

Volume 49, Issue 3

May/June 2005



Feline Conservation Federation



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To sign up, contact Donna Verba, Member Services Director

COVER: Amber bobcat lives with her bobcat buddy Boris and her people John and Terri Chuha. Read about their lives on page 34

BELOW: "My, what big teeth you have Grandma", said Little Red Riding Hood.

Photo of her cougar Katahdin, by Anne Amadon





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) non-commercial organization with international membership, devoted to the welfare of exotic felines. The purpose of this publication is to present information about exotic feline conservation, management and ownership to our members. The material printed is contributed by our members and reflects the point of view of the author but does not necessarily represent the point of view of the organization. FCF's Statement of Intent is contained in our bylaws, a copy of which can be requested from the Secretary. Reproduction of the material in this magazine may not be made without the written permission of the original copyright owners and/or copyright owner FCF. We encourage all members to contribute articles. Articles concerning exotic felines are preferred and gladly accepted. Articles involving other related subjects will also be considered. Letters and responses to articles may be included in the Readers Write column. Submission deadline for the next issue is the tenth of odd numbered months. Please submit all photos and articles to the Editor. Persons interested in joining FCF should contact the Term Director in Charge of Member Services.

In This Issue: Get ready for Convention. We promise lots of fun with friends and expect a bunch of furry kittens too. Don't miss it!

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Conservation of small wild cats

Jim Sanderson, Ph.D.
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The Beijing Zoo has enabled millions of visitors to see some of nature's most dangerous and majestic big wild cats such as the tiger, lion, leopard, puma, and snow leopard. You can even see smaller cats, the lynx and the clouded leopard, that are found in China. In fact, China has 13 species of wild cats, more than a third of all wild cat species, and more than any other country on earth. Moreover, the only place the Chinese mountain cat occurs is, not surprisingly, China [photo to right, one of China's national treasures, the Chinese mountain cat (*Felis bieti*), an endemic small cat found only in China.] This fact makes China one of the most important countries in the world for wild cat conservation.



The family Felidae traces its beginnings to the Oligocene about 30 million years ago. For these early ancestors cats evolved and spread across Eurasia, North America, and Africa. Later they spread into South America. Australia and Madagascar are not blessed with cats, as these landmasses broke free from the continents well before cats arose. New species of cats evolved and replaced others. Many such as the saber-toothed cat, North American lion, and North American cheetah existed as late as the close of the Pleistocene just 14,000 years ago but are now extinct.

There are 36 species of wild cats on earth today. Most people know something about and have even seen either in a zoo or on television the big seven cats: lion, tiger, leopard, jaguar, cheetah, snow leopard, and puma. These predators have thrilled television viewers with their speed and agility, strength and skill to kill prey sometimes much bigger than themselves. Tigers are able to kill crocodiles half again as big as themselves, leopards can carry their prey often as heavy as themselves into a tree, and a puma can take down and kill a bull elk 5 times its own size. The cheetah is the fastest land mammal, and the jaguar, kilogram for kilogram, is one of the strongest and most powerful wild cats. The magnificent seven big cats are all capable of killing a human but all generally avoid human contact. Cat attacks on humans are extremely rare however. So if there are 36 species of wild cats and only 7 are large, what are the rest of the cats?

I divide the remaining cats into two groups roughly according to size: Those that are bigger than 10kg,

roughly 9 species, and those less than 10kg, the remaining 20 species of cats that I call small wild cats. The medium-sized include 4 species of lynx (Eurasian, Iberian, Canada, and bobcat), the ocelot found in Central and South America, the caracal and two species of golden cats found in Africa and Asia, and the serval also found in Africa. The rest of the cats are small wild cats and most are no bigger than a domestic cat. What is so fascinating is that today there are more small wild cat species than ever before in Felidae history.

My own work has focused on the rarest of the small cats, those listed by the World Conservation Union as Endangered and so most in need of conservation action. One my most difficult challenges is to raise awareness of the plight of these lesser known but no less interesting wild cats. [photo below illustrating some of the smallest cats: guigna (pronounced gween-ya), Andean mountain cat].



The natural history of the smaller cats is every bit as interesting as their larger cousins and sometimes far more interesting. My own work on the guigna, or kodkod, (*Oncifelis guigna*), and the Andean mountain cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*) highlights just how elusive and interesting these small cats are.

Guigna (*Oncifelis guigna*)

The guigna, found in the Valdivian temperate rainforests of south central Chile and a small part of Argentina, has the smallest geographic range of any cat [below - melanistic female with lizard]. The largest adult male I



captured was 2.4 kg; a typical adult female was 1.7kg – much smaller than the average house cat, but one-on-one a house cat would stand no chance of survival against its wild cousin. Guignas are indeed wild cats.

Prior to my study the guigna was believed to be nocturnal (because it was rarely observed), assumed to be arboreal (because the only photograph in existence showed an individual clinging to the side of a tree), and believed by the local Chileans to be a vampire that sucked the blood of its victims. In fact, my detailed study demonstrated that none of these beliefs were true.

Guignas were able to move about the human-altered landscape by day and night without being observed by using vegetated corridors. Some corridors along small streams were only 3m wide but these offered enough cover for guignas. Often guignas hunted patiently from thick vegetation along the shoreline, particularly at high tide. Shorebirds typically foraged along the beach and at high tide were forced to race across the wet sand just in front of the breaking waves dissipating up the beach. When the birds came too close to the vegetation, the guigna pounced on them, and rarely failed to secure an easy meal.

The guigna's nemesis was the free-ranging chicken, however. When a chicken wandered too close to the

forest, it fell prey to a guigna. In this part of Chile chickens were raised for eggs and for meat and so the diminutive guigna was recognized as a thief of human resources and thus directly persecuted by people. Though I was initially most interested in discovering the cat's natural history and ecology, my task became one of convincing the local people that guignas were worth conserving.

Problems for guignas arose as a result of their predation of chickens. Often a guigna would discover a way into a chicken coop and during one visit kill all the residents. The cat would then be targeted for retribution. By compensating residents for their losses and by paying them \$20 to make their chicken coops cat-resistant, conflict was eliminated. For those people that kept free-ranging chickens, I bought the materials to build henhouses

Andean mountain cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*)

The Andean mountain cat (*Oreailurus jacobita*), found above 3500m in the Andes of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, and Peru, had been photographed only twice before I began my search for the *ghost of the Andes* in October 1998. Imagine venturing into the high Andes, a largely treeless, dry, and cold wilderness with snow capped peaks and smoking volcanoes to search for an elusive predator no bigger than a house cat [below picture of Andes and cat]. Nevertheless, two months into my search I found and photographed



the Andean mountain cat but despite continued effort, I failed to live capture one to continue my study.

Two years later in 2000 my photograph of the Andean mountain cat appeared in National Geographic and greatly raised awareness of the cat. My colleague in Bolivia Lilian Villalba joined the search. We and others documented that the desiccated skins of Andean mountain cat and two other cats found in the Andes, the puma or mountain lion and the pampas cat, were used for ceremonial purposes by the native people of the Andes. Live cats were killed on sight

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Two Very Special Old Men

Leann Montgomery

I remember the first time I met Marvin and Hush. It was at my first MEFES meeting in April of 1999. Although, I had never met him before, he was my inspiration for acquiring my first serval. Marvin had been visiting nursing homes with Hush in my area. He stopped by the local newspaper where my mom worked. She went on and on about this African Bush cat she had met. I found some newspaper articles on Marvin and Hush and their travels and did a lot of research on servals. Shortly after that, I acquired Osiris from a breeder here in KY and joined LIOC, now FCF. Osiris was with me at that first MEFES meeting. He was about 10 months old at the time and when Marvin met him, he kept petting him and saying to me, "Someday, he will be as good as my Hush". I'll never forget how proud that made me.

For the next six years, I watched in amazement at the bond between Marvin and Hush. I loved listening to Marvin's stories about his adventures with Hush. Those two were a treasure to MEFES, FCF, and countless other people whose lives they touched.



We all loved them. We all flocked to visit with them at meetings and conventions. We all wanted to be a part of the magic that existed between that old man and his cat. And we all watched as Marvin's health continued to decline.



Children at the MEFES meetings are drawn to Hush and Marvin

photos this page by Monte Francis

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Two Very Special Old Men,

continued from page 6

Bob Turner was like a son to Marvin. He looked out for him. He brought him to meetings. He did everything humanly possible to always care for Marvin. We all knew that when the time came that Marvin could no longer care for Hush, Bob would be there for him. Unfortunately unforeseen things happen and the best contingency plans can go awry. Bob had to have knee surgery and was out of commission, unable to move for weeks.

Bob sent out a plea asking if any of us could take Hush in at least temporarily until he could get up and around and I felt compelled to answer that call. Marvin had been admitted to a nursing home and his son was supposed to be taking care of Hush. I contacted Marvin's son and I realized that that he was not really caring for Hush and it would be best to get him out of there as soon as possible. I was off work on Friday and Marvin's son had a ball game Friday night and wouldn't be available until late. I didn't care how late it was, Hush was coming home with me.

At around midnight Friday night we arrived at Marvin's home. Nothing could have prepared me for what I saw. Hush was in a small cage in the living room. The smell would literally take your breath. The feces in the bottom of the cage were several inches thick and growing mold. The only water that Hush had was also full of feces with algae growing in it. The shelf, the floor, the wire of the cage, everything was covered in feces. I wanted to cry.

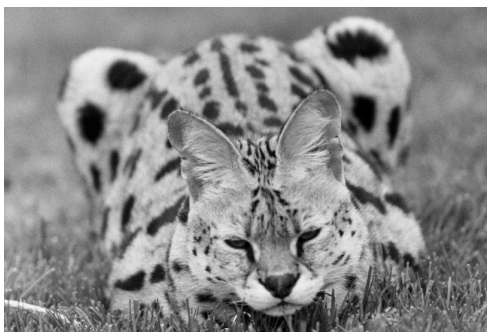
It was obvious that Marvin's son was terrified of Hush. At 18, Hush has gotten a little cantankerous and no one can handle him the way Marvin does. I was a little apprehensive myself about getting him loaded. Fortunately as soon as Hush saw his crate, he perked up and looked at me as if begging to be taken out of there. He hopped down off his shelf and waited patiently at the door for me to get the crate situated. I opened the door and in he walked. It was perfect. We had to ride home with the windows down because Hush smelled so bad. It was freezing outside and while the icy air blasted my face, I cried all the way home. And I promised Hush that no matter what, I would always care for him. Although I could never take Marvin's place in his life, I promised that I would try with everything in me to love him as Marvin did.

I was worried about how Hush would handle the stress of being in a strange place without Marvin. I had prepared a cage for him with a rug and huge pile of pillows and blankets to sleep on as I was concerned about how his old joints would handle being on concrete. When we uncrated him, he took one quick spin around the cage sniffing and then plopped down and

stretched out on his bed. He looked pretty happy. I felt better already. For the next couple of days, I hand fed Hush several small meals a day and talked to him. I was afraid that after not eating on a regular schedule, his stomach might become upset. He allowed me to pet him and I discovered that he was eaten up with fleas. His head was one giant scab beneath his fur. I managed to frontline him and for several days, I mixed Nature's miracle with hot water and misted him with it trying to get the smell of filth off of him. I was afraid that this might stress him out but he actually seemed to enjoy it and I had to do something about the smell. He has become somewhat accustomed to the hand feeding and some days will refuse to eat unless I hand feed him. If I am running short on time and just put the bowl down in his cage, he will look at me and go to the feeding spot and wait until I give in and come and feed him little bites one at a time. I was really worried that he might grieve himself to death without Marvin but he seems to be taking everything in stride. He's eating well and has put on a little weight. He has his days where he's a little grumpy but for the most part he's been a perfect gentleman. I made a promise to him on that icy tear filled night that I fully intended to keep. For whatever time this old man has left, he will be treated like a king.

I debated writing this and telling everyone about this situation but I have worked through my feelings of anger and guilt and feel that it should be an important lesson to all of us. Everyone should have not only a contingency plan but back up plans as well. We cannot always depend on our families to do right by our cats or follow our wishes in regards to them. Some times our families do not share the same love and respect for our cats that we do. It is up to us as exotic cat owners to look out for each other and to be there when the cats need us. I hope that all of you who read this, think of Hush and rework your contingency plans. If you see a fellow owner who needs help, step up and offer, whether they ask for your help or not.

Hush has been in my care for several months



now and he's doing fabulous. He seems pretty happy here. He greets me with purrs and serval

Hush, photo by Monte Francis

chatter and still expects to be hand fed most days. He has decided that he prefers Nebraska to chicken and will complain until he gets his way, and he always gets his way.

The first time I visited Marvin in the nursing home was an extremely emotional experience for me. I wanted so badly to take Hush but honestly, I didn't think that he would allow me to handle him on a leash. So, I did what I thought was the next best thing. I took Machista to visit. I had slid his carrier inside the door and proceeded to visit with Marvin. Although Marvin never sat up while we were there, when he heard Machista rattle his carrier door, his eyes lit up. "Ohhhh, did you bring my boy?", he said. The look of disappointment on his face was heart wrenching when he realized that it wasn't Hush. He petted Machista and talked to him a little but he really was only interested in Hush.

Monte Francis was kind enough to send me a CD of photos that he had taken of Marvin and Hush over the years. I had taken the best ones and blown them up and framed them for Marvin's room in the nursing home. When I gave him the first photo, he kissed it and talked to it as if Hush was really there. He spent more time visiting with those photos than he did with us. My mom and I fought back the tears during the entire visit. Marvin seemed as if he'd lost all hope. He told me that Hush had visited that very nursing home over 500 times in his life time. When it was time to go, I hugged Marvin and told him that Hush and I loved him. That he didn't have to worry about Hush, I would try to love him as much as he did and that he would never want for anything. He seemed relieved to know that I had Hush. "My bright little one", he said, "you take care of my boy, tell him I love him and tell him not to live to be 83."

I was already telling Hush every day how much Marvin loved him. I promised Marvin that day that I would try to figure out a way to bring Hush to visit. The moment we hit the parking lot, my mom and I burst into tears. I didn't know how I was going to safely make it happen but Marvin had touched so many lives, visiting nursing homes with Hush, that by God, if there was any justice in this world, Marvin should reap some of what he'd sown.

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I went home and called Bob Turner and told him that I needed him to meet me at the nursing home the following weekend. I might get bitten but it would be so worth it to see Marvin and Hush together again. I would figure out a way that we could handle Hush but I needed some back up in case Hush got nasty. I knew that Hush would be fine with Marvin and that getting him uncrated wouldn't be a problem, it would be getting him to go back in the crate after our visit that I was worried about. After thinking about it for a couple days, I bought a 20 foot retractable leash and ran it through the back of the carrier. The plan was that Hush could come out of his carrier and have plenty of leash to move about the room but if we had to, we could safely pull him back in to the carrier when it was time to go. I wasn't even sure that Hush would allow me to put the leash on him, but when the day came, I asked him if he wanted to go see Marvin. His eyes lit up and he met me at the door, I attached the leash and into the carrier he went. He thoroughly enjoyed the hour long car ride, but when we pulled into the parking lot of the nursing home, he got extremely excited. I'm convinced that Hush knew exactly where he was. His tail was wagging. He was meowing and pawing at the door, wanting out of the carrier. There is a nice living room type visiting area at the nursing home. We parked Hush's carrier beside the couch and went into Marvin's room and visited for a while before telling him that we had a surprise for him. We walked down to the visiting area and Marvin sat down on the couch right next to the carrier without ever even noticing it. I opened the carrier door and Hush shot out of it and into Marvin's lap. He was purring and rubbing his head all over Marvin's face. The two of them literally lit up the room. I don't know which one was happier. Hush was a perfect gentleman the entire visit. He was so content to just curl up

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Letter from the President

Greetings Fellow Members,

I have wanted to share something with you that is non-cat related and has been on my mind lately. Recently, I read an article in the *Baltimore Sun Newspaper* by Elizabeth Large that convinced me I needed to share what was on my mind.

In this newspaper article, Elizabeth stated, “To forgive is human; it’s just very hard to do.” People are wired to respond with anger, hold grudges, and seek revenge. Regardless of religious and other teachings, victims of wrongdoing usually do all three.

Researchers are finding that forgiveness can be a tool in reconciling couples and families, lessening of depression, and reducing levels of stress hormones.

I believe the following are causes of our becoming very defensive and ready to attack others instead of being forgiving: (1) our present day fast pace life style, (2) job stress (partly caused by downsizing and jobs going over seas), (3) the war in Iraq, (4) 911 attacks, and (5) all the negative network news. In addition, we private owners of the exotic cats have all the extra work of caring for our cats plus being bombarded with all the proposed ban laws that are hitting us. We find ourselves becoming defensive, blaming others, and unforgiving.

This high level of stress becomes so destructive to our happiness and our ability to overcome diversity. When we are able to forgive, we

can release some of the weight of the stress we are carrying. I’m sure we can all have better health if we become better at forgiving; we just need to work harder at forgiving. I feel when we humans are less stressful, so are our cats. Cats are very sensitive to our emotions.

As your president, I have seen some of the exotic cat owners holding grudges against other cat owners. We let our ego get in the way of our ability to think clearly. My wish is for all of us who support private ownership or who share their lives with the wild ones to work hard on forgiveness. Lets all give the cats the best opportunity to be as happy as possible.

On another note, FCF convention time is coming up the last week of July and hope you are making plans to attend and will bring your kitten friends too. For those who don’t have an exotic cat, this is a great opportunity to visit with other members’ kittens. I look forward to seeing many of you in Miami. Below are photos of your elected Board of Directors. When you are at Convention be sure to look them up and let them know your thoughts on what FCF needs to be addressing.

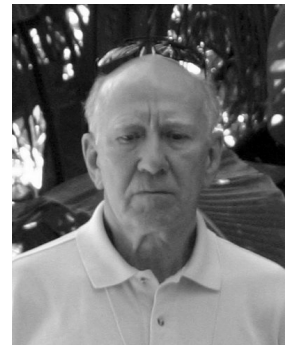
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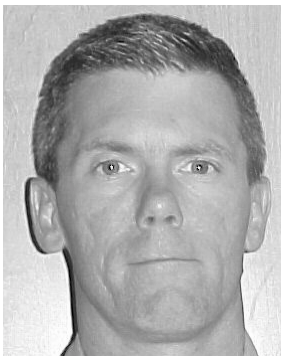
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Legislative Round-up

NC Senate Bill 1032 The NC Senate has passed a revised SB1032 now being referred to the House for review. The bill's sponsor, Senator John Garwood, had initially introduced the bill text as provided by the NC Zoo (AZA) in response to a lethal tiger attack on a young boy in Garwood's home county last year. Garwood was overwhelmed by the concern over the bill demonstrated by exotics owners, and was dismayed when he closely read the text of the bill and realized how many businesses and private owners it would affect.

The revised text is simply a referral to a study group, intended to make recommendations for legislation to be introduced in 2006. This study group is expected to take under advisement the concerns of the following entities or groups: The North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; The North Carolina School of Veterinary Medicine; The State Animal Response Team; Local law enforcement officials; Local animal control officials; Wild animal breeders; Exotic pet hobbyists; Commercial pet retailers; Small zoo owners; Humane organizations; and Any other entities or groups whose interests may be affected by proposed regulations.

The study group will be comprised of one representative from each of the listed 'concerned groups,' plus lawyers for the Senate, the NC Zoo Curator, and representatives of Senator Garwood's office.

It is likely that this study group will recommend exemptions for USDA licensed facilities, wildlife rehabbers and sanctuaries. Senator Garwood's office is open to the introduction of a permit system like Florida's. The concern in NC is that the state Wildlife Resources Commission has a history of denying possession/captivity permits and putting into place regulations designed to be prohibitively expensive and almost impossible to meet for larger native species, especially cougar. It will be critical that the new regulations are phrased such that anyone meeting the standards 'shall be' permitted rather than 'may be' permitted.

Mindy Stinner

Arkansas—Representative Jackson's lion, tiger and bears bill was a pared down version of the standard API ban bill. The Senate amended it to exempt USDA exhibitors and G & F Breeder/Dealers, and it removed the exemption for 501 c 3 wildlife sanctuaries. This is a rather amusing change, since the bill is worded such that illegal animals are to be seized and given to AZA zoos, Humane Societies or 501 c 3 Wildlife Sanctuaries. However, wildlife sanctuaries are not exempted from paying a \$250 per animal annual permit fee to the county sheriff's dept, and they are like everyone else, they are prohibited against collecting any new animals.

The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission then felt it necessary to adjust their regulations to agree with the new state law. Initially, the G & F draft considered mountain lions a form of 'lion', and there was a prohibition against issuing new Breeder/Dealer permits after June of 2005. Many representatives of the Feline Conservation Federation contacted the Commissioners to object to the inclusion of mountain lions due to the obvious confusion to owners and Sheriff's Dept it

would create, as this species is not mentioned in the State Act. Also the elimination of breeder/dealer permits would prevent sanctuaries from functioning and hinder conservation of these species.

I contacted all the Commissioners by e-mail and was gratified to receive several phone calls from G & F Director Scott Henderson, and Commissioners Sheffield Nelson and Mike Freeze and had a 2-hour visit to the NOAH Feline Conservation Center by Commissioner Benjamin. It was clear that FCF was being given an opportunity to contribute to the regulation input process. However, a second draft proceeded to once again conflict with the new state law, as it specifically prohibited USDA licensed exhibitors from possessing lion, tiger or bear.

FCF gave more input and the final version passed in May corrected the conflict by allowing USDA exhibitors to possess for exhibiting only, lion and tiger and bears, but they must also have a Breeder/Dealer permit if they rear, breed or sell lion or tiger or bear. All existing owners have until Dec 2005, to apply for a permit. After that date, permits will only be granted for conservation and scientific purposes. We have been told that sanctuaries will be granted breeder/dealer permits. The cougar is dealt with separately in these regulations and everyone with this species must now apply for a breeder/dealer permit. The FCF caging recommendations were adopted as well.

Lynn Culver

Oregon House Bill 3046 was up for public testimony May 4. Present to support the bill were paid lobbyists from API and HSUS, the Oregon Zoo, the AVMA, the Oregon Humane Society, a town mayor, and a sheriff's officer.

I believe Patti Smith, Chair of the committee, had already decided in favor of killing the bill before the hearing began. The good news was that quite a few of us showed up to oppose the bill, and we actually outnumbered the AR folks. Each of us only got 2 minutes to testify (we had been told 5) so most of us got cut off in the middle of our presentations.

Many of us, particularly myself, testified about the problems that would be caused by banning the current USDA facilities. Chair Patti Smith closed the hearing without letting the bill out of committee, so it is dead for the year. Chairperson Patti Smith is wonderful, with a rational head on her shoulders. She told several of us she thought the paid lobbyists were why the political system was so screwed up. Everyone please send her a thank-you card or at least an email! Rep. Mark Hass, who sponsored the bill, is bought and paid for by AR interests and should be voted out of office if at all possible.

Jessie Clark-White

New York - A07862 – Representative Townsend sponsored this bill at my request and it has been referred to the Committee on Environmental Conservation. A07862 is based on the FCF Model for State Regulations, adapted for legislation. It proposes a three-class system of permits that are issued based upon prior experience, passage of a test, caging, fencing and contingency plans. This is an important reminder that even when a ban is passed, it can be undone with another legislative initiative. However, this is a long process, and all FCF members need to express their support for this bill.

George Stowers

FCF 2005 SECOND QUARTER MEETING MINUTES

By Harold Epperson, Secretary

The Second Quarter meeting was conducted by FCF President Robert Turner via email and results of the voting by the eleven officers were reported on May 17, 2005 as follows.

Motion by Lynn Culver and Second by Evelyn Shaw, That FCF join the Friends of the Cats Group. Eleven Yes Votes, Motion Passed

Motion by Lynn Culver and Second by Kevin Chambers, That FCF approve \$200 to be paid to Jim Fouts as acknowledgment of services received that benefit FCF (This reimbursement is an FCF payment for services rendered by attorney Steve Schwarm of Kansas, retained by Jim Fouts on behalf of all Kansas big cat keepers) Eight Yes Votes and Three No Votes, Motion Passed

Motion by Kevin Chambers and Second by Lynn Culver, That section 3.2 k of the FCF Programs and Policies which reads: "At least one article of 500 words or more about the project should be provided by the principal investigator or other appropriate person for publication in the FCF membership magazine. Updates about the project through the year for the magazine are appreciated in order to keep the membership aware of the project and its progress." be amended to read: "An article of 500 words or more about the project should be submitted by the principal investigator or other appropriate person for publication in the FCF membership magazine. This article should accompany the funding proposal and is meant to familiarize the FCF membership with the project before funding is approved. After funding is granted, another article should be submitted giving the results of the project. Updates about the project through the year for the magazine are appreciated in order to keep the membership aware of the project and its progress." Eight Yes Votes and Three No Votes, Motion Passed

Motion by KEVIN Chambers and Second by Bobby Bean, That the First sentence of Section 3.2 b of the FCF Programs and Policies which reads: "Funding submissions will be reviewed at quarterly intervals throughout the year, during regular quarterly FCF board meetings.", be amended to read: Funding submissions will be reviewed at the Annual Meeting of the FCF Board of Directors. Four Yes Votes and Seven No Votes, Motion Failed

Motion by Kevin Chambers and Second by Bobby Bean, That discussion of awarding grants be tabled until the annual meeting. Eight Yes Votes and Three No Votes, Motion Passed

Motion by Kevin Chambers and Second by Evelyn Shaw, That the First quarter FCF Board of Directors Meeting Minutes be approved. Eleven Yes Votes, Motion Passed

Motion by Kevin Chambers and Second by Lynn Culver, That permission be granted to Jessie Clark-White to reprint the following articles from the FCF magazines for use on her web site with appropriate credit given to the original authors and the FCF.

MAY/JUNE 2004 NEWSLETTER: Raising Tigers in a Changing World, Do You Believe In Magic?, Nine Generations of White Tigers, Alpha - A Short Story, A Sanctuary's Perspective About Tigers

JAN/FEB 2005 NEWSLETTER: PETA Wants Fur To Fly Over Two Loose Tigers in NC, The Last Pet Cougar, A Pledge Eleven Yes Votes, Motion Passed

Motion by Evelyn Shaw and Second by Tracy Wilson, To award Dr. Kottwitz, DVM., for the Barbara Wilton Memorial Membership. Eleven Yes Votes, Motion Passed

The Exotic Feline Vet Directory

By Jessi Clark-White

I have started a project online to build a directory of vets willing to treat exotic cats. After reading of far too many desperate searches for qualified vets during a crisis, I decided to begin compiling a list that people could refer to. In a perfect world, such a list would only be used by new owners looking for a vet, but already I am aware of a couple of times where it has been used successfully to locate a vet during a critical situation.

The directory is organized by state and is available online at www.exoticcatz.com/vetlist.html. If you have a website, linking to this list will help your visitors find it in emergency and non-emergency situations. Please help spread the word about this potentially life-saving resource.

While there are now a number of vets listed, the directory is far from complete; there are many entire states which do not have a vet listed. You might save a cat's life by taking the time to add your vet to the list. You can do this by filling out a simple form online at www.exoticcatz.com/vetform.html.

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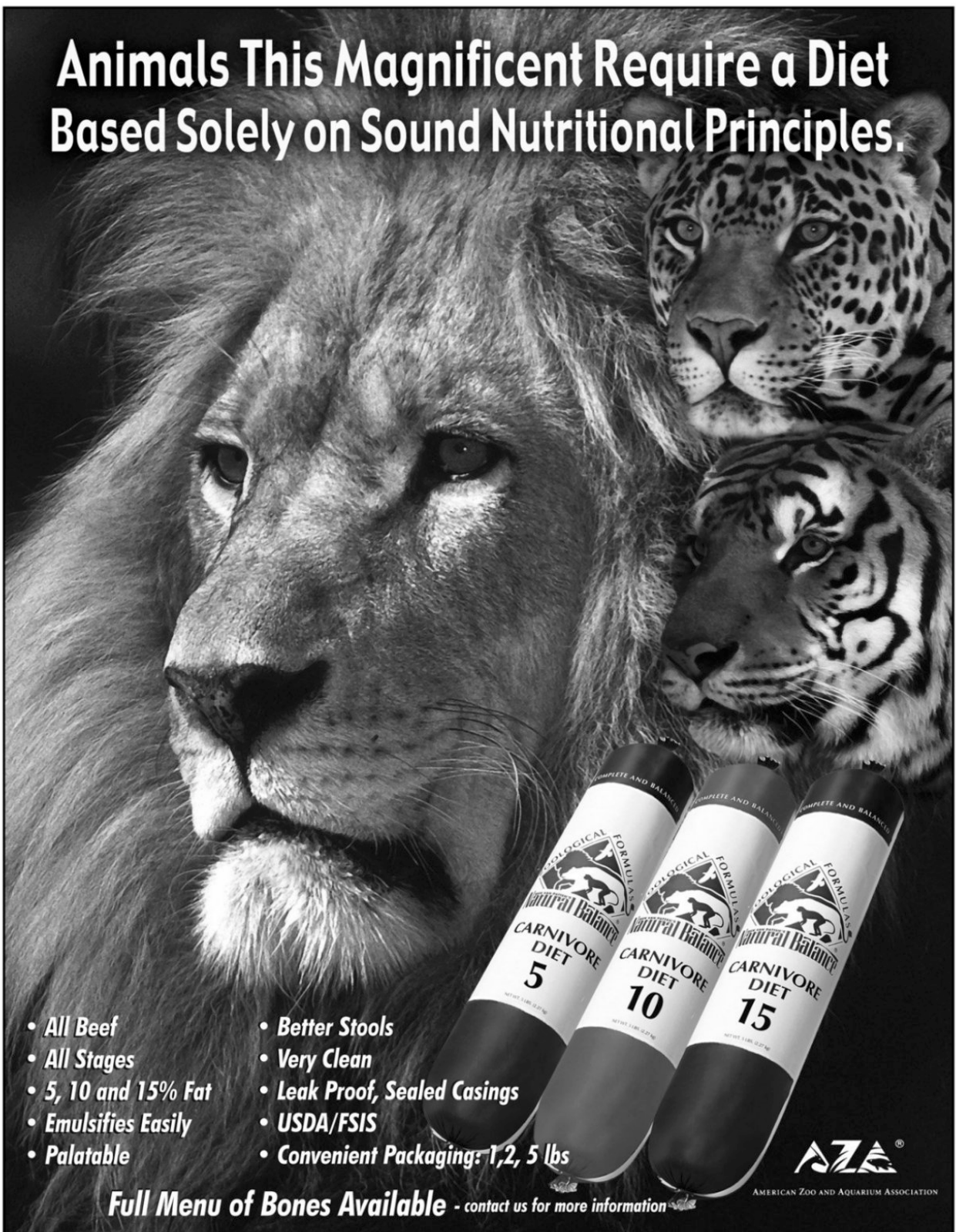
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Training Exotic Cats to Accept Nail Clipping

Copyright 2005 by Jessi Clark-White

The process of trimming feline claws can range from easy to downright suicidal. The training process I'm going to outline here is aimed at those who risk being turned into hamburger if they are unwise enough to try. This program can be scaled down and shortened if you have a cat that merely dislikes nail clipping or a kitten you want to introduce the concept to.

Many cats simply do not like having their paws touched, let alone held. This may be partly due to sensitivity or ticklishness, but it also has a lot to do with the fact that most people only handle their cat's paws when they want to examine them or clip their nails. When you are handling and petting your cat, be sure to gently touch and hold his paws so that you can build up positive associations with having that part of their body touched. When I'm cuddling with my serval Sirocco, I often stroke his paws or wrap my hand around his paw and hold it gently.

This training outline can be applied to dogs as well; I once worked with a husky cross whose paws were so impossible to handle that he had to be placed under general anesthesia every six months for nail trimming. By the time we finished the training he would roll over on his side on command and present his paws for clipping. He demanded a premium of half a hot dog per paw, but his owners could deal with that!

The training processes that come into play here are counterconditioning and desensitization; your goal will be to systematically replace any negative connotations your cat has with positive ones, and accustom him to the process. Good homework for this project would be reading my article on desensitization and counterconditioning previously published in this newsletter. If you don't have it handy, it's available on my website at <http://www.exoticcatz.com/trainingclassical.html>.

You will need to find a training treat that your cat enjoys. The ideal treat is something the cat is willing to go out of his way to get, small, (because you will be feeding a lot of them each session), and soft so that it can be quickly chewed and swallowed without breaking the cat's concentration. Small chunks of cheese or cooked chicken often work well. If your cat is not gentle about taking treats you can drop the tidbit on the ground for him to pick up.

One difficulty in training is the fact that by the time you deliver the treat to the animal, he may no longer be doing whatever you want to reward. For instance, your cat may be sitting still as you hold his paw in your hand. You decide to reward him, but he sees you moving the treat towards his mouth and yanks his paw away to grab the treat.

To improve communication with the animal and avoid accidentally rewarding the wrong behavior, it is useful to establish what trainers call a "conditioned reinforcer." This is an audible signal used to "mark" the desired behavior and bridge the time gap between that behavior and the actual delivery of the treat. That's what the whistles you see dolphin trainers carrying around are for. Many other trainers use a plastic clicker made specifically for that purpose, but you can also use a clicking sound made with your tongue or a specific word.

In this article I will refer to the conditioned reinforcer as a "click." Getting your cat to understand the meaning of the click is very simple and only takes a few minutes. Just click, then immediately give the cat a treat. Repeat this many times, and your cat will soon learn that the click means a treat is forthcoming. With that bit of preschool out of the way, you're ready to get started.

There are two main elements you will need to accustom your cat to; having his paws held and tolerating the presence of the nail clippers. To accomplish this, you need to break these elements down into small, incremental steps.

The steps for getting him to tolerate having his paws handled look like this:

- Be able to wrap your hand around the cat's upper leg
- Be able to briefly wrap your hand around the cat's leg just above the paw
- Be able to wrap your hand around the cat's leg just above the paw for several seconds
- Be able to wrap your hand around the cat's leg just above the paw and squeeze slightly as though you are about to pick up his paw
- Be able to touch the cat's paw briefly
- Be able to touch the cat's paw for a longer period of time
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw briefly
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and hold it for gradually increasing periods of time
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze it
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward as though you were going to trim it
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward as though you were going to trim it, then with your other hand pinch the tip of the nail with your fingernails to simulate the pressure the cat feels when you clip the nail
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward as though you were going to trim it, then with your other hand pick up the nail clippers
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward as though you were going to trim it, then with your other hand pick up the nail clippers and move them towards your cat's paw
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward as though you were going to trim it, then with your other hand pick up the nail clippers and touch them to the claw

- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward, then place the clippers in position to cut the nail
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward, then place the clippers in position to cut the nail and use them to squeeze lightly on the part of the nail to be cut. This gets the cat used to the pressure felt when the nail is cut.
- Be able to pick up the cat's paw and gently squeeze one of the nails forward, then trim the nail.

I'll take you through the first couple of steps in detail. With treats in one hand, wrap your hand loosely around your cat's upper leg. If your kitty isn't tame enough to allow that, you'll need to do some remedial basic handling work first, which is a little outside the scope of this article. But assuming you can, gently take hold of the leg for a moment, then click. Let go and give your cat a treat.

Throughout the training process, your cat's behavior will tell you if he's ready to go on to the next step. Was he completely comfortable with having his upper leg handled? If so, you can proceed further. If he pulled away or showed other signs of stress, you need to work at that level until he is comfortable with it before proceeding.

Let's say your cat let you handle his leg, but you felt him shrink back a bit, or perhaps he hissed at you. This means that for whatever reason he finds that to be a negative experience. You want to change that feeling to one of positive anticipation: "Oh, good, she's holding my leg! I'm going to get a treat!" This is counterconditioning.

So you do it again! Gently take hold of his upper leg, click, and give a treat. After many repetitions, you'll see his behavior change. He'll start almost ignoring the touch, and then you'll see him focus on your hand holding the treats, just waiting for the next one. Sometimes you'll see his head swing around to stare at your treat hand as soon as you touch him! At that point you're ready to move on. Just move your hand a little further down the leg, closer to the paw. Click and give him a treat. When he's comfortable with that, move on to the next step.

Does your cat run at the sight of nail clippers? The easiest way to solve this problem is to get a new pair that looks nothing like the old ones, and get him used to those by having them next to you as you conduct your training sessions. If that's not possible or your cat is still suspicious of them, you'll need to spend some time counterconditioning to build positive associations with the clippers.

When do you end a training session? Ideally, it will be before the cat gets full or loses interest, and after a success. Try to end the session on a high note. You can train as often as you want. Stress is cumulative, so if you are working with something the cat is a little uncomfortable with, keep the session short. For instance, the first time you actually clip a nail, you may want to give your cat a big handful of treats and call it quits for the day. If you tried to continue his stress level might build to the point where he starts to fight you and you lose progress. Better to send him away with the memory of a huge pile of treats received for something that was startling for a brief moment.

continued on page 19



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Two Very Special Old Men, *continued from page 9*

next to Marvin and sleep while we visited. Apparently Hush doesn't like Bob very much but he even allowed Bob to pet him. Bob told stories about his trips to Canada with Marvin and Hush. And how Hush would always take the opportunity to bite Bob when he least expected it. Bob remarked that Hush looked better than he did 5 or 6 years ago. It was good to hear that, knowing how he looked 3 months before when I picked him up. Marvin got tired and wanted to go back to bed. I told Hush to get in his carrier and right in he went. As Marvin headed to his room, again he said, "My bright little one, you take care of my boy". I'm sure that Marvin slept better that night than he had since he'd been there. I've always had a special place in my heart for Hush, but over the last 4 months, I've grown extremely attached to him. I hope that he still has quite a few more years in him.



Marvin and Hush reunited, photo by Leann Montgomery



Hush, photo by Monte Francis

That first visit went so perfectly that I think it has actually strengthened the trust that exists between Hush and I.

Our last visit was not as happy. Hush seemed depressed and really didn't want to go. I had a hard time convincing him to get in the crate. When we arrived at the nursing home, Marvin's room in the assisted living area was empty. Immediately I felt a rush of panic. Was Marvin gone? Did Hush somehow know? It turns out that Marvin suffered another heart attack. He had gotten out of the hospital 3 days before and had been moved into the actual nursing home part of the facility. They got Marvin up into a wheel chair and we were allowed to bring Hush into the room. Hush was obviously sad and refused to come out of his crate. We finally put the crate up on the bed so that Marvin could pet him and talk to him inside the carrier. I tried to apologize for Hush and told Marvin that he was just being grumpy. Marvin scolded me and told me that Hush was never grumpy. He was the best cat to ever live. We didn't stay long as Marvin was in and out of consciousness and I knew he needed his rest. It's been two weeks since that visit and I've called several times to check on Marvin. He's doing as well as can be expected. I hope that he will continue to improve and Hush can still be a part of his life. I am truly honored to be able to give something back to these two very special old men who have touched so many lives.

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Meeka

Angie Haggerty

From the moment my husband opened the carrier door when we brought our little girl home she was full of purrs and head butts. I can't say I would be so cheery after such a flight. I love to come home to her purrs and occasional kisses every day from work or just a trip to the store. She talks just as much as our Bengals and has to tell you about the day she's had or to let you know she wants something. I have learned that any moving object under covers is fair game to attack and a serval when pouncing down on top of you from across the room feels more like a tiger when they land.

Trimming nails is an adventure and from the sound you would have thought someone let a raptor loose in the house. I think most of the need to scream at me is she does not want to be restrained but, besides the dirty look I get when we were done she is back to playing as if nothing happened. Finding just the right litter box can be a challenge. After a few different styles and sizes we found the right one but if they aren't cleaned right away the bathtub becomes fair game. The transition from the bottle to solids was very easy with our girl. We started making up her formula recipe but mixing in the dry food into it a little more each time. Then, we also offered her just the dry on the side. She loves it and it's just the cutest thing to watch her because she always has it all over her face when she eats. It's on her nose, chin, whiskers and usually me when she comes and gives me loves and her approval of the tasty food. I have never had any problems with aggression when feeding. I can be



Sean and Meeka

face to face with her in her food dish and she just purrs and gives head butts. To be owned by a serval is the most rewarding love I have felt from an animal. Meeka has really enriched our lives and given us a greater appreciation for this wonderful loving cat.

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When Kittens and Cubs Will No Longer Be a Part of Your Life

Irene Satterfield, Kansas Member

Whether knowing when to approach your boss for a much-deserved raise or when to put two cats together for breeding, I am a true believer in the adage *timing is everything*. Some tasks require you to simply *sense* when it is a good time, while others require you to sit down and do the math. As I face 40 this fall, I find myself doing some math. At what age, considering my health and finances, can I no longer have babies (of the furry-kind)?

A part of responsible pet ownership is planning for your pet's well being should you die or become physically unable to care for them. Most likely you have heard that before, but along the same lines, you should plan your parentage much like we do when having human children. There is a traditional, if not somewhat natural, rhythm to life wherein parents have children, they raise them and they leave the nest. Most people think about how old they will be when their children leave home and how much time that will leave them to enjoy their lives again. Facing retirement or the "empty-nest" is a passage we will all go through some day. Some look forward to it, and yet we all will miss certain aspects of our youth. For many feline lovers, they will miss raising newborn kittens and cubs and seeing that cat through young adulthood, her old age and ultimately to her Rainbow Bridge. It is a passage in all of our lives that forces us to face our own mortality.

Others find it too hard to address and continue to bring babies under their care. I recently found myself in this situation with a very dear friend. She was looking to find homes for her older cats and yet unable to contain her desires to take in and care for babies. I knew she was facing difficult turning points in her life, but I also know it is easier to find homes for young cats than to place an adult tiger or cougar. Moreover, with an ailing husband, she physically cannot care for her big cats alone anymore, let alone the financial drain great cats can put on a retired couple's savings.

I called upon my faith and belief in her and laid the cards on the table.

At first I thought I might have hurt her feelings so bad I had made her cry, but she acknowledged that deep down she knew this and was simply grieving this turning point in her life. It is not an easy time for anyone, and I believe even harder for those that gain so much from their furry friends. Going forward, I will

call upon my dear friend to care for babies and help me grow and learn with the wildcats. While this brought some comfort to her, I know I dread the same day – which is September of 2012, yes, I have it calculated already – when I face my own declining years and say good-bye to the years of growing, loving and cherishing new feline friends.

Things to Consider

1. Will my social security allow me to continue providing the same level of care including veterinarian, food and housing repairs/costs? When gainfully employed and with good health, money matters can drastically change with a catastrophic illness in the family or your own rapidly depleting cash reserves. Once most people retire, savings can no longer be replenished. And discretionary income is non-existent for most retirees.
2. Will my health allow me to continue cleaning enclosures, ensure absolute safety and security and prevent escape? Moving fast can be the difference between a lost cat and a safe cat. Be honest with yourself about your health and abilities. If you are struggling and exhausted at 40, most likely 65 will be far worse. Are there hereditary illnesses in your family like arthritis or Alzheimer's? Care for wild cats boils down to safety and the caregiver must be in good physical condition to provide that safety via secure fencing and proper safety protocols.
3. Realistically, am I likely to outlive my cats if they live to 20 years of age? Give the cats the benefit of the doubt and take them out to 20 years, while assuming the worst for you.

For all the unconditional love your feline friends gave you, remember to someday return that love by unselfishly planning your family so that no young cat is left all alone. For now, cherish every moment with them. Some day, too soon, it will quietly and agonizingly come to an end.

Irene Satterfield
www.istormcats.com
isatterfield@comcast.net 913.219.6800
Yahoo chat: istormcat

April 2005 MEFES Meeting in Lyons, IN

The MEFES April meeting was hosted by Jann Tonyan and assisted by her sister, Judy.

President Pam Hotle started the meeting by having everyone introduce themselves.

Pam requested e-mail addresses from members for easier correspondence. Peggy Epperson will make phone calls when no E-mails are available.

Jann Tonyan said she would try to get a bobcat tracker from Crane as a speaker at a future meeting. Treasurer Harold Epperson read the current treasurer report and reported on our previous expenses. Our largest expense has always been the newsletter. Due to the lack of an editor, we may go to a simple fold over newsletter. Chris Worley stated he has a commercial printer and can do the printing at no charge to MEFES.

Elizabeth Serven, the USDA inspector, was a guest speaker. She gave a very informative and interesting slide presentation about why there are inspectors, what inspectors look for, and who is inspected. They also search for unlicensed facilities.

She explained the different types of license such as breeder, exhibitor, etc., and what that license covers. She said public safety is very important and proper barriers must be enforced. Contact with the animals must be safeguarded at all times with the handler in control.

She also mentioned several things animal owners should consider. In case of the owner's hospitalization, who would care for the animals? If the owner were to die, where would the animals go? Are written instructions posted for others to follow? In case of an escape, who should be notified? Phone numbers of all contacts should be made clearly visible.

Harold Epperson spoke about legal issues. The animal rights groups are seeking ban legislation from state to state. They are very well funded. Once these laws are passed, ownership of wild animals will be forbidden. Their main goal is to eliminate all human contact with animals. One possible way to approach this is to make these laws unconstitutional.

The Accreditation Program can be a big help to cat owners. A couple of insurance companies are giving discounts if you are accredited.

The position for Vice President had been left vacant. Mary Oatess made a motion to nominate Peggy Epperson for Vice President, and it was 2nd. by Harold. Everyone voted, and Peggy is now the Vice President.

The next meeting will be July 16, 2005 at the Fun Spot Amusement Park and Zoo located in Angola, IN.

Harold made a motion to adjourn, and Bob Turner 2nd it.

Patty Turner

ATTN: FCF MEMBERS

All FCF members who wish to present topics for discussion during the 2005 FCF Convention at the General Membership Meeting may submit them to the Secretary. Topics from members unable to attend the convention will be presented at the meeting by one of the board members. Please mail the topic in its entirety no later than July 10th to The FCF Secretary, 3310 Remington Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46227-8126.

Geoffroy & Siberian lynx kittens are a few of the species expected at the hospitality suite in Miami. DON'T MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT AND PLAY WITH A VARIETY OF FELINE SPECIES.



Here's a picture of my 2 boys Will and Silvain, and a young bobcat friend of theirs. This was taken last year when we were visiting friends in Tawas City, MI. ~Sara Schimke

Training Exotic Cats to Accept Nail Clipping

continued from page 15

It's typical to lose a little progress between training sessions. It's the cumulative effect you're after, so don't worry about it. It's a good idea to start a training session with a quick "review" of the last one - if you progressed from picking up the cat's paw and holding it for one second to holding it for fifteen seconds, start your new session by holding it for a couple seconds. You can quickly work your way back up to your cat's current comfort level. Likewise, if things completely fall apart, go "back to kindergarten." Start again at the beginning and progress through the steps until you are back to normal.

Good luck with your training. If you have questions, feel free to post on my online discussion forum at www.exoticcatz.com/forum and me and the other trainers on there will try to help you out.

Playa de Oro Benefit Raffle items to be given away in Miami



Help benefit the Playa de Oro Reserva de Tigrillos at the FCF Convention.

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“Jaguar”, custom framed *Kalon Baughan* art print. This framed piece is 18"x15" and comes in a Black Wood Classic Frame. Artist Kalon Baughan currently resides in Longmont, Colorado, where he works as a professional wildlife painter. Baughan has exhibited in many group and one-person shows, and he has been honored as Featured Artist at the Pacific Rim Wildlife Art Show, Nature Works Oklahoma Wildlife Art Festival, Northern Wildlife Art Expo and the Prestige Gallery Originals Showcase.



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Conservation of small wild cats, *cont. from page 5*
because they were considered bad luck.

Our conservation dilemma, however, was greatly exacerbated when we discovered that the Andean mountain cat showed no fear whatsoever of people. The native people repeatedly told us that they simply killed the cat by hitting it with a rock. Worse still was that while we searched for a place to study the ecology and conservation needs of the cat, so too did the native people but for a different reason. Most of the skins used in ceremonies were old and tattered and new skins were highly coveted. The cat's rarity was apparently a result of a lack of fear of humans and direct persecution for their skin.

Flat-headed cat (*Prionailurus planiceps*)

I am now in hot pursuit of the flat-headed cat (*Prionailurus planiceps*) found in peninsular Malaysia, and on the islands of Sumatra, and Borneo [right - Flat-headed cat]. Adult males weight no more than 3 kg. The flat-headed cat is the most aquatic of the cats. Specialized webbed feet and dentition show that the cat's main prey of fish and frogs. Behavioral studies of the few kept in captivity show that the cat ignores mice and birds unless these end up in the water. A swimming mouse immediately is recognized as prey and the cat will leap into the water in pursuit of its victim. Once caught, the cat, with a flick of the head, tosses the mouse onto land where, to prevent escape, the cat then rolls the mouse away from the water just as it would with a frog.

Once again no studies have ever been done on flat-headed cats in their native environment. They appear to be exceedingly rare in the wild and very few observations have been documented. Despite the hundreds of thousands of automatic camera trap pictures taken in Sumatra, for instance, only one individual flat-headed cat has been photographed. In contrast, nearly every protected area has documented the presence of several of Sumatra's other cats: tiger, clouded leopard, marbled cat, golden cat, and leopard cat. The flat-headed cat's relative, the fishing cat (*Prionailurus vivverina*) appears also to be rare in Sumatra.

Cats that specialize in aquatic prey are in trouble, at least in Southeast Asia. Extensive natural forests have been cleared for oil palm plantations and as a result rivers run brown with silt from runoff. Illegal gold mining dredges destroy rivers and their fish populations. Moreover, outhouses are customarily placed over watercourses. Raw sewage begins in the smallest villages in the mountains and is supplemented by increasingly larger villages downstream. By the time a river reaches the largest city on the

coast it is badly polluted. It is no understatement that Sumatra has the longest toilets in the world. The nearest rival is Kalimantan, Indonesian Borneo perhaps the last stronghold for the flat-headed cat.

Chinese mountain cat (*Felis bieti*)

The Chinese mountain cat occurs only in the provinces of Qinghai and western Sichuan and nowhere else on earth. This small cat is a National Treasure of China and is every bit as important as the Giant Panda. Yet it remains largely unknown even to specialists. In fact, we recently discovered that all the illustrations and drawings of the cat are incorrect. The lower back of the legs and bottom of the feet are dark brown and this has never been illustrated properly!

In an effort to locate free-ranging *Felis bieti*, the so-called Chinese mountain cat, we undertook a ten day expedition to the Hengduan Mountains of western Sichuan Province, China.



Beginning in Kangding, western Sichuan province, a student, Yin Yufeng, colleague Nima, and I visited small villages, towns, and forest guard posts to interview former hunters, villagers, and local herds-people in an effort to determine present existence of this little known small felid. We were particularly interested in local shops that might sell animal skins.

We traveled as far as Bangda village on Route 317 30km west of Luhuo in the northwest of Sichuan Province.

The most valuable source of information was provided by local Tibetan traditional herds-people whose knowledge of local wildlife was readily apparent.

Though most shops did not display the skins of *F. bieti* we used pictures of the cat and its skin to persuade shopkeepers to show us the skins. Our request was usually fulfilled. We found five skins of *F. bieti* for sale in three towns: Kangding, Tagong and Luhuo. Skins are bought by the shopkeepers for about 80 Yuan (US\$10) and then sold at a profit to tourists. We were offered skins at 400 Yuan but after bargaining an agreeable price of 120 – 200 Yuan was reached.

Using a book of wild cats we asked interviewees to select the pictures of the cats that occurred in the region. Their choices were snow leopard, clouded leopard, jungle cat, lynx, golden cat, Chinese mountain cat, and Pallas cat. Though hunters and townspeople were either unfamiliar or confused regarding the cat's existence, local herds-people provided excellent information.

Most local Tibetan herds-people quickly confirmed *F. bieti*'s presence. In one instance, a villager suggested that the Pallas cat and Chinese mountain cat were the same species. A local Tibetan herds-people soundly rejected this suggestion, insisting

the Pallas cat was not present and that, in fact, the Chinese mountain cat occurred near her village. Like others, she pointed out the tufts on the ears, dark bands on the tail and blond/brown coat as distinctive features. All herds-people that confirmed the existence of *F. bieti* told us that the cat is restricted to high elevation steppe grassland, did not occur in mountain forests, and was nocturnal.

Though hunting is outlawed by Chinese law and gun ownership is forbidden other effective methods are used to kill *F. bieti* whose winter fur is used to make traditional hats. The cat is taken in winter for two reasons: the cat is in its rich winter coat, and track following is easiest in snow. Tracks of the cat are followed to its night den in caves or in holes such as beneath trees. Poison meat is placed at the den entrance. In the morning the tracks are followed to the ailing or dead cat. Snare traps are also set at the den entrance.

Eventually we hope to identify a study site where we can

begin the first ever study of the Chinese mountain cat in the wild. Though it may seem odd, most small wild cats have never been studied in the wild so there is still much work to do. Few specialists have the time and patience needed to find the most elusive small cats. Cats are nature's most perfect predators and it seems that I was born at the right time to study them all. So many small cats, so little time.

Literature cited

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Sunquist, M. and F. Sunquist. 2004. *Wild cats of the world*. University of Chicago Press.

FCF thanks Jim Sanderson for his fascinating article and his photos. Jim will be our special guest Thursday evening at the Convention in Miami. Don't miss this great opportunity to visit with Jim.

Tiger, tiger, losing fight

Another 15 years, and the big cat could be extinct.

Vibha Sharma talks to experts and wildlife conservationists on the tiger crisis

The Sunday Tribune-Spectrum Sunday, May 29, 2005

In Sariska, there have been no reassuring tiger pugmarks to indicate the presence of the majestic cats in the prestigious Project Tiger reserve since quite some time now. And a Sariska-type situation could be just waiting to happen elsewhere too.

The last tiger sighting in Sariska was reported in November 2004 by a tourist, but there is no official confirmation. When the jungle fell silent to the roar of the tiger in March, a special investigating team of the CBI reported to the Prime Minister that there were no tigers left in Sariska, and that poaching was the main reason behind the disappearance of tigers from the reserve.

While conservationists and media reports had sounded alarm bells much earlier, saying much the same, it was only after the Sariska report that findings of missing tigers started pouring in from elsewhere too — such as Ranthambore in Rajasthan and Panna in Madhya Pradesh. And, activists began pointing out the grave situation in several Project Tiger reserves in the country.

Alert sounded Sariska today is national news. The possibility of tigers becoming extinct in the near future due to the high incidence of poaching made Prime Minister Manmohan Singh put Ranthambore on his priority agenda. Soon after the CBI report on March 17, he decided to constitute a task force on the status of tigers in wildlife parks, with CSE Director Sunita Narain as its chairperson.

While the Prime Minister told the CBI to probe the case of the missing big cats from Sariska, he is reported to be following the case closely, including the activities of master poacher Sansar Chand, who alone is said to have poached over 100 tigers last year. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has sounded a red alert to all reserves, like it does every year.

Political support Missing tigers have generated public awareness of need for wildlife conservation. MPs of rival political parties have come together to take up the issue and a forum — the Tiger And Wilderness Watch — has been formed to save the big cats in particular and promote the cause of forests and wildlife.

Organized crime In August 1993, when a consignment of six full-grown tiger skins, besides tiger bones, and leopard, chital, fox and otter skins were seized from Majnu ka Tila in Delhi, the extent of this heinous crime was established. Since then several seizures have been made. Smugglers get shahtoosh wool from Tibet to India and take tiger skins and body parts back to Tibet and China, says Ashok Kumar. While India is the hub for the supply of dead tigers, China is the biggest retail market from where the tiger skins and parts are further supplied to Vietnam, Taiwan, West Asia, South Korea and Japan.

It is believed that in the past 10 years 1,500 tigers have been killed. A government-commissioned independent agency, set up recently to compile and analyze the country-level tiger poaching data over five years (1999-2003), recorded 411 cases — of which 173 relate to mortality and 238 to seizures. Out of the 173 mortality cases, 114 tiger deaths were due to poaching, the government admitted in an affidavit submitted to the Supreme Court recently. Trade routes are well-established and all fingers point at Tibet and China. In October 2003, skins of 32 tigers, 579 leopards and 665 otters were seized en route to Lhasa in Tibet, highlighting the enormity of this illegal trade.

From a peak population of 4,334 tigers in the wild in 1989, it is now estimated to have dropped to 3,500.

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A Day in the Life. . .

an editorial by Bart Culver

On this day in Texas . . .

Carol Asvestas sent e-mail to Leslie Day, founder of Chimps, Inc. and Jane Goodall, lambasting them both because Leslie's newsletter featured a photo of Jane Goodall kissing the sanctuary's snow leopard Rose, right on the lips.

Jane was at Chimps, Inc as part of a fundraiser for that sanctuary. According to the Chimps, Inc. web site, "Though Dr. Goodall is best known for her work with wild chimpanzees, she now strives to spread a message of peace, environmental conservation and compassion for all living things through her educational speeches."

This is the picture that Carol Asvestas described in her e-mail as "exploitive hands on activity", . . . "appalling display", . . . "NOT acceptable" . . . "the sort of thing that pet owners and roadside zoos excel in". Carol demands that Leslie "stop this horrendous activity" or . . . "cease calling herself a sanctuary".



It was a typical Carol Asvestas tyraid, except this time she had the audacity to rebuke Jane Goodall and suggest that the two were in the same league. Carol Asvestas is not worthy to lick Jane Goodall's boots after a slog around the old watering hole, so this was a really outrageous piece of self-aggrandizing flatulence.

Just look at the picture – do you see an appalling, horrendous activity?

The words it evokes for me are love and conservation. I don't see how any person with a capacity for love could avoid using those two words in describing that picture, but Carol Asvestas did. Carol's phobic aversion to the very idea of anyone ever loving animals is the most extreme fanaticism and she knows it. It is exactly what she needs to ascend in the hierarchy of fanatics. She is an increasingly vocal element in a political movement to build a society completely devoid of wildlife friends. And for those animals used to human kindness that find themselves being taken to facilities that share her fanatic beliefs, I feel a great sadness. They are being warehoused in prisons for the innocent.

Unfortunately the AR movement has become infested with fanatics forcing us to understand what

a fanatic is. The seminal work on this subject entitled *True Believer*, was written in the 50's by Eric Hoffer. In it he analyses the most terrible recent plague of fanaticism, the Nazi's, and his thesis on the origins of fanaticism stand unchallenged to this day. Fanatics can come from any walk of life, but they have one thing in common. They were all failures at everything they tried. Desperately seeking someone or something else to blame for their personal failings they form or join a hate group and rise to leadership roles by being the most extreme and the most hateful.

Their commitment to "the movement" is not based on any particular conviction at all. Fanatics often flip-flop their beliefs and become just as fanatical for the opposite view. Their commitment and the tenacity of their movement come from the fact that the movement is their only source of self-esteem. This is a powerful and evil motivation that makes them ruthless, uncompromising and very dangerous.

Long before Hitler was thought to be a charismatic visionary, he was known to be a buffoon. He raved in the streets for years and the German people laughed him off at their peril. The time was ripe for fanaticism; there were failures everywhere. And there was also a discernable minority of apparently more successful people. As Amy Chua points out in her new book on Jihadism, *World on Fire*, fanatic movements require such a minority as a focus for their hatred.

Today throughout the world times are again ripe for fanaticism. And Jihadism is not the only fanatic movement afoot. Here in the USA, a truly fanatic AR movement has evolved. It is ruthless, deceitful and uncompromising. It is attacking a discernible minority of people successful in animal husbandry. And it is lead by the biggest failures in animal husbandry. The legitimate animal rights movement needs to repudiate fanaticism before it loses all of its credibility.

Meanwhile in Arkansas. . .

Tracy Wilson, a genuine animal lover and dedicated conservationist received a call from the highway department. One of the mowing crew observed a bobcat attempting to cross the highway carrying a kitten. The bobcat was struck by a car and killed but the kitten survived. The local police knew Tracy as a wildlife rehabber and they wondered if she would take the kitten. Not only did Tracy agree to take the kitten, but the love that abides in her heart made her think of the

continued on page 28

Don't miss the coolest FCF Convention ever! Make your plans to attend July 28-30 in Miami, Florida

Thursday afternoon we'll be playing with all the **exotic feline kittens** and socializing with other feline enthusiasts in our comfortable hospitality room and balcony area overlooking spectacular Biscayne Bay at the **Hilton Doubletree Grand**. Cool off Thursday night at the cash bar and break the ice over hot and cold hors d'oeuvres. Special guest **Jim Sanderson**, of **Conservation International** will join us and present a fascinating talk and share his amazing collection of wildlife photographs caught on his camera traps located around the world.

Friday we'll bus to **Everglades Alligator Farm** to see alligator and snake shows, then embark on a thrilling airboat ride through the Everglades' river of grass, renown for natural beauty and abundant wildlife. Next we'll get up close with tigers, Florida panthers, bears, alligators, king cobras, and more at **Everglades Outpost**, a rehabilitation center and zoo operated by Bob Freer.

Then we'll head to the lush botanical paradise of **Parrot Jungle Island** featuring countless species of colorful parrots and waterfowl, orangutans and other primates, snakes, Komodo dragons, crocodiles, wolves and tigers. A full slate of polished stage shows promises plenty of entertainment. **Dr. Bhagavan Antle**, one of the world's most renowned animal trainers will amaze us with his highly acclaimed performance that features trained tigers and ligers. Then as evening approaches and the park closes **Doc** will join us for a cookout style dinner at **Parrot Jungle's Treetop Ballroom**.



Doc gets up close and personal with his tiger friend

Special guest speakers include **Jeanette Williams**, adopted sister of Gunther Gabel-Williams and intricate part of the Blue Unit of The Greatest Show on Earth. **Doc Antle**, internationally known wild animal exhibitor. **Ron Magill** of the Miami Metro Zoo will present **The Cheetah Challenge**, and bring the zoo's **ambassador king cheetah**, if it's health improves. (*keep your fingers crossed*) **Dr. Dan Jones** will speak on **USDA policies and regulations**. **Tracy Wilson** will take us on a tour of **Playa de Oro**. All this and more, followed by Saturday's legendary **Banquet Dinner, Awards Ceremony** and **Benefit Auction**. **Don't miss it!**

Anyone wishing to donate items for the auction, contact Bobby Bean (contact info on inside cover).

The FCF Convention Doubletree Hotel room rate special is \$79 double occupancy. We have special permission to bring our cats to Doubletree. (*A damage deposit is required*) **For out-of-state felines, a Florida F&G import permit is necessary - call 850-488-6251**. To make reservations for the Hilton Doubletree Grand Hotel, 1717 North Bayshore Drive, Biscayne Bay, call **1-800-222-TREE** or **305-372-0313**. **Ask for the special FCF rate.**

Mail \$130 per person registration fee to: **FCF, 3310 Remington Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46227**. Children 6-18 are \$75 and children under 6 are free. There is a \$15 late fee for those registering after July 5. Single day registrations are \$25 for Thursday and \$70 for either Friday or Saturday.

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Blast from the Past

Long Island Ocelot Club Newsletter
Volume 12 Number 2 March/April 1973

Samie's Miracle

Marvin and Jackie Happel Seaside, Oregon

Do you truly believe in miracles? I do, cause with all the odds against me, I came home! My name is Sam Elita, my family calls me Samie, and I'm the ocelot that was lost for 44 days and 16 hours. I'm a very important ocelot according to my momma and daddy; I guess more people should be like they are cause they spent 'every one of those 44 days out hunting and searching for me. Here is their story:

It all began when we awoke one morning to find the doors standing open, including the outside door. Our little "Houdini" had been busy. She opens a door with her front feet by reaching up and turning the knob -she is just tall enough to be able to reach the knob effectively.

We live out of town on 11 acres without any close neighbors. Samie is usually chaperoned when outside but when she was out by herself she always returned within two and one-half hours and was always close by in the yard just snooping, enjoying the great outdoors.

When three hours had gone by that Monday morning we began go panic, and by afternoon and evening we were getting desperate. We just couldn't imagine where she could be or what could have happened to her. Deer season was on, and the hunters were doing a lot of shooting close to us. To the South of us is all hilly, forest country, quite primitive, with logging roads. We searched and called all that day, and three weeks of frantic searching continued.

We borrowed a hunting dog called Joe, spent several nights camping out and cooking chicken necks in hope the smell would bring her in. We contacted the Game Department, Oregon State Police. They suggested we put signs on the logging roads near to us. We called -local radio station and placed ads in the local, signs and ads offering a \$200 reward.

The dog, "Joe", would pick up scents, our hopes would be up, but always they fell flat. One night a bobcat was treed, another night a raccoon! Marvin, my husband and Samie's Daddy, climbed up and down trees like a monkey. Once we had to fetch an extension ladder as the fir tree was at least 150 feet tall and the lower limbs were rotten. Marvin couldn't get started up the tree without the ladder. Several people were using walkie-talkies, the dog was barking frantically, and he was climbing, search-each limb for Samie. But, it was a raccoon hiding his eyes from the flashlights, and it took three lights to find him, as raccoons are so adept at hiding. What a letdown! The coon was happy to see us all leave though.

All of a sudden the country was overrun with ocelots. Ocelots were seen eating out of garbage cans at night, running across roads, heard rattling doorknobs at various homes and all sorts of antics were reported. We did not let one report slip by, we checked each one thoroughly and they all proved to be false alarms.

Then one Saturday afternoon, 19 days later, when our hopes were sinking to rock-bottom, the phone rang—a hunter had seen her in a high fern meadow four miles from our home, straight southeast, up and over through the primitive country to the Hamlet Road rural area.

We had been searching closer to home, never dreaming she would have traveled so far or gotten so lost. We talked to the hunter. He gave a very accurate description of Samie and we moved our camp and started all over again. No luck!! I spent an afternoon in the meadow calling and coaxing, heard over 26 shots very close by in 45 minutes, due to target practicing. (I didn't know it was target practicing while I was in the meadow—I thought I was likely to get hit and was hoping I wouldn't be mistaken for an elk.)

Samie apparently was being spooked from all the hunters and shooting, and she wasn't letting any grass grow under her feet. Always we were behind her! The daytime sightings proved to be the accurate ones.

We redid our signs and raised the reward to \$500. More hunters and local people were getting interested and we were surely glad because our biggest worry then was that she would get shot. This particular area is very popular for hunting and fishing, especially for elk hunting—hunters coming from all over the state. We posted signs on all existing roads in the area, covering approximately 35 square miles.

The Hamlet Road area residents, 18 families in all, were putting food out, locking their dogs up and leaving lights on at night. Some of the elk hunters got too interested in looking for Samie to hunt for elk.

The local grocery-gas station was the hub of the Samie-hunt. Hunters gathered to discuss her location and where she would travel to next.

Another 9 days passed and then she ran between 4 hunters hiking on an old cat-logging road high in the hills. She was now 6 miles from home in the same straight south-eastern line.

She stopped between them, visited a little, and then discovered that they did not return the growls and yowls to her as her daddy would do, so she departed, running behind a log and then a wild Black Angus cow and hiding.

One hunter, a local resident, went to his phone, about a 1/2 mile away, but the rural lines were out, so he drove 8 miles to the local store and called us. By the time we got there she was gone. We called and looked, but no Samie—Marvin then hunted with Joe but he couldn't pick up the scent. (Joe was now boarding with us.) We walked those hills for several days and called and called. No trace of Samie!

Samie's grandparents, my folks, Mr. and Mrs. John P. Locke of Beaverton, canceled their vacation plans and came to the coast to help in the search.

Now our worries were mounting. Colder weather was coming on and the southeastern direction of travel would lead into the more primitive areas where roads did not exist.

Local people had donated chickens to the cause as Samie loves chickens. We had cooked chicken necks in our box traps and live chickens (2 in each cage) in separate cages. All the chickens were roosters, and loud ones too, but they could never call her in. She was just traveling too fast.

continued on page 29

A Day in the Life, *continued from page 24*

other kittens forlornly starving in their dens waiting for their mother who would never return. And Tracy was compelled to act.

Now Tracy and her husband Keith have a busy life and every day is full, but they both dropped what they were doing and organized a search party. They spent the entire day in sweltering heat searching both sides of the highway to no avail.

There was nothing more that could be done but as Tracy put it, "At least now I can look the little guy in the eye and tell him I tried".

Because Tracy has the expertise that only comes from involvement in exotic animal husbandry she knows what this kitten needs. He needs love. And at Tracy's he will receive love in abundance. And he will bond with his human benefactors and never be fierce enough to survive in the wild. So Tracy will give him a loving home for as long as he lives.

So you see there are two kinds of animal people. . . .

The phony scamsuaries that have no interest in conservation and put all their energy into promoting public hysteria and fear of animals because the only animal they really love is the green-backed buck.

And then there are true animal lovers, that spend their time giving the love of attendance and never asking for a thing in return.

Thank you Tracy and Keith for being true animal lovers and thank you Leslie Day and Jane Goodall for reminding us once again that all the great conservationists derived their lifelong dedication from hands-on love of individual animals which then extended to the entire species, the entire eco-system, the entire world.

Responsible exotic animal owners are the vanguard of pro-nature activism. We understand the necessity of conservation through commerce. We have turned our back yards into Noah's Ark. We are engaged in a struggle for the survival of nature and the soul of humanity. We must never ever consider allowing ourselves to be defeated by scam artists and fanatics. They cannot win unless we let them. For after their smoke screen of slanderous propaganda clears, two facts remain:

1. We are clearly the ones who love animals.
2. They are fanatics. Fanatics are bad news, and the way to fight them is to publicly



wild-born Arkansas bobcat under the care of Tracy Wilson

expose all their failures, all their lies, and deprive them of the undeserved self-esteem and acclaim they seek.

We are under attack and must defend ourselves by shining the light of love and the light of truth on their activity and our own.

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Samie's Miracle, *continued from page 26*

We placed our chicken necks in all the abandoned homesteads and barns. We made a round of checking these places each morning and again each evening. The only thing that bothered the necks was some sort of small animal that just chewed the skin away and left the meat and bones intact. In fact, we just couldn't trap much of anything—only one black domestic cat and a skunk.

We have one horse, an Appaloosa, so we borrowed another, and used the two to ride the cat roads. We never saw Samie or any sign of her but we sure had some wild adventures which are almost another story in themselves.

The temperature began dropping considerably, unusually so for this climate at this time of year, and snow and winds prevailed. Another 15 days had passed, and we were all thinking that perhaps the 10° weather had killed her. We were home discussing the situation when a pickup was driven into our driveway. I looked out the window as the driver jumped out and ran up to our door, shouting he had just seen her cross Highway S3 in a westerly direction about 2 miles from our home. Our King Pin was close to home. She had changed her course of direction and had traveled another 8 miles, this time due west.

She had been recognized by her leopard-like spots and long tail. She had been saved many a time from being shot by the long tail. Thank goodness bobcats are evasive and don't get seen too often, as several hunters told us they almost shot her before they realized she wasn't a bobcat.

We took Joe, but the snow was coming down so hard there just wasn't any scent left. She had crossed a log over the river and had perfect prints in the snow, but they were soon covered over. It looked as if she were heading towards Seaside, another direction away from home.

Early the next morning we went to the same area and started hunting for footprints. The temperature was dropping below zero. About an hour after we started looking we found where she had crossed the highway again, heading towards home, and with all the fresh snow and bright sun she was easy to follow until about a mile off the highway her track became mixed with elk, deer, coyote, and bobcat. It then seemed that all the other animals were trying to hide her tracks from us, so, back after Joe again. Again, too much confusion and no luck.

Joe tried so hard to track her. He would go first one way and then another, and get so thrilled when he had the scent. He'd bark and run and circle and bark faster when he thought he was getting closer. But, all at once that day he completely lost the scent and the track, just as we had lost the footprints in the snow. So, all we could hope for was that she could find her way home, home being about 2 miles east of Highway S3, or we could get our box tracks ahead of her path of direction.

We were so afraid she would freeze to death or some predator would get her. We knew she was hunting for home.

All during her stay away from home we had been sprinkling Colgate 100 mouthwash everywhere we went—it is her favorite scent. She can be fast asleep under the covers, Marvin opens the Colgate 100 bottle and out she comes, just in time to try and get a lick as he washes it down the sink. I imagine the drugstore really loved us, cause we were sure going through bottle after bottle of it. So, again we really went to town with the Colgate 100.

By late afternoon we hadn't caught up with her so we started moving our traps again in hopes we could get in front of her. We arrived home about 11:15 P.M. The traps for the safety of Samie were checked every 2 hours during each night so there would not be any chance of her freezing to death, should she get in one.

At 11:30 P.M. our "little Houdini" came up on the front porch under her own steam. She was too exhausted to try the doorknob but she made it to the window ledge. We started to cry, then laugh as we carried her in. She was so small (she looked like she had shrunk in the washing machine, all except her head and feet). We were so overjoyed, and our company too who had been helping to place the traps.

Almost an hour passed and she was still passing out kisses, her tail wobbly but high over her back. We knew she was running on reserve strength, but we couldn't slow her down. Her voice was hoarse, but she kept talking. She was so happy!

With frostbitten feet, ears, and nose, two bites, a touch of pneumonia, a loss of fur, a weight loss of 9 pounds (her normal weight is 25 pounds), traveling through subzero temperatures and snow, our Samie found us! She didn't unwind and begin to sleep for almost 40 hours, she just kept looking at each and every thing in the house as if she was dreaming and it would all go away if she closed her eyes. It is evident she wasn't a success as a huntress, even though she is equipped with her toenails and teeth, as she passed mud and hemlock needles her first four stools.

Samie's vet, Dr. Harpster of Portland, prescribed for her and helped keep us calm through the danger period. For several days we carried her to the bathroom, as when she would try to walk her feet would bleed. We had people tell us she would go back to the wild and she would grow a winter coat—nature would take care of her. She didn't grow any winter coat and she didn't go back to the wild. She is more lovesick than ever, and she doesn't want us to leave her. All the intensive care has really made her recuperation successful.

Samie has been extremely popular. AP and UPI picked up the story, and she made papers all across the nation; Paul Harvey News broadcast her return. We are compiling quite a scrapbook.

Our story has a happy ending, our house is once more back to normal, and she was really a miracle to us.

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My thoughts about Playa de Oro

Phil Parker

I visited the Playa de Oro Reserva de Tigrillos this April. Some of the photos I took on that trip are in this issue — thank you, Lynn, for arranging them! (see page 37) I could ramble at great length about the trip, but I don't think it would be very worthwhile; I will just say that Ecuador is full of an amazing variety of beauty, and there were so many times, especially while I was actually at the reserve, where I just had to stop and say "Wow!" to myself that I can't begin to count them. A big thank-you to Tracy Wilson for organizing the trip, Terri Nash for guiding the tour, and the FCF board for maintaining our affiliation with Playa de Oro; without them I never would have had this wonderful experience.

For the rest of this piece, I don't want to talk about my own experience going to Playa de Oro. I want to talk about yours. If you read this magazine, you've probably thought about the idea of going, but either put it off for "someday" or figured it wasn't really worth it. I want to encourage everyone to really think about going, and even if you can't, encourage your friends to go.

I have to be honest and admit this is not a trip for everyone. The trails are too rugged for anyone with limited mobility. Some of the best comes after an hour or more of hiking up and down steep muddy hillsides — the most rugged hiking I've ever done. If seeing a scorpion or poisonous snake would ruin your day, you should be aware that I did see both. There are also BIG spiders and other creepy crawlies that you could see in the jungle. I don't think the biting insects were worse than Illinois — I didn't get bitten until I got sloppy about using my insect repellent — but there are bugs. There's no TV, no Internet, no phone, and no air conditioning. It's uncomfortable at night. If you could not enjoy a trip that included these things, don't go. But if you have enough adventuring spirit that you can deal with these things, or even be excited by some of them — and I think most cat people do — then you can do this, and you should.

No words or pictures can hold the wonder and beauty of this place. It was so much more than I expected. Yet the tour I was on was very nearly cancelled because too few people signed up. That's really the reason I'm writing this: I want to encourage more people to go on this tour. I want Playa de Oro's brave venture into eco-tourism to work, and I want FCF to continue to be involved, because I want it to still be there when I have the chance to go again.

Upcoming Playa de Oro Tour dates:

September 16-25, 2005 with Tour guide Tracy Wilson
November 4-13, 2005, with tour guide Rosa Jordan

Join us in September or November on our eco-tours to the Playa de Oro Reserva Tigrillos for an adventure of a lifetime!

The cost for this adventure is \$700, excluding your airfare to Quito, Ecuador. This price includes two nights at a charming bed & breakfast in Quito (breakfast included), an afternoon at the Otavalo artisan's market and that night in an Otavalo B&B (breakfast included), followed by six nights at the Playa de Oro Reserve Lodge with all meals, jungle guides, river trips, a visit to the village, and a children's dance performance all included. Private Transportation between Quito, Otavalo, Playa de Oro, and back to Quito is also included.

Your fee supports the Playa de Oro Reserve by bringing income to their village and providing them with work, and also assists with feline conservation projects being conducted at the reserve. In exchange, you will see, taste, smell, and hear ancient rainforest as you have never imagined while being safely guided by local men through the jungle, coming to know the local people and experiencing their river and ancestral forest as they do.

Space is limited on each tour, so please sign up as soon as possible to reserve your space. You are required to have a passport to travel to Ecuador. Your \$350 deposit is nonrefundable. If you cancel for any reason, this deposit will not be refunded. If FCF has to cancel the trip for any reason, your entire deposit will be refunded.

For bookkeeping and accounting purposes, we have changed how the FCF tour fees will be handled in the future. Please make your check for tour deposit and any remaining tour payments made payable to EARTHWAYS, and mail to the following address:

Attn: Tracy Wilson, PO Box 1382, Searcy, AR 72145

Include a note for what trip date you plan to attend. Include your full name, phone number, mailing address, and email address where you can be contacted.

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View from a Zoo Professional: Private Ownership and Ban Laws

Doug Hotle
General Curator, Abilene ZOOlogical Gardens

I think that you would be amazed at the number of professionals in the Zoo field that are supportive of private ownership of exotics. We must all keep in mind that most of us got our start by keeping these animals in our homes, and many still have cats or extensive reptile collections of their own, thus "privately". As you are well aware, I too have kept these animals in a private capacity. After two decades as a Zoo professional I went private for a few years and had my own collection of medium sized animals. I find it odd that simply because I was a private individual at that time that there was a stigma about me that "I did not know what I was doing or that I could not provide proper care for these animals" simply because I was "private" at the time. Talk about your double standards. As we are both fully aware, there are multitudes of people out there that are more than capable of caring for these animals in a "professional" capacity, some even more so than many of the accredited facilities I have seen. The mere fact that they do not work at a zoo does not negate the fact that they might hold the knowledge and animal sense that it takes to provide long-term husbandry for these exotics. Some of the finest and most noted zoologist in history never worked in a professional capacity. I see many zoo professionals that are opposed to private ownership and they have some pretty strong arguments. After all, these are not your everyday pets. However, the more serious of the private individuals out there do not, nor ever will, treat these animals as simply "pets". I have also been annoyed at the number of brand new zoo professionals that voice their opposition to private ownership that have been in the zoo field for all of six months and think that because they work at a zoo they know it all or have some super all-knowing knowledge simply through osmosis. Others came straight out of college and into a high ranking zoo position and sit in a curatorial role or potentially even a directorship and have never even been up close to one of these animals let alone understand what it takes to properly care and house them. Yet they still voice a strong position without any real background. Not many, but there's a few out there.

Don't misunderstand me though. I feel that ownership of exotic animals (at least certain ones) is not for anyone and everyone. It's Billy-Bob with a tiger in his backyard in a 6x6 chicken wire cage or Fred who breeds cobras and sells them to 12 years old kids that drive the whole private ownership

reputation face first into the mud. And this is where the AR groups get their ammunition, and rightly so. Who can argue that? Sadly though, we take the bad with the good.

Now, to focus on the laws and bans that are spawning all over the countryside without any legitimate or substantial reason; that's a tough one. The biggest enemy the private sector has out there right now is not Peta, not HSUS and not USDA. It is themselves. Rarely if ever, do they attack the issue, rather they attack individuals. I watched them attack USDA, Fish and Wildlife from almost every state, and even Jack Hanna for about a week. Do they not think that the USDA and Fish and Wildlife monitor these listserves? Do they think that by pissing these people off that they are really gaining any support for their cause??? Do they really think that attacking Jack Hanna, who supports private ownership, is doing the cause any justice? What the private sector really needs, and I mean REALLY needs, is organization and follow-through. It's not leadership. There is leadership out there, just seemingly no support for that leadership. The groups and organizations out there are wonderful entities, however they need to tighten their ranks and each individual needs to stop complaining and do what they need to do to help out the elected leadership, and hence the cause overall. I watched the AR groups during the summer of 2000 and the big rehashing of the nuisance wildlife laws in Indiana. During all of this I observed the way that Peta and Fund For Animals conducted themselves. I thought to myself, "wow, we are going to roll over these people because we have our poop in a group and are ready for them and they are so unorganized and are just flying by the seat of their pants". And we did. We were able to knock them back resoundingly. I also thought to myself, man if these people ever got their stuff together they'd be extremely dangerous! And guess what. They are figuring that out. It's just a matter of who gets it together first. Them or us. Who wants it worse? There is no doubt that exotic animals are going to be regulated in some fashion. If anyone thinks otherwise they have their head in an untold orifice. The private sector needs to form strong associations that are legitimate and respected and create their own set of guidelines and husbandry standards. I would model after what the National Wildlife Control Operator's Association did to defeat the Animal Rights groups in state after state and I would do it soon.

continued page 32

Tiger, Tiger loosing fight, *continued from page 23*

New approach Sunita Narain, Chairperson, Tiger Task Force recommends setting up of a leaner, meaner wildlife-crime organization, comprising young volunteers to track crime, manage databases and follow thorough investigation on the pattern of the narcotics bureau. "To save the tiger, the country needs a brand new approach. The existing methodology of tiger management by excluding the involvement of local people from tiger habitats is faulty. It can never work in a country where the livelihood of local people is dependent on forests. We need a conservation strategy that involves forest people so that they, in turn, become protectors of tigers." She hopes the task force will be able to submit its report in three month's time, but adds that the members do not have a magic wand or quick-fix solutions to the problem.

Tiger conservation is dependent on a census method which is far from reliable, says H.S. Panwar, a member of the task force. "The methodology of searching for pugmarks is doubtful for the simple reason that our tiger habitat extends over 300 million hectares. This also results in double counting and at times fudging of figures.", says Narian Belinda Wright, Chief, Wildlife Protection Society of India, who is at present in Ramthambore in connection with a state-level visit, also stresses on a more transparent management of forests. "What happened in Sariska can also happen elsewhere," she says with a note of concern. After all, about 100 years ago, there were 100,000 tigers world-wide. Today, there are less than 5,000 wild tigers.

'I see no hope' says Valmik Thapar, who started working on big cats 30 years ago and spends at least 60 to 70 days in a

year in jungles. He calls Project Tiger a complete failure and the task of the Tiger Task Force impossible. "There are not more than 1500 tigers in India. There is a good population in central India, a substantial population in Corbett and the Sunderbans and the southern part of India. In all, six out of the 28 reserves seem to be doing well.," he declares in an interview with Vibha Sharma.

"If you want to save tigers, give them inviolate space. Tiger turf for tiger to live has to be protected and this is a fact of science. Engage local people to protect wildlife and not exploit it. Whenever man has come in to use land, tigers have become extinct from that area. It is not possible for man and tiger to live together. Tigers cannot be saved if they do not have inviolate space. Let him take the tough decision and decide how much land can be set aside for them, without the menace of tourists and jeeps playing havoc with their lives. More than 35 to 40 per cent of the world's tiger population lives in India. A tigress with cubs needs to live in totally protected areas. If you cannot give them space, tigers will not have any future and there is no need to waste time on debating how to save them.

Several FCF members have indicated they will be bringing their exotic kittens to Convention for us to enjoy in Miami.

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View from a Zoo Professional,
continued from page 31

These have to be strong organizations (or ONE association) and NOT just a club or social event type thing. Everyone needs to take it seriously! I would implement a Certification program that is bulletproof and beyond criticism and let that be a major part of the program for keeping these animals. There needs to be an ethical foundation with not just every hilljack that wants a cougar chained to his garage can just hop on in and get certified. There needs to be a set of strict rules. This is the only way that you will stop the bans from stripping you/us from our animals. Do not rely on the "this is our right" defense to fly for much longer. Lawmakers don't necessarily want to write new regulations, if there are some already there that they can implement, those written and already in use by a "professional association" then they'll be easier to sway in your direction when that time comes.

What do we know about the wildcats of India?

Shekhar

Scientifically proven field information on the wildcats of India concerning their biology and ecology from the wild is available for only 3 out of the 15 known species found in the country.

In 2000 the first surveys to establish the status and distribution of the caracal in central India were conducted.

During the period of 2001- 03 a detailed study to understand the distribution and ecological requirements of 6 species of wildcats in Central India was conducted. This study covered Fishing Cat, Rusty Spotted cats, Leopard cats, Jungle cats, Asiatic wildcats, Caracals, Leopards and Tigers.



Rusty spotted cat

The Panna Tiger Reserve alone supports 7 species of wildcats. The Panna Tiger Reserve with its many wildcat species has been selected for long term monitoring. The wildcat population of this park will be monitored over a long period and gradually biological and ecological data will be gathered from the region.

From 2003-2004 the India small wildcat project moved into the Eastern Ghats of South East India to document the status and distribution of wildcat species of that region. 6 species have been identified from the region and habitat studies are under way right now.

The 2005-2006 season has targeted the Namdhapa Tiger Reserve, East India with its 10 species of wildcats, for status, distribution and ecological surveys. The Feline Conservation Federation is being asked to grant funding for this study.

Wildcats, Ratels, Civets, Mongoose and Pangolins all have a varied diet consisting of birds and their eggs, reptiles, insects such as beetles, termites and crickets, aquatic life such as fish and mollusks and small mammals like rodents and hares have a great influence in maintaining the balance of the microhabitat of the ecosystem.

Most of the lesser known species are elusive and very secretive in nature and they are hard to sight because of their activity period is mostly nocturnal. If there is a problem situation within the species it usually goes unnoticed and

interventions will be too late. Periodic monitoring of the species will help us avoid this situation.

21 Species of carnivores coexist in Panna and Satna regions of Madhya Pradesh. The region supports highest diversity of carnivores in Central India. While at the same time over 40 species of carnivores exist in Namdhapa region.

We lack information on how resources like available prey, space, available cover etc are being shared by the species. Insights into this will help us manage wildlife areas that support rare and endangered species effectively.

Questions relating to populations of individual species in a region can be answered with this survey. For Instance: Are the rusty spotted cat populations increasing, decreasing or stable? Or what factors effect populations of a species in a region? Or how many cats should we have to have a viable population? Is Interbreeding a problem?



feral cats can interbreed with the Asiatic Wildcat

Status of Lesser-known species in the protected areas and outside protected areas can be established. And the effects of altered wild landscapes due to cultivation, mining, deforestation, over grazing etc., on a species survival will be understood. Other influences on the survival of species such as the impact of stray dogs on animal numbers and the threats to animal numbers by road kills will be worked out.

The entire exercise will help build an easy to use, repeatable model for monitoring lesser known wildlife. With basic training forest staff and locals can easily repeat the procedures.

We may eventually gain insights into rare biodiversity like the muntjac presence in the Panna region that had never been reported before. Or we never know what surprises await us in Namdhapa Tiger Reserve.

How my wife and I fell in love with Bobcats

John and Terri Chuha

I guess we all have to sit back and think, just when did our fascination with exotic cats really begin? I have always lived with cats from the day I was born. I remember when I was about 5; we had a calico, whom my mom named Useless, who had a litter of kittens. I can still hear the little sounds those kittens made, when we tried to pet them or pick them up and then my mom yelling, leave the kittens alone!! I also remember our days going to the Cleveland Zoo and how I, just could not wait, to see the big cats; the lions, tigers and cheetahs. But the day my interest in exotics began, was the day my father told me, that he saw a man driving his car with a cougar in the back seat. I must have been about 10 years old then. I guess I never really believed him however, until about a month or so later when our family was taking a family drive, that we passed a car and much to my surprise and delight, there it was. That same car with the same cougar sitting in the back seat!! That cougar just looked at me and I could not believe what I was seeing. Well the years passed and I never did forget that day.

It wasn't until about 4 years ago, that my wife and I learned of a new breed of cat called the Pixie Bob. I think by now, most of us have heard of this legend, the domestic barn cat crossed with a Bobcat.

Whether the legend is true or not, we still fell in love with the Pixie Bob.

Their size, personalities and features were just different from the ordinary house cat. Well, 4 Pixie Bobs now own us and this is where our love with the Bobcat began. One day, as I was doing some online research on the Pixie Bob breed, I began to wonder, does anyone have a real Bobcat as a pet or was that idea even possible? At that time, I had no idea that people did keep exotic cats as pets, other than my fond remembrance of that cougar in the car, when I was a kid. So, I proceeded to do a search on Bobcats and much to my surprise, I located a breeder who indeed, did raise Bobcats and Lynx as pets. I gave it much thought and then I told my wife. I think at first, my wife thought I was crazy, but when I shared the stories and pictures of other Bobcat owners with her, she became hooked with the idea as well.

Before I even thought of bringing our first Bobcat kitten home, I did what every responsible owner must do. I did the research and lots of it!! I checked with my state, county and local laws. I read about exotic feline diets, I spoke with my veterinarian to see if she would be willing to work with a Bobcat and I spoke with many Bobcat owners, who were more than willing to tell me what it was like living with a Bobcat and gave me other useful advice. After reading and hearing their stories and looking at many pictures, I made the decision. Yes, I wanted to get a Bobcat.

Well, that was 2 years ago and we now live with 2 Bobcats; Amber, our first girl and Boris our 1-year-old boy. We will soon be getting a third. This third Bobcat is a 3-year-old boy and he is a rescue. Sharing our home with 2 Bobcats sure has been a life-changing event. We have learned to live with the Bobcat's quirks, like many



Boris Bobcat

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pairs of socks or underwear we have lost or how many times I walked into a bathroom with a very wet floor, because one of the bobs emptied all of the water out of the toilet bowl onto the floor. If you are a Bobcat owner, you know just what I am talking about. We are still learning. Amber has now reached that point in her life, where she has decided to spray (she is spayed) and decided to claim me as one of her kind, by turning around and spraying me just the other day. Of course, it did not help that she knew I was going outside to feed the stray cats that roam the area. Boris acts like the spoiled little kid that just has to get into everything. It doesn't matter to him if you put things away in the closet; he has learned a long time ago just how to open the doors. In the morning, he loves to go for rides on your back and when Amber sees this, she has to join him. Amber has learned the trick at taking the chicken bone bag out of the refrigerator. All I have to say is Amber, where's the bone bag? And she comes running. You cannot help but fall in love with Bobcat talk or those loud rumbling purrs. Coming home from work and hearing those large Bobcat feet scampering across the floor and the wroow wroow greetings.

Yes, my wife and I are proud Bobcat owners or maybe it's the other way around. One thing is for sure, owning an exotic cat is a lot of work and does take a great deal of responsibility. But, we would have it no other way. Our lives have been forever changed, because we fell in love with Bobcats. One day, I would love to be owned by a Cougar as well. But don't tell Amber this; she will have nothing of it.

top right and middle: This is Amber, our sweet girl

Bottom left and right: Boris riding John and playing tug o war



April 1-17, 2005 Playa de Oro Report

by FCF guide Terri Nash

As far as the tour portion of the trip went, everything went smoothly and successfully. The first week was a group of birders, and the second week ended up just being one brave FCF member, Phil Parker. There were some others signed up for this week, but they had a family crisis at the last minute and had to cancel. But Phil told me he enjoyed himself tremendously and thought the Reserve was an amazing place to visit. I just want to add that I think both Guillermo and Ramiro (Van Drivers for the tours) are terrific and couldn't have been more helpful to me in getting supplies and running us around and both are very punctual. I loved working with them.

The animals Little Chief is doing great. I visited him often and exercised him with the stick and rope toy through his door, which he loved. Little Chief does get attention from all the staff and I can tell Mauro really loves that cat. Tracy and Rosa were cautioning me about letting Little Chief out of his cage because he is very rambunctious and thinks humans are toys, and what to do to prepare myself protection wise...well...as luck would have it...I had none of those precautions on my side when Little Chief escaped from his enclosure one day. My room was on the bottom floor and I came out of my room and there was Little Chief standing there looking at me and there I was standing there in bare feet, shorts and a t-shirt. We looked at each other and I knew this was going to be fun. Enma was down at the kitchen watching, and the guys were all down at the river. So here I was, with nothing. I bent down a bit and put my hand down and out to get ready to block a pounce should he take that route, but he was cool. He simply walked slowly up to me and then clamped on to my leg, not in a mean way but I pried him off and he clamped onto my arm, so I pried him off again then yelled for Enma to get me the water bottle or a walking stick...or something!! Little Chief knew I wasn't afraid of him, so I think he lost interest or it could have been the fact he found himself right beside the open door to my bedroom...yup....next thing you know it stuff was flying everywhere in there, he was having a ball. Finally Enma dragged him out with the broom after he clamped onto it. He jumped on the bednet and put muddy paw prints all over it so that was taken down. He then pretty much terrorized the kitchen girls and then found the ball of bed netting in the laundry pile and somehow managed to roll himself right into the middle of it all with only his head sticking out, it was hilarious!! Mauro was so choked at this point and got the vinegar spray bottle and proceeded to spray this ocelot head sticking out of the ball of netting...It took a lot but finally Little Chief relented and scrambled out...lol! I then took him for a nice walk in the forest, he was super and even laid down at my feet purring and licking himself, then he took off for an hour then he came back to lay in the shade and terrorize the kitchen girls by parking right outside the door! Then Mauro put him back in his cage and all the fun was over. So Little Chief is doing just fine, mischievous as ever.

The Monkeys... The monkeys are out of vitamins but I really worked on Enma to get some variety in their diets, but the monkeys seemed to be really picky and always choose only the banana. Of course Pico goes crazy for his partially cooked chicken enma gives him. He will eat coconut, a little carrot, on occasion. Regarding vitamins, I really think you should try putting their vitamins in their water source and using those terrific little water bottles they use for either hamsters or the bigger ones for guinea pigs and let the monkeys at the Reserve drink from that and get their vitamins at the same time. Enma says they hate eating their vitamins, so it's worth a shot and the water would stay cleaner as well. Chickita is fine and of course is still "staring" up a storm! lol! Enma can imitate her so well ...you have to see it...so funny.

MISC Projects... Mauro put in two new cement stairs leading down to the waters edge. So that helps getting up and down from the riverbank.

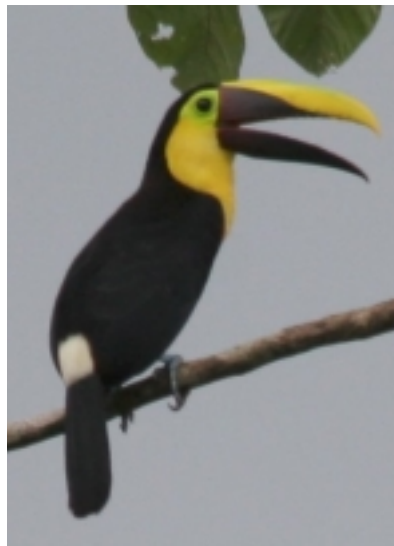
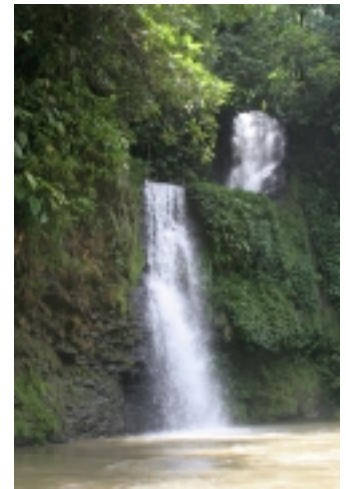
The jungle trails were in great shape. The one directly across the river was cut very wide and a pleasure to walk and as it turns out...that trail is an "excellent" birding trail all the way around to and back down to the river, especially coming down the creek bed through the canopy to the river. Really good birding!!

The San Juan Trail (waterfall). Mauro and the boys did a hell of a lot of work on this one. Not only was it cut back nice and wide, but they dug in good foot holds in sections and especially impressive were the wood branch stairs they built into the steep creek bed which comes down to the little river near the falls. Really sturdy and good stairs. I did add some knotted rope portions to sections and got them to notch up the stairs a bit for grip. But I only had so much rope. So I strongly recommend we put a long section of knotted rope right down the whole steep streambed down to the waterfall creek. It's slippery and steep and would be good for balance and helping people back up.

The lodge loop trail was a sorry sight when I arrived. So the guys set to work clearing it first, as they wouldn't give me a machete and laughed when I asked for one. So I had to walk along the trail with four guys with machetes in a line chopping away. They cut through a large downed tree and I got them to add new log bridges to two sections of water. I also bought some large chicken wire before I arrived and I used this to put over all the log bridges. It provides excellent traction. I stapled it to the logs. Works great. I also put flagging tape around the lodge loop so you can tell your people to follow the flagging tape around the loop and not go off on other trails.

Village The marimba dancers were great! We loved them and then we were taken around the village to buy crafts. Very well done!

continued on page 38



*Photos of Playa de Oro
taken by Phil Parker
during his April visit*



Playa de Oro Report, *continued from page 36*

I am pleased to report that the chicken coop project is a complete success! The village has embraced it completely and seems very proud of their individual structures which range in size and shape from the small modest 1-2 chicken bed size to the very spacious larger chicken haciendas which can host several chickens and keep them safe and comfortable during the night, and should any chickens visit PdO, they will now have several places to choose from for accommodation. I was taken on a tour of all the chicken coops by Mauro, Manuel and Manuel Jr.. During the tour I visited a total of 39 chicken coops at 39 different houses, with 29 of them completed in sturdy fashion and 10 still in different stages of completion. The completion of this very important project at the village of Playa de Oro, Ecuador, will definitely have a positive impact on the preservation of several species of wildcat which inhabit the region around the village.

School I toured the school. It is newly painted. The storage bins are built but still need locks. Clemente also told me of plans to build a few more storage bins and showed me where they would go. The school looks bright and cheery with the new colored paint. They need just a bit more paint to finish one little section left over. There is a teacher there that is being paid for by donations from FCF members, and I met her in the boat when I was leaving. She is either from the village or has family there, so that is good, maybe she will stay on longer than past teachers.

Camera Traps While I was there we did not get any shots of wild cats on the cameras. I did see tracks of a cat when I first arrived but it did rain almost every night and Mauro and I both think that was a deterrent. But the cameras are working as they did capture images of people using the trail. After letting the cameras stay out in the field for the night I noticed two things the next morning. One, there was condensation on the lens port on the inside of the glass and two, the outside was terribly mucked up by splattered rain and muck and you could hardly see through it. This occurs every night it rains. To combat the condensation I would only put the new, tiny lids on very lightly and then angle one side down a bit to leave the tiniest sliver of an opening so air could circulate and warm air could get out. This seemed to work well. The condensation problem disappeared and no moisture ever got inside the casing. Also, when it came time to check the cameras you don't have to wrestle the lid off while trying to keep the camera position the same and not disturb the aim etc. As far as the rain/muck splatter problem on the lens ports I combated this by placing a large, long narrow leaf on top of the camera housing to act as a visor. I put a small stick on top of the leaf to keep it in place. I then took 3 or 4 large leaves and placed them on the ground right under the lens port area so when the rain did splatter at least it was clean and didn't gunk up the port nearly as bad. But if we can, I recommend tending the cameras everyday to wipe the ports clean. In a perfect world of course.

I also explained to Mauro the whole rechargeable lead acid battery situation. I explained that the batteries could never get low in their charge and I set up a diagram showing a rotation schedule for the batteries. Basically a rotation will happen every 10 days. At any given time there will always be two batteries in the field, two on the charger, and two in limbo waiting to rotate into the cameras next. I drew this rotation in a diagram for Mauro and left it with him. Mauro is clear that the batteries can never be allowed to get low in their charge and the importance of sticking to this rotation.

Camera Trap Project Assessment Tracy, the fact that we have the shots we have at this point is a miracle! I think. The fact that my "one night stand" camera setup got a shot of a Margay on its one and only night was a miracle. And the fact that you got several good shots of an Ocelot from the cameras is another miracle. Your absolutely right, the biggest hindrance to this whole photo project by far, is the fact we don't have someone down there actually "doing" the project and maintaining it on a day to day basis. That is a huge setback!

What we need is a researcher down there. Perhaps just a student level who is studying some aspect of a wildcats life. We need someone down there who is staying for several months and can utilize the camera project and really make it work. This kind of project needs someone in the field full time, absolutely! Until we get that person, we are operating at a great disadvantage and productivity will be slower as a result. Those cameras need to be monitored every one to two days...

We need to: clean the lens ports of splattered rain and mud clean out the tiny spider webs that spiders build in the sensor opening monitor the images, if any, that have been taken make sure the sensors are working and triggering the camera re align the camera if it was knocked by any wildlife or people the batteries have to rotated every 10 ten days make sure the camera is still aimed properly down the trail and at the proper height to be triggered by something the size of a cat move the cameras to different locations should no results occur at a spot

Then at the lodge the batteries are on a crucial rotation schedule in order to maintain their charge using solar energy.

The rain forest around the lodge is also not an easy place to find obvious and productive camera placements. There is abundant water, mainly in the form of creeks, all through the Reserve. So you don't have the luxury of finding a good lone watering hole in an area and setting up a camera for months at that spot and getting tons of wildlife as a result.

Also this particular forest is covered in a maze of trails which are shared by people and wildlife, so there aren't any obvious "game trails" to set up a camera on. You just have to try a logical spot using such cues as cat tracks, feces, sightings, etc and then hope that during the time frame the camera is at that spot, a cat will happen to use that trail, rather than the other hundred it could choose from on a given day.

That's about it for my report, Let's hope we get some images of those elusive tigrillos!!

Ever Wonder What Happened to the FCF Editor, Mindy Stinner?



She's covered under with lions (*and tigers*)



While I am busy putting together another FCF magazine, Mindy was kind enough to share some of these fantastic lion moments with the FCF.



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