



July/August 2012 Volume 56, Issue 4



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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. www.felineconservation.org

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FOUNDER:
Catherine Cisin

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
Lynn Culver
141 Polk 664
Mena, AR 71953
479-394-5235
executivedirector@felineconservation.org

OFFICERS
President:
Kevin Chambers
7816 N CR 75 W
Shelburn IN 47879
812-397-2302
president@felineconservation.org

Vice President:
Patty Perry
P.O. Box 2359
Moorpark, CA 93020
805-517-1005
vicepresident@felineconservation.org

Secretary:
David Lewis
1301 3rd Ave
Conway, SC 29526
843-222-4391
secretary@felineconservation.org

Treasurer:
Marilyn Antle
P.O. Box 31210
Myrtle Beach, SC 29588
843-283-2826
treasurer@felineconservation.org

DIRECTORS:
Conservation:
Pat Callahan
3400 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513-304-7155
conservation@felineconservation.org

Legislation:
Robert Johnson
P.O. Box 31210
Myrtle Beach, SC 29588
786-390-8553
legislation@felineconservation.org

Teresa Shaffer
12811 Outerbelt Road
Lone Jack, MO 64070
816-739-3999
director@felineconservation.org

DEPARTMENTS:
Accreditation Chairman:
Doc Antle
P.O. Box 31210
Myrtle Beach, SC 29588
843-271-2299
Gemojungle@aol.com

Conservation Advisor:
Jim Sanderson, Ph.D.
356 Freeman Street
Hartford, CT 06106
505-720-1204
gato_andino@yahoo.com

JOURNAL STAFF:
Managing Editor:
Lynn Culver
Layout/Copy Editor:
Eden Tran
sonandedentran@yahoo.com
Guest Layout/Copy Editor this issue:
Lynn Culver
lynnkulver@hughes.net
Associate Editor:
Judith Hoffman
Charles Thrasher

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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 lynnkulver@hughes.net, or send by postal service to 141 Polk 664, Mena, AR 71953.



President's letter

The election will be coming up soon and I want to give a brief synopsis of how that will be done this year. Ballots will be mailed by first class to each eligible voting member. Constitutional changes made last year require members to have been a member for one year in order to have a vote. The ballots will have an address and date where the ballots need to be returned. This will be an independent accountant and the ballots will never be in the hands of any member of the FCF. As required by the constitution, the winners will be determined by preferential balloting and complete voting instructions will be sent along with the ballot.

You should have received an email notification on July 1. All FCF memberships expire October 1, so be sure to renew before then. Some members that joined in 2012 will have a credit coming towards their renewal. These are ones that joined before July. Should you have any questions about the amount of your credit, contact membershipservices@felineconservation.org or treasurer@felineconservation.org. Professional members, remember that your dues are \$25 higher than the regular dues.

Ron Young has resigned from the Accreditation Committee and the Professional Review Committee because of time constraints from moving. Ron's service to the FCF has been greatly appreciated and we wish him the best in his new location. Brian Werner was appointed to replace Ron on the Accreditation Committee and Mindy Stinner was appointed to replace him on the Professional Review Committee at the recent board meeting. Congratulations to Mindy and Brian.

Our Member Services director, Jennifer Kasserma, has launched a new program called "Take a Tour. This will be a page on our website with an interactive map that you can click on a state and various members that allow visitors will pop up. You can click on each location and more information will

be given including any discounts or special offers to FCF members. If you would like to be included in the listings, please contact Jennifer Kasserma. Her emails is membershipservices@felineconservation.org.

In this journal, you will find a "summary" of the Convention board meeting rather than the official minutes. This is because a consensus was not reached by the board on the version presented. The board will have to come up with the official version in a meeting. We normally reach a consensus and then ratify the minutes later. I have always been a firm believer that the board should be open and up front with the members. At the convention board meeting, I attempted to rescind the bylaw that allows only professional members to be board members. I called for a roll call vote on that motion, since Robert's Rules requires that a roll call vote record how each member votes. I wanted everyone to see how each board member felt about restricting the board to less than 30 people out of our 800+ members. Our secretary has refused to record that despite my objections and has been supported by four other board members, not surprisingly the same ones that voted not to rescind the bylaw. Because of that and other inaccuracies in them minutes, the board has been unable to approve the minutes since it

takes a unanimous consensus to do that outside of a meeting and I will not approve anything that is not accurate in an attempt to hide things from the membership. So, the unofficial "summary" is being printed including the inaccuracies and grammatical errors as presented by David Lewis. Even after explanations as to why the draft was unacceptable as minutes, David Lewis, Patty Perry, MariLin Antle, Rob Johnson, and Teresa Shaffer all feel that is good enough.

Kevin Chambers

Registered Feline Handlers

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

BASIC: - Courtney Cortina-Pineda, Joy Courson, Chris Tromborg, David Lewis, Jeremy Gillow

INTERMEDIATE: Jim Sanderson, Daniel Chambers, Vincent DeMaggio, Julie Walker

ADVANCED: Mario Tabraue, Maria Tabraue, Joe Schreibvogel, MariLin Antle, Kody Antle, Julie Wagner, Nick Sculac

The following members have been approved for an upgrade in their registration level:

INTERMEDIATE: Kathleen Lamke

ADVANCED: Roger Newson, Leslie Thalman, Kurt Beckelman, Betty Auch, Tim Stoffel

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. Being a registered handler is the first step to becoming a Professional Member. The online Professional Membership application process is online on the Members Only web site.

Congratulations to these members for their dedication to their cats.

David Lewis, FCF Secretary

From the Executive Director

Lynn Culver

Convention was a big success, with international guest speaker Neville Buck bringing us husbandry from the United Kingdom, and especially the John Aspinall method that has resulted in the successful reproduction of so many rare felines. For those who could not make convention, you missed a great presentation. A few of Neville's photos are part of this Journal's Best Shots.

For those who missed convention's "Ask the Experts" presentation for FCF registered handlers, Linda Castenada has summarized her advice for this *Journal*.

Convention was special, not only for the many members who traveled long distances to attend, but also, for the cats they brought, including a ocelot. Tim Stark brought his adult female. The ocelot was this organization's founding species and was, at one time, by far the most numerous. But ban legislation and regulations have forced this species into an extinction spiral. With little hope of ever gaining new genetics, we can only delay the inevitable.

Other species at convention included white tiger cubs born at Tiger Safari Zoo. Today, the highly endangered tiger is the most common species in captivity, but I wonder, will it also go the way of the ocelot? Providing habitat for a feline as large and strong as a tiger is extremely expensive. Tigers can be handled safely while they are young, and by allowing the public the opportunity to experience this rare and mesmerizing feline, significant funds can be raised that will help support lifetime care as well as conservation efforts. USDA creates policies in response to trends. From tiger fence heights, to public interaction with cubs, the USDA regulations are changing. Read more in this *Journal* on page 15.

Several members have contributed articles on their enclosure designs. The environments we create for our felines have a profound influence on their quality of life. It is our responsibility to address their mental, physical and emotional

needs. Read about small cat cages for bobcat and serval, and a specialized habitat for a rescued lion in this issue.

Another contribution is from the 15-year old daughter of a member. It's a story about the family's puma, and the wonderful, enriched habitat created for this lucky feline. It is especially bittersweet, when one realizes that such a habitat may someday hold no pumas because of the passage of the Captive Wildlife Safety Act. I hope not.

The FCF Facility Accreditation Committee approved the G.W. Exotic Memorial Park for accreditation. The Park is home to one of the largest collections of big cats in the country. It's part rescue, part breeding, part education and show, and always open to the public. FCF congratulates the Park's founder, Joe Schreibvogel for all his hard work to build such outstanding environments for the animal residents. Joe is well known by many of our members, and has a radio and Internet show as well. Recently the Humane Society of the United States tried to discredit the G. W. Park, just a few days after Joe testified against the HSUS backed ban bill in Ohio. Edited video footage made by a former employee/undercover spy, aired on television. Allegations by HSUS have been investigated by government agencies and no charges have been filed or actions taken.

All facilities need to be especially careful of whom they hire, and whom they intern. HSUS is determined to eliminate private possession of captive wildlife and is infiltrating animal businesses. The more visible you are, the bigger the target you become. Even the FCF organization is a target by the HSUS, and certainly our member facilities are as well. Being interviewed by television or newspaper always carries a risk of your words being deliberately taken out of context. Video is edited to put your facility in a bad light. Be very cautious in accepting any

interviews by the media. If you do, never forget that you are not only speaking for yourself, but you are also a representative of the feline community. Remind viewers that animal rights critics do not have either the qualifications or experience to speak with authority. We are the only real hands-on husbandry experts.

A great opportunity to take either or both the FCF Feline Husbandry Course and the Wildlife Conservation Educators Course is set for November 9 and 11 at the Conservators Center, in Burlington, NC. Details are on page 38.

In closing, Dr. Chris Tromborg has contributed a well researched article on taming and domesticating. This organization pioneered the taming of ocelots and margay. In our more than five decade history, we have tamed individuals of every feline species in captivity. Perhaps some species could be on their way to domestication, if only the legal climate will allow us to continue our hands-on husbandry.

The FCF is in an election year, and by the time this *Journal* reaches your mailbox, the August 10th close of the nomination period may be reached. Only professional members can be nominated. Candidate bios will be in the September *Journal* and ballots will be mailed out to members who joined the FCF since prior to October 1, 2011.

New Professional Members

The Professional Membership Review Committee has approved the following members who have applied for FCF Professional Membership since publication of the last *FCF Journal*.

Kody Antle, MariLin Antle, Fred Boyajian, David Lewis, Shelleen Mathreus, Alice Schoebel, Mark Schoebel, Bobby Staley, Susan Steffens, Mindy Stinner, Joe Schreibvogel

Journey to the FCF Conference 2012

John Franklin, DVM

In the excitement of Sharon's voice, I hear the promise of great adventure if I come with her. Her face is radiant when she talks about the upcoming Feline Conservation Federation meeting in Cincinnati. We will see exotic cats with their people, up close and personal, at the welcome dinner on Thursday night. On Friday morning, private buses will take us to spend a day at the Cincinnati Zoo where we enjoy special lectures by the zoo staff and trainers, watch cheetahs chase lures at speeds over 50 miles per hour, see cougars track "prey" inside their enriched habitat, share a private lunch with our group (while entertained by a staff member's "show and tell" with a special zoo resident), spend time with a cheetah during an ice cream social that includes a Q & A Session with his handlers. And, my wife promises, we get to visit all the other species at the zoo, too.

Saturday includes lectures by world-class experts on topics of particular interest for exotic cat caregivers: how to raise money for facilities, the genetics of white tigers, the value of a wild feline registry for owners and breeders, bonding with wild cats in sanctuaries, the conservation of endangered small cats, and cutting-edge technology for the assisted reproduction of endangered exotic cats. At the end of

the day, and the conference, we eat dinner aboard the Belle of Cincinnati Riverboat during a sunset cruise on the Ohio River.

In over 20 years of veterinary practice, the last 15 in partnership with Sharon, an excellent veterinarian in her own right, I have attended a variety of meetings and conferences at the local, state, national and international level, to keep current on advances in the fields of medicine, surgery, dentistry, ethics and management. Board-certified in Companion Animals, I focused on animals dwelling primarily in the homes and yards of their people. Why people might choose this kind of relationship with a bobcat or a cougar, much less a Siberian Tiger, never made sense to me. My experience with wolf-hybrids gave me pause in recommending any wild animal as a human companion.

When Sharon visited FCF member Carl Bovard's sanctuary, "Single Vision," in Florida last year, her enthusiasm for large cats grew dramatically. After our annual North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando in January, she persuaded me to visit Carl's family, which included bobcats, cougars, Siberian and Bengal tigers, an African lioness, German Shepherds, domestic cats, Lemurs, and exotic birds and squirrels. Carl's facility was well constructed, spacious and spotless. His animals appeared to be in excellent condition, contented, even playful. The affection shared by the liconservation, and to the education of the public about the importance of their survival, was clear.

Unfortunately, the conference hotel in Cincinnati for the FCP meeting is sold out when we arrive at the front desk. (Our reservations at a different hotel tanked at the last minute.) Another attendee, who looks like he might have once played linebacker for a college football team, offers to help us find a room. His name is Bill Meadows and he has arrived from a Zoo in Oklahoma, "Tiger Safari," with his baby tiger cubs and their caregivers. After we find a



Harold Maxwell walks up to the Welcome sign at the Radisson Hotel.

room at a nearby hotel, we walk into the gathering room to register for the meeting. The silver haired woman, Mari Antle, sitting behind the table remembers Sharon from last year's conference in Orlando and welcomes us as if we have just arrived for a family reunion.

I am surprised by the diversity of the people drawn to the conference. Their passion to save the endangered populations and habitats of wild cats—both the large and the small species—is only part of the story. Throughout the meeting, I strike up conversations with everyday people who enjoy a close, personal, relationship with their exotic cats. I am drawn to the stories of these people who are as different as the wild cats that inspire them. Reserved, even shy, they quickly warm up when I ask them about their animals. A man and his wife from Michigan, Jim



Tim Stark brought an ocelot born at his facility for the members to enjoy in the Hospitality Suite.

and Nora Batista, speak of their bobcats with a tenderness people usually reserve for their children. A soft-spoken woman



Christi LaMountain bottle feeds a tiny Geoffroy's cat kitten.

from Oklahoma, Leah Aufill, shows pictures of her asleep beside her cougar. A dark-eyed young woman, Jennifer Kasserman, walking her yearling Canadian Lynx on leash, gives voice to the plight of endangered cats at public schools. Bobby Bean, a white-haired gentleman from Tennessee, shares a poignant story about how his cougar insisted she nurse her litter in the middle of his and his wife's bed—the cat's chosen sanctuary to raise her young. (I assume he and his wife relocated to another bed, but I do not ask.) I meet a passionate businesswoman, Christa Donofrio, who volunteers her free time to work at the Conservator's Center, Inc., a rare animal preserve. Another woman manages a rescue facility in Houston. Sharon and I visit with Earl and Carol Pfeifer, an engaging couple from Canada who are so eager to raise a cheetah cub that they will move to another country if needed.

We also enjoy personal conversations with the speakers at the meeting on Saturday. In the informal and relaxed atmosphere, questions are easy to ask and complex issues are made more understandable. Bruce Eberly gives a well grounded "how-to" on the all-important fundraising for nonprofit animal facilities and organizations. Dr. Jan Janecka (from my alma mater Texas A&M) shares a palpable enthusiasm for tracking the lineage of exotic cats through their genes. Mindy Stinner's presentation on establishing a registry

for wild cats within the FCF organization is compelling and thorough. Neville Buck travels from England to share slides and anecdotes about his exotic small cat sanctuary and how he bonds with them in ways he learned from his legendary mentor John Aspinall. Dr. Jim Sanderson, a pioneer in the conservation of small cats found in the wild—species that range from the Andean Ghost Cat to the Thailand Fishing Cat—displays a rare gift for weaving science and conservation into a coherent story of global challenge for us, our fellow animals, and our planet. Dr. Bill Swanson, the veterinarian at the Cincinnati Zoo (and another Texas A&M grad) talks in depth about the promise of embryo transfer for the conservation of endangered cat species and about his success and frustrations with the application of this technology in Brazil.



Dr. Jan Janecka spoke on a DNA study of white and orange tigers during the presentations Saturday.

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the catered buffet, we leave the dining room to walk the open decks of the Belle of Cincinnati, watching twilight settle like a soft blanket over the river. When our



Debi Willoughby, Joy Courson, Shalleen Mathews and Fred Boyajian pose on the Belle of Cincinnati Riverboat deck after dinner Saturday night.

boat reaches the dock, we follow the crowds into the cool night air and wait with a small cluster of FCF folks for the next bus back to the hotel. I see Lynn Culver, the tireless executive director who, along with President Kevin Chambers, is always in the middle of whatever is happening at the conference. Sharon and I approach Lynn and tell her that of all the meetings we have attended as veterinarians, the FCF is among the most fun, the most interactive, the most informative, inspiring and least expensive. She acts surprised, but she recovers quickly and asks me to contribute my comments to the next FCF Journal (the hallmark of an astute executive director: always get it in writing).

Lynn introduces us to an unassuming man with a blond ponytail, who stands next to her. His name is Doc Antle, she says, and he will host the next FCF Conference at his rare species sanctuary in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Sharon told me about Doc after she attended last year's meeting in Orlando. She visited with his mother there, the same warm, engaging woman who greeted us at registration. Doc is the owner of T.I.G.E.R.S., (The Institute of Greatly Endangered and Rare Species), one of the largest rare cat facilities on the East coast, if not the country, and is a leading advocate for saving large cats and their habitats.

I discover that Doc, when he was a young man, joined a spiritual sanctuary for people at a place near our home in Virginia. He went to China and became a doctor of Chinese Medicine. On his return to his community, he was inspired to advocate for animals, especially those who live in the wild and whose voices are too often lost in the destruction of their habitats.

On our return to the hotel, Sharon and I catch up with Dr. Jim Sanderson, the international expert on the small, often overlooked, cats of the wild. This eloquent scientist and ardent conservationist shares his story with us, makes us feel as if we are old friends, resting in each other's company. A former mathematician at the famous Los Alamos Laboratories, Jim's eyes moisten when he speaks of endangered species. "The animals invited us to join them on Earth," he says.

Sharon and I drive back to Virginia the next day, both of us now over-the-top excited about our visits with the cats and with all our new friends. The FCF has such big ambitions, I tell her. Even with a self-initiated upgrade of professional standards to forestall legislative mandates, FCF

must still unite a diverse, small group of people into a common voice to advocate for the well being of endangered cats and their habitats.

I believe they will continue do this.

Although Sharon and I are newcomers the FCF, we were never treated like outsiders at the meeting. We felt a kinship—akin to coming home. I imagine that FCF could also stand for the Feline Conservation Family. Perhaps the wild cats are inviting all of us to come home—home to a reunion that includes them too.

Drs. John and Sharon Franklin, retired from veterinary practice, enjoy life in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia with their two domestic felines: Queen Cougar and Pacha Tuson (Peruvian for "the point around which the earth turns"). John and Sharon have written a book that is a story about the human-animal bond, inspired by leading numerous groups to Peru over the past decade to work with indigenous healers.

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FCF 2012 – Visiting the Cincinnati Zoo

Tim Stoffel



White lioness on loan from the Siegfried and Roy collection.

2012 turned out to be an unusual year for me with respect to the FCF convention. I normally try and attend the entire convention. But this year, I was only able to make Friday, and Saturday morning. So instead of writing an article about the entire convention, I am going to concentrate on our visit to the Cincinnati Zoo. So without further ado, let's jump right in!

This year's FCF convention marks my third visit to this wonderful zoo (2003, 2006 and 2012). And it is always interesting to see what has changed since our last visit. The Cincinnati Zoo is known for having the best collection of wild felines of any major zoo in the US. This is why we keep coming back.

At 9 AM, we all gathered for the bus ride to the zoo. Cincinnati's zoo is located right in the middle of town, so there are homes all around the outside of it. This time, we were dropped off at a special bus stop outside the zoo, and we all had to walk into the zoo. This walk gave us an opportunity to see things on the outside of the zoo, things we usually don't see.

One of these is solar panels. One side of the outside area of the zoo is dominated by a massive solar panel array. I did not find out the capacity of this system (nor did I get a picture of it), but I am guessing the capacity is somewhere between 3/4 and 1 megawatt. A LOT of power! I am guessing this system is fairly new, almost certainly not more than a few years old. (Our zoo in Reno, Sierra Safari Zoo, just installed a 100-kilowatt solar panel system that I believe is the largest solar panel system in northern Nevada, available for close inspection by the public. Besides generating power for us, it shades much of our petting zoo.)

The convention planners planned a very busy day for us at the zoo. In about the only criticism I can make about our zoo visit, I think we had too many activities planned, so it was very difficult to see much of the zoo. So, I took advantage of the 'breaks' to check out what I wanted to see, and got good exercise hurrying around to different places in the zoo.

One of these 'breaks' was a quick visit to my favorite animals there, the white lions. They are located quite a ways back in the zoo, so it was a good hike to get to

them. These white lions, Cincinnati Zoo's only lions, are part of Siegfried and Roy's White Lion Outplacement Project, which dates back to around 2000, if I recall. But they still have all four of these beautiful beasts (2 males, two females) that were given to them, and on this day, the lionesses were out (They alternate between having the lions and lionesses on display). But soon, it was time to be at our first event of the day, a cheetah run. There was just enough time available on the way to the cheetah run to visit the zoo's insect house.

Cincinnati Zoo, despite being 'landlocked', has carved out enough room inside the zoo, to construct a cheetah run. To take advantage of the available space, the run is actually U-shaped, and is behind a tall, woven wire fence. Woven wire is nice material to use for such a fence, as it minimally obstructs the view. In all other respects, it is a conventional cheetah run, with a lure pulled along the ground by a steel cable, driven by an electric winch. The cable's route is varied slightly from time to time, to add some variety to the course. Outside the fence, bleachers have been erected under a canopy, so people can comfortably watch the action.



Cathryn Hilker addresses everyone sitting in the bleaches just before the Cat Ambassador Show begins.

Cathryn Hilker was there to direct us to our seats, even though she is officially retired from the zoo (Once started, you can never truly give up working with cats!).

As the cheetah runs themselves happen pretty quickly, the 'show' is augmented with some other animals. A serval comes out and jumps at targets suspended in the air. An ocelot comes out and climbs up and down a post (one of the few cats that can climb down facing the ground). A fishing cat dives into the small pool in the middle of the enclosure. Non cat species include a porcupine, a red waddle hog and an Anatolian shepherd dog. Just before the cheetahs came out, we saw a fishing cat doing a little fishing in the run's pond.

One disadvantage of this U-shaped cheetah run design is that the cheetahs do not run as fast as in a straight line course, reaching a maximum speed of about 45 mph. But it is fast enough to give good exercise to the cats, and they are still spectacular to watch. And the final leg of the run is arranged to pass right in front of the bleachers, giving those watching a good view of the cat. Two cheetah were run, a male and a female. At the end of their run, they were rewarded with a pan of meat, something that should be at the end of any good run, even by a human ;-)

This year, I had indulged myself with a new camera, a Canon 5D Mark III. This is a full-frame professional grade DSLR camera with a really amazing high-speed autofocus system. One of the goals of

purchasing this camera was to be able to capture things like cheetahs in motion. I was able to put this capability to good use, and captured a number of amazing cheetah action photos. (In 2003, I managed to catch a cheetah running at full speed, with all four legs off the ground, with a film camera. This was a chance-lucky shot, and I don't think anyone else managed to catch this, even with better

cameras).

After the cheetah run was the longest 'free' break of the day. I used this break to good advantage to see the zoo's other cats.

The first place I visited was the 'Night Hunters' exhibit, the new name for Cincinnati Zoo's famous small cat house. This exhibit had been reworked, to be a 'night' environment, with most illumination be-

ing a dim blue light. But many of the cat species that had been there in previous years were still there. Among them were Black footed cats, Pallas' cats, clouded leopard, ocelot, caracal, and Sand cats. I took full advantage of my new camera's ability to shoot high quality photos in near-darkness to get pictures of these cats, along with a variety of other night-dwelling animals on exhibit there.

I later learned something interesting about this building. At night, they turn the 'regular' lights on to simulate daytime. So in the 'Night Hunters' exhibit, day is night and night is day!

The next visit was the cougar exhibit, which is immediately outside the 'Night Hunters' building. This is a new exhibit, and very nicely done. It gives the resident cougars a chance to explore a range of different 'habitats' from a nice grassy area to 'mountain crags', to water. The cougar on exhibit seemed to like the exhibit, and was busy exploring it. But, more on the cougar later.

We had lunch in an activity building



A serval has been conditioned to leap at a ball during the show, demonstrating this species' jumping abilities.



Tommy T cheetah dashes after the lure during the Cat Ambassador show.

located not far from the cheetah run. This was a 'make your own sandwich' affair, and gave us a chance to rest our feet a bit. A couple of informal talks were given during lunch.

One thing I couldn't help noticing about the zoo is a proliferation of places serving food and snacks. I did not remember seeing so many food, drink and snack vendors on previous visits. I guess this the new thing with major zoos, to help bolster revenue. If you go hungry or thirsty at the Cincinnati zoo, it is your own fault!

Just after lunch, there was a little show with the white lions. This attracted a lot of folks, who occupied the observing bridge in the lion exhibit. Director of Conservation, Pat Callahan, who is also the head cat keeper at Cincinnati, came out and gave a talk about the white lions. As he talked, he threw pieces of meat to the lionesses. Typical of lions, they saw the meat landing around them: "Oh! Someone is throwing meat at us. Oh well, I guess I will just have to get up and do something about that?". In any case it, was

a nice little show, and we got to see the lionesses move around a bit. (Unlike previous years, we did not get a chance to see the off-exhibit lions.)

Not long after lunch, we were all treated to an extra show with one of the zoo's cougars. The cougar was moved around to various 'stations' with meat treats hidden in remotely controlled dispenser boxes. This gave us a good chance to see the cat climb, jump, and generally explore. And in a rather rare and unusual thing to see at a major zoo, we saw the keepers hand-feeding the cougars through the fence. A practice unheard-of in large zoos until just a few years ago, it is a sign that the big zoos are finally learning the importance of intimate contact



Tim Stoffel photographed this puma leaping from rock to rock.

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Immediately after the cougar show, we were escorted through a security gate to see the all new tiger/snow leopard exhibit, called 'Cat Canyon', then under construction. This exhibit was just being finished, and has been opened to the public since our visit. Several spacious enclosures were built. One of these is for the zoo's white tigers (which, unfortunately will be some of the last white tigers you will likely see on exhibit in a major zoo, due to new policies being strictly enforced by the AZA). Another new exhibit was built for the snow leopards. These exhibits are state-of-the-art to the point that there is even an air-conditioned place for the snow leopards to lounge outdoors during hot summer days. A winding path takes you past the exhibits, and it is certainly much more 'natural' than the previous exhibits.

Then for many of us, it was off to training for FCF registered handlers. This training was done in a rather hard-to-find theater in the back of the zoo's aviary. I ended up having to 'flag down' a number of folk, and lead them to this well-hidden theater.

Once everyone was in the theater, we were treated to a detailed discussion of the zoo's ambassador cat program. During the program, we were shown a serval, an ocelot and a domestic cat (Oh! Feel the danger!!) that were all used for educational presentations. Although not brought out for us in the theater, the same people also worked with the zoo's cheetahs. This is a refreshingly well-managed program that has the keepers working hands-on with the cats every day. This is a real exciting thing to see happening, and is (in my mind) a reflection of the fact that cats and people CAN get along very well! Both the do's and the don'ts of managing such a program



During the Registered Handler's training demonstration, Sihil demonstrates how ocelot's go down head first.



After Greater's ice cream, we enjoyed an oncore appearance of Tommy T cheetah and the cat ambassador trainers.

were discussed. In all the years that I have attended the registered handler training, I felt this was by far the best presentation I have seen.

As soon as the registered handler's training was over, we once again congregated at the Cheetah run. As we entered, we were served some extraordinarily rich ice cream, and some equally indulgent toppings by non-other than Thane Maynard, the director of the zoo. Afterwards he briefly talked to us. After that, we were treated to something really special. Tommy T, one of the cheetah, was brought out, and we all were able to 'enjoy' having a cheetah nearby and take advantage of photo opportunities without the wire fence between us and the cat. No audience contact with the cheetah was allowed, and it was at all times on a leash with a handler, and he clearly demonstrated his affection for those ladies. We could hear his constant purr. I do know the cheetah passed by me within a few inches at least once. We got to see the cheetah in a variety of settings and poses, including licking up some melted ice cream left on the serving table. In any case, this was very special, and will be remembered for a long time to come.

After that, our day at the zoo was nearly over. As is often the case, there was only about 5 minutes left to look through the zoo's massive gift shop (And for once, I didn't buy anything there!). We walked back out to the bus loading area, sharing memories of our special day with each other.

Next year, we have Doc Antle's Preservation Station in Myrtle Beach to look forward to seeing (and ligers!). I am hoping things will work out so I can attend the entire convention next year!

Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course gets better!

Michelle McKay

I started Zoofari Educational Encounters a year ago after "Coming into this business sideways," like I have heard Mindy Stinner say. I have degrees in Education, Psychology and Counseling, as well as experience as an animal care specialist and manager at different private zoos. None of that prepared me for owning my own "Animal Educator" business however as well as the course I took at convention. Debi did an excellent job teaching the course and throughout the day I kept saying to myself that this course was designed especially for me. I wish I had taken this course months ago because it has already made a huge difference in my business. There were little tricks of the trade that I had not thought of, business and marketing ideas, and training tips as well.

Another excellent part of the "pre conference" conference was the awesome presentation given by the Cincinnati Zoo's Outreach Educators. We got to see first hand an excellent presentation from Kate, a professional who does exactly the type of program that I do. She also explained everything that she was



Debi Willoughby taught the Wildlife Conservation Educator's class on Wednesday before the start of this year's convention.

doing and why she presented certain animals in certain ways. We got to see up close and personal an Eagle Owl, Alligator and Prehensile tail porcupine. She did an excellent job of answering our questions and was very professional and

industry. Even if you never plan to own your own animal educator business or exhibit your animals, the knowledge you learn in these courses will prepare you to educate others about the importance of preserving wild cats in captivity and the wild.

My son, Austin, who is 13 and is very passionate about working in this field someday, also took the course and he stated to me, "The course was very helpful and it gave me a better understanding of the USDA and CITES and also made me want to pursue my dream of working at a zoo or owning my own zoo someday." Austin then added, "The overall conference was one of the best experiences of my life. I loved getting to meet people that are actually living their dream of helping big cats survive in the wild and in captivity. The whole thing has inspired me to work harder in school so I can also live out my dreams!"

I can honestly say that the whole experience was worth every penny we spent. The knowledge we gained, the friends we made, the babies we got to love on, these things are priceless in my eyes. I appreciate all the hard work of the board and others who made this event possible.



The prehensile tail porcupine holds a piece of banana.



Kate with Eurasian Eagle Owl.

knowledgeable. The topping on the cake was Cathryn Hilker's visit and getting to hear about some of the vast experiences she has had in her lifetime as a conservationist/educator.

I honestly feel that the Husbandry course and the Educators course are essential for anyone working in the animal

New Member view of Husbandry Course and Social Mixer

Kane Molavi

My name is Kane. I am an undergraduate college student currently residing in Salisbury, Maryland. I grew up in various states throughout the southwest but have also had the opportunity to briefly live in other regions. I have always happened to enjoy animals, particularly felines. I am actually quite new to the world of conservation and husbandry. In my membership with the Feline Conservation Federation, I hope to educate myself on the subject of exotic feline care so that I may accomplish my future goal of private ownership.

I took the FCF husbandry course as a first step in learning about this complex topic. I found it to be highly informative. The instructor presented many crucial elements involved with the keeping and care of big cats. Several very important areas were presented as well as other areas that I had not previously known about. The instructor was extremely helpful with answering questions and further clarifying any of the subjects that were discussed. I would recommend this course to anyone with any level of knowl-



Feline husbandry begins with bottle Feeding. Leann Montgomery feeds her new bobcat kitten.

edge and experience and not merely as a refresher course but also because of the possibility of annual revisions that may be made from obtaining any new information.

While I was not able to attend every day of the convention, I did get to be there on the first day. Prior to this day I had not been around any exotic cats except for one occasion that took place when I was in high school. I had my picture taken with a tiger cub at a furniture store in Denver, Colorado. That was actually the first time I had ever been face to face with an exotic cat and was actually really nervous even though the cat looked like it only weighed around 50 pounds. The experience I had at the convention was almost identical except that I knew more about exotics than I did on that day with the tiger cub this time I was not frozen with an unnecessary fear of big cats due to a lack of knowledge. At the convention I wanted to "pet" all of the cats including the larger ones. While there were several people exhibiting the cats, the only ones I noticed who were petting them were the owner's, therefore, I did not even bother to ask to do so because it seemed pretty evident what the answer would have been. Either way, it was a blast.

I remember seeing a



Certified instructor Mindy Stinner, teaches the FCF Wild/ Exotic Feline Husbandry Course to a room full of students.

nice sized lynx sitting in her owner's laps and giving them head butts. Every now



Jennifer Kasserman's Canada lynx Soki was on display during the Thursday icebreaker social.

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and then she would get up and hop from chair to chair around one of the tables and return to the lap of either one of her owners. She was quite a sight to see. I also recall a pretty humorous moment when a gentleman positioned himself in front of the cat and said, "She is beautiful." The cat immediately and respectfully returned the greeting with a hiss. I am not sure if she disliked strangers or if she

was still just a little shaken up from the long trip to the hotel. I could see that everyone there liked this lynx as much as I did and I believe her owners were very fortunate to have her as were all the other cat owners.

I also had the chance to meet some of the board members. They shared their experiences, provided me, as well as others, with a lot of information, and were

more than happy to answer questions and give suggestions for any potential future owners. With everything said and done, I have applied for a few internships to start getting experience and would advise other newcomers to do the same. We all owe it to the animals and ourselves. But yeah, loved the convention and cannot wait to go back next year.

The USDA "Policy" on Cubs

Kathy Stearns

It began like any other USDA Inspection. . . But I was curious why I was having such a frequency of inspections instead of just an annual inspection. When asked, the Inspector informed me that I was being targeted for four inspections a year minimum, due to the fact I breed. WOW!

As my guard is up on continuous inspections I noted that they would write me up for the littlest infractions. And this continues till today. So I become more proactive.

In a conversation with a breeder in South Florida, she informed me in December of 2011 that her inspectors told her that she had to leave cubs with the mother for a minimum of ten days for the colostrum. I became curious and concerned. I had not read any policies to this effect. And, to my knowledge, such a request is contrary to what I have read indicating that colostrum is only available to the offspring for a day or two at most, and I have also read articles questioning evidence of the benefits of colostrum and its relationship to protecting the cubs till commercial vaccinations are given. Some researchers believe that colostrum can be received by the kittens through the umbilical cord as well.

So I immediately contacted the USDA office about this, and was told that there is no "policy" but that they are concerned that the cubs be protected, especially when they are exposed to contact from the public. The USDA representative would not give me specifics or USDA positions, as there really were none in writ-

ing at this time. I was told that USDA decisions would be on a case-by-case basis only.

Where had I heard this before? . . . Oh yeah, caging sizes. We all know what a mess this has become.

So with my history with USDA, and this agency's position that I am to be under increased inspections, I decided to be prepared. I worked with my veterinarian to develop a simple veterinarian-approved "Protocol for handling of cubs". This document covers all ages, from the earliest age to the 25 pound weight limit applicable to all licensees under Florida State law, and describes the type of contact, length of contact, and variations

As I expected, the USDA arrived to inspect, especially the current cubs. The Inspector was prepared to write me up, but I had a "veterinarian approved protocol", and this thoroughness on my part, thru my inspector for a loop. Instead of being cited as "non-compliant", my inspection report stated I was "under review" and the inspector took a copy of my written protocol to submit to the regional office for their decision as to whether my veterinarian approved protocol is a violation of the Animal Welfare Act regulations.

Finally, USDA made an appointment to sit with me and discuss the situation. They said they could put nothing in writing (as I always request this of this agency) because, my inspector explained, if they put it in writing it would be making a policy, and they were not prepared to do this at this time. But after review and discussions with the regional office and



Laurie Gauge, the Big Cat Specialist, they have decided at this time USDA will go along with my cub protocol. They said they will be regulating public contact with cubs on a case-by-case basis. In my case, they are taking into consideration the number of years I have been raising cubs and allowing public contact without any issues or incidence of disease transmission.

I have since made a more complete and complicated protocol, as I see the importance of having this. But I also see a down side that once you have a protocol you have to abide by it, or you will be in violation of your own protocol. So my protocol includes the extreme cases, so I never go outside its boundaries. I can always do less, but you cannot do more than it allows.

I also caution that we need to all listen to what inspectors are telling us during our inspections, and make sure we are sharing this information and processing among ourselves how we can better protect ourselves.



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I Shared A Ride On A Plane With A Lion

Maggie Martin

An African Lion traveling on our plane, Delta Flight 456 leaving Guatemala at 1.47 pm for Atlanta on Saturday, 7 January 2012. How unbelievable was that !!

Born of a curiosity for a strange video recorder stowed carefully in the overhead bins in business class by two gentlemen; I became party to an incredulous story of the rescue of Kazuma, a male African lion from the grip of a fly-by-night roadside circus owner in Guatemala.

Arriving in Atlanta, we all stood waiting to see which door we would have to exit. As we waited, I struck up a conversation with one of the gentlemen dealing with the video camera asking him if he was on "location." His reply totally amazed me. He told me that they had a rescue lion on board that had been mistreated in a roadside circus near Antigua and that they were taking him to a permanent home in a sanctuary referred to as a preserve in Alabama, USA. He told me that the lion had been resting since June in quarantine at the Guatemala Zoo (La Aurora), which is fairly close to Guatemala Airport. Kazuma's health was slowly improving and he had gained 75 pounds.

As tourists, we had walked around the perimeter of the zoo. Some locals were gazing over the wall but we did not see what the interest was. We had also traveled to, and around, surrounding areas of Colonial Styled Antigua, and Lake Atitlan, which is a beautiful area surrounded by mountains and cute little traditional towns.

The more I discovered about the story of Kazuma, the uncannier the coincidences seemed as we had traveled in his footsteps.

Kazuma first believed to be four years old, is now thought to be between eight and 12 years old. He has spent most of his life underfed and in cruel conditions in a cramped cage on the back of a pick up truck. The state of his health was a huge concern.

After contacting Susan Steffens, executive director of Tigers for Tomorrow

(whose life work and passion is the well being of the animals on her preserve), I was filled in on the details of the rescue.

Steffens said that the Guatemalan Animal Rights Advocates contacted her in July, as they were looking for a permanent home for Kazuma where he can live out the rest of his life peacefully. During the first week of November, Kazuma was released to the preserve and the race was on to get the paperwork completed and to raise the \$40,000/\$50,000 needed for the process of relocating him to his new home. It was important that Kazuma be in his new home by the end of the year so he could acclimate to the colder climate before the cold weather set in. Guatemala has spring-like weather all year round. The \$10,000 worth of needed materials was donated to build Kazuma's enclosure, den

box, and jungle gym. The whole community has been involved in some way or another to bring him home on time. Crossville Elementary School raised around \$1,000.00 for the cause, and has adopted Kazuma as their school mascot. A sign to this effect is to be attached to his enclosure. A grand homecoming party was arranged.

Steffens was touched by the warm welcome that they received from the Guatemalan people who were so happy that their government stood up for the rights of Kazuma and confiscating him from his owner. It is believed a precedent has been set which will affect the plight of other wild animals in similar conditions.

CONAP (the same type of agency as the US fish and Wildlife) warned the owner of Kazuma that he had to improve his living conditions or he would be pros-

ecuted for animal cruelty. The owner of the circus left the area near Antigua and disappeared.

CONAP relocated the circus one year later near Lake Atitlan in Panajachel. With the help of another animal agency, a trial began. CONAP negotiated for Kazuma to be sent to the La Aurora Zoo in Guatemala City. The judge's order was for Kazuma to be confiscated and the Circus owner to spend 10 days under arrest. At this point the lion was still at the circus.



Kazuma is inside that secure metal crate. His next stop is a US Customs and Fish and Wildlife inspection.

Before the order could be executed, the circus owner ran off taking Kazuma with him.

The circus was once more located by CONAP one year later in the city of Jocotenango, near Antigua. CONAP already having the judge's order, called the police and had the lion removed from the circus and taken to the La Aurora Zoo. So many people have been involved in the process to improve the plight of this lion. Truly amazing!

Kazuma's departure from Guatemala was delayed a few days because his traveling crate would not fit onto the scheduled plane. It took a few days to arrange his flight in a larger plane. It was not necessary to sedate him for the journey. Kazuma was hungry, and simply placing some food into the traveling crate enticed him to enter. It was necessary to limit his

intake of water for the journey. His last drink was at 9 am. Once he was unloaded in Atlanta, it was a priority to give him some water. Everything was planned to run like clockwork so that there was no more suffering for Kazuma. The journey by truck from Atlanta, Georgia to Attalla, Alabama was approximately two and a half hours.

Kazuma did not quite make it to his new home by the end of the year as planned.

However, it was a very joyful New Year to bring him home during the first week of January.

Home now is: "Tigers for Tomorrow" at Untamed Mountain, a sanctuary for exotic animals who have lost their home for one reason or another. Steffens has a huge emotional investment in her animals. They are her life. She has a young black bear that is a yearling, who she plays with and gives cuddles. Steffens is one incred-

ibly special lady.

If you would like to visit the preserve or send a donation you will find it at 708 County Road 345, Attala, AL 35954 Call 256- 524-4150, or visit the web site at www.tigersfortomorrow.org.

I am so moved by this rescue story and that it is so wonderful to know that good things still happen in this world!

A New Life for Kazuma

Lynn Culver

Kazuma now lives in his own habitat at Tigers for Tomorrow, a wildlife preserve and rescue facility in Alabama. Over 2,500 donors funded the cost of transport and construction of his new home.

The all-new enclosure is constructed using 9-gauge chain link attached to schedule 40 steel poles. The area enclosed is 35 feet by 60 feet including a smaller holding area. The habitat was specifically designed with Kazuma's rehabilitation needs in mind. Several platforms of different levels help work his legs, especially his back thigh muscles that had atrophied severely from a lifetime of confinement in the small truckbed enclosure.

Sue explains, circuses in Guatemala are not like those in the US. Animals such as Kazuma are not trained to perform, but just hauled around to be exhibited, and Kazuma literally spent most of his life without any access to any exercise. The confiscation of Kazuma took 18 months, because the circus had its own armed security. Military and police literally had to surrender arms to the circus security.

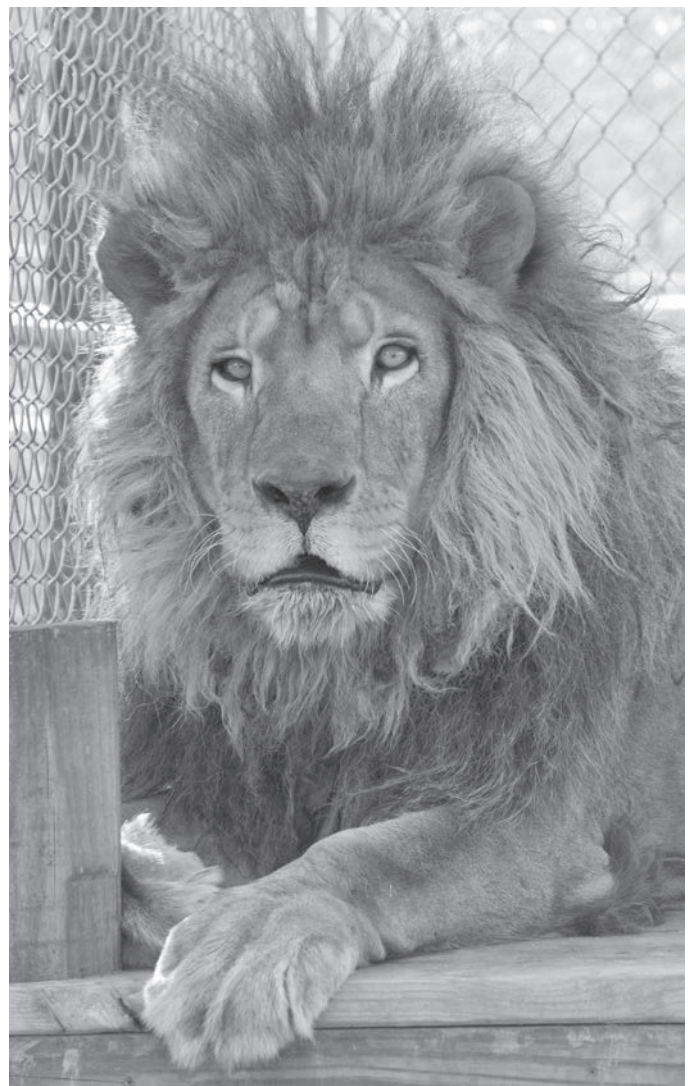
It was only in the final six months before he made his journey to the US, that he actually experienced an opportunity to walk around on the ground, while he lived at the Guatemala zoo that housed him after he was finally confiscated from the circus.

Tigers for Tomorrow designed a series of jungle gyms, starting with the first, only eight inches off the ground. Huge boulders were placed inside his enclosures,

giving him opportunities and incentives to climb up and stand up on things. Kazuma is declawed on all four feet and his bottom canines are blunt, either from self-injury or filing, it is not clear.

When Sue Steffens was first contacted to take in this lion, she was skeptical of the veracity of the Internet reports. But as she researched more and realized the need was real, she decided that Tigers for Tomorrow would commit to the project and make the effort to raise the funds and bring Kazuma to America to live out the rest of his life with dignity.

Sue had his transport cage fabricated to IATA airline standards in the US, and she, along with the Tigers for Tomorrow director of animal care, Wilbur



Kazuma has a forever home at Tigers for Tomorrow.

McCulley, and board member Don Nap flew down with the crate to meet Kazuma and the zoo keepers where he was stay-

ing. Sue remembers her first impression. "Kazuma looked like there was no spirit left in his soul." Even though he had spent the previous six months out of the truck bed cage, and he was well-loved by the zookeepers, he was listless and lifeless. Sue said, "The first time he stood up, he fell over." Even though he had gained nearly 80 pounds while at the zoo, he was still very weak and needed to gain additional weight.


Wilbur, who has a special affinity for lions, was able to get him playing, and the zoo staff was amazed. After that session, everyone left for a short while and returned with the transport cage. It was now 5:30 pm and Wilbur was able to get Kazuma to load himself into the crate, so that no darts or chemicals were required. It appeared that Kazuma understood that his life was about to change for the better, and he made the decision to walk out of one life and into his next. That night, the zookeepers said goodbye and he stood up and rubbed the wire to thank them for the care they had shown him the

past six months. They spent that night sleeping beside him. The next morning, while being loaded, Kazuma stood up proudly in his crate, fully aware, and ready to face his new life.

For the first two months after his arrival at Tigers for Tomorrow, Kazuma was hand fed all his meals. Sue is happy to report that he has gained another 100 pounds, and in spite of his many years of mistreatment at the hands of his circus owner, Sue says, "Kazuma is a very sweet lion." When he was first unloaded into his new enclosure, it was 11:30 at night. He walked deliberately into his yard, found his den box and put himself to bed. The next morning he came out and Wilbur fed him his first meal in two days.

Sue says he has finally learned to stand up, scuff, and urinate. Before, being in

such close confinement, he would just urinate on himself, which lead to chronic yeast infections on his thighs, which Sue has been treating successfully, and it is about 95% cured. He is not much different than the other animals at the facility. He comes out, lays on his jungle gym and greets the visiting public. His leg muscles have improved greatly. In this sweltering Alabama heat, he enjoys lying in front of his own fan and being misted by Wilbur. When he roars, he yells out "Zuma."



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Serval home surrounds owner's residence

Michelle McKay

When I started Zoofari Educational Encounters, one of the first things I needed to do was to build enclosures for the animals I planned to acquire. One of my husbands' favorite animals at the zoo I previously managed was an African Serval cat, so he was very excited when I said I wanted to get a serval. (Buy in from him was very helpful seeing how much work the enclosure was required from both of us). I had the idea that I wanted our serval to be able to be in our



Everyone helped build Nyasha the serval, a big habitat that attaches to the kitchen.

home as well as have access to her enclosure right from our house, so that is where creativity had to kick in. I decided to attach the enclosure to our kitchen window, which meant lots of platforms because we have a walk out basement and our kitchen window is on the second floor. We started the process by protecting our house from potential spraying and claws. We decided that the enclosure would be 12 feet tall on the lower wall and 13 feet tall on the high wall. We put treated posts against the house and then put OSB against it, which created a protective barrier. I tried to match the paint to the house, which did not actually go so well. Another coat of paint was required to cover up the blue that was just a bit too bright.

We lag bolted the wall to our house to ensure it would not go anywhere with a strong wind.

The next task was fencing. I looked online for used chain link dog panels, which I found for a very reasonable price. We sanded the areas that were weathered and then painted the metal with Rustoleum to protect it for the long haul. The dog pen was six feet by 10 feet and there were six panels total. By using our house as two sides of the enclosure, we were able to stack the panels on top of each other, which gave us the twelve feet

of height we wanted. Again, we used treated posts and cemented them in, and attached the panels to the posts. The roof was a little trickier. We used roofing panels, which required both my husband and I to be on very tall ladders to create the frame and

support beams. I prefer to work with big cats any day, than be high up on a ladder with the wind blowing. Not sure why it had to be so windy the day we were doing the roof, but it was definitely nerve racking.

Once the fencing and roof was complete, it was time to fill in all the open areas that could be possible escape routes. The area between the top of the fence panels and roofing required some creative sections of fencing, which we wired or nailed to the fence or roof to prevent squeezing through any gaps. My husband created a double door entrance, which he roofed to create a large platform. Double door entry was one of the essential features I learned about from

Doug Evans, at Conservator's Center, Inc., when I was first learning about enclosure design. Inside the enclosure we incorporated limbs from a tree we had to cut down in our horse pasture as support posts, as well as treated wood as the platform floors. We also added a small gold fishpond for our serval's enjoyment as well. This was a whole family affair and when we had family visiting from out of town, they jumped right in and wanted to help. The last item to complete the serval enclosure was her den box, which we built so we can see directly into it from our kitchen window. We also created ramps with footholds and railings between the different platform levels. My husband laughed at this idea but I think it made him feel better as well.

Our serval loves her enclosure and spends many hours lounging in her den, watching our various other animals from all the different platforms and catching fish every now and then. At night she sits on her platform outside the kitchen window and politely asks to come in for the night. We really have the best of both worlds with this design because we still get lots of head butts and drool, purring and love as well as watching her enjoy her enclosure.



Plenty of platforms and ramps make a super space for Nyasha serval.

Building Cages for Small Felines

Debi Willoughby

We have four small cats: A bengal, a savannah, a Geoffroy's cat and a bobcat. They used to be housed inside my home in their own room that we turned into a cat room during the winter months, and then they would move to an outside cage, eight foot high, eight foot wide by 16 foot long, for the summer months.

The issue we were having is our Bengal cat sprays. We were unable to break him

seams between the walls and floor; the mat would catch it. We then covered the ceiling and walls with fiberglass sheeting. Fiberglass sheets are extremely easy to keep clean, tough enough for cats bouncing off of them and they do not absorb the spray of urine like wood walls would. There were four windows in the building that we covered with plastic coated wire to protect the cats from hitting and smashing them. We covered the ceiling lights with coated wire so the cu-

bunks and used crates for lock downs. My husband made metal runners to attach to the top and bottom of the front of the crate and we cut a thick piece of Plexiglas to slide into the runners to secure the cat inside the crate. The crates were attached to the side of the cage and positioned so we could train the cats to go inside their crates before we entered their cages. The Plexiglas would slide into the runners and secure the cat in the crate. Then we could go in and slide their food



Dakota's enclosure has boulders, swimming pool, tree limbs, platforms and hammock, and it connects to an indoor room.

of the habit and we did not want our house getting soaked with feline urine so we decided to move them into their own building outside. We looked at our options and decided our empty small horse barn would be the best building for them. So we got to work and insulated the barn, put in new windows and ran electricity to the building for heat and lights. We lined the floor with roofing rubber and had the rubber go up the sides of the walls about four inches. This way, when the cats sprayed the walls, the urine would not run down into the

rious cats could not hurt themselves if they happened to somehow reach them and start playing with them. We split the building into two cages and a lockout area. We used half inch by one inch coated wire on the small cat side and one inch by one inch coated wire on the bobcat side. This allowed us to let the cages be only four inches apart without the cats being able to get to each other and hurt themselves. Instead, the cats can play on either side of the fencing together.

Plastic decking was used to make

tray into a slot we cut out of the crate so the cats could eat while we cleaned their cages. Training the cats to go into their crates was not hard as they were motivated by food!

The next step was to build outside pens to attach to the building so the cats could go inside and outside as they pleased. We put heavy duty all-weather dog doors in each cage for access to the outside. We had previously purchased metal greenhouse frames from a garden nursery that was downsizing. These curved



Quanset hut enclosures for both Dakota, the bobcat, and Spirit the Geoffroy's cats.

frames were about seven feet tall in the center. To raise the pen height to eight feet high, we decided to use six inch by six inch landscape timbers (similar to railroad ties). The timbers were stacked two timbers high and secured them with 10-inch spikes and flat brackets. We made the size of the pens 14-foot wide by 25-foot long using the timbers. We drilled holes in the timbers to slide the frame poles into and hung one and a half inch by one and a half inch coated wire over the frames to enclose the pen. We used both hose clamps and wire ties to attach the wire to the frames. We also used heavy duty U-nails to secure the wire to the outside of the timbers. Hog panels were utilized that we had lay-

ing around for added safety to the cage. We cut the small bottom part of the hog panels and hammered them into the ground all around the outside of the cage and attached them to the timbers with U-nails. This way if anything decided to dig in or out, they would run into fencing underground.

Double lockouts were built inside the pen for added safety and rolls of sod were used for a substrate. We did not want to try to grow our own grass because we have a short warm season in Massachusetts and did not want to keep the cats locked inside their building the whole time waiting for the grass to grow. Next came the fun part in adding furniture to the cages to fulfill their physical and wild psychological needs (the need to scratch, scent mark, rub, chase, stalk, etc). Here is what we put inside the pens:

- plastic decking for bunks (plastic does not absorb the urine)
- large tree branches for climbing
- hung hammocks from the roof of the pen
- wading pools
- fountain grass for hiding under
- crates and igloos up high on top of the branches for sleeping
- set up an area (pre-determined by the cats) for a litter box filled with sand
- hung a wood dowel hanging bridge from the roof
- made a ladder up to the beds
- large rock for sunning on
- planter with crab grass for nibbling on

· attached left over pieces of the plastic bunking at different levels along the side of the cage wire for planks to walk along

Each cage took us about 40 to 50 hours to complete. Once they were done we sat in them and enjoyed the view our cats would be looking at every day. It was very relaxing!

Our final step is to landscape outside the pens to dress it up a little bit. Our cats utilize everything in their cages, but their favorite things are their pools, hammocks, fountain grass to hide under and planks to walk on. I hope this article gave you some ideas for your own cages. The biggest things to keep in mind are safety, ease of cleaning and setting it up for the cats to enjoy and utilize.

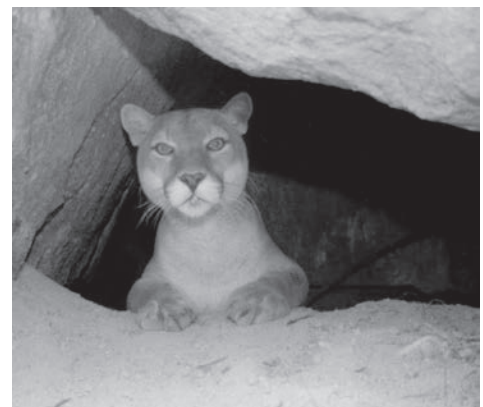
Mandalay's Forever Home

Tiffany Sidden

I moved to Wilkes County about six years ago when my mom married my dad. I guess you could say that that's when my love for cougars started. When I first moved here and I was told that we had a cougar, my jaw dropped. I was so excited. I couldn't wait to see a real life cougar. After I had saw Mandy, the cougar, we sat down and daddy started telling me about his history with cougars. He has been raising them for 30+ years and I was

amazed, I mean, what ten year old would not be. Now, about 5 years later I am still as interested in them as I had been.

Now, about our cougar Mandy, she is about 12 or 13 years old. This is about how long cougars live in the wild. However, in captivity, cougars usually live to be about 12-13 years or somewhere in there. Mandy lives in a two acre by two-acre natural habitat. She also has a manmade cave inside. My dad has been talking to the boy scouts about cougars.

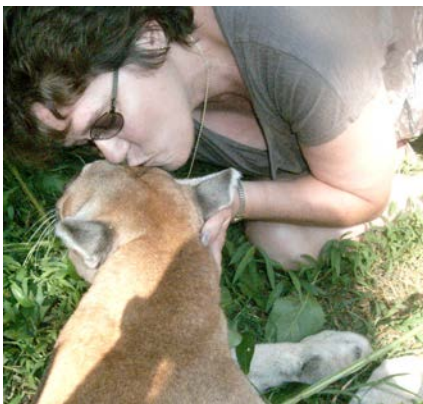


Natchez, one of Tiffany's dad's cougars, looks out from his cave.



Tiffany visits with Mandalay (Mandy for short). This lucky puma lives in a 2-acre natural habitat that encloses both a pond and a rock cave.

talking to the boy scouts about cougars. She is very loving and funny. Sometimes when daddy goes into the cage with her, she will start purring and lying on his lap, it's so sweet. I went in there a few times but I never let my guard down because you have to respect them. One time I went in there she let me kiss her nose. I never expected a cougar to be so nice, because all the depictions in mov-



Tiffany's mom, Donna, gives Mandy a kiss.

ies make them out to be mean and violent.

Mandy is not the only cougar daddy has owned. Some of the others were Natchez, Ginger, Babygirl, and I can't think

of the rest but he had several. I don't know what it is about cougars but I just fell in love with them the first time I met Mandy. I never got to meet any of the rest of them because they had already past own before mom and dad were married. We have a veterinarian on call 24/7 that specializes in big animals and his name is Dr. Eads. So if anything ever happens then we know we're covered, which is reassuring. He is so great with animals, and we think a lot of him and his work.

Ginger was the most protective cougar dad had ever had. She was a very special girl. Natchez was daddy's big boy at about 200 lbs. He was a big loving boy he and dad loved each other very much; he died at about 20 years which is a very long life for a cougar. These are the ones that dad talks about the most but he has stories about others as well.

My dad knows that there are wild cougars in the area because when Mandy comes in heat he has seen them around. The love that these animals have is genuine and they need to be watched and learned about as much as possible. They are nature at its best with love and beauty. They need to be respected. My dad built the natural habitat for the safety of people and the comfort of the cat. I have included some pictures of daddy's cougars through the years. And in conclusion I would love to be able to raise more. They are such a joy to have around.



Mandy poses on her boulder pile inside her high fenced, wooded habitat.



RSF

RARE SPECIES *Niassa Lion Project*

The Rare Species Fund is working with the Niassa Lion Project to help conserve one of Africa's five last remaining healthy lion populations as well as other wildlife inhabitants. In addition to lions, Mozambique's Niassa National Reserve supports populations of leopards, cheetahs and wild dogs. The area is considered to be one of the "Last of the Wild" and most undeveloped places in Africa.



Project Goals

- Targeted Pragmatic Research.
- Educational Outreach
- Work closely with Niassa National Reserve Authorities
- Direct Support for Reserve Staff
- Community Scout Monitoring Program
- Minimization of Human-Lion Conflict
- International Coordination of Lion Conservation Efforts



RSF

www.RareSpeciesFund.org

NIASSA LION PROJECT

The Niassa Lion Project (NLP) views community participation as an essential element of long-term protection for the African lion and the many other imperiled species within its critical habitat. NLP is deeply engaged with local residents, the management authority of the Niassa National Reserve, schools, tourism operators, and the bordering nation of Tanzania in its spectrum of conservation, scientific and educational activities.



*Above: Researcher tracks radio-collared lion with long range telemetry equipment at the Niassa Reserve in Mozambique.
Left: Water holes like this represent the life-blood of Africa and are a necessary part of survival, including this lion.*

Lions once roamed freely across most parts of Africa. Having already disappeared from northern Africa, they are now found only in parts of southern and eastern Africa and in the southern part of the Sahara desert. With only 23,000 - 40,000 lions remaining, the African populations is half of what it was in the early 1950's. Mozambique's Niassa National Reserve is home to only one of five healthy lion populations left on the continent.



Above: NLP founder Dr. Colleen Begg takes blood samples from a sedated lion. Left: NLP camp, well stocked with provisions and research equipment. Far left: A very rare image of a brown hyena, caught by an NLP camera trap. (Unmarked photos provided by Dr. Begg and the Niassa Lion Project)



G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Park is now an FCF Accredited Facility

One facility that does it all, and has recently been approved for FCF Feline Facility Accreditation is the G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Park in Wynnewood, Oklahoma. There is no denying that with over 170 cats on the grounds, this is one of the nation's largest feline sanctuaries.

The word "sanctuary" can bring on some emotion-filled debates, and also carries with it a lot of various expectations. Different organizations and government agencies have created their own definition of sanctuary. They require that in addition to rescuing animals, a sanctuary must also be a publicly supported charity, must prohibit public contact, must not breed anything, and



One-acre fenced-in habitat with dug moat serves as a play yard for tiliger, lions and tigers. Several enclosures connect to the habitat and various groups can have use of the space.



Adventure Tours begin with a short show by Joe and his tiger pal Sarge. The pair educate visitors about the history of the Park, its rescue, exhibit, and breeding programs, as well as the plight of tigers in nature.

must provide lifetime care for the feline.

But many feline facilities perform sanctuary work along side other missions. When you rescue a feline in need and give it a home, you have given this feline "sanctuary", as in, "a safe place". Having other purposes, such as breeding, or pet ownership, should not negate the efforts made to improve the life of a feline in need.

G. W. is much more than just a sanctuary, or, in some people's assessment, its multipurpose mission disqualifies it as a sanctuary. Whether you buy into the animal rights definition, or you think Webster's Dictionary got it right when it defined sanctuary as a "place of refuge and protection", you cannot discount the vast number of tigers that have been removed from bad situations and brought to the Park, where they now enjoy regular meals, expansive habitats, veterinary care, and plenty of attention from employees and visitors.

G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Park opened October 14, 1999 and in just a few



Bonded male lion and female tiger produce ligers.

short years collected nearly 90 cats. Joe Schreibvogel, Park founder, traveled around the country to pick up cats in need of a new home, mainly tigers. He answered calls from government agencies wanting to place cats they had confiscated from illegal or abusive owners. With a start like that, it's no wonder that Joe was once an outspoken critic of private ownership.

The very first tiger rescued was a pregnant female living in nearby Ardmore, Oklahoma. She delivered her cubs at the Park just a few months after arrival and Joe fell in love. As rescues came in from other parts of the country, Joe deliberately paired a couple of unrelated animals and then used the cubs born in his educational shows. During 2003 and 2004, he exported several of his offspring to zoos in other nations, reasoning that his donated cats would fill an important need in counties that did not have these ani-

mals to exhibit to their public.

The rapid population increase at the Park did not come without growing pains. USDA inspectors cited the Park for repeat non-compliant items such as inadequate record keeping, animal care violations, and even being uncooperative with the inspectors. By 2005, USDA had filed an official complaint in court. This could have led to the Park closing, but instead, it was a turning point. Rather

than waste time and money fighting a los-

practices, it instituted meticulous record keeping, and substituted reliance on donated livestock and random food sources with a steady diet of USDA inspected, human consumption meat. The USDA regularly inspects the Park, and Joe is proud of his good relationship with the animal care inspectors and the Park's many USDA reports documenting full compliance with Animal Welfare Act regulations. Joe took responsibility for past shortcomings, addressed them, going far beyond minimum requirements, and now helps others in the animal community do the same. These actions define Joe as a



The liger habitat is a two acre area with a pond, island, and suspension bridge. Four ligers and a white tiger reside in this roomy environment.



This is not an Oklahoma tree squirrel, its a liger. The giant cats like to climb the nature oaks growing in their habitat.

ing battle against the government in their kangaroo court, Joe paid a fine and agreed to a period of probation. The Park replaced its dependence on a volunteer staff with trained, paid employees; it revamped its husbandry and public safety

professional, someone who has conformed to the technical and ethical standards of this animal industry, and who acts in a conscientious and businesslike manner.

It was also around 2005 that Joe had a change of heart about private ownership in the US. Joe met some of the many good, licensed exhibitors in the US. The Park cooperated with other USDA licensed zoos and exhibitors, donating cubs and exchanging animals. Joe began to champion reasonable regulations to state legislators. Most recently, he spoke as a representative of USZA before the Ohio Senate and House in opposition of the proposed HSUS backed ban bill.

About three quarters of the cats living



The G.W. Park became home for this Asian leopard after the owner was widowed.

at G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Park arrived from previous owners that could no longer care for their cats, the rest are offspring born from the Park's selective breeding programs. The felines are housed in 85 enclosures. The oldest cage was constructed in 1998. Cages and habitats are constructed from either 2-inch oilfield pipe with 9-gauge-chain link fabric stretched, or 6-gauge welded wire panels that are welded to 2-inch galvanized aquare tubing.

Most enclosures are free standing, but some do share common walls, and in those cases, the material of choice is 2-inch x 4-inch welded galvanized panels. For individual habitats, the design is 4-inch x 4-inch opening welded wire panels for the first 5 feet, and above that, 2-inch x 4-inch panels to prevent any large cats from climbing. Most habitat walls at the park were 12-foot tall and topped with 3-foot incline for added protection. This design has never been breached and has served the park well. However, for the past year, the USDA has been implimenting a nationwide change in policy, setting new standards for the height of open-topped habitats for tigers and other big cats, in response to the two escapes by tigers, at two public zoos, in the previous two years. The Park has now raised its habitat fences another four feet, to a height of 16 feet, to meet the latest USDA requirements.

The lion and tiger habitats range in size from the smallest being 50 feet by 50 feet, to the largest, which is a two-acre enclosure occupied by three female ligers, one

male liger and male white tiger. This is Joe's favorite compound. It has a large pond with an island in the middle, and a bridge over the water to reach the island. The cats can often be seen hanging out on the bridge, or even sleeping in the big oak trees. Another favorite habitat of the park visitors is the breeding habitat for a very unusual feline creation that can only be seen in captivity, the

tiligers (that's a double hybrid, a female liger, which is cross between a male lion and a female tiger, bred to a male tiger). An elevated overlook allows folks to walk over the enclosure and look down.

Each enclosure has a variety of enrichments including natural logs for scratching and climbing on, fire hoses that hang from trees with tire swings, ponds for swimming, and stock tanks in every cage. Toys are boomer balls, bowling balls and

bowling pins for knocking around. Novel items presented for enrichment include stuffed animals, which are quickly destroyed (and removed) and bowling pins in burlap

sacks scented with cologne. For fleas, Joe has had great results by adding either lemon joy or orange joy dish detergent to the stock tanks. The tigers love playing in the bubble baths and the natural or-

ange and lemon oils kill and repel fleas.

For big groups the park offers their Endangered Animal Adventure Tours, which begin with the group seated around a circular fenced stage area to watch and listen as one of the park's hand reared, and leash trained tigers is walked around while the tour guides deliver a ten minute conservation message. The interaction between the trainer and big cat gets everyone's attention and prepares them to fully appreciate the magnitude of the Park and its inhabitants, and understand that this vast collection of giant felines are representatives of species that are literally on the brink of extinction in nature. The special guided tours that follow conclude with a visit to the breeding areas that are not normally open for visitors. There, tour guides discuss the various feline species, and the park's selective breeding programs, and explain to the guests the big cat behaviors. Finally, after everyone has been sufficiently educated, and have seen the massive size and power of these big cats, and understand the enormous liability and responsibility of caring for big cats, they are given one



Tiger bathes with Orange Citrus dishsoap, which combats fleas and keeps the big cats clean and smelling nice.

of the most rare, and memorable experiences any feline lover could ever dream of having. Juvenile cubs, with soft, velvety fur, and endearing, friendly chuffs, expressing curiosity and playful antics,

are brought out for everyone to pet and enjoy. Each person leaves with a new appreciation for the plight of these great cats, and a lasting impression that the cuddly cubs they just played with, are destined to grow up to be nothing less than 500-pound predators that are not domesticated pets.

Close to 70,000 visitors come to G.W. Exotic Animal Memorial Park annually, with most visiting between March and August. It takes 18 full-time employees to run the Park, and during the busy summer months the payroll swells to 34. The Park joined the Wal-Mart food-recycling program in 2006. The program was started by Quest Recycling, benefitting animal facilities and reducing landfill usage. Participants in the pro-

gram pay a small fee and pick up Wal-Mart surplus meat weekly in receptacles they must provide. Contracts last for at least a year, and the volume of product varies with each location and season. But overall, the program has revolutionized the economics of the larger sanctuary industry, with the significant savings in animal feed. During the summer the Park feeds about 1000 pounds of beef, poultry and pork daily, and fasts one



A lioness, male tiger and liger offspring.

day a week. Joe has a contract for 37 Wal-Mart in the Oklahoma City, Metro and Lawton area. Meat is picked up on Tuesday and Thursday each week. The driver and assistant leave in a big truck with a lift gate at 3 am in the morning and drive as far as two hours away, stopping at each Wal-Mart before returning 12 hours later. After four hours working steady, 18 employees will have the product unloaded, sorted, portioned out, and cold stored. And then again on Thursday, the routine is repeated. While the meat is top quality, there are still items that are not suitable as feed, such as deli items that are picked up at the Park by the Quest company weekly and sent to a rendering plant to be used for make-up and other human products. This arrangement is a substantial savings to the Park, but is still not free; the gas to pick up the product runs \$400 weekly, and it takes 18 employees working an average of eight hours each week to turn the delivery trucks laden with Wal-Mart surplus product into the Park's food source.

As part of the FCF accreditation process, Accreditation Committee member Bill Meadows visited the Wynnewood, Oklahoma facility to evaluate its current diet, staff, and records, and inspect construction and maintenance of feline enclosures. Meadows stated, "G.W. is a very clean park. There are many great improvements made in the past few years. The grounds are well-maintained and well-landscaped, and the cats have a high quality of life at the Park."

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Wild Cat Research and Conservation in Tanzania's Ruaha Landscape

Amy Dickman

The Ruaha landscape in central Tanzania is a vast and largely unexplored wilderness, which is globally important for wildlife, particularly big cats. It is thought to hold around a tenth of the world's remaining lions (*Panthera leo*) and is one of only four places in East Africa still thought to support at least 200 cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*). In addition, it has globally important populations of leopards and smaller cats, as well as the third biggest population of endangered African wild dogs (*Lycan pictus*) in the world. However, despite its international significance for wild cats and other carnivores, the Ruaha landscape has long been overlooked in terms of research and conservation effort, with no dedicated carnivore research or conservation projects in the area until 2009. That was the year that our team, from Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), set up the Ruaha Carnivore Project (RCP), to try to provide vital baseline data on Ruaha's large felids and other carnivores, and to help address conservation threats in this crucial area.

There are two key issues facing

wild cat conservation in the Ruaha landscape – firstly, there have been no detailed scientific studies of their abundance, ecology or population trends, which hinders the development of appropriate conservation and management plans. Secondly, intense conflict exists between local communities and large carnivores, which range across the village land adjacent to Ruaha National Park. Lions, leopards and other carnivores cause significant problems by attacking villagers' livestock, and sometimes even the villagers themselves. Furthermore, the local people see little or no benefit from living alongside these dangerous species, so have no reason to tolerate their presence. Therefore, spearing, snaring and poisoning are all common on village land around Ruaha, posing a significant threat both to wild cats and to other threatened species such as vultures, which scavenge off poi-



Equipping Park drivers with cameras enables them to take excellent photos of wild cats – individuals can be identified either through whisker spots or coat patterns.

using two main approaches – direct sightings and camera-trapping. There are several tourist lodges within Ruaha National Park, and the lodges and Parks have been extremely helpful, encouraging tourists to share their photos of wild cats with

RCP and enabling us to start creating a carnivore identification database. Lions are identified through their whisker-spot pattern, which is unique to every individual, while leopards (*Panthera pardus*) and cheetahs are identified by their coat patterns. However, relying on tourists sending in photographs can be quite erratic, so we are now working directly with



Amy examining a lion which was killed on village land in response to livestock loss.

soned carcasses.

The Ruaha Carnivore Project has been developing programs both to provide baseline data on Ruaha's wild cats, and to mitigate the serious human-carnivore conflict that exists in the landscape. In terms of ecological and population research, we have been

lodge drivers, who are being equipped with GPS units and high-quality cameras. They record and photograph all wild cat sightings and report them back to us, which has been extremely valuable and will, in time, enable us to collect reliable data on wild cat numbers, demography and movement in Ruaha National Park.

Outside the Park, where wild cats tend to be much shyer and more elusive, we



Tanzania's Ruaha landscape is globally important for wild cats, particularly lions, cheetahs and leopards.

are relying upon camera-traps rather than direct sightings. These camera-traps are remotely-triggered cameras, which photograph any passing animal – as well as inquisitive people! They provide vital data on the distribution and relative abundance of wild cats and a whole range of other species across the landscape, and have even confirmed the presence of certain species which were not conclusively known to occur here, such as the striped hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena*). These data are being shared with the Tanzanian authorities and will hopefully



A camera-trap photo of a large male lion in Ruaha National Park.

be used to inform future management and conservation plans for the Ruaha landscape.

In addition to the ecological research, we are working hard to improve the cost-benefit ratio of wild cat presence on village land. We are helping villagers improve and protect their livestock enclosures, for instance by fortifying them with diamond-mesh fencing, which has so far been 100% successful in prevent-

ing attacks. In order to help people better protect their livestock while out grazing, we will shortly be starting a livestock guarding dog programme, using Anatolian Shepherd Dogs imported in from the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in Namibia. The conflict mitigation work has been successful, with attacks dropping over time, but it will never be enough just to reduce the costs of big cat presence – people have to see a real, relevant benefit from their presence in order to want to conserve them. We have therefore equipped a village clinic in the central pastoral area, are twinning village schools with international schools under a 'Kids 4 Cats' partnership initiative, and have established 'Simba Scholarships', which provide fully-funded secondary school scholarships for children from poverty-stricken pastoralist families. We are also working with colleagues in Kenya to develop the successful Lion Guardians model in Ruaha – this is an innovative approach, which employs young warriors,

who would traditionally kill lions, as lion researchers and conservationists. At a wider scale, we are also educating the local communities about wild cats and the need for conservation through Swahili DVD shows and visits to the National Park – the vast majority of people have never been there and have only ever seen lions when they were

attacking stock, so these visits are hugely important in terms of improving attitudes. Changing attitudes is a slow process, but local people are already reporting less animosity towards wild cats, and a greater recognition of benefits from their presence, so this work is having important results in terms of reducing conflict.

There is a huge amount of work to do in the Ruaha area, and RCP is very committed to building capacity amongst Tanzanian researchers, so that they can develop and continue this work in the long term. One of the project's research assistants is currently completing his undergraduate degree in wildlife management, one is at Oxford University studying for a postgraduate diploma in international wildlife conservation practice, and another is about to embark on his Masters degree in conservation biology. We are confident that RCP's work, increasingly managed by this team of skilled and enthusiastic Tanzanians, will provide invaluable data on Ruaha's carnivores, and will substantially reduce conflict, significantly improving the situation for both people and wild cats in this critically important area.



Amy with Barabaig warriors, and the project's community liaison, Ayoub. Msago.

FCF Convention Board of Director Meeting Summary

Second Quarter Board of Directors Meeting was held in Cincinnati, OH on June 7, 2012. Board members present were: President- Kevin Chambers; Vice-President-Patty Perry, via conference phone; Treasurer-MariLin Antle; Secre-

tary-David Lewis; Director-Robert Johnson; Director- Teresa Shaffer and Executive Director-Lynn Culver. Director Pat Callahan was not present for this meeting. The following motions and discussions were held during the meeting:

Ratify the 1st Quarter 2012 Minutes: Moved by David Lewis, seconded by Robert Johnson, the minutes of the January 19, 2012 meeting were approved for publication in the March/April 2012 Journal. There were no additions or correc-

tions. Motion to ratify the vote to approve the minutes passed with six yes votes.

Budget: Moved by Teresa Shaffer, seconded by MariLin Antle, the 2012 Budget be approved: Motion passed with six yes votes.

Brochures moved by Robert Johnson and seconded by Patty Perry: A discussion on designing a brochure explaining the organization, including how the brochure will be presented and the contents. The estimated cost will be \$700 for 10,000 brochures and \$500 for 5,000 brochures. Robert Johnson volunteered to draft the brochure and submitted to the Board for approval. The motion is pending board approval of the design.

Moved by Robert Johnson, seconded by Teresa Shaffer, that FCF renew its subscription to CAPWIZ for third quarter 2012: Motion passes with five yes votes one abstained.

Breeding Bans and Ban by Legislation: Moved by Teresa Shaffer, seconded by Robert Johnson, that the FCF executive director will contact members of FCF facilities that openly support bills that ban ownership and breeding in opposition to FCF's policy and report to the board. Then the board will determine if any further action is required. The motion passed with six yes votes.

2012 elections: Moved by Teresa Shaffer, seconded by Robert Johnson the 2012 election ballots will be counted by the same CPA in OK as used previously in 2010. It was also decided that there will not be any ballots in the journal, only via mail to eliminate duplicate ballots. The board has also decided to accept incomplete ballots and multiple ballots may be included in the same envelope. The motion passed with six yes votes.

Rescind bylaw requiring professional membership to serve on board of directors: Moved by Kevin Chambers but not seconded by anyone. Kevin called for a vote by roll call: one vote yes, five voted no. Motion failed.

Amend the accreditation committee policy to require applicants for the facility accreditation committee to be a professional: Moved by Robert Johnson, seconded by David Lewis. Motion passed by five votes one abstained.

Refunds from Professional Application: Moved by Robert Johnson, seconded by Kevin Chambers it is agreed that, due to the revision of the professional definition, if a member has applied for professional status, up until that point, and has been denied, the application fee will be refunded. Motion passed by six votes.

2013 Convention: Moved by Teresa Shaffer, seconded by MariLin Antle, that the 2013 Convention be held in Myrtle Beach during one of the first two weeks of June 2013. Motion passed with six votes.

Appointment of professional committee member: Board voted on the appointment of the professional committee member. Three members expressed interest in being appointed as professional committee member, Kurt Beckelman, Brian Werner and Mindy Stinner. Mindy Stinner was appointed with five votes, Brian Werner received one vote and Kurt Beckelman received no votes.

Appointment of accreditation committee member: Board voted on the appointment of accreditation committee member. Three members expressed interest in being appointed as accreditation committee member, Heather Grierson, Brian Werner and Tim Stoffel. Brian Werner was appointed with six votes. Heather Grierson and Tim Stoffel did not receive any votes.

Professional Member Requirements: Moved by Robert Johnson, seconded by MariLin Antle the board voted to expand the current definition in the by laws for professional member as follows: A Professional member of the FCF is someone who is substantially involved in the captive husbandry of wild felines and who operates with high standards of animal care and facility management, and who conducts their husbandry, business, and public image in an ethical manner. Professional members holding felines will hold a USDA license to engage in the breeding, brokering, sales, or exhibition of wild felines, or they may be employed or hold substantial, but unpaid positions at USDA licensed, or non-profit wild feline facilities. The facility must not be newly licensed and have established a record of good compliance. The indi-

vidual must not have been convicted or be under investigation of wildlife violations, by state or federal agencies. There must also not be a history of incidents, accidents, or escapes. An individual applying for professional membership must have sufficient experience at a professional level and provide sufficient and proper care, maintenance, housing, equipment, display, transportation, veterinary care, and safety protocols. Professional membership may also be granted to those running non-profits, substantial financial supporters, wildlife educators, veterinarians, researchers, and conservationists. Professional members must support the goals and mission of the Feline Conservation Federation, which is to protect the rights of qualified individuals to own and to pursue captive husbandry of wild felines, and to preserve, protect and propagate wild feline populations in captivity and in nature. Motion passed by five votes one abstained.

Other Topics Discussed:

Stud Book: Mindy Stinner reported to the Board of Directors on progress of the Stud Book. Options include testing and breeding. Will be restricted access for security reasons. The name selection is important.

Cat Census: Ohio is the only state with new input due to Governor Order.

ING account: The signature card for the ING account needs to be updated.

Defanging and declawing policy: Robert Johnson requested that the FCF policy on the FCF website be amended to clarify that the organization does not support the practice of defanging or declawing.

Conservation Grant: with the absence of Pat Callahan the discussion concerning the conservation grant could not commence.

Summary by David Lewis, FCF Secretary



How to Build a Good Cat Ambassador

Linda Castaneda

At the Cat Ambassador Program at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden we often get questions about how we raise cats to be successful animal ambassadors. Through years of trial and error, we have found that there are certain key elements that can make a good ambassador. These are a few tips that we pass on to others who are wondering what they can do to increase the success of their ambassador cats. There are of course many ways to create a good ambassador, and each cat will be different, but this is what we have found has worked for us. Hopefully it can help you too.

GET THE RIGHT START

The first step to most successful ambassadors is starting young. Getting cats young before their eyes open allows you to capture the critical imprinting period. Yes they are always wild animals, but if they imprint on a human they are more likely to have better buy in to being an ambassador.

Another important step is being consistent with handling and training-



Fishing cat Minnow as a kitten.

als can not understand intent, only action, so make sure everyone who raises the cat is behaving in the same way around the animal. There should be others involved; we always say that it takes a village to raise a cat. Having well trained (so that all are consistent) staff and volunteers interacting with your new ambassador will make them confident around a variety of people.

Habituate, desensitize and socialize your ambassador. Habituation, or the lessening or disappearance of a response with repeated presentations, is applicable to things such as doors shutting, the TV, crowds of people or anything that the cat may come in contact with throughout their life. Desensitization, or the process of changing an animal's perception of an event to a neutral perception, would apply to things such as having your ambassador wear a collar or a harness. Socialization, or the process whereby an animal acquires and participates in the patterns of behavior characteristic of its society, is a tough one. Usually this applies to wild behaviors, such as primates that learn their hierarchy. However, your ambassador needs to learn the rules of being an ambassador, such as sitting nicely during programs, not striking at handlers and that being on leash means work time.

MUSTHAVE BEHAVIORS

So what are the typical behaviors that an ambassador should have? If you intend on traveling with your cat, a good solid crate behavior is critical. If you do not intend on traveling with your cat, they should be familiar with the crate anyway for vet visits or in case of an emergency. Cats should love their crate, so making it their "safe place" will both benefit them and you. Pairing the crate with a positive thing, such as food or a favorite toy, will increase the cats desire to be in the crate. When first starting out with the crate, we will feed animals their diet in the crate so that they learn the crate is the place where good things happen. Crates can be very helpful when dealing with shy animals, since it allows them to take refuge in a

safe spot and to face new situations on their own terms, emerging slowly if that is what makes them more confident. The most important thing to remember about crate training is that the crate should not be a place for punishment! It cannot be both the great place to hang out and where the cat goes when it is "bad".



Cougar Joseph used his crate as his safe place in new environments.

Collar/harness and leash are also critical behaviors for an ambassador. For maximum success, start young and slow. Pair the collar/harness and leash with something positive, such as a favorite toy, the best treats or even the animal's entire diet. Advance at the animals pace, some individuals will take very well to wearing a collar or harness and others will not but it is important to keep it positive, even if it moves slowly. As for which is better, collar or harness, that is up to you and your cat. We have traditionally always started our cheetahs on a harness first but our last 2 cats have hated the harness but done very well with the collar. Letting the cat determine their comfort level is the best way to go.

"Leave it" is a great safety behavior for an ambassador to have, especially if they will be around people. Leave it tells your animal that they need to look away or back away from an object or person. This will come in handy if your cat likes to pounce on items, such as coats, towels, or even people. Leave it should be reinforced with reward (verbal, tactile, toy or food) and may also be paired with punishment. The key to leave it is to give the animal the option to do the right thing

and earn a reward before a punishment is given.

A recall is another great safety behavior that may be life saving if ever needed. Pick a specific noise that will only be used during a recall, such as a whistle, a bell or even a clicker. The animal should respond by coming to the noise immediately. To make a recall effective, pair it with a jackpot (an extra large reward) or a special treat to be used only for the recall behavior. Many zoos employ this behavior to bring large and dangerous animals in from their display in case of an emergency, such as a visitor falling into the display moat. This behavior can be used to call an animal into their holding but also to call an animal back to you if you are out on the walk and a leash or collar fails.

Other than the basics listed above, we train our ambassadors to perform their natural behaviors on cue using the animal's specific adaptations. For example, we train our servals to jump and the ocelot to climb on cue. This keeps the animal active during a presentation, gives them mental and physical exercise anytime and wows the audience watching during programs.



Ocelot Sihil shows off her climbing skills during a school program.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

While there are numerous great behav-

iors to teach any ambassador cat there are also many inappropriate behaviors that cats can display. The biggest cat no-no's include stalking, swatting, biting or any other opportunity to rehearse aggression. Chewing or attacking the leash is also not allowed in the cat program. The best way to combat these behaviors is to nip them in the bud when the cat is a kitten. Remember to give your cat an outlet for their energy that will still be appropriate as an adult. So while swatting is not as bad as a kitten, you don't want a full-grown adult doing the same.



While cheetah cub Nia chewing on a binder is cute, this would not be an appropriate behavior for a cheetah adult. A cub displaying this behavior should be re-directed to chew on their own toys and rewarded when they do.

PROBLEMSOLVING

But what do you do when behaviors start to break down? The best thing is always to teach good manners from the beginning but there are certain things that can help remind the animal of the appropriate behaviors. The first is to re-direct bad behaviors and reward your animals when it is behaving appropriately. For example, if your kitten is trying to swat and play with your keys, give it something else to play and swat at, such as one of its toys. Then reward with praise when it does the appropriate behavior.

The second strategy is to teach incompatible behaviors. These are behaviors that take the place of a bad behavior since the two cannot be performed simultaneously. For example, if the cat rushes the door when you try to go in to their enclosure to feed them, teach them a station behavior away from the door. The cat cannot station and rush the door at

the same time, they must choose one or the other and if the station behavior comes with a good reward, they will hopefully choose that one.

Another key component for employing effective behavior strategies is knowing your animal's behavior, especially the precursors to bad behavior. Every animal gives warning before it will engage in bad behavior so learning the species precursors and your individuals "tell" will help you re-direct their behavior when you begin to see the warning signs. Our youngest cheetah Nia gets what we call "naughty tail" out on walks, she flicks her tail when she is laying down right before she jumps up from her laying position. Knowing this, we can re-direct her behavior when we see it to avoid any issues with bad behavior.

Keep an open mind when dealing with behavior and training. Recognize when you need a game change and need to try something new and keep in mind that some individuals just will not work. Not every cat is cut out to be a perfect ambassador, even with perfect training. Finding a role for these cats in your program, even if it is doing exhibit presentations, allows them to still be an ambassador while working within their comfort level.

Lastly, remember it is important to create opportunities for success. Do not set your cat up to fail by putting them in situations that you know are too overwhelming or tempting for them. Remember that they are still a wild animal; it is not fair to ask them to fight instinct!

GOOD PEOPLE PRACTICES

The last element to making good ambassadors is good people practices. Regardless of the program we do, be it a cheetah appearance, school program or summer show, we always aim to have a conservation message and action. Our goal is to create a connection between the visitor and an animal and inspire them to want to save earth's species.

Record keeping is also a good practice to have. Record keeping allows for accurate assessment, evaluation and readjustment and also enables you to rely on documentation and not memory for how/when it was done. In addition, it can help peers when they need some advice on



We teach animal adaptations before the cats come out so students understand the cats unique ability to survive in their environment.

how you were successful.

Connecting with peers is also very important. Get to know others that share species and/or similar programs as you. You might be able to double your knowledge with a phone call or email. Making contacts can be helpful with problem solving and generating new ideas for enrichment, programming, etc.

And lastly, continuing education will also benefit the people and animals in your program. Belonging to organizations (like FCF!), reviewing publications and attending conferences are a great way to make connections, develop new

ideas and contribute to others animal programs. After all, we are all on the same conservation team. When given the opportunity, we should provide help to each other, for the sake of the species in our collection, as well as those in the wild.

Want more info?

A great training organization to look into is The Animal Behavior management Alliance (ABMA) - theabma.org Some good reference books include Don't Shoot the Dog by Karen Pryor and Animal Training by Ken Ramirez

WILDCAT WEEKEND NOVEMBER 9-11 AT THE CONSERVATOR'S CENTER

This event is being hosted by the Conservator's Center, (www.conservatorscenter.org) an educational wildlife facility just north of Mebane, NC. The Center is home to almost 100 animals representing 19 species, including tiger, lion, leopard, serval, jungle cat, caracal, bobcat, ocelot, and Geoffroy's cat, as well as non-feline species including binturongs and wolves. The closest airports are Raleigh-Durham (RDU) and Greensboro (GSO).

Friday, November 9 WILD/EXOTIC FELINE HUSBANDRY COURSE 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

Saturday, November 10 WILDLIFE VISITS at various local organizations

Sunday, November 11 WILDLIFE CONSERVATION EDUCATOR'S COURSE 8:00 am - 5:00 pm

The FCF Husbandry course aids cat caregivers in providing better quality of life for their felines and makes them aware of larger issues in the feline ownership world. The course includes an introduction to all species of wild cats, and covers nutrition, health care, habitat construction and enrichment, laws and regulatory agencies, contingency planning, and much more. The recently updated student textbook includes demonstrative photos and notes to provide reference for years to come.

The Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course is a "how to" course is designed to cover all the basics of developing a safe, informative, entertaining and successful wildlife educator's program. Taught by an experienced wildlife educator, the course explains choosing and training animal ambassadors, managing different types of audiences and improving public speaking. Already working as an educator? Learn how to stand out and be more valuable to your employer. Learn to create your own wildlife programs, as well. The course also includes details about forming, marketing, and expanding your business, and two interactive workshops with small wild cats. Students receive a textbook, test, and certificate of completion.

To recharge from the coursework, the Conservators Center invites you to attend our Pumpkin Prowl festival on site at the Center, or to join our Twilight Tours at a reduced cost. Central North Carolina also offers other cat-related activities in the area including visiting TigerWorld, another FCF member organization with more than 30 big cats.

The registration fee for each class is \$95 FCF members, \$130 for non-members. The registration fee for both courses is \$190 for FCF members and \$260 for non-members. Registrants may choose to attend both, or only a single class.

To register, please email the following information to director@conservatorscenter.org, or mail it to Conservators' Center, PO Box 882, Mebane, NC 27302. 1. Your Name: 2. Class Selection: (Husbandry, Educator's, or both courses) 3. Facility Name (if applicable): 4. Phone Number: 5. Email Address: 6. Mailing Address:

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Mice



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

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

Rats



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

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

Coturnix Quail



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

* We offer combined quantity discount quail pricing.

Rabbits

Size	Our Price	Weight (lbs.)	Count
X-Small:	\$4.00	0.50 - 0.75	1
Small:	\$5.00	1.00 - 1.75	1
Medium:	\$6.00	2.00 - 3.75	1
Large:	\$7.00	4.00 - 5.75	1
X-Large:	\$8.00	6.00 - 7.75	1
XX-Large:	\$9.00	8.00 - 9.75	1
XXX-Large:	\$10.00	10.00 - 11.75+	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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Nyasha serval keeps Tucker McKay warm in bed. Photo by Michelle McKay.



Dakota bobcat checks out the high spot in his new digs. Photo by Debi Willoughby.

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Rare melanistic serval caught on camera trap in Gabon. Photo compliments of Torsten Bohm/Nicolas.



Beautiful head study of Natchez puma. Photo by Steven Sidden.



Tish and Chloe live at Tigers for Tomorrow. Photo by Susan Steffens.



Tecumseh puma leaps from rock to rock. Photo by Tim Stoffel.



Little Geoffroy's cat kitten caught in midair by Jennifer Kasserman.



Spotted Asian Wildcat. Photo by Neville Buck.

Is Taming Domesticating Exotic Cats?

C. T. Tromborg, Ph.D.
Sacramento City College & University
of California Davis

In his landmark treatise, “Wild Animals In Captivity,” Heinrich Hediger proposed that some degree of socialization in the form of taming and training should be developed between captive wild animals and those who care for them. Experience and research suggest that this is a valuable management strategy for selected species, but it should be approached with some caution.

Increasingly, contemporary animal care organizations, including those associated with The Feline Conservation Federation (FCF) and, for that matter, the American Zoo Association (AZA) accredited facilities are challenged with greater responsibilities associated with the long-term manage-



Taming starts with bottle feeding, so that young kittens learn to associate humans with nurturing and love.

ment of endangered captive wild felines. Controversies about the most effective ways to manage captive populations over the long-term can arise when there appear to be conflicting or poorly defined management goals. A prime example of apparently conflicting management goals concerns the degree to which captive wild felines should be socialized through taming. Taming as defined by Hediger involves regular interactions between animals and the animal maintenance

staff in such a manner that animals become less reactive to the presence of humans. A primary characteristic of taming is that it results in a lessening of “flight distances” in formerly very reactive animals. Some of the benefits realized from a reduction in flight distance include greater accessibility for veterinarians and greater access for other maintenance personnel. Increased tameness also results in a reduction in startling to sudden stimuli, a reduction in reactivity to the presence of humans, and a concomitant reduction in anxiety and stress responses. While these benefits are desirable, concerns about the long-term consequences of the practice of taming should be addressed.

In order for taming to be accomplished, captive wild felines must be continuously interacted with by their caretakers, a situation common in most facilities. Problems arise when captive exotic felines are tamed as a management tool over generations. While socialization makes captive management of wild felines practical, it is conceivable that selection for tractability and tameness could lead to incipient domestication. Surprisingly, under some selective breeding regimes, incipient domestication can occur within a few generations. Consciously or otherwise, domestication is accelerated when supposedly desirable traits are selected for through artificial selection, especially in small, captive populations of exotic felines. To the extent that tractability and reduced reactivity are considered desirable, selection for these characteristics could result in cats that could be described as being more tame or docile than free-living individuals. When breeding groups of captive felines are very small, population “bottlenecks” might result in “founder effects” which can lead to severe inbreeding and the fixing of genes that code for unusual or even deleterious characteris-

tics. Genetic bottlenecks, founder effects, and inbreeding are real problems with small populations of highly endangered cats, especially for those that might be targeted for eventual reintroduction into habitats from which their ancestors have been extirpated. Incipient domestication could fix genes that code for behavioral characteristics that are not adaptive in felines re-introduced into the wild.

Contemporary populations of captive



Spending time with kittens conditions them to grow up comfortable around humans, replacing their instinctual “fight or flight” reaction to the presence of people.

felines exhibit phenotypic and genotypic characteristics which are the result of countless evolutionary adaptations to a sequence of natural environments. Unfortunately, not all captive felines are housed in environments that bear resemblance to the environments that cats evolved in. Artificial environments devoid of the natural selection that guided the evolution of various species of cats in the first place offer few opportunities for the expression of species typical behaviors. The relaxed selection characteristic of artificial environments could result in physiological and behavioral changes in captive populations in just a very few

generations. Genetically fixed changes have been observed in species in as few as two generations. To counteract these trends, biologically relevant features characteristic of the environments where each species developed should be incorporated into the design of their habitats.

Several strategies that address deficiencies in the environments of captive felines have been suggested. One approach advocates that artificial environments should possess features that mimic some of the “natural” physical aspects of a feline’s typical habitat. Another approach advocates the provision of interactive technologies that allow felines to exert some degree of control over their surroundings. The most promising approach for improving artificial habitats probably involves an integration of both approaches, ultimately achieving the elusive “slice of nature” that allows captive cats to behave as if they were free-living cats.



An enriched environment includes recreational activities such as swimming.

With varying degrees of success, improving the physical surroundings of captive felines has become prevalent, and with improved environments has come a greater understanding of how changes in the physical environment influences feline behavior. However, to the extent that captive wild felines are encouraged to behave like their free-living relatives, the management of individuals in captivity is complicated. Wild-type behavioral tendencies are less conducive to some of the interactions required to maintain individual felines in captivity while employ-

ing them in educational programs. This is where the argument for socialization becomes important.

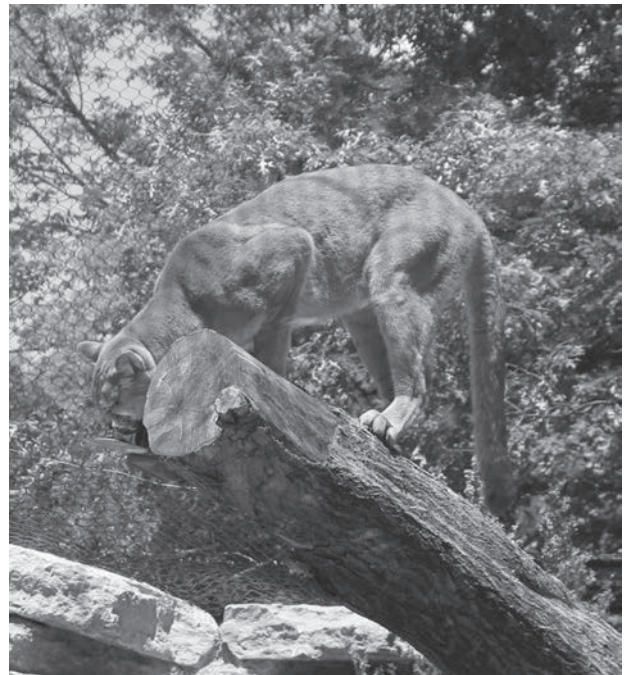
Hediger argued that most non-socialized wild animals perceive human beings as at least threatening, but often as mortal enemies. Wild animals, recently brought into captivity, either exhibit extreme reclusiveness or are constantly attempting to escape from perceived ecological adversaries. In attempting to avoid contact with humans, excitable animals are more likely to injure themselves. There is more than one instance of a frightened animal severely injuring itself by colliding with a fence while attempting to flee from a caretaker. Therefore, in order to mitigate the flight tendency of wild animals, Hediger maintained that they should be “tamed” by their handlers or keepers. Hediger maintained that taming results in the reduction in flight distances. A “flight distance” is defined as an imaginary circle into which an animal will not tolerate the

entry of a perceived adversary. In addition to shorter flight distances, Taming results in reduced reactivity to some perceived threats, reduced numbers of startle responses to some stimuli, and reduced levels of emotional and physiological arousal to the presence of caretakers, visitors, and other animals. Changes in behavior due to taming, and

even early domestication are quantitative, not qualitative. Domestication seems to result in the elevation of response thresholds above levels typical for “wild-type” individuals, which is manifested in a reduction in reactivity. Interestingly, there is some evidence that more emotionally reactive, “wild-type” ani-

mals are not only more “jumpy,” but are also more likely to engage in stereotypic motor patterns than are less emotionally reactive, tamed animals. Less reactive animals would be less aroused by the presence of humans, providing better subjects for display purposes and easier handling within the context of educational outreach programs. Another important benefit of increased tameness is that trained cats are easier to observe and to administer veterinary care. For those with limited space, because of reduced flight distances, tamed cats frequently require less space for their housing. Occasionally, socialized felines can even be housed together in multiple animal environments. More tractable felines sometimes exhibit increased tolerance of other species, making mixed species exhibits more practical. More tractable cats also lend themselves better to interactive exhibits and are safer within the context of educational outreach programs, where animals might be transported to venues outside of the holding facility. Finally, cats exhibiting decreased arousal frequently experience improved reproductive success.

In tamed animals, some behaviors become rare or disappear altogether. More



This puma at the Cincinnati zoo has learned to seek automatic treat dispensers, such as the one at the end of this tree log. This kind of training keeps the cats active and stimulates their minds.

than likely, these behaviors have been preserved even after many generations of taming or domestication. Domesticated Norway rats, housed in plastic or stainless steel cages, seldom exhibit the burrow digging behavior observed in free-living Norway rats. When the very same rats were placed in enclosures with substrates similar to those found in the wild, they began to exhibit burrowing behavior that was similar to that of wild rats. Once again, the notion that the environment must accommodate natural behavior is suggested. Perhaps some of what is regarded, as the loss of “wild-type” behaviors in captivity is really a response of an animal to an unresponsive non-interactive environment. The importance of this finding is that if captive felines are provided with biologically relevant surroundings, their behavior should continue to resemble that of their wild ancestors more so than if their surroundings do not provide for the expression of species typical behaviors. This is particularly important for the maintenance of threshold to respond to certain environmental contingencies. Artificial environments should be designed in ways that encourage the retention of behavioral thresholds that are important to animals that are targeted for reintroduction into habitats from which they have disappeared.

Hediger believed that taming captive wild animals could be accomplished through an active program of training. In effect, he advocated providing captive animals with something to do while fostering a human bond with them. Felines living in nature spend most of their time seeking prey, avoiding becoming prey, playing, procreating, or sleeping. When felines are removed from their native environments, they lose their primary occupations. Food and shelter are provided within the confines of captivity. Hediger believed that training animals would offer a form of occupational therapy that would provide some psychological and physical benefit for the animal and would enhance the relationships caretakers had with their

charges. Critics of this approach to providing animals with behavioral opportunities objected to its unnatural appearance. Other critics believed that training programs were reminiscent of those employed in circuses, carnivals, and rodeos and featured a disrespectful level of human domination of non-humans. Oddly, other attributes of traditional zoos and wild animal parks reminiscent of circuses, including non-educational circus-like entertainment and carnival-like food did not arouse the ire of critics of training.

A major problem with training is that it can be time intensive. Private managers and even keepers at major zoological parks already have more than enough to do to occupy their time. Sometimes, training can be augmented with technology. Some interactive devices can be installed to promote species typical behavior while conditioning cats to interact with trainers and their equipment. These installations can increase the overall level of physical activity while promoting the expression of species typical behavior. Cats expressing normal behavior can be assumed to be healthy, while those expressing abnormal behavior might be suffering from some disorder or disability. Additionally, cats behaving naturally offer a better educational experience for visitors and are more effective ambassadors for the conservation of their respective species in nature. However, for the captive felines, there might be implications.

The degree to which wild-type genotypes and phenotypes can be preserved in cap-

tive populations of felines over generations is problematic. This is particularly true when individuals are selectively bred for tractability, one of the hallmarks of domestication. Domestication is partially defined as an adaptive, evolutionary process observed in captive animals subjected to artificial, directional selection. It is certainly possible that it is occurring in some populations of captive felines held in FCF facilities. Some prerequisites



Cincinnati zoo serval in the Cat Ambassador Show has been trained to show off its ability to reach down a long tube and gain a treat.

for domestication include captivity, reduced or absent natural selection, artificial selection, and experiential events that recur with each generation.

Domestication begins with the introduction of wild-type individuals into an artificial situation, supervised by human beings. During these early introductions, there is almost always a high degree of mortality in the first few generations. Selection may operate initially to cull out the more wild or reactive individuals in a newly captive population. Those animals that survive could already represent a slightly different genotype from that of the wild-type population. Further, there

may be deliberate or unwitting selection for animals that appear to be more docile and easier to manage. Certainly these individuals are easier to handle during routine medical procedures. Other individuals are more cooperative during procedures important in captive breeding, including semen collection and artificial insemination. It is not surprising that the qualities of tractability and reduced reactivity are desirable to some owners. However, founder effects, genetic drift, and inbreeding are severe problems that must be considered when the genetic management of small populations of captive endangered felines is proposed.

To the extent that changes in behavior are correlated with other phenotypic changes, and to the degree that these changes are represented in alterations of the genotype, behavior can provide a means for assessing genetic changes in captive felid populations over generations. The availability of biochemical methods for assessing changes in genotypes and managing the genomes of endangered animal populations are well known and discussed elsewhere.

Genotypes and phenotypes notwithstanding, it is difficult to determine whether or not a species is actually undergoing domestication, especially during the early stages of this process. Unfortunately, most studies of the domestication process involve investigations of a very limited number of species. Even fewer studies investigate changes in morphology as opposed to behavior. Some changes in morphology appear to be adaptations to the relaxed selection and modified diets found in artificial environments. Changes in food preferences and even in the morphology of the digestive tract have been observed in some species brought into captivity.

Most studies have investigated domestication in Norway rats (*Rattus norvegicus*), and have focused on behavior. Wild Norway rats, which have just been removed from the wild, can be habituated to their laboratory surroundings, including the presence of human handlers. Here, habituation refers to a process wherein animals cease to respond to irrelevant stimuli. In other words, these animals can be partially tamed. A par-

tially domesticated animal and a tame one might be difficult to distinguish from one another, since the differences between them might only involve flight distances and reactivity. Consequently, other characteristics that accompany domestication are used as indicators of the progress of the process. Many of these are concerned with the retention of juvenile characteristics, a process termed neoteny. Some of these include increased docility, increased subservience to humans, and increased flexibility in learning situations. Fully domesticated Norway rats appear to learn more quickly than wild-type rats and are more flexible in their responses to novel test situations. They also exhibited reduced caution and increased inappropriate social behaviors when approaching strange rats after only six generations in captivity. In other words, animals manifesting signs of advanced domestication appear to behave more like juveniles than their wild-type counterparts.

One of the most comprehensive studies of domestication involved the silver fox (*Vulpes fulvus*), which were actively domesticated to provide animals for the fur trade in Russia. What was surprising was the rate with which behavioral and morphological changes became fixed in these populations. Within two or three generations after being brought into captivity, these animals became very docile and easy to handle. Along with these changes in temperament, there were changes in the pelage, a decrease in the size of the adrenal glands, an associated reduction in the levels of corticosteroids, a decrease in the seasonality of estrus cycles, and greater numbers of estrus cycles. Obviously, some changes in behavior due to domestication might be

useful in captive management schemes while others might pose problems for the long-term management of some populations.

One concern expressed by researchers when discussing domestication is the concept of degeneracy. Generally, wild representatives of a species are believed to possess greater genetic variability, to be physiologically harder, and to be behaviorally more authentic. This assumption is based on the presence of constant selection for adaptive traits in populations of free-living felines, factors that are probably missing in artificial settings.

With regard to concerns about degeneracy, in a Long Island Ocelot Club Journal article from the 1990s, some holders of wild-type exotic felines were dismissive of domestic cats because of their reliable expression of the very juvenile characteristics discussed above in domesticating silver foxes. Further, they pointed out that the brains of domestic cats were smaller than those of wild felines of similar size. Remember, however, at least in Norway rats, rats on their way to domestication exhibit considerable behavioral flexibility and an enhanced ability to acquire new tasks. Criticisms aside, one way of looking at domestication is that it is a suite of adaptive responses to severe changes in an animal's environment. It should be understood as we make plans for the future of captive exotic felines. One thing is clear: Many populations of captive felines are small and becoming increasingly inbred. This is also distressingly true for many of the remaining free-living populations of felines.

The extent to which a species has un-

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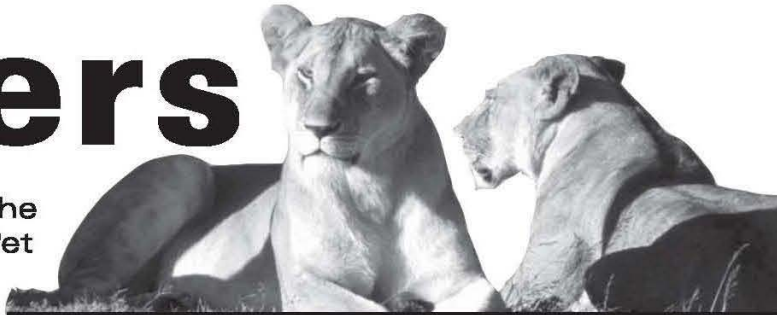
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dergone domestication is difficult to quantify, but can be investigated by conducting comparative behavioral studies between captive and wild representatives of the same species. This approach is possible only when the wild relative or ancestor still survives in relatively unperturbed natural conditions. Another approach is to hybridize closely related species and observe which traits are intermediate between the parental types. A third approach is to conduct longitudinal studies of a species and to record genotypic and phenotypic changes that occur over generational time. In all three instances, what is being sought are signs of increased juvenile behavior or significant changes in morphology that indicate some underlying domestication-related change in gene frequencies.

Domestication is a complex process of which taming is only one aspect. While taming in itself does not necessarily lead to domestication, it is an integral part of the process. Other attributes of domestication include captivity and a continuous association with people. Further, there must be predictability in the physical and experiential surroundings of each generation of a species undergoing this process. Domestication is an evolutionary process, and involves the complex interaction of genes and environments at the locus of the animal. Importantly, and often overlooked by biologists, animals inherit their genes from their parents but also usually inherit environments from them as well. Obviously, this is not the case when animals are brought into captivity. Here, they inherit the environment from humans. When the environment of a species changes, and remains different for several generations, a species might, or might not, adapt through evolution to these different environments. Consequently, an animal facility possessing captive wild felines is likely to generate new sub-species of increasingly domestic felines over time. In fact, this is very likely to occur if it is not actively discouraged.

All populations of captive felines re-

quire the same management strategies. For example, some species are commonly available and are not endangered in their natural habitats. These are often indigenous species that are common in the region surrounding the animal facility. These species can be interacted with on a regular basis without regard to the long-term genetic or behavioral changes that continued captivity might bring about. FCF facilities in North America might display bobcats, lynx, and mountain lions as focal animals in educational programs focusing on native felids. In this instance, domestication is not a major concern and taming should be employed when it improves husbandry procedures or educational effectiveness.


With other species of felids, especially those which are highly endangered in the wild and which are increasingly found only in captivity, taming and possible domestication presents a problem. In many instances, the preservation of the wild-type genotype and behavioral profile should be encouraged. Preservation of wild-type genotypes and behaviors is even more critical if the population is one that is targeted for eventual reintroduction into its former habitat. If taming is envisioned, it should only be undertaken to reduce stress responses during interactions with handlers and veterinarians. In some very reactive, very cryptic small fe-

lids, where stress responses are common, taming could facilitate improved health and reproduction.

Perhaps populations of endangered felines could be divided into those populations that are regularly displayed to the public for educational purposes and into those that are kept off display and are seldom, if ever, interacted with except for absolutely critical medical interventions.

An important factor in the management of captive wild feline populations is the quality and quantity of space. Taming can be used to compensate for either poor quality environments or those with inadequate area. If an institution possesses small, barren enclosures, featuring little refuge and no behavioral opportunities, then taming might provide their cats with behavioral opportunities. Further, with small, barren cages featuring little refuge, the reduction in flight distances is beneficial. Further, the interaction between cats and their caretakers could provide the cats with their only relief from a monotonous existence. For larger institutions, which are fortunate enough to possess large, complex enclosures, where flight distances are not a problem, taming some cats could make them more useful in educational outreach programs. Further, even with large en-

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closures and normal social groups, some cats are easier to maintain when they have been socialized. When an institution is very large, and possesses huge tracts of land, taming can be used sparingly. When cats are kept in semi-natural surroundings in natural groups, taming might be used only for medical intervention. Here there is probably sufficient room for the cats to escape from anxiety-provoking interactions with humans or other cats. Frequently, the social environment is complex enough to provide interactive experiences for cats on a daily basis. For institutions of all sizes, to the extent that taming reduces the need for rough handling, restraint, or projectile anesthetics, it is desirable as a means of reducing environmental stressors.

Finally, and with increasing frequency, there are those endangered felines which are exclusively housed in captivity and which no longer have habitats to be returned to. These species are condemned to eternal captivity, and to the extent that

taming facilitates their long-term survival in captivity, it should be utilized. These individuals are probably susceptible to the effects of domestication if, for no other reason, than their continuous association with our species.

There is a relationship between the need to tame animals, the danger of domestication occurring, and the genetic management scheme proposed by some conservationists. To the extent that a genotype should be protected, taming should be undertaken with some caution. To the extent that the genotype can be replenished or is not endangered, taming can be undertaken with less concern for the effects of domestication.

It should be evident that taming is a tool and should be used when necessary, but discouraged when problematic. Taming is not intrinsically negative, but its potential role in the long-term changes in the genetics of captive feline populations is a concern.

In advocating taming, Hediger was very clear about its utility. Taming is a means of reducing environmental stressors on newly captured animals, including felines, thus facilitating their care and maintenance in captivity. Taming, and the training associated with it, could provide a means of introducing complexity into the surroundings of captive felines in monotonous unresponsive habitats. Taming and training could be used to promote social behavior and could encourage the development of relationships between cats and their humans. Viewers observing tamed animals could develop a

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FCF thanks these members and businesses who have donated to projects since the last Journal, providing funding for educational materials for members and legislators, supporting felid 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.

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Tommy T. Does the "T" stand for tame? Trainer Alicia Sampson shares a hug from the big spotted cat, as Kathy Watkins watches, while Linda Castaneda speaks to Lynn Culver, who is watching the affectionate display.

greater empathy for the plight of highly endangered free-living felids, once again, forging a stronger human/animal bond. To reiterate, cats who have been appropriately tamed through training are better candidates for educational outreach programs, creating a more effective conservation message. This might have implications for the long-term survival and vigor of populations of both captive and free-living felines. The major objections to taming and training are its possible role in leading to incipient domestication. Domestication should only be a concern for populations of felines that are held in captivity over many generations.

This is certainly the case with those felines from disappearing habitats or for those with no wild left to return to. These species will only continue to exist in captivity, in small, increasingly inbred populations. What these species are today is not what they will be in a few decades. The descendants of these endangered felines will have to continue their existence in the company of humans. One possible avenue for the continued existence of these felines is that they become groomed for enhanced compatibility as companion animals. Maybe we should advocate for exotic companion felines, derived from those species of feline with no place else to go but back to home, with us.



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Feline Conservation Federation

July/August 2012 Volume 56, Issue 4

The Feline Conservation Federation is a non-profit organization with a mission to conserve wild felines through preservation, education and research.

Cover photo: Tim Stoffel used his brand new Canon 5D Mark III, full-frame professional grade DSLR camera with high-speed auto focus to capture the cascading waterfall and Cincinnati Zoo's puma Joseph, licking his chops after eating his latest treat. The puma exhibit is one of the latest improvements at this renowned zoological park. Not only is the puma's habitat enriched, but the resident felines are also conditioned to utilize its varied topography by seeking hidden meatball treats loaded into various dispensers on the rocks, logs, and grassy areas, giving visitors a rare opportunity to see these cats in motion, leaping and climbing.

Back Photo: Tommy T cheetah was one of two spotted cats that demonstrated their incredible speed by chasing a lure during the Cat Ambassador Show. Debi Willoughby shot this beautiful head study of Tommy at rest. FCF gained an exclusive opportunity to visit with these spotted cats later in the afternoon, when the trainers brought Tommy T out to visit with our group and pose for photos.

