or potentially breeding pairs of ocelots in the country and of those, most of the pairs (or at least one of each pair) are from the same bloodline. As for jaguarundi, margays, golden cats - none. And why? Because laws prohibit private ownership, to say nothing of the private breeder. And the ban laws are spreading everywhere; so that soon there will be no private ownership of any exotic cat anywhere. And if there is no private ownership, who is left to keep the various species alive? How many more years will it be before someone will be writing an article about how she "used" to have a breeding colony of servals or of caracals, and now they're all gone

Good Will Ambassador Cheetah Brothers Will Help Save a Species

I have just spent the last hour listening to the purring of two cheetah brothers. They are currently living in a guesthouse on my farm in Ohio. When quarantine is over in another 10 days, they will go to live at the Cincinnati Zoo. They shall become part of an international effort to raise awareness of the critical status of the wild cheetah. Like the cheetahs before them, they will assist in raising the funds to help support the successful Cheetah Conservation Fund in Namibia, Africa.

They were bred by a private breeder in Africa, a woman who started her own 'Crusade to Save the Cheetah,' some 40 years ago. They were raised by another private breeder and educator in Capetown and finally sent to our zoo just three weeks ago.

Private folks, all of them, who give their time, talent, and yes, their personal money to help save cats.

How can those of us, who work for zoos, be critical of

others who desire to do what we do—love cats, touch them, save them? How can an uneducated political process judge and condemn those persons whose only goal is to be a part of and save our material world? Without private breeders and private individuals who are touched by these animals, the cats shall surely be the worse off for it. In fact, without private breeders, the small cats that do not represent the "draw" of the big cats, shall suffer a serious threat of captive extinction: a gene pool we dare not lose.

In an educational "program" these cheetahs serve as "ambassadors of goodwill" to thousands of students as they visit schools. As cats that support their own kind in the wild, they are unsurpassed in their ability to form bonds of human understanding.

The purring of these two brother cheetahs shall be heard across our city and state, and their voices heard around the world.

Cathryn Hilker
Founder-Cat Ambassador Program
Cincinnati Zoo

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A Visit to the Heart of the Earth

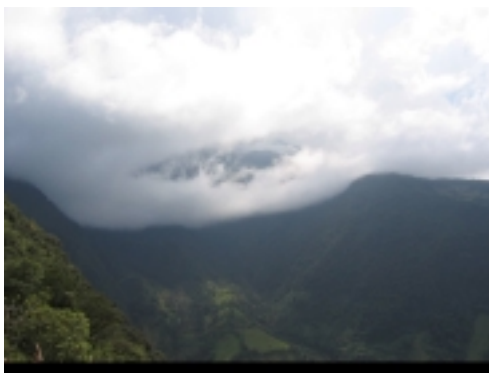
Bart Culver

For some strange reason the tours of Playa de Oro Reserva De Tigrillos has so far attracted far more woman then men. This trip is no exception; there are two men, and eight women. Not that I am complaining, but all you men out there who think this experience isn't wild enough for you, listen up. This is not a sit back 'n relax tour. It's a real participatory adventure deep in the heart of the jungle two and a half hours up a wild river as far as a dugout canoe can take you, where there are no roads or



photo by Bart Culver

they obtain their food, fiber and medicine directly from the earth. The machetes they always carry are not for show. They are to protect you from bushmasters and fer-de-lance. This is a trip for trekkers, conservationists, anthropologists, poets, philosophers, nature lovers or just lovers. But it's not for wimps. Every real adventure entails an element of danger and things can go wrong.



Rosa and works out an alternate route, through the cloud forest all the way to Esmeraldas, a beach town on the coast. A 10-hour drive. Halfway there, the trip becomes a real ordeal. Twelve people in a van with no air conditioning descend into a parched wasteland of shanty towns utterly devastated by oil and gas interests, where people seemed to have nothing better to do than burn every flammable thing in sight. Then the pavement turns into pure rocks and dust. Suddenly its like we go through a cosmic wormhole to emerge in the quaint beach party town of Esmeralda. Refreshed with a few cocktails with names like "aviation gas" we dance to salsa music in the blue pacific.

power lines. Its walking hours up and down jungle trails to reach places of exquisite beauty that are not any map, being shown the way by the resident ocelot named Mishi, seeing monkeys and boa constructors and birds and butterflies and bromeliads and orchids. But most of all it s trusting your life to the capable hands of the wisest, happiest, more gracious people you will ever meet, as they show you how easily

What goes wrong this time is the road to Otavalo has been taken out by a large landslide, and the highway workers are on strike. Instead of fixing the road, they are blockading it in various places. Undeterred, Tracy gets on the Internet with

Playa de Oro Reserva de Tigrillos



Early in the morning we pile in the van, which Ed has named the gas chamber, head up the coast and turn east again. We spend a total of 19 hours in the gas chamber to go the long way around but we reach the village of Selva Allegra (happy jungle) on time. Julio the boatman, Ramon, and Clemente are waiting for us, all proudly wearing their spotless white FCF T shirts. And there it is. Our conveyance. A genuine, hand made dugout canoe over thirty feet long and three and a half feet wide, carved out of a single mahogany log, with a forty-horse outboard motor. We pile thirteen adults and a lot of luggage and supplies in it. It's



still floating but even Julio isn't sure the boat can carry this heavy a load. But off we go up the Rio Santiago, through white water, up steep slopes of rushing water, winding through serpentine green corridors with sheer walls hundreds of feet high. Waterfalls cascade directly

into the river. It's dangerous. It's exhilarating. It's magnificent. It puts Disney World to shame it its real. Two and a half hours later we reach the lodge, the farthest penetration of man into this pristine jungle. I'm not ready for the ride to end. But when Julio shuts the motor off the magic envelopes me. There is not a single mechanical sound, Only the Rio Santiago rushing to its meeting with the pacific and a roudade of birdcalls.

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An American in the Czech Republic shares his View

by David Sparandara

I am an American living outside of the states. My formal education is in the fields of philosophy and history. I do not teach in the area of ethics but certainly perceive there to be important ethical concerns involved in owning exotics. These concerns include the very way that we encounter animals early on and the lasting impression that these initial encounters have on us. These events shape our thinking about our rights and our responsibilities when dealing with different species.

It is a complicated issue as far as who has what rights and do private ownership laws extend to animals. I am far less concerned with the legalities as with the care and time and consideration that would go into owning an exotic animal and for what purposes people become involved with this pursuit. There is a place for private ownership and the private sector is involved in the breeding, conservation and stewardship of wild animals.

While living in the states I attempted to get permits to work with small wild cats. When I made the initial decision to become involved with wild cats it was for a myriad of reasons, some rather altruistic if ultimately a bit naïve, some perhaps pertaining to ego in terms of the pure joy of working with the cats. I was successful to a point in my quest to get my permits although my failure to get a final permit made the others that I did get largely useless. But there were great and beautifully sublime moments with the cats. My facility was selected to work with one of the only really successful reintroduction programs for the small cats, a program for Scottish Wildcat. This was a three-step reintroduction program that was working in the islands off of Scotland.

To be honest I never tired of working with the cats, I never abandoned any in my charge and spent all of my extra income (perhaps the \$5,000 to \$8,000 extra or so I made a year as a teacher that I would have saved I instead) rather unselfishly put into cats. The cats for me were not my professional occupation, but certainly were more than a hobby. Still, I always felt that the professionals in the field only tolerated my work. On one level I understand this, as I get nervous when people start 'mucking around' in my professional field, but I felt that while some respected me, others just looked at the entire endeavor as useless and with a degree of hostility.

In 1991 I moved to Europe to live and teach, and for the first nine years here I took a hiatus from working with animals. Three years ago I felt concern both for the ways the zoos operated in my adopted country, which is the Czech Republic, and that something was missing in my life. My return to working with cats that first year was limited to translation work for the zoo helping them get their printed materials in order, but as trust was established I was consulted on acquisitions and asked to aid the zoos in obtaining new blood lines for certain felines as they wanted to look to the private breeder network world wide and not just at cats in zoos. I helped in this capacity. I established from my meager funds a small facility to be used as an off site breeding facility, and of course attained my licenses here for such work and not-for-profit status.

I feel that there must be tests and legitimate obstacles placed in the path of those who declare that they want to work with

exotics. Working with living creatures cannot be entered into in a capricious manner. But there should be a road that one can traverse that is logical, respectful and that will ensure that those who try to go this route will be properly equipped to be successful. A road that can be negotiated over time and that will then allow one to enter this type of work if they prove capable.

Obviously rights and privileges are very different things. But there are those that feel anyone has the right to own wild cats, particularly large cats, and that this is protected in the Constitution as a form of property ownership. This view has always left me with a degree of hesitancy about this overly simplistic right wing approach, as I think this flies in the face of common sense, among its other problems. On the other extreme are those that seek to address these issues through blunt legal rules that would not adequately address the subtleties involved in this field.

And then there is the problems encountered in the pet trade. Again this is complicated. I know for a fact that people are taking all sorts of reptiles, birds and monkeys out of jungles and protected areas and that smuggling is a huge problem that should be addressed with greater penalties, but I am not at all convinced that this is happening with any regularity with cats. We must take those people to task that follow unexamined impulses, leading them to buy an exotic animal and then, like a child with a short attention span, moving away from the concomitant responsibilities such decisions carry with them.

I know that there are people working with small cats that breed for reasons of maintaining many genetically diverse groups and whose knowledge of the gene pool in the captive held populations worldwide make them suitable to aid the species.

And then there are those that breed and follow good husbandry procedure but have no higher aim but the pure joy of breeding. It is very hard to deny the positive value of relations between people and animals and I believe that this can include people and wild animals.

Many private facilities offer the animals they keep conditions that far exceed most zoos in terms of cage size, enrichment and diet. For this we should all be proud.



*Animals and people enjoying each other at CCI in the US:
Maria Houck and Teri Batcheler with cubs*

Keetah, A Tiger who “Talked” a Paraplegic Out of Suicide

Pete Bergerson

The Paraplegic

People often leave special experiences with exotic animals with new insights which can make them better domestic companion owners, enhance their relationships with their families and others, and bring about a greater concern for threatened and endangered species and habitats and human impacts upon them. Professional animal handlers and exhibitors such as myself and many other responsible owners have gained those opportunities while maintaining superb safety records.

I experienced the special happening related in this story. In my thirty-year career working with over 100 species of animals in all sorts of hands-on situations, there are a few extremely special animal beings that stand above all others; a tigress named Keetah was one such feline. Keetah was respected as an individual and a tiger. She shared many activities with us. We talked to her a lot and always tried to be very sensitive to her moods, likes and dislikes. Her behaviors were brought about by motivation, versus training. We made learning things fun, instead of a chore for her.

She was born in a zoo and raised in an excellent docent home until she was about 6-months old, then she was put back in the zoo. The docent said that she sensed some special things about Keetah early on, a calm disposition, enjoying being a part of activities and a great sense of humor.

Like several born to her parents, Keetah later developed cataracts that could not be corrected in her case. When she was about 1 1/2 years old, a young man named Brad, also superb with animals, heard that the zoo was going to “put her down” (kill her). Brad called the zoo about his taking her to save her life. The zoo cautioned him that she charged keepers and that he would never be able to control her and that she would be more than prone to attempt to kill people.

Her entire family that we met, except for her father, were pretty mellow tigers, so Brad questioned how the zoo represented her. She turned out to be quite the opposite of the negatives portrayed by the zoo. We did things with her on a collar and leash I still wouldn't do with many domestic animals, but she was an extremely unique tiger in total temperament. Brad and I shared many wonderful and unusual experiences with her.

She taught us an unbelievable amount about animals and might very well have fulfilled the zoo's negative prognosis had she been in a less sensitive environment. She redeveloped the same qualities that the docent had described. In front of audiences, when she sensed people responding to her, she would often feed off an enthusiastic audience. She touched many people in her short life (she died at the age of 3 1/2). Around other living beings, humans, animals, birds, etc. she generally acted as if their reason for living were to be a close friend. If she was around or met a person she didn't like (few of those), she would simply ignore them.

Keetah had been with us for about 11 months. We walked into the Saint Paul (Mn.) Civic Center, with her on a leash, for a trade show. Looking to my left, I saw that Keetah had keyed in on a paraplegic in a wheelchair, named John, who was a complete stranger to us. Keetah sensed something and “woofed” at him.

John stopped his wheelchair. Keetah approached him and sat at his feet with a paw in his lap as she vocalized constantly to him. Tears were dripping down John's cheeks as he rested one hand on her paw and the other on her head.

I got about 4 sentences out, trying to apologize for her approaching him so abruptly and with no introduction and give some explanation. Suddenly, through his tears, John looked at us and said, “I appreciate your concern and trying to apologize, but she may have just saved my life.”

Naturally, both of us were more than a little curious about John's comment. But, given her sensitive personality, she had clearly sensed some level of unusual stress that John was feeling. My next thought was what was he planning to do here? We realized that a fair size crowd had gathered around, probably with the same amazement that Brad and I were feeling. Keeping people back, we both focused on John and Keetah.

John said that earlier that morning his fiancé had returned the ring and never wanted to see him again. The handicap-equipped van was in her name only and she was going to trade it in for a regular car. He had given away his 2 domestic cats because he felt he could not provide proper care for them. He had gotten a ride to the trade show with a friend as his last outing, and added “I have a gun at home and enough pills if I don't have the courage to shoot myself.” He sounded serious.

Simply reacting to the situation, Brad handed John the end of the leash. We suggested making a “deal” with him. First, we'd keep everyone else back and give him and Keetah 10 minutes one on one before the trade show. We suggested he think about what had just happened and his comment - but without trying to analyze or explain what Keetah had done but instead to simply feel it emotionally and respond that way.

We asked John to stay at the trade show with us. We would give them another 15 minutes after for one on one. Then we gave him our phone number, asked him not to kill himself that night, to think about his experience as we suggested and call us in the morning. We promised that if he decided to take his life, we would not try to change his mind.

In a tone of measured reluctance, he agreed and stayed with us for the trade show and their time after. We sensed that John's attitudes and thoughts soften a bit during the trade show, and we were not sure what would happen that night. Going home, we discussed the afternoon and how it had affected us.

The next morning, John called about 10:30. He explained, with some emotion, that the experience with Keetah, her sensitivity to a complete stranger, caring and interaction had given him back every reason to live. We stayed in touch with him and provided some opportunities for him and Keetah to be together occasionally. She always responded to him in special ways that touched Brad and I deeply each time.

I am blessed to have worked with many wildlife ambassadors in my professional career. I have shared this experience with Keetah that clearly illustrate animals are considerably more

than just “things” whose purpose of life is simply to do our bidding, conform to our own whims, become our alter egos and satisfy any urges for control over something else. They are living beings, though not human; with many capabilities beyond those humans typically accord them.

Quality relationships with companion animals can have subtle and sometimes profound effects on the mental and physical well being of the human element as consistently demonstrated by medical studies and results of animal assisted therapy. The quality of those relationships and their subtle effects is the result of choices made by people -not animals.

Conservation of the Fittest

Sara Comstock

In today's world, we have witnessed and observed, the fittest survive. Whether they are human or animal, only the strong willed/fittest, have learned to adapt to live in today's society. As for humans, conservation of the world's natural resources, air, water, land, vegetation and the animals, will foresee our own future on this planet. But what about the animals? How do they see their future on this planet?

The animals of this world have put their trust in us humans, to protect them, to love them, to nurture them, and to conserve them. As the animal numbers dwindle due to human over population and losing their environment, the conservation of the animal species has fallen onto humans.

As a private exotic owner of various animals, and ex-breeder of birds and African Servals, I can only speak from my own experience. Owning or being owned by an exotic animal is not for everyone. It takes a special breed of person, dedication, devotion and commitment. The knowledge alone that you must attain in keeping exotics healthy and happy is a full time commitment of continued learning.

The conservation of exotic animals has become the responsibility of not only zoos, sanctuaries, etc, but also the private owner. Being an ex-breeder, I understand on how important breeding of the animal species is. The responsibility to have an animal become extinct falls on us, as humans. Breeders help in keeping the different species of animals here on this planet. We supply many zoos for animals to be displayed to the public. It is the responsible exotic owner who also takes into our care the retired zoo animals as well.

The responsible private owner has the ability to devote more time, and more attention to the animal. Experience in knowing the animal on a one to one basis helps greatly in becoming alarmed quite quickly when an animal is ill or stressed.

Being owned (as I like to phrase it), by my animals, has given me great rewards. Over the years, I have felt their love and devotion to me, which will last a

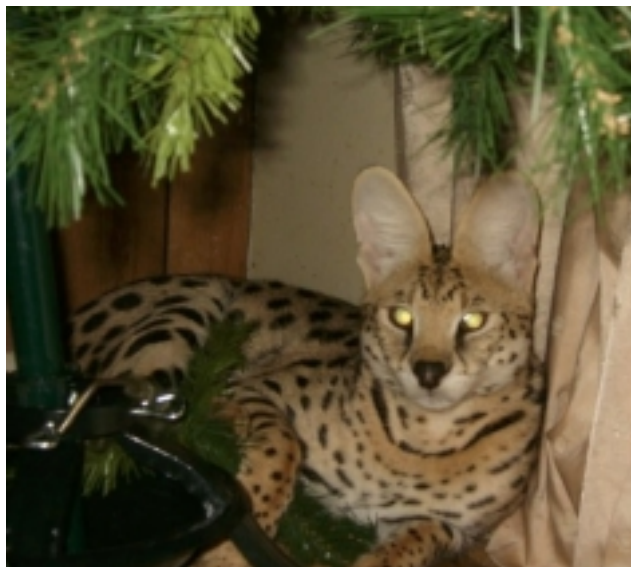
lifetime in my heart. They have included me with their silly antics, their ups and downs, their sadness and their joy. Their intelligence and their learning capabilities have astounded me. In training my servals to do fire drills, I have been astounded on how quickly they learned by the tone of my voice, to run inside to their appropriate carriers, and sit, wait for me to close the carrier doors. One of my females alerted us to a house fire; she continually chipped, sounding her alarm of danger. Last year, our house was overcome with flooded waters; one of our male servals would not leave us alone, kept coming back to us, turning to see if we were following him. He took us downstairs, to one of the couches in 2.5 feet of water, to where one of our domestics was stuck under the couch, and was drowning. Head butts, a purr, a chirp, with the look of love in their eyes, just for me, are emotions I share with my Servals every day.

Over the years, I have been asked questions about owning exotic animals. Aren't they dangerous? Do you trust them? The general public has been taught through the media and thru animal rights organizations to be fearful of any animal that is not what they consider domesticated. My own personal belief, the more time spent with an animal, the more the animal comes to know you, and trust you.

Whatever animal you presently have, if not enough time is spent with the animal, the animal can and will revert back to its natural instinct, to be wild. True, there are animals, that will always be wild, and can not be tamed, and there are always circumstances to every situation, every animal. Cruelty, neglect is just some to name a few. An animal's natural instinct can also play on whether the animal can be considered “dangerous”, such as the different breeds of snakes, spiders, dogs, and even fish.

It is our responsibility, the exotic animal owner, to teach the public about exotic animal ownership. Exotic animal ownership cannot be taught from a book, but rather hands-on experience. In presentations to Day Camps, I have found thru the years, a child's attention becomes alert when seeing and touching an animal, rather than opening a book and read. Teach the children when they are young to become responsible pet owners for the future.

Remember the words of Antoine de Saint-Exupery,
“You remain responsible.. Forever...
For what you have tamed.”





*Happy
cats
help
make
us
happy
for
the
Holidays*



Top left to right Thomas white lion cub - Maria Houck
Caracal by the fireplace - Jana Laundre
Ruger bobcat - Torri Villines
Bengal and geoffroy buddies - Debi Sadar
Sugarmint serval kitten in Santa hat - Bob Turner
Lynx shoulder wrap on Bobby Pack - Nancy Barter
Leo serval waits for presents under the Christmas tree - Evelyn Shaw
Frera tiger cub with toys - Mindy Stinner
Siss-E serval is the perfect Christmas gift - Sara Comstock
Leo lays beside Jeremy sucking on a candy cane - Evelyn Shaw



A Freight train could be barreling down on your cats in your home state

Don't get 'railroaded', stay alert, stay active, if you want to stay alive!

Kansas Wildlife and Parks Department has been considering new regulations to ban private possession of big cats since their January 2004 public meeting where Kevin Jones, Kansas Dept Wildlife and Parks law enforcement officer, gave a report titled Federal Legislation and State Law Jurisdiction pertaining to Exotic Cat Ownership, stating Kansas needed to bring the state more 'in line with the recently passed Captive Wildlife Safety Act'. His report cited often-repeated pseudo-statistics such as '1000 web sites advertising tigers and other big cats for sale as pets' and '5,000 pet tigers across the country'. Jones also stated 104 mountain lion permits exist in Kansas. My research shows this fantasy number is the result of bad statistics and no follow-up – 60% of cougar permits were issued in the first 4 years after the Cougar Permit requirement was enacted in 1991. In the last 4 years, only a dozen people have been granted a permit, and one year there were none given out. Most of the cougars in Kansas were registered over a decade ago, and logically one can conclude the owners haven't filed a death or transfer report and many are probably gone.

The minutes of this January meeting reflect no public comments, only ominous questions from the Commissioners. Commissioner Hall asked, 'would the department would be liable if it chose no action and something happened?' Chairman Dykes asked to have more information on the Wyoming model, 'where everything is prohibited, except what is legal'. Secretary Hayden stated 'we could win the lions and tigers issue and start on those first and then discuss with the livestock commissioner (banning) the other species. It is a complex area and we will have to take it species by species, maybe a moratorium or grandfather clause and then a deadline for people to dispose of the animals already in the state'.

By February, some press coverage began to foreshadow things to come, when a cougar was sighted at a University campus. The newspaper account reads: Secretary of Kansas Dept of Wildlife and Parks, Mike Hayden doesn't doubt for a minute that a mountain lion is wandering around Kansas University's west campus. "The question, really, in Lawrence is not whether somebody saw a mountain lion; it's, "Was it a wild mountain lion or was it one that got loose or was turned loose by its owners?" Hayden was also quoted as saying '104 people have permits to own mountain lions' and he was 'looking at ways to reduce that number'.

By April another W & P Commission Meeting had this topic in their Workshop Session with Kevin Jones leading. Chairman Dykes suggested looking at including bears and wolves as well. Only one Kansas resident

Ken Lockwood spoke and he relayed his experience in helping to get a Peabody cat facility closed down.

In June another D W&P public meeting discussed this issue however the minutes do not reflect any public comments. It was recorded that a meeting of 'affected parties' to further discuss ways to clarify and bring control over the issue, had been scheduled.

In August at another Public Meeting, Harvey Holladay, a lion owner attended, and the minutes reflect his anxiety and concern over whether he will be allowed to keep his cat. Provisions were being considered to 'allow the operation of zoos and 'accredited' public displays serving the public good, but eliminating the possession of big cats merely as pets'. And for the first time, it was agreed to add another species - all non-human primates were now targeted.

The October meeting gained much wider public interest. *The Commission had violated its first instinct, no-longer banning just one kind of animal at a time.* The Simian Society activated their membership. The various Internet lists began alerting people about the proposed Kansas ban. On behalf of the FCF, I mailed out informational letters to all Kansas USDA licensed cat facilities and FCF members alerting them of the October meeting. I sent written comments and made phone calls to Kevin Jones and K D P&W. attorney Chris Tymeson.

I made a three-day trip to Kansas to testify in front of the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Dept at their public meeting in Atchison. There were about a dozen primate people, including several representatives of the Simian Society present. For Kansas's cat owners, there were about 6 facility owners and myself representing the Feline Conservation Federation.

Representing the sanctuary world, Carol Asvestos and a volunteer from her Wild Animal Orphanage drove up from Texas to testify, as well as a woman from the International Fund for Animal Welfare that flew in from Massachusetts.

Carol and the IFAW representative were some of the first speakers. They were both very brief, and to the point – 'pass restrictions now'. Carol drew the Commissioner's attention to the red folders full of information she had previously supplied to each of them. Considering that the drive for Carol was about 40-hours round trip, I suspect she must have arrived a day earlier (distributing her red folders, etc) and used her time to speak directly with the Wildlife and Parks personal, possibly their attorney, who struck me in previous phone conversations as being very ill informed and hostile to private ownership.

Much of the focus of the various speakers centered upon the concept of 'accrediting', since it is mentioned in the proposed regulations that 'provisions will be made to exempt accredited zoos, schools, universities, circuses or federally allowable transport of these animals'.

The Simian society distributed written materials and asked the Commission to develop regulations, not ban laws. Their officers spoke of their accreditation process under development. They urged Kansas W & P to consider the Florida approach and provided copies of the Florida regulations on a CD for the Commissioner's consideration.

Jenell Kneuson, Kansas animal owner and officer of the International Society of Zooculturists, introduced them to the ISZ and told them of its Accreditation program.

As a representative of the FCF, I handed each Commissioner a packet containing an FCF magazine, USDA licensing explained, FCF Model for State Regulations, FCF Accreditation program and information on private sector gene pools. I explained what the Captive Wildlife Safety Act will do and the need for private conservation and our gene pools. I urged they propose regulations that address public safety and animal welfare and also 'permit a legal climate that is favorable to sustainable captive populations'. The Commissioners asked questions about FCF and private owners.

The present proposal before the Commissioners does not allow breeding, acquiring new animals or any new ownership. As written it will prevent establishment of any new zoos, educators, sanctuaries, or any offspring from the prohibited species. It also calls for registration of presently existing animals, followed by banishment from the state by 2010.

Based upon the input of the October meeting, I am told that the W & P attorney Chris Tymeson will draft several options to regulation, to be published on the web site <http://www.kdwp.state.ks.us/> and distributed to the Commissioners for review. It is important that Kansas residents and others wishing to express concern

send in written comments to the W & P department. **On January 20, 2005, at 1:30 p.m. at the Memorial Hall Auditorium beside the Landon Office Building in Topeka, Kansas the Commissioners will vote upon the proposed regulations.** Will the proposals cover just the big cats? Will it include all species of cat and all non-human primates? At press time these questions remain unanswered. **It is important that Kansas residents make their views known as the January meeting will be another opportunity for public comments.**

Coincidentally, on the day of the meeting, newspapers ran a story of a dead mountain lion found dumped in southwest Shawnee County, near 89th and Auburn Road. This is near Topeka, just about an hour south of Atchison. Because a KWP officer had been on that road about five hours earlier, officials believe the sub-adult mountain lion had been dumped there to 'appear that a vehicle had hit it'. A preliminary exam determined the declawed mountain lion had been dead for several days and had no broken bones — which would have been expected in a vehicle death. There were no gunshot wounds or bite marks.

Only an animal rights activist wanting to create negative press coverage would benefit from such a stunt. Interestingly, where the feline was found would be on the way to the Atchison meeting if one were driving up from San Antonio, TX.

Lynn Culver
FCF Director of Legal Affairs



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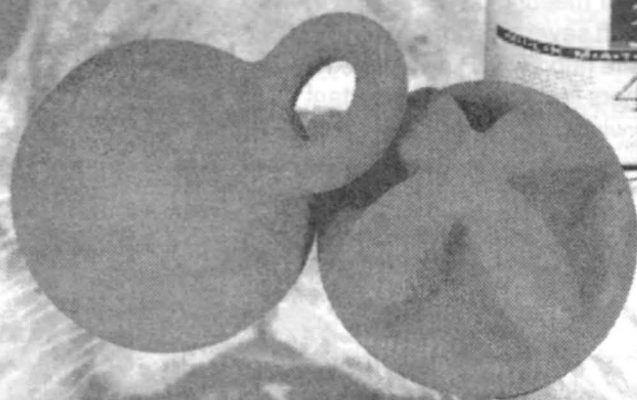
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A Visit to the Heart of the Earth *continued from page 16*

We have time to rest and take a short walk around the lodge before Emma, our hostess, treats us to a series of food we had never eaten before. Their flavor causes me to call her Reina de Comida, the queen of food. That night I dream that a jaguar prowls near my room calling my name. I awake. The sound is real. It's not a jaguar calling my name but it is a wild ocelot, walking around the lodge, singing bass to the song of the Santiago. A feeling of total peace comes over me; the throbbing din of commerce is stilled. My thoughts are



sharply focused. Ecuador is a land of stark contrasts and clear choices, between hellish devastation and pristine beauty. Between rape and rapture. We have passed through hell to get here and this is heaven on earth, paradise. Here, you can feel the very heart of the earth, beating strong. Standing in the green cathedral of eternity, I feel myself getting younger. Mother earth embraces me like her lost child, Life is everywhere, and

I soak it up. Where is the creator but in his creations? No church ever built, no words ever spoken, could bring me so close to god as that canoe has done. Tomorrow I will dance before god with his true

people and cleanse myself of all the dirt of commerce and rejoice.



Today is my big challenge. Can a sixty-year-old diabetic asthmatic with high blood pressure and a gimpy leg keep up with people half his age? The answer is yes. I walk two hours up and down jungle trails to the village of Playa de Oro, dance with the villagers

photo by Grace Lush

till the soles fall off my Nike sandals and play drums with the drummers. On the way home the canoe runs around and I jump out and help push it across the shoals.



The next day I hike to the waterfall, swing on a vine like Tarzan, repeatedly climb up and drive off the cliff like the natives.

The day after that I go on an unscheduled hike with Mauro up the mountain to check out the water supply. He doesn't slow down for me at all. He goes uphill as fast as he goes on level ground. I keep up, I never get winded, and I never use my inhaler. Others



photo by Grace Lush

say they feel similarly invigorated. The reason, of course, is that we are breathing the purest air in the world. Higher oxygen content, zero pollution. The surprise is how dramatic the feeling is. Carbon monoxide and thousands of other toxins are ubiquitous in the air most of us breathe and in our blood. We cannot remove the poison from our bodies unless we remove our bodies to a place of purity. Such places are rare. Playa de Oro Reserve is such a place. It is a powerful, magical place of healing for the body and the spirit.

As Maruo and I start back down the hill, he motions for me to go first. I say no amigo, tu tienes el machete. Mauro offers me the machete. I can't describe what an honor this is. The trust that is explicit in it. But no honor I have ever been given meant any more.

My request to go canoeing with the guys, without the motor has been granted. Mauro comes along this time. They



photo by Bart Culver

show me how to stand, and we pole up the river and up a creek and walk up the creek catching crawdads and reading animal tracks. I haven't spoken Spanish since high school. But it comes back with surprising ease because there is something I really want to say. I tell them what a rare privilege it is to share their perfect life. I tell them so much of nature has been ruined by 'contaminacion' that people pay to go to places like Disney World where the rivers are artificial, run through pumps.

Mauro picks up on the theme and I realize I don't have to convince these people they are doing the right thing. They know. Mauro and the village elders have seen the unreal world with all its temptations and chose to return to protect their land and their people.

Rosa Jordan, the great lady who started this project has chosen well. It takes incredible courage and genius not to do what these people have not done. They have not sold out. They will not sell out. They can teach us more than we can teach them. If we can help these pure and beautiful people ward off the evils that consume us simply by escaping into their wonderful world, what a perfect victory for us all. My Spanish progresses from comical to a moment of eloquence. I promise that I will return to help them, because I respect them very much. Their way of life must be preserved because they live in the heart of the world and the heart of the world must not die.

Never ever in my life have I so yearned to be understood and accepted by anyone. The look in their eyes tells me I have become more than a guest. I am a trusted friend. I understand the importance of keeping my promises to such a guileless people. I will return. I invite you to come with me. Years will fall away from you, and your heart will beat to the rhythm of eternity.



photo L to R: Standing in front of a single massive tree are Joy Peele, Cynthia King, Brigitte Cowell, Grace Lush, Bart Culver, Tracy Wilson, Christina Forrester, Loree Smith, and Staff members Ramone and Clemente. This photo and others for this article by Monika Neale, unless otherwise identified.

We need another and a wiser, and perhaps, a more mystical concept of animals. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate for having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of their senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings, they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth.

The Outermost House, by Henry Beston

Playa de Oro Sends A Very Special Thanks to FCF Members

Playa de Oro Reserva de Tigrillos

November 18, 2004

To Mr. & Mrs. Carl Maier,

As director of the Playa de Oro Reserva de Tigrillos, I am again writing this letter to greet you cordially, on behalf of our entire community and especially those of us who work here. We are sincerely appreciative of the valiant support you have bestowed on this project, most recently in the form of a \$5000 donation for the purchase of a new boat motor. This will be a great help to us in furthering our activities, by providing more efficient transport for our visitors and ourselves.

Upon receiving this donation, we understand one more time that people of good heart like yourselves are willing to help us strengthen our efforts to continue working in the conservation of our natural eco-system; the flora, the fauna, and all the wild area. In this small corner of Ecuador's geography, there exist a people quite special in that they do have a conservation mentality and an appreciation for nature that is very rare.

With all respect, for the consideration that you have bestowed upon us, I would like to formally invite you to make a visit to the reserve, to enjoy its uniqueness and observe all that your donations have made possible.

Attentively,

Mauro Caicedo

Director, Proyecto Tigrillo

Why Keep Big Cats?

A Spiritual Look at our Relationship with Animals

By Tim Stoffel

Many people wonder why anyone in their right mind would want a lion (or a tiger, or a cougar, etc.) as a pet. After all, aren't the great cats hardwired, vicious killing machines? Isn't injury or death by these creatures an inevitable outcome of keeping them? Must they at all times be isolated from us by thick bars and strong fences? Arguably, the great cats are among the most powerful, beautiful and magnificent creatures that walk planet earth. Although it could be claimed that this alone is enough reason to justify owning one of these animals, there is actually a far deeper reason—and a very surprising one to the uninitiated—to have these animals close at hand.

This paper is an expansion on some ideas presented in a paper entitled 'Constitution and Happiness,' written by John Williamson, John Burkitt and myself. The paper explores some of the ideas presented here, but looks at them in a much different light. This paper can be found at www.lionlamb.us/lion/Constitution_and_Happiness_10a.doc

Humans have a number of basic needs. Most of these we are familiar with: food, shelter, water, etc. But, there is one fundamental need that is often overlooked, as it is not often portrayed as a basic survival need. That is the need to connect to another living being in a spiritual way. The most relevant example of this is the bond between husband and wife in a good marriage. But, it goes far beyond that. One can have a deep relationship with a friend, but never have (or need) the physical part of that relationship that would come with marriage. A person can have a relationship to a higher being—and many people do. In fact, the teachings of most religions will lead the believer from a rote following of rules to a functional, abiding relationship with this higher being. And this relationship is intangible by our physically based standards. Last, but not least, a person can have a bond with an animal or animals.

What is special about animals? Looked at from a purely religious standpoint, animals were created by a higher being and were put here for a number of purposes. One of these purposes was to form relationships with humans, to be, as it were, our close friends. Generally, the animals that draw people into relationships are the higher animals: horses, elephants, dogs, cats, lions, tigers, etc. However, this bonding can occur with lower animals as well. Someone I know recently had their pet snake die on them. Now, most of us don't think too highly of a snake, perhaps the lowliest of all the reptiles. But, this person was crushed by the loss of this snake, and it had a noticeable effect on them emotionally for some time. So, if this kind of bonding can happen with a snake, imagine what it must be like for a tiger? Indeed another friend of mine who recently lost a lion described the experience "like losing a child."

What is it we see in animals that causes deep relationships to form? A lot depends on your worldview. For me, it is in their spirit. It's hard to deny that animals have spirits. Indeed, the Christian bible talks about the spirits of animals, and how they form a part of the compartment in which we exist.² But, what is the proof of this? In most cases, it is something deeply personal, and purely experiential. It is something we cannot measure or

quantify, or systemize (especially from a legal standpoint).

Briefly, here's my experience that helps me draw this conclusion. Some years ago, a lion died. This lion was special to me, as he had an incredibly deep bond with his keeper. They were literally and figuratively, the best of friends. But even lions die eventually, and this lion died a terrible, lingering death of cancer. I did not know this lion or his keeper personally. But I mourned for weeks over the loss of this lion and the special relationship he had with his keeper. One sleepless night during this time, while I laid in bed with this issue and a lot of other thoughts on my mind, God let me meet the spirit of this lion. It was a stunning, life-changing experience. I learned two really critical things from this experience: First, animals do indeed have functional spirits (but not to the degree we do) that do not die with their bodies, and animals are a channel of God's pure love.

Shortly after this happened, I finally got a copy of a book I had been waiting for (and contributed to in a small way), *To Walk With Lions* by noted lion researcher Gareth Patterson. This book corroborated my experience with some similar experiences that Gareth and his friends had experienced. Also, about that time, a friend of mine was beginning to research this very topic. He, too, had such an experience, in his case with a dying bobcat. This experience motivated him to devote his life to the conservation of our wild cats. And, it has kept him focused on this goal through and good times and hard times.

If you go to any bookstore, you will see shelves lined with books on animal spirituality. Animals have both a profound and well-documented physical, as well as psycho-spiritual effect on most animal owners.

Armed with many independent validations of my experience, I began to understand what it is with animals, especially the higher animals, that draw us into such deep bonds with them.

First of all, the basic need to connect exists in animals, as well as in humans. It apparently is an essential part of life.

Many scientists argue that animals are basically hardwired robots that are programmed to survive, and do little else. One article I remember reading said that the typical large animal has about as much computing horsepower in their brain as a '286 microprocessor (remember those?). These scientists reason that any behavior we see in animals, including those we 'confuse' with emotions, are nothing more than different manifestations of that will to survive.

However, don't tell this to an animal lover. They will clearly demonstrate to you, through experience, that these theories of animal behavior are dead wrong. (How can you measure love and trust in a laboratory?) In fact, some scientists are just now waking up and beginning to realize this. One scientist, who has been researching human as well as animal interrelationships even has gone on record as saying that 14 of the 16 basic human emotions are also active in animals.³

So, why big cats? Why not a dog instead of a leopard? Surely, a dog must be able to meet our needs to bond as well as a leopard, if this 'need to connect' is inherent in all animals?

How many of you out there are married? Or, looking for ‘Mr./Mrs. right’? How many of you married the first person you dated, or met? How many of you selected a mate at random, or had someone do this for you? We, as humans can’t just bond with any other human that happens to come our way. There is usually a long, drawn-out selection process before we commit to a relationship. The same goes with animals. Some people might (as illustrated earlier) be fulfilled by a relationship with a snake. For many, a dog or cat or bird will do. (But not just any dog, cat or bird. Look how different many species of each we have.) For some it takes a horse. For others, a lion.

For the very reason that we aren’t denied choice in whom we marry, we should not be denied that choice in whom we bond with from the animal kingdom. A person should have the freedom to bond with that animal that best fulfills them. In fact, such bonding should be encouraged and supported by our society, rather than being constantly questioned.

So, what do we see in the big cats that attract us to them? Unfortunately, many are initially attracted because of their power, and reputation as killers. However, one quickly learns that a properly raised big cat is just the opposite. They can be unbelievably affectionate. They can sense your emotions, and provide all the wonderful qualities we see in a domestic cat, but in a really big way. And, when you spend enough time around them, you will begin to sense how incredibly spiritual these animals are (especially lions!).

Although you must never forget these are large predators that can kill effortlessly if provoked, people who have this degree of bonding with their cat rarely get hurt. (The statistics show the vast majority of cat-related injuries happen to those who have custodial care of these animals--zookeepers, hired help, etc.--as opposed to an abiding relationship.) Indeed, there are now four instances I know of where a lion has gone out of its way to save a human life. Tigers have two instances of human rescue to their credit that I am aware of. Many more cases of this kind of altruism undoubtedly exist.

This principle works from the cat’s perspective, as well. They choose their favorite humans. And, they can become very jealous of ‘their human.’ For instance, at the zoo where I volunteer, three of the four lions have bonds with me. The big male has the deepest. Occasionally, I even get the chance to sleep near him, and he will stay by my side all night long. But the fourth lion and our two tigers don’t have much to do with me. We also have a liger which ‘adopted’ me. He wants me to be around him as much as possible, and gets noticeably upset when I leave. Other volunteers have a different, but similar experience. Some of the cats that aren’t real social to me will fawn all over them, while some of ‘my’ cats all but ignore them. Every keeper has a different grouping within the same 7 cats that likes/ignores them.

So, what does this all boil down to? Love. The most cherished of all emotions, and the one that draws us into close relationships more than any other. As I see it, it’s no mistake that a higher being has chosen to make animals an outlet of this all-important quality. After all, although animals can show emotion in a very deep way, they do not have all the ‘baggage’ us humans seem to carry around with us. Therefore, the love we see in animals is very pure. Unspoiled. It draws us to them. It is said that many people come to work with animals because they have emotional

problems. Among the animals, they can find strength and healing. And for some, it might take the love of a lion or a tiger to minister to that emotional need. It is a big love, a special love. Pretty soon, you find the cat is your ‘best friend’ and vice versa. It becomes immaterial that they are a super predator. (Although basic safety must always be practiced, as their protective instincts still function very well.) Such abiding relationships are truly spiritual in nature, as it is relationship that is the very basis of what we call religion. To deny this kind of a relationship to a person ‘because they are inherently dangerous animals’ is downright criminal. In fact, it is a direct violation of our right of free practice of religion.

I can tell you firsthand. There is nothing in all the world better than the love of a lion!

¹This paper, and a number of other interesting papers can also be found at www.tigertouch.org/library.html There are also some interesting papers on my website at www.lionlamb.us/lion/lionwrit.html.

²Ecclesiastes 3:19-21 Since the spirit of man or animal is indestructible, I interpret this as meaning that the spirits of animals share the earth with us. I believe they will be redeemed with everything else at the final judgment. Romans 8:18-23

³From the book *Who Am I The 16 Basic Desires That Motivate Our Actions and Define Our Personalities* by Steven Reiss, a professor of psychology and psychiatry at Ohio State University.



Maddison, a very special member of this family

Kyle Hinze

I enter my dorm room after a long day of learning about equations, human behavior, philosophy and an array of other subjects. I take my coat off and shake the rain off of it. I then kick my shoes off and let them land wherever they land. For most freshmen in college I am sure that being able to throw your shoes wherever you desire is a new thrill. Completely void of a mother's shrill voice screaming about where your shoes belong.

However, after throwing my shoes I sigh and remember what I am without. I remember times when I had to put my shoes in the "safe room" before my energetic and mischievous bobcat would grab them and claim them her property. I can't wait until the next time I get to go home and visit.

Being owned by a bobcat was a journey that started at the beginning of my freshman year in high school. I heard about someone owning a bobcat and thought it was a very interesting idea. I did a little bit of reading and became hooked.

I joined a few exotic cat groups and started researching. I told my parents that I wanted a bobcat and my mom was completely flabbergasted. "You want a what?" The answer I got back was a definite no, end of story.

That wasn't the end of the story because I am almost as stubborn as a bobcat. I wouldn't stop, I would read my parents accounts of people owning bobcats and what a day in the life would be like. I went around the house making up songs about bobcats. Every chance I got I showed them how dismal and boring our lives were.

One glorious day my mom was ready for battle. She told me that she doubts bobcats are even legal in the County/State. She said this with a smirk and eyes glittering of victory. If I hadn't found the wonderful FCF she would have won.

Through talking with various members they all told me the first thing I had to do was call my local fish and game department. So, I had already done this, and I gave her my knowledge. She was pissed that her 15-year-old son was winning the battle, yet at the same time she was seeing maturity in me that she hadn't witnessed before.

My parent's finally acquiesced and I located a breeder with kittens for sale and after several phone conversations between her and my mother, we convinced the breeder that the entire family was behind this decision and as a full family project we had the commitment and support necessary to look after the cat for her entire lifetime. We started to prepare for life with a bobcat.

The spring of my freshman year we were on our way to Sea-Tac to pick up a kitten from Lynn Culver. As long as I live this memory shall be with me. We had picked out a name for the little girl on our way to the airport. Her name was Maddison Renee. When we got to the airport we could hear loud shrieks from one of the airport places. We picked up the scared, all alone bobcat and the bonding began.

We had high hopes of being able to train her to behave, to not ruin our house, to basically do what we wanted her to. Obviously, we were new to raising an exotic cat. There was a lot of training done, unfortunately she was training us. Remember the shoes? It took my family about five pairs of shoes to learn.

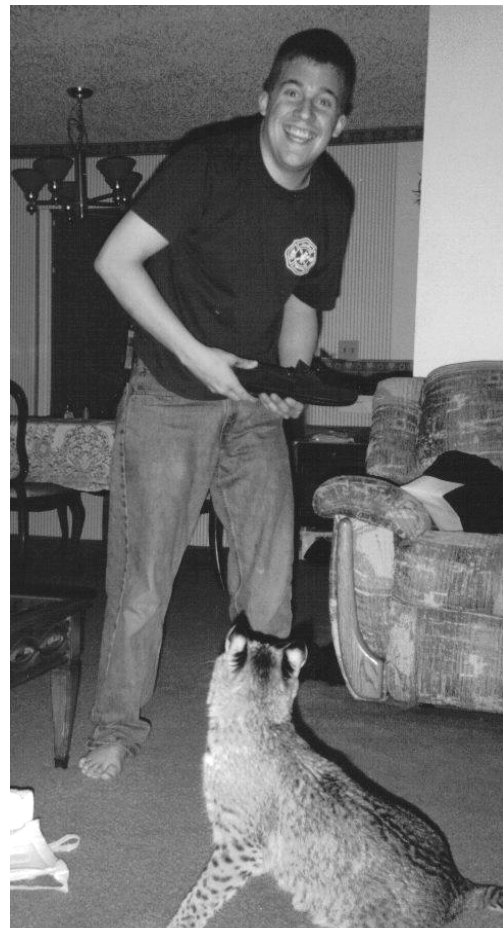
I know that it was risky letting a freshman in high school have so much responsibility, but it has shaped my life into what it is now. My plans are to get a degree in business and start my own business and live with Maddison and maybe someday in the future a few more bobs and a lynx.

I just hope that they are still legal to own. I wish I had more time to fight bans but it's hard. However, I will be educating people at the school (Western Washington University) about the good side of owning exotics. I have been talking to a few groups who would like me to go and speak to them. These are animal activist groups, who strangely enough haven't formed an opinion on captive big cats. Being that Western is a huge liberal school I thought that I should get to them before some PETA creep finds them.

My parents miss me so much, but their lives are full of wonder and surprise. Maddison misses me as well but she likes the fact that it is easier to get into things. I was always the one on top of closing doors, putting things away, and trying my best to dissuade her from causing too much trouble. I have heard that since I have been gone Maddison has discovered many new toys.

The other day I received a package from home. I eagerly opened it, not knowing what to expect. I started to laughing and crying all together. This got my roommate curious so he looked in the box.

My roommate must think I am crazy. In the box was a chewed up magnet, a piece of a shoe, and some other little tidbits that were captured by the love of my family's lives.



Sugarmint – Loving Surprise

By: Bob Turner

My wife Patricia and myself get very attached to things, probably more than we should. I work at General Motors and get the employee discount on GM vehicles. Due to the vehicle discount, most of the General Motors employees trade in their vehicles for new vehicles every year or two. Financially, maybe my wife and I should trade in our vehicles for new vehicles every year or two, but we don't. We keep our vehicles at least 10 years. The reason, we get attached to that vehicle and want to keep it. I take very good maintenance care of our vehicles and they last at least 10 years. This is an example of getting attached to things.

We use to do wildlife rehab for the state of Indiana. By law, we had to release all of the rehab animals and birds we took in. It was hard for us to do the wildlife rehab work due to getting very attached to the animals and birds, which made for a sad day when they had to be released. We knew that we were doing the right thing, but we are not good at letting go.

In the fall of 1993, we got our first exotic cat, an African Serval from Donna Amos on the west coast. We are so thankful for Donna breeding the servals and all the sacrifices she has to go through so that others like us have the opportunity to share their lives with the beautiful animals. If the wonderful people like Donna were like Pat and I, then there would not be the newborn animals available for others. What a loss that would be to the captive conservation.

Since 1993, our exotic cat family has grown to (5) servals, (3) bobcats, and a temporary cougar. We did not breed any of our cats because we would get too attached and could not sell them to others. We would also be too overly concerned about their welfare after being sold. Thanks to all the breeders who are able to work through that problem.

About a year ago, we exchanged our male serval named Sukari for our friends Bill and Diana Johnson's male serval named Sierra. For over a year, Bill and Diana's Sierra, would not attempt to breed with any of their (5) female servals, so we made the exchange in the hope that Sukari would breed with their females. Bill said Sierra was a "Gay Boy" and is not interested in the girls. Since Sierra was not romantically interested in the pretty females, for the past year we let one of our female servals named Peppermint play with Sierra.

On Thursday, November 4, 2004, we had a great surprise occur at our facility. This was the first of three surprises over the next 11 days. We found out Sierra was a bad bad boy. On that day, Pat heard a squeaking sound coming from Peppermint's bed. Pat said, oh no, she has a mouse. To her surprise, it was not a mouse, but a beautiful baby serval. So much for the Sierra "Gay Boy" thing. Now, for something we did not want to happen, we would not take anything in this world for our new baby named "Sugarmint". What makes this more of a surprise is I hold Peppermint in my arms every day and still did not know she was expecting a baby.

Now, we were on the phone with Bill and Diana Johnson and Lynn Culver about baby serval care. We have helped the Johnson's bottle feed servals and bobcats from (2) weeks old to (7) weeks old at our home, but having a new born was new to us.

Since Peppermint is very mild and tame with us, we were going to try to leave Sugarmint with Peppermint well past the suggested 12 to 14 day period when you pull the kittens from the mother. We wanted Sugarmint have the mother's milk as long as possible and still have the Sugarmint bond with humans. We were going to try leaving Sugarmint with Peppermint three to four weeks.

Peppermint let us be with her and Sugarmint as much as we wanted and Sugarmint seemed comfortable with that and did not hiss at us. Things were working out well until the 11th. Day. On that day, every time we would go to Peppermint, she would pick up Sugarmint and carry him from the nest bed to us. Finally, we got concerned for the well fare of Sugarmint and pulled him from Peppermint. Very sad time for us as we hoped to prove that if you had a very mild mother and with some work we could leave the kitten with the mother lot longer than the 12 to 14 days and still have the kitten bond with humans.

I was a little disappointed in Peppermint not wanting to keep her baby. At the time, I was sure she didn't want to just move her kitten but give it to us. Just after we pulled Sugarmint, Peppermint seemed very happy and loved on me and wanted to play. I was thinking how unusual for her to be so happy just after taking her kitten away from her.

I called Lynn and asked her about holding off not feeding Sugarmint for the first 24 hours so he would be hungry and readily take to the bottle. Lynn said to not force the bottle to Sugarmint the first 24 to 30 hours. Offer the bottle but do not force the bottle to him. Lynn said for the kitten to see the bottle as something positive, not something negative that first 24 to 30 hours.

Backing up a little here. When I first saw that Peppermint had just one kitten, I was a little concerned that Peppermint's milk may dry up due to just one kitten. The reason I was concerned was that I was raised on a farm and some times when our pigs had their first born with only two or three piglets, the mother milk would dry up about in about seven days and we would have to pull the piglets and hand feed them.

Our surprise number two: Four hours after we took Sugarmint from his mother, we offered the bottle to him and he was hungry so he readily took to the bottle. I was not expecting him to take to the bottle that quick.

Our surprise number three: Later that night when I picked up Peppermint and was holding her and telling her she was not the best mommy for giving up her kitten, I notice her milk had dried up. Now I knew why she was trying to give her beautiful loving kitten to us. She could not feed her baby and wanted us to save her baby. With tears, I told her how good of a mommy she was to our little surprise, named Sugarmint.

SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM AN OLD OCELOT BREEDER

Loreon Vigne

In the 60's Ocelots were being purchased from classified ads in the newspapers. They cost a mere \$60. It was not a very good situation, for they were coming into this country from South America after their mother was killed by natives in the rain forest, no doubt for her fur, and the babies taken for the pet trade. They were to be found in pet stores too, of course.

Being young at the time, I did not see the whole picture, and decided I wanted to have an ocelot after seeing a photo in the paper of a group of happy looking ocelot owners that belonged to the Long Island Ocelot Club, each with an ocelot on their lap.

My house cat had just died of old age and I thought this would be a wonderful new pet. My first ocelot was a dream cat, and lived in the house just like a regular domestic, unfortunately he died of kidney failure after about five years because his previous owner, a doctor, had fed him a diet of beef heart, and this ocelot would eat nothing else. At the time there was not a lot of knowledge about what to feed an ocelot.

Having lost this beloved pet, I then purchased a pair of ocelots, a large male from a family with children and other animals. They had totally detooped this cat, who was also declawed but did not neuter him. The female I got from a couple who no longer wanted their adorable ocelot because they had ordered a cheetah. They lived in a home in a nice neighborhood in San Francisco, with a fairly small yard. I often wondered what ever happened to that cheetah.

I knew many people with ocelots in those days. Most of them had a fairly good setup for their cats and Zupreem had become available which was the chosen food for them to eat. An LIOC chapter started in California and we would meet at local parks or each other's homes to discuss how to care for our cats. There was not much attention toward breeding as most of these cats were destined to be pets.

I was however determined to make more ocelots in captivity, feeling certain that as time went on and more generations were born in a domestic environment that they would indeed become pets and the barbaric practice of taking them from the wild would cease. Not too many others were concerned with this ideal and in the late 70's exotic cats began to be banned in large cities in California. I had already had success with the breeding pair I had acquired and had six ocelots in my backyard at the time. Since I had two dwellings with yards that backed up on each other they had a pretty big area, as tall buildings surrounded me. I could let them out of their cages and they could roam about in the yard. I was told I could be grandfathered to keep them there but could not breed anymore. That was when I purchased some property in the country where I could carry on the breeding program in spite of having many ties to the city where I had a business.



I sold some of my property and my business in order to do this move and ended up with a place I call Isis Oasis, which I ran as a retreat center. In time I obtained servals, bobcats, and a jungle cat that has fathered chausies as well. I also added many birds and people who could not keep their macaws and parrots asked us to do so, and now we have rather extensive aviaries. These add much enrichment to the cats.

Occasionally we have Feline Enrichment Weekends. People come to stay and learn about the cats and offer them a variety of toys, herbs, feathers, bubbles, veggies, and generally pay lots of attention to them all day. The cats seem to love this chance to interact with the visitors. We used to have one ocelot that would hug anyone who entered his habitat. He was much photographed for books, magazines, and postcards. After he passed away his mate, who was also growing old had one more kitten, which was a female. Of course we had to keep her. We called her Isis and she has now learned that same behaviour. He touched so many lives and it is her turn now to offer our guests unconditional ocelot love.

Just before our last Enrichment Weekend we got a call from a writer who had heard about this gathering and asked if she might write a story about our facility. She said she loved cats and wanted to write something positive about what we were doing as she had heard good things about us. This weekend, we had two baby ocelots and a baby chausie to make the event even more rewarding and since she wrote for the S.F. Chronicle, a major newspaper, we thought it a good opportunity for people to learn more about



continued on page 38

Who Are The Real “Animal Rights” People?

by Pat (Catman) Webb

Is it simply a “they and us”, or a “them vs. we”? What about the animals? With all the everyday pressures and thoughtless autonomic motions that the individual, average human carries out on a daily basis, there seems less and less genuine time for thinking about what is really important in our lives, and about the true importance of our animal brethren’s lives.

If we could lay down a Big Measuring Ruler, and throw everyone on to measure the human spirit, there would be thoughts by “many.” For “many,” true achievement in life can only be measured in the amounts of accumulated personal assets. It seems huge amounts of assets in one human’s hands can actually be a bad thing. Depending on which human, of course.

That being usually agreed on by most, I would ask a moment of time to share my thoughts on the basic animal advocate human types, specifically the view in consideration of their quality of interaction with animal species. I view Animal People in 3 basic ways.

1. Those people who Truly Care About Life, All Life.

They are fascinated by life, and so curious of it as to be drawn to caring about it in all forms. People who want to understand the surrounding life forms with whom we share this planet. The depth of caring can get wrapped so deeply into the human psyche that some even create a religion/philosophy to work out their own personal angst, shortcomings, and (in many cases) create a life’s complete agenda. This could be biologist, zoologist, sanctuary worker, private caregiver, pet owner, or even that radical extremist who would get themselves so far into agenda/advocacy, they find themselves continually further distanced from any real animals at all. These also find themselves *used* by the number 3’s.

Number one people are a rainbow of human natures, all “sharing a caring” for our animal neighbors. There is a common thread.

2. Those that are Afraid Of Life.

They are afraid of their own lives, so consequently timid of any other life surrounding their own. They do what is necessary to make every day as much the same, as the one before, and the one after. Doing the necessary job, performing as expected to ensure that the next day might not scare them. Oh, there might be a nice small dog or cat at home, but it is there “for the kids”, and seems to be simply dirty, and makes the rooms smell different. Different is, of course, a bad thing to these type of people. Animals seem unpredictable, even old dog “Shep” at Dad’s house, who always laid around, all through those busy high school years, and they hardly even noticed him. “Old Shep” loved that distant human, but never saw love returned. These people will care for the family pet by making the feeding, watering, and other pet chores, be a part of their expected

routine. Like washing clothes, or mowing the lawn. Or, feeding Old Shep II”. These people had children, some who are probably now “useful idiots” for radical animal rights extremists. The young minions carrying out the distasteful duties to punish themselves for not being nicer to “Old Shep”. They now miss him dearly. Or, whatever deeper subconscious relevance it might relate to. (We seem to use animals for many more burdens than we might think.)

Although, I think most of the Nuevo-Leadership humans of the current “Animal Rights” groups, are more likely to fall into the 3rd group.

3. Those that only believe in One Life... Their Own.

These people use all of their emotional and logical resources to provide only for their own lives, and not much for anything else. Some may marry and produce children, who then find themselves competing for love, with that particular parent’s own ego. God help ‘em, we will see what agenda those kids will be dealing with soon enough. More often than not though, these people don’t marry, nor produce

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Who Are The Real “Animal Rights” People?

offspring (which might be a good thing:). The selfish thoughts are explained away as dedication. It's quite OK to earn a salary of half a million dollars annually, in animal advocacy, after all it's “For The Animals”. Ummm, OK, if they say so...

No time for even an “Old Shep” here. Besides, it's not fiscally prudent to just throw personal money away on a single animal, when there are so many needing saving (that can actually yield a return on investment), the all important R.O.I. Again, “Old Shep” just doesn't make sense. To those who may conceptualize that this is being selfish by these people, it's OK, these people have created a great “guilt repellent”.

To have an animal near you is cruel to the animal. Repeat, OK? To have an animal near you is cruel to the animal. Wow... that is truly so profound, so perfect, as “guilt repellent”. Works well even for the “useful idiots”. I guess it really would be cruel to an animal that had to live with a person like that. *coff*

These people cannot care about people who have animals near them, because they can't understand that type of human. They can't really care about real animals, as it's everything for them, their own lives. To them, life is just one big, fast, self-absorbed ride. Since there is no REAL deep caring for an animal, there's no harm in making big bucks off them, right? Especially if the whole effort is written off as actually helping animals. Wow... that is truly so perfect, as guise for being such Greedy Bass Turds (fish feces, nothing is lower).

Well, there you have it, in my humble opinion. The 3 types of “Animal People”, in a nutshell. Yes, there are varying degrees of types between those 3, but that may seem to work well enough to be the “Big Measuring Ruler”. The number 3's have the most money so they can speak the loudest.

Sometimes though, truth comes as a quiet whisper in the ear, as realization sets in. To start questioning the loud people. Questioning their motives. Questioning the fact that the greedy resources that are accumulated started off from thoughts of helping out animals, from people who send in those donations, and all that other charitable giving. The Number 3's simply think, “Good work if you can get it”. They even are creating the definitions we find all ourselves living by. Are these people really Animal Rights? I don't think so.

What if an animal felt he had the *right* to live side by side, with a human? What if that animal felt that his species has a *right* to survive? What if he feels he has a *right* to expect responsible caring humans to gather them up and really protect them? When the last 1/4 inch of their native habitat is taken or spoiled, that animal feels he has the *right* to be taken care of by those who would take or spoil their original homes. From the humans who care enough, to feed *more* than just advocacy to the world around them. Humans

who actually feed the animals. People who are the most likely to actually be able to hear and understand what an animal says and feels what their desired rights are. I guess those humans are the real Animal Rights humans then, huh...Is that us? Are we really the true Animal Rights people? Have the #3's, using the angst filled #2's (including any “useful idiots”), stolen a philosophy and betrayed it? Betrayed animals? Betrayed the rich dynamic fabric and diversity of life, for personal gain and riches?

The real Animal Rights is a human obligation. We robbed, so we must somehow return. With obligation comes labor (not lip service). To true animal and life lovers, that labor is a labor of love. This is something that the #3's will never understand. They don't need to. They just need to find some other avenue to ply their asset accumulating skills, and quit exploiting animals.

To all the #1's... These are the real Animal Rights People. The ones who responsibly provide nice safe comfortable environments for animals. In their homes, Sanctuaries, Nicer zoos,,, But most importantly, in their hearts.

If there is a glimmer of truth, personal connect, or understanding in these words, feel quite comfortable in passing them on. Animal Rights, Animal Welfare, whatever you want to call it.

Shouldn't It Be About The Animals?

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Election Results are In

President – Bob Turner – 70
Vice-President – Kevin Chamber – 68
Secretary-Treasure – Harold Epperson – 69
Membership Services– Donna Verba – 70
Legal Affairs – Evelyn Shaw – 44
Conservation Education – Leann Montgomery – 54
Advertising & Publicity – Marcus Cook – 45
Life Director –
 Bobby Bean – 41 (78)
 Lynn Culver – 38 (75)
 Tracy Wilson – 37 (72)

FCF Election – Other Results

Sara Schimke – 34
Hope Bennett – 23
Deborah Rabinskyy – 30
George Stowers – 36 (78)

Upon opening sealed envelopes on December 7, 2004, and the checking of certified membership list by J. B. Anderson, the above results are sworn to be true and accurate as completed by:
Verlyn Bergen, DMin.
J.B. Anderson, Life Director

FCF NEWS

Husbandry Course Hosts wanted: FCF members interested in hosting our 2005 spring courses in March or April, please contact our Conservation & Education Director. Husbandry Course hosts advertise the event, secure a course location, receive registration

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FCF 2005 Convention in Miami, Florida will feature a visit with Bhagavan Antel and his ambassador animals at the Parrot Jungle Island! Details soon.

Next Playa de Oro Tour is January 28 - February 6, 2005. The cost for this 10-day adventure is \$700 excluding airfare. (Fly to Quito, Ecuador) This includes 2 nights at a charming bed & breakfast in Quito (breakfast included), 1 night in Otavala at another unique B&B, 5 nights at the Playa de Oro Reserve Lodge (all meals included), boat transportation, private van transportation, visit to Otavala market, village tour, village children dance performance, most of your meals, and jungle guide service. (Your out of pocket expenses are a minimum of \$85 or less, while in Quito & Otavala) Please contact Tracy Wilson at Tracy@touchthejungle.org or call 501-368-0399 about reservations, as this tour is almost full. Visit Playa de Oro's website at www.touchthejungle.org

FCF Director Leann Montgomery spoke before Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources December 1. Kentucky has proposed a total ban of big cats and primates, except for AZA zoos and school or university related educational purposes. At a public hearing in Frankfort, Leann Montgomery spoke before the Commissioners about the need for private gene pools of threatened and endangered felines. Leann distributed Legislative Action packets to the Commissioners on FCF and our views. Based on her presentation, the Commissioners voted to table the exemption part of the regulations to give it more consideration to consider allowing some types of private ownership. Exemptions will be voted upon in February.

Update received on FCF supported Wild Feline Survey in India from Shekhar Kolipaka. He is presently in the panna tiger reserve and work is progressing well. The forest outside the tiger reserve area is disturbed but still supporting very good wildlife. He has sighted and documented the jungle cats and rusty spotted cats habitat preferences. The other 3 species found in these jungles have so far eluded him.

Editor Needed for the FCF Magazine. Mindy Stinner continues to edit our fine publication, however her responsibilities at the Conservator's Center have greatly increased. If there is an FCF member interested in this volunteer position, you can contact Mindy for more details about editorship or contact any board member and let your interest be known.

FCF Accreditation Panel is now accepting applications for Exotic Feline Facility Accreditation. Accreditation inspection/questionnaires can be downloaded from our web site at www.felineconservation.org.

Exotic Cats are Inspiration for Life

I have just returned from Africa where I take my senior staff every few years for inspiration.

Inspiration for what? While Africa can inspire you for many things, for us it's feline conservation. Seeing Africa's big cats out in the wild gives you a whole new perspective on how they really live.

We have more than fifty big cats, an elephant, 2 bears, 25 apes and other primates as well as a host of other wildlife that live full time with our 25 staff members at the Institute (T.I.G.E.R.S.), The Institute of Greatly Endangered & Rare Species. But living with them in captivity and living with them in the wild create 2 very different experiences and perspectives.

Many people talk about the wild, but to actually be in the wild is a life changing experience. The wild is a hard place to find, almost a myth really. It has been taken away almost everywhere. There are vast tracks of land across this planet,



and 10s of millions of people via television has worked as well as wild felines interacting in a personal way with their handlers and friends, it gets to people in a different way.

Captive wild felines as Conservation Ambassadors

Most people do not realize that we are in the midst of a mass extinction that is affecting every living thing on this planet. We are losing up to a dozen species of plant and animal every day. This rate is far faster than when the dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago. Stunningly beautiful animals like the wild felines capture people's attention so they become more willing to learn about critical conservation issues. The wild felines are one of the inspirational and important living examples of the environmental problems facing the world, which makes them the perfect wildlife ambassadors. Many wild felines are currently on the brink of extinction due to rampant habitat destruction and poaching.

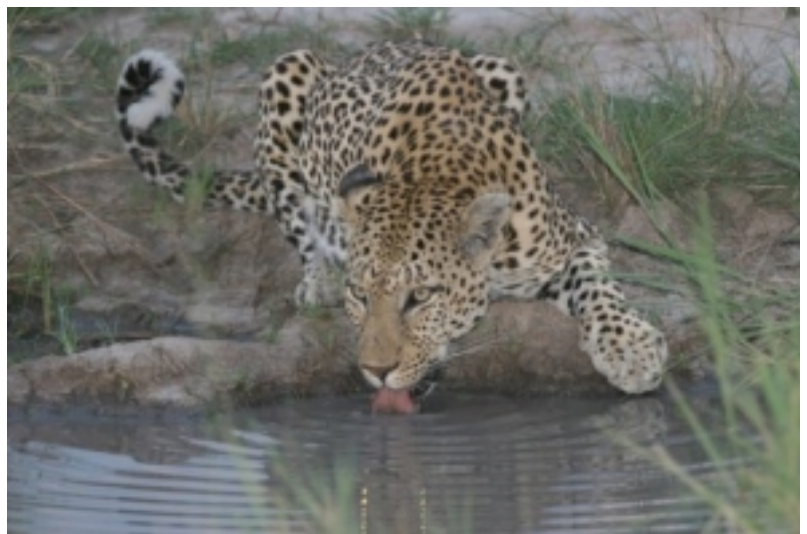
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but man has irrevocably changed almost all of it. The real wild and dangerous animals have all but disappeared. Large areas of land in Africa, Asia, and the Americas have not yet been encroached upon by people, but they are missing the lions and leopards, tigers, pumas and jaguars, and most all of the top predators. They are the first to go as we come in and we have done this almost the whole world over. You may find a few scattered here and there, but the real wild is an endangered place. If we are lucky less than one half of a percent of the planet is national parks.

To see the mega fauna of Africa at work helps to put the idea of conservation in perspective. For myself and my staff it lets us see what it all must have been like just a few decades ago and why we need to get out there and change peoples hearts and minds to try and save the last bits of wild that are left.

Nothing in my experience of the last 25 years as a conservation educator, teaching millions of people through live shows



cheetah, lions and leopard in Africa photos by Bhagavan Antel.

Don't miss Bhagavan Antel at Parrot Jungle Island at Convention 2005 in Miami, Florida!

Blast from the Past. . . .

Long Island Ocelot Club Newsletter

Volume 23 Number 6

November/December 1979

Clouded leopard Shari, owned by LIOC secretary/treasurer, Jackie Vanderwall graces the cover, and inside are both stories of Seth, a leopard cat, and assorted leopard cat accounts from Pat Quillen. Penny Andrews reports on a California couple that chose to put their beloved 4- year old lion to sleep after a judge ruled him to be public nuisance, and included also was 30 Years of Ocelots (feeding, cleaning, doctoring, heartbreak, fatigue and determination) from LIOC founder Catherine Cisin. Penny is an account of a margay, a species all but gone from captivity in the 21st century. The Congressional passage of the final rules on the Endangered Species Act, and an early wave of state ban laws passed in the 1970's that specifically forbid private possession of ocelot, margay and jaguarundi destroyed the captive gene pools. CITES prevents any new importation of margay, insuring this species will remain extirpated from US captivity. Once seen at many AZA zoos and commonly bred by private collectors, it is today another almost vanished species.

Penny

Heidi Marie Fahrenholz

When I first saw Penny in the zoo, she was lying rolled in a ball in the corner of a glass cage that looked much like a fish tank, her fur all covered with sawdust. Her body looked so tiny that it was hard to believe that she was a margay, but from her markings it had to be so.

Contrary to what I believe in, I knocked at the glass to make her wake up and look at me. Slowly her head emerged from under her right front paw and big black eyes looked at, or rather through me. The sight of her little face gave me quite a shock. Apart from the fact that her ears were all slashed from many fights with her cage-mates (she had survived four males in that cage) she looked exactly like my favorite margay Ocel, a very big wild born male. Although it was much smaller, her face had the same shape and expression as Ocel's, the color of her fur was the same and her body shape and markings, though smaller were almost identical. Seeing this unhappy, tiny bundle of fur that looked so much like my contented and pampered pet was almost more than I could bear, but no way was the zoo going to give her up.

It took me almost one and a half years to get Penny out of there, a time during which I had tried everything from offering a ridiculously high sum for her to threatening to put the condition under which she was kept in the local papers. Finally my day of victory arrived and I went to collect her. When I had paid for her at the office I asked to be allowed to put her in the traveling cage myself. I had some fresh grass with me and knowing that she had never received grass in the zoo I was sure she would follow it wherever I put it, but I wasn't given the chance. When I came downstairs to the cages. Penny was already hanging in the keeper's net ready to be pushed into the traveling cage. The keeper watched me with the grass, grinning and murmured something like this being a cat and not a cow. I didn't reply anything but offered the grass to Penny who was sitting quietly in the carrier. She grabbed the grass with such greed that she almost ripped the skin off my hand - she finished every bit of the grass. I left without even looking at the keeper's dumbstruck face.

I had covered the carrier with a towel in order to keep frightening sights from Penny and placed her next to me in the seat. After driving a while, I stopped and bent down to Penny, lifting the towel to reassure her, but Penny needed no reassurance. She was lying comfortably on the cushion with front paws neatly folded she looked at me without fear. From what I had been told, at the zoo I was more than surprised. The director assured me that she was shy and unhandlable, even vicious at times and that he would not feel liable for any injuries she might do to me since he had warned me. Penny's interested glance wandered from the window to my face and vice versa the whole drive home. I was ever so anxious to get home and open the carrier to see what she would do in my bedroom.

When we arrived Penny immediately came out of the carrier sniffing the carpet carefully, which must have borne the smell of almost all of my 14 exotics who all, at times, are in that room when they roam the house. She exercised her claws on the carpet and flung herself on her side, watching me with interest. Slowly I moved my hand and arm toward her to stroke her. She immediately hung on my arm, all four paws clinging to it, before I even had a chance to touch her. Then she started biting, but oh so very gently. I lifted her on my lap where she stayed and I stroked her while she gently nibbled at my fingers.

Was it possible that a person who had cared for and fed this animal for more than five years had not realized that Penny was completely tame and that this zoo animal had probably started its life as a pet and was more imprinted with man than many domestic pets I knew? Obviously it was possible.

Ever since Penny has only meant joy to us. She dearly loved her new large and natural outdoor place but as she was much too small to join any of my other margays (she only weighs 6 pounds), and my oncillas who are more her size were more than unfriendly to her, she had to stay on her own. During teatime each day Penny was allowed into the house for an hour or two and during this time I introduced her to my most gentle, domestic born, male oncilla, Gato. From that day they have been playing in the house together while we watch them. Gato was happy since this provided him with an additional couple of hours free run before he was allowed to roam the house with his fellow oncillas in the evening.

Soon after she arrived, Penny came into heat. She called for me and did not care for any of my male margay: whom she could see and smell through the fence. Nor did she care for Gato oncilla. She just wanted me. She would spend hours rubbing and rolling in my lap. She was most loving and loveable when she was in heat, but I felt that she was in heat too often. When she showed signs of heat every week instead of every six weeks like the rest of my girls, I knew something to be wrong. Every-time she was in heat there was also a lot of discharge and when I first

noticed the discharge when she was not in season, I knew her real troubles had started. I went to the vet with her, where she behaved beautifully, and he decided that she would have to be spayed as soon as she was out of season. After the operation I was told that her ovaries were cystic and that she had just been about to develop an infection of the uterus.

Penny recovered rapidly and soon could enjoy her outdoor place again. Although I missed her affectionate ways when in heat, she still remained the loving cat she was before. I soon tried to put a collar around her neck that she accepted as if she had never been without one, but when I tried to walk her in the garden she got terribly frightened by the enormity of the space and would hide under me. I then had the idea to take her carrier which she used to sleep in, out into the garden and with her sitting in the carrier with the door open I walked around with

Penny watching the scenery. It did not take long before she ventured out and walked a few steps on the leash - always returning to the carrier quickly when she felt insecure. After three weeks we did not need the carrier anymore and Penny was going on walks like Ocel or any of my other leash-trained cats.

I found that Penny loved the car and she soon joined me and rode with me when I drove the few miles every day to Nickel, a margay rescue, whom I had taken in shortly after I received Penny, and whom I could not house anymore due to lack of space. He was boarding in a beautiful indoor/outdoor facility of a friend who had lost their ocelot.

I am more than happy, and I think Penny is too, that I have finally succeeded in getting her. I was more than upset when I visited that same zoo again and saw a pair of young Geoffroy cats cuddled up in Penny's former cage.

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Meet the FCF Accreditation Panel *continued from page 12*

animals and fish. He has been both a speaker and attendee at continuing education classes, seminars and conferences about insurance, exotic animals, live animal transport, chemical immobilization, valuation, and various entertainment activities. Mitch has personally raised, trained, and owned tigers, lions, leopards, etc. for over 15 years.

Tracy Wilson - Tracy hails from Searcy, Arkansas where, along with her husband Keith, she has operated an exotic cat sanctuary and breeding facility for the last five years as well as owning Wild Trax Supplies, a provider of vitamin supplements and other cat related items. Her previous experience includes caring for big cats at a large

large sanctuary for an additional five years. Tracy has held a USDA Class C exhibitors license for the last 5 years, conducting educational programs about wild felines for children's programs. She has experience in all aspects of wild feline husbandry, from neonates to elderly cats, ranging in size from bobcat to tiger. Tracy is a certified instructor of the FCF Basic Wild Feline Husbandry Course and has served as the FCF Director of Conservation and Education for the last 4 years. She is very active in the Playa de Oro Reserve, a wildcat preserve located in Ecuador, where she has lead several excursions and oversees the FCF funded camera trapping survey and conservation effort. Tracy's hands-on experience consists of 136 cats of 9 different species.

Big Cats Seen by Live Audiences Create Awareness of their Endangered Status

Rick Thomas

From the first day I obtained Zeus, my first tiger, I was overwhelmed with the desire to make sure that the public knew what I knew about these beautiful cats. Simply; the laws to protect the public are important, however, not to let these laws eventually cause the extinction of an already endangered species.

We now know that these animals are worth thousands of dollars DEAD! People are killing these animals for ridiculous folkloric medicinal purposes.



Rick Thomas, world-famous magician and dedicated feline conservationist was the keynote speaker at the 2004 FCF Convention in Las Vegas

Trying to keep these animals in the wild is great if we could keep them safe from man. Humans are destroying this animal and I believe there are ways that we can help to eliminate the killings.

I enrich lives and open eyes by presenting these animals to thousands of people every day. Creating an awareness to the problem is an important part of the entire plan of conservation and I am proud to be offering that part of the plan.

I am praised repeatedly for my efforts by patrons at my presentation each and every day for enriching their lives with this information. It is constant thanks for what I do for the tiger and its plight. I believe that my message: asking the public to be aware of and participate in the saving of these animals is critical to the ultimate goal to save tigers.

May you realize that my efforts are truly complimenting the efforts to save endangered species.

Observations of an Ocelot Breeder *continued from page 31*

our sanctuary and perhaps discover that exotic cats could be well taken care of and even breed in captivity. Just before the day of the event however she called me and told me she would not be coming. Her editor had told her she would have to write something negative and that there had to be two sides to her story. She was unwilling to do that as she purposely had chosen to write something positive. She had the integrity to not want to do this but it shows how the media is controlling the hype that is being thrust upon the unknowing populace. There can no longer be anything good said about the keeping of exotic animals without the extreme other side.

I was reminded of the first ocelot baby I had in the late 60's who I called Omar. The newspaper came out to take his picture and proudly announced that he was the first ocelot

ever to be born in San Francisco. What has happened to public opinion in that span of years is quite alarming. In considering this situation you wonder why they continue to write purely negative stories about animal attacks without ever a good thing to say otherwise. Who is pulling the strings attempting to squash anyone's ability to live in harmony with the creatures of the earth that otherwise might become extinct?

Our minds are clearly being manipulated by the media in so many ways. It would seem that the only way to help people understand the value of propagating exotic animals without the other negative input is to find a way to do it ourselves. I have started a book called lots and lots of Ocelots, which may find its way to a publisher. Let us all try to do what we can in whatever way we can. Those of us, that I like to call animal people, need to put aside our differences and become a strong force for our rights as citizens of the United States. Spotted Blessings...Loreon

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Alie Harvey

It was a clear, crisp autumn morning; the sun was shining on my face as the air bit my nose. I walked down the path that led to the river, the leaves crunched under my feet as I walked. I looked up on the mountainside and saw a sea of colors; orange, yellow, red and brown. So majestic was the sight that I just had to stand in awe of our creator.

How could anything be so beautiful and peaceful? It was the exact same way I felt the first time I laid eyes on Saber, our grandpa tiger who makes his residence at Safari Park in Caney, KS. Saber is a 12-year-old Siberian (Amur) Tiger. He is roughly 9 feet from nose to tail tip, his light orange coat is painted with black stripes, and above each eye there are three markings that look like teardrops. His eyes show his wisdom and age and I have to say every time I gaze into them I am taken aback by his beauty and majesty. High atop



his rock, sometimes he will cross his front legs as if to say, what other cat can compare to my dominance and at 600 pounds I have to say, he is right.

My name is Allie Harvey and I confess, I am an animal lover. I joined up with my husband, Tom Harvey founder of Safari Zoological Park, 2 years ago. My experience pales in comparison to his, he has been caring for these stately creatures most of his life. I have had the good fortune to be a part of the team and learn of their exotic nature and wonderful personalities first hand. They are completely dependent on us and whether it is 75 degrees or 5 degrees outside everybody needs and receives love, food, and water.

The park is unique in that visitors receive personal, firsthand explanations about each animal on a guided walk-through tour. The information is factual by nature but generally always takes a twist by the time we get to the “catwalk”, the first encounter with the big CATS. It is at this time in the tour that the people in the tour and the tour guide make that connection. They realize that it takes all of us working together to preserve these magnificent animals. We need each other for preservation, propagation and education.

If we don't, how will our children's children get to see a beautiful Tiger in “real life” and not just in a book or hear a Lion roar, or see Leopard jump up in a tree. Wherever you are, whatever you can do, it is important. If you can volunteer your time, the seemingly smallest of tasks are important. Maybe you can write, lobby for their rights- our rights, maybe you can support monetarily, then do that even if it is a dollar a month. EVERYTHING is appreciated. Working together we can succeed. We must be a voice for those that can't speak.



We want to thank everyone in FCF for stepping up to the plate and helping us make our point in a magazine especially for protecting our way of life we care so passionately about and fighting ban laws.



Captive wild felines as Conservation Ambassadors

continued from page 35

The unique opportunity to see one of these incredible animals outside of a traditional zoo environment can give people a greater understanding and appreciation of these magnificent creatures, therefore wild felines in alternative educational presentations assume an important role as ambassadors for conservation issues. We have found that after an up-close, uncaged experience with these types of animals, people are willing to learn about the increasing global issues and possible solutions to save our planet's biodiversity.

Present efforts may not be enough to save them, but while they are still here, wild felines with their beauty and physical prowess are helping to conserve what biodiversity remains by assisting us as conservation ambassadors.

The Myth of the Wild

Many people are quick to say that wild felines belong "in the wild" for most wild felines the wild is a myth. There are only a few disconnected populations of many wild felines that number only a few thousand per species, not enough to sustain populations for many generations to come. At the turn of the century there was a human population of 1.5 billion. By the year 1960 we had increased to 3 billion. Today there are 6.5 billion of us and we are already feeling the increasing strain on our natural resources. At our current rate of expansion there will be over 9 billion people by the year 2015. The wilderness that once covered this planet is quickly disappearing. We have already cut down over half of the world's forests. The remaining wild ecosystems are under siege, including the protected reserves set up for wild animals.

Endangered wild animals are currently being poached at an alarming rate, usually by poison or snare. The very idea of the "wild" is a myth because there are so few truly wild areas left.



Doc and assortment of tiger cubs, including some tabby tigers

In Africa and Asia most of the "wild animals" live in managed reserves, enclosed by either fences or an encroaching human population. These animals are guarded and often fed. Their freedom is restricted and their natural behavior is extinguished. These animals are in every sense as captive as the animals maintained in responsible zoological facilities.



Doc and assistant next to giant liger hybrid

Omega Point

We are quickly nearing "Omega Point", the point of no return. This is when the devastation we have inflicted on our life supporting ecosystems finally becomes irreversible and they begin to fail. At the current rate of mass species extinction, Omega Point could occur in the next 10 to 15 years. Not only is the biodiversity of our planet at risk, so are we. There is a real danger our kids and grandkids will live in a world where wild tigers, rhinos and condors are only memories. For many of our already endangered wildlife species to survive into the future, captive-breeding programs will play a critical role.

The famous naturalist William Beebe once said, "*When the last individual of a race of living beings breaths no more, another heaven and another earth must pass before such a one can be again.*"

Dr. Bhagavan Antle (doc) lives in Myrtle Beach SC. where he and his staff operate T.I.G.E.R.S. Preservation Station a living tiger museum and wildlife interaction center that sees over 3 million visitors each year. T.I.G.E.R.S also operates a live wildlife theatrical presentation "Wild Encounters" inside world famous "Parrot Jungle Island" in Miami Beach, FL. year round.

Visit Bhagavan up close and personal at the Parrot Jungle Island during the 2005 FCF Convention in Miami, Florida July 28 to 31!