



Feline Conservation Federation

September/October 2011 • Volume 55, Issue 5



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COVER PHOTO:

Please see details about this beautiful tiger on our back cover.





TO SUBSCRIBE TO THE FCF JOURNAL AND JOIN THE FCF IN ITS CONSERVATION EFFORTS

A membership to the 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. The FCF works to improve captive feline husbandry and ensure that habitat is available. The FCF supports the conservation of exotic felines through captive and wild habitat protection, and it provides support for captive husbandry, breeding programs, and public education.

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convention memories?
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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.

Display advertisement space is available at the following prices: \$10 business card, \$25.00 quarter page, \$50.00 half page, and \$100 full-page ad.

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, or send by postal service to 141 Polk 664, Mena, AR 71953.



Feline Conservation Federation

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

It has been quite a busy summer for the FCF. Our membership continues to grow with over 800 members in our ranks and we need every single one. While other organizations have sat idle, the FCF has been preparing for the battles we knew would eventually come. For tigers, that time is here. The recent federal register proposal by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to remove the generic tiger exemption from CBW permit registration will be catastrophic to the U.S. tiger population if it passes. Thankfully, we have been busy gathering facts and hard evidence even before this proposal was made public, and the FCF will be making a very strong comment supported with documentation. After reading many of the nearly 13,000 comments to date, I was not able to find a single one in opposition to removing the exemption, though I only read a small fraction. Hopefully, our comment with factual data will stand out like a ray of light to illuminate the truth and counter the thousands of animal rights criticisms. Hardly any of the remarks say anything that is even remotely applicable to the proposal. Most just want the keeping of tigers to be outlawed. They are being

whipped into a frenzy by the leading animal rights organizations which have been providing them with all kinds of misinformation to throw at USF&W, without one shred of documentation. One rumormonger even went so far as to say that he knows tigers are skinned alive on tiger farms!

There is a very good chance that the comment period will be extended beyond the Sept. 21 deadline. If it has been extended and is open when you read this, please voice your **OPPOSITION** to the proposal. We thank all of you that have already or will make a comment. In comparison to the animal rights organizations, we may be small. But we need to show the world that we are as intelligent and tough as the wildcats we all love. We **MUST** work together so that future generations can experience the thrill of seeing a live tiger.

One of the projects we have been working on is the wildcat census, which has brought to light several disturbing facts. The U.S. captive tiger situation has deteriorated by nearly half in the last six years. This is largely due to an influx of breeding which happened when the generic tiger

was given the exemption from CBW registration. That glut of initial breeding has declined and leveled off to the point where those first tigers are now dying off faster than they can reproduce. Tigers are unique in that they were accorded an increase in breeding from the exemption, which this greatly helped the species by allowing genetics previously unavailable to be spread throughout the population. Unfortunately, all other wildcat species are facing the same rapidly declining numbers. We **MUST** work together to preserve our rights to own these magnificent beasts and sustain their genetic viability for future generations of cats and cat lovers.

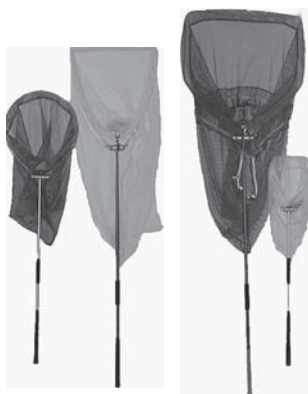
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Lynn Culver

This year has been difficult, weather wise, economy wise, legislation wise. It seems we have less and less time to enjoy the things that make our lives special. Juggling all the responsibilities of home, family, and felines leaves little time for relaxation. That is why the FCF Convention is so important. It is a way to have fun, socialize, and learn about cats, all rolled into a single event. You can order a DVD and see what you missed. Read about it on page 33.

The USDA continues to cite facilities with tigers, and sometimes other large feline species, for being behind fencing USDA has decided is not high enough. In addition to fencing height changes, some facilities are experiencing new barrier fence interpretations as well. Being cited by the USDA should always be taken seriously. If you believe you are not in violation, it is imperative that you file a written appeal to the regional office. And do not ignore the due dates for compliance. Repeat non-compliant items are all potentially finable, and the fines can legally be up to \$10,000 per offense!

It is expensive and difficult to raise existing fences, but will no doubt afford added protection. Some of the larger facilities are struggling to comply with this new USDA demand, and at least one very large sanctuary operator has plans to sue the USDA if it is written up. Not all facilities have had inspections since the USDA developed new "performance standards" for tigers under 3.125 Facilities General and began citing licensees. I am still interested in knowing of your experience, especially if your facility is not written up. Please contact me so I can add you to the database.

This issue of the *Journal* focuses on legislative and regulatory issues. Contributing authors spotlight their experiences gaining licenses. I am proud and encouraged to know that there are up-and-coming feline owners, trainers, and educators gaining state and federal permits. Congratu-

lations to Daniel Blinder, Felicia Frisco, Lynette Lyons, and Craig DeRosa. The FCF is committed to helping the next generation continue learning and succeeding in captive feline husbandry, and that is why we have teamed up with Cathryn Hilker and the cat ambassador program at the Cincinnati Zoo to offer the Wildlife Educators Course November 5th (see page 22), and Wild Animal Safari has joined us to make the next Basic Feline Husbandry Course something special at their park in in Strafford, Missouri, on October 29th (see page 7).

Also included in this *Journal*, Charlie Sammut, a 20+ year veteran of California's animal industry, explains what is happening in that state. Kurt Beckelman invites Oklahoma members to propose feline regulations. Terri Werner spotlights the past legislative season in Texas, showing readers what is involved in opposing state bills. And hats off to Robyn Tubbs, a pet serval owner who made Texas history by changing one county's statute from banning exotics to regulating exotics!

This issue's 1978 "Blast from the Past" explains why we have lost our captive margay population. In a particularly ironic letter from the Fish & Wildlife Service to the LIOC, the club is encouraged to breed their cats for pets and apply them for captive self-sustaining status.

We must maintain healthy captive feline populations because all the world's wild felines are experiencing greater and greater pressures in nature. Cathryn Hil-

er shares a particularly sobering report on a new threat to lions in Africa – poison.

Tigers are a species on the verge of extinction, and are once again in the spotlight. FCF Editor Eden Tran looks at one tiger in particular. Tony, the "truck stop tiger," is the object of a nationwide animal rights protest, reminiscent of the "Free Willie" campaign launched a few years ago over a captive killer whale in a Hollywood movie.

The FCF president, legislative director, and I have been coordinating the FCF response to the F&W proposal to remove the generic tiger exemption. It never ceases to amaze me the amount of misinformation the animal rights industry puts out to their members and the media, as well as the ensuing fervor they are able to whip up in their followers. I almost feel sorry for the government, as they have to wade through over 12,000 comments on this proposal, and none of these people understand what this proposal is, nor what it can and cannot do. The responsible breeding of endangered species is made much more difficult by the permit process required by the F&W Service. Tigers are the only endangered feline exempted from it, and because of this freedom from regulation, today there are more tigers and greater genetic diversity. It has truly been a mixed blessing, with the downside being that the number of tigers exceeds the amount of high quality captive habitat. To me, this is not an indication of too many tigers, but of too few committed facilities.

With all the social, economic, and legislative pressures, I can see the future holds fewer available habitats for tigers, not more. It is critically important that the FCF identify all tigers and institute a tiger registry and breeding assistance for the tiger population outside of AZA control. We are almost there, having cut our teeth on pumas, and tigers are next. Be sure to read Kristie Burns's report on the puma registry project and consider volunteering to work on another species.

DONATIONS

The FCF Board of Directors thanks the following individuals who have made donations to FCF projects since the last published *Journal*. These generous donations provide additional funding for special projects such as creating educational materials for members and legislators, helping support feline conservation, and improving captive feline welfare.

We appreciate each donation, no matter the amount, recognizing that it is the many small gifts that, when combined, add up and make a difference in the effectiveness of the FCF. We encourage everyone to follow this example and donate funds for projects that interest you.

Conservation Fund:

Ann McFadden - in memory of Phil Slosberg
Mary Mortimer - in memory of Phil Slosberg

The FCF appreciates your generosity and continued support.

FELINE HUSBANDRY IN AMERICA'S HEARTLAND!

The next Basic Exotic Feline Husbandry Course will be held at **Wild Animal Safari**
124 Jungle Dr., Strafford, MO
Saturday, **October 29, 2011**, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm
(Course will be conducted in the Safari Classroom)
Return Sunday October 30, at 10:00 am for a guided tour of the park's felines.

Registration Fee for the Saturday Husbandry Course and Sunday Park Tour: \$110 FCF member (\$145 non-member). Register online and pay with PayPal at the FCF website. Registration fee covers entry to the Wild Animal Safari on Saturday and again on Sunday, lunch at the Safari Grill on Saturday, and a special guided tour of the park's feline facilities on Sunday beginning at 10:00 am.



The eight-hour course focuses on responsible captive husbandry. Featured topics include: natural history of the feline species, nutrition, health care basics, handling equipment, facility design, behavior conditioning, contingency planning, and regulatory agencies. This is an instructor-led, multimedia presentation, complete with student textbook, workshops, final exam, and decorative certificate of successful completion.

The course nutrition section covers calcium, vitamins, and diet designs. Health care information includes threats to neonates. Dozens of new photos illustrate cages, fencing, materials, and enrichments. Student textbook has improved feline species photos and better range maps, too, making it chock full of useful information for future reference.



Students return to Wild Animal Safari Sunday morning to see the park's feline husbandry practices, including, diet, enrichments, enclosures, and contingency plans. Felines on exhibit include Bengal tiger, leopards, bobcat, caracal, liger, and lion. This 250-acre safari park features a total of 600 animals of 65 species. After the guided feline tour, take your own vehicle on the five-mile Drive-Thru Safari, or ride the bus lead by an Animal Safari tour guide. See elk, water buffalo, and wildebeest running free, as well as tigers, hyenas, and zebra on your safari! Come face to face with camels, hand-feed an American bison, or meet smaller, friendlier animals along the Walk-About and Winding Path.

Directions to Wild Animal Safari: From I-44, take the MO-125 exit, EXIT 88, toward Fair Grove/Strafford. Go for 0.3 miles. Turn right onto MO-125/S MO-125 and go for 0.2 miles. Turn left onto E Old Route 66/MO-00/E Main Street and go for 3.1 miles. Turn right onto Paradise Rd and go 0.07 miles. Take the 1st left onto Jungle Dr. and go for 0.09 miles and Wild Animal Safari is on the right. Need more info? Call 417-859-5300 or visit <http://www.goanimalparadise.com>.

FCF hotel is the **Holiday Inn Express Marshfield**, 1301 Banning Street, Marshfield, MO 65706. Reserve your room for \$81/night online at www.hiexpress.com/hotels or call 1-800-315-2621. The

Main-In October 29th Husbandry Course Registration Form - please cut out or photocopy and mail with check or credit card info to: FCF Treasurer, P.O. Box 31210, Myrtle Beach, SC 29588

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hotel offers free local calls and a complimentary continental breakfast, featuring fruits, juices, cereals, hard-boiled eggs, and pastries. Holiday Inn Express is right off I-44 at exit 100.

COUGAR GENETIC DATABASE PROJECT UPDATE

By Ron DeArmond & Dr. Kristie Burns of Pella Wildlife Company, www.pellawildlifecompany.org; Mindy Stinner & Kim Pyne of Conservators' Center, Inc., <http://conservatorscenter.org>; & Lynn Culver of Feline Conservation Federation, <http://www.felineconservation.org>

The FCF members mentioned above have been hard at work this summer on the "Cougar Genetic Database," part of an organization-wide effort to create a definitive and updated database on each feline species captive in the United States. The goals of these databases are to go "above and beyond" what is now available and create a database of felines that includes information in addition to the license numbers of feline owners, addresses, and available lineage information. These databases will eventually contain e-mail addresses, detailed information on each facility, phone numbers, interviews, and DNA samples.



These genetic databases will provide valuable information on the biodiversity of the species in captivity for breeders and captive feline owners, will enable the FCF to provide DNR, law enforcement, and other officials with tracking information on captive cougars, and will serve as a research platform for projects such as the "Behavior Anthropology and Captive Cougars" being researched by Dr. Kristie Burns of The Pella Wildlife Company.

The first database being worked on is the Cougar Genetic Database. This project will serve as a model for creating databases for the other feline species. Although the final result will be one organized database that will be easily accessi-

ble, the process to reach that final point is detailed and time-intensive.

To create the database, we started with a standard list of feline owners that was downloaded from the USDA and FCF websites*. In the case of the cougar database, we started with six different basic spreadsheets. Since each database can contain up to 10,000 records or more, each project needs a number of volunteers to work on it. After collecting spreadsheets, the following steps will be finished in order:

1. **Create New Headings:** The first step we have completed was to create new standard headings that not only provide space for all the current data, but also include additional space for e-mail, phone, and additional facilities.
2. **Merge Databases:** Secondly, all the databases were merged either using the merge feature on the spreadsheet program or manually using the "cut and paste" feature.
3. **Clean Databases:** The next step was to standardize all the data and clean the spreadsheet of data. In our spreadsheet, we found that some owner names were included under "facility name" and that some states were spelled out, while others were entered as an abbreviation. During this step, all of these discrepancies need to be fixed. Since our records exceed 8,000, this is a very time consuming step and is being worked on by five volunteers.
4. **Standardize Font:** We are doing this at the same time as step three, but it can also be done before or after step three. During this step, the spreadsheet was highlighted and all fonts were standardized. In many cases, this happened with the click of a few buttons. However, in our case, we still had a number of entries with odd capitalization, so we had to go through and manually re-type some entries.
5. **Eliminate Duplicate License Records:** This is also being worked on at the same time as step three and four, but could be done after step four. It is more efficient to do it at the same time. During this step, we are making sure that each license has only one entry in the database. If there are

multiple entries for one license, then we created an additional column to accommodate the additional facility,

manager names, and addresses. In the case of the cougar database, we created seven additional columns on our spreadsheet, called "Facility 2, Facility 3, Facility 4," etc. Each additional entry also had a place to include the facility manager name, address, phone, and e-mail.

6. **Research Missing Information:** After we complete steps 1-5, our data should be standardized. At this point, missing information will be researched online or by mail. For each facility, a Google search will be performed and additional information, such as e-mail address, phone and website name, will be added to the spreadsheet.

7. **Create a Database:** Once the spreadsheet is clean and contains all the data that can be found, it will be entered into a database system that allows for additional information to be added more easily and will also allow numerous cross-referencing possibilities. The Conservators' Center, Inc. is donating our cougar database and will serve as a model for databases for other feline species.

8. **Solicit Additional Information:** Once the database is complete, letters need to be sent to each license owner. Mindy Stinner, Kim Pyne and Kristie Burns created a standard letterhead that will be used to send out letters to each cougar owner. This letterhead will contain the FCF logo, as well as the logos of the research facilities, Pella Wildlife Company and The Conservators' Center, Inc., and will be sent to each facility that owns a cougar. This initial letter will simply explain the project and ask for additional information that is needed and will ask if the person would be interested in submitting a DNA sample or being interviewed for research projects.

9. **Update Database:** Based on responses and returned mails, the database will then be updated. Information will continue to be added to the database on an ongoing basis, including updated addresses and contact information, as well as DNA data.

*USDA:<http://acissearch.aphis.usda.gov/LPASearch/faces/CustomSearch.jspx> & FCF Member List: <http://www.felineconservation.org/members/index.php>

SPOTLIGHT ON FCF's "TEEN TIGER MOM," FELICIA FRISCO

By Felicia Frisco

I am 18 years old, and I come from three and nine generations of animal trainers and handlers on both sides of my family. My uncles, aunts, and cousins all train elephants. Both families come from circus backgrounds. My grandfather on my dad's side ran away from home at the age of 13 and joined the circus. He started with horses, and then moved onto elephants, bears, chimps, lions, tigers, leopards, and jaguars. He has owned and trained many other species too.

I was two years old when I started performing with three African elephants, then went on to present them in our shows, at the age of 13, as one of the youngest females to ever present an African elephant act!

In 2000, we started training tigers once again, and we created an educational show designed for fairs that would educate the public on the plight of tigers and how greatly endangered they are, while also entertaining them. Our cats would respond to voice commands to demonstrate various natural behaviors like jump-

ing, sitting, lying down, and rolling over.

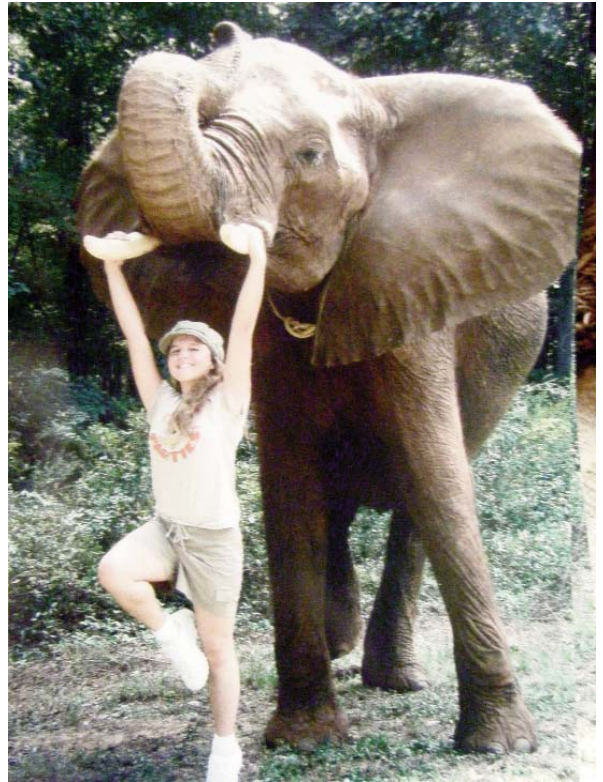
Although I have participated in raising all of our family's tigers, last year, I was given my first tiger cub. This cub was born to one of our tigers. He was mine to raise and train, and he was the one I shared my bed with, which caught the attention of the television media earlier this year.

His mother wanted nothing to do with him. She wouldn't even nurse him his first day, and the chances of him surviving were low. But he made it, and that was why his name is Will (will to survive). Although I have been in the media before with my elephants, it was nothing like I expected when Barry Bland did a photo shoot of me sleeping with my tiger. It was WORLD WIDE NEWS.

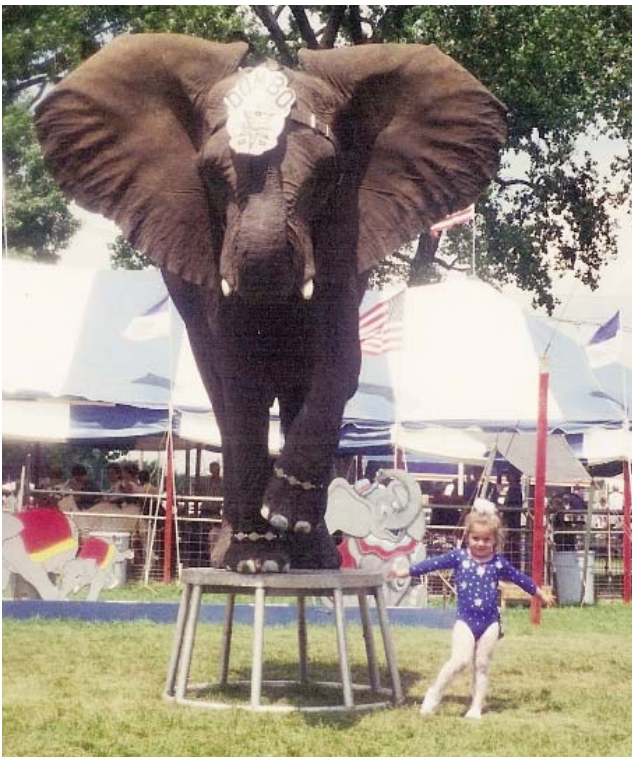
When you travel and have performing animals, you are faced with animal rights issues

day in and day out, so being controversial was nothing new to me. People often say it is not fair to have tigers and other wild animals perform, travel, or have them in captivity because they are bored in a cage. What these know-it-alls do not know is that you do not travel all year, only a couple months out of the year. The rest of the time you and the animals are home. Animals love to learn new things. Training helps to stimulate their minds and exercises them in a fun and rewarding way.

All our animals are trained with rewards. Some animals learn faster than others. My elephant can learn things in a single day. My current tiger cub, Romeo, learned how to jump from seat to seat in



A later photo of Felicia and Dumbo just hanging out together! Photo from Felicia Frisco.



Felicia began her circus career at the ripe old age of two, here with an African elephant pal, Dumbo. Photo courtesy of Felicia Frisco.

about a day and has been working on sitting and staying for the past week and is doing really well. In order to work so closely with these large felines in training, you have to have a bond. That is one of the biggest reasons why I sleep with my tigers as cubs. For those who watched the news coverage, the cub was a 60-pound youngster, not 100 pounds like some reports falsely stated.

It is important to always remember that with any animal, whether a dog, snake, horse, or exotic, there is a risk. Like anything in life, you can never trust them 100% (like people!). We raise all of our animals from a young age, some since birth. Our tigers spend the first year of their life living in and out of our home. The tiger cubs go outside during the day, but sleep inside at night in their indoor enclosures. The first year of a tiger's life is the most playful year. Just like puppies, they like to play, and, over time, they learn when it is playtime and when they are being too rough. It is important to learn their moods. You know when they are excited or when they don't feel good.

Some days, just like anyone, they just want to be left alone, and you work with and around that.

We are with them 24 hours a day, and that creates a bond with them. We are 100% hands-on with all of our tigers. We can hand feed all of them. From inside their enclosure, we can walk them on a leash. Our mother tigers allow us to be inside their dens during and after delivery, because they are 100% accepting of us with their babies. All of this comes over time and requires hours and hours of dedication, working with them every single day, 365 days a year – you get no days off.

Once our animals reach a certain age, it becomes a two-person job. We never go in or around the tigers without another person right there with us. This is not only safety for us, but for our animals as well.

The reason I will continue working with these animals is the same reason that motivates my entire family -- because this is what we know and this is what we love to do. This lifestyle is not how it once was, when people used to love coming to a circus and seeing animals, but is now a tradition and lifestyle that is slowly dying out. If we don't keep up this tradition that we love, then who will? There are very few up-and-coming cat trainers in the circus world. I think I am the newest in America and there are two other girls older than me who started a few years ago. We have a YouTube web page that is dedicated to showing and explaining how animals are trained and raised without abuse, which can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/circusunite>.

In the next two weeks, I will be entering in with our adult tigers and will also start training with Romeo, so that we will be performing in the show by next year. These are animals I have spent my life growing up with, and I will continue doing this for as long as I can. I would never trade my life for anything else and I will continue to do what I love by spending my life with these animals.

You can visit my new blog at www.teentigermom.webs.com.



Since her recent debacle with the American media, Felicia, with her beloved Will, has really begun to make her mark in the exotic cat world.

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EXTIRPATED SPECIES RETURNS TO NEW YORK

By Tanya Paterno

Why a puma and when it first started

In the mid-1990s, Craig frequented a bait and tackle shop next to his martial arts school. The owner was known as “Bobcat Bob” because he kept two bobcats. From visiting and listening to Bobcat Bob, Craig became interested in wild felines. Many years later, when Craig was at a stage of his life where he would be able to work with such a feline, he spoke to a local pet shop that sold exotics such as fennec foxes and servals. Craig began researching servals and found, among many other things, that they have hybrid relatives known as “savannah cats” that were more accessible in New York.



Takoda, here being led by Craig at Bear Creek, was born on Christmas Day, in Christmas, FL, at the end of 2010.

Craig found a breeder and obtained his savannah, Ronin, in 2004. From that point on, his passion for the savannahs and wild felines grew. Due to an unfortunate turn of events, Ronin passed away at the early age of two and a half. Craig was heartbroken and devastated, and decided to channel this energy into a quest to learn more about the pure wild felines.

New York legislature had passed new restrictions on the possession of wild

felines, so by 2008, when Craig was ready for a serval, he learned that to obtain any wild feline, one has to hold a USDA license. In order to obtain a USDA license, you must be involved in commerce, either brokering, breeding and selling, or exhibiting. Since Craig has a teaching background, he felt that obtaining a class C exhibitor's license would best serve his local community and wild feline conservation.

Craig then began taking the required steps toward a USDA license. Being new to the exotic feline world, Craig's savannah breeder introduced him to the Feline Conservation Federation and recommended that he take one of their feline husbandry courses to gain knowledge about working with, and caring for, exotic felines. Craig took this to heart and joined the FCF near the end of 2008. Several months later, in February 2009, he attended a husbandry course in Panama City, Florida. This course was conducted by Lynn Culver, Executive Director of the FCF, and hosted by Bear Creek Feline Center. The day following the course instruction, students were invited to tour Bear Creek Feline Center and see how this licensed Florida feline sanctuary and educational center operated. During the tour, the group was shown the different classes of felines. Craig was immediately drawn to the puma. He had always been interested in this feline; one hears much about the lion and tiger, but very little about America's own large cat, the puma.

During a conversation with BCFC owner/operator Jim Broaddus, Craig shared his desire to gain New York licensing. Jim invited him to participate in a BCFC intern program by returning regularly to volunteer at the facility. Doing so would gain him husbandry experience and the knowledge necessary for licensing by

the USDA. Craig was excited to take Mr. Broaddus up on his interning offer, especially since it included handling experience with their puma, as well as with six other smaller feline species housed at BCFC.



Craig chills at Bear Creek Feline Sanctuary, while his buddy Saint takes advantage of a much-loved chin scratch. Photo courtesy of Tanya Paterno.

From that point on, every month for the next three years, Craig flew down to Florida and interned at BCFC. He learned to care for the exotic felines, as well as how to exhibit them in educational venues. In addition to working with the felines at the center, Craig also took educational trips with BCFC and aided in research.

In February 2011, Craig flew down to Miami, Florida, to attend the FCF's Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course held at Parrot Jungle, led by instructor Ron DeArmond. The intensive eight-hour class gave insight into picking an ambassador feline and raising it for a conservation education program, and it also provided information on how to create, promote, book, and conduct a safe, fun, and educational program.

Planning for USDA license inspection and satisfying New York

After logging over one thousand hours of intern time at BCFC and obtaining certificates from the above-mentioned courses, Craig designed and began construction of his facility in anticipation of applying for USDA licensing.

The difficulty in complying with New



Takoda's newly constructed enclosure goes far and above USDA criteria. The sturdy, three-tiered platform provides him with not only an area to satisfy his climbing and jumping inclinations, but also gives him a grand throne from which to survey his personal domain.

York regulations is that state laws restrict possession of wild felines to those holding a USDA exhibitors license. And, for the native puma, an additional state license is required. After speaking with the New

York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), the office that issues licensing, Craig learned that the caging requirements were those of the USDA. Craig focused upon safety, going beyond

the USDA standards wherever possible. The enclosure was built of 6-gauge GAW (galvanized after weaving). The primary enclosure and perimeter fence were both ten feet high and also enclosed on top. The primary enclosure measures 24x24 feet, and the perimeter fence is six feet away. Both structures are fastened to 16" wide by 36" deep curbing foundation. Craig's goal was to have a top-notch enclosure in terms of public, feline, and handler safety. The caging used is a panel design, purchased from a company that specializes in animal enclosures. The delivery was delayed by four weeks, a frustrating set back for the entire process.



Craig and Takoda provide a beautiful, live illustration to accompany Ron DeArmond's presentation on the state of the Florida panther, at the Orange County Public Library in Orlando, Florida. Photo by Eden Tran.

Inside the main habitat are a natural tree and a three-tiered structure that enables the cougar to sit up high. Another shelf was installed underneath the shade of the tree. A small dry house was built to meet the USDA requirements; however, Craig is planning to build a much larger dry house before winter. Currently, the floor surface is natural dirt, but Craig is looking into different footing options. A curtain drain is planned around the interior edges of the cougar's habitat to prevent water build-up.

Due to the fact that Florida Fish & Wildlife recently moved the *Puma concolor* from a Class II to a Class I cat, Craig's paperwork and cat experience were in review for twice as long as normal. Also, the USDA Eastern Region would not indicate whether Craig's paperwork was sufficient to satisfy the USDA policy on experience required for exhibiting dangerous animals. Craig just had to wait until the enclosure was inspected and a full report was written.

On June 30, 2011, the enclosure was finally completed to a level sufficient for a USDA pre-licensing inspection. On July 8, the inspector arrived and the enclosure was extremely well received. She commented that she wished all of her zoos could create similar structures. Even after the inspection, the inspector indicated to Craig that his paperwork was still under review, but she expected that he would receive approval soon after her report was written. She also indicated that she was surprised that there was any question about approval, as the information provided by Craig was much more comprehensive than that received from other licensees. On Tuesday, July 12, Craig's application for USDA licensing was approved. He immediately contacted the NY DEC special license bureau in Albany, New York, to have his endangered/threatened species license expedited via e-mail.

What puma did we get?

While Craig was logging hours working with wild felines in preparation for gaining his USDA licensing, his mentor and sponsor, Jim Broadbuss, alerted him that a cougar cub was born on Christmas Day, in Christmas, Florida. The Bear Creek Feline Center houses this cub's older brother, named Saint. Craig had logged hundreds of hours of handling experience with Saint during his many interning visits. Jim felt that the young

cub would be the perfect cat to use as an educational program ambassador.

Lynne Hawksworth, of Hands on Wildlife, was raising the cub. She had named him Takoda, meaning “friend to all.”

Craig traveled to Florida to work with Takoda on multiple occasions from the time the cub was three months old. He worked with Takoda and Lynne, building a routine and a special bond of trust. Together, the three built a foundation to prepare Takoda for his arrival at Craig’s facility, named Ghost Cat Habitat. Much of the final time and training was completed during the few days before the FCF convention in Orlando, this past June. One of the highlights for Craig was the opportunity to assist Lynne during the presentation of Takoda, during Ron DeArmond’s “Return of the Panther” public talk at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida.

How it arrived in New York

Upon receiving his USDA license, Craig drove 18 hours south to Bear Creek Feline Center, where Takoda had been staying for the past few weeks. Craig and Takoda spent a few days readjusting and, by Saturday evening, Craig and his wife began their drive back to Dutchess County, New York. They arrived on July 17th, at 4:30pm. Takoda was an extremely good traveler, sleeping the entire drive. The trio did make a stop at Virginia Safari Park, where their good friend, Stephanie Vaughan-Williams, is general curator. They were allowed into a special area so they could feed and exercise Takoda in private. For the final leg of the journey, Takoda once again slept peacefully. This was probably due to that fact that Takoda was already a seasoned traveler, as Lynne had taken him to New York to appear on “The Today Show” with Dave Salmani for Earth Day 2011.

How is Takoda doing?

Takoda has been at Ghost Cat Habitat for a month. He has adjusted very well to his new enclosure and surroundings. The



Although Takoda and Craig have been friends for a long time, they are having to acquaint themselves and get used to the new enclosure and routine at Craig’s Ghost Cat Habitat in New York.

cooler climate has affected his energy level, increasing it significantly. He loves all of the different smells of his new environment. During his down time, Takoda enjoys jumping to his top shelf and laying across Craig’s lap for their midday catnap.

Where are we in developing an educational program?

The eastern cougar was critically endangered when Craig began thinking of developing an educational program centered on this species. In March of 2011, US Fish and Wildlife declared the eastern cougar officially extinct. By this admission, all protection for cougars in the Northeast was removed. Therefore, Craig felt it was imperative to begin educating others in the Northeast on the importance of the cougar to our natural environment, especially in light of the increasing amount of documented

puma sightings believed to be dispersing from the Black Hills of North Dakota. Sadly, one of these great cats was recently hit by a car and killed in Connecticut. DNA evidence from hair and fecal samples proved that this same individual had been sighted previously in New York.

Craig and his wife have put together a brochure to introduce neighbors to Ghost Cat Habitat. They have also begun practicing their exhibit with friends and family. The development of the educational presentation is underway and they hope to have it finished toward the end of September.



Craig helps Takoda hone his gift of agility by using a cougar-sized enrichment toy to lead him up on of the poles in his enclosure.

CALIFORNIA: THE FUN NEVER ENDS!

By Charlie Sammut
President, International Animal Welfare
Association
Owner, Wild Things A.R. Inc.

It seemed as though things were pretty quiet in California for the longest time, but those of us who have been doing this long enough knew that meant something big was brewing ~ it always does. The worst part of a lull in the storm is that the players become complacent, thinking their contributions are no longer needed. As president of International Animal Welfare Association (www.IAWA.info), I've seen this time and time again, and the battle to keep people involved and supportive of organizations that protect them is exhausting. This is a sad and unfortunate truth that plagues many organizations. When things appear to be still, our foes are lobbying! They are never just coasting, for, unlike us who have other things to do (like caring for our animals), they have nothing else to do, so we should always assume that they are planning, lobbying, and implementing new strategies or legislative attacks which they truly know so little about. IAWA is on the constant watch, monitoring all that our extremist-activist foes are doing, and we beg our supporters to continue supporting us even when we are not in the midst of a heated battle. Their funds are being saved for the battle that will inevitably come our way, and the longer the lull, the bigger the battle, and the more funds that will be needed by our side to fight properly and responsibly!

Here in California, Fish and Game was very careful to cross their t's and dot their i's when implementing the proposed changes to Title 671, the laws that govern our licenses to possess wild/exotic animals in the state. When the drafts were released, we were all stunned that there was no mention of a change to the inspection process, a subject that was so temperately

debated by the Fish & Game Advisory Committee for the past five years (of which I am a member, as are several extremist-activists based in California), but, nevertheless, the new regulations were adopted with no change to inspections. That had many of us suggesting that something was wrong, because the activist never even showed up at the hearings to object to this fact. There were several other proposed changes we took issue with in the new regulations, but because the inspection process remained unchanged, we opted to count our blessings, remain silent on those for now, and be confident we could make those



Charlie Sammut calls Chui the leopard, now 24 years old, "one of my best friends ever." Sammut has been working with exotic animals for years, providing animal actors and his training skills for the television and film industry, print media, and live events.

changes later.

Well, we were right! Soon after the adoption of the proposed changes to Title 671, the state announced yet another public hearing to further modify the regulations; this time, to the inspection process! The successful lobbying and hidden agenda of the activist groups could NOT have been more apparent than they were at the

first public hearing on this matter. Currently, our veterinarians are allowed to inspect our facilities. They have been for the past 20+ years, costing the state nothing to accomplish this task. The activists want to remove the veterinary inspections and force the state wildlife department to enter into contracts with private entities to do the inspections, and we can all imagine who those private entities would be! The only alternative would be for the state itself to assume the responsibility of doing all the inspections, which is ultimately what they tried to pass by Fish and Game in the July and August meetings. This proposal meant hiring additional staff (each at a cost of over \$80,000 a year!!), new vehi-

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One of Charlie's film credits is 1997's *Donnie Brasco*, when a lion was needed to portray the pet of mobster Lefty Ruggiero, played by Al Pacino (shown here with Johnny Depp).

cles, offices, etc., all of which would be expensed out to the permittees. The long and short of it was that we fought the proposal in person, in writing, and through our legal and lobbying firm, and, in the end, successfully brought the process to a halt. We were able to prove to the commission that the Department's proposal simply would not work! It violated several state mandates currently in place via the Governor (hiring freezes, travel freezes, etc.), on top of which it did not pencil out. Two inspectors could not accomplish the number of inspections required, and if one inspector quit, got sick, etc., it would place the Department in violation of their own statute by being unable to accomplish the inspections. The funny thing is, at the hearings, the Department didn't even object to any of this; so the Commission basically ordered the Department back to the drawing board, and that's where we are at today.

Our goal is to meet with the Department and find a way to continue allowing our veterinarians, or a veterinarian whose intentions we trust, to do these inspections, while being in compliance with the intentions of Title 671. We sincerely believe there is a way to accomplish this and that no other professional is better suited to inspect and recognize problems with animals than a licensed veterinarian. Inspecting for the mechanical requirements of Title 671 is a no-brainer! It's etched in stone – cage sizes, materials, all of it, is in writing. A construction inspector could do it! The activists will object, threaten lawsuits, and more, as they have already done, but eventually the Department is simply going to have to buck up and stand up to these bullying tactics they have been attempting to buffer thus far.

As far as the parts of Title 671 we took

issue with but held off on fighting, we are simply waiting for one of our members to see an actual adverse reaction from them, which will give us a reason to approach the commission and revisit our concerns. One such issue is the new demand to microchip all of our animals. All agree that anesthetizing animals for the sole purpose of micro chip-

ping is unsafe, unethical, and unreasonable, but, in a recent conversation with Fish and Game, I was told that they do not necessarily disagree and are willing to be open minded on the matter. They are readily accepting other means of identification (photos of identifying marks, patterns, etc.) as a temporary means until there is an actual medical reason to anesthetize the animal. So it does appear as though they are working with us, which we feel is far more sensible (and economical) than a war. Another issue was the

"five-year experience" regulation stating that handling experience with an animal had to be within the past five years to qualify as experience and enable one to add a species not already in a collection. Again, we are waiting for the first circumstance to arise, at which time we are fairly certain all will agree that a person's experience with an animal six years ago is no less qualifying than it was five years ago. Although I am certain this issue could be challenged legally, I have a suspicion both the Commis-

sion and the Department will reconsider this thinking when there is a need to do so.

Other than that, we (Californians) are all dealing with all the same federal threats and battles other animal facilities are unfortunately forced to deal with. The selective enforcement of USDA is more apparent than ever. The turnover of inspectors is beyond belief. We have had four new inspectors in the past four years/inspections. It really is baffling. Activists continue to persuade politicians to approach and author legislation for unwarranted issues that are fictitious and undeserving of taxpayers' money. But we continue to do what we can to protect our interests, our animals, and our industries. I consider it a normal and monthly expense to do so now, as I do my feed bills and utilities. It's just a part of our industries, and I hope all will adopt the same line of thinking, whether they support IAWA or another similar organization in their state and/or the FCF. Our strength is in our unity, and as I have always said, "We can affect the evolution of our industries or be a victim of it."

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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:	\$0.39	\$0.34	\$0.29	7.50 - 10.00	.25	100
1 Week:	\$0.69	\$0.64	\$0.59	30.00 - 40.00	1.0	25
2 Week:	\$0.89	\$0.84	\$0.79	50.00 - 75.00	2.5	10
3 Week:	\$1.14	\$1.09	\$1.04	100.00 - 125.00	4.0	10
6 Week:	\$1.44	\$1.34	\$1.24	130.00 - 150.00	5.0	5
8 Week:	\$1.54	\$1.44	\$1.34	155.00 - 185.00	6.5	5
10 Week:	\$1.74	\$1.64	\$1.54	190.00 - 225.00	8.0	5

* We offer combined quantity discount quail pricing.

Rabbits

Size	Our Price	Weight (lbs.)	Count
X-Small:	\$5.00	0.50 - 0.99	1
Small:	\$6.00	1.00 - 1.99	1
Medium:	\$7.00	2.00 - 3.99	1
Large:	\$8.00	4.00 - 5.99	1
X-Large:	\$9.00	6.00 - 7.99	1
XX-Large:	\$10.00	8.00 - 9.99	1
XXX-Large:	\$11.00	10.00 - 11.99+	1



Chicks

Size	Less than 500	500	1000	5000	Grams	Ounces	Count
Small:	\$0.25	\$0.20	\$0.15	\$0.12	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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BLAST FROM THE PAST: ESSA RULES AGAINST MARGAY IMPORT

Long Island Ocelot Club Newsletter
March/April 1978, Volume 22 Issue 2

The following letter was received by your Editor from the Endangered Species Scientific Authority in response to my answering a request for information on rulemaking by that department.

Dear Ms. Treanor:

On September 7, 1977, the U.S. Endangered Species Authority (ESSA) disapproved a permit application to import two margays from Nicaragua. As I felt this action would be of interest to LIOC, I thought I would take this opportunity to inform you of our recent activities involving wild cats.

The permit application referred to above was submitted by a zoo in the United States. The margays were purchased by an American couple at a market in Nicaragua. The couple was apparently concerned for the welfare of the cats and tried to give the cats to a zoo to ensure that they would have a suitable home. The ESSA disapproved the application because the approval would be inconsistent with the ESSA's policy on imports of specimens of animals and plants included in Appendix I of the Convention. The

ESSA has established a policy that it generally will not approve imports of specimens on Appendix I, unless such imports are for essential scientific use not detrimental to the survival of the species, or to enhance the propagation or survival of the species. The disapproval by the ESSA is the first test of its policy as applied to the import of pet Appendix I animals.

Furthermore, the ESSA noted that the approval of such imports of pet animals would probably stimulate collectors to acquire more animals for pets. As I am sure you are aware, such activities deplete wild populations and are often conducted without regard to the humane care of the individual animals concerned.

I expect that the ESSA's impact on the activities of LIOC will be minimal. The ESSA is primarily concerned with the international trade of wild animals and



The F&W suggestion to the LIOC to have their margay population designed as captive self-sustaining never happened. In 1979, the final rules on the ESA were adopted and eliminated the concept. This small feline usually has a single kitten per litter. Such small litters, coupled with natural attrition, has dwindled the population so that today there are only five documented margays in the entire country. This one resides at the Cincinnati Zoo. Photo by Jim Sanderson.

plants included in the Appendices of the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species. International trade in captive-bred specimens of Convention species is exempt from the provisions of the Convention and can be conducted under a certificate of exemption.

The Convention and ESSA recognize the importance of captive breeding to enhance the survival of species included in the Appendices of the Convention. However, as the taxonomy of wild cats is not well known, it is very important that breeding programs of these animals be rigidly maintained to ensure the genetic integrity of the species.

It would be most appropriate if pet animals were supplied by breeding existing captive stock. I would suggest that your organization might want to investigate having certain species of wild cats designated as Captive Self-sustaining. This designation simplifies interstate trade in such animals.

I would appreciate it if you would place ESSA on your regular mailing lists. If I can be of any further assistance to you or other members of your organization, please write or call me at (202) 343-5687.

Sincerely,
William Y. Brown,
Executive Secretary

Registered Exotic Feline Handler Program

The FCF board of directors congratulates the following individuals for being accepted into the Registered Exotic Feline Handler Program since the past *Journal* issue.

Alexandra Brielmayer – Basic
Christina LaMountain – Basic
Mary Roberts – Advanced

Christa Donofrio – Basic
Patrick Cochran – Advanced
Michael Tovar – Advanced

The three levels of FCF Feline Handler registration are: *basic* – at least one year of experience, *intermediate* – at least five years of experience, and *advanced* – more than ten years' experience handling exotic felines.

Be sure to update your registration in the members-only website when you obtain additional handling experience or new species experience. If you believe your experiences qualify you for an upgrade in registration status, make a request with your updates and the secretary will process the registration.

The online registration form can be filled out directly in the members-only section of the FCF website and the \$30.00 registration fee can be made through PayPal.

The board further challenges all FCF facilities to apply for accreditation by the FCF Accreditation Board. The overview, basic standards, and accreditation application are on the FCF members-only website.

Congratulations to all of these members for their dedication to their cats.

George DeLong, FCF Secretary

BOOMER'S FAMILY WON'T GIVE UP!

By Robyn Tubb (Boomer's Mom)

A few years ago, we took in Boomer, a serval who lost his original home due to the owner living in a Texas county that passed a ban ordinance. When the serval was discovered, the story came on the news and I contacted the owner and offered to give the six-month-old feline a new home. On April 4, 2011, the Montgomery County Animal Control came to our home and told us that, although Montgomery County allows exotics, because our house in Magnolia is less than 1,000 feet from a school, it was illegal to have a serval. We were not aware of this regulation. We were given 30 days to remove the cat.

Boomer is a beloved member of our family. The idea of "getting rid" of him simply devastated us. We didn't want to lose him. Our only choice was to accept that we would have to sell our newly remodeled home and move to a location where we would be allowed to keep our serval. Making this move would be hard on our family, not only financially, but also emotionally and physically. We had no idea where to go, but decided that we would try to find some rural land in a nearby county that allows exotics. I spoke with Montgomery County Animal Control and they advised me to try Waller, Liberty, or Walker County. Since Waller County was the closest county, we started there.

I called Waller County Animal Control on April 4, 2011, and left a message. Don Jones, the Animal Control officer, returned my phone call the next day. I explained our situation and asked him if we could own a serval in Waller County. Mr. Jones told me that servals were allowed as long as you had a permit and that he was responsible for issuing the permit. My husband and I were delighted that we had a place we could move to and keep Boomer. John wanted to hear for himself and called Don Jones on April 7, 2011. Mr. Jones returned the call on April 11, 2011, and told my husband that, yes, we could have Boomer in Waller, and all we needed was a permit from him, which would be \$150 a year. This was AWESOME news and we heaved a huge sigh of relief.

We immediately began looking for a place in Waller County. At first, we

searched for a house to rent so that either our friends or my mom could move there quickly and keep Boomer until we found something to buy. We looked every weekend from morning until too dark to see, but we were unable to find anything during the 30-day time frame. In order to comply with the order from Montgomery County Animal Control, we delivered Boomer to the man who bred him to temporarily keep him safe. We didn't want to lose our boy, but felt we had no other choice. At least we knew he would be loved and with someone he knew. On April 22, 2011, we took Boomer to Dallas, and informed Montgomery County Animal Control that the cat had been removed from our home.

This was terribly upsetting to me and I had to be placed on medication for stress. The more I tried not to think of Boomer, the more I did. We redoubled our efforts in searching for a place in Waller, especially when we got a call from Dallas, letting us know that Boomer was missing us as much as we were missing him!

We finally found a place in Waller, where our friends could move and keep Boomer for us until we found a place of our own. We called Don Jones and told him our friends were moving to Waller, and bringing the cat with them. He said that was fine. One of the happiest days of my life was when we drove back to Dallas, to pick up Boomer.

On May 11, 2011, we finally signed a contract on a new place in Waller. I sold my 1967 Camaro for half of what it was worth, and we sold a lot of personal things in order to get the money to buy this place quickly. Then once again, we called Don

Jones. I'm sure we called too often, but we wanted Mr. Jones to know what we were doing step by step. We were determined to do this by the book, just the way he said to do it, because we didn't want to ever go through such trauma again. Mr. Jones told us to have Boomer's shots up to date and then he would come out and give us a permit.

Meanwhile, we received a certified letter on May 16th, saying we were being fined for having a serval in our neighborhood after the 30-day removal order by animal control. The Home Owner's Association said they heard a rumor that we still had him, so we had to pay. The Home Owner's Association continued to harass us by writing us nasty letters. We had to get a lawyer to write a letter and inform them that we would be taking legal actions if it didn't stop. They finally dropped all the charges against us.

At this point, everything seemed fine. We were packing for our big move and visiting Boomer and our friends in Waller County. Then, Mr. Jones told my husband that before he could give us a permit, we must obtain a \$100,000 liability insurance policy. It was difficult to find an insurance carrier to provide this, but my husband found an agent to issue a policy and things were back on track.

Then, in mid-June, Mr. Jones arrived at the home of our friends who were keeping Boomer for us and told them that they had 30 days to remove the serval. He said that he did some checking and, back in 2001, the county commissioners enacted a ban ordinance for dangerous animals, so residents could no longer have an exotic animal in Waller.



Is Boomer giving Robyn a kiss or telling her a secret? Whatever the case, it's obvious that they've grown very close to one another!



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It was June 15th, and we had been talking to Waller County Animal Control since April 5th. We were totally up front about our situation and were repeatedly assured by Don Jones that we could have our serval in Waller County. Based on his assurances, we sold much of our personal property, put our house up for sale, and bought land with a mobile home – all to be with Boomer legally. We could not afford to move again. We had put everything into this move. We would do whatever it took to keep Boomer at our new place in Waller, such as building an extra secure cage that's concreted into the ground with no access to him from the outside.

I was not going to give up. I told my story to the sheriff of Waller County. When he learned what we had been through, he said to me, "We're going to make this right." Then he told me to talk to County Commissioner Frank Pokluda, who was the representative over my district. So that is what I did. I drove out to the store that Frank owned and told him our whole story and how the animal control officer had misled us. Frank understood how important this was and he was sympathetic to our plight. He told me, "I have done a lot of favors and people owe me. I will make it right."

Frank added the exotic animal ordinance to the agenda of the monthly commissioner's meeting the following week. Waller County has four elected commissioners and a judge who vote on all ordinances and county issues. We went before these officials prepared to tell our story. I had put together a booklet of photos and information about servals, Boomer, and what we had been through, to present to each official. We were never even given the opportunity to speak at the meeting. A very hostile commissioner named Sylvia Cedillo was dead set against allowing exotics in her county and she did all the talking (and yelling) that day. Mostly she yelled about how we took our poor cat out of Africa, ripped his nails out for our satisfaction, and how cruel it is to do that. After she was done, Frank spoke up and suggested the commissioners hold a workshop to understand more.

After that night, I was really scared, so I started looking for advice. I called a lady in Texas who raised bengals, because I remembered she also had a serval. She put me in touch with David Norris, another serval owner in Texas. David listened



Boomer gets caught by the camera while licking his chops. Now that he can stay with his family, life seems to be treating him pretty well.

to my story and had plenty to say, because he also went through a similar situation years ago with his serval. In his case, he went to court and then decided to sell his home and move out into the country to get away from the city regulations and keep his serval. David suggested I contact Lynn Culver, the Executive Director of the Feline Conservation Federation, because she knew a lot and had been very helpful to him.

I spoke with Lynn Culver, learned about the FCF, and joined as a member. Lynn gave me advice and insight into this process. She was very hopeful, knowing that at least one commissioner and the sheriff were sympathetic to Boomer and me. She explained that with only five voting members, all I had to do was convince three to amend the ordinance. She counseled me that it was a waste of time to work on Sylvia, but instead I needed to stick close to Frank, listen to and follow his advice, and ask him which commissioner I might be able to win over. That gave me hope, and I now understood the reason Frank had suggested a workshop. It would be to present a variance for Boomer or suggest that the county amend the exotic animal ordinance.

The next week, we had our workshop. We were looking forward to finally being

able to tell our story, but, once again, we were unable to talk. Sylvia was the one talking and asking questions. She asked the animal control officer, Don Jones, what he thought about servals. Don said, "I have no problem with servals. I would be much more concerned with a loose pit bulldog than a serval."

Sylvia asked the sheriff why the county had enacted an ordinance that prohibited exotic animals. He said he didn't know, but figured it was probably because the commissioners were too lazy to come up with ordinances and it was easier to ban exotics than develop regulations to possess them. She asked the sheriff what he thought of servals and he said he did not have a problem with people owning a serval as long as the animal was properly contained. Then Sylvia questioned the game warden about why servals were illegal. He told her that, back in 2001, the state legislature passed a dangerous animal act that listed large dangerous animals, like lions, tigers, and bears, and it also included servals. Sylvia asked his opinion of servals and he said he did not have a problem with them. She asked him why they were included on the dangerous animal list and he said he thought it was probably to increase revenues. He explained that the state law required

everyone to apply for permits and pay fees, and he figured the more animals listed, the more fees that could be collected. Sylvia was visibly upset at each of these answers.

Three more commissioner meetings followed the workshop. We hired an attorney to write up a variance for Boomer and it was presented at the next meeting. At that meeting, Don Jones, the animal control officer, proposed to instead have the county ordinance changed to match the surrounding counties, and suggested adopting the Montgomery County exotic animal ordinance.

Later, Don Jones and the sheriff came out to our home to inspect the grounds and location of where we intended to con-

struct Boomer's cage. They took measurements and amended the proposed ordinance to allow caging to be 500 feet from the nearest residence.

Two weeks later, at the fifth meeting, the ordinance was introduced and read. The following week, the commissioners met again and voted on the new ordinance opening up Waller County to allow permits for exotic animals. The judge and two commissioners voted in favor of the new ordinance, and two commissioners voted against it. The ordinance passed.

This has been one of the most frustrating things we have ever been through and I don't ever want to go through something like this again. Just the thought of us losing our loving family member was very

upsetting. We would have done whatever it took to keep him. I am happy to share with the members of the FCF the news that this terrible wrong has now been made right, and Waller County now allows its residents to possess exotics, providing the owners comply with permit requirements that cover caging, liability insurance, property location, and proper animal care.

We have finally closed on our new place and are about to build Boomer the most awesome cage he has ever seen. We can't wait to get him back with us to love and spoil. I hope our story will help someone. These ban laws do not have to stand forever, as this story illustrates. Good luck.

SERVAL SON: SPOTS AND STRIPES FOREVER

Book Review by Shelleen Mathews
Director, Wild Felid Advocacy Center of WA

When I heard this non-fiction book had been written, I was eager to read it, because I had a personal "history" with the main character, Deaken, an African serval. The author, Kris Smith, had been a volunteer at a facility housing many wild cats and wolves that I managed in the 1970s. In those days, it was politically acceptable to breed wild cats while also providing "sanctuary." Times have changed since then.

This 143-page book is simply written and can be easily read in a couple of hours. *Serval Son* is a poster-child for what should not be done in owning a wild cat. The author is upfront in admitting mistakes and her intention is to discourage private ownership.

I knew Deaken before he was born. His mother, "Rhodesia" (nicknamed "Dea"), and father, "Kenya," were housed at the facility I managed in the 70s. Deaken's name came from combining his parents' names, however the author states the "ken" portion of his name was because the father had come from the country in Africa. Actually, Kenya was born at Robert Baudy's place in Florida, and came to us via a short stint at the Olympic Game Farm in Sequim, Washington. Kris wanted to own a serval, and when the litter was born I gifted the kitten to her. Given her experience with bottle raising and her desire to bond with the kitten

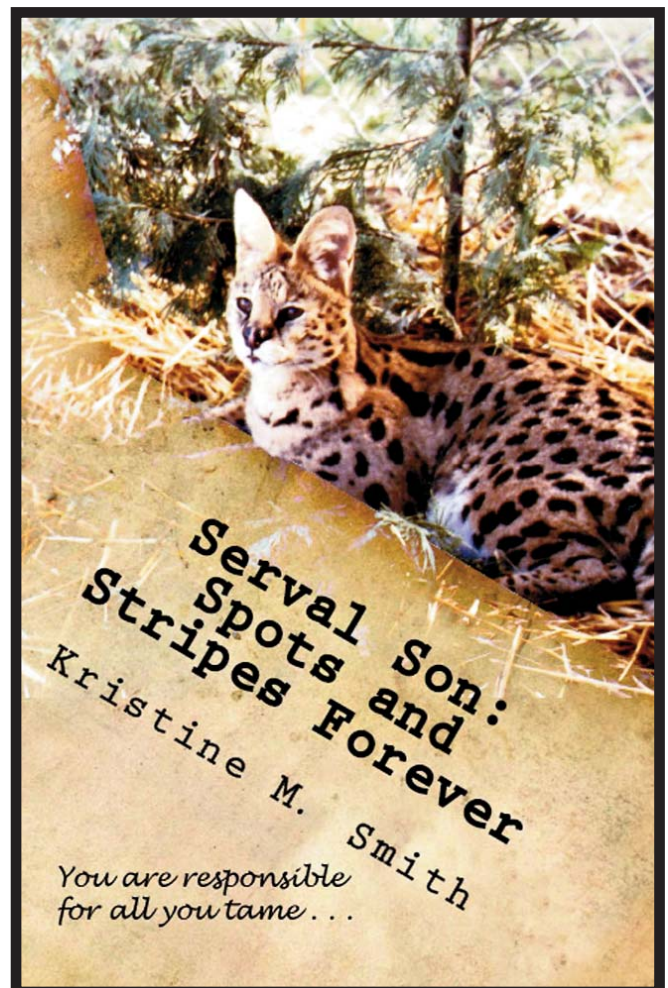
early, she took him home at five days of age.

My memories surrounding Deaken's parents, their breeding history, and kittens vary substantially from the author's, but the passage of time can cloud even the best and brightest of minds!

Serval Son documents the author's moves between Washington and California, her family, and her admiration for and friendship with DeForest Kelley (Star Trek's Dr. McCoy). Additional difficulties in finding housing for Deaken in California led to his being kept at Shambala (Tippi Hedren) for some time.

Smith shared a true bond with Deaken and did not give up that bond until the end of Deaken's life at 17 years of age. In chapter 21, I am confident readers will shed tears when Deaken crosses the Rainbow Bridge. The life of a serval and bond with his owner comes through to the extent that the message of discouraging private ownership may be over-

looked by readers. Although I enjoyed reading the book, it would probably not hold any compelling interest to the experienced exotic owner.



PUMAS & CHEETAHS & EDUCATORS, OH MY!

Don't miss this opportunity to take the next **Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course** on **November 5, 2011**, at the **Cincinnati Zoo**, from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Take advantage of two bonus activities that will let you see wildlife presentations by seasoned professionals. Arrive Friday afternoon to watch a 4:00 pm talk in front of the new Puma Exhibit at the Cincinnati Zoological and Botanical Gardens. Course instructor Ron DeArmond will give a presentation on America's great cat while cat handlers will have the pumas demonstrate behaviors. Meet at the front gate on Vine Street at 3:30 to be led as a group to the puma show.



On Saturday, November 5, arrive at the Cincinnati Zoo entrance gate at 9:00 am. Take a short walk to the Flamingo Room of the Tree Tops building. The multimedia presentation teaches: how to start a wildlife educator career, how to create a program, how to build public credibility and image, and how to pick, condition, and safely present feline ambassadors.

After a catered lunch, students will watch a special show at the Cheetah Encounter Arena. Cathryn Hilker and the cheetah handlers will run the cheetah and give a conservation talk.

This special two-day learning opportunity is priced at \$110 for FCF members and \$145 for non-members. Fee covers Cincinnati Zoo entrance at 4:00 pm on Friday, November 4, for the Puma Talk, plus zoo parking and entry at 9:00 am on Saturday, November 5, for the 8-hour Wildlife Conservation Educator Course. Course materials include textbook, felid ambassador booklet, tests, certificate of achievement, and catered deli lunch.

The official hotel is the **Hampton Inn and Suites Cincinnati/Uptown-University Area**. Located across the street from the zoo, at 3024 Vine Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45219, it is just a short walk to the zoo entrance. The special FCF room rate is \$109. Book your room online using the code "CHXFCE" or call 513-281-2700 and reserve Friday and Saturday for \$109 by mentioning the code "CHXFCE." The brand new hotel is walking distance from the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens. Included is a complimentary hot breakfast and in-room Internet service. Hampton Inn has a fitness center and indoor heated pool.

Nearest airport: Cincinnati Northern Kentucky International (CVG). The Airport Executive Shuttle can provide round trip transportation to the hotel for \$30. Book ahead at 800-990-8841 or at the desk at the Baggage Claim area to reserve and pay.



*Tecumseh & Joseph are
waiting to see you, so
register now!*

Register online at www.felineconservation.org (Upcoming Events page) and pay with PayPal, or use the mail-in form below:



Main-In November 5th Wildlife Educators Course Registration Form - please cut out or photocopy and mail with check or credit card info to: FCF Treasurer, P.O. Box 31210, Myrtle Beach, SC 29588

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Saving the “Generic” Tiger

Many tiger conservation programs divide tiger species along geographic and political lines (Siberia, Indochina, South China, Sumatra, and Bengal). Recent genetic evidence suggests that all modern tigers have descended from a common ancestry dating back only a few thousand years, and that geographic and political borders in no way define what a tiger is. The Rare Species Fund seeks out the finest tiger preservation projects for its support.



Recent political debates have cropped up about which type of tiger deserves to be saved. The conventional idea adhered to by many is that only documented pure subspecies are important and that undocumented “generic” tigers should not be allowed to exist. The recent advancements in our understanding of tiger genetics suggests that current policy and procedures concerning tiger conservation need to be rethought. Both *Science Daily* and *Current Biology* have reported on the conservation value on the “generic” tiger, noting that they provide genetic representation of tiger subspecies that are extinct in the wild.

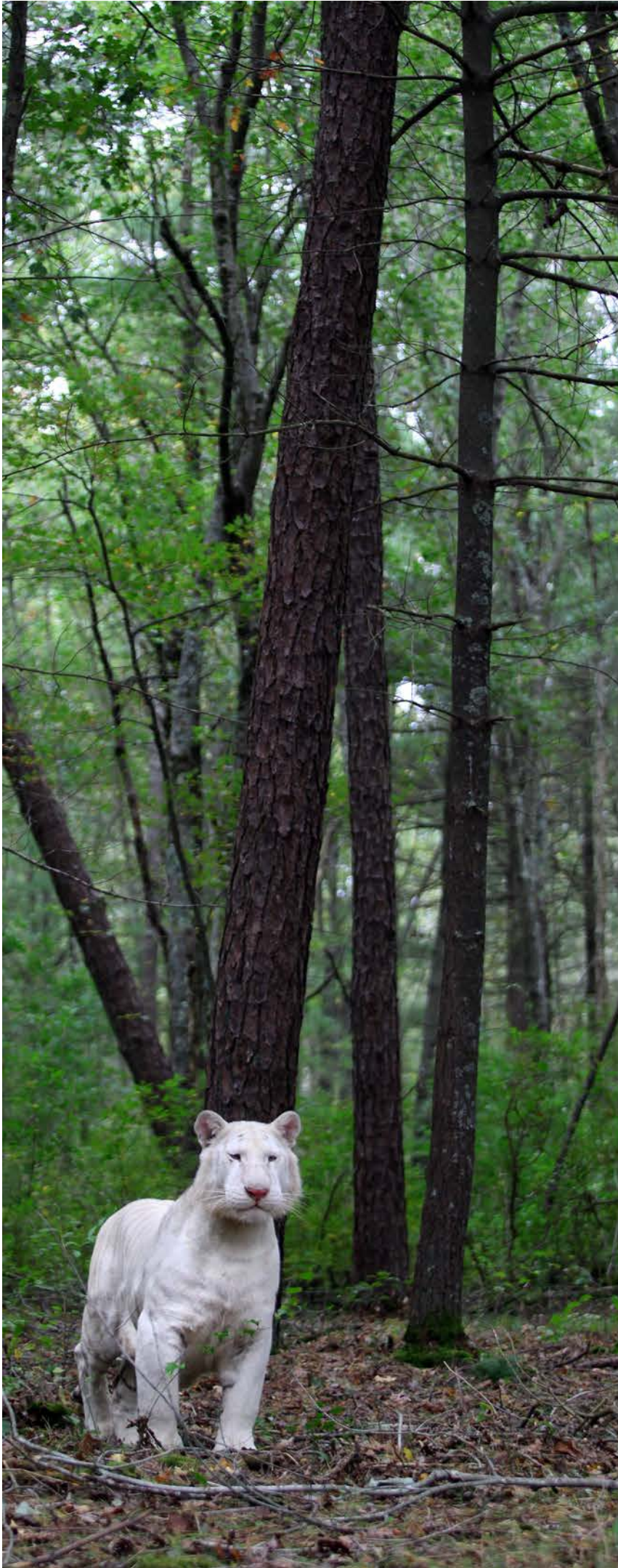
Studying mitochondrial phylogeography, researchers at the National Institute of Health have indicated that “classical tiger taxonomy has failed to reflect the true phylogenetic distinctions.” They also go on to suggest that, due to current

scientific evidence, the Caspian tiger and the Amur tiger “should be taxonomically considered a single subspecies.” The area of these two tigers ranges across an entire continent, nearly 4,800 miles, indicating that their distinction as separate subspecies was defined more by political boundaries than by physiological differences. If two of the most geographically distant subspecies are so incredibly similar, we must question the wisdom of “saving only pure subspecies” as a primary plan for tiger conservation.



“A tiger from Sumatra and a tiger from South China have less genetic differences than a person from Ireland and a person from Asia.”

- Stephen J. O'Brien - Chief, Laboratory of Genomic Diversity, National Cancer Institute



What does it mean when we say that there is a push to eliminate what the purists have dubbed the “generic” tiger?

It means that the different color varieties of the tiger will be no more.

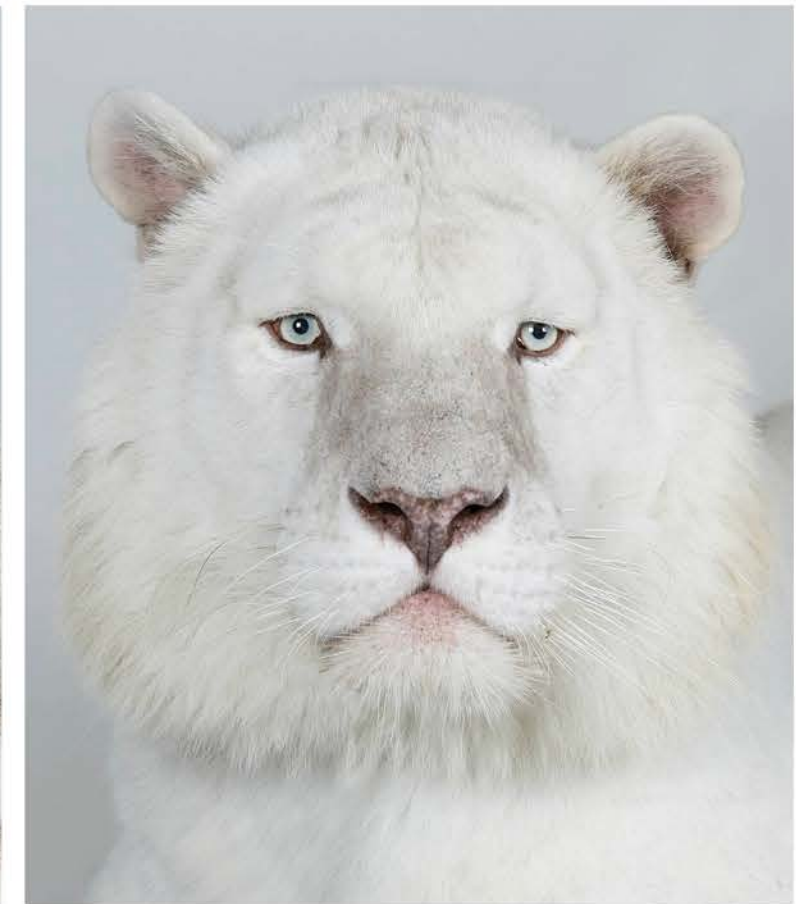
No white or golden tabby tigers ever again!

Detractors would have you believe that these animals are the product of human creation, when in fact they are the last remaining representatives of the diversity of tigers that once naturally existed in the wild, fully in need of being protected and preserved.

Not only is there an inherent conservation value in saving these varieties for future generations, because of their uniqueness, they play a very powerful roll in inspiring the public to be more environmentally responsible in all their endeavors.

Due to the critically small number of tigers in both the wild and in captivity, if we as a society decide that a particular variety or color of tiger may no longer reproduce, then we will have lost forever a piece of what makes the world a magical place.

The snow-white tiger was once known as the “ghost of the forest.”



If current proposed policy goes unchecked, we will lose these very rare color varieties of the tiger forever. This tragedy would mean that our children and grandchildren will only learn of their existence from pictures in books, just like this. (Clockwise from top left: royal white, snow white, standard and golden tabby tiger.)

Politics and Conservation

Ironically—and sadly—some wildlife legislation can do more harm than good when it comes to saving endangered species. Tiger extinction can be as much a result of politics as it can be from poaching. Widespread campaigns of misinformation have led to unrealistic estimates of the captive tiger population in the United States. The idea that there are more tigers in Texas than in India is not supported by the numbers. In fact Texas ranked 2nd in the U.S. and is home to only an estimated 300 tigers. Emotionally charged media broadcasts have led Americans to the false belief that there are an untold number of captive tigers living in squalid conditions in the backyards of America. Building on this misconception, it has been suggested that privately held tigers "could" be slaughtered and smuggled out of the U.S. to feed the Asian demand for tiger parts in traditional medicine. Although no occurrence of this has ever been documented, this idea has been repeated so many times that, for many people, it has become a matter of absolute fact. This belief has become the shaky basis for proposed legislation which would not only "not" help save the tiger, but actually hinder tiger conservation.



This Golden Tabby tiger is one of the few remaining genetic representatives of a type of tiger that has become extinct in the wild.

Tiger populations worldwide are dwindling to unstable numbers. If we follow the unsuccessful path of trying to save small numbers of pure subspecies only, we run the very realistic risk of losing all tigers. An exhaustive new tiger census has estimated that approximately 3,000 tigers exist in the United States. The generic tiger makes up more than 90% of this population and represents the greatest viable pool of tiger genetics. In fact only 280 of the roughly 3000 tigers in the U.S. fall within all the species survival plan (SSP) of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the founding stock of the Malaysian tiger SSP was only six animals. The likelihood that these programs will ensure the survival of the tiger is dubious at best. If proposed legislation is allowed to limit or halt the reproduction of the generic tiger, we will lose our most valuable conservation resource. We will be losing the forest to save the tree.



Seeing different colored tigers captures the public's imagination and inspires people to take an active role in conservation.

Tigers are a barometer of the natural world and ideal wildlife ambassadors for stimulating support of conservation efforts. Estimates by watchdog agencies suggest the worldwide population of tigers has dropped nearly 95% in the past forty years: barely 3,000 individuals remain in the wild. Up-close and un-caged encounters in properly managed private facilities—in particular, personal contact with the rare and colorful royal white and golden tabby tigers—evoke a lasting emotional response and stimulate the public's interest in supporting tiger preservation efforts.

HOW TO SCALE TO THE TOP OF CALIFORNIA'S MT. PAPERWORK

By Lynette Lyons

As a new restricted species permit holder in the state of California, I keep looking back at the eight-month-long struggle and wonder why it was so difficult. Honestly, I understand the necessity of preventing someone who wants a "pet tiger" living in a one-bedroom apartment from getting one. Furthermore, preventing animals from going to people who would neglect to care for them is an important mission. Negative examples aside however, it does not explain the immense difficulty of acquiring educational wildlife animals for people who have the means, motive, space, and experience.

When applying for an exotic animal permit in California, understand that you will most likely need to submit your application multiple times before you are either approved or denied. It starts off simply enough. You ask for a permit application and they oblige. Once you return the application, though, the real challenge begins. The first time I sent in my application, it was returned to me a month later with a list of more information that was needed, even though it had not been requested in the original paperwork. The second and third times were met with the same results. Eventually, my persistence paid off in the form of my permits. In the end, the application was nearly 40 pages thick.



Little Galindo, a golden spotted Geoffroy's cat kitten, has been hand reared by Lynette and socialized for his future as a goodwill ambassador.

To make this ordeal less harrowing for everyone involved, knowing the majority of what's required before applying should be extremely beneficial to all future applicants.

First and foremost, besides your application, a résumé should be included, detailing not only where you have worked with animals professionally, but also what animals you have worked with, for what length of time, and in what capacity. Regardless of how irrelevant certain experiences may seem, you never know how certain animal experience may affect your outcome. As an example, if you want to obtain a permit for a serval, but you cannot find a facility with servals that is hiring, working at a different facility with a bobcat, caracal, or other small cat is still considered sufficient.

Two years of full-time experience working with whatever animal you have applied for is required to even be considered for approval. At the end of your résumé, it is important to total the amount of time you have accumulated, therefore providing proof that you have worked the mandatory amount of time.

The next thing that should be included with your application is a set of "letters."

Everything from statement of purpose to letters of recommendation should be part of your extended application. A statement of purpose is simply a document stating what you intend to do with the animals once they are acquired. There must be a purpose behind the permits, whether it is



Lynette hand-feeds the world's largest rodent, a capybara.

caretaking, such as for a sanctuary, breeding center, or educational facility. If a person applies for a California permit for exotics stating that they simply want the animal as a pet, even with qualifying experience, the applicant will be turned down immediately.

Letters of recommendation can be more difficult to get for some people. Many letters of recommendation from former employers are simply verifications of employment. A letter that goes further, stating exemplary things about your work with the animals, is a plus. Other necessary letters need to be acquired from people who are interested in hiring you, or, in the case of a breeding permit, buying animals from you. Those letters provide evidence that you will be using the animals as the permit intends. Additionally, your application should also contain information about every animal that you request. A thoroughly researched report on each animal displays not only your knowledge, but also helps to illustrate how you would incorporate that animal in educating the public.



Although Galindo is being raised inside the house with Lynette, he looks as equally at home in this outdoor habitat.

Last, but not least, the most important thing to remember is that the more information you have, the better. Any little piece of information that can be added to your application doesn't hurt, and it might help. It doesn't matter how trivial the details are, because more is ALWAYS better.

Unfortunately, even with the most immaculate planning, there is no guarantee of succeeding the first, second, third,

licensed animal facility and have always lived with animals as diverse as camels and zedonks and ostriches. My love of animals has led me to want a license of my own. I have volunteered and worked at several facilities to gain the necessary experience, such as Classroom Safari, a Petaluma-based organization that brings exotic animals into schools. For the past few years, I have also been working with John Erickson and his late wife Jill, at

or even fourth time you apply. However, no matter how infuriating, frustrating, and disheartening things get, remember that if you have all of the qualifications and enough perseverance and tenacity, you will eventually prevail.

In my own case, I grew up in a

their Leaping Leopards facility in Sebastapol, a state licensed breeding center for ocelots and Geoffroy's cats.

I recently have had the incredible experience of rearing a little Geoffroy's kitten born at Leaping Leopards on Jill's birthday. He is named Galindo, after Jill. This fuzzy, rambunctious, little wildcat, native to South America, came to me at the age of two weeks. Galindo is getting comfortable with the sights, sounds, and smells of our human world. For all intents and purposes, I am his mother. I am already using him at presentations by Classroom Safari and am considering Galindo as a therapy animal, along with the other creatures at Lyon Ranch.

I recently learned that I have been approved for 12 exotic animal permits from the California Department of Fish and Game. In addition to the Geoffroy's cat, I am also licensed to possess a civet, ocelot, fennec fox, coati, genet, wallaby, porcupine, alligator, hedgehog, and sugar glider.

The piles of paperwork and months of waiting were completely worthwhile when Galindo came home for good. I will continue socializing Galindo in preparation for his future role as goodwill feline ambassador, appearing in classrooms and other community events, where I am sure he will get kids excited about exotic creatures.

Show your support with every purchase you make!

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ATHENA: MORE THAN JUST A GREEK MYTH

By Daniel Blinder

My life changed forever on the evening of April 19, 2011, when I purchased my first baby serval. Born on St. Patrick's Day, she was one month old, and it was love at first sight. She had been delivered from New Orleans, Louisiana, and I must've called the broker at least 50 times during the trip to make sure she was okay. When I arrived at his partner's house, he took me inside and had three servals in a cage, all with homes, all specifically spoken for. As soon as he opened the cage, she ran right up to my shoes and just lay there, while all the other servals had yet to come out. "That's your baby," he said, and I couldn't believe it. It was like she knew.

As we got in the car, my girlfriend would try to hold her as I drove, but Athena would just crawl over to my side and sit in my lap. A bond had formed. We took her to a friend's house nearby to show her off, and, surprisingly enough, she learned her first trick and remembers it to this day! I would put her on the floor and tap her head and say, "Tag, you're it," and run. Guess who followed every single time? Athena! Being that she was so small, she would constantly stumble as she ran and occasionally just ran head first right into the glass door. She was indestructible! After a short while playing tag, we decided to take her home to meet the rest of the family.

At the time, our family had consisted of a four-month-old Maltese, a 16-month-old jungle cat, my girlfriend, and me. Athena and Mister, the Maltese, took to each other amazingly, which was great, because now Mister had someone else to release his energy with. Cleo, the jungle cat, hated her. They could not be in the same room unattended. This lasted for three weeks; screaming, hissing, and grunting, no matter how hard Athena tried to get along. Then one day, Cleo just came up to Athena and started grooming her, and Athena curled up into a ball snug-

gling against her. It was an amazing moment, because for three weeks I wondered if they would ever get along. Now they are inseparable, and it seems like Cleo has some maternal instincts kicking in.

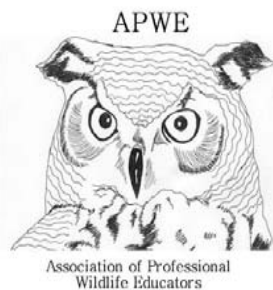
Athena has one favorite toy, Hedgy, the hedgehog. She loves him so much that she learned his name by herself, just listening to us talk about it. We would always play fetch with Hedgy, so that's actually how we taught her. One day, as my girlfriend and I were lying down in our room, we noticed that Athena was playing with Cleo, but Cleo didn't really like it, since she wanted to sleep. Being that we were tired, neither of us wanted to get up, so jokingly I said out loud, "Athena, go get Hedgy." She sprinted downstairs so quickly that I thought I had startled her, that maybe I had spoken too loudly and scared her. Before I could actu-



Athena gives her "Daddy," Daniel Blinder, an affectionate smooch before bedtime. Photo courtesy of Daniel Blinder.

ally finish my thought process, she was leaping into the room onto the bed, with Hedgy in her mouth, rubbing it against my hand. Laura and I just melted! After that day, no matter where we were or what we were doing, when anyone asked Athena to go get Hedgy, she did!

The Feline Conservation Federation held their annual convention in Orlando, this June, so naturally Laura and I went and took part in the educator's class. During this time, Athena stayed with my sister, who owns a 50-pound chow, Tisha. They got along perfectly, my sister would tell me, until it was bedtime. Athena was used to sleeping on our bed, but my sister didn't want that because my baby likes to attack toes in the early morning and apparently Laura and I had gotten used to that very quickly. Now that Athena had no bed, she took over Tisha's completely! She wouldn't let Tisha on it at all, even though you could probably fit a Great Dane on the doggie bed. Tisha would have to wait until Athena fell asleep and then slowly crawl onto the bed. This was a tricky situation for her, because if she woke her up, she would have to start all



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over again, but if she did it successfully, Athena would end up cuddling with her. It was too cute!

Ever since that wonderful, first day in April, we have tried to socialize Athena and take her out as much as possible. We started out with going to the vet even if we didn't have an excuse, just to stop by. Laura and I have a great relationship with Dr. Thomas Goldsmith and would highly recommend him for any exotic or avian needs. As the trips increased, so did the comments from our vet! Up to this day, he says that she is one of the best-behaved servals he has seen, and that's a huge compliment coming from a guy who has raised and bred servals, clouded leopards, ocelots, and more. We couldn't believe it, and we are convinced it is because of the amount of time we spend loving her and enriching her. Athena loves to play. Fetch and soccer are her favorites, even though she cheats sometimes and uses her mouth to put the ball in the goal. Yes, in the goal! She also loves to fish, and every so often we throw a live crab and a crawfish in the mix, which she absolutely loves! Athena was raised on seafood rather than raw meat until we switched her over to a Zupreme/Mazuri diet. She would eat anything from mahi mahi, tuna,



Leggy Athena reclines like the queen she is beside her smaller, domestic companion. If they could, they would be smiling for the camera!

shrimp, squid, and octopus. She just loved it. A few times she even chose the mahi mahi over a little piece of steak.

Because we take her out so often, Athena really behaves herself! Believe it or not, but she actually comes to restaurants with us and eats. Not on the table, of course, but on a chair next to us. We usually order a Caesar salad with chicken on the side and just give her the chicken, although she loves lettuce, too, as well as mint leaves! Athena has been to the mall, both walking on a leash and being carried, and she loves it. Even with everything going on and all the attention she gets, she always keeps her cool and never freaks out. Laura and I are expecting a rascal of our own in November, so we decided to take Athena with us to see our obstetrician, who is a family friend and owns many exotics, and she was a hit to say the least! We now have a list of doctors wanting to accumulate hours for a license because of her!

Athena has been a blessing, as not all servals are like her. No matter how bad of a day either of

us has had, we can guarantee that the second we walk in Athena will give us kisses and a head-butt and we'll have a smile on our face. She loves being affectionate. Sometimes when we carry her, she will put both paws on our face and pull herself up to kiss us and head-butt us. Once I am in the house, there is no room that I don't get followed into, including the bathroom. Athena treats us both the same, but I would say she is a daddy's girl. She is the star of all the programs we put on and is just the best ambassador anyone could ask for. Athena has been through a lot in her short life and currently is battling the giardiasis parasite. As much as it breaks my heart to see her in pain, she somehow finds a way to comfort me as if to say, "Do not worry about me, I will be okay."

On March 17th, a baby African serval was born; on April 19th, a life long bond was formed. Some say Athena will change as she gets older, but my vet and I disagree. She falls into a category of elite cats that remain calm and docile for life. How many servals do you know that will sleep on your chest with their head on your cheek? I look forward to writing more about Athena as she progresses and has her first litter. And for all you serval owners, be careful, Athena has her sights on being on the front cover!



Athena gets cuddles from another human friend. Photo by Daniel Blinder.

SHOULD WE SAVE TONY THE TIGER?

By Eden Tran

Traveling west on Interstate 10 through Louisiana, once you make your way over the Baton Rouge Mississippi River bridge, in about another quarter hour you'll find yourself in a small Cajun town called Grosse Tete. The name comes from a Cajun French term meaning "fat head." It's a very diminutive community with a population of less than one thousand people. There's not much around for outsiders, but many travelers end up stopping there at a truck stop/gas station for a fill-up, refreshment, or a potty break. The reason? Well, as you come close to the exit, a huge billboard looms over I-10, announcing the "live tiger exhibit" at the aptly named Tiger Truck Stop. Hmm, that sounds interesting, and I do need a rest from driving, so let's make a quick stop there! Just south of the interstate, you'll find the business, a sprawling lake of asphalt swarming with big rigs and a few other cars and trucks. Next to the commercial trucking area sits a squat concrete building, very noticeably painted in bright yellow and purple in homage to the LSU Tigers. And, speaking of tigers, right across the way from the gaily colored convenience store is exactly what the

billboard advertised: a real live tiger! For most readers, namely FCF members, this is not a big deal. We see exotic cats at work, at school, at home in the bed, etc. But the majority of folks passing through Grosse Tete, Louisiana, don't have that jaded attitude. For so many travelers, the lure of seeing an exotic cat up-close is just too good to miss!

Admittedly, it's a great business ploy, but with that comes the never-ending wrath of those pesky animal rights advocates. An eight year long battle has been brewing between the owner of the Tiger Truck Stop, Michael Sandlin, and the AR group Animal Legal Defense Fund. The ALDF bared its ugly teeth by suing the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, hoping that Sandlin's tiger of 11 years, Tony, will eventually be removed from his home at the truck stop. The ALDF, an AR organization which uses the legal system to target AR issues, reasons that Michael Sandlin should never have been granted a permit to own Tony in the first place. Sandlin's exotic cat ownership status was grandfathered in after Act 715 was passed through the Louisiana legislature in 2006, when it was deemed illegal to privately own or exhibit a tiger in the state. Regardless that Fish & Wildlife issued a permit for Tony back then, the ALDF insists that Sandlin never even met the eligibility requirements to be grandfathered in. Looking farther back in the legal records, they highlight the fact that an ordinance passed by the local government of Iberville Parish prohibited the ownership of any tiger or other big cat in 1993. The ALDF states that if Sandlin was not in compliance with local law at the time, he should never have been issued a permit in 2006. He did not legally own Tony prior to the change of the state law. To nitpick at the issue even further, they say Sandlin was




A parking lot view of the truck stop's convenience store and filling station. Tony's enclosure is to the right, a short walk across the lot.

also breaking the law because he did not live on the premises where the animal was kept.

This past spring, Mike Caldwell, a district judge in Iberville Parish, LA, ruled that no future permits would be issued by state officials allowing Tony to legally remain in Grosse Tete. Most recently, though, the First Circuit Court of Appeal, in Baton Rouge, reviewed the case on August 29th and overturned Caldwell's ruling. Now, Mike and Tony have the chance for another trial and, hopefully, a more positive outcome. Unfortunately, even with this lucky turn of events, another court hearing is still in the works for September 15th, this time with the intent of having the present permit, which expires in December, possibly revoked even sooner. This ongoing legal mess can be accredited to the ALDF, which this time points its finger at terminology within the statute specifying that a valid permit may only be issued to an animal's individual owner, Sandlin in this instance, whereas Tony's permit is in the name of a business, the Tiger Truck Stop. AR will grasp



A handpainted sign greets Tony's visitors and provides some background info. Tony accepts donations in the forms of cash or raw chicken - he wishes!



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Tony appeared cool and content in his newly painted digs the last time I visited him. He has a water mister attached to a vertical pole on the right, plus plenty of shade. Everyone else outside was sweating buckets, of course! Photo by Eden Tran.

at any straws they can, I guess. But, while the technical issue here may only be one of semantics, ALDF is still succeeding at causing as much trouble for Sandlin and his truck stop tiger as possible.

With all the AR attention and legal brouhaha, Michael Sandlin and Tony have garnered more than their share of publicity, positive and otherwise. The history of the Tiger Truck Stop goes back 20 years to when Michael was given possession of his father's tigers. Back then, the family was in the business of breeding tigers. Originally, they had a breeding pair named Toby and Rainbow. Then, after Tony was born in 2000, they acquired a mate for him, Salina, but they lost her prematurely to pancreatic cancer. In all, Michael says that they have had ten out of 13 tigers born that went on to live healthy lives, with some at various zoos in the U.S. Since the unforeseen death of Salina, Tony has been the sole inhabitant of the truck stop's exhibit. And because of changes made to the laws governing the ownership of exotic cats, it would be impossible to secure another companion for Tony.

I have been fortunate enough to be able to check in with Tony the tiger every once in a while, as I travel between Texas and Alabama a good bit. This began several years before I joined the FCF. After I began learning about the world of captive exotics, I started giving the truck stop

even more scrutiny. Was Tony being taken care of properly? Was he healthy? Was he content? And what was there to this uproar about "Save Tony the Tiger," with its websites and petitions? At the time, I was a newbie, not taking sides, but not believing everything I heard, either. I just relied on my own observations to help me make up my mind about the whole situation. Did Tony need saving?

On a particular trip home from a family Thanksgiving gathering a few years ago, we stopped in to say hi to Tony. We

weren't there long, but I watched him for a few minutes. He paced the entire time. And the more I looked, it seemed that he looked a little thinner than he should have been. Now I'm not saying anything personal against Michael Sandlin, but at that time it looked to me like Tony's needs might not be being met. I didn't see any enrichment items around either. I personally do not care if someone wants to own a certain animal, because that is a right that we should all have, especially in America. I've owned my share of unusual pets, including orphaned squirrels and a precious opossum. In fact, I have a particular disdain for PETA (shouldn't we all?!). My concern arises as to whether or not someone respects their animals enough to give them proper care and a dignified quality of life. So, at the time, I was marginally worried about how Tony was being treated. That's why I continued to drop by the Tiger Truck Stop whenever I traveled along I-10. But I knew that I wasn't getting to see the whole picture.

According to USDA records, the Tiger Truck Stop has had more than the lion's share of attention for a facility housing just one tiger. The USDA has routinely inspected Tony's home for compliance about every six months for at least the past few years. And, you have to go all the way back to 2008 before coming across an infraction, which, by the way, stemmed from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. Prior to that, there might be a list of further transgressions, but I don't know



Michael Sandlin and Joe "Exotic" Schreibvogel broadcasted Joe's "Out and Wild" show online on August 17th, with Tony lounging in his purple and gold lair as a backdrop. Photo by Eden Tran.

of them. I don't have those records. But what I'm trying to point out is that even though Sandlin's been under the USDA's microscope on a regular basis, he's been keeping things on the up and up. Regardless, though, AR continues to hound him.

Finally, on August 17th of this year, I had the opportunity to meet Michael Sandlin and get to see the OTHER side of the story! Up to now, I had still been monitoring Tony occasionally, and it looked like he was doing much better. No more pacing, and it was obvious that major improvements had been made to the entire truck stop. As an aside, another criticism from ALDF was that the new purple and yellow color scheme of the truck stop created an infringement issue against Louisiana State University. Happily, LSU doesn't think it's a problem!

So, back in August, another exotic animal celebrity and FCF member, Joe "Exotic" Schreibvogel of G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Park in Wynnewood, Oklahoma, showed his support of Tony's caretaker and truck stop family by broadcasting his weekly, live Internet show, "Out and Wild," from the inside of Tony's enclosure. I was able to be there for the

event, where I took photos, observed, and spoke with not only Michael, but also Tony's keeper Paul, a whole crowd of truck stop employees and customers, and Sandlin's business partner. Tony kept cool with his mister and relaxed on top of his concrete dwelling while everyone else suffered heat exhaustion. He even got a few head scratches and a raw chicken snack while we waited for the show to begin.

I had the chance to ask Michael about a few concerns of mine. As he answered questions, I could see by the look on his face that he cares very deeply for Tony and loved the others as well. He spoke candidly and explained to me how he sees the situation of having a tiger live by a truck stop. Mike likened the sounds of the trucks to a cuckoo clock, which can be extremely annoying to visitors, but is simply white noise in the background of those who live there. As for the gas fumes? Joe made his own assessment of the truck stop environment in relation to Tony's living quarters. He said that the fumes were undetectable from all the way over in the tiger enclosure. According to Joe, who takes responsible care for his own ani-




mals, Tony's life at the truck stop doesn't seem to be an impediment to his health or wellbeing. He's surrounded by people who love him and will defend him until the end.

So, does Tony need to be saved? Joe doesn't think so. Neither do I. Tony was born in captivity and bonded with Michael and his family. He's healthy and he's safe. His habitat and standard of care are in keeping with USDA criteria. It seems as if all is the way it should be. Except for the ever-present AR people. They'll never go away, but hopefully they can be thwarted. Michael Sandlin still has his battles ahead of him, but if he takes care of Tony responsibly and doesn't lower himself to the level of his enemies, maybe things will turn out positively in the end. If you would like to support Tony by signing the petition to keep him at home, please visit www.savetony.com. You may also connect with Tony on Facebook, at the community forum called "Keep Tony Where He Is." And, if you're like me and have the opportunity to be in the area, drop by the Tiger Truck Stop to say hello to Tony in person. After all, he's a bona fide celebrity now!



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AFRICA REVISITED

By Cathryn Hilker
Founder of Cincinnati Zoo
and Botanical Gardens Cat
Ambassador Program &
Founder of the Angel Fund
— supporting in-situ conservation

May 31, 2011, Tanzania,
Ruaha Carnivore Project

As our Cessna Caravan circles the landing strip in Ruaha National Park, I look out the window and I see a herd of elephants move across the runway. As we make our final approach, I cannot help but hope that elephants are better at dodging aircraft than birds. But just before the wheels touch down, the last of these great creatures clears the runway and vanishes into the heavy bush. It is always a thrill to be back in Africa. And bush flying has always been fun - bumpy landings, but fun. This particular flight saved me a 13-hour drive from Dar Es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania, over roads that are nearly nonexistent. My old back had slammed the door on that option. The plane taxis back up the runway, showering dust and sand, and comes to a stop beside the biggest baobab tree I have ever seen. Looking quite small and alone under this ancient tree is one young woman and one Land Rover. The elephant herd has long since vanished.

In this remarkably remote part of Africa, a young English woman has her project center, which we must endure two more difficult hours of driving to reach. Situated in the Ruaha National Park, Amy Dickman, a Ph.D., from Oxford University, has the task of creating and running a community-based conservation effort with the local Maasai/Barabaig who live in the park. Please take note of the word "community-based." The park supports not only wildlife, but it must also support the needs of the people who live in the park, and their input in any project is of the utmost importance.

Wildlife, particularly predators, living in close proximity to people frequently leads to conflict. The loss of one breed-



Dr. Amy Dickman works to solidify her ties with one of the local Tanzanian villages, which will aid in her quest to gain their cooperation in her conservation efforts. Photo courtesy of Amy Dickman.

ing-aged goat can be catastrophic to a family who only has two breeding-aged goats. The retribution for this kind of loss often leads to death for the nearest predator. The predator to be killed, be it a lion, hyena, or cheetah, can often be the one that just happens to be seen in the area. It

new corral, but also show great appreciation towards both Amy and me for the help. This is how community based conservation works.

Amy faces the problems that all grassroots organizations encounter; poaching, indiscriminate trapping, illegal hunting



In Maasai villages, where raising livestock is vital for survival, poison has been used in retaliation for loss from predation. Prior to Cathryn's visit, a whole lion pride was tragically killed as a result of this practice.

is not necessarily the goat killer.

Any solution Amy suggests to solve these conflicts must include local village input. Maasai traditionally put livestock in corrals (boma) at night, but many of them are not predator proof. Amy has championed the use of strong predator proof wire fencing to reinforce the thorn corrals which her project funds when the village agrees not to hunt the local predators. We visit one of these new, sturdy stock corrals in the nearby village. They have had no stock losses of any kind for several months and the people show not only great pride in their huge

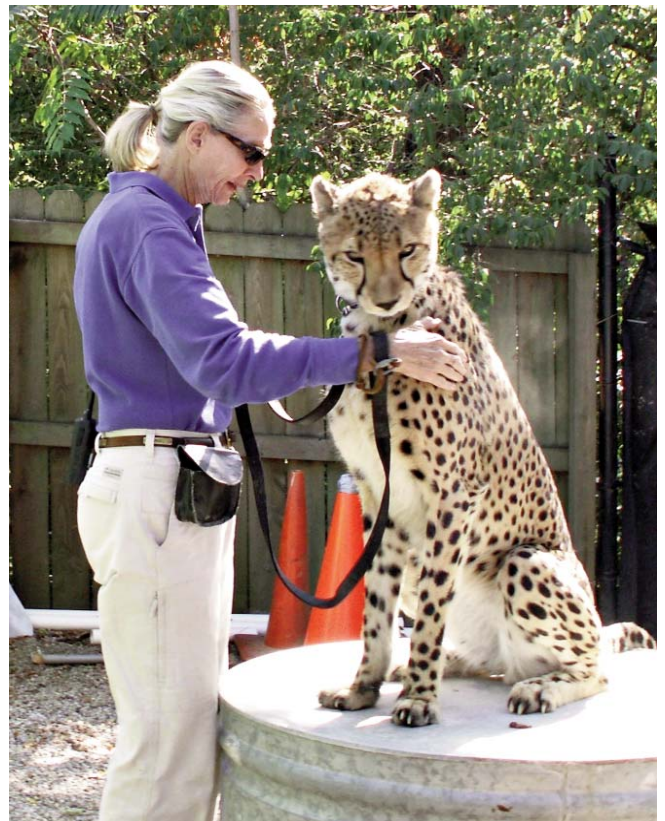
sponsored by foreign interests, and the newest threat - poison. The day before I arrive, Amy had received the news of a stock loss in another village. In a particularly lethal reprisal, bits of poisoned meat were left at the stock loss site and a pride of 20 lions died as a result. This newest and deadliest method of predator control has a devastating effect on the entire food chain.

But this not a story about good people versus bad people; it is actually a story as old as human history. It is a story of competition for resources, food, and space. I learn a hard lesson on this trip. I am still not certain where to put this information, but I am pretty certain of one thing. Once asked at a lecture what each person in the audience could do to help wildlife, E. O. Wilson, author and world famous entomologist, answered "Educate, educate, educate."

Personally, I have been fortunate to be affiliated with the Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Gardens, which has allowed me the use of many animals, both native and exotic, particularly our cheetah ambassadors. We all know the power an animal has in the classroom. We all know the spell they have over us, their owners and trainers. As every zoo, private breeder,

and animal owner uses this "spell," we can tell the story to a huge audience. We who know the privilege of having animals in our lives can only repay those lives by telling the story over and over.

The Cincinnati Zoo cheetah ambassadors will continue to raise financial support for projects such as Amy's. We shall continue to provide as much conservation education as possible. We shall continue to run our zoo's cheetahs so that every zoo visitor can see the speed, hear the sound of feet pounding turf, and at times, even hear cheetahs breathing heavily as they pass. But frankly, right now, I have a need to just go touch our cheetahs and know that they are safe.



Cathryn Hilker spends some special one-on-one time with one of the Cincinnati Zoo's special ambassador cheetahs.



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EVERYTHING'S BIGGER IN TEXAS... EVEN BIG CAT LEGISLATION

By Terri Werner
Director, Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge

Starting back in February 2011, Texas introduced two bills regarding exotic animals. I was notified by Lynn Culver about these bills and immediately started contacting everyone I knew here in Texas.

The bills initially were introduced based on two entities, Primarily Primates and a couple who was starting a sanctuary.

For those of you who have been down this road and seen the process of how bills are introduced, heard, and voted on, it's very frustrating, and fighting these bills were no exception.

HB 251 was introduced to basically stop some people from starting their own sanctuary. It was first brought up by an unhappy neighbor (and not a close neighbor). The couple went to court and won their right to have their animals and start a sanctuary. They had complied with all regulations in Texas and with the USDA. That didn't make the "neighbors" happy, so these people contacted their house representative. He decided to introduce a bill that would stop the couple, but not hurt anyone else. As we all know, this never happens. This particular bill was long and messy. Luckily, when we all got up to speak on this bill, it was evident that it was geared toward these individuals and was written without regard to anyone else.

HB 1546 and SB 958 were the same bill. Basically, these were not bad bills; they wanted to define a "sanctuary" in order to protect true sanctuaries, which we all agreed was needed, because the lack of a definition is what started some problems with Primarily Primates. However, Primarily Primates had teamed up with the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, and they were added to the bill to "accredit" sanctuaries. If you were accredited by them and met the definition of a sanctuary, then you were exempt from further regulation. This, of course, didn't set well with many of us sanctuaries. It's fine if

you want to join other groups and be accredited by them, but you should not be forced to join, nor make a single organization the only "accrediting agency." The American Sanctuary Association had also been named as an accrediting agency, but was later dropped from the bill.

I have to say that it was nice to see all the animal people come together on this. Sanctuaries, breeders, exhibitors, private owners, zoos, and other animal groups turned out to fight these bills.

Tiger Creek asked all of its supporters

part, they are working. The one problem we have seen is that some counties have decided not to develop or enforce any regulations. Counties are supposed to either ban exotics or permit them by following the Texas state requirements to have the owners, sanctuaries, and zoos register their animals. Some counties are just not dealing with it.

If there is one thing I can stress to everyone out there who has exotic animals, please, please stay on top of regulations and fight for what is right. Your voice will be heard and can make a difference. We are fighting large animal rights groups who have deep pockets, but, when we all work together, we can defeat them.

I also have to say that most of these bills get introduced because of private owners or exhibitors who do not have the money to build proper cages. Remember, first impressions are everything. If we are to prove to legislators, neighbors, and animal rights groups that we can properly take care of these animals and give them a good life, then you have to build nice, roomy, sound enclosures. If you cannot afford to, then you should not have the animals. With rights come responsibilities. Passion and your love for the animals do not persuade the public that you can take care

of the animals. Show that you are concerned about the animals' welfare, the public's safety (neighbors), and your ability to provide a great home for the remainder of the animals' lives. And, by all means, please set up a plan for someone to care for your animals in the event of your demise.

I am sure Texas will face these bills again in the future. The FCF needs to make itself known as an accrediting agency for animal holdings. ZAA was added to the bill to be exempt along with AZA. They presented facts that showed they were just as good as AZA. The FCF and other organizations can prove that they are just as creditable as the Global Federation.



in Texas to sign petitions to these representatives and make phone calls. In the end, we had over one thousand petitions signed and the representatives' phones were ringing off the hook.

Everyone dealt with these bills through May, when the legislative season ended, and just when we thought it was all over, they were introduced again into the special session, a time at which no one can speak on the bills. We just held our breath and hoped they had heard us and listened and saw that these bills hurt animals, did not help them, and are a waste of time and money. And once again these bills did not pass.

Texas already has laws in place regulating exotic animals, and, for the most

THE TIME TO BE PROACTIVE IS NOW!

By Kurt Beckelman

In February of 2010, an Exotic Ban Bill was introduced to the State Legislature to be voted on. Thanks to the help of GW Exotics, Bill and Melissa Meadows, Leah and Bobby Aufill, and a contingency of primate owners, we were able to get the bill killed in committee before it had a chance to be voted on. We went and met with the committee members weeks before it was to be voted on and presented the facts that this bill, SB 1798, was the work of HSUS and that they hired a lobbyist, a former state legislator herself. We were met for the most part with open minds, save for Senator Easley.

After the committee met, one state senator came to me and suggested very strongly that this would not be the last time something like this would be attempted and it would be in our best interest to present a proactive exotic bill. That is the reason for this article.

As of this writing, there are 20 states that have ban laws in effect. More are being added yearly. The politicians are being influenced by the likes of HUSU and PETA, along with Born Free and other animal rights groups. They have the money and the influence to scare and mislead, helping these ban laws gain support.

I know that there will be many members who do not agree with regulations. But we have to wake up and see that with us being proactive and introducing and working to get a proactive bill passed in our prospective states, Oklahoma included, this is a chance for us to be able

to keep our exotics. Without being proactive, we are allowing the AR groups to take away our freedom to keep exotics. If we ignore this, then we have no reason to complain. It is much easier to work before laws and regulations are passed than to try to get them reversed. I for one do not like being told that I need a law or regulation to keep exotics. But, truth be known, we live in a society that runs on laws and regulations, and if this is what it takes for me to have the animals of my choosing, then I will meet this reality half way.

I have posted on the FCF group site for Oklahoma members to contact me concerning the proactive bill that I am working on. I have only received one reply. I need help on this and hope that all members in Oklahoma will respond. This is not a one-person issue; it applies to all of us. I hope that members in other states that do not have exotic ban bills will consider working on a proactive bill before it is too late. It is coming, people, and burying your heads will not make it go away.



group 1



group 2

FCF NEEDS YOUR HELP TO MAKE THE WILDCAT SAFETY NET FUND RESCUE-READY!

For a \$50 donation, choose one of three thank you prints by artist Teri Zucksworth. These 18" by 24" colored-pencil drawings are ready for matting and framing. Pick the black leopard "Hanging Around," the lounging white tiger "Paying a Visit," or the snow leopard "Standing Guard."

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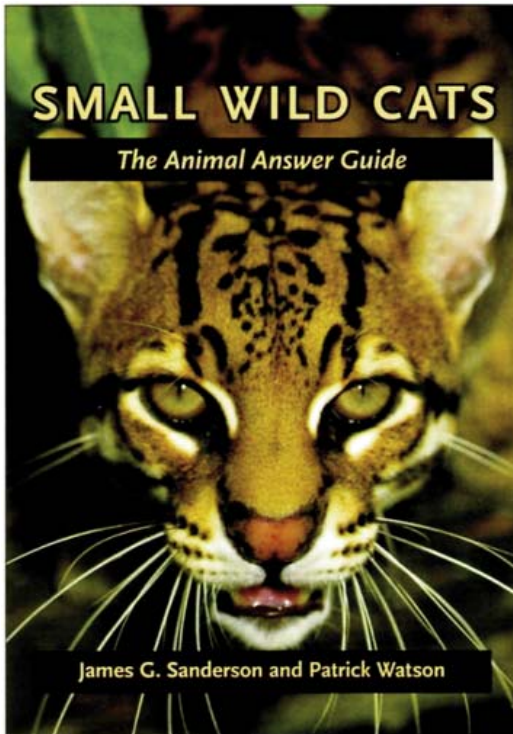
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Do your part to help transport captive felines out of harm's way -- support the FCF Wildcat Safety Net with a donation today.



group 3

SMALL WILD CATS: THE ANIMAL ANSWER GUIDE



Jim Sanderson's book, *Small Wild Cats: The Animal Answer Guide*, published by The Johns Hopkins University Press, is now in print. Artist Patrick Watson produced the original artwork in the book and is a co-author.

We are all familiar with the big cats such as the lion, tiger, cheetah, leopard, and puma; however, very few could name many of the other 30 species, except perhaps bobcat and lynx. But the diversity of small wild cat species is quite remarkable and includes fascinating animals such as the black-footed cat, the flat-headed cat, the Andean cat, and the bay cat.

Why a guide to small cats? The easy answer is that they are beautiful and mysterious and add a diversity of behaviors and habits not found in the big cats. And they intrigue many of us. Unlike the lion and some domestics and feral cats, all of the small cat species live a solitary, secretive life. Many are rare and in danger of becoming extinct, and some are so rare and difficult to study that we can describe only their appearance and approximate geographic range. Some have *never* been studied in the wild.

Unlike the big cats, small cats have been little studied in the wild. Over time, myths and legends about many of the species have grown. However, we now know enough to provide answers to many questions both the scientists and naturalists have been asking. One fact has emerged as our knowledge base has broadened: small wild cats are nature's most perfect predators. This guide has been created to answer the many questions that arise about these small but unique creatures.

Small Wild Cats: The Animal Answer Guide is available from Jim in soft or hardcover. If you are interested, contact Jim at gato_andino@yahoo.com. The book is \$45 hardcover and \$24.95 softcover.

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION OF SANCTUARIES & EDUCATORS

Never before has the industry in California been under such attack. For some time now the California Fish and Game Commission has been overwhelming the animal industry with proposed amendments. The latest round would require licensees turn over to the Department confidential files, business records, and business contracts, as well as impose mandatory additional inspection fees that would total thousands of dollars.

A substantial number of sanctuaries and private preserves and rehabilitation facilities decided to band together and form C.A.S.E., California Association of Sanctuaries and Educators, to represent their interests. Kele Younger, one of the founders, served legal documents directly on the Department for licensee records so that C.A.S.E. could begin contacting and organizing permittees. C.A.S.E. has sent out a petition and gained pro bono legal assistance. The new association did not attend the public hearings this past August, but did serve legal briefs on the Fish and Game Commission.

Kele Younger operates Magic Jungle, a non-profit sanctuary and educational facility outside of Palm Desert. Magic Jungle does educational tours once a month, and also provides felines for some film and television work.

C.A.S.E. is recommending that all association members and affiliated supporters join the FCF. Kele notes that the FCF does an incredible job of social networking and monitoring issues nationwide and keeps its members informed.

"Tragically", says Kele Younger, this could be the last generation to privately possess and care for our spectacular wildlife."

For more information about C.A.S.E. or to join, send inquiries to C.A.S.E. c/o Magic Jungle, P.O. Box 580103, North Palm Springs, CA 92258.



Nileca and Asiaca, a brother and sister Asian leopard pair, pose with Kele Younger. The two were born in a Chicago area zoo and moved to Magic Jungle as adolescents. When they arrived, they were little terrors according to Kele Younger, but today they are love monkeys and have become the mascots for the park. Photos of the spotted siblings appeared in *Glamour Magazine's* "Girls Gone Wild," as well as on the covers of *Palm Springs' Life Magazine*, and the cover of *Desert Entertainer*. Photo by Mark Farley, of Elite Land Tours of Palm Springs.



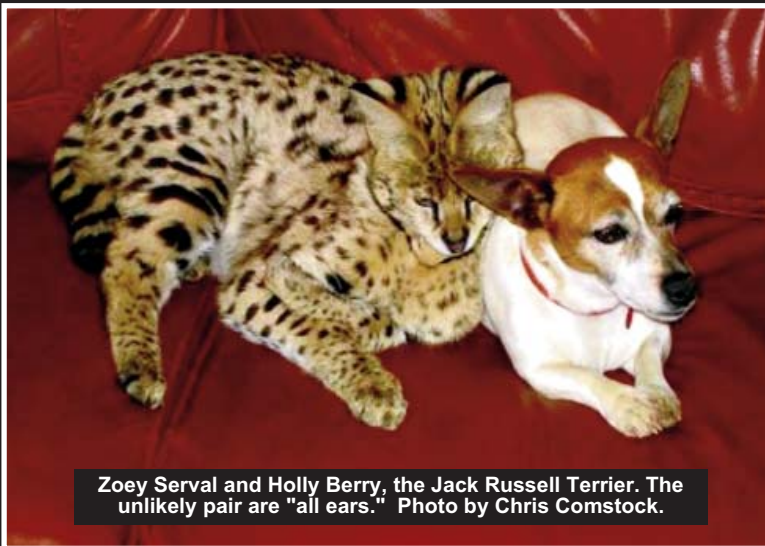
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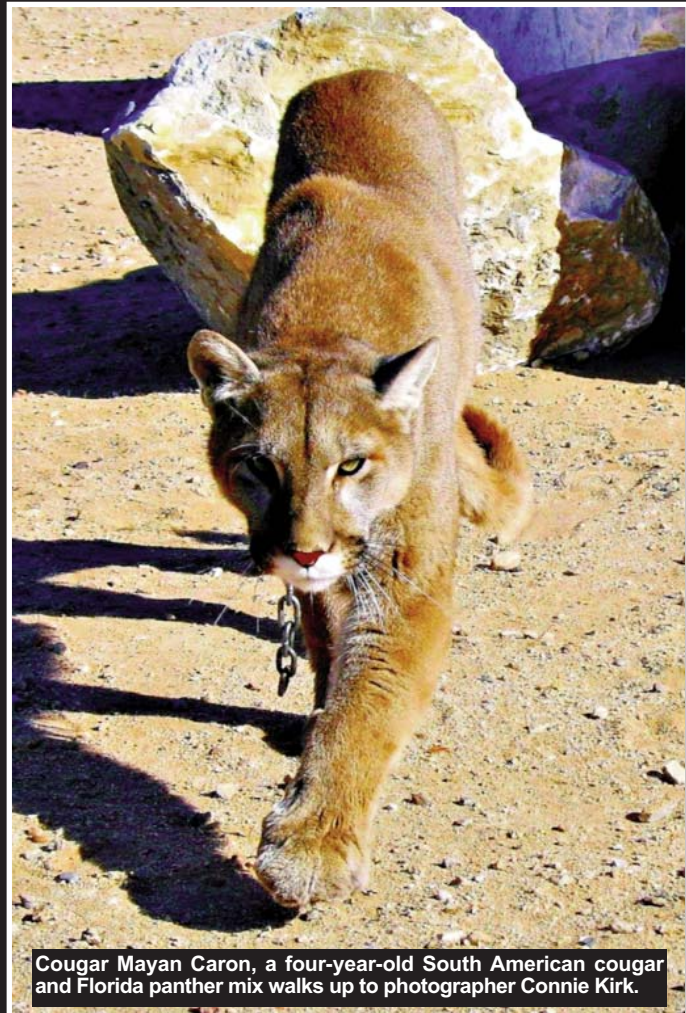
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Zoey Serval and Holly Berry, the Jack Russell Terrier. The unlikely pair are "all ears." Photo by Chris Comstock.



Cougar Mayan Caron, a four-year-old South American cougar and Florida panther mix walks up to photographer Connie Kirk.



Sandi Spears photographed little lion cub, Tonka, resident of Cedar Cove Feline Conservatory and Education Center.

YOUR BEST SHOTS



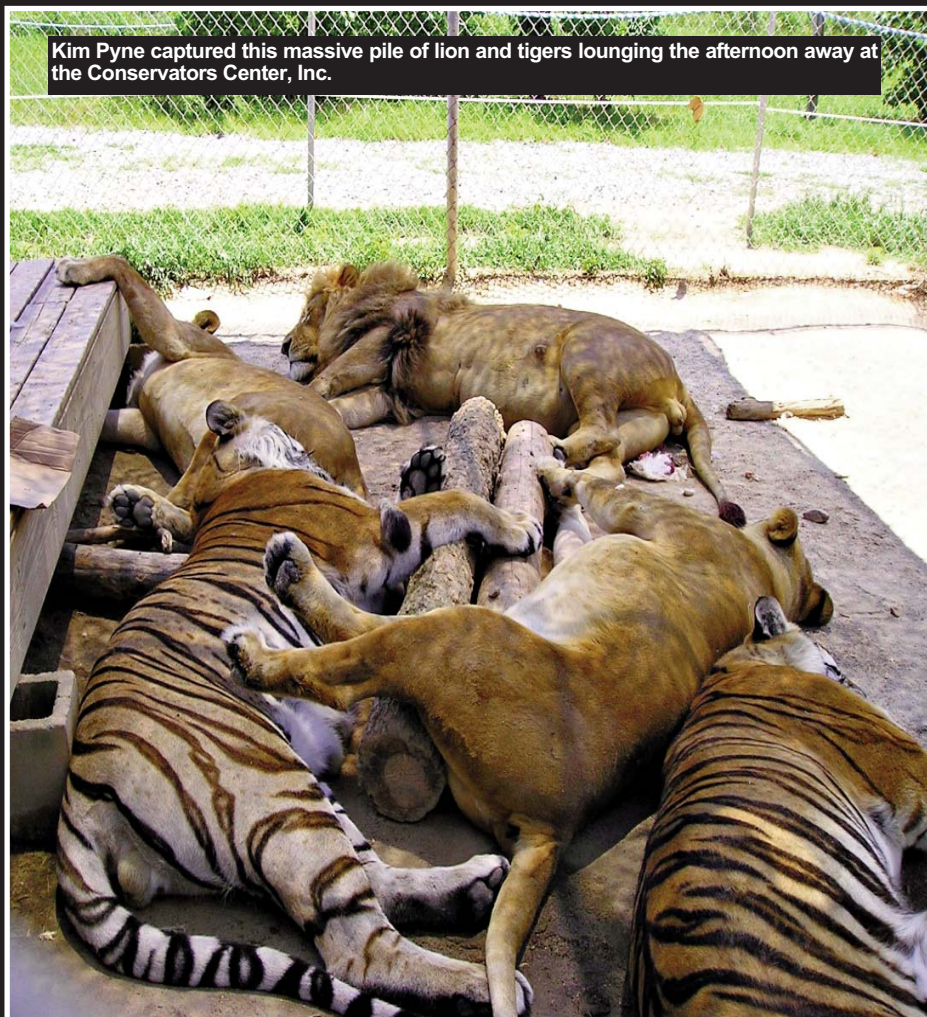
The more the merrier. In this case, five little Geoffroy's kittens stare intently at photographer Lynn Culver.



Kahn, of Hawk Creek Wildlife Center, lies across the master bed looking as regal as the lion portrait behind him. Photographer Loretta Jones says he is an amazing feline and one of her best ambassadors.



Sweetie the bobcat looks like the original "Velcro kitty" as he scales the walls. Photograph by Gustavo Alegria.



Kim Pyne captured this massive pile of lion and tigers lounging the afternoon away at the Conservators Center, Inc.



Another shot of Athena, Daniel Blinder's little Greek goddess.



Yvonne Veety's Monty ocelot, resident of Panther Ridge Conservation Center, may look familiar to you, because he is the ocelot on the FCF logo.

THE TRUTH ABOUT GENERIC TIGERS

By Lynn Culver

More than 95% of the world's wild tiger population has been lost in the past century from hunting, poaching, and habitat destruction. In the early 1970s, with much fanfare, Project Tiger attempted to increase tiger numbers with habitat protection and anti-poaching measures. Recently, however, the world's premiere tiger reserves have had entire populations, numbering over 400 tigers, completely wiped out by poachers in collusion with corrupt officials.

Equally distressing is the parallel decline in captive populations. Captive-bred tigers are critically important safeguards against extinction and fill the needs of education, breeding, and exhibition in the United States. Contrary to the spurious estimates of 10 to 15 thousand tigers in America, a careful and systematic nationwide survey of tigers and tiger habitat conducted by the Feline Conservation Federation has revealed that there are only about 3,000 tigers living in American captivity.

We have suspected for a long time, and now we know for sure, that the pitiful, dwindling number of tigers living in nature actually exceeds those protected from harm living in state and federally licensed animal facilities in America.

Over the past decade, we have seen a decline in captive tigers and the number of facilities that provide tiger habitat. Many USDA-licensed breeding facilities have either given up their licenses or evolved into non-breeding sanctuaries. One example of this trend is Big Cat Rescue, originally called Wildlife on Easy Street. In the 1990s, this large and diverse private collection was actively breeding and selling kittens. Today, however, Big Cat Rescue is conservation's worst enemy, and is leading the charge to legislatively force the extinction of all captive felines.

Other organizations, like Born Free, formerly known as Animal Protection Institute, and the United States Humane Society (HSUS), are waging well-funded and misleading campaigns that publicly smear the reputation of USDA-licensed facilities and the conservation value of most of America's captive tigers. World Wildlife Fund and TRAFFIC have joined these animal rights extremists to put pressure on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

to rescind the regulatory exemption that allowed commercial breeding and interstate commerce of "generic tigers," those felines that are not pedigreed or are subspecies mixed tigers. These organizations rationalize their campaigns by implying that if America has a healthy captive tiger population, these felines could, potentially, someday enter into the black market for body parts, and this would, somehow, fuel demand and increase poaching in the range countries.

Interestingly, this fear is the opposite of what happened with the American alligator. Commercial captive breeding actually removed poaching pressure and alligators in nature rebounded.

Furthermore, the decision to leave generic tigers listed as endangered, but exempt from the CBW requirement, is a different approach than what was taken by the Fish & Wildlife Service for the chimpanzee. On December 28, 1988, the Fish & Wildlife Service approved a special rule declaring captive chimpanzees a threatened species, which exempted them from the general prohibitions imposed on endangered species. Fish & Wildlife Service reasoning was that it "may encourage propagation, providing surplus animals and reducing the incentive to remove animals from the wild."

On June 11, 1993, the public comment period re-opened on the proposal to eliminate registration for several species that were present in the United States in large numbers and were genetically unsuitable for scientifically based breeding programs. The decision to include "generic tigers" in the proposal was based on the Service's belief that the scope of the Captive Bred Wildlife (CBW) registration should be

the encouragement of responsible breeding that is specifically designed to help conserve the species involved (i.e., in the case of tigers, breeding on a subspecies level). The Service believed the breeding of generic tigers had never been affected by the CBW system because generic tigers could be found in most of the 50 states, and intrastate commerce had never been regulated by the CBW system. The Fish & Wildlife Service supported the rule because it wanted to facilitate interstate breeding transactions with exempted species and, thereby, increase successful breeding and maintenance of these endangered and threatened species.

This rule was part of several proposed changes published in the Federal Register in 1993, and opened for public comment. A total of 1,269 sets of written information and comments were received from individuals, institutions, and organizations. The proposal to exempt certain species from CBW registration elicited just 142 comments, of which 101 recommended either complete deregulation of captive-bred wildlife, or at least of interstate commerce in such animals. The pro-



Freya, a beautiful orange tiger, resides at Conservators' Center, Inc. Because Freya does not have a known pedigree and has not been DNA tested, this feline is considered "generic" by the F&W Service. Photo by Mindy Stinner.

positional was supported by 26 commenters and opposed by two. Thirteen other commenters favored or opposed some, but not all of the taxa proposed for exemption.

Contrast that to the current Fish & Wildlife Service proposal to rescind this exemption for generic tigers, published August 22, 2011, in the Federal Register. More than 11,000 comments have been posted in less than three weeks! Reading the comments leaves no doubt that well funded and Internet savvy animal rights fanatics are misleading the public and inflaming hysteria. Comments by the AR followers include demands to Fish & Wildlife to track and register all tigers, to stop people from keeping them as pets, to protect tigers from the horrible abuses owners subject them to, and to stop owners from selling tiger body parts to the black market. I have even read comments asking the Service to protect tigers because owners are "skinning their tigers alive."

Tigers are called "generic" when they lack pedigrees that track back to nature. When the ancestry of a tiger is not documented it, cannot be accepted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service as being a Bengal, Amur, Indo-Chinese, or Sumatran tiger, even though it may indeed be such an animal. But not having a written pedigree does not mean the feline is not valuable. In fact, according to renowned geneticist Steve O'Brien, testing of tigers to determine subspecies origin found that 14 of 62 tigers (23%) not enrolled in any managed breeding programs were indeed purebred, as well as seven of 50 tigers (14%) of unknown origin being verified as pure subspecies. If 14%–23% of the 3,000 American generic tigers were tested for genetic purity and found to be purebred, it would more than double the number of tigers available for managed breeding programs. Also, according to Mr. O'Brien, an important fraction of captive tigers retain genetic diversity unreported, and perhaps absent, in the wild populations. Further, Mr. O'Brien found genetic markers and diversity in generic tigers not found in the smaller gene pools maintained by the SSP breeding programs.

Even without DNA testing, many private facilities have carefully managed their breeding programs to increase genetic diversity through out-crossing. Today's white tigers are typically perfect specimens, and many of the genetic defects inherent in the early AZA zoo inbreeding

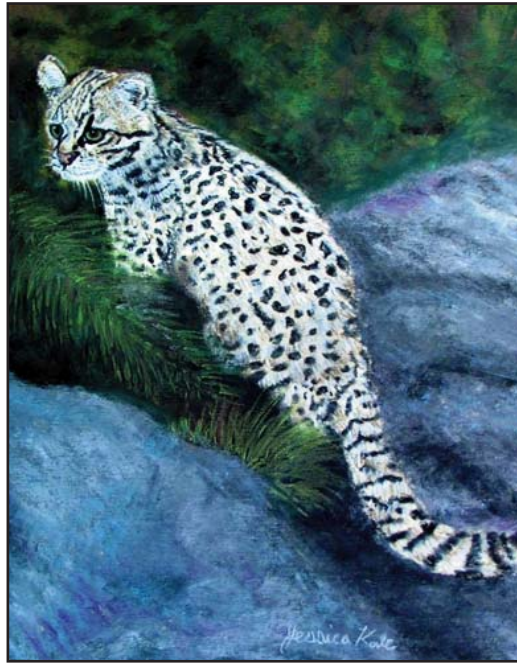
programs are completely gone.

The FCF opposes removal of the generic tiger exemption. There are already effective laws that address tracking, and its perceived threats, and which already regulate and protect tigers as much as the federal government can.

Congress passed two laws protecting tigers. The Captive Wildlife Safety Act, promoted by animal rights fanatics claiming widespread sales of tiger cubs for pets, became law in 2007. The CWSA restricts interstate movement of tigers to USDA-licensed facilities and sanctuaries. The Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation Act criminalizes the sale, import, and export of products intended for human use and containing, or labeled or advertised as containing, any substance derived from tigers. Since there have been no violations of these laws, we can only conclude that these laws are effective and sufficient.

More than 95% of American tigers are husbanded by federally licensed facilities, which are subject to unannounced government inspections as often as necessary to ensure compliance with the Animal Welfare Act. Licensed facilities are required to keep accurate, written records of acquisition and disposition, as well as records of inventory, and are obliged to make them available for USDA inspection. It is these same USDA records which the

Special Custom Art Offer



Artist Jessica Kale donated to our convention fundraiser auction a custom feline portrait. Debbie Willoughby placed the winning bid and she chose a photo of her Geoffroy's cat, Spirit, which Jessica rendered into this pastel painting.

Jessica has offered an exclusive deal for FCF members. Contact her by email at jesskale@gmail.com and send her your photo to commission an 8x10 Pastel Pet Portrait for only \$40, with 20% supporting the FCF.

Feline Conservation Federation accessed to census the national population of wild felines.

A nationwide survey of all wild feline species held by facilities and persons who are licensed by the USDA, or who hold state permits, has documented less than 3,000 tigers in these permitted facilities. This information is available to the Fish & Wildlife Service, or any animal rights organization, through the Freedom of Information Act. There is no lack of tracking information, or lack of regulations or government enforcement of animal welfare. These are phony issues being used by animal rights fanatics. And worthy of note is that the organizations bringing forth these issues are using sensational claims to manipulate the public and government agencies into furthering their real agenda - to regulate captive tigers into extinction. It is not about tracking or welfare, it is about an extremist philosophy opposing the captive husbandry of wildlife.

For any government agency interested in knowing, the licensed tiger habitat in America consists of 468 facilities. Of these facilities, at least 226 have been identified by the FCF as USDA Class C exhibitors that operate city, county, or private zoological parks. These facilities hold at least 809 tigers, including the near-

ly 400 tigers maintained in AZA-member zoos. Another 91 sanctuaries hold 1,544 tigers. At least 22 educational facilities are habitat for 68 tigers. The remaining 585 tigers, held by 129 USDA- or state-licensed entities, reside in commercial breeding facilities or nature centers, are owned by small exhibitors, individuals, retired commercial operations, are school or university mascots, are used in circus, stage, and other traveling exhibits, or could even be tigers in zoos and sanctuaries not identified by the FCF.

In 2011, the Feline Conservation Federation contacted USDA and state agencies and has identified 2,884 tigers, which is less than the estimated number of tigers left in nature. Almost all states now prohibit “pet tigers” or private owners. A very few states, such as North Carolina, Oklahoma, Nevada, and Ohio, still do not license or regulate large cats, and these states could have a small, undocumented population not included in this census by the FCF. The state of Texas, once believed to hold more tigers than India, actually has closer to only 300 of these highly endangered cats. Most Texas counties prohibit “dangerous animals,” due to legislation passed in 2001. Many former tiger owners and licensed breeders donated their large cats to sanctuaries. The urban legend of the “tiger in your neighbor’s backyard” is a myth. Animal rights groups fabricate these sensational claims to help them pass legislation and raise funds.

Examination of the USDA and state inventories shows that more than half the tiger population has been removed from the genetic bank and is not part of any breeding program. Sixty-five facilities hold just a single tiger, which makes breeding impossible. More than 60% of the tigers the FCF has located are in facilities holding ten or more tigers. There are 72 facilities holding 1,791 of the 2,884 tigers included in the FCF census. Of these 72 facilities, 38 operate as non-breeding sanctuaries, which removes another 1,387 tigers from the gene pool; a dozen zoos exhibit 164 tigers, ten exhibitors hold 211 tigers, and two licensed brokers have 29 tigers. The remaining 331 licensed tiger facilities possess about a thousand tigers.

If the Fish & Wildlife Service rescinds the generic tiger exemption, it will negatively impact the few remaining breeding centers, because they will not qualify for



Three colors of tigers not normally seen in nature. Snow white stripeless tiger sits atop a white and black striped tiger, and a cinnamon colored "tabby tiger" faces the pair. These colorations are expressions of rare recessive genes carried by tigers with bengal heritages. Some facilities manage their breeding to select for these recessive traits, causing them to become dominate and visible. Photo by Melissa Faust.

the CBW registration according to the Fish & Wildlife interpretation, and this will reduce genetic diversity and, consequently, harm tiger conservation. This is because, although the CBW registration is created for the “enhancement of propagation,” the Fish & Wildlife Service only grants registrations for pedigreed tigers. If a tiger is labeled as “generic,” the facility holding it will not gain registration for commercial breeding, even if that tiger possesses rare genes, might be physically perfect, is performing the exact same important education and fund-raising purposes of the purebred tigers, and might in reality be a subspecies-pure animal.

In order to sustain any population of animals, there must be a large and diverse gene pool and the ability for individuals to move from one habitat to another. This is required whether in nature or captivity. By removing the generic tiger exemption, the Fish & Wildlife Service will be undoing the improvements in genetic diversity made during the past decade. Tiger movements will be limited to within a state, resulting in isolated gene pools, much like what happens in nature when tiger reserves lack corridors and are cut off from each other. This causes inbreeding and a loss of heterozygosity in tigers.

If Fish & Wildlife removes the CBW

exemption, it will not be tracking more tigers, nor preventing tiger breeding, nor stopping the imaginary sales of tiger parts on the black market; all reasons given by the AR supporters wanting the exemption removed. The only guaranteed effect will be to reduce genetic diversity and harm conservation of tigers.

The FCF is now launching its first studbook, starting with the puma, and, as soon as the bugs have been worked out of the system, the FCF will progress to the tiger. We are looking for volunteers to help on this project. Contact me if you are interested.

There is a crisis in sustainability in many captive populations of feline species. An honest assessment of the genetic diversity of the U.S. tiger population is overdue. Whether subspecies-pure or not, all tigers have the potential to possess rare and important genes which should be preserved in the captive population. There is no guarantee that the small gene pools of Amur, Sumatran, and Indo-Chinese tigers held by AZA-member zoos will survive into the next century. If recent history is any indication, the future for tigers in the wild is doomed. It is not if, but when they will go extinct. Our captive populations are more important than ever.

COUGAR IMMOBILIZATION COURSE REVIEW

By Dr. Kristie Burns
Wildlife Behavior Anthropologist
www.PellaWildlifeCompany.com

On August 23-24, 2011, 13 members of the police force, animal control, DNR, and NGOs attended a cougar immobilization course, hosted by the Minnesota Zoo and led by John Laundre, vice-president of the Cougar Rewilding Foundation (<http://www.easterncougar.org/>), and Jay Tischendorf, DVM, of AERIE. Students included FCF members Ron DeArmond and Dr. Kristie Burns, plus three additional Pella Wildlife Company staff members and new FCF members and Feline Husbandry Course graduates: Ashley Rutherford (staff biologist), Sam Starits (staff ecologist), and Kyle Huber (director of public safety).

John prepared students for tracking by providing them with some basic cougar biology and wild cougar behavior. He talked about how one can identify the kill site of a cougar, where cougars usually spend their time, how they hunt, what they eat, how much they eat, why they travel, how to estimate cougar population in various areas, and public perception of cougars. He also talked about his extensive experience darting cougars and what one should expect when approaching a cougar, darting, and then collaring it.

John listed the main features of a cougar kill site to be:

- The kill will be found under cover.
- The stomach will not have been eaten.
- The skull will have been crushed (as they like to eat the brains first).
- The kill will be neat and not scattered.
- There will be a localized puncture wound on the back and neck.
- They don't eat the fur, so they will cut it off with their claws and it will appear to be cut by scissors.

John spoke extensively about his research on where cougars spend their time, and he provided data showing that cougars spent most of their hunting time on the "edge" of forests rather than in the interior or out in the open (as wolves do). He shared some of the most recent data on a cougar's dietary needs, mentioning that the most recent statistics show that cougars eat only 27-35 deer each year. He acknowledged various research studies, including one that showed that, by counting calories and comparing that to the

average weight of a cougar, it would be impossible for a cougar to eat more than 40 deer in one year.

John discussed using this data in combination with general cougar biology to estimate cougar populations and said that establishing and maintaining habitat is crucial to the balance of the predator-prey relationship. He pointed out the significance of how many deer a healthy cougar population will kill, but that it is also key to note how the presence of cougars affects the behavior of the deer population, including the creation of a "landscape of fear," which helps keep the deer population under control. In a healthy relationship between cougar and deer, the cougar serves as a natural "shepherd" or "gardener." He estimated cougar populations in Minnesota and Wisconsin to be between 1,125 and 2,251, and said that his upcoming book will show data on additional states.

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In conclusion, John stated that most cougars a tracker will encounter have similar characteristics – they will be using many states as corridors, they will make creative use of cover (such as cornfields), they are often lost or scared when traveling, they do not want to harm humans, they usually travel in search of a mate, they are uncomfortable and scared in unfamiliar territory when traveling, and they are unable to find food as efficiently when traveling. Of the utmost importance, however, is that each of these roaming cougars is essential for DNA distribution of the species. While female cougars tend to stay in one area their entire lives



Minnesota Zoo veterinarian Jim Rasmussen shows John Laundre the type of syringe he uses to give the cougars an injection of immobilization drugs. Photo courtesy of Kristie Burns.

and often share part of their territory with other females, male cougars often roam from location to location. Because of this tendency, John calls male cougars the “main movers of the genes” and emphasizes how important it is to allow them to roam, and he considers tagging and tracking tantamount in allowing this to happen in a safe manner for the cougars, as well as the public.

Jay Tischendorf talked about other reasons tracking and tagging cougars is important beyond capture for radio-collaring. These reasons would include public safety, relocation, and health. Jay also talked about the various methods used in tracking, which would change according to the situation. He talked about identifying tracks and the final steps of capture. Students were then given the opportunity to test various dart projectors and were able to witness the darting of a captive cougar. The subject, a 108-pound cougar, was immobilized for a dental and health exam by Minnesota Zoo vet Jim Rasmussen and his assistants. Students of the cougar immobilization class were allowed to observe the immobilization process, exam, and awakening process.

During his talk, Jay spoke in detail about tracking, including how to use gait

as part of the identification process, and how to identify scrapes, kills, scat, hair, and tree scratches. The key points he identified with cougar tracks were:

- The lack of claws showing in the track (depending on the situation).
- Toes are usually pointing in.
- Tracks are larger than those of canines.
- The heel pad and front paw pad are of a different size and shape.
- Cougars have a diagonal “zigzag” walk pattern to their gait.
- Tracks are usually purposeful, instead of wandering as with a canine.
- A cougar paw includes a teardrop pattern.
- Cougar paws are smooth, not rough like canines.

The course concluded with a “lab and discussion day,” where students had a chance to examine various dart projectors, including a blow dart tube, and witness

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the darting of a captive cougar. Discussions at the end of the course included conversations on how the DNR can cooperate with local law enforcement entities, how important public perception is when assisting in a public capture, and how important research like the Cougar Genetic Database (mentioned elsewhere in this issue of the FCF *Journal*) will be in providing valuable information needed to track wild cougars.

Jay will be teaching this class again at various locations throughout the U.S. Please check with him about future course dates at: TischendorfJ@hotmail.com.

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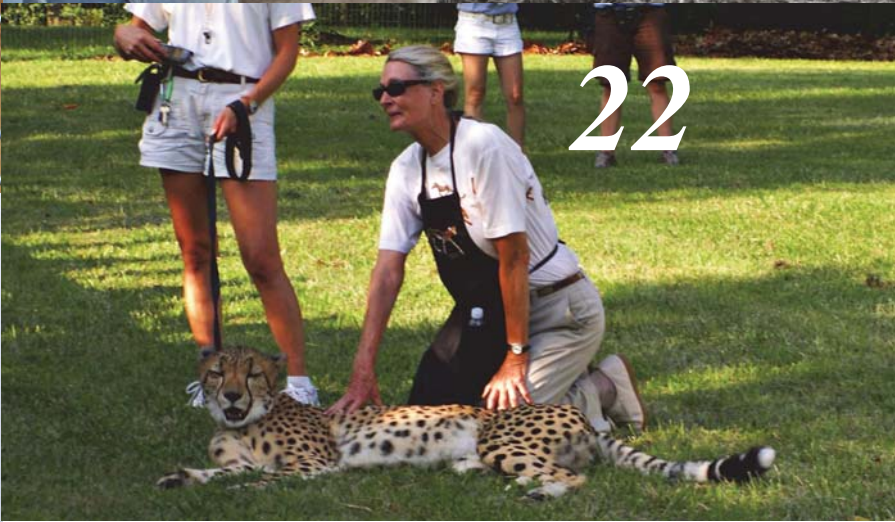
Convention this year added something special. The FCF wishes to thank Jason L. Liquori, Hocus Focus Productions, for filming the FCF Convention. Hocus Focus Productions is a full service video production and photography company located in Central Florida, producing independent movies, (features and shorts) and assisting small businesses and individuals produce their own high definition videos. Hocus Pocus Productions,
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The FCF 2011 Convention video footage is being uploaded to YouTube and will be available online on the FCF website shortly. You can also have a copy of the **2011 Convention DVD** mailed to you by sending a \$10 payment to the FCF at: FCF Treasurer, P.O. Box 31210, Myrtle Beach, SC 29588.

Included on this video montage are:

- Thursday icebreaker social with kittens and other critters
- Friday trip to Dade City Wild Things
- Friday's trip to Joel Slaven's Professional Animals
- Joel Slaven's training demonstration for registered handlers
- Doc Antle's presentation on the recent spotlight on a “presumed pet tiger” and how to effectively deal with interviews by the media
- Jim Sanderson's eye-opening report on small wild cats, specifically the fishing cat and the devastating effect of Thailand's shrimp farms and Borneo's palm oil plantations
- Li Quan's “Riding the Tiger,” outlining her commitment to the rewilding of South China Tigers, in South Africa at the Tiger Li Preserve, in preparation for their release back into a nature preserve in China.







Feline Conservation Federation

September/October 2011 • Volume 56, Issue 5

Cover Photo: Splashing through the water is Kashmir, a handsome tabby tiger, who had been a favorite of visitors to Catoctin Wildlife Preserve and Zoo over the last decade, before he passed away in 2010. His memory lives on through photographer Rick Hahn, C.A.P. and executive director of the Global Wildlife Trust. The zoo now exhibits three white tigers.

Mutosh was born at Natural Bridge Zoo four years ago. Gretchen Mogensen raised the pretty puma from birth and says, "Mutosh is my world." That's saying a lot, coming from someone who grew up with the zoo and has had countless animal experiences. Mutosh is Gretchen's personal baby and the only cougar she goes in with. "She still sits in my lap, though at 100 pounds she hardly fits," says Gretchen. "We take midday naps together, I brush her hair, and she licks my arms and face to the point of torture."

