



Feline Conservation Federation  
Mar/Apr 2010      Volume 54, Issue 2





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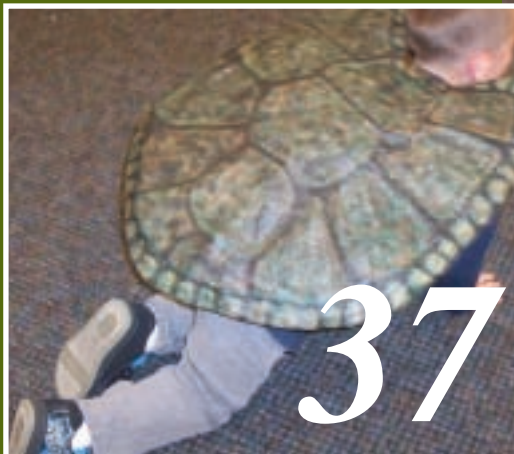
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Beautiful blue-eyed Tonka stares at cameraman Randy Johnson. You can watch Tonka playing in the snow at the FCF accredited Phillips Park Zoo.



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*photo credit James Battista*



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*photo credit Tom Roper*



## TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE FCF JOURNAL AND JOIN FCF IN IT'S CONSERVATION EFFORTS

A membership to FCF entitles you to six issues of the Journal, the back-issue DVD, an invitation to FCF husbandry and wildlife education courses and annual convention, and participation in our online discussion group. FCF works to improve captive feline husbandry and ensure that habitat is available. FCF supports the conservation of exotic felines through captive and wild habitat protection, and provides support for captive husbandry and breeding programs and public education. Send \$35 annual dues (\$40 Canada, \$50 international) to FCF, 4403 S. 334th E Avenue, Broken Arrow, OK 74014

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The Feline Conservation Federation publishes the Journal bimonthly. The FCF is non-profit, (Federal ID#59-2048618) non-commercial, and international in membership, devoted to the welfare and conservation of exotic felines.

The Journal publishes articles on exotic feline conservation and husbandry, management, and regulatory and legislative issues affecting ownership for our members. The author's point of view does not necessarily represent the point of view of the organization. Reproduction of any material in the Journal may not be made without the written permission of the original copyright owners and/or copyright owner FCF.

Letters to the editor and guest editorials are also published.

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Submission deadline for articles and advertisements is the 10th of even numbered months. Please submit all photos and articles to the Journal Managing Editor. High Resolution photos and articles may be emailed to [lynnculver@hughes.net](mailto:lynnculver@hughes.net), or send by postal service to 141 Polk 664, Mena, AR 71953.



Feline Conservation Federation



## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

2010 is kicking off to be another busy and exciting year for FCF. Thank you every FCF member who donated to the African Safari Sweepstakes fundraiser. About 810 donations were received before the January deadline and another 60 bonus entry forms were generated for members who gained ten or more donations to the FCF. Kathrin Stucki generated the most donations and won the registration for convention and three nights stay at the hotel prize for her efforts. Congratulations to Wayne and Rhonda Sluder for winning the African Safari and international airfare. Be sure to read Wayne's story in this Journal. Wayne and Rhonda decided that with one young child and another on the way, the time was not right for them to take this trip so they sold the Safari and made a donation of \$1000 back to FCF. I want to thank the Sluders for their generous support of FCF.

Kate Conner and her committee are hard at work on making this year's convention another event you won't want to miss. We'll be in Oklahoma and will visit Bill Meadows' Tiger Safari. I've visited Tiger Safari and Bill is really making it a true destination site for middle America. His facility and attendance are growing by leaps and bounds. I also know that Kate is planning on having another very special guest in attendance, but I'll let her fill you in on that to keep the suspense up. Just make sure you mark your calendars for July 29-31 and make your plans to be in Oklahoma.

The only FCF Husbandry Course planned is in conjunction with the convention in July. We need additional courses. Anyone considering hosting a Husbandry Course should contact Sylvia Gerber. Once expenses are paid, the host splits the profit with FCF so not only will you be helping to educate people, but also you stand to profit both yourself and FCF financially as well.

Billie Lambert recently resigned her position as Director of Development on the FCF Board of Directors due to lack of time. I thank Billie for her efforts and wish her well. Billie set up the Zazzle store for the FCF. Be sure to visit the site to get your FCF merchandise. <http://www.zazzle.com/fcf>. The board needs to appoint another to replace Billie.

If you are interested in this position, please contact me.

The Oklahoma contingent of FCF members successfully killed a restrictive state bill, read about it inside this Journal. Kudos to all of those involved. Working the legislature is something that no one enjoys, but is a necessity when it comes to keeping cats. The best way to get your legislator's attention is to sit face-to-face with them. This lets them know that it means enough to you that you have taken time out of your busy life to personally communicate your concerns. It also builds a relationship with the legislator, which simplifies things in the future when your voice needs to be heard. We all need to be on our toes during the legislative season. Be vigilant and stand up for your rights.

One thing I'd like to emphasize to our members is the need to educate the public. To learn more about how to develop your own wildlife program, register for the Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course being conducted July 28. Whether doing exhibits, education programs, or simply talking with others about wildcats, taking the time to share your knowledge with someone does make a difference. The more people know about the plight of wildcats in both the wild and in captivity, the better their chance for survival. This is particularly important in educating young people. All of us had some experience as a child that influenced our passions as an adult. The animal rights movement's spending more and more each year on "educating" the youth on their viewpoint and idealisms. We need to do this also. Contact any local youth group to schedule a talk at one of their meetings. Groups like 4-H, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Nature Clubs, and others are always looking for such speakers. The biggest benefit is the opportunity to talk to kids on a one-on-one basis and let them know that they can make a difference. The more they know, the greater their interest and passion becomes.

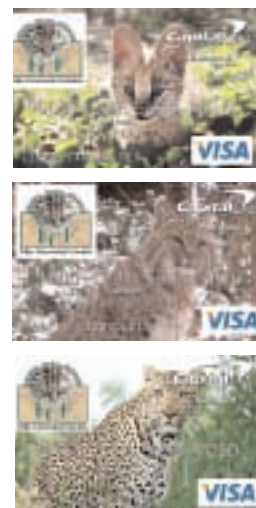
We are proud that the FCF Wildcat Safety Net approved funds to help relocate six big cats from Texas to Wisconsin. Your support of the Safety Net makes this possible. Please be sure to read the article in this Journal and consider making a tax-

deductible donation to the Safety Net so that FCF will be ready when called upon again. If you hear of any such situation, or want to serve on the Safety Net committee, contact Caroline Alexander at [cello33dolly@yahoo.com](mailto:cello33dolly@yahoo.com).

FCF has been contacted by professor Carlos Albers who is researching the various felid species potential for domestication. He would like our assistance in a survey he has set up on a web site. Please be sure to read his article in this issue and then visit his web site and participate in the survey.

And finally, here's a brand new way you can raise funds for the FCF. The FCF is partnering with Capital One to offer FCF credit cards. The program is called the Shopping Survival Plan (SSP). You shop, FCF survives. Here's how it works. FCF will receive \$50 the first time you use your card and a percentage of the purchase price after that. 2% on gas and groceries, 1% on other purchases, and up to 10% with selected merchants. The card has no annual fee and has all of the benefits of a Visa Platinum card. This is a wonderful way to support FCF with something that you use in your everyday life. You won't have to do anything different with this card. Capital One will automatically figure FCF's portion and send it to us automatically. Please apply online for a Capital One FCF Shopping Survival Plan card and help FCF when you book your convention airline tickets and all your other purchases too.

<http://www.cardlabconnect.com/ShoppingSurvivalPlanSSP>.



Choose one of these FCF Capital One cards or design your own.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

FCF was founded as a feline welfare organization. Before there was conservation awareness, there was concern for the health and safety of kittens imported from South American jungles being raised in people's homes. Cathrin Cisin published the LIOC newsletter to share experiences and knowledge of diet, medical issues, and care. So it was only natural that FCF should create the Wildcat Safety Net, which embodies our concern for captive feline welfare. This program helps cats in need reach safe haven.

In this Journal is news that the Wildcat Safety Net was contacted to aid in the transport of two tigers, three leopards and a cougar from Texas to Wisconsin. The owner of these cats was a former traveling exhibitor, at one time licensed and regulated by both the USDA and the state of Florida. But repeated failure to meet the state and federal regulations resulted in the loss of both licenses. A move to Texas did not improve matters, and a concerned citizen contacted authorities. These big cats were living in circus type transport cages, and the owner had failed to gain necessary Texas state and county permits. The prosecutor charged the owners with multiple violations. In a plea bargain agreement to drop the charges, the cats were given up.

When Jeff Kolisky contacted me for financial assistance to transport six of these cats to Wisconsin, I felt this was definitely the kind of situation FCF contemplated when the Safety Net was created. Jeff is the founder of Wisconsin Big Cat Rescue and Educational Center, a non-profit sanctuary. I knew of Jeff from the Tiger Next Door, a documentary of the Dennis Hill story that we viewed during the membership meeting at convention last July. It was Jeff that took in 20 of Mr. Hill's cats. The Safety Net committee voted to approve the grant application to transport these cats to a better life.

At the same time, another confiscation was happening. This was a USDA confiscation in northern Indiana. The USDA had written up the licensee repeatedly for violating Animal Welfare Act regulations. A confiscation order gave the cats to two

FCF member facilities. Valley of the Kings received a lion and a tiger, and the Exotic Feline Rescue Center (EFRC) took 10 more. I spoke with Joe Taft, founder of EFRC. He described these big cats' living quarters as being circus transport-sized cages inside a barn.

Being USDA licensed carries with it an obligation to follow the regulations and make corrections when an inspector documents non-compliance. As a USDA licensee, one gives the government regulatory authority over the facility in exchange for the license to engage in commerce. USDA licensees should know that non-compliant items carry a potential penalty of up to \$10,000 per violation, and it is entirely up to USDA whether to issue a fine or how much to fine. If one does not correct non-compliant items, and the USDA believes the animals are suffering, or in danger, USDA will build a case to support this finding, and will take the animals.

This license to conduct business can have a very steep price. One must take it seriously. Familiarity with the Animal Welfare Act and USDA regulations and policies is a must. Policies can be found on the USDA web site. When the USDA proposes new regulations or policies, they are published in the Federal Register. There is a public comment period. FCF comments on proposals that affect feline owners and so should owners.

In the two decades I have been licensed, I have observed how USDA has evolved to respond to the exotic animal industry. Social attitudes have changed on what constitutes public safety and adequate care for captive wildlife. What passed as acceptable a couple of decades ago, is no longer good enough. It is very important that everyone act professionally and provide properly for the cats. Being broke, or out of work, does not excuse poor husbandry.

The FCF husbandry course has taught over 500 students the basics of proper exotic feline care, preparing the next generation of handlers, and also, broadening the base of knowledge of present handlers. Last year FCF developed the Wildlife Conservation Educators course. It can help graduates qualify for a USDA exhibitor license. FCF puts its resources into these programs to ensure that the next generation of feline keepers is trained and prepared.

In this Journal is a story of FCF members who graduated from both the husbandry and educator's course and are now teaching children about wildlife and conservation. Pet bobcat owner turned wildlife advocate! I hope that this article inspires other FCF pet owners to do the same. It is up to all of us to shape the attitudes of the next generation in our communities because that is the only hope for a future with these felines.



Joe Taft and Exotic Feline Rescue Center volunteers place their transport cage beside tiger's cramped living quarters.

## CHILE AND THE FCF, THE BEGINNING BEGINS

Pat Callahan

When I heard that two friends, both wild cat biologists, were going to Chile, I asked to tag along on vacation. FCF's own Jim Sanderson graciously said "yes." So I joined them from October 9 to November 1, 2009. As a vacation, well, I have had better ones, but as an experience, it was an adventure for sure!

We flew into Santiago, Chile and went straight to a Symposium on the Carnivores of Chile, sponsored by the University Catolica. Alex Sliwa, from Germany, spoke on how to study wild cats, based on his work with Black-Footed Cats in South Africa. I spoke on my work with captive Pampas Cats and Jim spoke about how to do work that supports conservation and not just "science." We spoke in English but everything else was in Spanish. Despite the title of the symposium, talks included Spanish lynx and

Andean Bear neither are Chilean, but also Puma, otters, guinea cats and foxes of Chile. Our trio challenged the audience, mostly college students, to get busy and study Chile's small cats, the Andean cat, guinea, the Geoff's and the Colo colo (Pampas Cat) before they disappear. At the coffee break, a dozen or so students approached us, eager to "do something." E-mail addresses were exchanged and maybe some fires lit.

Next we met with Jim's colleague, Augustin Irate, author of the book *Mamíferos de Chile*, who brought an Architect, to discuss plans for a remote field

station in San Pedro de Atacama. This is potentially part of the FCF's Andean Mountain Cat Project. We would visit that area in a few days.

Meanwhile, we visited an area Jim knows very well, the Island of Chiloe. This is prime guinea habitat and for the very rare Darwins Fox. This area is cold

had just returned from Ethiopia. Now we went north to Antofagasto and met with the Regional Director of the Chilean quazi-governmental organization CONAF whose support and land space is vital. He likes the Andean Cat Project and his office oversees the San Pedro de Atacama area and its local CONAF office there. We



Viva vicunas! Chilean Andes border the Altiplano high desert where herds of South American camelids roam.

and wet with thick bamboo and other under growth. That is, where it is still unfarmed. At Senda Darwin we saw efforts to return the land to the pre-European arrival state, and a dorm for students, and heard but did not see the rare Darwins Frog calling. At the shore we saw Magellanic penguins. I was dressed for "springtime in the desert" and started coughing and sniffing.

We returned to Santiago Airport to pick up Steve Gold, to help assess building sites and any solar power needs. He is in the construction business and his hobby is to do solar stuff at remote field sites. He

traveled east to San Pedro, the "gateway" to the Altiplano Region, a high desert area with volcanic hot springs, copper and sulfur mines, salt, and more desert. Parts of it literally look like the planet Mars. The Andes Mountains here begin at its eastern edge, with Volcano Licancabur (elev. ~15,000 ft) and its neighbors. Farther east, passable by car, is Bolivia and Argentina. This is where European ALMA Radio-telescope is sited and is very remote once you leave tiny San Pedro. We checked in at the local CONAF office, walked the potential field station site and met the Architect's mother, also an Architect!





Viscachas are the main prey species for Andean and Pampas cats.

Many pros and cons began to become apparent. Mr. Gold's input was very valuable.

We all know what wild cats need to survive and FCF members have heard or read about Jim Sanderson's dream about the Andean Cat. Now I could see first hand,

that so much is involved, a lot of just basic things to be done, because no one is doing anything. FCF is truly on the ground floor of this Project! As for the cats, we did not expect to see any, and did not, but we saw what they need to exist. Water. Water plus soil=grasses=rodents and birds=Colo colo (Pampas Cat). Water plus soil=grasses plus boulder fields= viscachas (think triple size chinchilla) and birds=Andean cats! But also it means herders, hunters, foxes, sheep, llamas, alpacas, well you

know. We did see cat tracks along the Rio Salado-Salt river, and I declared them to be Colo colo=MY Cat! Wow! I actually felt like we were being watched!

The next step is to get camera trapping data from this region and see what really

is there. The CONAF guys were pleased to get camera traps and will get more. Other strong allies were met and asked to join in. Remember my saying, "all conservation is local." You gotta have local allies! The field station is still very much a design in progress and other sites need to be assessed. I was proud, as an FCF Member, to be seeing this activity and the spreading of the gospel so to speak, of Small Cat Conservation!

The gods of the volcanoes rewarded us for our efforts, not with seeing cats, but with other wildlife. We saw vicuna, guanaco, Andean Condor, Inca terns, Andean Coots and two species of flamingo, up around 14,000 ft. Ice and flamingoes, very odd. But those vischaca, they were extra fun to stalk; I believe they brought out the cat in us. More on Chile another time and those wonderful people of Chile too!

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## KODKOD: GUIGNA OR PAMPAS CAT?

Jim Sanderson, Ph.D.

The common name *kodkod* is sometimes used in place of the common name *guigna* (gween-ya) when referring to *Leopardus guigna*. In the region where the *guigna* occurs, most Chileans use the term *huiña* (ween-ya); the term *kodkod* is never used. This curious fact begs the question: what is the origin of the term *kodkod* and what wild cat does it refer to?

The diminutive *guigna* is a native of south-central Chile and a small part of Argentina. When Charles Darwin passed through the region between 1831 and 1836 the region was heavily forested from the coast of Chile east to the foothills of the Andes where many lakes are found. Before the arrival of Europeans, the so-called lakes district of Chile was occupied by Mapuche, one of many Native American groups inhabiting the region. Of relevance here is that the Mapuche had specif-

ic names for the wildlife, including wild cats that inhabited the lakes district.

Pascual Coña, a Spanish priest, lived among the Mapuche carrying out the labors associated with his belief system. In Spanish, the alphabetic letter “ñ” is n-yah so that Coña is pronounced Cone-yah. In 1930, Coña published his book “Testimonio de un cacique mapuche” in the original Mapuche language (left side below) side-by-side with a Spanish translation (right side below). Realizing the Mapuche were rapidly being replaced by the Spanish and that their knowledge gathered over more than a thousand years was rapidly being forgotten, Coña produced a written record of the knowledge of a Mapuche cacique, or person of great importance (a chief). The cacique’s



Spotted guigna is native to Chile.

knowledge of the zoology of the region begins on page 107 with the wild cats and continues on page 108. Note that Coña attempted to produce the sounds of the Mapuche words using Spanish, Greek, and German since the Mapuche had no written language. Footnotes were also

C. Zoologia . - LA FAUNA CONOCIDA POR LOS INDIGENAS. (\*)

1 - ANIMALES MAMIFEROS (34)

Mēlei tēfachi auka kulliñ. Doi fuchai pa<i, pa<üll ka trapial (1) pi<ei ka, ka nawel (2), fei pewenche pēle pe<ekei. Mawida meu ká mēlei feichi kodkod, wiña (3) rume, ka kudmu (4), fei chel narki (5) fem<ei.	Hay animals feroces, El más grande es el puma o león chileno (1); el tigre (2) se encuentra en dirección a la Argentina. Además hay en las selvas los gatos monteses: la huiña el colocolo (3); y el cudmu, (4), que tienen semejanza con los gatos domésticos (5).
---	---

1 - ANIMALES MAMIFEROS (34). - (1) FELIX PUMA. (2) F. ONCA.

(3) F. guigna y colocolo. (4) F. pájaros. (5) F. domestica.



Melanistic guigna has successfully caught a lizard snack.

included in the text on pages 107 and 108 that are reproduced here as well.

How is it possible that so few lines of text have led to such great confusion and that this confusion persists and has

become widespread? The Mapuche and Spanish translations must be more closely examined to discover the Mapuche words for the wild cats we recognize today.

In (1) the Mapuche cacique first refers to the Chilean lion or puma. Next is reference (2) to the jaguar that is found in “the direction of Argentina.” The jaguar does not occur in Chile so it must be that the cacique traveled widely. The first footnote refers to *Felis Puma* and *Felis Onca* leaving no mistake that the Mapuche cacique refers to the puma and jaguar. The small wild cats are not so easily reconciled however.

The Mapuche cacique in (3) first refers to a *kodkod* and then a *wiña*, in (4) a *kudmu*, and in (5) a domestic cat. This is translated by Coña into (3) the *huiña* (a *guigna*), the *colocolo* (what we know as a pampas cat), in (4) “and the *cudmu*,” and

(5) a domestic cat.

Footnote (3) refers to a *guigna*, a *colocolo* or pampas cat, in (4) another morph of the pampas cat, and in (5) a domestic cat.

That fact that the Spanish *huiña*, from which the Latin *guigna* is derived, and the Mapuche *wiña*, sound alike is unmistakable evidence that these words refer to one and the same wild cat. The only confusion arises because the order of the words presented in Mapuche was transposed in the parallel Spanish translation. Thus, we are led to conclude that “*kodkod*” must be the Mapuche word for “*colocolo*,” what we recognize as the Pampas cat. Indeed, those that have heard a Mapuche speaker say the word “*colocolo*” will attest that it sounds like “*kodkod*.”

Previously, several species of Pampas cat (*Leopardus colocolo*) were recognized,



*colocolo* and *pájaros* being two of them. We now recognize just one species and several subspecies. Thus, we are led to conclude that the Mapuche “kodkod” refers to the subspecies *colocolo* and “cudmu” might refer to *pájaros*. However, note the curious omission of Geoffroy’s cat (*Leopardus geoffroyi*). It might well be that cudmu refers not to *Leopardus colocolo* *pájaros*, but to Geoffroy’s

cat. Since Coña was not a biologist we might well never know exactly what small wild cat is named by the Mapuche cacique.

In any case, a careful analysis of Pascual Coña’s book “Testimonio de un cacique mapuche” reveals that the Mapuche referred to what we now know as the guigna (*Leopardus guigna*), written huiña in Spanish, as the wiña, and that the

Mapuche word “kodkod” referred to the Pampas cat. This confusion can henceforth be easily avoided by using the common name guigna for *Leopardus guigna* and dropping the use of the word kodkod.

#### Literature cited

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## FISHING FOR INFORMATION: WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT ONE OF THE WORLD’S MOST MYSTERIOUS WILD CATS?

Anthony J. Giordano, M.S.

Director of Conservation Science & Field Projects

S.P.E.C.I.E.S.:The Society for the Preservation of Endangered Carnivores & their International Ecological Study

LifeScape International

\*\*\*Integrating Nature & Humanity for a Sustainable Future\*\*\*



Barry Bland

Fishing cat gets his fish. This one lives at T.I.G.E.R.S.

Many budding zoologists or curators still remember those unusual details they learned about certain species when they were kids. This is when we, like many kids actually, were all going through our “dinosaur” phases as well. During this time, we were offering-up five- and six-syllable “o-saurus” names with startlingly perfect pronunciation and recollection, astounding our extended family during the holidays. Remember? Okay, so maybe you weren’t the dinosaur type, but if you

work with animals today, you probably do recall that zoological trivia I’m talking about. You know, the blue whale is the largest animal to have ever lived. The male – and only the male – duck-billed platypus has poisonous spurs on its “elbows”. And of course, cheetahs are the fastest land animal on earth. But I think a particular obsession of mine had to do with how little was known – indeed, how little is known – about so many species. Among those waiting for the shroud of mystery to be lifted are many of the small cats. Never quite able to muscle the charisma as a tiger or jaguar, both of which I myself am guilty of having studied, small cats have often been left in the dark, largely overlooked, and overshadowed.

Today, the welcome distraction of those interesting zoological facts, “cat trivia” if you will, remains, and I am still spontaneously challenged by both friends and family. The rusty-spotted cat, for example, is considered the world’s smallest felid; the Canada lynx’s enormous feet are adaptations for walking across encrusted snow fields; and margays, due to adaptations in their rear ankle joints, are able to walk down the trunk of a tree

headfirst. For me, one of the most unforgettable of these trivial facts was an arcane anecdote of a fishing cat captured long ago and halfway around the world. A cat that managed to kill a female leopard kept in a cage too close to its own.

To say that a wild fishing cat is of an unsettled and somewhat belligerent disposition is like saying getting hit by Mike Tyson is painful. Both are somewhat understated. Fishing cats are the quintessential tough cat, in much the same way that the bobcat is here. Unlike the bobcat, however, fishing cats are probably habitat specialists, tied to the presence of true wetlands with thick vegetative cover across a vast south Asian landscape. A medium-sized cat, fishing cats as their name implies subsist largely on fish and other freshwater aquatic prey. They have also, however, been reported to take small to medium-sized mammals in parts of their range. Males in particular in some locations, which have been known to reach weights of 32 lbs., are quite capable of taking small ungulates as prey. Females are much smaller, weighing as little as 12-15 lbs. However, 15-25 lbs is probably more of an average range for both sexes.

It is no mistake I have carefully chosen words like “probably,” and “likely”. They are words that lack confidence and imply doubt. The truth is, so little is known about the fishing cat’s ecology and habits in the wild, that biologists can only provide their best guess about many of these things. Today, there are only a handful of people working on the ecology of fishing cats anywhere throughout their range. Ironically, even their distribution is a matter of debate. They are believed to historically have ranged from the Indus



A.H.M. Ali Reza  
& Anthony Giordano

### Fishing Cat Tracks.

River valley of Pakistan, east across southern Asia through parts of India and Sri Lanka, north to Nepal, and east again through Bangladesh and into Thailand. But where exactly within many of these countries do fishing cats actually occur? For instance, where might they be found in the high-elevation country of Bhutan? How far north do they range into other parts of southeast Asia? Are they rare in Peninsula Malaysia? Do they occur on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia? For this last question, no verifiable records of the species have occurred from there. Yet further south, however, at the northern end of the island of Java, is the most unlikely population of fishing cats anywhere. Like the geographic distribution of many southeast Asian vertebrate species, this population is a mystery. Did fishing cats once occur on Sumatra, but since have gone extinct before recent times? If I had to guess, I'd say "probably." But then again, there's that word again.

Given that the seemingly straightforward question of "where do fishing cats occur?" is not known with certainty, its no wonder that information regarding their natural history and ecology has been slow to accumulate. Add to this the fact that few studies have specifically targeted them, and a few cryptic habits that might demand a good mix of survey techniques, and its no wonder this species lingers in obscurity. But, despite its wide distribution and a seemingly unassailable toughness; despite all we admit we don't know about fishing cats, what we think we do know is not encouraging: that is, not even obscurity can save the fishing cat. They are disappearing.

Last year the World Conservation Union, the international partnership and

collaboration of scientists and institutions that maintains the world's "redlist" of threatened species, reclassified fishing cats from "vulnerable" to "endangered." Although no empirical studies to date have attempted to estimate population parameters, biologists working across known fishing cat range have all offered their best guess at recent trends. And actually, if we accept that the fate of fishing cats is tied to intact wetland ecosystems across South Asia, then the reason for their

disappearance is easy to explain. Wetlands are disappearing. At an alarming rate, really. In some areas, the threat to such wetlands surpasses that of the tropical forests in the same region.

Not all is gloom and doom, though, and several projects have answered the call for more information. For example, there is a brilliant one in progress now in Thailand, one which may finally provide us with much needed information on the cat's spatial ecology, habitat use patterns, and density. There is another project targeting that most remote outpost of fishing cats in northern Java, a population which further research could reveal is as genetically distinct from all others as it is geographically separate, thus warranting immediate conservation action. And there is another recently begun in Bangladesh, a country where I believe typical fishing cat habitat is extensive, and fishing cats themselves perhaps even relatively common. It is in this latter country that my work with fishing cats occurs. Here, surrounded by some of the best and most committed scientists and conservation professionals that I've had the privilege to work with, we may have the potential to study fishing cat populations across a large enough landscape that the knowledge we gain could be valuable for developing a national conservation strategy.

With the largest delta and mangrove regions in the world, one of the highest densities of riverine ecosystems, and seasonal floodplains that completely inundate much of the country, at the risk of oversimplifying things, Bangladesh is sort of a giant wetland all by itself. As such, it may have the potential to serve as one of the most effective fishing cat strongholds anywhere.

Using a combination of techniques such as camera-trapping, track surveys, and interviews with local people, we have begun efforts to determine the distribution of the species across Bangladesh. We have already learned a lot. For example, in rural areas, fishing cats are common culprits at local aquaculture ponds, regularly stealing carp. As a remedy, many locals in one ecoregion prefer to live-trap and relocate problem animals rather than kill them. This is cause for optimism, not only regarding the local cultural attitudes toward these animals, but also because cooperation with the victims of fishing cat "raids" are a new source of information for researchers.

At the very least, we have turned a corner with respect to fishing cats. They are starting to receive some of the attention they deserve. However, at this point, that is all we can say. We have a long way to go before we can start speaking confidently about their natural history, distribution, and overall habitat needs, much less larger aspects of their ecology. But I am encouraged by the efforts now taking place, and I believe we'll eventually get there. And when we do, we will likely find we have even more interesting questions to ask about this most mysterious cat.



A.H.M. Ali Reza  
& Anthony Giordano

Searching for tracks around isolated "ponds".



## VICTORY IN OKLAHOMA

Kurt Beckelman

We can declare a victory against the Humane Society. For the third year in a row we have stopped a ban bill against private ownership of exotics. In Oklahoma, SB 1798 sponsored by Senator Anderson specified individuals could not own large cats and non-human primates. The bill required prohibited animals be micro-chipped and reported to the local animal control officer. Had this legislation passed into law, it would have opened the door for amendments to be added in the future, including expanding the list of prohibited species.

As a private owner of bobcat, black leopard, Geoffroy's serval and lemur, SB 1798 would permit me to keep what I possessed, but I would be restricted in breeding, selling, or adding animals. When my leopard or lemur died, I would not be able to replace them.

I contacted the FCF Oklahoma State representative, Bill Meadows and FCF executive director Lynn Culver to discuss our plan of action. I never thought I would get so involved in the political process. Emails and phone calls were made to other members of the FCF to alert them to the bill. Many were shocked to learn that a bill like this was being introduced again. Kudos to everyone who got involved making calls and emailing their Senators. Special thanks goes to Leah and Bob Aufill, Bill Meadows, Melissa Meadows, Rep. Leslie Osborne and another person who wishes to remain anonymous and to Lynn Culver for taking my many phone calls.

Here are the steps we used to effectively kill this bill. Bill Meadows and I went to the State Capitol on February 1, the first day of the 2010 Session. After the bill was read, we personally met with five of the senators on the Tourism and Wildlife Committee, which was assigned this bill. We stated our position as private owners, and our reasons why this bill should not pass. I stressed to each member that the SB1798 was backed by the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and was presented to Senator

Anderson by a paid political consultant and lobbyist. This was information I uncovered during our research phase. Many responded that they opposed HSUS, and thought the bill was an infringement to our personal rights to make the choice to own exotics.

Some Senators were not available to talk to, so we left our business cards and the reason we were there with their secretaries. Sad to say, no calls were returned, except for Senator Justice who kept in contact with Bill Meadows and Melissa Meadows.

After February 1, other members of the FCF contacted the Senators to apply pressure to defeat the bill. Joe Scriverogel from G.W. Exotics in Wynnewood was also involved with this pursuit. Wednesday evening the 10th, I received a call from Bill Meadows that the committee was going to meet the next day at 10am and the bill was on this agenda. It is important to note that very little notice is given to the public. The agenda was posted on the Senate web site on Tuesday, just 48 hours ahead. We were not notified by any of our contacts in the capitol but got word through the animal community grapevine. This is a valuable lesson. You must stay on top of any proposed legislation, as it can move at any speed, at any time.

Wednesday evening Lynn sent out email to all Oklahoma members and we called to try to get as many people attend-

ing as possible. Bill Meadows, Leah and Bob Aufill, and myself represented the FCF. Several people from G.W. Exotics were present. Bill was the only person allowed to speak on this bill. I know that other FCF members wanted to attend, but were unable to because of schedule conflicts on such short notice.

One of the committee members asked Senator Anderson about the origin of the bill and he admitted it was the Humane Society, but specifically avoided mentioning HSUS. Senator Garrison remarked that what the AR groups were trying to do was an infringement on our rights. Finally, a politician who understands. Three other committee members asked questions, and then the vote was taken. 8 voted against the bill, and 3 voted for the bill; victory for us.

This report demonstrates that we can win when we work together as an organization to defeat the AR groups that are working against us.

One Senator on the committee suggested that FCF present a fair and balanced bill to curtail the many attempts by AR groups to take our rights and liberties away. We intend to craft such a bill and present it next session. We are going to work as a group on this effort and have an attorney who has offered his service to us. Anyone who has experience or would like to be involved in this effort is welcome to contribute.

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## TRACKING THE BLACK-FOOTED CAT: FCF HELPS IN AFRICAN CONSERVATION

Robert Johnson

Prior to my involvement with FCF, I must admit my knowledge about the more rare species of smaller felines was fairly limited. Most of my expertise was with cats that were not only too large to comfortably fit in your lap, they required trucks and trailers to be transported. Through the many informative FCF Journal articles, along with the occasional conversations with our own internationally known small cat specialists Pat Callahan and Jim Sanderson, my awareness of these often overlooked felines has slowly begun to evolve. During a recent trip to the low grassveldt region of South Africa, my familiarity with one of these species took a large leap forward as I got a firsthand glimpse into the life and behavior of the black-footed cat, the rarest and smallest feline in Africa.

As a senior trainer at T.I.G.E.R.S., part of my responsibilities is to lead safaris for our guests into the bushveldt region of South Africa to see some of the most spectacular wildlife on the dark continent. The most recent trip (ending only about six weeks ago) had two separate groups of guests, the first of which began in mid-November, the second beginning in early December. This unique situation presented me with a fantastic opportunity. I found myself with two full weeks to explore the wonders of South Africa.

During our last FCF convention, in Salinas, money was appropriated from the FCF Conservation Fund to purchase a multi-media projector for help in outreach education programs in rural Africa. The goal of this particular program is to help educate local people about the importance and fragility of the black-footed cat. Since postal delivery is often unreliable in the isolated areas of South Africa, and since I now found myself with a couple weeks time to fill, I volunteered to hand deliver the projector to the Marion Holmes of the Cat Conservation Trust.

After contacting Marion and her husband Richard about meeting up, I inquired as to whether additional equipment would



Setting up the projector provided by FCF's Conservation Fund.

be useful. Since the projector was being supplied by FCF, and since I would already be traveling to the other side of the world, the Rare Species Fund offered to send additional equipment, if it was needed, along with me. As it happened, Beryl Wilson, the field researcher and project manager for the Black-footed Cat Working Group, was radio tracking black-footed cats in the north and had been looking for several years to get some camera traps for the project. All of a sudden, I found myself with another destination in my travels.



Out in the middle of the night with Beryl and the film crew, tracking the elusive black-footed cat.

After returning to Johannesburg from my first week in the bush, I set about the task of determining how best to approach my circuitous route around the country, and decided my first stop would be to visit Beryl Wilson and deliver the camera traps. The route toward the town of Kimberley was remarkably like driving through the central United States, except for the obvi-

ous fact that I was driving on the wrong side of the road and everything was written in Afrikaans. Numerous farms and ranches dotted the wide-open landscape, and much like the U.S., the further west I drove, the drier everything seemed to be.

Driving around and through the frequent dust devils, colored dark red by the dry clay soil, I arrived in Kimberley just ahead of a dark and ominous looking thunderstorm that threatened to make this a wet visit. My first destination was the McGregor Museum in which Beryl is the head Zoologist. The museum itself is a massive colonial style building that brings one's imagination back to the days of when this land was under European rule. Built in 1897, this sprawling complex has, over the past century, been home to a sanatorium, a convent school, the Hotel Belgrave, and most recently the McGregor Museum.

Ushered in by an elderly security guard, I walked through a seemingly unending labyrinth of darkened hallways looking for Beryl's office. At about the point I was sure I would never be able to navigate my way back out, I saw a trickle of light spilling out from underneath a single door about halfway down a long hallway. When the door was answered, I saw an office covered with maps and charts, shelves filled with texts zoological specimens, and a large prominent picture of a black-footed cat. "You must be Beryl," I said.

After greetings and introductions were exchanged, Beryl proceeded to explain the project they were working on. The Black-footed Cat Working Group is headed by Dr. Alex Sliwa, curator of the Cologne Zoo in Germany. Beryl is project manager and keeps the whole thing together and running. She is currently working on a dissertation concerned with the distribution of black-footed cats in their natural range. As she started explaining the home range of these animals and the new information she had uncovered from both historical data and recent reports, you could tell her excitement was building. Pulling books

and notebooks off the shelf, she talked about prey species and the black-footed cat's choice of habitats. When she revealed that there seemed to be a strong correlation between the populations of spring hares and black-footed cat's, her eyes lit up like it was Christmas morning. "They have definitely found the right person for this job," I thought.

During our conversation, Beryl mentioned she had a television crew traveling with her that evening while she tracked two radio-collared black-footed cats, and invited me to join them. We grabbed some food and waited for dusk before we started our quest for the elusive nocturnal felines. I learned that the town of Kimberley is home to the De Beers diamond mines and that the research area, Benfontein, is part of the vast tracts of land owned by the company. We arrived at the Benfontein research station just after sunset and fitted the Toyota pickup with its requisite telemetry antennae which would assist with the radio tracking. We met up with a television crew and headed out into the grasslands.

The terrain, at a glance, looks pretty flat and uniform, and it might not sound like a difficult task to find a cat that is constantly transmitting a homing signal,

tion, you will most likely run into an excavated termite mound, a ditch, or a rabbit hole, all of which are hidden by the short grass, and all of which the cats use for cover. The termite mounds themselves stand about three feet tall. There are also nocturnal aardvarks in the area which burrow into these mounds and feast on the resident insects. This of course leaves a three foot deep hole next to the three foot tall mound. This poses a particular hazard as more than one research vehicle at Benfontein has come to a sudden and violent stop as a result of "falling into" one of these holes. To add to the complexity of finding a black-footed cat in the wild, they are constantly moving and can trek as far as 30km in a single evening.

We had a very lucky night of tracking. Not only did the impending thunderstorm push off to the south of us, we found the first black-footed cat, a female with a den of kittens, within about an hour. (This particular feline and her den are currently the sight of interest of one of the supplied camera traps.) Needless to say, the elusive feline did not hold still and pose for the television crew and the longest unobscured sighting lasted only a split second. While the producer assured us that they had enough footage for the story, I believe

terrain. We eventually did catch up with the little fellow and Beryl was able to track him and enter his movements into the GPS for later analysis. Beryl explained to me the use of live traps in the study. These devices were used not only to catch black-footed cats, but also other small predators which have a direct affect on the



Discussing the live traps used to catch specimens.



Great Karoo: The vast expanse of the great Karoo, home of Marion Holmes and the Cat Conservation Trust.

but for those who have not attempted such an endeavor, you are apt to be greatly amazed at the difficulty. First of all, you are looking for a cat that maxes out in size somewhere around 4 pounds. Even in ankle-high grass, these animals simply disappear. While the terrain looks relatively flat, if you walk 45 feet in any direc-

tion, they eventually decided to call it a night because they were not sure if their equipment or their spleens could handle the bumpy off-road driving much longer.

After the departure of the television crew, we headed back into the field to search for a male black-footed cat whose territory was a 30 minute drive across the

territory and survival of our little feline subjects. We took a look at some of the traps that had been used in the field. The De Beers company had offered to manufacture another 50 traps to the needed specifications in order to further the study. The problem, however, was one of logistics. While the De Beers offer was generous and much needed, only so many traps would feasibly fit into the bed of a small Toyota truck. The solution was simple, but expensive; they needed a trailer. The following morning we explored that solution, and by early that afternoon we had visited a local trailer manufacture, after discussing matters with Doc Antle of T.I.G.E.R.S., we ordered a custom built research trailer to be provided on behalf of the Rare Species Fund. The research would continue and do so with some much needed equipment.

I departed the town of Kimberley later that afternoon and headed south. I reflected on the amazing experience of seeing





The new trailer being provided by the Rare Species Fund.

my first black-footed cat in the wild. What also seemed truly amazing to me was the amount of wildlife that came out at night: armadillos and armadillos, bat-eared foxes, crested porcupines, black-backed jackals and spring hares (which while running look like a cross between a rabbit and a kangaroo). During the day the area looks desolate and uninhabited by wildlife. If we did not go looking for these animals, we would never have known they were there. This pretty much sums up the role of the black-footed cat in South Africa. Most people who live in black-footed cat territory are unaware of their existence. Unfortunately this also means that no one there really cares what happens to them. It was amazing to learn that the vast majority of support, or for that matter even awareness, of black-footed cat conservation is from American and European patrons. Most Africans know absolutely nothing about the black-footed cat. This is the exact concept that Marion Holmes is trying to help remedy and her facility would be my next destination.

As I made the seven hour journey from Kimberley toward Cradock, I passed through the great Karoo. This area is more vast and isolated than I would have ever imagined, with great, wide mountains and vast open plains that contain not an ounce of obvious human presence, save for the road I drove. While planning the route, I noticed a number of small towns on the map. As I made my way, hour by hour, through these points of interest, it became evident to me that not only were these dots on the map not towns in the traditional sense, they seemed only to be comprised of a single rock building, with no electrici-

ty or running water. In fact their single remarkable feature was that they happened to be located at the intersection of two almost indistinguishable roads. This is something one should seriously take into consideration when planning fuel stops.

I was eventually able to navigate my way and, following Marion's directions, I made a left onto the appropriate road toward their house. It seemed odd that Marion told me to make a left, but did not mention the name of the road. There of course was no street sign anyway. I found it even more peculiar that the GPS in the car just said "driving on road." I eventually found out that even though Richard and Marion had lived here for some 15 years, while they were sure the road had a name, they were not quite sure what it was. About 16km down the "no-named" road I came to the driveway of Richard and Marion Holmes, which I was informed could only be traversed if the depth of the Great Fish River was passable. (I say all of

this only to illustrate how far out in the middle of nowhere I was. The road name does not really matter, the mail-man would never dare drive out that far anyway.)

After pulling in the driveway, thanks to the relatively low water level, I was heartily welcomed by Marion and a troupe of bouncing dogs. Richard and Marion were very hospitable and told me all about their vast property inhabited by antelope, zebra, and buffalo (as well as a few wild cats) as we enjoyed a wonderful home cooked meal. Afterwards, I sat and talked around an open fire with the Holmes family and a number of their guests.

It quickly became apparent that Marion's true passion is breeding and caring



Black-footed cat.

for a number of the different species of small African cats, including of course the black-footed cat. It was a special treat for me to see black-footed cats up close and face to face, especially after diligently searching the grass for hours just to get a glimpse of one (and even then being lucky). The care and attention to detail



Sitting with Marion and "Princess" discussing the future of the black-footed cat.

that Marion puts into her cats should certainly be admired, and for those of us who own or are involved with exotic cats, replicated. Enrichment is of utmost importance and she goes to great lengths to ensure that her cats get much of their natural prey items as well as some things the cats just enjoy. In addition to dung from some of the antelope (which some of the cats love to sniff and roll in), the cats get the occasional ostrich egg. With a small hole in the shell to get them started, the cats work diligently to get to the nutritious prize inside. Mental stimulation and exercise wrapped up in a nice ovoid package. Another treat for the cats is "guinea pig television." A cage with guinea pigs is located next to a number of the feline

enclosures, offering hours of entertainment for the cats. While the guinea pigs do not come into contact with the felines, they never seem to realize the cats are a potential threat. The excited felines, on the other hand, can often be seen crouching behind a tuft of grass in anticipation of perfecting their pouncing skills.

One thing that Marion has taught me is how fierce a black-footed cat is, or at least thinks it is. This cat makes more predations or kills than any other feline, and quite probably most other predators. It is estimated that for every kilometer they walk in the wild, they will make a kill. That means for those black-footed cats who journey 30km, they are making 30 predations in a single night! That is pretty amazing when you think a leopard or lion goes days without making a kill. I know some people out there are thinking, "Yeah, yeah, they are probably catching a mouse or something." While that is true, its important to keep in mind that their average size is only 3lbs. If a black-footed cat weighed 400lbs we would all be in serious trouble.

Marion's youngest black-footed cat, Princess, displayed her tenacity while stalking and pouncing on her favorite play toy, the Jack Russell terrier Phoebe. This little cat was doing back flips off the wall and was doing her best to tackle a dog more than three times her size. You can see a video of the two on Youtube.com (search "black footed cat attitude is everything.")

In addition to the cats at her facility, Marion is very active in educating the public about the importance of predators in the ecosystem and bringing awareness of the existence and fragility of the black-footed cat. Nowhere is this more important than in the rural areas where the people and animals must co-exist. Toward the end of the fantastic visit with the Holmes family, I presented Marion with the projector provided by FCF which will allow her to present this information in an effective manner. Because black-footed cat specimens are rare, and because children tend to learn more if there is some tactile involvement, I also gave Marion a replica black-footed cat skull (on behalf of the RSF) to take along to schools programs, in

hopes that this too will help educate and further her success in this endeavor.

My experiences with the black-footed cat in Africa were truly eye opening for me.

There is still so much to learn about these amazing little felines. I greatly appreciate the hospitality of Beryl Wilson and of Marion and Richard Holmes and the time they took to share their lives and their projects with me. Much of this was able to be arranged because of the involvement of our capable Director of

Conservation, Mr. Pat Callahan, and, of course, the much needed equipment was only possible because of all of our continuing efforts at FCF and the Rare Species Fund. It is really nice to see such dedicated people working diligently on projects like these and it is even nicer to be able to offer them direct support. This is one of those wonderful times in my life that I find a situation in which EVERYONE wins.



Image from one of the supplied camera traps. This black-backed jackal is prowling outside the den of a mother black-footed cat and her kittens, looking for an easy meal. Notice the radio collar on the jackal. He is being tracked by another researcher also studying the area of Benfontein.

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## LOOKING AT LOSS WITH HOPE

Kim Barker

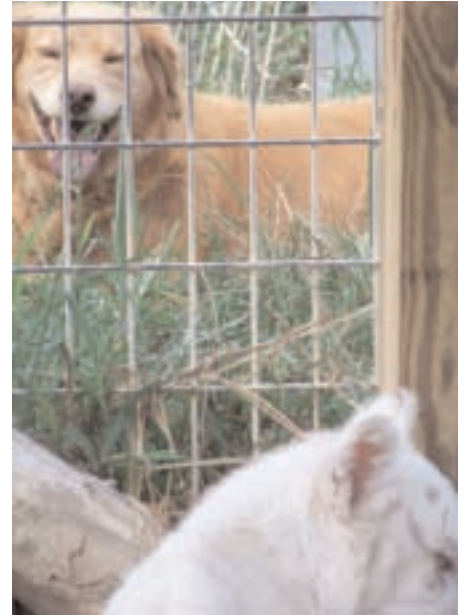
We all experience loss. It's a part of life that no matter how many times we experience it, it never seems to get easier. Sometimes, it actually feels harder.

At the Conservators' Center, many of the animals arrive when they are old or damaged in some way. It is part of being a sanctuary for these creatures that you know you may only have a few short years with them, if that. When I first started volunteering, I academically understood that and realized that the longer I stayed, it was inevitable that I would witness a loss.

I had been at the center just over a year when the first losses I experienced happened. The first was the loss of Sam, a very large, stunning lion. His loss was unexpected and to see the fall of such a magnificent animal was enough shock all

teer, I am now volunteer staff with much more involvement and history with the people and animals. I can be found at the center almost every weekend, doing something in the compound. In this short time, I have been afforded some experiences of a lifetime. It has also given me the opportunity to know these animals far better than I ever anticipated. I try to not think about having to say goodbye to any of them, even when I know it's coming. And now, it's no longer academic.

This past summer, I got my first experience of what it was like to say goodbye to an animal I had close ties with. If there was activity in the compound, Flag dog would be there with his mom, Mama dog, making sure the compound was safe for man and beast. It was hard not to smile when you saw Flag. He himself seemed to be smiling all the time. Flag dog had been



Flag dog sits by Author the white tiger.



Will the tiger, will always be remembered.

by itself. The second was of Will, an elderly tiger who had been in renal failure. Again, at the time, the Center's largest cat. I had actually worked with Will, so the loss felt a little closer this time than the one with Sam. The third was Murphy serval. Though we had only known Murphy in the short time since he was born at the center just a few months before, I, along with many others, had helped feed and raise him. A little closer still and all had happened within weeks of each other. Though not easy, I was still relatively new and did not have much history with the residents of the center.

I am now coming up on completing my third year being involved at the center. Instead of being a relatively new volun-

sick for quite some time, but we all thought he was getting better. What we weren't expecting was a silent, underlying illness. The call was a terrible shock, and one of the first concrete realizations that I had really gotten attached to the people and creatures that I call friends at CCI.

And then there was one that we all knew might be coming, but we all still hoped that we could just have a little more time.

Solida tiger arrived at the center in 2004. Her history gave her absolutely no reason to trust a human being ever again. Doug and Mindy will tell you a comical story of how they transported this rather large and goofy female tiger from the coast back to the center in a pickup truck.

Though still very much a tiger, her playfulness and gentle nature endeared her to everyone who met her. If volunteers or potential staff expressed an interest and dedication to working with the large cats, Solida was the one most had their first experience with. She was very gentle taking treats through her fence, and was very talkative to all her friends. She was a favorite of everyone.

One of my first jobs at the compound was to water the plants every Saturday. That easily took a couple of hours and though important, definitely isn't the most engaging job in the compound. I will never forget the day that Julia Matson, one of the CCI staff, asked me to water the tigers. Yes, I wrote that correctly and my response was basically the same...WHAT?!

If I, or anyone else for that matter, had a hose in my hand and did not offer Solida a shower, she would become the most emotionally wounded tiger you have ever seen. Not only that, you would pay for it later with a snub. It usually only lasted a few minutes because she did enjoy visiting with people immensely, but you would get the snub...she had too...she's a cat!

Many of us spent a lot of time with Solida, and the closer the end came, the more time we tried to spend with her. Over the Thanksgiving weekend, she was scheduled for a procedure. It was to see if suspected cancer was operable. There was a lot of tension that day, as we knew the very real



Kimberly binturong will be missed.

possibility that we were spending the last hours with her. Before I got started on my day, I stopped by and gave her a favorite scent, spearmint, on some cardboard. She responded in appreciation, put her nose down, and took it in.

Julia and I had a tour. The folks on the tour could read the concern on our faces and we were honest with them. Halfway through the tour, we got the news we were hoping not to get. Solida was under anesthesia and the decision was made not to wake her. The cancer had spread and even if we operated, it would cause Solida great pain for the rest of her life. Anyone who knew Solida knew she did not endure pain well and her quality of life was of the utmost importance. The decision was easy to make in Doug and Mindy's heads, but hard to come to grips with in their hearts. Two other guides graciously took over our tour and gave us a chance to see her before she passed.

It is a surreal experience holding a living tiger's paw and grooming her, knowing that in a few moments, you have to say

goodbye for real. That day, no one was spared the grief, and tears flowed freely. It was one of the most precious moments I have ever been a part of. Her passing was very quiet, peaceful, and painless.

The next day, she was buried on site. There is a tradition that we have funerals

for the animals we care for. There were lots of flowers, scents, kind words, and still more tears.

I don't know that CCI will ever see another tiger like Solida. I don't know that another one will ever exist anywhere on the planet. It is still difficult to walk by her enclosure, but there are a lot of fond memories.

As I was working on this article, we had another passing at the center. On January 9th of this year, we said goodbye to Kimberly binturong. She was a very sweet creature with wild banshee hair. She was famous for both. She was an excellent complement to her mate Archer, who can be quite grumpy and temperamental. She will be missed for years to come.

In spite of the heartache that losing these wonderful creatures bring, I can say with absolute certainty that it is worth it. Just a few steps into the compound, and you are greeted by a chuff, an "oof", a whimper, or a trill by one of the residents telling you they are happy to see you. We are relational beings that in spite of the losses, continue to care for and befriend those around us, human and non human.



Solida is a very special tiger that touched the hearts of many volunteers and visitors at the center.



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## BLAST FROM THE PAST - WILLIAM B. DE THAILAND AND FLOWER

Long Island Ocelot Club Newsletter  
Volume 19, Issue 3  
May/June 1971  
Bill Boyle

The story of William B. and Flower begins about six years ago in Boring, Oregon. William B, a wild born adult golden cat, and an adult female golden cat were imported from Thailand by Wilbur and Mary Ellen Tracy of Pacific Northwest Branch. Their intentions at that time were to attempt breeding these rare and beautiful exotics.

Unfortunately, some months later the female escaped from her cage and was shot by a farmer and poor Wild Willy was then all alone. Finally, when the Tracys moved to California, Willy was given to the Olympic Game Farm. This event occurred about four years ago and unfortunately the Game Farm at that time did not have any Golden Cats, and had no use for Willy. Bill Hodge (bless his soul) asked me if I would like to have the cat and, of course, I immediately accepted. Willy then came to Tacoma and lived with me on Lake Steilacoom along with Henry & Hazel (ocelots) and Stanley (bobcat). But again Willy was still alone.

I looked and looked for an adult female but was unsuccessful. Willy was not tame and completely unapproachable in spite of all my efforts.

About three, years ago I sold my house on the lake, moved into the city and unfortunately did not have adequate facilities to take Willy with me so Liz Ghent took Willy to Seattle to live with her and Loki LaPuma. Again, Willy was all alone really.

While attending the national convention in Los Angeles two and a half years ago, I discussed Willy's plight with Bob & Lil Smith of ACEC. Bob and Lil have been great friends for many years and some months later they called and told me that they had been given a whole female Golden Cat called "Flower" and that they might consider a breeding loan. Wow! Elizabeth and I went wild and immediately started negotiations with Bob & Lil. Finally some months later little Flower was shipped to Liz on loan.

Well, it was love at first sight for Willy B. Liz had nursed poor Willy back from near death from a Salmonella infection

and believe me Flower restored his mental health (if you know what I mean).

Liz reported many attempted matings and suggested or suspected that Flower had absorbed a litter of kittens. We both were becoming a little bit discouraged but kept on hoping and trying.

1973 and 1974 were bad years for Liz Ghent. She lives in a beautiful neighborhood in Seattle but unfortunately her neighbors

are not nearly as beautiful as her surroundings. Three criminal citations were brought against Liz as follows:

1. "Keeping more than three animals in a residential zone."
2. "Disturbing the peace" by allowing Loke (cougar) to "howl" at night
3. "Allowing a dangerous animal to roam at large." (Actually, a 12-pound margay that she was boarding for a few days escaped through a bathroom window and was recovered a few hours later in a neighbor's garage.)

I personally represented Liz at two of these trials and they were unbelievable. At one trial 10 neighbors showed up and testified against her. Perjury was rampant and it was obvious to me that her neighbors were deliberately harassing her with these trumped up charges. Neighbors at the trial freely admitted using ladders to observe over Liz's eight-foot fence and take pictures. Tape recordings were introduced of Loki's night chirpings, etc. Lies were told about the smell emitting from



Jim Sanderson

Asian Golden cat

her cages. So-called responsible citizens at these trials violated the law with their perjured and misrepresented testimony. Anyone who is acquainted with Elizabeth Ghent knows that she is probably the most responsible member of the Cascade Branch of LIOC and it is obvious that the whole thing was neighborhood harassment and completely unjustified.

As a result of these actions, Liz decided to move out of the city and as of this date she is in this process.

To make a long story short, on March 10 Liz heard litter noises coming from Flower's nesting box. The big event had finally happened. Flower took good care of her babies (one male and one female) for three weeks, but then became excited and began dragging the kittens around so Liz took them from Flower and is hand-raising them. At four weeks they are beautiful, healthy and thriving.

1975 will be a good year for Liz Ghent, a responsible, intelligent animal lover and one of the best friends I have ever had.



## RODENTPRO.COM® Wholesale Feeder Price List



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### Mice

Size	Less than 500	500	1000	2500	5000+	Length(inches)	Weight(grams)	Count
X-Small Pinkies:	\$0.16	\$0.15	\$0.14	\$0.13	\$0.12	0.50 - 1.00	1.30 - 1.80	100
Small Pinkies:	\$0.16	\$0.15	\$0.14	\$0.13	\$0.12	0.50 - 1.00	1.90 - 2.40	100
Large Pinkies:	\$0.16	\$0.15	\$0.14	\$0.13	\$0.12	0.50 - 1.00	2.50 - 3.00	100
Peach Fuzzies:	\$0.19	\$0.18	\$0.17	\$0.16	\$0.15	1.00 - 1.25	3.10 - 4.40	100
Fuzzies:	\$0.19	\$0.18	\$0.17	\$0.16	\$0.15	1.25 - 1.50	4.50 - 7.00	100
Hoppers:	\$0.30	\$0.28	\$0.26	\$0.24	\$0.22	1.50 - 2.00	8.00 - 12.00	100
Weanlings:	\$0.40	\$0.38	\$0.36	\$0.34	\$0.32	2.00 - 2.50	13.00 - 19.00	50
Large Adults:	\$0.45	\$0.43	\$0.41	\$0.39	\$0.37	2.50 - 3.00	20.00 - 29.00	50
X-Large Adults:	\$0.55	\$0.53	\$0.51	\$0.49	\$0.47	3.00 - 3.75	30.00 - 50.00	25

\* We offer combined quantity discount mouse pricing. \* Measurement does not include tail length.



### Rats

Size	Less than 500	500	1000+	Length (inches)	Weight (grams)	Count
Pinkies:	\$0.39	\$0.34	\$0.29	1.50 - 2.00	3.00 - 8.00	100
Fuzzies:	\$0.49	\$0.44	\$0.39	2.00 - 2.50	9.00 - 19.00	100
Pups:	\$0.79	\$0.74	\$0.69	2.50 - 3.50	20.00 - 29.00	25
Weaned:	\$0.89	\$0.84	\$0.79	3.50 - 4.50	30.00 - 44.00	25
Small:	\$0.99	\$0.94	\$0.89	4.50 - 6.00	45.00 - 84.00	20
Medium:	\$1.39	\$1.34	\$1.29	6.00 - 8.00	85.00 - 174.00	10
Large:	\$1.49	\$1.44	\$1.39	8.00 - 9.00	175.00 - 274.00	5
X-Large:	\$1.59	\$1.54	\$1.49	9.00 - 11.00	275.00 - 374.00	3
XX-Large:	\$1.79	\$1.74	\$1.69	11.00 - 13.00	375.00 - 474.00	2
XXX-Large:	\$1.99	\$1.94	\$1.89	11.00 - 13.00	475.00 - 600.00+	2

\* We offer combined quantity discount rat pricing. \* Measurement does not include tail length.



### Coturnix Quail

Size	Less than 500	500	1000+	Grams	Oz.	Count
1 Day:	\$0.34	\$0.29	\$0.24	7.50 - 10.00	.25	100
1 Week:	\$0.64	\$0.59	\$0.54	30.00 - 40.00	1.0	25
2 Week:	\$0.84	\$0.79	\$0.74	50.00 - 75.00	2.5	10
3 Week:	\$1.04	\$0.99	\$0.94	100.00 - 125.00	4.0	10
6 Week:	\$1.34	\$1.24	\$1.14	130.00 - 150.00	5.0	5
8 Week:	\$1.44	\$1.34	\$1.24	155.00 - 185.00	6.5	5
10 Week:	\$1.64	\$1.54	\$1.44	190.00 - 225.00	8.0	5

\* We offer combined quantity discount quail pricing.

### Rabbits

Size	Our Price	Weight (lbs.)	Count
X-Small:	\$3.50	0.50 - 0.75	1
Small:	\$4.50	1.00 - 1.75	1
Medium:	\$5.50	2.00 - 3.75	1
Large:	\$6.50	4.00 - 5.75	1
X-Large:	\$7.00	6.00 - 7.75	1
XX-Large:	\$8.00	8.00 - 9.75	1
XXX-Large:	\$9.00	10.00 - 11.75+	1



### Chicks

Size	Less than 500	500	1000	5000	10000+	Grams	Ounces	Count
Small:	\$0.25	\$0.20	\$0.15	\$0.12	\$0.10	30.00 - 35.00	1.0	25



### Guinea Pigs

Size	Less Than 500	500	1000+	Inches	Grams	Count
Medium:	\$1.39	\$1.34	\$1.29	6.00 - 8.00	85.00 - 174.00	10
Large:	\$1.49	\$1.44	\$1.39	8.00 - 9.00	175.00 - 274.00	5
X-Large:	\$1.59	\$1.54	\$1.49	9.00 - 11.00	275.00 - 374.00	3
XX-Large:	\$1.79	\$1.74	\$1.69	11.00 - 13.00	375.00 - 474.00	2
XXX-Large:	\$1.99	\$1.94	\$1.89	11.00 - 13.00	475.00 - 600.00	2
XXXX-Large:	\$2.29	\$2.24	\$2.19	13.00 - 15.00	601.00 - 900.00+	1

\* We offer combined quantity discount guinea pig pricing.



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## CARING FOR BOBCATS

James Battista

In the state of Michigan bobcats are considered wild animals no matter if they were captive bred or born in nature. To legally own a bobcat you must get a permit from the Department of Natural Resources. There are state regulations

as a protected tunnel and window enclosure that would allow the cats access to and from the main house. The officer stated that it would be no problem getting the permit and about two weeks later it came in the mail.

Two months later we picked up our bobcat Rufus at the Metro airport. Another

couple picked up his sister Zoe, on the same day. When we got home we brought Rufus into our bedroom and opened his carrier so he could explore his new territory. He was a little shy at first just looking around and taking in all the new sights and smells. Then my golden retriever Basil, entered the bedroom, took one look at Rufus and proceeded to lie on the bed beside him. From that point on it was true love. Rufus and Basil both had a few sniffs then Rufus started licking Basil on the head. Needless to say he just lay there enjoying his massage until it ended. Even now almost two years later Rufus and Basil are best buddies and Basil still gets an occasional grooming when Rufus wants to relax with him.

Bottle-feeding was quite the bonding experience for Rufus and us. He did not want to suck the nipple at first, probably the formula was a little too cool, but after a short warm up he clamped right on and started drinking. We would hold him close with his feet on the carpet and he would suck the two-ounce bottle, collapsing it within 30 seconds. He drank two to three bottles about every four hours around the



Enclosure finished and decorated inside with cat house, cat tree, cat box, toys, platforms, everything you need, just add bobcats.

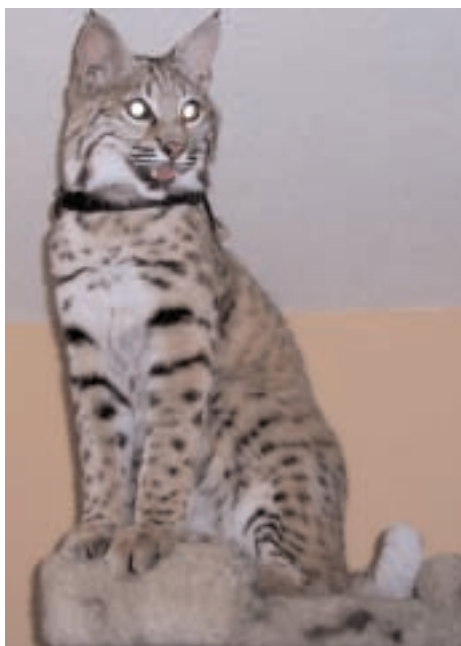
regarding the health and welfare of these animals. You must provide an adequate enclosure and certain amenities must be included within. It must be strong enough to safely contain the feline and kept locked for the protection of animal and the owner. Once the enclosure is completed the DNR must be contacted to inspect the facility. Only after this inspection is passed will the DNR issue a permit to acquire the animal.

We constructed an enclosure from a kit we purchased from a Canadian supplier. We contacted the DNR and made an appointment. When inspection day came, needless to say, we were both a little anxious and apprehensive but it went off without a hitch. The officer from the DNR was very personable and also a feline lover. He was impressed with the enclosure with all the required amenities as well



Rufus and Basil nap together.





Rufus poses on his cat tree

clock. By the time he was eleven weeks of age he was down to three times a day. All we had to do is open the fridge and he would come running into the living room where we had an eating place set up for him.

Litter training was never much of an issue. All we had to do was put him in the litter box one time and after a few sniffs he made it his own. We did notice that he was trying to get on the toilet and in the bathtub. He would just walk around it curiously looking at the water. One day he jumped into the bathtub and peed. We had read about bobcats in nature going in the water to hide their scent and found it fascinating he would do the same in our house in the bathroom. I thought about trying to toilet train him, but after a few weeks he surprised both of us by jumping up on the toilet and urinating in it. I was so proud. That's my boy. I had to take a picture and that picture made it into the FCF Journal. We absolutely loved it. Now he continues to use the toilet but we have to flush right away or he will play in it and that is not so nice. He also uses a very large litter box when he wants to.

After bottle-feeding came introduction of solid food. Nora and I cut up raw chicken and beef into one inch cubes and gave

it to Rufi but he would not touch it. Then we tried some tuna we were having for lunch. He would sniff it and walk away. So it was back to the bottle. Next we tried offering him a little formula poured over his raw meat and he would lick up the liquid and leave the meat. That evening Nora was fixing some chicken wings for dinner and Rufus was on the counter helping. She gave Rufi a chicken wing tip to play with. He took the wing tip into the living room and threw it up in the air and tried to catch it as it fell. When he did catch it, he would shake it and give a little growl. After about ten minutes of this play behavior we heard the crunch of him chewing the wing tip. After eating that one, he was back on the counter ready for another. He did not bother to play with this one very long before he ate it. His taste for meat was finally activated and he made the transition to a raw meat diet. Chicken is still his favorite, and today he eats almost two pounds daily.

The next few months living with Rufus was somewhat mundane, or exciting, depending on his mood. Some days he would sleep most of the day, and other times he would be so full of energy it was a challenge to keep up with him. Rufus really liked to jump on the mantle and knock down anything that was put up there. It was a good thing we read the FCF *Journal* and were warned about this sort of behavior. Everything breakable was put into storage. He also liked to mouth on us with his little needle teeth that was not pleasurable. We taught him "No Bite" using stuffed animals as a human hand substitute and that worked very well.

When Rufi reached the age of six months we had the opportunity to get him a playmate. The other couple that had purchased his sister decided not to risk having their bobcat living with their new baby. I felt so sorry for them because I knew that they loved Zoe very much and did not want to give her up, but family pressure won out. We offered to care for Zoe making it clear that if they ever wanted her back it would just take a phone call.

The day she came to live with us was filled with new experiences. Our friends drove across state to bring Zoe to us. After the three-hour drive she was ready to get out of the carrier. We put Rufi outside in his enclosure and let Zoe explore the house and the other cats and dogs at her leisure. At first she just walked around very slowly and smelled everything she could. My other animals were most curious and came over to say hi. That's when Zoe let out a hiss that sent my other cats back a bit, but the dogs could have cared less. My Golden retriever wanted to play as soon as he saw her and my little Schnoodle barked and snapped and sent Zoe back in the cage. Rufus and Zoe slowly got to be friends and now although I have to feed them separately they play together quite often.

Rufus started chewing his stuffed toys. At first he would just take them out to his enclosure and just chew them to bits, but then I noticed he was trying to swallow some pieces. These toys were stuffed with some kind of synthetic that was not digestible so we took all the stuffed toys away from the bobcats. Everything was going fine until one day Rufus stopped eating. He acted fine for a couple of days and then started to be lethargic. Worried, I sent Lynn Culver an email regarding this issue and she promptly called me back, and suggested I get him to the vet right away because he could be blocked. The vet palpated him and did not find anything so she took some x-rays. She said they revealed some stomach contents, but that it did not look solid.

She told us to take him home and keep an eye on him for a couple of days. Two days passed and there was no improvement. Rufi would not eat or drink or poop and now he would not let anyone near him. At that point we contacted the vet again and she said to get him in and she would do surgery to see what was wrong. Rufi was in surgery for about an hour and a half. The vet called and told us Rufus had ingested four toy mice that, although were small enough to be passed individu-



Rufus is back home recovering after surgery with his domestic cat buddy.

ally, could not be passed as a single mass of hair and material. When I picked him up later that day the vet instructed me to give him some antibiotics, pain medication, and stomach medicine by mouth. Rufus had other ideas. There was no way he was going to let anyone near his face let alone get something down his throat.

The vet was not worried about the pain or stomach medicine but said he must have his antibiotics. That's when she gave me a syringe with two cc of long acting antibiotic.

I have never given an injection before and needless to say I was a little apprehensive. Every time he would see me

coming he would try to hide. That's when I got the idea to get him while he was sleeping. The next morning I found him sleeping on our couch with some other cats, so I got the syringe, snuck up on him, grabbed a pinch of fur just behind his neck and it was over before he could even pick his head up. He's back to normal now and weighs 40 pounds. He and Zoe are back to playing and chasing each other around the house along with the other animals. At times it's like having a house full of two year olds.

Zoe has not had any issues so far. I feel more confident I will know what to look for and how to deal with them when they do arise.

Having two bobcats has been a great learning experience as well as a lot of fun. We both hope to start a wild feline sanctuary when I retire in the near future so we can care for other animals that need a loving home so they can leisurely live out their lives.



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## THE 39<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL FCF CONVENTION

**It's time to start making your plans to attend the FCF convention!**

This year we will gather in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma from July 29 to 31, and once again offer the FCF Basic Wild Feline Husbandry Course and the Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course on Wednesday, July 28.

The convention registration opens Thursday afternoon. Drop off your auction items and visit the kittens until the evening buffet dinner and icebreaker, featuring fine food and drinks. Socialize with interesting and colorful attendees, including our special guest, Jarod Miller. Jarod is a TV personality and naturalist, zoologist and lecturer on captive and wild animal management. Jarod founded his own wildlife education and production company, Wild Encounters. [www.JarodMiller.com](http://www.JarodMiller.com)



On Friday, we will start early and head to FCF member Bill Meadow's, Tiger Safari Zoological Park for a tour, lunch, and our all-star line up of speakers in his brand-new, air-conditioned banquet hall overlooking the zoo grounds. Special guest Jarod Miller will speak, as will FCF conservation advisor, Jim Sanderson and others.

Tiger Safari specializes in hands-on education for all ages. We will be guided by one of Bill's staff and meet up-close & personal, his exotic animals such as Emmett the Capuchin Monkey, Heckle & Jeckle little Fennec Foxes, and Zazu the

Ring-Tailed Lemur. The Park is home to rare tabby, white and snow tiger. Also, see African lion, serval, leopard, bobcat and Siberian lynx.

Friday night you are free to experience nightlife at historic Bricktown, located in downtown Oklahoma City. Bricktown is a beautiful, bustling part of the city, filled with eateries, shopping and entertainment. After dinner, take a relaxed stroll along the riverwalk, or better yet, a water taxi



ride in the canal. Whatever you like: sports, art, local food, shopping, people watching (my personal favorite) or drinking (my other personal favorite), there is lots to do in Bricktown.

On Saturday, we will bus you to the Oklahoma City Zoo, which exhibits 9 species of cat, including snow leopards, Sumatran tigers and African lions. Other popular zoo attractions are "Great EscApe", a world-class exhibit that allows adventurers to journey through a tropical rainforest and view gorillas, orangutans and chimpanzees; and "Aquaticus", a spectacular showcase of marine life from around the globe, and "Oklahoma Trails", a eight acre, ten million dollar exhibit featuring 800 species native to Oklahoma. And for our little people, a brand new Children's Zoo just opened. Children can explore, touch, and immerse themselves in a natural environment that will stimulate their imagination, encourage exploration and give them a greater appreciation for nature. We will return you mid afternoon to give you plenty of time to unwind before the big night.

Then dress to the nines (or not, your choice) and join us for cocktails, banquet dinner, entertainment, and fund-raiser auction, this year hosted by our special guest, Jarod Miller.

### **Registration:**

Convention Registration (before July 5) \$199

Late Convention Registration (after July 5) \$225

Children 6-18 \$129

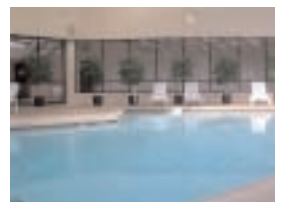
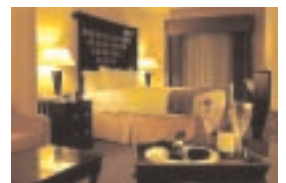
Children 5 and under Free

Basic Exotic Feline Husbandry Course \$ 95

Wildlife Conservation Educators Course \$ 95

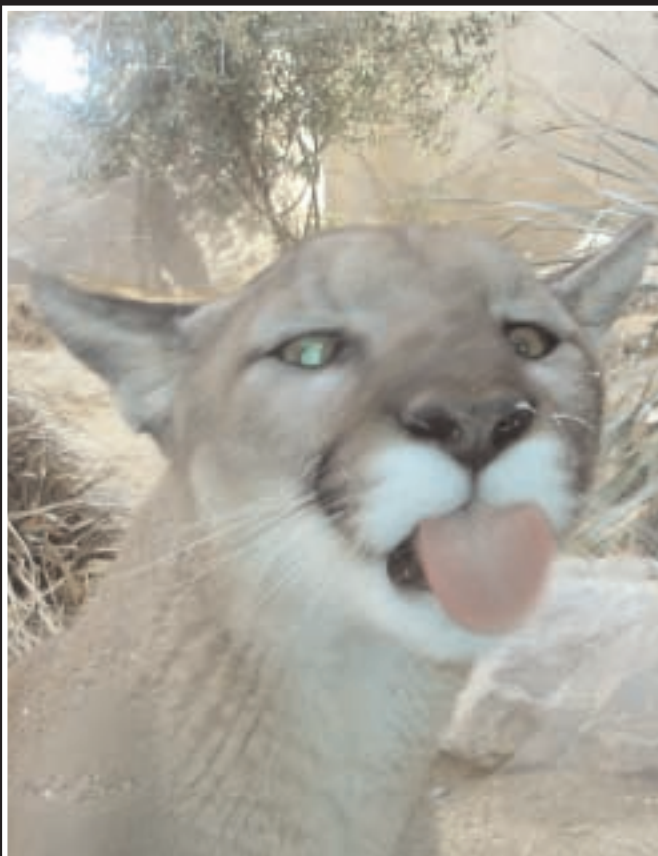
**Accommodations:** The official hotel is the Holiday Inn, in Norman, OK, (approximately 25 miles from OKC airport) totally renovated in April 2009. For hotel reservation, please contact the hotel directly at (405) 364-2882, and be sure to tell them that you are with the Feline Conservation Federation. The room rates are \$79.00 single/double, or \$99.00 suite

**Transportation:** If you plan to fly into Oklahoma City, and do not want to (or do not plan to) rent a car, please contact Kate Conner via email at [kate@tqt.com](mailto:kate@tqt.com) or via telephone at 612-376-7793 x114 to discuss transportation.





Reno Bobcat stands up to get a better look at her snowy world and photographer Kim Pyne gets the moment on film.



Marisa Katnic took this photo of the Living Desert Zoo's cougar "kissing" the glass wall.

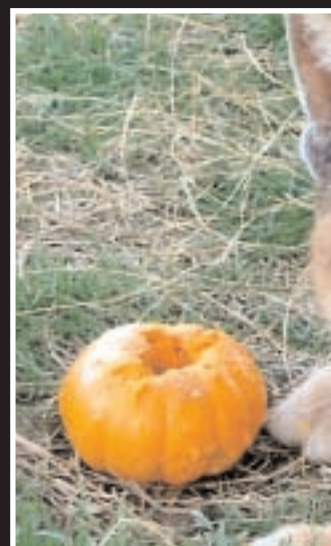


Robert Johnson captured this serval kit popping her head up above the lush African growth.

## YOUR BEST SHOT



Rajani Ferrante catches Robert Johnson warming up to Parvati, the Siberian lynx.



Julie Reid's photo shows Scarle play toy.





Vickie Keahey photographs Sultan the tiger hugging his snow covered tunnel at InSync Exotics.

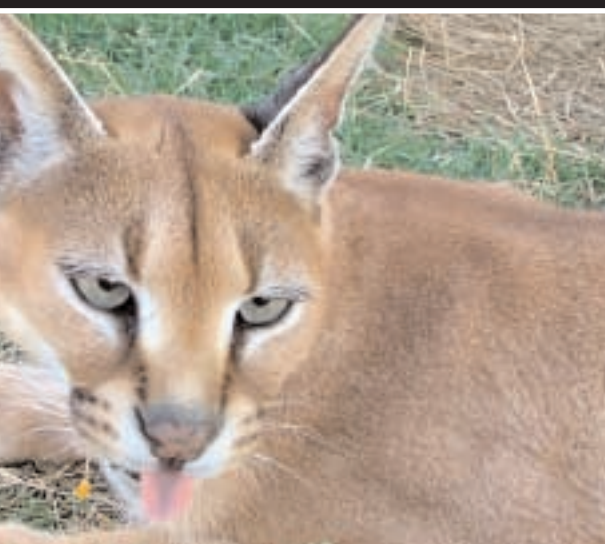


Lynn Culver's little bobcat Daisy plays 'mom' to Lola and Jazzie geoffroys.



Prayeri Harrison took this portrait of Out of Africa staff member Debra Kennedy sharing a loving moment with her good friend Sonora the mountain lion.

S



ett caracal spitting out pumpkin pieces after chewing up her new



Trainer Chris Heiden and Kody Antle pose with white tiger Amary and white lion Ivory. A team of four trainers headed by Doc Antle assure everything is perfect for Doc's photo.



*Courtesy Horace Langford Jr.  
Photographer - Pahrump Valley Times*

## Managing Public Perception

*Part two of a five part series by*

*Mindy Stinner, co-founder Conservator's Center, Inc.*

*Mebane, North Carolina*

## PART 2 - MANAGING THROUGH PREVENTION

Average people fear what they do not know. Wild cats are always fierce, dangerous and unpredictable on Animal Planet and in Hollywood. In the zoos they are carefully separated from people to protect the people. We all know this is also to protect the animals, but the public does not perceive that. So someone who touches their wild cat is fascinating. If they do so under the protection of a show business glamour screen, like Sigfried and Roy, or a big circus act, people perceive it as OK because they are presenting as professionals. The average person assumes a level of competence goes with being a professional. That may not be accurate, but it is public perception.

When people step into my over cluttered office, it is lined wall to wall with licenses, permits, certificates...official and officious looking awards and certificates that make us look like people are giving us accolades left and right. I know law requires our USDA license, but most visitors do not. I know a certificate from an Animal Planet workshop is just a pretty piece of paper representing a wasted day, in my opinion, but they do not know that, either. It looks like we not only know what we are doing, but we have been at it a long time, and we are good at it.

If we, as private owners, are to be accorded the respect of the average person, we have to behave in ways that make people confident of our abilities. That means we must be knowledgeable about the various species, able to explain to people how and why we work with them, and convey what is going on with the species in the wild. By its nature, this is educa-

tional programming for the public. We must also demonstrate our ability to work with the animals without putting the public at risk. The public loves the idea of a daredevil, but they are always mortified and surprised when one gets injured. Most daredevils do not put other people at risk—but someone injured handling a big cat may either allow the release of the animal or create a scenario where another person risks his life to save him. So it is critical that the public never perceive that possibility if we are to be seen as safe handlers.

"Pet" is not a dirty word. However, the general public thinks of a pet as an animal that cannot hurt them or their family. They pay no mind to dog and cat bite statistics, and they do not think twice about signing their kids up for horseback riding lessons. It is all a matter of perception. They treat these animals with a casual attitude because they are familiar enough people do not anticipate a problem with them. They assume someone with a pet wild cat will have the same habits in handling the wild pets, even if they do not. Apply that carefree mindset to handling a tiger, and the result is potentially disastrous. What we, as owners, must make the public understand is that first and foremost we are not putting them at risk. Because of our vigilance, we are not putting ourselves into a position where we will need to be rescued. In addition, it must be clear that the cat itself is happy and well cared for. If avoiding the word "pet" prevents people from thinking I am no more careful with my tigers than I am with my dog who runs loose around the

property with me, then that is a reasonable trade-off I am willing to make. It is all about perception.

Perception is the key to having an advantageous launching point for interaction with difficult people. If you are perceived as an asset to the community, you are starting any discussion from a positive vantage point. We often find ourselves managing "difficult people" both from the outside world and from within our own organization. The two things we have found to be critical in their successful management are having a concrete party line that is unshakable and truthful, and dealing with them immediately and directly. Our goal is not to control them, it is to educate them so they understand they do not have any right to behave as a blindly fearful person who scares others, and so they understand that what we are doing is a benefit to our community.

The people who seem to me to be the most difficult to work with or negotiate with are people with their own agenda in their interactions with us. Sometimes these folks want to be seen as championing the rights of the local people who have been left defenseless in the face of hoards of lions and tigers that will undoubtedly escape to menace the neighborhood. Sometimes they just want juicy gossip or a great story to tell. Sometimes they are animal rights oriented, or they want us to side with them in attacking other private owners. And sometimes they want to be re-elected. It is up to us to identify what they are looking for, and decide whether we can meet their needs or demonstrate clearly and politely that



we are not going to be part of meeting them. Either way, we make every effort to educate and not to alienate them.

A local community organizer, Carol, had decided that we were a terrible threat to her children. The fact that she had moved into the area long after we were established did not deter her from her efforts to get everyone worked up about our presence. Fortunately, before we moved to this property, we spoke to most of the community leaders, including local government officials, the sheriff's department, and several of the neighboring farmers. When Carol began to organize community meetings to address issues of concern, we were on the agenda along with drug sales and robberies. The farmers and sheriff's department both let us know she was stirring up people's fears. We found out about the meetings and attended one, bringing cookies and drinks. We made ourselves available to answer questions, and offered to make a presentation at the next meeting, which we did.

Though no one else from the neighborhood expressed any concerns about our presence to us, Carol assured us that there was still concern. She wanted to come see our whole property and bring an "inspector" who was supposed to be an experienced professional zookeeper that she was hiring to look over everything. We explained to her that we were already inspected by a qualified veterinarian who issued us USDA licensing, and that the surprise inspections included both animal care and public safety concerns. We did tell her that if she wanted to come out with a friend, we would walk them both around and do our best to answer ques-

tions and concerns. Carol agreed. The woman she brought out was someone we knew. She had worked briefly at a facility where we had worked years before, whose safety record was of much more concern than ours. She was very complimentary of our enclosures and safety planning, and reported such to Carol.


Since that did not pan out, Carol began insisting on holding a meeting with the sheriff's department to go over every detail of our emergency plans. I provided her with a copy of our plans, and she began calling the local law offices weekly to demand a meeting. Our local sheriff's department does not have the resources to play community mediator, and they already have our plans and have discussed them with us. I let Carol and the sheriff's department know we were happy to meet at their convenience...and after a few months of scheduling conflicts, Carol gave up and moved on to addressing other terrifying dangers in our community like the type of wood used to make the local playground equipment. We could not meet her need for attention, but we could prevent her from making us the Most Terrifying Thing in the community, and thus avoid being her cause of the moment/attention-getting device.

We have been dealing with the public much more since opening for guided tours in 2007. I am often stunned by the breathtaking cluelessness of the general public when it comes to big cats. We have nice, polite answers for the people who want to pet the tigers or ride on the lions. We have carefully worded explanations of how we plan for emergencies or what we would do in case of an accident or escape. Some of

the questions are real zingers, though, and can stump anyone the first time they hear them. "The boys have the big mane hair and the girls have stripes, right?" "Tigers are bad for the environment, aren't they?" "Can I drop my 4 and 6 year olds off for the day?"

In the last few years we decided to write up an FAQ sheet for our staff, interns and volunteers. We wanted them to be able to answer questions about who we are, what our mission is, and what our facility perspective is on issues like private ownership and conservation activity. We wanted them to be able to explain the difference between animal rights and animal welfare to anyone who asked. It took us some time to do this, but it has made a difference in their ability to clarify our position against irresponsible animal ownership of any kind as opposed to saying that we do not think any type of wildlife can make a good pet in the right circumstances.

Having people on site who can represent us well has been a valuable tool in managing the inevitable difficult visitor. We expect people who are taking our guided tours to ask questions about where the animals came from and how they are being kept now. We expect them to ask questions about their diet and veterinary care, how they stay warm in winter and how we keep them busy and entertained. There is no way, however, to anticipate some of the questions people will ask if they are trying to find a problem. We have spent time coaching our tour guides on how to manage these people using brutal honesty, or turn these questions back on the askers whenever possible. "Why is that cat limping?" can be answered with an explanation about the cat's age and an explanation about the problems the cat had with a bad declaw job from his first owner's veterinarian. "What are you doing about it?" can be answered with an explanation about the glucosamine supplements he takes and having a warm dry place to be when the weather isn't good. "Why isn't he healed completely?" is another matter. We can explain about chronic conditions all day, and the person may remember only that we have a limping cat we cannot cure. So we get very direct. We tell them that this is an ongoing condition that we manage to the best of our ability, and that like when a person gets older, sometimes there are things you cannot fix. You manage. And we prefer the animal



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*Protecting Your rights  
To own Animals  
since 1990*

**Polly Britton**  
Legislative Agent

alive and coping over euthanizing them to prevent the public from complaining about their appearance at our facility, which is often a retirement home for these animals. That generally stops it.

We also came up with an answer for, “Can I drop my 4 and 6 year olds off for the day?” We tell them, with a smile, “Once.”

Managing the press is another issue that we often face. It is not a big deal to bring the press in on purpose for an event, when we assign each press member to a handler who knows our organization inside and out. Even then we find some very amusing misquotes occasionally end up in print. One reporter had questioned why we fed whole prey meals, like whole deer and chickens with feathers. Our experienced and press-savvy volunteer explained that cats are obligate carnivores that get the necessary nutritional components from the different parts of their prey, including muscle meat and organs. In the final run of the story, she was quoted as having said, “Feathers are nutritious.”

We once had a local newspaper reporter out who was new to her job, and who was also taking pictures for the article. Though we gave her access to several



The Caswell Messenger ran this very unflattering photo of Jacob, taken by news reporter Lauren Eakin. Her angle made him look more like he was dehydrated or dead, than napping in the sun.

she could take her time and get a nice shot without fence in it. The photo that ran on the front page of the newspaper was of the napping tiger. However, the angle she had taken the picture was very odd and unflattering. Since she did not zoom in on the tiger's face at all, the photo included his full sleeping body on his side in the grass.

He looked dead. It was not the result I had hoped for.

When people tour our Center, one of the things they see is animal management equipment. If you do not know anything about catch poles and nets, they can look very important as tools of the trade. I do not have many animals we would use a catch pole on, but I have the poles here and in public view nonetheless. We also have transport crates and other equipment stores just in view. People ask about them. It has generally never occurred to the public that we have a way of moving animals that does not include turning them loose and hoping they run the direction we want them to go. They like to see the management equipment, and it gives us a chance to talk about our emergency plans and our safety protocols. People leave feeling safer, though it may not have occurred to them at the time to be fearful. During the next ice storm, while we quietly bustle madly about out here, they sit at home and are bored. Instead of thinking, “I hope the lions and tigers do not get out and come eat me” they think “I bet the people are busy pushing tigers around in those little cages and getting their nets ready.” Reality vs. perception. Control what you can.

The time to create a plan to manage the press is before something bad happens. The problem may not even occur at your own site—it may be something that happened elsewhere in the world. Because you work with similar species, the press may assume you have something worthwhile to say. Local press will be especially interested, and local people will automatically worry about whatever happened elsewhere happening at your place. The time to make a relationship with reporters is before something bad happens. That way they know you enough to maybe not jump immediately to a snap judgment, and they know you will be willing to speak to them as soon as it is appropriate to do so after an incident.

Create a kit with basic information about your place and the animals within. Identify ahead of time who is OK to speak to the press should something happen to you, and make sure they know they have

been approved to do this. Just as important, let everyone else know they have not been approved. This folder also is a good place to keep a copy of a FAQ sheet you can share with reporters. Include copies of your licenses and credentials, photos of the animals, and if you have it, some videotape of your place looking its best with your animals enjoying themselves. This can provide some stock footage for the press that makes private owners look good at a time when we may need that positive light. If the animals are filmed by strangers when you are under duress or there are flashing lights, they may be pacing and upset instead of serene and relaxed, so offer reporters this option so you can be seen in the light of what your place is normally like instead of how it looks at that bad moment. Remember as you select photos and video to include that you must think hard about every way the public might perceive this photo—including all the negative twists that they may put on it. Printed material and photos are permanently a definition of who you are. Make sure the material you provide is accurate and well edited. Check the background of the photos thoroughly, and be sure to consider every angle a person looking to make trouble might be able to use against you with this image.

We have been contacted for comment following the San Francisco tiger escape, the Roy Horn tiger bite on stage, a death by a pet tiger in our state, and an attack by a rabid bobcat at a golf course in another state. There is no way to anticipate every situation that may occur, but you can come up with some basic guidelines to guide your comments that will help you keep on point when under duress, and will help whoever is filling in for you if you are dealing with a crisis at your own place.

#### **NEVER**

- Blame the victim
- Attack another facility verbally
- Guess what happened in an incident at another location
- Say your animals could never hurt anyone
- Say your animal could never



escape, bite, etc.

- Lie

#### ALWAYS

- Assume the public knows nothing about ownership of exotics
- Assume fear is the usual public response
- Treat their fear as valid
- Stick to known facts
- Play down your emotional response—other people will cue off you
- Explain why this bad thing is unlikely to happen to your facility
- Explain the animal's behavior if you know what happened
- Express regret or sorrow over the situation, especially over harm to any people involved

It is easy to want to say in response to an escape or accident that it is the fault of the other dumb owner or member of the public who should have known better. However, that makes us all look bad, and does not do anything to allay the public's fears that there are lots of inexperienced owners of dangerous wild cats out there. Think instead that you want to protect this

owner and point the attention of the public in a beneficial direction.

Instead of attacking the SF Zoo for having a cage that you know was not adequate and did not meet the basic AZA standards, explain that this is a reputable zoo that clearly had an issue with the enclosure, which relies on a moat system for containment. We all know the problems with moats, which can fail easily if ice or debris buildup inside them, or there is an especially athletic or motivated cat. That information will not help the public feel any safer—it will make them even more fearful. Stick to general platitudes that cannot haunt you later, like: "The staff members at the zoo are trained professionals and they are certainly looking into the problem to prevent future escapes. They report that the animals have all been removed from that enclosure and it will not be used again until this is resolved. This is a terrible tragedy for the family of the victim, and also a tragedy for the zoo staff and its visitors who have lost a beloved tiger. We have inspected our enclosures, none of which rely on a moat, and are certain we will not have the same type of containment failure at our site."

If a difficult situation occurs at your own place, you want to have a plan to manage public perception already in place. Any emergency situation from natural disaster to escape will catch the public's attention. You may also have a PR crisis caused by a disgruntled ex-employee or volunteer, or a disagreement with a neighbor.

We have even had to deal with "lion sightings" locally. Fortunately for us, the animals they describe are not lions but mountain lions or cougars. The records we keep of the animals we have on site help us document that we have not lost any animals, which is convenient when we are asked. In addition, the local officials who know us and have visited us regularly, know that we do not have any cougars, and they are able to tell the neighbors, who trust them, that this is so. People who do not know the difference between cougars and lions, however, are quick to call the sheriff's department to excitedly report their sighting, and they are not always ready to accept that we live in a location where cougars may yet roam.

FCF is still on  
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[www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com)!!!

How can you make searching and shopping for that perfect gift this holiday season even more perfect? Use iGive, where with every transaction a portion goes to benefit Feline Conservation Federation.

Everyday prices/policies NEVER change from purchasing through other stores websites, so help our organization with your everyday purchases!

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Recruit new members (the more the merrier!) and iGive will send your cause a \$5 bonus for those members who shop within 45 days. We are also doubling all search donations to \$.02 a search for all members. (Ends 11/15/09)

P.S. Searching at iGive is a great way to get people involved helping Feline Conservation Federation. It's free to you and free to them, and it can really add up quickly.

## Editorial

# SHINING LIGHT INTO THE DARK ABYSS OF TIGER EXTINCTION



Kim Barker

Every tiger leaves enormous footprints on the earth and in our hearts.

Lynn Culver

The Year of the Tiger dawns and tigers in nature are barely hanging on. While the exact population is unknown, and the best we can do is estimate using sampling and photo trapping, the latest published number is 3,200 tigers worldwide. For nearly four decades a multi-national, multi-million dollar effort to save this most charismatic feline has staved off extinction, but this iconic feline still remains critically endangered.

In 1972 an estimated 5,000 tigers existed worldwide, a 95% decrease since the turn of the century. The alarming global decline in tigers led the World Wildlife Fund to form Operation Tiger. Working at top speed, its Tiger Task Force

launched the largest conservation project ever seen in Asia. That year a detailed national survey conducted by the Indian Board of Wildlife counted 1,827 Indian tigers. The next two decades saw tiger population estimates slowly creep up under this intensive effort, reaching a high of nearly 3,000.

This month we entered the official Chinese “year of the tiger.” According to preliminary estimates from an ongoing Indian government census, their tiger population is between 1,300 and 1,500, which is less than half the 2002 estimate, and is fewer tigers than when Operation Tiger was originally launched.

“Tigers could become extinct in the wild in less than a generation,” the World Wildlife Fund warned as it launches yet

another aggressive fund raising campaign to save this persecuted feline. This time it is called the Tiger Initiative. This time, the WWF is hoping to raise \$13 million a year, just for its highest priority sites. Its noble goal is to double the tiger population by the next Year of the Tiger.

The reasons for the latest population decline are largely man-made. Organized criminals corrupt the villagers, the wildlife agencies and the governments. The locals use snares, poison, and guns to kill tigers, and the poached bodies are processed into hide and bones and smuggled into Asia for the medicinal markets. The high prices paid for tiger parts fuels the multi-billion dollar black market industry. Governments and conservation organizations have been unable to stop the



decades of carnage, and probably never will. Poaching, the decimation of habitat, the decline in the tiger's prey, and the conflicts arising from human encroachment into the remaining tiger territory continue to obstruct its recovery.

This is a wake up call to us all. It is extremely expensive, and it is very difficult to save a species from extinction. Once a population dips down to critical numbers, if the factors that brought on the extinction crisis cannot be eliminated, there is no saving the species in nature.

Bald eagles and other great birds of prey were saved because we identified the problems and corrected them. The insecticide DDT that was weakening eggshells was banned, and captive breeding and release programs replenished the wild populations.

Reintroductions are costly and waste lives if the problems have not corrected. The US government has spent 12 years and 20 million dollars trying to restore Mexican wolves in Eastern Arizona and southwest New Mexico. A total of 92 captive-born wolves have been released. Last year's federal wolf census found 27 wolves in Arizona and 15 in New Mexico, compared with 23 in Arizona and 29 in New Mexico in 2008. There is no organized black market driving the killing of wolves, but ranchers persecute them because they are predators. Those 42 wolves living in nature carry a price tag to taxpayers of nearly half a million dollars each.

In the case of tigers, our captive cats should not be risked for reintroduction because the problems that brought on this catastrophe still remain. There is no reason to sacrifice the lives of more tigers by placing them into what is surely harm's way.

Benevolent captivity is a necessary hedge against extermination. Now more than ever, this is the truth. But for our captive tigers to survive into the future, we must protect and manage them. The habitat we have created in the United States for tigers is disappearing. Animal extremist organizations are pressuring legislators to pass laws that prohibit our facilities. Our integrity is under attack by TRAFFIC. This wildlife trade-monitoring network accuses us of participating in the global black market trade in tiger body parts, even though no evidence exists to substantiate this assumption. Instead of helping tigers by funding genetic testing, TRAFFIC is proposing federal legislation to pro-

hibit commercial conservation efforts. Our husbandry success is under attack by organizations that are competing with us, and those organizations opposing us. Private owners are vilified because they have done a better job of propagating and protecting tigers in America than all the multi-billion dollar international efforts in the wild. Even our tigers are under attack. Self-appointed experts protecting their conservation monopoly label all of our tigers as 'worthless', because, our tigers

gram found that 14 individuals were in fact, sub-species pure.

All healthy tigers are valuable as genetic contributors and all need to be protected. Someday science and politics will be forced to admit this truth.

We must maintain a delicate balance between community and cats. These felines must be managed and bred carefully; we cannot over-populate the available captive habitat. Tigers held by knowledgeable, and compassionate individuals are



Bengal tigers can inherit unusual coat color mutations. Here a group of adolescent tigers living at T.I.G.E.R.S. preserve display three coat colors; orange with black stripes, cinnamon with red stripes, and white with black stripes.

are not listed in their studbooks. These 'experts' have launched an insane media campaign of hate for all tigers possessing pelage color mutations.

At a time when every single animal is precious, how can the media quote as fact such shortsighted, self-serving opinions? Here are some real facts. There are 550 Amur tigers held in global facilities, representing the offspring from 109 founders. And worldwide, the population of Bengal tigers is just 210 individuals, all descents from just 29 founders. For decades the US population of bengal tigers have been preserved by private facilities, after the Association of Zoos and Aquariums abandoned the conservation of this sub-species in the early 1980's.

How much valuable genetic diversity remains in the US, held by private non-AZA member facilities, undocumented, and unverified? To try to answer that question, a 2008 genetic study of 62 tigers not enrolled in any organized breeding pro-

the species' hope for the future. We must educate the public about the importance and need for our captive population of tigers, and defend these great cats from those who wish them harm.

The conservationists and international organizations and governments of the world will continue to debate the merits of captive husbandry and commercial activities. Conservation is politics; I doubt anything will ever change, or a consensus will ever be achieved.

In the meantime, we must resist the forces attempting to manage our tigers into the dark abyss of extinction. A remarkable relationship built on love and trust between man and tiger has formed, and it compels us to be guardians for this magnificent icon of wildness. Our deep compassion drives us to protect all tigers, those living with us, and those surviving in nature.

## AFRICAN SAFARI SWEEPSTAKES WINNER CHOSEN DURING FUNDRAISER



Brad Webster adjusts young serval so photographer Richard Shull can take a portrait.

Wayne Sluder

Mena, Arkansas – On Saturday, January 16th the Feline Conservation Federation partnered with the Arkansas Native Wildlife Center to support a fundraiser for a new American Black Bear rehabilitation facility. The Wildlife Center located in Rich Mountain, 11 miles outside of Mena, Arkansas is involved in the rehabilitation of injured North American wildlife. Lynn Culver, Executive Director of the Feline Conservation Federation, helped to organize and spoke at the event. Lynn, her husband Bart, and friend Brad also brought several exotic cats to the event. A young African Serval and Caracal were brought to offer visitors a close up view of these cats and also, provide photo opportunities. Sharon Scott worked with Lynn to organize the event and set up donations.

The event was televised live on a local community based cable TV channel produced by Rudy Timmerman of the Rich Mountain Community College. A silent auction, “canned” raffle, door prizes and refreshments kept everyone entertained during the event. The drawing for the African Safari was scheduled for a later time on the event agenda. A large roll cage containing around one thousand African Safari entries occupied a center place. In the audience were seven registered master falconers holding birds of

prey including peregrine falcon, European eagle owl, screech owl and red tailed hawk to name a few. The animals on display were fantastic, and provided an opportunity for everyone to get up close to examine and ask questions. FCF members Leah and Bobby Aufill from Oklahoma contributed to the refreshments by bringing some of their authentic southwestern salsa and chips. They also brought Thunder, their six-month-old bobcat. Kurt Beckelman, FCF Treasurer, was

there providing support for the event.

Tommy Young, Director of the Arkansas Native Wildlife Center gave a presentation on the successes of the Wildlife Center over the years. An impressive number of animals have been rehabilitated at the center. In the past 27 years, 14 bears were rehabilitated and released into the wild. Thousands of hawks and owls were rescued. As many as 22 Bald Eagles and 18 Golden Eagles were rehabilitated. The center rescued and rehabilitated over 20,000 mammals during this time. Tommy asked many of the falconers that were present to speak about their birds and to

recount stories of the difficulties, trials and tribulations they endured over the years attaining the master falconer rank. I learned it really takes a special and dedicated individual to train and rehabilitate birds of prey. Just as exotic cat owners struggle with ownership rules and regulations, so do falconers. Within the next few years, for the first time, falconers will be allowed to possess an unlimited number of eagles. These successes were hard won and demonstrate some of the progress we



Eurasian eagle owl spreads her wings on command.

have made with bringing some of these fine birds back from the brink of extinction.

Special guest and dignitary, Chief Lee Standing Bear of the Manataka American Indian Council presented an honorary membership to Tommy Young. Manataka means, “Place of Peace.” For many Native Americans, Manataka is a sacred place. For thousands of years, various tribes around North America traveled in peace



A room full of licensed falconers share red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, screech owl and other birds of prey at the Arkansas Native Plant and Animal Center fundraiser.



to this site to perform ceremonies, and share the “gift of the healing waters.” This place is now known to us as Hot Springs National Park.

A transcript of Chief Standing Bear’s

membership into the Manataka American Indian Council. In accepting this membership, this person is committed to having a sincere desire to learn, and to teach indigenous ways, maintain a good heart,

stumbled on the last name, “Wayne...,” Lynn, reading over his shoulder chimes in “Sluder... Wayne Sluder!”

My wife, Rhonda, and daughter Phoebe were with me as we accepted winning the raffle. We were so excited. Rhonda could not believe it. Three months before the event I had purchased four raffle tickets to support the FCF. I do not think anyone ever expects to actually win a raffle. However, I knew it was for a good cause and did not hesitate to send in my donation. The African Safari is an awesome trip to South Africa for a six day, six night stay at the Zulu Nyala game lodge. It included round trip airfare and open Jeep safaris into the bush each day. After winning the trip, my wife and I discussed when we would be able to go. Our daughter is 16 months old and Rhonda is 7 months pregnant, so we knew it would really take some planning! After some careful thought we decided that now was not the time for us to be taking our young daughter on such an adventurous trip. Not to mention our infant daughter due in April. So, we put the ticket up for sale on the Yahoo FCF group mail list. I immediately began receiving inquiries and within days the trip was sold. Marisa Katnic and her friend Allison Navarro are the lucky two FCF members who will be going on the trip. I think they are planning to go around August/September and I am sure we will hear some great stories when they return. As an added bonus, \$1,000 of the sale was donated to the FCF general fund!



Rudy Timmerman and Tommy Young hold microphones for Standing Bear.

presentation follows:

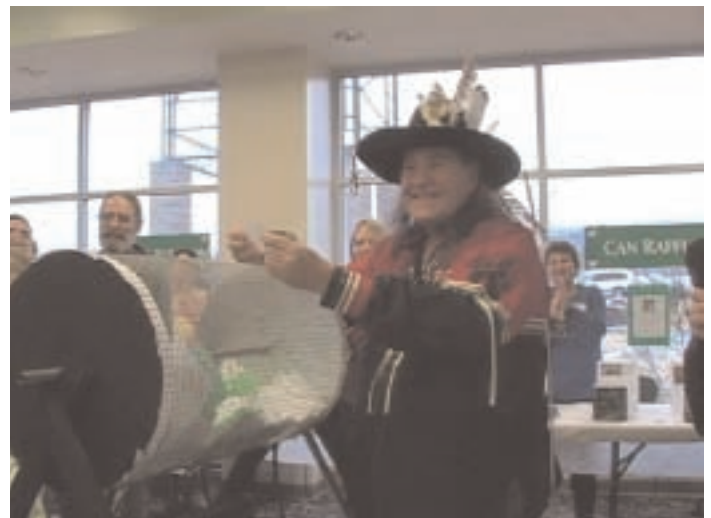
“It is so vitally important that you are here today because you are here in order to give honor to our friends. The two-legged, the ones with wings, those that swim and crawl, and our cousins, the four-legged. When we lose them, I can’t imagine a world without our friends or our cousins. We are so close to that point where so many species are endangered today. It makes one’s heart very heavy. It makes our spirit sad from the knowledge that if we don’t do something and do something quickly, then we are going to lose a very vital part of our existence. Without them, who are we?

We were placed here on this earth to do only one thing, to tend the garden. To watch the garden, and all of its beautiful creatures. We must return to a time that we regard the earth as being sacred. Every step we take is precious and we should honor it.

The Manataka American Indian Council comprises a lot of people from all over the country. We support many worthwhile and magnificent things including Tommy Young and the Wildlife Center. We have something to present to Tommy. This is a

and spirit, and love of the great creator, mother earth and all people, unselfishly give to the advancement of indigenous culture, and to work for the rebirth of sacred places worldwide.”

Amanda Morningstar, Standing Bear’s daughter, played drums and sang a song in tribute to an elder that had recently passed. Tommy Young, Standing Bear and others joined in. A second song was called a Community song that everyone including the audience, participated in singing. A short time later, Chief Standing Bear was asked to do the honors and select the winner of the African Sweepstakes. With Lynn Culver holding the microphone, Standing Bear spun the raffle cage and selected a ticket. I could not believe it when Standing Bear read the name and



Standing Bear draws the winning ticket for the African Safari sweepstakes.

## TAZMIR AND TEELA



Tazmir and Teela posing as book ends.

Julie Roper

Back in 1997, fantasy turned real when my husband and I welcomed into our home Tazmir, the first of our two cougars.

The idea of sharing our daily lives with a beautiful big cat was wondrous beyond imagination, we entered our dream by building our home around a cougar's special needs.

We did not bring Tazmir into our life, though, just as fantasy fulfillment. He immediately became our top priority, as we struggled to give him and, later Teela, a life brimming with love, fun, enrichment, balance, and tranquility.

And always uppermost in our minds was the resolve to protect them from the multitude of evils that await displaced big cats. We made that commitment with the

same reverence many people dedicate to children or spouses.

We did not ask them to entertain us. We never tried to domesticate them. We wanted to learn everything about our two cougars and to give them love so deep they would never feel deprivation in their life that was never to be wild.

In return, we were given the cougar-love of their bonding, with us as protector and provider.

We felt the love that flowed between them bestowed to us, as they

searched us out every day to give us grooming, nuzzling, endless vocalizations, and head butts with trills.

Tazmir and Teela lived inside with us most of their lives in an intimate, relaxed, beautiful series of daily vignettes.

The memories I have of these years are the memories that make me glad to have lived at all. Teela was 9 when she died four years ago from heart problems. Our epic dream totally disintegrated yesterday [January 30, 2010], when Tazmir abruptly died at 13 from an aneurism.

Our loss is profound in many ways but especially now that laws make it near impossible to share your home and life with such magnificent animals, in all their grace and complexity.

We kept our promise to both our babies. They never suffered hunger or unsuitable diet. Their territory remained their sanctuary their entire lives. They played with each other, almost as wild and free as two cubs, with hardly a care in the world.

All their life, they never felt fear greater than fear of the evil vacuum cleaner.

The swell of prohibition laws that consumed private ownership has taken from us the chance to share this experience again or to delight in the experiences of others who are yet to discover how much depth and active con-



A special love shared between Julie and Tazmir.

templation moves in the heart and mind of a big cat.

Having had a life with Tazmir and Teela has taught me more than I can ever fully explain to another human. I discovered though that it is the human species that is limited in depth and contemplation by our domestication and that when we lose the wild, it is our spirit that becomes extinct.

For all of those graced to be keeper of this wild breed, breathe in as much of the life with them as you can.

It is an empty silence when the dream ends and only vapors remain. Vapors and the harsh cries for more restrictive, new laws.



Taz and little 'sister' Teela explore the pond in their outdoor enclosure.



Taz and Teela rumble in the grass.



## EVOLUTION TO WILDLIFE EDUCATOR - IT ALL STARTED WITH RUFUS

Nora Battista

If someone would have asked me five years ago what my plans for the future were, the answer would have been very different from the course my life is on right now. I certainly hadn't envisioned a life with two bobcats in it. I also never saw myself speaking in front of groups of kids about wildlife and habitat preservation. I could not have imagined that I would be making plans to build a wild animal sanctuary. Things don't always turn out the way you plan and maybe that's a good thing.

After our kids were grown and we found ourselves empty nesters, my hus-

haven for domestic cats as well as wildcats. He was especially interested in bobcats as they are indigenous to Michigan and such beautiful cats.

We searched the internet for information about bobcats. We were amazed to find how much information was out there. We wanted to know everything! We wanted to know how to raise them from cubs, what kind of habitat is stimulating and fun for bobcats, and how to create a healthy diet for a bobcat. We researched the state laws and



Young Rufus gets into everything, including the dishwasher.



Rufus really is 'toilet trained'.

band Jim and I started rescuing domestic cats. We discovered that there were many cats that needed a home for so many different reasons. After we had what I thought were enough, Jim introduced the idea of getting a wild cat, specifically a bobcat. Honestly I thought he was nuts! But after talking to him I realized he was serious, not only about getting a bobcat, but also about his plan of rescuing wild cats. He told me that when he retired he wanted to open an animal sanctuary. He wanted to rescue and to provide a safe

permits to own a bobcat. We wanted to know how bobcats behave. Would they be happy in the habitat we created for them? We wanted to know if we would be able to handle a bobcat and how it would adapt to us and to the other animals in our home. We researched the costs of providing all that bobcats need.

During our internet search we came across the FCF Website. After reading the information on the site about raising and caring for wild cats we were confident that we would have a resource for all our

questions and concerns for caring for a bobcat as well as a reliable source for information on conservation and preservation on all wild felines.

We made a decision to get our bobcat baby "Rufus". We picked him up when he was eight weeks old. His sister accompanied him and was picked up by another woman at the airport. We met her and promised to keep in touch and exchange info and ideas about caring for our new precious babies. Our bobcat experience was about to begin, what an adventure it would be!

We bottle fed Rufus, cuddling with him alongside a giant stuffed tiger while he drank from his bottle. We wiped his butt until he was able to clean himself up. We were amazed that he used the toilet and that he loved to play in water. We figured out how to play with him without getting bit. His favorite game is "Hide and Stalk". Our home went through a lot of changes as we added play areas for him, and put away breakables and what he thinks are edibles. He fit in well with our other animals. As a matter of fact he formed a special bond with our golden retriever "Basil". Rufus loves being with him. The only time we hear him purr is when he is laying next to his buddy Basil.

Rufus's sister's "Mom" kept her promise to keep in touch with us. She loved her bobcat Zoe, however her family was giving her a hard time as she was planning on having a baby and they didn't feel it would be safe to have a bobcat in the house. She asked us if we could take



During our children's wildlife awareness programs, we let the kids wear giant shells on their backs so they can be turtles for awhile.

Zoe. Because we were having so much fun and success with Rufus we were more than willing to take his sister. We hoped that brother and sister would just love being together again. It did not go as well as we hoped. There were a few scuffles and a lot of loud and weird vocalizations, but after a while they began to tolerate one another. Now although they don't exactly cuddle, they do "talk" to each other and play together.

In 2008 we attended the FCF Basic Wild /Feline Husbandry Course held in Panama City, Florida and then toured Jim and Bertie Broaddus's Bear Creek Feline Center. We learned new things about handling and caring for our bobcats from the course such as behavior conditioning and contingency planning, and plenty about regulatory agencies that we had not been aware of. We returned home confident that we were on the right track to keeping our bobcats healthy, happy and safe.

This past summer we attend our first FCF convention in Salinas, California. It was an awesome experience. We were especially interested to learn about the different ways Charlie Sammut found to build and fund his ranch. We got a lot of good ideas that we hope to someday implement at our own sanctuary.


While at the convention we attended the FCF Wildlife Educator's course and were very impressed by the presentation by Ron DeArmond. We had never considered becoming evolved in community

wildlife education but that class changed our minds. We have put together some simple wildlife presentations geared toward young students. We found an abundance of information on building a presentation around a certain animal or theme students may be learning about. We do not use our bobcats as "animal ambassadors" in our programs since they were not

raised and conditioned for this. However, we do bring other small animals such as use turtles, rabbits, and sugar glider. Our main goal is to teach awareness and respect for wildlife and for the environment. Using the techniques and ideas taught at the educator's class we have come up with presentations that are fun and interesting for kids as well as educational. After each presentation I always leave a FCF and an APWE brochure with the teacher.

Raising our two bobcats is proving to be an awesome experience. Our daily interaction with them brings us so much enjoyment. They are a continuing source of wonder and amusement. Their presence in our lives has brought new awareness of wild feline conservation and has afforded us many new learning experiences. We have made new friends who share our interests and our enthusiasm for these amazing cats. As we make plans for our animal sanctuary we continue to educate ourselves about wild feline ownership and conservation efforts. We look forward to the prospect of an exciting and rewarding future, one that will definitely include our much loved bobcats.

APWE



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## ANIMAL SPIRIT GUIDES

Lee Standing Bear Moore

A long time ago, humans were created to be caretakers of the garden -- Mother Earth. They held all things of creation sacred. The people respected Nature and understood they were only a small part of the whole circle of life. Humans knew each part of creation played a significant role in the contentment and survival of the other. They accepted the divine idea that all things were equal and no animal, including man, held dominion over other parts of creation.

Humankind knew if they attempted to conquer Mother Earth, they would bring great suffering upon themselves. Man knew that Nature was not 'wild' and hostile but was a benevolent friend. Then, by a twist of organized religious dogma, many began to think humans are the greatest and most important part of creation and they saw Nature as 'fallen' and sinful. Man has attempted to divorce himself from Nature to the detriment of all creation.

American Indians, also known as the People of the Land, traditionally and historically hold a special knowledge of the land and its inhabitants. Intimate knowledge of the world surrounding the American Indian was possible because of a belief system that considered all things of creation equal and necessary, worthy of respect and honor.

The result of the American Indian belief system is tremendously beneficial to the world. We gave the world knowledge of a form of government now enjoyed by people of the United States -- democracy. American Indians first domesticated over half of today's world food resources. A vast majority of the world's pharmacopoeia (healing medicine) came from the American Indian's tremendous knowledge of the plant kingdom. Our knowledge of plant medicines, healing stones, healing clay, and animal wisdom is unmatched among any people in history.

Although there are over five hundred American Indian tribes, speaking more than one hundred and fifty languages, there exists universal beliefs that transcend ethnic, cultural and geographic boundaries.

Common among those traditional teachings are the basic beliefs that we should:

Never take more than we need;

Thank the Creator for what we have or what we will receive;

Use all of what we have;

Give away what we do not need.

American Indians know to respect Nature and kill only what we eat and to use every part of the animal. We do not waste life nor disrespect their spirits but honor and thank them for providing us with life and comfort. We ask our spirit guides to lead us to the spirit of the animal we killed for food so that we may pray in thanksgiving to its spirit. We honor their cousins by leaving a gift where the animal fell.

Today, as in the old days, American Indians give special recognition to the power of the animal spirits. We wear their skins and feathers in ceremony and dance. We paint them on our bodies and carry parts of them in our medicine bags. We paint the animals on our homes and wear animal fetishes.

These practices allow us to remain connected to the animal guides so they may teach us their powers and give us lessons of life. These acts remind us that all things in creation are our brothers, sisters, cousins, and more importantly, our teachers and friends. As humans, we too are animal spirits.

American Indians view all things in creation as having spiritual energy. All things are connected and worthy of our respect and reverence. Our way is to seek balance and harmony within the complex tapestry of life called the Great Circle of Life. As we move within the circle, we emphasize these truths:

Everything on earth is alive;

Everything on earth has purpose;

Everything on earth is connected;

Everything on earth is to be embraced.

A principal tenant of our belief is that all things are connected and we are related to all things in the circle.

All things on Earth Mother and all things in the Universe are capable of being Spirit Guides. Why? Because the Spirit of the Creator is in all things.

Each thing on Earth Mother and each thing in the Universe has its own particular appearance, traits and other distinguishing qualities. In a general way, we can draw certain lessons from these traits and qualities for each object or thing in the universe. We do not and should not attach a particular "meaning" to these things as to do so would be like creating

spiritual dogma or doctrine -- and this is something that is a big no, no.

(Organized religions are quite comfortable and totally dependent on man's written dogma or doctrine for their survival and faith. We call this regimentation "Spiritual Thought Boxes" because there is little or no room for individual divine revelation found within the confines of a controlling dogma. Nearly the opposite is found within American Indian beliefs that allow for infinite meanings and interpretations that we call "Spiritual Freedom." In the same way every thing of creation is different from all other things, so it is with our spiritual beliefs - founded within the uninhibited nature of all Creation.)

Therefore, we caution you: Statements we sometimes make about the traits, habits and particular distinguishing qualities of various animals, are in no way intended to give a human definition or meaning to other spiritual entities, objects or things. Messages of this nature can only come to the individual through the Creator.

Some say knowledge of the natural power of animal guides has been lost. This is not so. Many people think animals are not spiritual -- having no spirit or soul. Most think animals are less intelligent than humans, savage and without society or conscience. This is not so.

It is said that man once spoke with the animals; however, man lost this ability and other powers when he placed himself above the animals as master of the earth having dominion over all things.

Truly, the intellect of animal is different from that of man. Animals are taught differently and speak in different ways. When intelligence is measured in human terms, the animal does not fair well, but if the test were reversed, humans would fail to measure up to animal standards.

Animals know the time and place to migrate, but man cannot find his way without a compass or the stars. Animals live well without the need of tools or weapons. Man cannot. Animals are happy and contented in their environment. Man is not. Animals live among their families all their lives. Man does not. Animals have found the right way to live with their limitations and skills without rancor or strife. Man has not.

*excerpted from Spirit Guides and Totems*

# Rare Species Fund

Local education supporting global conservation



Figure 2. Zones of Khao Yai National Park.

## Thailand - Khao Yai National Park

The RSF supports Khao Yai project by providing in-country teams with the means to purchase equipment for use in anti-poaching techniques and training. The project is being conducted in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution and The Carnivore Conservation Project of northern Thailand with an ultimate goal of securing the wild tiger population in the Khao Yai National Park.

The Rare Species Fund is working in co-operation with FCF on several different facets of conservation to help preserve our natural resources and protect our wild places. Firstly, the educational wildlife shows bring awareness of conservation issues to millions of people per year. The live animal ambassadors capture the hearts and imaginations of their audiences and instill a personal connection and responsibility towards saving ALL wildlife. Secondly, funds generated by these programs go directly to help support grass roots conservation projects in the U.S. and around the globe. **Local education supporting global conservation!**



*Sightings of wild tigers like this are becoming ever more rare.*



[www.RareSpeciesFund.org](http://www.RareSpeciesFund.org)





## A LEARNING EXPERIENCE SHARED



Teresa Shaffer

After many, many days of watching TV (not the Olympics, CSI or American Idol) the video camera feed from our serval girl's den box, the day finally came! And along with this day came an ice storm too. Moma had made a nice nest in the straw, but unfortunately, it was in the opposite corner as the heating pad. She had been restless all day, usual for her when getting close to birthing.

My husband and I had an educational program to do that evening and of course the first baby was born an hour before we needed to leave. Scot called his mom to fill in for me and headed out.

I was thinking, no worries, as this momma was experienced and should be fine. Shortly after he left, the baby, or babies, were very loud and sounded strong. The serval mom had her back to the camera and was blocking my view. After several minutes or so of crying, the sounds tapered off, which would suggest that they had found the milk bar.

After a half hour of watching the monitor, there were no sounds or movement from kittens or momma. Her back was to the camera. I needed to get a better look so I went to the front door and opened the door and called out to her, and then quickly I ran back to the TV and checked to see

if she had moved. No movement. I put my coveralls and snow boots on and headed out into the ice storm to try to check on them. I went to the den box, which is hooked on to the outside of the enclosure, and called her name and listened. Nothing, no sounds, no hissing and no babies crying. My experience told me this was not normal, and was definitely cause for concern.

I went down the hallway and into her enclosure as far as I dared, but still couldn't see her or hear any movement. I felt I had no choice but to go back to the den box and check on them. I carefully lifted the hatch just an inch or two to peek in. Nothing, no movement. Then, I heard a hiss and a hard swat at the box. Momma was definitely ok, but still I didn't hear any sounds from the kittens.

Scot returned three hours later. I was sure things were not right. Out we both went, with a spotlight and a warm carrier (just in case). After much coaxing, Scot was able to lure her out of her box and block the opening. I opened the hatch and my fears were justified. Two lifeless, cold babies lay beside the heated floor pad, (but not on it) covered in the nest of straw.

I brought them into the house and I tried to revive them in a sink of warm water. I don't know what made me do that, as they were obviously gone. Maybe it was just too much to bear and I just felt I had to try something.

After soaking them in the warm water for a few minutes nothing happened. I felt very depressed as I headed back to the kitchen to wrap them in a towel to bury them later. It was then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the smallest of the kittens barely stretch its neck and open its mouth. What! How could this be? I ran the baby back to the sink of warm water while

telling Scot... Get the dextrose and the heating pad ready! He got the supplies for me, and he went back to warming the other baby, just in case.

I couldn't believe it! Over the next several minutes I watched this baby fight for its life and come back to us. After some time in the warm water I vigorously dried her with a soft towel while holding her next to my chest in my sweatshirt. She was moving and crying weakly, but still crying!

I knew that hypoglycemia was a serious risk with moribund neonates, so I gave her 50% dextrose solution, a drop or two at a time, under her tongue every 5 or 10 minutes, while carefully continuing to warm her. Within 30 minutes, her voice was strong and she was suckling my fingers. After making sure her body temperature was up to normal, I gave her weak formula, and then started the long night of hourly feedings.

We passed the first big hurdle, bringing her back from death. But I knew the ordeal was just beginning. A neonate that survives the stress of a hypothermic episode is not out of the woods. And, while passive maternal immunity is received through the placenta, this kitten did not have the added benefit of getting colostrum from nursing her serval mother.

The kitten drank from the bottle. We gave her time with a domestic cat, and she would nurse on the domestic's nipples even though it was not lactating. We were cautiously hopeful, but this kitten only lived a couple of days. Her transition from strong to weak took just a matter of hours, and then she passed away forever.

What went wrong? Fading kitten syndrome has many causes, including being born premature, or born with birth defects. Another killer is secondary sepsis from either viral or bacterial origin. Aspiration pneumonia can result if the kitten inhales contaminated fluid at birth.

I am writing this article to share this experience with fellow breeders. Don't give up in a crisis, and try to stay calm. Even if the end result isn't always a happy one, it is a good feeling to know you did everything you could, and help ease those 'should of', would of' 'could of's'!

## WILDCAT RESCUE GETS HELP FROM FELINE CONSERVATION FEDERATION WILDCAT SAFETY NET

Roger Newson  
FCF Director of Public Relations

Jeff Kozlowski, founder of Wisconsin Big Cat Rescue & Educational Center contacted the Feline Conservation Federation (FCF) to apply for financial assistance through the FCF's Wildcat Safety Net Fund to transport two white tigers, three black leopards and one puma that were recently seized by county officials in Marion County, Texas.

A disposition hearing had been conducted on February 4, 2010 at Marion County's district courtroom regarding the seizure of more than 50 animals from 950 Lewis Chapel Road, where former circus queen Barbara Hoffman and her business partner, Fred Lulling, reside.

Ms. Hoffman and Lulling were arrested the day before on six counts of animal cruelty after county and state officials seized domestic and exotic animals, including 10 jungle

to be "animal cruelty."

Officials obtained a warrant to seize the animals after being notified that the couple was illegally harboring the wild cats. An agreement regarding the cats was reached during the disposition hearing where criminal charges against Ms. Hoffman and Mr. Lulling were dropped and the wild cats were given over to Wisconsin Big Cat Rescue and Educational Center and other Texas wildlife facilities.

Ms. Hoffman visited the wild cats to say her final goodbyes before they left on their long drive north. She removed the collars from the cougars and tigers at the request of Mr. Kozlowski.

The FCF Board of Directors quickly approved the Wildcat Safety Net committee's recommendation to grant up the maximum amount of \$1,000 to Wisconsin Big Cat Rescue and Educational Center to defray transport expenses. Additional donations to aid this transfer can be given to the Safety Net fund in the name of the Wisconsin facility and will be forwarded as well.

Before heading for Texas, Mr. Kozlowski estimated

his organization needed \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00 in donations, explaining, "This will cover cost for transferring the cats, cage building, food, and vet care when they get here." Jeff and volunteers drove down to Texas and



Cougar will get a new life in Wisconsin.

transported the 6 cats back to Wisconsin.

"These cats have been housed in cramped roll-out cages for way too long, so let's get them to a place they will be safe, can roam around in grassy enclosures, have plenty of enrichment, and good health care. We'll give these cats a chance at a peaceful and happy life, and a chance for the public to learn about them."

The mission of Wisconsin Big Cat Rescue and Educational Center is to provide a safe place and a comfortable home for abused, neglected, and unwanted big cats, and also to educate the public about these extraordinary animals and the actions that necessitate the need for the center.

Mr. Kozlowski has been working with big cats for about 8 years, and established the USDA licensed non-profit facility in March of 2005. His goal in life is to give what he can to wild cats and help these majestic creatures as much as possible.

While making their way to Texas, Mr. Kozlowski and his team endured hazardous driving conditions through snow and ice covered highways. The return trip was even worse. Black ice on the roadway brought the team to a complete standstill until conditions finally improved. Thankfully, there



One of the tigers in its cramped enclosure.

cats. Their bond was set at \$30,000 each. Dr. Carol Hedges, a local veterinarian who assisted at the seizure, testified that most animals "appeared to be in good health." However, she considered their cramped confinement





Tigers, cougar and leopards were housed in transport sized cages.

were no issues with the loading and securing of the cats.

The FCF Safety Net team was grateful that these great cats could be relocated to suitable environments and certainly commends Mr. Kozlowski and his volunteers for their efforts. Executive Director, Lynn Culver stated, "We are happy that the FCF

Wildcat Safety Net could fund this relocation effort. Once again, the private feline community and supporters cooperated to ensure that endangered felines are safe from harm.

Mr. Kozlowski worked with two other Wisconsin facilities to secure placement for three of the big cats. After they arrived in Wisconsin, Casey Lugwig, a Wisconsin zoo owner, picked up the two tigers and the cougar and drove them to their final destinations. The female tiger and female cougar are now at Animal Haven Farm Zoo, a no-kill animal shelter and zoo. The cougar was successfully introduced to three other females at the Animal Haven Zoo and they immediately welcomed her to the group. The tiger is still in quarantine, awaiting veterinary assessment of her condition.

Mr. Lugwig transported the remaining male tiger to his zoo, where he had prepared a habitat especially for this sight-impaired cat. The tiger's vision is very poor due to cataracts. At this time his access to the higher resting platforms has been blocked until he becomes familiar with his new environment.

The two black leopards are now living together at Wisconsin Big Cat Rescue and Educational Center where they finally have room to run. The abrupt change in climate, unfamiliar people, and new enclosure has the black pair somewhat spooked, so they are spending most of their time inside their warm dens boxes.

The female spotted leopard was introduced to the resident spotted male, an older feline that has been neutered and declawed. The habitat has two separate den areas, and a feeding area connected to a larger exercise area. Mr. Kozlowski reports that the introduction went well, and both leopards are getting along, sharing a sleeping den and eating together in the feeding area.

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## JAGUAR: FELINE KING OF THE NEW WORLD



Jaguars are mainly terrestrial, but they do climb trees. Michelle Mills shot this photo of a jaguar lounging on a limb in Belize.

William Smith, Ph.D.

The jaguar (*Panthera onca*) is the largest (by weight) indigenous feline living in the New World. The very largest regional variation or subspecies of jaguars are those of the Amazon Basin, which may weigh as much as 350 pounds. Locally known as el tigre or tiger, the jaguar is considered to have the most powerful biting capability of all living felines. The extreme biting ability of the jaguar specifically evolved in order to quickly kill armored reptiles, such as turtles, the caiman, and alligator. In Addition, the jaguar is clearly one of the most aquatic felines, comparable to, or surpassing the Asian tiger for its fondness for water and swimming.

This monograph is primarily concerned with four existing subspecies of jaguar - *P. o. hernandesii* – west Mexico, *P. o. arizonensis* – southern Arizona to Sonora, Mexico, *P. o. veracrucis* – Texas to south east Mexico, and *P. o. goldmani* – Yucatan, Belize, and Guatemala.

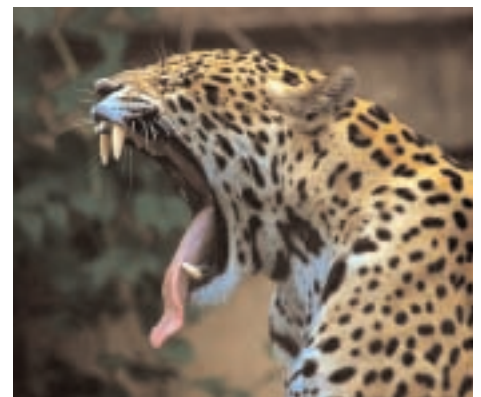
Adult jaguars are normally solitary, and separate soon after mating. The gestation period is typically 93-105 days. Two

cubs are most common, but occasionally four cubs are born. Cubs are normally weaned at three months, but may remain with the mother for as long as two years. Jaguars are one of the longest lived felines. Jaguars have been known to successfully produce young well after the age of twenty. Lifespan in the wild is commonly 12-15 years, but captive jaguars have lived as long as 27 years. As an adult, the jaguar is most often a crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk), solitary, stalk/ambush hunter. Jaguars are considered to be an apex or keystone predator, exerting important influences on the ecosystems in which they live. At least 87 different jaguar prey species have been documented. Jaguars are capable of consuming as much as 25 kilos of fresh meat at one time. Jaguars prefer a rainforest environment, especially those ecosystems which also have deepwater riverine conditions. Female jaguars' territory is typically 25-40 sq. miles, and may overlap with the territories of other females. Male territory is typically 50-80 sq. miles, and does not usually overlap with the territory of other males. Because of somewhat differing prey species and habits, the jaguar may

occasionally be sympatric (sharing territory) with the cougar (*Felis* or *Puma concolor*). In spite of environmental preferences, the jaguar is highly adaptable and has ranged from the humid lowland tropics, to both low and high elevations in the arid Southwest region of the United States. Outside the U.S., the jaguar was declared endangered, and became a "protected species" in 1973. Because of several actual sightings of wild jaguars in southeast Arizona in 1996, jaguars were included as a protected and endangered species within the U.S. in 1997.

Jaguars inhabited southern areas (perhaps up to 40 degrees north latitude) of

what is now the United States, during the Pleistocene epoch (2 million years ago, to 10,000 years before present - BP). Pleistocene jaguar remains dated to 40,000 and 11,500 BP have been found as far north as Missouri. These progenitor Ice Age



Large canines and jaws that open wide give jaguars a strong and deadly bite.

jaguars originally came from northern Asia via the Bering Land Bridge, and are thought to have weighed at least 450 lbs. Since the end of the Pleistocene (10,000 BP), the jaguar may have intermittently inhabited the resource rich riverine sys-



tems of the lower Mississippi Valley and Gulf Coastal Plain, until the beginning of European colonialization. This former jaguar resident of the northern Gulf Coastal Plain area may be one of several, now extinct jaguar subspecies, which existed throughout the western hemisphere. These humid lowland areas of the lower Mississippi and northern Gulf Coastal Plain have dense temperate/subtropical forests, numerous slow moving rivers, and a diverse variety of known preferred jaguar prey species. These riverine prey species include turtles, alligators, large fish such as gar, large water snakes, and numerous aquatic migratory and resident birds. Stone platform smoking pipes attributed to the prehistoric Mississippian culture, which apparently portray large, long-tailed felines with spots, have been found in sites such as Spiro, which is located in eastern Oklahoma. During the 1930s, an archaeologic jaguar skeleton was excavated from a cave in western Tennessee. These and other artifacts may suggest the presence of jaguars in the woodland Southeast approximately 1000 years ago. As recently as 1900, jaguars occupied areas of the American southwest as far north as the Grand Canyon, and as far west as coastal southern California. The actual or mythic realm of the Chichimecs (progenitors of the later Toltecs and Aztecs of central Mexico) was referred to as Aztlan (Coe 1994). The prehistoric northern boundaries of the realm of Aztlan, corresponded to the natural northern range of the jaguar. This area includes areas west to southern California and the Pacific coast, north to at least the Grand Canyon, and east to the lowland riverine areas of the southeast, including Texas, southeast Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and Tennessee. Sometime around AD 1350, the Postclassic Period Mixtec people of the eastern Valley of Oaxaca, Mexico buried one of their noblemen in an already ancient tomb in the hilltop site of Monte Alban. Among the great treasures of the burial were two jaguar longbones,

To right: Post-classic Mexican graphic jaguar image in the form of a textile stamp.



An unknown deity emerges from the mouth of the divine jaguar in a terracotta piece from the Zapotec city of Monte Alban.

which were intricately carved with figures associated with calendrics and astronomy.

#### Were-jaguars



Olmec artwork depicts the jaguar costume associated with the Aztec military order of the jaguar knights.

to a race of were-jaguars, having the combined features of felines and humans. The concept of the were-jaguar is at the heart of Olmec cosmology and civilization. Dominant Olmec art styles centered upon representations of creatures, which combined the features of a snarling jaguar with those of a weeping human infant. Many examples of fat, sexless, were-jaguar babies are depicted in Olmec art/religion. In the Gulf Coast region, the were-jaguar may have been associated with a rain or fertility cult. A recent

One of the early ritual complexes involving the jaguar took place during the early Mesoamerican Preclassic period (1600 BC – AD 150). The Olmec of the Gulf coast of Tabasco and Veracruz, Mexico believed that at a distant time, a woman had cohabited with a jaguar (Coe 1994).

This union gave rise



Ancient image of were-jaguar statue.

archaeologic excavation in the state of Veracruz, Mexico revealed the skeleton of a 30 year-old man. He had been buried in a painted rock shelter approximately 4500 years ago. Several of his teeth had been deliberately

filed down for the presumed purpose of attaching jaguar canines or dentures to his modified teeth. This is the very earliest evidence of jaguar zoomorphic ritualization, or “were-wolfism,” and the earliest dated dental procedure performed in the Western Hemisphere. The practice of using jaguar teeth and spotted skin as markers of authority and shamanism was eventually to become widespread in ancient Mesoamerica.

#### The Jaguar Portrait as Symbolic Icon

Throughout ancient Mesoamerica the icon or image of the jaguar was a clear symbol of authority, royalty and shamanism. The northern section of the pyramid complex at the Midclassic Period Olmec site of La Venta, Mexico has been interpreted to be a gigantic stylized jaguar mask or face (Coe 1994). Also excavated at the site of La Venta were three rectangular mosaic pavements, each measuring about 15 by 20 feet. Each pavement is composed of 485 flattened blocks of serpentine, and are thought to be abstract



Ancient Olmec culture mosaic based upon the image of the jaguar. This one is from the site of La Venta.



jaguar masks. These pavements were deliberately buried under many feet of clay and adobe soon after construction. At the Classic Period Maya site of Palenque in Chiapas, Mexico, stylized clay jaguar head/masks are stacked in totem fashion on terra cotta tubes, which were used to contain ritual incense. The central object within the temple of the sun at Palenque is the mask or face of the jaguar (Coe 1994).

### The Black “Night Time Sun” Jaguar

Approximately 6% of jaguars manifest as melanistic. Melanistic or “black” jaguars have a black or dark colored coat, with some spot outlines that may appear when seen in bright sunlight. Black jaguars were highly ritualized in ancient Mesoamerica as living shadows, the nighttime sun (Coe 1993), and as symbolic of the night. The occasional appearance of white albino individuals (very maladapted to survive in a dense tropical jungle) must have compounded the ancient ritual significance of these magnificent felines. Because of appearance, rarity, and the complexity of ancient Mesoamerican cosmology, both black and white jaguars may have been especially attractive as ritualized domesticates, captives, or sacrifices. The above ground “tomb” found at the Olmec site of La Venta, Mexico, which was constructed of large basalt pillars, might have alternately served as a pen for captive black or white jaguars. The Mayan sun god (Kinich Ahau), on his nightly journey beneath the earth, becomes the fearsome black jaguar of the underworld. In the Classic Period Maya site of Palenque, Mexico the black jaguar is portrayed as the principle god of the underworld, and specifically as the night sun on its nightly passage beneath the earth. For the Aztecs of late Postclassic Mexico, the black jaguar was the zoomorphic totem of the important god – Tezcatlipoca (literally – smoking mirror in Nahuatl). The “black” Tezcatlipoca was the fierce giver



and taker of life, lord of sorcerers, and patron of warriors.

### Jaguars, Maize and the “World Turtle”

The turtle is a traditional Mesoamerican totemic animal, and a cosmologic symbol of the physical world. Because of observed specialized biting capability, the jaguar was known to ancient Mesoamericans as a creature/god singularly powerful or divine enough to open or crack the world (turtle shell), in order to release important objects or forces. The young Maize god (and maize itself) emerge from the split open surface of the earth, which is depicted in Classic Mayan iconography as a cracked turtle carapace (Coe 1993). This illustrates the ancient cultural/cosmologic importance and paranormal strength of the jaguar in possessing the ability to release or control a very important cultural creation - domestic maize (corn). Varieties of maize represented the most valuable ancient subsistence food crop of Mesoamerica, the American Southwest, and the Mississippian Southeast.

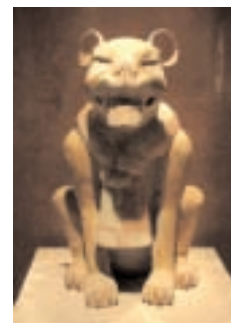
### Jaguars and the Color Orange in Ritual

Orange is a symbolic signal color indicating stimulation, excitement and potential danger or warning. Orange may be associated with the comings and goings of the primary giver of life - the rising or setting sun. The orange/yellow basecoat color of the jaguar may have been included in a ritualization complex associated with the color orange, which existed throughout prehistoric Mesoamerica for at least 3,000 years. The most common jaguar color pattern consists of black rosettes on a orange/yellow basecoat. The normal orange coloration was symbolically associated with the “daytime sun” jaguar. The “orange” daytime sun regularly traveled visibly overhead until plunging under the earth. Once under the earth the sun was symbolized as the black jaguar, until the next morning, when the sun emerged again at dawn as the daytime “orange/jaguar sun.” Other examples or members of the Mesoamerican orange ritual complex include orange *Spondylus* shells and ornaments, Thin Orange ceram-

ic ware (a signature ceramic product of Classic Period Teotihuacan), orange monarch butterflies, and orange marigolds and zinnias. The venom of the large, highly ritualized east Mesoamerican rattlesnake (genus *Crotalus*) has the same color as fresh orange juice.

### Conclusion

The jaguar is the largest feline, and a top keystone predator of the Western Hemisphere. While some notable efforts



Statue of a mesoamerican jaguar priest.

have been made to preserve optimal jaguar habitats, this long lived feline, as a variable species, is presently in danger because of the diminishment of genetic diversity. Unfortunately, extinction of jaguar subspecies, in numerous regional areas which have not been adequately pro-

protected or preserved, is probable. The jaguar has been a highly ritualized feline, symbolized as the day and night sun, and was considered to be a principal rain/fertility deity throughout the New World. Several ancient civilizations, including the gulf coast Olmec, based much of their cosmology and art on real or mythic aspects of the jaguar, manifesting in a cult of the were-jaguar. The Maize god and maize itself may have been mythically released into the upper world as a result of the jaguar’s powerful bite. Throughout ancient Mesoamerica the jaguar’s face, as an abstract icon, may have personified or



South American jaguar canine pectoral worn on the chest to impart the protection of the jaguar.

represented the day and night sun for more than 3000 years. The Mayan and Nahuatl (Aztec) terms for jaguar were often incorporated in the titles of notable priests, rulers and warriors.



## USING FELINE BEHAVIOR TO TEST A NEW METHOD TO RECONSTRUCT PHYLOGENY (OR HOW TO BE PAID FOR SPENDING ENDLESS TIME OBSERVING WILD FELIDS)

Carlos C. Albers, PhD

Assistant Professor Departamento de Ciências Biológicas Faculdade de Ciências e Letras de Assis  
Universidade Estadual Paulista - Unesp Assis, SP – Brazil

Since very early childhood I have been absolutely fascinated by felids, from the domestic cat to the lion, from the tiger to the black footed cat. When my father asked what I would choose for a job, I always wondered how I could get paid for just being around cats, the wild and the domestic ones. Well, I figured it out. As a professor and researcher in a well-ranked Brazilian University, one of my most important “duties” is to watch feline behavior.

I already enjoyed different kinds of scientific work with these wonderful animals. I have searched for their foot prints and other vestiges while I tried to see them in the wild. I have observed them in zoos throughout my country and in other ones, videotaping them so I could watch it later, again and again, to better understand what I was seeing. In my small town, I chased domestic ones in the nighttime, to figure out what they do when outside our homes. I analyzed color, shape, and size of their hairs to build a key to tell the difference between the Brazilian species when only small pieces of fur or individual hairs are available. I even looked for DNA in those hairs.

In one of those works observing felids in zoos, I came to the idea to use behavior as character to reconstruct phylogeny. Studying phylogeny is to try to understand how species are related to each other. As an example among rodents, it could be said that the mouse is more closely related to the rat, than to the shrew. To reach such a conclusion, one might compare bones, mostly the ones in the skull, or the DNA of the in-group, the group of species one is interested in, to reconstruct its genealogic tree, its phylogeny. Character based in skull bones or DNA is the most common ones. But proteins, ecology, soft parts morphology, and other characters can be used as well. Behavior is not so common a source of character because of out of date

opinions shared by ancient scientists. But this stance is turning, and the use of behavior as character source for phylogeny is becoming more and more accepted.

In that particular research, I observed adult domestic cats (*Felis catus*) that lived in colonies of at least four individuals. I used data collected mainly in two colonies. The cats didn't belong to any particular race, I just avoided the black cats, or very dark ones, because of difficulties to visualize behavior. There was not gender distinction when choosing the individuals.

The other feline species included in that work were the Bengal cat (*Felis bengalensis*), the Caracal lynx (*Lynx caracal*), the Serval (*F. serval*), the Asian Golden Cat (*F. temminckii*) the Geoffroy's cat (*F. geoffroyi*) and the Oncilla (*F. tigrina*). The nomenclature of felids followed in that work is the one indicated by Gittleman's *Carnivore Behaviour, Ecology and Evolution*, from 1989. The data was collected in videotapes, done mainly in four institutions: Fundação Parque Zoológico de São Paulo, Brazil; Zoologischer Garten Berlin and Tierpark Berlin-Friedrichsfelde, both placed in Berlin; and Zoologischer Garten der Stadt Wuppertal, in Wuppertal, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany. I have also done some filming in the zoos of Sorocaba, Brazil, and in Copenhagen, Denmark.

I choose to use facial grooming as the source of behavior suited to phylogenetic analysis. Considering both sides of the

face, felids display no less than forty five different grooming behavioral units, including parts of the anatomy like the face itself, the tongue, and the forearm (for the feline grooms its face with the front paw after it have been licked by the tongue). These are some examples of these behavioral units:

### **PLB - Protraction of the tongue, down.**

The animal opens the mouth, protracts the tongue up to about 1/3 of its maximum extension and, then, curves it down.

### **ZAB - Forearm.**

After PLB, with the paw lifted up, with the palm turned to the internal side, the cat moves the head in direction to the chest, touches the tongue in the base of the forearm, moves the head forward and the paw backwards, licking the forearm along and, then, retracts the tongue

### **ZPH - Paw to eyes**

Departing from ZAB, without touching the face with the paw, with movements of the head and the arm, the paw goes by the superior lip, by the vibrissae, and by the eye until landing in the forehead area.

### **ZHV - Eye to vibrissae**

Departing from ZPH, the paw touches the face and goes down, with movements of the arm and of the head until the fore-

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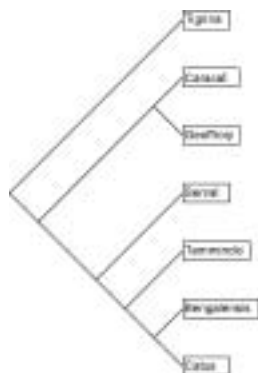
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arm reaches the superior position of insertion of the vibrissae.

PLB, ZAB, ZPV and ZHV are part of the mnemonic codes I used in that work. I had 29 codes, as I did not discriminate between left and right sides of the face. All observed felid species display these behaviors. And as all species showed the same grooming movements, it was not possible to use them to compare species. To do so, I studied in what sequence each species used the different behaviors to clean its face. It is important to say that it is not usual at all to use sequences in behavioral studies. Most scientists use the frequency that the animal displays each behavioral unit. This means that most scientists count how many times each behavior is performed by the animal subject in a given amount of time. But to use sequences is preferable because they are much less altered by the environment than are frequencies. And different species showed different sequences in the facial grooming while sticking to the same pattern among the different individuals of the same species. So, using sequences is kind of a little breakthrough of my work. To extract sequences from the raw data using the behaviors observed in the videotapes taken in zoos is not so straightforward, and thus, my collaborators and I built a software based in a mathematic algorithm created by one of us, the MrDiTree algorithm.

So, as the characters used to reconstruct the phylogeny of the species studied are the sequences of grooming behavioral units, I had a way to compare them. And each species had more sequences in common to another one, than to the others. I summed up all the sequences each one

species shared with every other one, and so, using a dedicated computer program, I could tell the distance of relatedness, the phylogeny, of the studied species. The result is the figure to the left:



It is called a cladogram, a graphic outline used to show a reconstructed phylogeny. What the cladogram tells is that, among the observed species, the Caracal is closer related to Geoffroy's cat than to any other species in that work. They are sister species. The same can be said of the domestic cat and the Bengal Cat. In this phylogenetic tree, the Asian Golden Cat is closer to the clade that bonds Bengal and Domestic Cats. And the Serval is closer to the former group. Oncilla is isolated from any other species or group of species, meaning that it is linked further from the others.

Comparing these results to Felid phylogenies proposed by other authors, it could be seen that part of this cladogram is not so diverse, whereas another part is so. The worst part is that Geoffroy and Tigrina are not together. Since they are South and Central American species, it is hard to believe that they do not share the same evolutionary step that led to creation of the South and Central American spotted cats group. One possible explanation for that result is that the Oncilla individuals I used in that work were from very different origins and I think that at least some of them were hybrids between Oncillas and other felid species. If I were right in this, of course all grooming behavior sequences wouldn't be that of pure Ocillas.

Well, this only a brief summary of that work of mine. The whole story can be read at Japyassú HF, Alberts CC, Izar P, and Sato T (2006) *EthoSeq: a tool for phylogenetic analysis and data mining in behavioral sequences*. Behavioral Research Methods 38:549-556.

I am now interested in the evolution of social behavior among

the Felidae. Like others, I believe that the cat is not the only species of that Family that is apt for domestication. I think that many other feline species would be domesticated if the same circumstances that lead to the domestication of the cat had arisen for them too.

I would appreciate if members of FCF would assist in this study by participating in a questionnaire survey. In this survey I am asking about some particular behaviors of felids maintained by members that may or may not be displayed towards owner or handler. Some other information is also asked for. I will then be able to compare the results with those of other similar surveys, done in a bit different research design where the closer human/feline bond shared by FCF members and their wild cats wasn't taken into account. The questionnaire has been uploaded onto the Internet and can be accessed at this web site:

<http://www.assis.unesp.br/ffrei/felids.htm>

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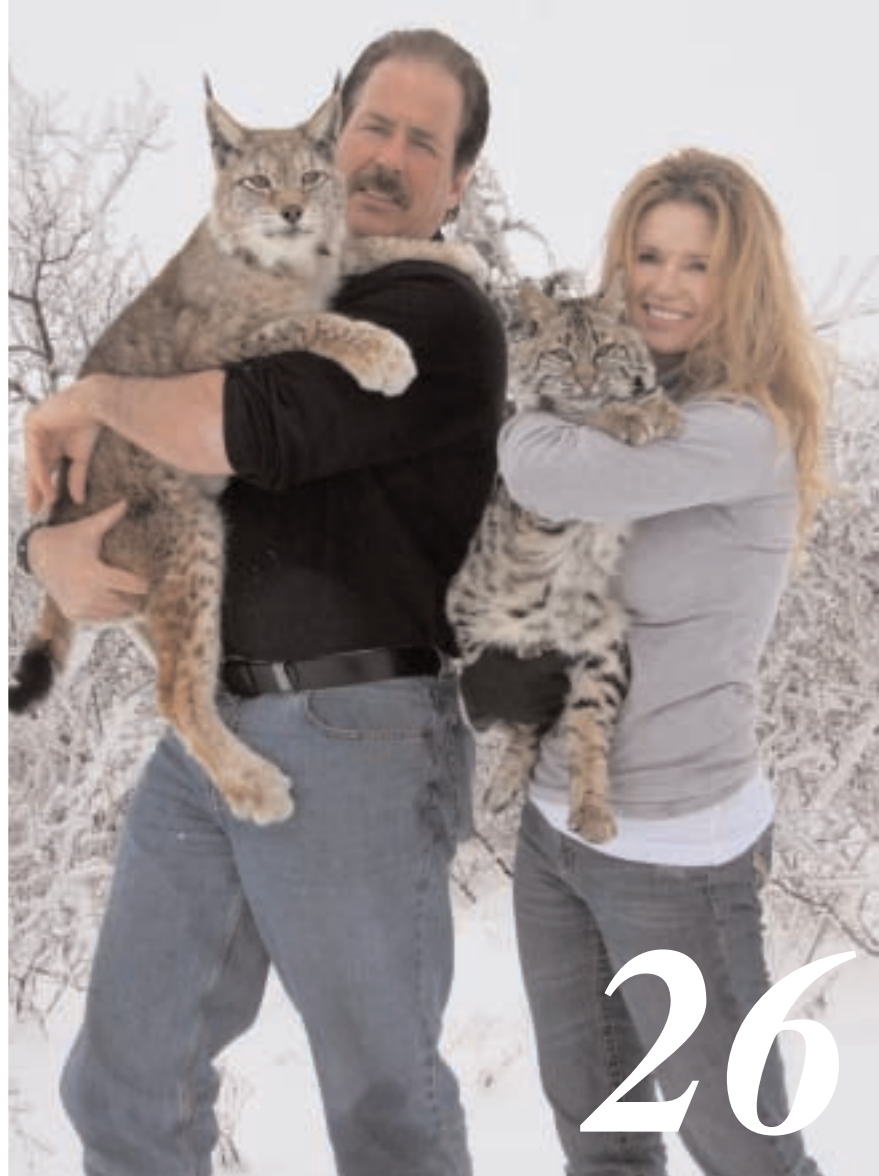
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## **Feline Conservation Federation**

**Mar/Apr 2010**

**Volume 54, Issue 2**

Leo, a two-year old African lion, is one of the first residents of Pilot Peak Wildlife Park, a 501-c-3 non-profit facility in northeastern Nevada scheduled to open to the public during 2010. Leo and his friend, Tiger, a tigress, came to the park after retiring from photo cub work. Deeanna Croasmun, co-founder of the facility and also editor of The Wendover Times, says, "Leo has adjusted well to the winter cold and snow by growing a thick winter coat and eating more heartily, and those extra calories help him stay warm. The two cats are very bonded and snuggle together in deep grass hay in their shelter; often Leo is completely covered by his tiger blanket." Deeanna took this photo using an 8.1 megapixel Sony Cyber-shot DSC-T70. She keeps the small and lightweight camera in her pocket while doing her daily animal chores so she doesn't miss out on any good photo opportunities. She loves all her animals, but can't help but feel there is something a little extra special about Leo, as he is so sweet and loving, and so adorable when he requests tummy rubs.

