



Feline Conservation Federation

September/October 2012 ~ Volume 56, Issue 5



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JOIN THE FCF IN ITS CONSERVATION EFFORTS

A membership to the FCF entitles you to six issues of the *Journal*, the back-issue DVD, an invitation to FCF husbandry and wildlife education courses and annual convention, and participation in our online discussion group. The FCF works to improve captive feline husbandry and conservation. The FCF supports captive and wild habitat protection, and provides support for captive husbandry, breeding programs, and public education. Send \$35 annual dues (\$40 Canada, \$50 international) to FCF, P.O. Box 31210, Myrtle Beach, SC 29588.

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The Feline Conservation Federation publishes the *Journal* bimonthly. The FCF is non-profit, (Federal ID#59-2048618) noncommercial, 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 high resolution photos and articles to the *Journal* Managing Editor. Photos and articles may be emailed to

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



Letter from the President

It is election time for the FCF. Everyone that has been a member for at least one year on October 1, 2012, will be receiving a ballot in the mail. You will need to mark your choices and return the ballot to the address included with the ballot. The board of the FCF is not involved at all in the vote counting process. Our policy is to have all counting done by an outside accountant to make sure the counting is done fairly.

Unfortunately, this year none of the races are contested. Ideally, we like to see at least two candidates for every position, but this year several candidates chose to decline their nominations after the nomination period closed in order to leave and start their own club. Since write-in votes are not allowed, the choices have become limited.

I feel we have a strong group of candidates and that FCF will be moving just as strongly into the future. I am sure that each of the candidates will do their part into making this so. The focus of FCF has always been characterized as being education, conservation, and legislation. In the last 10 years, we have made significant strides in furthering all three areas.

In the education field, the FCF has several hundred graduates of the FCF Feline Husbandry Course. Our more recently developed Wildlife Educator's Course is also seeing graduates completing the course in line with the numbers taking the Husbandry Course. The *FCF Journal* is invaluable as an educational resource and has gone from less than 10 pages of black and white articles to a 48-page full color gem. The FCF website was developed and has visitors from all over the world visiting it for the information we provide. The Youth Education Committee has been putting out e-newsletter for the past year to help educate the next generation of wildcat enthusiasts. The FCF Feline Urgent Response Team (FUR Team) is in the process of creating a website with contact information to enable law enforcement agencies to have access to on what to do in case of sightings or other cat related emergencies.

Conservation efforts have been progressing through publication of research articles and the formation of the Conservation Grants Program. Several thousand dollars have been raised and awarded to researchers throughout the world to help

better our understanding of wild felines. Many researchers have joined the FCF family and we hope to gain more as well.

Legislatively, we continue to contact legislators and testify for upcoming legislation. We strive to keep members abreast of the latest happenings and bill introductions via the FCF Yahoo chat list and special email notifications. This is one area where we most need the help of the membership. Neither the board nor the Legislation Committee can adequately address all 50 states and federal legislation. You, as constituents, carry the most power within your states. We are more than willing to give you guidance on dealing with state issues and helping where we can, but

ultimately it is up to you to carry the banner within your state and protect your own interests.

We need every member to help the FCF continue this progress forward. Please consider serving on one of the many FCF committees to help make us all stronger. In the next issue of the *Journal*, we will have more details on committees and appointments that the new board will need to make at their first meeting of the year. We will explain what you need to do to be considered and what is expected from each position.

Kevin Chambers

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From the Executive Director

By Lynn Culver

Captive populations of cats have fluctuated throughout the decades. When I acquired my first cougar cub in 1985, there were literally dozens of breeders in dozens of states. It was relatively easy to come by this species. Today it's no longer true.

From the 1970s though the early 1990s, bobcats and lynx were available from numerous fur farms located in the northern states, as well as from many USDA licensed facilities and zoos. The market for pelts was declining, so these farms began to offer live kittens for sale instead. Many of these businesses have closed down. I can only imagine the emotional conflict one must go through if they rear bobcat and lynx to be killed and skinned when they are adults and then begin also hand-rearing some of the tame offspring for sale as companion animals. Eventually, something has to break inside, because the two activities are not emotionally compatible. Fur farms pioneered diet and successful reproduction of bobcats and lynx, but are mostly a thing of the past. And their offspring, well, not so many of them are in breeding situations. Today, Canada lynx, Siberian lynx, and bobcat are nowhere near as prevalent. I remember in the 1990s belonging to several yahoo chat lists set up for lynx and bobcat owners. Posts were a daily occurrence. Now these same lists are largely abandoned, kept alive by the occasional spam email.

Individual owners of exotic felines wanting husbandry information and wanting to share husbandry knowledge founded this organization. This month's "Blast from the Past" is a telling 1972 reprint by Michael Petersen of the University of Iowa, praising the LIOC for its potential in captive breeding. The club had over 1,000 members at the time, as well as a Director of Conservation. It had breeding successes in many species, much of it due to the simulation of natural habitat and extreme "privacy." He proposed grand regional breeding centers, overseen by LIOC and zoological associations, to maximize the success and long-term sustainability of species. This never happened, and today we are facing the extirpation of some once commonly husbanded feline species.

Things might have been much different had these ideas reached fruition. Instead, a proliferation of federal laws, international treaties, and draconian state regulations has cut off much of the potential to improve our captive genetics, which is necessary to sustain species long term. The July AZA Felid TAG meeting, reported on by Kat Benford in this issue, covers that association's move towards globalization of gene pools. Entire continental zoo associations do not have the diversity necessary to maintain any species; it will take moving cats across the oceans to offset the deleterious effects of inbreeding.

In the FCF, we keep a feline census and, even with all the laws and tightening of regulations, we still maintain over 3,000 cats. However, the population numbers are changing. I reported our census in 2010, and in the past two years, the FCF has seen a steady increase in the number of tigers, from 731 in July 2010 to 1,084 tigers in September of 2012. Tigers are facing a true extinction crisis in nature, but our increase in captive-bred animals is a mixed blessing. If states do not allow citizens and licensed businesses to create habitat for these tigers, they will end up homeless and eventually find their way into fewer and fewer sanctuaries. Like everything else in our highly competitive world, the big

are gobbling up the small, and even sanctuaries are having a difficult time staying afloat. The social pressure from the extreme animal rights fanatics that do not want any breeding, human contact, commercial use of cubs, or any trained adults in shows, is precipitating a crisis in the ability to husband this species. These fanatics want tigers reduced to the status of beggars, their survival relying entirely upon the charitable donations generated by sad stories of neglect and abandonment.

In this issue, the FCF publishes several articles from members who are directly involved with this most charismatic feline species. Tigers for Tomorrow, a rescue and educational preserve, has been award-

Current FCF Feline Census

<u>Feline species</u>	<u>Captive Number</u>	<u>Number of FCF Owners</u>
Amur leopard	6	2
Amur leopard cat	1	1
Black-footed cat	11	2
Bobcat	205	83
Canada lynx	52	30
Caracal	63	40
Cheetah	11	6
Clouded leopard	36	5
Cougar	217	66
Eurasian lynx	15	9
Fishing cat	10	3
Geoffroy's cat	46	15
Gordon's wildcat	4	2
Jaguar	13	9
Jaguarundi	4	2
Jungle cat	21	13
Leopard	147	46
Leopard cat	29	11
Liger	32	14
Lion	338	58
Margay	1	1
Ocelot	30	12
Pallas' cat	9	2
Sand cat	4	2
Serval	307	107
Siberian lynx	30	18
Snow leopard	19	4
Tiger	1,084	73
Hybrids:		
Savannahs	269	33
Bengals	70	21

ed FCF accreditation for its high standards of care. Julie Walker authored a valuable article on contingency planning, in hopes that the need for sanctuaries can be reduced. Another article by Julia Wagner balances the missions of public education and animal welfare at a modern multi-purpose wildlife facility. And what about training these great cats to perform? Two members who work with tigers, Felicia Frisco and Jeff Harwell, explain modern approaches, a far cry from the days of Clyde Beatty with his whip and chair. Today's performances are based on love and mutual respect, a deep devotion, and total immersion with the animals in their care. This human/animal bond is as close as we can get to the Garden of Eden, to

the time when man was not the enemy and our presence was not cause for fear and dread in the animal kingdom.

We are facing more and more challenges. Economic times are still very fragile and the cost of doing business is continuing to rise. A federal bill to prohibit the breeding of big cats is in both the Senate (S3547) and House (H4122). The FCF organization needs every member to continue membership, and more members must get involved. The current slate of candidates for the next board of directors does not even fill all positions. Current board members have chosen not to re-run and this is good. The FCF should not be led by a select few; it needs to be open to new leaders, new ideas, and new energy.

With the change of board members in 2013, will come an opportunity to re-energize the organization and possibly refocus the purpose back to captive breeding and maintenance of felines in captivity. These are our roots and our legacy. Although once an organization for ocelots, today the FCF census is mainly dominated by big cats. If small cat species are to survive in captivity, the FCF must champion the rights of individuals to own, breed, and exhibit them. There is a great role for the individual to play in the captive breeding of small cats. The effort to maintain gene pools of our smaller cat species must get more attention if there is to be a future for private ownership.

A Geoffroy's Pairing: Hope for the Future

By Julie LeRay Angelloz
Bambusa Forest Cattery

Our Geoffroy's boy, Captain Hook, aka Topy, arrived at the ripe old age of 8 weeks. He was a spunky, loving, and playful little boy with beautiful markings and a huge tail. We already had a mate for him. Her name was Tima. They looked like twins and were inseparable. For several months, they lived in our house, dashing about and getting into everything they could find.

It was time to move outdoors, so we constructed our pair an outdoor enclosure where they could enjoy a more natural and instinctive setting for bonding and hopefully breeding. We framed up their enclosure with treated posts and beams, and

attached welded wire panels with two-inch square openings. The enclosure is large enough that grass is always growing, and there are plenty of platforms, and places to get off the ground, and protection from rain and shade from the summer heat.

One year later, Tima became ill and suddenly passed away. Topy mourned for her, becoming very depressed. I tried introducing several of my Bengal females to him, but he showed no interest. After I had paired him with three of the girls, I knew that was not what was going to make him happy. In the summer of 2012, we brought a new Geoffroy's girl into his life. She was a 10-month-old, melanistic, mysterious Geoffroy's female.

We called her Panther. She was housed in the enclosure next to his for a little while, so she could get used to her new surroundings and we could watch both cats as they became accustomed to each other's presence. Then we introduced to pair together. Immediately, Topy's whole demeanor changed. He was lively and he would not let her out of his sight. She hissed a bit, and resisted his advances



Topy greets his new companion, Panther, a melanistic Geoffroy's cat.



Topy is a spotted Geoffroy's cat and will weigh less than 14 pounds at maturity.

of friendship toward her at first, but about three days later, they were lying side by side. He grooms her and she grooms him. They play, chase each other, and eat and sleep together.

Topy knew the minute she arrived that she was just like him. He is a very happy boy and they are so very happy together. We feel very confident that someday they will be a successful breeding pair of Geoffroy's cats.

Successful Introduction and Breeding of a Known Killer!

By Neville Buck
The Aspinall Foundation, UK

The Aspinall foundation has long had an association with breeding the endangered fishing cat. With experience spanning over 25 years, we have been responsible for the birth of over 70 kittens (59 of these at Port Lympne). We are also proud to have one of the lowest mortality rates of kittens in this species. I believe this success is partially due to having dedicated keepers who specialize in small felids, but also the husbandry routine used.

The husbandry routines for all of our small felids at Port Lympne follow the same basic principle. Each pair of cats, are maintained in an exhibit comprising of two outdoor enclosures, which are separated by fine mesh. Both have two heated dens and two unheated dens. This construction allows the cats to become acquainted prior to introduction, and also to separate them when necessary.

All cats have free access to the enclosure at all times. It should be remembered that felids are generally most active at dusk and dawn. Providing full access to their enclosures at all times is essential to allow natural species specific behaviours. Locking animals in at night and out during the day can cause unnecessary stress leading to aggression.

All enclosures are planted with natural vegetation. This creates good visual barriers from each other, but also from the visiting public. The cats are more relaxed in this environment and less likely to try and hide.

Enclosures are only viewable to the public from one side.

Cats are not disturbed in their nest boxes, especially breeding females. It is important for them to know they have a safe area to raise kittens.

New pairs of cats are introduced when the female is not in oestrus. There is less tension between the cats if the male is not intent on mating as soon as they meet for the first time.

Introductions are carried out late afternoon onwards, when the park is less busy. A large feed is given an hour before an introduction (any food remains are removed immediately before the introduc-



Rajatha is a typical fishing cat, with long, stocky body, relatively short legs, broad head, round ears, and a short tail. His olive-gray fur has black stripes and rows of black spots.

tion takes place).

Cats are fed whole carcass feeds a minimum of twice a day.

During 2008 our husbandry protocols were put to the test when we acquired a new male fishing cat. Following a discussion with the fishing cat EEP coordinator, I learned of a male that had killed two females at two different institutions. The second female had been killed within five hours of being introduced, which resulted in him being isolated from other females and branded a killer! Having experienced a similar situation in which a known killer was successfully mixed with a female resulting in breeding success, I felt it might be worth giving him one last chance. So after further talks with the coordinator it was agreed that we would bring him to Port Lympne and see what we could do, as he was quite an important animal for the European program.

On arrival he was placed in quarantine near his future mate (she had been selected due to her dominant behaviour in the presence of a male), and was initially restricted to a darkened shed for two hours to allow him to settle after his long journey. When the shed slide was opened, I was surprised how

relaxed he appeared. He immediately entered the enclosure, collected his food and walked around as if he had lived there all his life. The enclosure design is constructed of three outside enclosures with numerous heated and non-heated dens. For the first five days he was restricted to enclosure one, while the female was restricted to enclosure three (they were separated by the middle enclosure). After five days, the female was given access to the middle enclosure, and immediately approached the dividing mesh to check out the new arrival. This was met by a ferocious display of aggression from the male as he threw himself at the wire. For the first time an element of doubt crossed my mind, as I realised this could all go wrong! As he settled in

to his new environment, his display of aggression was also directed toward the keeping staff. As he approached for food, he walked sideways with an arched back, while he hissed, growled and showed his teeth. His aggression directed toward the keepers subsided as he became more acquainted with his enclosure.

After their brief meeting at the wire, the female chose not to acknowledge the presence of the male. She would make full use of her enclosures, but did not react to the male or even approach the dividing mesh even when he began to call. Their behaviour was monitored closely with no sign of interaction, but at least there was no aggression since the initial meeting. It took six months before the male began to rest and sleep near the female's enclosure, and regularly gaze into it. At the beginning of February 2009, it was established that the female was showing no sign of

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oestrus, so both cats were moved into each others enclosure to allow them to become acquainted with their prospective mates' smells before the planned introduction.

The following afternoon they were given a large feed before they were to be introduced (all food remains being cleared one hour before the introduction). As with normal procedure, all the padlocks on the enclosures and sheds were unlocked in case intervention was required. On introduction, the male remained hidden from view in a large clump of bamboo. The female approached him as soon as she was given access, growling as she inched her way



Fishing cat's are adapted to riparian areas such as marches, mangroves, rivers and streams. This female recently arrived at Port Lympne and will be paired up with a male named Rondou.

slowly toward him. She sat directly in front of him about half a metre away. She remained there for 10 minutes before she backed off and worked her way behind the male. At this point, both animals were not in view and growling was heard from the female, which prompted the male to move above her on a tree stump. Eventually the female moved away, so they were separated due to the falling light conditions.

The following morning (after a large feed and clearing the remains) they were given access, although it was mid afternoon before the male entered the female's enclosure. He approached the female several times, who responded by growling

and spitting. Each time he backed away the female followed him. It is normal practice to introduce a new pair for short periods over four to five days, gradually working toward leaving them together while they are fed. Due to the fact that the female had shown to have the upper hand, it was decided to bring this process forward, and they were offered food. The male immediately collected food and settled to eat, but the female approached growling and stood over him. He backed away and lay on his side, with his head flat to the ground raising his foreleg in defence. He eventually retreated and left her to feed. After feeding she again followed the male growling, backing him to the edge of the pond and into the icy water as he tried to get away. As night approached they remained apart and seemed to settle down so it was decided to leave them together and check on them regularly throughout the night, with the use of a Nikon night viewing scope. For the next three days and nights they were monitored regularly. Although there was very little interaction between them, at least the female had stopped being so aggressive toward the male. Although they had permanent access to each other, they remained in adjoining enclosures.

During the beginning of May, the first sign of interaction between them was observed. Both cats were heard calling and the female was observed scent marking much more than usual. The male was very interested in the female, and followed her very closely through-



Fishing cat kitten born to the pair, now lives at Leipzig Zoo.

out the enclosure most of the day. No mating was observed and this behaviour only lasted a day. At the end of June, calling was heard repeatedly from the female, no other behaviour was observed. She had obviously been in oestrus as she gave birth to a single female kitten on the September 3. Two weeks prior, the female had been separated in preparation for her impending parturition.

The pair was successfully reintroduced the subsequent year without incident, and again produced a single kitten. Following the maturity and separation of this kitten, the pair is once again together with the hope they will continue with their successful relationship.

Donations

The FCF Board of Directors thanks the following individuals and corporations who have made donations to FCF projects since the last published *Journal*, providing additional funding for educational materials for members and legislators, supporting 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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John Yonaitis

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Wildcat Safety Net:

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Laura Walker

The FCF appreciates your generosity
and continued support.

Oscar the Margay

By Teresa Shaffer

We never dreamed we would ever have the opportunity to own a margay. Our excitement is still present many months later. It is such a privilege to just sit and watch Oscar, who even at 18 years of age is very active. Although we do not know his whole history, we know he was a pet for many years and was transferred to a zoo where he did not acclimate well to life on exhibit, so he was donated to us.



The big eyes of the little margay are uniquely adapted to maximize night time vision.

We feel blessed to be able to offer Oscar a forever home. When we do have a visitor, which is rare, he seems to enjoy the stimulation. I feel it is our obligation to share him with the occasional visitor as seeing a margay in captivity is a very rare opportunity. I do not know the exact number but, I believe there are less than 10 margays in captivity, and that is my opinion. It is a very sad situation. The few margays in AZA zoos are not being bred. It is our dream to find a female for him,

but that is not realistic at his age. I cannot imagine life those many years ago when margays and ocelots were a popular household companion.

It really hits you how quickly things can change. This reaffirms the need to fight the changing laws. In years we could be looking back at the serval or caracal just as we are the margay today.

We are so lucky; we will

definitely enjoy Oscar for as long as he is here with us.






This old boy is probably one of the last few margay in the U.S. He is believed to be about 18 years old and was once a family pet.



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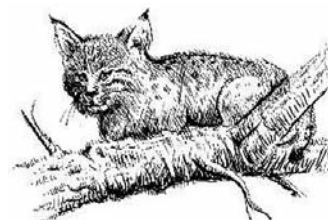
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Candidate Statements for 2013-2014 Board of Directors

By Pat Callahan (for Director)

If elected to the FCF Board, I would continue the work of the Conservation Grant Committee. Also, realizing that the public climate that FCF operates in is becoming hostile, I would work with the Board and elected Officers to promote and protect FCF's image and reputation in all

forms of media. I believe in the Big Tent idea of membership, but also recognize the need for a way to govern FCF, possibly including other levels of membership, similar to what AZA uses. I will act, if elected, to preserve the FCF and to seek consensus and advice from the Membership.



By Kevin Chambers (for President)

There has been much discussion over the last year of the direction and focus of the FCF. As one member of the board who is running for re-election, I want to share my views on this with the entire membership.

My perspective on the FCF has not changed from what it was many years ago. I believe the FCF should be exactly what it claims to be -- an organization for people with an interest in preserving, protecting, and propagating the wild cat species. I feel it is important for the FCF

to have a diversified membership consisting of breeders, exhibitors, pet owners, researchers, educators, etc. Together, we have a much stronger voice than any one segment can have alone, and that is in all aspects, whether it be education, legislation, research, or conservation. Many years ago, I was accused of just wanting the breeders or professional types in the FCF. At the time, there were few in those categories who were members. In the intervening decade, the FCF has more than tripled in membership and we do have a wide variety of backgrounds amongst our membership. More recently, even though my views have not changed, I have now gone full circle and been accused of just wanting to make FCF a social pet owners' club because I am not in favor of excluding certain segments from voting rights or serving on the board. There is room for everyone in the FCF. In fact, having people from all aspects makes us a stronger organization. Several of the current board members have opted not to rerun for office and instead start their own organization of primarily what they consider to be professionals. I wish them the best and I will support them in any way I can, just as I hope they continue to support the more inclusive FCF.

There is an underlying tenant that I feel is the most important thing the FCF has to offer its members. This is the ability to network with other people. The ability to

do this is what makes all of the other things work. The more diverse the background of the people you network with, the better able you are to form well-rounded opinions and knowledge. Whether it is members on the chat list educating one another on the best way to raise a kitten in the house, a speaker at the convention talking about how they breed endangered species, someone testifying in front of legislators to explain why proposed legislation is good or bad, a youth newsletter instilling in the children why we should care about the wild cats, or an article in the *Journal* giving the results of a researcher's work, it is all done by networking with others. We all can learn from one another, but we all must be given that opportunity and the forum in which to do it. Without members from other aspects of wild feline areas, we have no one to learn or gain perspectives from. Together, we make one impressive machine. To lose any cog in that machine hurts us all. If we have no one to teach us, how are we supposed to learn? I think the FCF is a perfect forum for this. It makes us all better able to educate the rest of the world and share our love for wild cats with them.

By Lynn Culver (for Treasurer)

I began my service to this organization in 1989, as its Newsletter layout editor and served my first term on the board of directors as secretary/treasurer in 1991. At the time, I knew little about being on a board of directors or of my expected duties. This was before email and the Internet. The annual board meeting was conducted during the convention and minutes were reported in the Newsletter.

Other board meetings were conducted by mail and phone. Eleven board members had to be contacted by mail, motions made and voted upon by mail, then tallied by the president and reported by mail to the officers.

A lot has changed in two decades; the corporation is now the Feline Conservation Federation and it conducts several board meetings through Internet forums and all members have access to the discussions and meetings of this board. The

newsletter is now a *Journal*, and the minutes of an average of four board meetings per year are reported.

My next service to this society was as its Legal Affairs director in 2001. I have also been its President and Life Director. As a board member, I attended all meetings, made motions, and voted on issues. It is sometimes not easy to get along with other elected cat people, and in the past decade there have definitely been conflicts between individuals on the board. This is

probably normal and, believe it or not, healthy. By having differing opinions, it ensures that the board is thinking, is hopefully listening, and learning.

I am presently contracted to serve this organization as its first executive director. I attend all board meetings, I give the board the benefit of my experience, but I do not make motions and I do not hold a vote. I am charged with implementing the wishes of this board, the programs and policies it approves, and to conduct the day-to-day operations and safeguard the assets of the non-profit corporation. Not a day goes by that I do not think about the FCF, and on most days I devote several hours of work to see that promised services, events, programs, and goods are delivered on time and meet high quality standards. My contract runs until January 31, 2013. It is my first experience as an executive director, and I have enjoyed it, but I recognize that for the FCF to grow, it needs to have others in this position.

I have accepted the nomination to be this organization's treasurer. I am very familiar with the bookkeeping of the FCF,

By Mindy Stinner (for Vice-President)

When I founded the Conservators' Center in 1999, and chose to house exotic felines, I made a commitment to care for my cats in a way that is responsible and professional. I joined the FCF in 2001, when it was still the LIOC, because I recognized that many members of this organization shared these same beliefs, and I wanted to ensure I was part of this network of exotic feline owners. In my earli-



having overseen it online for the past 6 years. I have also trained several treasurers on Quickbooks and the FCF accounting needs. I am confident I can handle this responsibility and am prepared to return as a voting board member to weigh in on the future of the Feline Conservation Federation as it continues down its path as this nation's oldest private feline conservation organization dedicated to captive propagation of wild felines and protection of these species in nature. This organization is not a "pet club;" it is not primarily a "social club;" it is clearly a society of very diverse feline experts, professionals, and enthusiasts with the common goals to improve captive feline welfare and wild feline survival.

It might be useful to remind our members of the founding of this non-profit society in 1979, as the LIOC Endangered Species Conservation Federation. When the Articles of Incorporation were filed with the Florida Secretary of State, the object of the corporation was as follows: to hold meetings and seminars for the discussion, encouragement, and support of

est years with the organization I watched the transition to the new name and a more conservation-minded philosophy. I served as the newsletter editor as it grew from eight pages to more than 30 under the enthusiastic leadership of the FCF's active board. I served on the FCF's board as the Conservation Director, before a new board structure was adopted that eliminated specific duties for individual board members. I have seen this organization hire its first paid staff and watched the membership numbers triple.

Through all these changes this organization has thrived and grown. It has also continued to struggle with the same core issues over all these years. Who are we, as a group? What basic beliefs do we hold most sacred? What issues are most critical for our members? And will we be allowed to continue to own these cats?

I believe that we are strongest because we remain so inclusive. Our members include cat owners of 40 years, people who run major facilities, keepers, trainers and veterinarians who work with these species, researchers and field biologists, and pet owners. You don't even have to own a cat to be a member, you just have to believe that wild cats are worthy of respect and study, in captivity and in the wild.



programs, both public and private, that are dedicated to the preservation and propagation of all wildlife species, and to recognize and endorse the significant and ongoing contributions made to wildlife programs by responsible conservation and zoological organizations.

I know that our organization's members share the belief that wild cats should be kept and sometimes propagated by educated, responsible owners who provide the best possible care for them. We all know the importance of working to protect their native habitats and to study them in the wild, which is why we see such overwhelming support for projects like those brought to our attention by Dr. Jim Sanderson, and funded through our Conservation Grant program.

We all also believe that sometimes owners of wild cats need help, whether it is one person with one cat, or a business going under. We all take responsibility for helping find new homes, and in an emergency, we help fund the transport and care of animals during their transition through our Wild Cat Safety Net grant program.

While there are many issues that our members face daily, in the end, only one is really important. Will we be allowed to continue to own these cats? State by state, region by region, we as owners are being attacked by groups with their own agendas. I am ashamed to say that we owners have aided them well by dividing ourselves, refusing to work together, fearful of repercussions if we associate with this person or that...

I admit I am guilty of this, as well. I

have no human children, so I see the animals in my care as my children and the facility I co-founded as my legacy. It is tremendously upsetting when a person with a pet serval takes the cat to a mall where it bites a child. I know the press will take that issue and paint me with its brush of irresponsibility and egotistical decision-making, and my animals may pay the ultimate price of losing their homes. I want nothing to do with anyone who puts their animal at risk because they want to show it off, or who thinks that careful operant conditioning isn't a key part of training any animal before using it

in a public program, or who thinks it is okay to let a member of the public into an area not designed as public space. I can't get far enough away from anyone who lets untrained people have contact with their animals beyond trained educational ambassador animals. The public does not know what risk they are taking. But you should. Why do I care what happens at your place? Because when something goes wrong for you, all of us are at risk.

I worry every day about whether we cat owners will be here a year from now. It colors every decision I make. I know that within the FCF, there are some people

who will behave in ways that terrify me. I also know that the vast majority of people within the FCF are responsible, thoughtful owners. Our members love their cats, and they want nothing more than to protect them and give them the best home possible. I am trusting in my fellow FCF members that they will take care of one another by behaving responsibly. I believe in the FCF's mission, its goal to educate members and the public, and its commitment to protecting wild cat ownership. I sincerely hope that each member remembers how important their actions are to protecting all of us.

By Dr. Chris T. Tromborg (for Director)

I accept the nomination to run as a director on the Board of Directors of the Feline Conservation Federation. I am honored to receive this nomination, and will continue to be so honored irrespective of the outcome of the election.

I have been a member of the FCF since 1992, when it was called The Long Island Ocelot Club. This reflects a nearly 40-year interest in feline behavior, conservation, and husbandry.

I became interested in the plight of free-living and captive felines in 1969, when I became involved in efforts to change the management status of the mountain lion in California. At that time, they had been poorly studied and were virtually unprotected. We succeeded in achieving a high degree of protection for the mountain lion.

Over the past 40 years, I have worked for the protection of wild mountain lions

and bobcats in California; the preservation of free-living cheetahs, snow leopards, and tigers; and the improvement in the management of populations of captive felines in public, private, accredited, and non-accredited institutions.

My interest in the husbandry of captive felines prompted me to serve as a member of the AZA's "Animal Care and Husbandry Advisory Board (Feline TAG)" and to conduct and publish several studies focusing on behavioral enrichment for captive animals in zoos, including felines. My interest in conservation of free-living felines motivated me to become a member of the board of directors of The Mountain Lion Foundation.

Although I do not presently possess wild or exotic felines, I have always recognized the right of responsible private individuals to possess, befriend, display, breed and manage captive exotic felines.

If elected to the Board of Directors of the Feline Conservation Federation, I

promise to uphold its Constitution and to continue to work for the felines of the world, domestic, exotic, captive, wild, and free.



By Debi Willoughby (for Secretary)

My name is Debi Willoughby and I am running for the position of Secretary on the FCF Board of Directors. I am currently a wildlife educator, traveling with my small cats to teach people about wildlife and conservation.

I have 16 years of experience working hands-on with exotic animals. My experience started with working at zoos taking care of a



wide variety of animals and performing educational shows both on and off zoo premises, including work for Animal Planet and Discovery. I started my exotic feline experience during this time, caring for and training different species of cats from servals to Siberian tigers. It became my passion and main focus of my life, and still is to this day.

In 2001, I started my own wildlife education business, Jungle Encounters. I have per-

formed thousands of shows and lived with, cared for, and trained 30 species of exotic animals to serve as animal ambassadors for our shows. In 2007, I formed a small wild cat conservation show to raise awareness about and funds for small wild cats. Because of the popularity and success of this show, Jungle Encounters now focuses all of its attention on small wild cat conservation and education. We currently have four small cats we use in our shows and have plans to expand on the species of cats, the number of shows, and value of our shows. I also started a wild bobcat research project here in my state of Massachusetts. I am researching the current bobcat populations within our state so we can determine where the healthy populations are, where they are expanding to,

and the future of bobcats in Massachusetts. This study can be used for future bobcat conservation in our state as well as our surrounding states.

It has taken me 10 years to establish my credibility to satisfy the state wildlife agency and be able to obtain the proper state permits to legally possess small wild cats. I have also stood behind and fought for similar rights for educators in neighboring Connecticut. This has given me knowledge and experience to help other members stand up for their rights to possess exotic felines.

During my working career, I have also worked in the accounting field for 24 years. I started in an entry level accounting position and worked my way up to being an independent bookkeeper for numerous small businesses. I have been successful in the bookkeeping field because I am trustworthy, keep information confidential, and am detail-oriented, reliable, and responsible. I also served on the Board of Directors for a non-profit DART group (Disaster Animal Response Team) for two years, helping the group grow, expand its member database, train town representatives and staff on animal disaster preparedness, and market the organization across our region.

I have been an FCF member since 2003, and have helped out in different areas of the organization throughout my membership. I currently am the Director of Education for both adults and our youth. I have overseen our Youth Com-

mittee to accomplish valuable educational resources. Some of our accomplishments are sending out a bi-monthly youth newsletter, adding a Youth Section to the FCF website, creating an interactive wild feline species map with fact sheets of each species of cat, and sending out a bi-monthly Premiere adult newsletter to all FCF members. I also recently redesigned the FCF's Wildlife Educators Course book and am currently teaching the Wildlife Educators Course. I have assisted with other various projects within the organization as well as written numerous articles for the Journal.

I am dedicated to wild cat conservation and believe in responsible exotic cat ownership. Every convention I strive to meet as many members as I can so I can learn about the FCF membership. The FCF has hundreds of members with diverse animal backgrounds and beliefs. If we stand together we can be a productive force in maintaining exotic cat ownership, as well as an established contributor to numerous wild cat conservation projects around the world.

Over the years, the FCF has grown tremendously as an organization and we now have in place very valuable assets to aid in our fight for responsible exotic cat ownership. These assets include accreditations, outreach education, and worldwide conservation efforts. These assets have put the FCF in a highly respected position to be able to have a strong voice in fighting the bombardment of bans that

come our way.

I feel every member has much to offer and contribute to the FCF. I feel I have the knowledge and experience to fulfill the secretary position and I will continue to strive to meet and learn from as many members as possible so I can represent the entire membership in helping the FCF move forward. As Secretary, I would serve the members to the best of my ability, will continue to grow and expand on the educational courses we offer as well as increase the online resources we have available to everyone. I will also explore creating an online network of educators by state so members can contact an educator in their state to help educate the public in a professional, responsible manner. Together we can serve an important purpose by providing significant, positive contributions to responsible ownership and conservation efforts throughout the world. Thank you for your time and consideration for this position. I look forward to meeting more members at the next convention and finding new ways to further the goals of the FCF.

We share so many beliefs, we must not let our disagreements divide us. We all suffer a terrible loss if we fail in our mission to preserve, protect, and propagate these wonderful cats. We must continue to work together, and we each must remember how our individual behaviors affect all of us.

Take the FCF Tour!

By Jennifer Kasserman

Members have talked about this idea and now we are working to make it real for everyone. Our new program for FCF members is called Take the Tour. Our goal is for members to benefit from one another through the FCF's networking lines.

How it works, say you are living in Missouri and planning a trip to Florida. While driving down south, you want to visit some of your fellow FCF member facilities, but you are not sure where they are on your route. You can then log into the members only section of FCF website and click on the Take the Tour icon. This will open a new window with a map of the entire U.S. The states with registered facilities, sanctuaries, and locations will have stars on them. You can then click on

the state to get a closer view of where these places are located. When you then click on one of the places you are given their information, such as contact info, hours of operation, website, and discounts they offer specifically to FCF members.

With all this information, you can plan your trip accordingly and visit some of your fellow FCF members. Being that this is offered only in the members-only area on the website, some of our members may offer you the opportunity to visit their site even though they are not an actual facility or open to the public.

For someone to enter their location into this program, they must submit their information to the FCF through membership services. The information we need is your facility name (if there is one), contact name, address, phone number, hours of operation (if applicable), website info



(if applicable), costs, discounts offered to FCF members, and a small blurb about your location. You may also attach an icon or logo if you have one.

So far, we have a few people that have already sent in info to start participating. The program has been created and is almost ready to be up and running. We need everyone to decide if they are willing to participate and submit their information. This program is something we hope to work as an even better networking tool throughout the entire FCF.

What a great opportunity this can be for all! I am ready to add you to the tour map; just email me at membershipservices@felineconservation.org.

Controversy over Eco-tourism in India's Tiger Preserves

By Mazhar Khan & Eden Tran

The Honorable Supreme Court of India recently has given an interim order to ban tourism in the entire core area of Indian forests. This order halted all tourism into the core areas of India's tiger reserves, including Ranthambhore National Park, located in the state of Rajasthan. The Supreme Court asked all state governments to give their verdicts. A second hearing was set for the 22nd of August. If the Supreme Court sticks with their interim order, it will, in effect, kill the tigers and tourism in India. What we have been observing over the last 20 years or so is that tigers and tourism are complementary to each other in India. The majority of tigers in India, live where the people (tourists) go to see them. Examples include Ranthambhore, Sariska, Kanha, Bandhavgarh, Panna, Pench, Tadoba, and Satpura. There are so many places in India where tigers exist, but the numbers have decreased in most of those areas, whereas the numbers of tigers have been increasing in the well-known national parks of India. If we talk about Ranthambhore, most of the cubs have been born in the tourist areas of this park, so the breeding of these tigers has never been affected by tourism. To sum up what has happened in the Supreme Court, an NGO initially submitted a PIW (public interest writ) to the Supreme Court, citing that tourism was causing problems for the tigers and tiger breeding to a point where we should ban tourism in the core areas. They submitted their writ 1½ years ago, and now the Supreme Court has finally heard them. There was no one present to stand against this writ at the time it was heard, so the Supreme Court went ahead and banned tourism in the core areas. The follow-up hearing on the 22nd of August gave proponents of ecological tourism the chance to voice their opinions.

The core area which has been determined by the ban is the heart of the forest, with the buffer area surrounding it. According to the opposing NGO, we should keep tourism in the buffer zone, but the ecological conditions of Ranthambhore and some other forests, like Bandhavgarh, differ from the normal environmental layout. The department showed that Ranthambhore's entire criti-



Tourists from all over the world travel to Ranthambhore National Park for the chance to see one of India's 1,700 remaining wild tigers. Naturalist Mazhar Khan accompanies a group that was lucky enough to spot T-17, a 6 year old female Bengal tiger known as Sundari, who now has three healthy cubs. Photo courtesy of Mazhar Khan.

cal tiger habitat, the core area and buffer area, is only about 35 square kilometers (less than 22 square miles), divided into 6 parts, all of which are separated by long distances. In those buffer areas, you won't see a tiger or even a deer; you will find factories and villages, cows and goats, so tourism isn't possible in those areas.

What are the advantages of tiger tourism? Each tiger covers about 30-40 square kilometers (18-25 square miles) for its territory, and forest guards can't reach everywhere because they can only access many areas of the forest by foot. The number of guards is so few that they can't possibly cover entire territories at any given time, so the tourist vehicles do their best by tracking and sharing all the information of tiger sightings. This includes all cub sightings in the tourist areas of Ranthambhore. If a tiger is injured, a tourist vehicle will inform the department. Whenever the forest department is not able to find tigers, the tourist jeeps will find them. Every day, the local guides provide four jeeps to the department for tracking work, which they do the whole night in and outside of the forest, and they don't profit from this, only being reimbursed for fuel charges. Villagers don't

come into the forest for grazing or wood-cutting due to the fear of tourist jeeps, so that helps keep the villagers away from the forest. Anytime the forest department needs guides and drivers for work in the forest, it is done without any charges, with guides spending nights in the forest whenever they are needed.

Many of the park's guard houses have been made possible by tourist donations, including all washrooms. Since the tiger project came into being in Ranthambhore Park, authorities have been able to purchase only two jeeps, while the rest of the vehicles have been donated by tourists or the hotels, complementing the forest department's severely lacking funds. Most of the water dams have been made possible by tourist dollars, as well as schools which provide village children with a good education. This includes educating them about the importance of the forest. Many former poachers have found work in the tourist trade here, which has decreased some of the tremendously damaging poaching activity. Families of the former poachers are getting a good education in those schools and their lifestyle has also changed for the better. Without the tourism provided by Ranthambhore Park, they wouldn't get any money for educa-

tion and would face the ultimate question of where they would be able to find employment in the future.

The ban on tourism affects not only guides, drivers, hoteliers, and travel agents, but also many people from the town who are indirectly connected with the forest, such as sellers in the market who provide vegetables, fruit, meat, eggs, and bread for the hotels, resorts, and guesthouses in the area. Thousands more people are connected to the tourism industry through the production of local handicrafts, too. About a dozen shops in the adjacent town of Sawai Madhopur are dedicated to the sales of various items made by local artisans, including beautiful, hand-woven fabrics, carvings, and hand-painted scenes depicting species found in Ranthambhore's large feline population. As long as the tourism ban is upheld, these jobs are suffering along with all the others.

After India's Supreme Court had the chance to hear back from proponents of the parks' tourism industry, they announced that a final verdict on the subject of tiger tourism within the various preserves would be given on September 27, 2012, a date which was anxiously awaited for by many, many people whose livelihoods are made possible only by the ability of tourists being allowed to visit their parts of India, and bring with them such a large source of income to these remote areas. Conservationists and naturalists working in the parks as tour guides wondered how they would possibly earn a living if the tourism ban were not to be lifted by the final decision of the court. Fortunately, everyone associated with India's tiger eco-tourism industry was able to heave a great sigh of relief on the 27th of last month, as the verdict was announced that tours would be able to resume in this greatly endangered species' territory, finally deeming the intrusion of nature lovers to not be detrimental to the health or breeding environment of the tigers. Although wonderful news for all involved in the industry, this decision did not come without compromise. As the new season of tourism opens in India's various tiger preserves, new guidelines



Naturalist Bobby Bhargawa and colleagues encounter a tigress known as T-39, about 6 years old. The Indian tigers are so used to tourists and researchers that they don't pay any mind to the many safaris taking place inside the park. Photo courtesy of Bobby Bhargawa.

will have to be followed that the Supreme Court has set in accordance with their decision. One guideline that has been put forth actually will favor the tiger tourism industry quite a bit. As opposed to the previous guideline of tourism activity being restricted to as little as ten per cent of tiger habitat, now they will be allowed to open up to as much as 20 per cent of core zones for tourists to experience the opportunity of seeing these magnificent creatures in the wild.

Another of the new guidelines restricts any tourism from being conducted in areas of the forests which had previously been inhabited by local populations that the Indian government relocated in order to

give more tiger habitat to the animals within their core zones. Having tourists allowed into these areas has caused some justified anger on the part of the relocated citizens. From now on, no human activity should occur in these spaces reserved explicitly for tiger territory. A final major guideline changed by the new Supreme Court decision deals with the taxation of tourist hotels and resorts, which will now be the responsibility of local governments. Previously, a charge of ten per cent had been demanded across the board from the income brought in by tourist businesses, which is earmarked for use in community development.

As of now, each state will control how much tax will be mandatorily given by tourist facilities in the form of a "conservation fee," and there is also talk of the eco-tourism industry being able to voice opinions on how these collected funds will be used.

The future of Ranthambhore and other tourist areas in India looks hopeful, but still awaits another Supreme Court hearing on Oct. 3rd, when the "comprehensive guidelines on tiger conservation and tourism" will be discussed. Hopefully, all decisions will benefit both India's tiger populations and the large sector of the human population which subsists on the existence of the country's eco-tourism.



Ranthambhore National Park's well-known "dollar male," so-called because of his identifying markings, gets cool in one of the park's precious watering holes. His stunning looks attest to the health of the tiger population in this particular reserve. Photo by Bobby Bhargawa.

It Takes More than a \$30 Application to Get a USDA License!

By Vincent DeMaggio III

For years now, I have had no problems with my exotic cats, cougars Simba and Bakira, and bobcats Keesha and Savior. I started building onto our already spacious compound in December of last year; this time construction was to meet USDA standards, because I planned to apply for a license in the near future. I was confident that I could meet the facility requirements. As for handling experience, I had already owned cats for eight years and I also had completed the FCF husbandry course and was registered with the FCF as an Intermediate Handler.

I moved our female cougar, Bakira, into the enclosure with our much younger male, Simba, so that I could build onto her side of the compound. Both cats were a little nervous, but soon got used to each other. It was especially hard when feeding each of them or when I went in, because they would have to share my attention. Remembering lessons learned in the FCF husbandry course, I never took my eyes off either cat. By February, Bakira's roof was finished, so she moved back and I started building an eight-foot perimeter fence and designing the required trap cages for each cat.

On March 15, 2012, Bakira seemed as if something was wrong. She kept walking to the door of her cage, looking at me the whole time. She was whining for my attention, not food, but truly for me to go into her cage with her. After analyzing the situation, I entered her cage. Watching Bakira, I saw blood near her rear end!! To my amazement, there in her house lay three tiny cougar cubs that must have been born a couple of hours earlier. WOW!!! What a shock! Bakira never showed signs of being pregnant, never mind being in labor probably before we left for work. The next thing I knew, I found myself on my belly, looking into her cage very hesitantly. I didn't know what to expect from Bakira, but she gave me a reassurance hug to go ahead and look at her new prize. Simba, in the next cage, seemed to be walking with a strut as if he were proud to be the new father. Bakira would move herself around ever so gently, careful not to squish one of her kits, and began to clean them everywhere, at one point cleaning me, too. Have you ever gotten your face licked by a mountain lion?

Wow, her tongue is three times rougher than a typical house cat. I called my mentor, Lynn Culver, to inform her of the wonderful news. I felt like a real father; where are the cigars when a new dad needs one? Once I settled down by talking to Lynn, she asked me about my progress on getting USDA-licensed. I needed to work faster, because the kittens would grow quickly and I would need the license to sell these three beautiful, spotted girls.

I called the USDA in Colorado for an application. After filling it out and applying for a USDA class B license on March 21, 2012, I was contacted by mail on April 18, 2012. It said to expect a USDA animal care officer in our area to come by for an inspection of our compound and our exotic cats. On May 2, 2012, inspector Jeff Baker, DVM, and Sandra Meek came to our home and spent two and a half hours inspecting and taking pictures of everything from our refrigerator to our cats. There was no privacy, as they examined all medicines in the house from our vitamins for us to the vitamins for the cats. Our cages were photographed from end to end, as, of course, were the cats. It was worth it when I saw the results of the inspection: "No non-compliant items identified in this inspection." I felt great, kinda like Simba did when his pride of three were born. No one can take this feeling away, except for... Dr. Sabala, Regional Head of Veterinarians of USDA, who called me a short time later to inform me the USDA wanted more information. This included background checks on my partner and I, the organization we were members of, more info about our education, our vet's experience with exotic cats, plus a written contingency plan in case of emergency, our food-handling policy, and, finally, the cats' diets. Right away I started putting a folder together to keep track of what we needed to send in. The folder had over 40 sheets of information. Several phone calls back and forth included repeating everything I had written in our five-page letter.

Finally, on June 13, 2012, the USDA inspectors came out again. Armed with their "big cat specialist's" expertise, this time they wanted to challenge what we

had written in our 40-page folder and the history of our exotic cats. When the inspectors left, again I received another perfect score; "No non-compliant items identified in this inspection."

"One more inspection is to be done, though," Dr. Sabala continued to say. This time was with Sandra Meek and USDA veterinarian Konnie Plumblee. The pair wanted to meet our veterinarian of record, Wes Rice. On August 23, they arrived and Wes was on his toes with quick responses to every question. Dr. Rice has been our vet for almost a decade and is the vet for Turpentine Creek Wildlife Sanctuary, which houses one hundred big cats. We have much confi-



Bakira gives one cub a bath while they nurse.

dence in his judgment and he has our utmost respect when it comes to our lovable, fun exotic cats. He has been there for us through thick and thin, and when our daughter's puppy died, his vet assistants were there to help her through the tears and even sent a sympathy card. Wes Rice has always been reliable, non-judgmental, and gets excited for you!! He is proud to be our veterinarian and is always up to a new challenge, so when I asked him to come to the house, he didn't hesitate. It was only natural for him to hear the great and final news: "No non-compliant items identified at this inspection." As of September 4, 2012, I now officially run a class B USDA-licensed facility. I may legally deal with, exhibit, breed, and sell offspring. Gaining and holding this license was one of the hardest things my wife and I had to do to continue our dream of breeding and sharing our great love of these amazing felines.

Learning the Art of Moderation

By Julia Matson Wagner
Director of Outreach
Conservators' Center

As everyone who will read this article understands, loving animals can inform your entire life trajectory; it can provide a prism through which to view the rest of the world. But the amount of time, dedication, and emotional energy that goes into caring for exotic wildlife can be overwhelming, and it can leave us jaded or dogmatic. It is therefore critical that we learn to balance the love we feel for our animals with the understanding that each of us is part of a larger community of private exotic feline owners.

For those of us who have chosen to work with exotic felines professionally, it is especially imperative that we pair that passion with the ability to effectively communicate our goals with people across a wide spectrum of beliefs. In a political

climate where we must defend even housing exotic animals in captivity, it is even more challenging to explain why we are choosing to breed instead of just rescuing. At the Conservators' Center in Mebane, North Carolina, we work to broaden the public's understanding of these complex issues with our three-part mission of education, conservation, and rescue.

Founded in 1999, the Conservators' Center was intended to be a small educational and breeding facility that would focus on species that are underrepresented in traditional programs, including small felines such as caracals and ocelots. We intended to stay closed to the public and instead do off-site educational programming and consult with overseas projects on husbandry and conservation. Over time, we also embraced animals in need of placement and rescue, beginning with large cats in 2000, with a temperamental tiger named Tigra.

Our ability to manage felines with behavioral and physical issues did not go unnoticed, and it resulted in an ongoing stream of placement and rescue requests from the USDA. In 2004, we accepted 14 rescue lions and tigers to the site, anticipating that ten would be moved to another facility. Instead, the other facility closed, and four of the females from the rescue gave birth to a total of 15 cubs. In a five month period, our large cat population grew from three to 31. This unanticipated population spike presented the organization with many challenges. We had to manage our financial resources responsibly while also moving the organization forward in accordance with our founding mission, not

always an easy task as we were expending more resources on rescue than we ever intended. The next eight years were about survival – ensuring that the 100 animals we are now responsible for received the care they needed while also keeping the organization afloat.

In 2006, ban bill legislation for North Carolina arose, throwing us into the forefront of a political battle for our ongoing existence. Despite internal disagreement, we opened to the public in 2007, as a way to boost funding and educate the public about the importance of responsible private ownership of exotic wildlife. We hoped that we could more effectively fight future ban bills if we had an educated base of supporters. With the decision to open our doors came the incredible challenge of explaining the need for conservation breeding, the importance of private ownership, and the future of exotic felines in captivity and the wild to a populace for whom these topics were relatively foreign.

Five years later, we are still working to perfect a message that balances the goals of education, conservation, and rescue. There is temptation to focus too heavily on the rescue aspect of the mission, and we are constantly self-evaluating to ensure we don't fall into that trap. We have many cats on our site that have dramatic and heartbreaking backgrounds, which are the exact stories the general public has been conditioned to crave. And we certainly do tell these stories, but we work to not overstate the need for rescue. Instead, we focus on the need for appropriate regulations to ensure that people who are not caring for their animals properly are put out of business, while those of us who are responsible may maintain our ownership. It's a far more nuanced position than people are accustomed to, but they are responding. After years of bombardment with negative and manipulative messaging from the HSUS, ASPCA, and other animal rights organizations, people are beginning to become emotionally fatigued by rescue. How many people do you know that now just turn the channel when the sad puppy and kitten faces appear on their television screens? And in a political climate that is becoming increasingly extreme, not just in the animal field, but across the national spectrum, we are finding that people respond very well to a



This magnificent male African lion named Mufasa was one of 14 lions and tigers that once lived at a failing Ohio facility, that arrived at the Conservators' Center in 2004. Photo by Kim Pernicka.

message of moderation.

Once you open people's minds to the concept that animals in captivity can be happy and healthy, you have a foundation from which to start a conversation about conservation breeding. You can also introduce people to the concept that the animals they are personally meeting – animals with names and individual personalities, like Taz Lynx or Spike Tiger – serve as incredible ambassadors for their wild counterparts. That these wonderful critters, with their endearing quirks and unique emotional needs, can be the most effective way to get children and adults passionate about the fate of these species in the wild. We are all interconnected; it is just a matter of helping people see how it all comes together. As we have stabilized our organization, we are looking to reinvigorate the in-situ partnerships that we have fostered over the years. This will only enhance the conversation about how private organizations can have a demonstrable impact on these species in the wild.

If there is a single goal we hope to achieve when someone visits our site, it is that they walk away feeling positive about what they experienced. We do not want people leaving upset with the thought that there may not be tigers in the wild in 50 years. Instead, we want them to understand that, while this is a reality, there is also an option to perpetuate the species in captivity for the good of future generations of people and tigers – a notion that is bolstered by Arthur Tiger happily trotting up to greet his visitors. No one should leave our site disturbed by the horrendous conditions that Mufasa Lion endured – they should be uplifted by how happy he is lounging in his pine grove with his three pride mates. And we are succeeding at this goal.

When talking about fellow exotic animal owners, and even about members of our own staff, we affectionately explain that many animal people are animal people for a reason –

because they simply do not engage well with their human counterparts. It is therefore imperative that those of us in this field who are capable of cogently communicating do so in a way that is productive and responsible. Each organization must consider how their messaging impacts this industry as a whole. The short-term gain of condemning private owners will result in a long-term loss for all of us if the public is trained to believe that the world is divided into rescue-only facilities and irresponsible breeders. There is a middle ground that many of us occupy – let's inform the public of its existence.

All of this positivity and moderation has paid off. We have thousands of visitors each month, many of whom are returning because this is a place that makes them feel hopeful. Our Lifetime Adoption program, the bedrock of our animal care fund, is growing exponentially, as it offers individuals and families the chance to emotionally invest in their animal and this



USDA authorities asked Conservators' Center to take on an underfed white tiger cub named Arthur. With plenty of loving and good food he has grown up to be a favorite for staff and visitors. Photo by Kim Pernicka.

organization as a whole. We consider ourselves a community – every person who walks through this door is treated as an ally in the fight for our animals, both in captivity and in the wild. And at the end of the day, that is what we are all striving toward. Hopefully, over time, we as a private ownership community can come to a place of increased cooperation. Because without that cooperation, we may not survive, a fate that is tragic for our cats and for the people who have not yet had the opportunity to experience the majesty of meeting a perfectly content, captive lion, tiger, or ocelot.



Spotted Geoffroy's kitten, Tango, and melanistic Geoffroy's kitten, Clara, are being raised together at the Center to someday, hopefully form a bonded, breeding pair. Photo by Kim Pernicka.

Wildcat Weekend

The Conservators' Center is excited to host the FCF for the Wildcat Weekend November 9th, 10th, and 11th. The weekend will be both fun and educational, with a packed agenda of activities over the 3-day period. Classes will be taught Friday, November 9th and Sunday, November 11th.

On Saturday, November 10th, there will be opportunities to experience the Conservators' Center, Tiger World, and the Natural Science Center of Greensboro.

Conservators' Center

1 pm-3 pm – Pumpkin Prowl

For the first time ever, we are inviting the public to see our wonderful critters receive their annual fall treat: dozens of leftover pumpkins. Our animals enjoy digging yummy treats out of their pumpkins, playing soccer, drowning these new toys, and generally making a giant mess, all in the name of fun. The compound will be opened up, allowing visitors the opportunity to enjoy the Conservators' Center at their own pace. Volunteers will be stationed throughout the facility to answer questions and provide information about all of our wonderful critters.

Special pricing for Wildcat Weekend participants: \$10

4:30 pm-6:30 pm – Twilight Tours

Have you ever heard lions calling to one another as darkness falls, or wolves howling as the moon rises? Come experience these breathtaking moments on an evening tour of the compound. This is an exciting opportunity to view the Conservators' Center's nocturnal species and our big cats when they are most active.

Special pricing for Wildcat Weekend participants: \$10

Reservations are required for both events. Please email tours@conservatorscenter.org if you want to join the fun, and make sure you specify you are participating in the FCF Wildcat Weekend. Book your spots now, as space is limited.

TigerWorld

An FCF member organization with more than 30 big cats will be offering Educational Keeper Presentations throughout the day:

- 9:00 am Tiger & Lion Cub Feeding
- 10:00 am Leaping Lemur with a Keeper
- 11:00 am Bobcat Fun
- 12:00 pm Operant Conditioning with White Tiger Mohan
- 1:30 pm Bear Talk
- 3:30 pm Cub Training

TigerWorld is located about 2 hours away from the Conservators' Center, near Charlotte, NC.

Natural Science Center of Greensboro

The Natural Science Center of Greensboro is an AZA-accredited zoo located an hour west of the Conservators' Center. It houses two tigers on loan from the Conservators' Center, Axl and Kisa, as well as many other species.

Friday, November 9

Wild/Exotic Basic Feline Husbandry Course

The FCF Wild/Exotic Feline Husbandry course introduces students to all species of wild cats and teaches nutrition, health care, habitat construction, enrichment, contingency planning, laws and regulatory agencies. Great for new owners and just as important for any volunteer or employee working at feline facilities.

Sunday, November 11

Wildlife Conservation Educators Course

The FCF Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course is a "how to" course designed to cover the basics of developing a safe, informative, entertaining and successful wildlife educator's program. Includes two interactive workshops with small wild cats. Special guest, Zoofari Educational Encounters, will demonstrate a wildlife ambassador presentation and answer student questions. Improve your value to your employer. Add new ideas to your facility's conservation messages.

Both classes start at 8:00 am and conclude at 5:00 pm.

The registration fee for each class is \$130. The registration fee for both courses is \$260. (\$35 discount for FCF members)
Additional fees for facility tours on Saturday.

For more information about either of these courses, visit the Feline Conservation Federation Website Upcoming Events page http://www.felineconservation.org/organization/upcoming_events.htm.

You can also register for either course online at the FCF website and pay with PayPal.

Out of Africa and Working with Tigers

By Jeff Harwell

Like most of the people reading this article, cats are one of the biggest facets of my life. While my childhood friends were playing GI Joe, or He-Man, I was pretending to be a jaguar. "It's just a phase," my Dad would say to reassure my Mom as I raced by on all fours. I guess he was right, at least about the crawling around part, though it did take quite a while, long enough to warrant many more reassuring pep talks from my Dad. "At least he's not playing Barbie" escaped his tongue within ear shot of a stealthy would-be jaguar on more than one occasion.

After college, I worked in a cubicle for a year and a half to appease my parents, and then attended a zoo vocational school. In 2006 I finally made it to my dream job. I'm a large carnivore handler at Out of Africa Wildlife Park in Camp Verde, Arizona with 47 large carnivores, including 15 tigers in my care. The tigers are by far my favorite to work with, as they wear their heart on their sleeve and are very affectionate. Out of Africa is a wonderful facility and for me, seeing the huge enclosures and all the happy animals it was love at first sight.

We are unique in that we play with most of our animals in a completely free contact manner. Much as one might play with a house cat with a feather tied to the end of a plastic stick. We play with tigers in an arena in front of a crowd with a much bigger cat toy and a much bigger cat. We harnessed the tigers natural play instincts to provide enrichment and exercise years ago and slowly it evolved into a show in which people can enjoy watching tigers and humans play together. Our tigers are not trained to play, they do it for the same reason the house cat chases your untied shoe lace, and just like the house cat, calling a tiger's name does not mean he's coming. Like us they have a large spectrum of emotions and if a tiger doesn't feel like playing they certainly do not have to. We feel it's better to never force an animal designed to kill to do anything it does not want to do...

As a handler, (and I use the term "handler" loosely as it usually the tigers that handle us) I'm often confronted by very opinionated people and their views on why tigers should be restricted to protect-

ed contact or none at all. While I am very pleased that they take an interest in my tiger's well being, I couldn't disagree more. Their arguments usually have to do with the tigers being wild and not "tame." When I call one of my tigers they have the

this benefit the tiger? Even tigers in the wild seek out companionship during estrus. Wild tigers can be seen flirting and playing like cubs at times, and a tiger will rarely stay in a territory that is void of the opposite sex. If you took one of my tigers



Chalet and Jeff doing a normal jump. Just out of the picture is a big, inflatable dolphin that Chalet is hunting. Photo by Kathleen Reeder.

choice to come or stay, but 95% of the time they come to me knowing I probably do not have food or a prize of any kind. They come to me for the same reason I would come if an old friend called me. They take as much pleasure in our relationship as I do. At Out of Africa we are all about full filling our animal's needs and in my opinion, an animal's emotional needs, their emotional fulfillment, is a very high priority. One might argue that tigers are solitary animals and it's unnatural to try and forge a relationship with them, but it's also quite unnatural for a tiger to live in a captive environment. Since we have decided to keep them captive, necessary though it may be, I believe it is our responsibility as wildlife care takers to give them the best life possible. I find it hard to believe that some would rather the tiger not have the most fulfilling life possible, in the interest of being more "wild" more "natural". Why? Is it going to be released into the wild? How does

and put them in a small enclosure with no socialization they would go nuts in a matter of days! They wait around all day for us to enter their homes, much like a dog awaits their owner's return from work. Our tigers even know when it is their day to play in Tiger Splash and as the time draws near, they anxiously wait at the gate for us to give them access to the arena. I can honestly say I am blessed to care for the happiest captive animals I've ever met and I doubt I'll ever meet a more spoiled tiger in my lifetime. Our cats are so spoiled that toys like big boxes are boring, if we hide meat they are probably not going to take the time to look for it, and they never pace (with the exception of one rescue tiger, who had probably been habituated to this behavior while living in a tiny room). They are not just showcases or statistics to us, they are our friends. They are always happy to greet us, they always cheer us up if we're having a bad day. They play pranks on us (which usual-



Rejoice is doing a "body dive." This requires handlers becoming the toy or prey by acting "wounded" by limping around or making sporadic movements, to gain the tiger's interest. Jeff is in the pool as back up to the keeper playing. Photo by Kathleen Reeder.

ly hurt). While I can't prove that they love us any more than I can prove to my coworkers Sasquatch doesn't exist, I do not know how else to describe the emotions we share. The symbiotic relationships we share are infinitely rewarding in so many ways, and I just cannot imagine taking it away from them for the sake of "keeping them wild."

Now just because we share a great love does not mean the tiger would not hurt me, and this holds true with most animals and even humans. So we are always careful, always alert, and sometimes scared. Tigers have the luxury of being blameless. A tiger cannot sin, it cannot be evil, and it can only be a tiger. No matter what they do, odds are they are not going to feel bad about it. When we do get hurt, the tiger usually does not even know he has hurt us, but even if he did, he would experience no remorse. When working with tigers this is a hard truth to wrap your mind around, but at the end of the day it does no good to hold a grudge against a tiger. While they cannot transgress, they can certainly remember transgressions committed against them, which will quickly deteriorate a hard won relationship.

Just because I can play with one tiger a

certain way does not mean I can do it with all tigers or even the same tiger from one moment to the next. I could say I have to be careful because they are "wild animals" but this feels like a cop out, or an undeserved label if you will. For instance I tell my girl friend that her dress does not make her look fat not just to be nice, but also, for fear of wild broom-wielding retribution. The welts I've received from that broom were not because she's a wild animal, but because I had crossed her threshold on a particular matter, (and because I'm an idiot). Dogs bite their owners all the time and still we call them tame or domestic. I would propose that no living thing is "completely safe" but all have different thresholds on different matters with a thousand variables affecting these breaking points from one second to the next. When we work with a tiger we strive to know that individual tiger as intimately as we can. Always taking into consideration as many factors as we can, searching for that one aversive stimulus that might set off one of the tiger's dangerous instinctual behaviors. We also know we are fallible and that tigers are quite literally designed to kill. We take solace in knowing no animal attacks without reason, though it may appear to be the case when motives are

unclear. Some signals are easy to pick up on, like body language, or how the weather is affecting them, but some are quite difficult. A wasp sting can scare or infuriate a tiger, and that furry could easily be displaced onto one of us if we are too close. The amount of wrath poured out onto an individual is usually in direct correlation to the tiger's fondness of the recipient. It is for this reason that we are very invested in our relationships.

Out of my 15 tigers, there is one who would rather not have a relationship with us in his home. He is a little more territorial than most and while I still give him other types of enrichment, he would rather fulfill his emotional needs with other tigers, which is quite alright. We just have to except that like people, every tiger has it's own personality that comes with it's own set of pros and cons.

There are many precautions we take when we're on the tiger's side of the fence. One of the most frequently asked questions we get is, "aren't you scared?" I think people ask us this because they perceive us to be relaxed when in actuality we are constantly calculating the steps we take, our body language, and watching for outside influences. Learning to walk with tigers is one of the toughest things to learn and it is very difficult to teach. I can tell a new guy all day long not to make a certain move but until he does and it ends poorly, he just won't get it. Another thing you have to learn if you want to work with tigers is that they are not on the clock. Patience is a virtue that will make your life easier and keep you safer in this field.

Most facilities will play with their tigers while they are cubs. They develop bonds, provide much needed stimulation to an energetic youngster, and inevitably give it hugs and affection only to rip it away when it hits a certain age or weight and are suddenly deemed dangerous. What must that be like for the poor cub that was so used to affection and is hard wired to be extremely social for at least it's first year and a half. Honestly I feel that this is one of the saddest things that takes place in our industry. While we are far from perfect, I feel that many facilities should be more open to free contact for the sake of the very animals they have dedicated their lives to. In my opinion the benefits far out way hazards. For instance, we have a tiger that is prescribed eye drops and if she does not feel like coming out of her den to receive them, we crawl

in to her. We rarely have to anesthetize an animal for vet procedures, and God forbid a cat escape we would have a much better chance of securing it without an incident than most.

People only care about what they know, and they only care to save what they care about. It is our job to introduce them to our friends, to help them see our animals as we do, and to sow in them a desire to help our beloved animals before it is too late. This is where many of our sanctuaries and wildlife parks really shine. While AZA zoo's SSP (Species Survival Plan) work is amazing and priceless, many other facilities are set up better to tug at the heart strings and really infuse a desire to act into those patrons. To introduce a tiger not as a specimen in need of preservation, but as Liberty, the rescue who loves to tackle and lay on top of people, who has bad eyes but a wonderful mischievous and loving heart. These up close and "real" ambassadors are the ones who truly represent their wild cousins in dire need of rescue. Many of us harp on educating the public. We can talk about the tiger's plight all day long but unless we are motivating people to action, it is all



Ezekiel is "pinging" off the fence and is about to land on the toy. Notice he's going to employ his claws so the toy can't escape. Photo by Prayeri Harrison.

for not. You do not have to convince them to be the next Alan Rabinowitz. They do not need to scour rainforest in search of

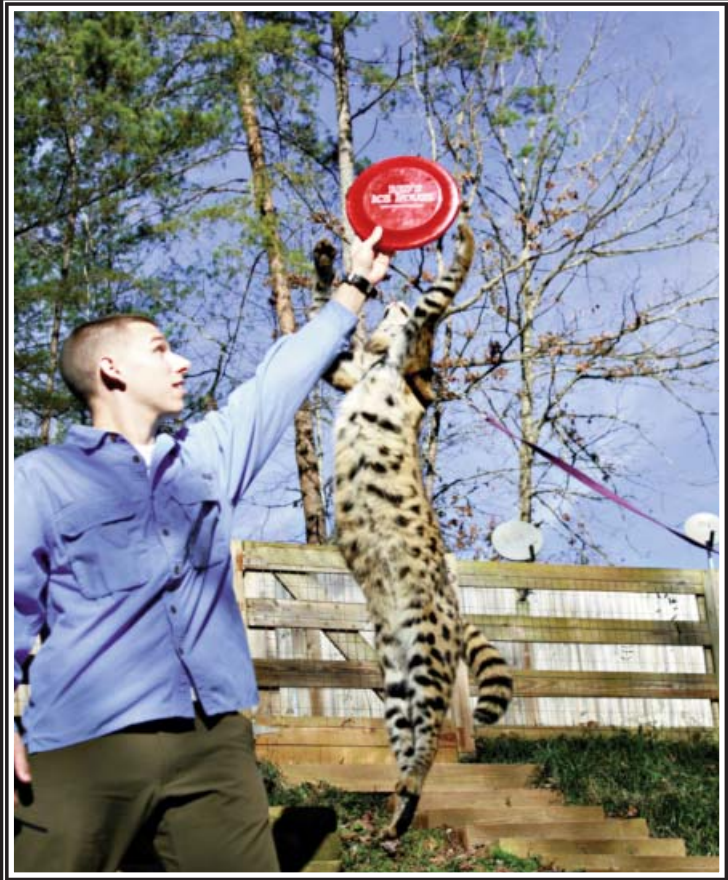
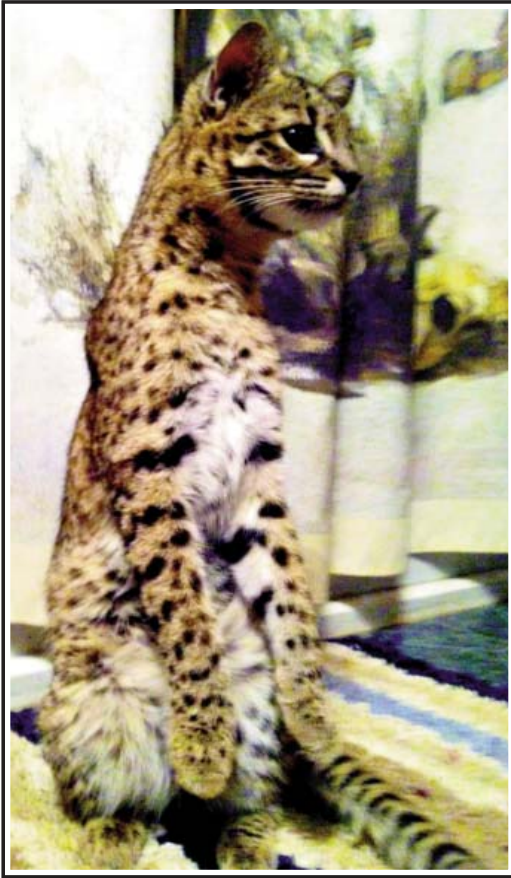
tigers and poachers. Now a days, there are a ton of easy ways to help. One of my favorites is texting the word "tigers" to the 5-digit phone number 20222 to make a \$10 donation to the WWF via your phone bill, or the word "panthera" to 85944 to make the same contribution to Panthera. This money will go straight to the field where it is needed most. I even make a joke out of it to help them remember, by adding "if you can't afford \$10 tacked onto your phone bill to help the tigers then just use your friend's phone! Seriously, the tigers don't care where the money comes from."

Some might argue that we play with our carnivores for the benefit of our egos, and I am not going to sit here and say that I do not love the pictures of my self being tackled by tigers. Come on, I do not care who you are, that's cool, but it is just a perk. There are some days that I would rather not go in with certain animals because fear has crept in, but I do because I do not want our relationship to suffer, and the animal would be disappointed. Like any job the novelty eventually wears off and you are left with the daily grind. But the relationships I have built with my animals do not wear off, they simply grow.



Jeff does a body dive. Sometimes dives are done so the tiger actually catches the handler in the air, which has been dubbed the "Kamikaze." This game is little more dangerous because the cats love it so much they get excited, so this is when relationships are really tested. Keepers don't attempt a body dive until the bond with the cat is very strong. Photo by Kathleen Reeder.

Classic "meerkat pose" demonstrated by Midori the Geoffroy's cat. Photo by Sheri DeFlorio.



A serval demonstrates its jumping abilities during the Animal Encounters Tour at North Georgia Zoo. Photo by Hope Bennett.

Your Best Shots



Randy Spaw caught Jasmine Geoffroy's without a care in the world, napping peacefully on Jennifer Kasserman's lap.



Vicki Albert took this photo of Billie L kitten sucking down his morning bottle.

ke, a stunning adult male lion, lives at
ide and Pack. Photo by Gary Holliman.



Fiona bobcat is the dominant feline in the
household. Photo by Vera Chaples.



ambert's serval
tle of milk.



Duma, Ramsey, and Seada are introduced to the joys of the "kitty
pool." Photo by Kelly Allen.

Florida Panther Thatcher resides at Bear Creek Feline Center. Although he looks regal here, he is actually a big rascal who likes his ears scratched.



Amur Tiger lives at Hogle Zoo, Salt Lake City. Despite streams of gawking tourists and temps in the 90s, he remained cool and serene. I wondered what he was thinking about when I took the picture.



Serval Heba is a close friend of Roger Newsome. She loves to go on road trips. This shot was taken when she was lounging in the back seat with Roger.



Sweet Pea also lives at BCFC. She is different type of bobcat, from Texas; smaller and has less fur even in winter. The sweetest of cats, she has a cute pink tongue which she sticks out. She lets strangers pet her.



Siberian lynx Natasha lives at BCFC with two other lynx. She is the matriarch and very queenly, as can be seen from this picture. One does not mess with Natasha.

Cats from a Different Perspective: Some Furry Friends Commem- orated in Watercolors

By Kat Benford

When you look at your feline friend, what do you see? Photos capture the external beauty and grace of an animal but often miss the quirky mood or personality. If you feel as though something is missing from your pictures, consider adding artist to your resume. Before you scream that you cannot draw a straight line remember "nature abhors a straight line and you will not find one out there." Talent is less important than love of the subject, perseverance and practice---lots of practice. I am living proof.

A bit of history about myself: I reach Medicare this year. Since retiring from the federal government, I eventually made it to Florida in 2002. Since grade school I had never touched art except as a visitor to museums and art history classes. Enter color, watercolor to be exact: brilliant, changing, rich colors for which I had no names. Suddenly, I wanted to learn about and to be able to reproduce the astounding colors and beauty I saw everywhere. So I started taking classes painting poorly, seascapes, landscapes and cityscapes---

you get the idea.

About the same time I saw an ad in the local paper asking for volunteers to work at a nearby, non-profit exotic cat facility. I love animals, just about any kind of animal, and I had worked with wolves in college. It seemed a match of interest and experience. Was it ever; a whole new world smacked me between the eyes.

Long before I considered painting cats, I worked and played with them, made "love eyes" at them and tried to capture what I saw with photos. Sometimes, photography worked but mostly it seemed frozen in place. Do not get me wrong, I use photos extensively. To sketch a cat unless it is sleeping is impossible even with a timed five second drawing. At best, you will get an ear, paw or maybe an eye. Photos give you the time to observe the cat in many ways. For me, however, knowing the cat is vital to capturing that individuality. Some of the paintings I do are small, watercolor sketches. The largest works are approximately 11x14. Working larger than that takes too much time and boredom raises its head. I have painted the same cats over and over in different poses

and expressions. It is an axiom that in watercolor, you can never reproduce an exact copy of a painting; serendipity is a reason why I love the medium.

Back to the original question: what do you see? Most of my cat paintings are portraits. For me, the eyes of a cat reflect its soul. Each cat's eyes are unique: some are hooded, some are loving, and some, like Hero, our male Siberian lynx, are so deep and wise with ancient knowledge to stun even a casual visitor. My paintings are usually "loose" and impressionistic in style. I am not interested in reproducing a photo, so I keep details to a minimum to key on the focal point: the eyes.

So, can you, cat lover, learn to paint your friends? I say a resounding yes! Unlike painting human portraits, no cat will judge your work. It is for your pleasure and increased awareness of your four-footed family. Practice drawing, play with color, and be patient with yourself. Above all, have fun.



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Tigers on Tour

By Felicia Frisco

My name is Felicia Frisco. I am 19 years old and I have spent the last year training my first tiger, Romeo, who is now 16 months old. I am also in training to take over my family's educational tiger show, called "The Tiger Encounter," featuring our six Bengal tigers; three tabbies, one white, and two standards. I believe I am the youngest female trainer in America. Our show travels about 16 weeks a year. We operate out of our two facilities; one in Illinois, and our winter home in Tampa, Florida.

We created a way to let the public see tigers demonstrate natural behaviors. We use positive reinforcement, meaning they are trained and rewarded using pieces of beef (and for our younger tigers, a bottle) all through our show. We also give demonstrations on how our tigers are trained while stating different facts on the plight of the tigers and the need for them to be protected, not only in the wild, but in captivity as well. People do not understand how important these ambassador animals are and how much awareness they really raise. Many people are unaware there are as few as 3,200 tigers left in the wild. They don't know that products they use everyday are contributing to the loss of habitat leading tigers to extinction.



Felicia with her tiger Romeo, at the family's facility in Tampa, Florida. Photo was taken Christmas Eve when Romeo was about 9 months old.

My family has been training animals for generations on both sides of my family. My grandfather was a zoo director of the Glen Oak Zoo in Peoria, Illinois, for many years. He was one of the very first people ever to acquire a USDA license in the state. In 2002, my parents created The Tiger Encounter. We wanted to create a show for people to learn about tigers and see us interact with tigers in a way the public does not usually get to see. Tigers, as well as other animals, have been very misunderstood thanks to the media. The media have created this image that tigers are nothing but evil creatures out to kill and have no compassion, so most people really do not think of the tiger as an animal that can have a human connection. Our shows draw anywhere from 500 to 5,000 people, depending on how many seats and standing room we have at a venue. Just think about all those people, two or three shows a day, 16 weeks a year. People who otherwise may never get to see these animals because they do not go to a zoo or their small-town zoo does not have tigers. Even if they do go to a zoo, they never get to see them up close the way they do at our shows. Adults and children see and learn about these animals on a whole new level because we are bringing the animals to them.

Having elephants, we are well aware of activists, but we have never really had issues at our shows

with activists. You get maybe one or two a year at the fair and only a few times have we had to have the police escort them out. The first time I remember meeting an activist, I was about six years old; they told me they hoped my elephant would kill me. Another incident I remember was when I was 13 and an activist was following me all day with a camera and she was asked to stop filming me because I was a minor. She refused and started harassing us and passing out papers from the PETA website, even though the fair had a sign at the front gate saying, "No soliciting." She was causing a scene, so of course the police escorted her out. On her way out, I went to take a photo of her so if she came back we knew what she looked like, and when I raised my camera to take the picture, she came running and swung her bag, put it in my face, and told me she would knock me out, no matter how young I was. She was dumb enough to do it while a sheriff, five officers, and someone from the fair board was there. The police officer told her if she touched me he would personally throw her in jail. Needless to say, she is not allowed back.

I never really had many problems with activists over my tigers until I went on television for sleeping with a tiger and became "Teen Tiger Mom." I was not ready for what happened. I never expected the story to get so big and go nationwide. I honestly just thought it was in a magazine, but then I heard Good Morning America was going to talk about it. Still, I was like, "no big deal, it will blow over."



Felicia rewards Kyla with a meat treat after she has demonstrating how tigers can walk and hop on their hind legs. This was taken at the Illinois Fair.

Well, no, that was not the case. It was on every news station, I was in magazines around the globe, I made the front page of the paper in India, and, shockingly, they had nothing but nice things to say because they actually know what is happening to their tigers, unlike the people living in the U.S. A women's magazine in Africa ran the story and we even had the Oprah network call numerous times, but after long discussions we decided it was best to decline anything that big. I went into hiding for a few days after that. I turned my phone off, deactivated Facebook, and refused to watch any of the news stories. It all happened so fast, and of course the media was finding every which way to turn this story around on me to make me look like a bad person. They overestimated my tiger's weight, nearly doubling it to 100 pounds. They gave the false impression he was just a "pet" tiger and neglected to mention he was my tiger in training. I decided it was best to just not speak out, because it would just keep the story alive and the press did not report accurately.

I finally started going outside my home and was shopping in the Verizon store and looking at the monitor when I saw Doc Antle on the Joy Behar show, and Joy was showing my photos on the TV, and I just thought, "Oh my, it is everywhere!" I was grateful that Doc Antle was interviewed to speak about me, and was very lucky Joy Behar was supportive and even posted on Twitter that people should just leave me alone. Joy also interviewed Tippi Hedren, and Tippi was put in her place. The only real highlight of my week was seeing Tippi have nothing to say because she did exactly what I did, except in an unsafe manner.

After a few days, I turned my Facebook back on, and that is when I started getting mass amounts of hate mail from fake accounts, thanks to some crazy activist posting my Facebook page to their Facebook pages and websites. I was getting death threats. I got detailed messages from people saying how they wished I would die a slow, painful death. Someone created a video of me on YouTube, making fun of me and pretending to be me, which thankfully YouTube removed. I finally looked up articles about me online

(big mistake googling my own name!), so of course that led me to reading the comments. Some were good, but a lot were awful. A big activist had posted the link telling people to comment how awful I was. Now keep in mind, I had just turned



Felicia holds a metal hoop above her head as Kyla sails through at a show in Orlando, Florida.

17; being at the age where most kids are worrying about high school drama, I was worrying about what tabloid would write something bad about me next and what detailed messages I would find of how I should die. Not to mention getting fake pages pretending to be made by me. When all this was happening, I started looking into the cyber-bullying laws after an activist named Sky, an advocate for "Save Tony the Tiger," started taking my pictures and posting them on her sites, threatening me, degrading me, and

encouraging her friends to message me saying they hoped I die, even though they did not know who the heck I was other than that I had a pink room and a tiger. My tiger Will had a very slim chance of surviving with his mother. She was a first time mother and would not allow him to nurse, so I pretty much brought Will back from the brink of death and became his surrogate mom.

I looked into cyber-bullying and realized how many teens are affected by it and lose their lives to it, so I created my first video speaking out against it. I got a lot of positive comments and requests from people in the private exotic animal community (this was all around the week I was in the media) and saw how many of them are dealing with the same issues animal trainers are going through with new laws and bans being passed, so I decided to do something and started speaking out to the fans of "Teen Tiger Mom." I created my first video, called "The Truth about Captive Animals." Overnight, the video got 1,200 hits and lots of requests from people on both sides of the "exotic animals in captivity" debate. I also got messages from schoolteachers and journalists over my videos. I have created many slide shows since then, and you can find them on my YouTube account or my Facebook pages. I also just got word that the Scholastic company has put out a debate kit in the school systems for kids to discuss how fair is it to have a tiger. I realized the only way to get people to understand us owners is not by trying to change their minds or fighting with them, but by showing them how much these animals really mean to us and let them see with their own eyes, by producing positive images and encouraging them to ask questions. This is why I created a Facebook page that is open to the public, and I encourage activists to share my photos and ask questions; it has changed quite a few minds of activists and big supporters of PETA, who are now fans of my tiger Romeo. We have had a lot of people say that they see the way we are with our animals and can see they are loved and well cared for. This year, the only reason we have had harassment on our fair's Facebook pages and phone calls to the fair office is because a facility in Tampa, Florida, has had a issue with me since I was shown on TV sharing my bed with a

tiger, and, lucky for me, I was in their backyard (oh, joy!). The comments on the pages mostly come from people in other countries or people in other states who have never seen my show, been to our facility in Tampa, or ever plan on driving a thousand miles or fly across the country to go to the fair. They are mostly commenting and posting misinformation and photos about my show because that one facility influences them. For instance, at the Sarasota County Fair, where my family has worked for over 20 years, the husband of that one facility's owner came and took photos 30 minutes before my show of my tigers in their holding trailer, which far surpasses USDA requirements. His photo only showed half the trailer and he said all of the tigers are locked in there 24 hours a day with no room to move. He failed to mention that the tigers are free to go in and out of their transport trailer into their exercise arena (once again far beyond USDA standards) all the way up until 30 minutes before show time, which allows us to be able to clean and set up the props. He even failed to notice that in the background one could plainly see me and my tiger Romeo doing our pre-show training demonstration.

Our shows have been presented at fairs for many years and some have been booked continuously for 20 to 30 years because of popular demand. These fairs



Felicia shares a big hug with Romeo while he gulps down a bottle of milk.

know the people leaving negative comments are ones who would not be attending the fair anyway. If people did not want to see these animals, we would not have full shows. But the negative people have brought some publicity to the fair. While trying to contact news stations to put out a bad press release on our show, it actually made the press want more interviews on our show; at our last fair I did a total of 14 interviews with the media in only seven days. Between news, talk show, radio, local journal, and magazine interviews, all the lies were put to rest and I was able to explain why it is important for us to preserve tigers in captivity and have these animals in the public eye. You cannot expect someone to want to protect something without letting them connect with that animal, letting them get up close, which is something they cannot do in most zoos. We get nothing but positive feedback from people who see our shows, and Romeo has stolen the hearts of many fans. I had to make him his own fan page on Facebook! He also does our kid shows, where he comes out to interact and play in the arena and I answer kids' questions about tigers and Romeo, my golden tabby Bengal tiger.

We spend thousands of hours with our tigers during their first year, when they live in our home, and this helps to create the proper bond that makes it possible to do the activities we present in our shows. We learn their behaviors and work off of that when training. When training is done with positive reinforcement, it is not only mentally, but also physically good for the animals. We all know tigers are lazy animals and like to sleep 10 to 15 hours a day. In the wild, they only wake up to hunt, and in captivity we do the hunting for them, so all they want to do is sleep. When you bring them out and train them and have them learn new things, you are stimulat-



The tabby tiger jumping is Romeo's older sister Tora. She is 5 years old and is leaping over Romeo's aunt, Sarah, who is 9 years old.

ing their minds and getting them to get up and move around. I have a few tigers that are pretty fat anyway, but it keeps them from being bored, giving them something to do and think about. My tigers get enrichment toys and we offer them different scents, but after 15 minutes they are over it and want to sleep. I get asked a lot about how to train. We start working with them while they are young, teaching them how to sit and stay on a seat. This also helps with vet care and makes giving them vaccinations a lot easier, by having them sit instead of using a squeeze cage like most zoos do. Having full contact with them makes it easier to give them physical exams, which we do daily.

I support responsible private ownership and encourage anyone to join my Facebook page or to subscribe to me on YouTube. My advice to anyone who is contacted by media is to think long and hard if they are really ready and prepared for possible nationwide exposure and to remember not to get into a full debate if they are not prepared with facts. Be aware of networks looking for controversy and finding ways to make the exotic animal community look bad, which is the biggest reason I have declined all offers from big networks. The best way to get people to open their minds is to keep producing positive images of yourself and your animals and just let them see for themselves.

Blast from the Past: Some Alternative Approaches for Perpetuation of Endangered Wild Felids

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We are all aware that there has been a general worldwide decline in many populations of wild felids. This decline can be attributed to four major factors: the fur trade; pet trade; habitat destruction; and predator control.

Moves to counteract these population decreases include the Endangered Species Conservation Act (1969), which prohibits the importation of certain live felids or their parts (i.e. fur) into the United States, and hunting and trapping regulations in certain areas. Little has been done to prevent destruction of these cats' habitats.

Obviously, these regulations will not prevent habitat destruction. What alternatives are there for maintaining existing wildcat populations in North America? This paper will discuss some effects of the pet industry on wild felids; breeding wild-



The margay is a species nearing extirpation in US captivity. But at one time, margays like Pebbles, above, were successfully bred in captivity and LIOC members shared news of such accomplishments. Photo by Fred Boyajian.



Ocelot kittens were common in captivity. In fact, in 1968, it was believed that as many as 635 ocelots were imported. Zapata, pictured above, is the descendant of many generations of captive breeding. Photo by John Erickson.

cats in captivity; regional control of and/or guidance of the pet industry, of wild feline breeding centers, and of ownership of wild felids as pets. It is hoped that these proposals might serve as possible guidelines for thought on alternatives in the management and perpetuation of North American felids.

Effects of the Pet Industry

The U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife estimates that the following numbers of wildcats were imported into the United States in 1968 for various live animal industries:

- Ocelot (*Felis pardalis*) 635*
- Margay (*Felis wiedii*) 72*
- Jaguarundi (*Felis jagouarundi*) 133
- Puma (*Felis concolor*) 27
- Bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) 16**
- Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)
- Jaguar (*Felis onca*) 11

*These figures may be somewhat misleading, since margays and ocelots as kittens are difficult to distinguish.

**This figure represents both species of lynx.

These figures probably represent minimum estimates, since many wildcats are also captured within the United States or are imported by private interests. It is obvious from these statistics that ocelots and margays are the two most popular species, particularly in the pet trade.

The Endangered Species Conservation Act of 1966 currently recognizes the jaguar, jaguarundi, ocelot, and margay as peripheral mammals--those whose occurrences in the United States are at the mar-

gin of their geographic range. These species may not be endangered elsewhere, although they are probably scarce within the United States.

Many subspecies, then, are not protected by the Act. Consequently, they are open to exploitation from both the fur and pet industries. Since it is obvious that many cats will be captured for the pet trade in the near future, an attempt must be made to minimize the mortality factors associated with this industry.

An estimated 75 to 90 percent of ocelots and margays trapped for the pet trade will never survive the trip to the exotic cat owner. No doubt similar mortality rates exist for other wild felids.

At this time, I will briefly describe a large exotic cat club, since portions of the remaining discussion will reflect certain aspects of this organization.

It is an organization which has the potential to be instrumental in reduction of mortality factors associated with the pet trade. It also has the potential to become involved in captive breeding programs.



Neville Buck holds a litter of three captive-born jaguarundis. The red and brown phase kittens were born at the Port Lymph Zoo in the UK. Accounts of captive breeding success with this species were reported in early LIOC newsletters, but this species has nearly disappeared from U.S. captivity.

This club is international in membership, containing at least 1,000 members. Many of these people have more than one pet feline. The club's primary function is devoted to the welfare and proper care of the pet exotic cat in North America; the organization is divided into 14 regions or branches.

Information on care, meetings of interest, conservation, and veterinary care, etc., is published in a bi-monthly newsletter. The club also circulates a list of veterinarians who have had experience in the treatment of various exotic felines. Conservationists are occasionally invited to give talks at regional branch meetings.

An example of conservation concerns by a member of this club was stated as a guest editorial in the Newsletter. In essence, this member felt that the club should state its purposes to the Secretary of the Interior. He was of the opinion that one of the club's purposes should include active and properly supervised breeding and/or repopulation programs.

At about this time, a staff position of Director of Conservation was created in the club. This indicates that the club is openly concerned about conservation of wild felids.

One regional club branch has recently begun discussion of setting up standards for proper care of exotic felines during air shipment. Another branch has organized a group which will buy and care for pet exotic felines in the event that their original owners die or become unable to prop-



Bobcats are native to nearly every state, being adaptable to mountains, swamps, forest, woodlands, and farmlands. This species is not endangered and is actually one of the most healthy feline populations in the world. Bobcats still enter captivity through rehabilitators and legal capture. Photo by Tonya Baker.

erly care for them.

In summary, this large exotic cat club is not merely an organization of status-conscious cat fanciers, but rather is one which is concerned for the welfare and conservation of all exotic felines. I submit this group be considered as a possible ally among forces for conservation of wild felids.

Breeding in Captivity

Mr. William Engler, who has had considerable, varied experience with many species of wild felids, recently told me that he feels that the only way to perpetuate these cats is through breeding in captivity.

Erickson described a Federal research program for endangered species. He more aptly stated that captive breeding could not be "a substitute for the study, preservation, or management of natural ecosystems." Rather, captive breeding should be used only as one of several means to continue the species.

The breeding of exotic felines in captivity is experiencing limited success in several locations. Mr. Robert Baudy, president of the Rare Feline Breeding Compound in Center Hill, Florida, is perhaps one of the more successful persons involved with this activity.

He has been responsible for the propagation of cats ranging in size from margays, servals (*Felis serval*), and ocelots to Siberian tigers (*Panthera tigris altaica*). He is currently preparing a book on techniques for breeding wildcats in captivity. Ironically, Mr. Baudy has made an offer to the Florida State Game Commission to breed the Florida puma (*Felis concolor coryi*) at no cost. This gesture has largely been ignored.

Zoos, such as those at Cincinnati, San Diego, and the Como Zoo (St. Paul, MN), are also experimenting with and have had some success in breeding wild felines in captivity. They, as well as certain members of an exotic cat club, have found that simulation of the natural habitat, extreme "privacy," or artificial insemination may increase the chances of successful propagation.

Others have discovered that although the cats would mate and give birth without difficulty, the females would often kill or abandon the young in captivity. This would then necessitate hand-raising the



Cougar cubs are born spotted. Because this big cat was once native to most states, Fish & Game agencies have the authority to regulate possession. During the 80s and 90s, this species was commonly bred and kept, but in the past two decades, enactment of new restrictive laws has curtailed ownership and most captive breeding programs. Photo by Steven Sidden.

new litters with special formulas, etc.

I would now like to turn attention to the possibility of establishment of regional wild feline breeding centers. These centers could be formulated in several manners. One possibility would be for the regions to roughly correspond with some of those in the large exotic cat club. One center could be located in each of these regions.

Competent and interested zoologists, conservationists, and exotic cat club members would supervise each center. Ideally, the purposes of the centers would be threefold:

1. To acquire adequate genetic stock for breeding;
2. To supplement (and possibly meet) the demand for pet exotic cats; and
3. To provide stock for repopulation of depleted natural areas.

Since ocelots and margays have fairly low reproductive capacities (one to two young per litter and up to three litters per year), it is not expected that the total pet demand could be met. However, I believe that such establishments would at least reduce current exploitative pressures upon wildcat populations.

Genetic stock could be obtained from wild-caught individuals, zoos, and private owners interested in perpetuating these animals. Private owners would be discouraged from neutering their cats, a practice which sometimes reduces the habit of "spraying" urine.

The amount of adequate genetic stock would depend upon how large a demand was in existence. Perhaps 10-20 pairs each of successful breeding ocelots and margays per region might be a logical

starting point. The problem of inbreeding could be eliminated by use of a pedigree paper system similar to that used by the American Kennel Club.

Baudy indicates that regional breeding centers would certainly be feasible for the smaller cats. The large cats would require more expensive cages. He says his investment in cages over the past five years has cost \$105,000, and that his animals in inventory are worth \$210,000. The 75 cats (19 species) consume 400 pounds of food daily. I would estimate that a small-cat breeding compound might cost from \$200,000 to \$500,000, including the initial building and equipment investment. Annual upkeep could range from \$50,000 to \$100,000.

Control Guidelines

Importation of all exotic felines, whether endangered or not, should be controlled by the Department of the Interior. This control should be extended throughout the importation trip, including the time when trapped, held in foreign cities for exportation, during possession by the animal importer, in pet stores, and through determination of proper prospective owners of exotic felines.

All trappers, animal importers, and pet store owners who sell exotic cats could be listed, contacted, and educated with respect to proper care of these animals in captivity. Items such as proper nutrition, handling techniques, and veterinary precautions (necessary vaccinations, etc.) would be stressed and enforced. The hunting technique, whereby the adult female cat is killed by trappers for the fur market, while the young are sold as pets, would also be prohibited.

Foreign trappers not adhering to the suggested guidelines and regulations could be reported to the proper authorities in their respective countries. Economic boycott of these trappers might also be an effective method of enforcement. Animal importers and pet store owners violating such regulations in the United States could be heavily penalized.

Many people who purchase exotic cats for pets are uninformed of the tremendous responsibility which is incurred if proper care is to be given these animals in captivity.

These cats are frequently purchased as curiosity items, for their beauty alone, or for status symbols. They are then given up, often to poorer conditions, which may result in the death of the animal.

I suggest, therefore, that regional con-

trol and/or guidelines be established to determine which prospective owners are truly qualified to have exotic felines as pets and/or for breeding purposes. Realization of such control may be accomplished in several steps:

1. Application to the proper sources (breeding centers, pet stores, private owners, etc.) for possible ownership of an exotic cat.

2. Examination and evaluation of prospective owners' desires, philosophies, and attitudes toward possession and care of pet wildcats. This would be achieved by use of questionnaires and interviews with persons knowledgeable on the care of exotic felines.

3. Arrangement for visits by prospective owners to the homes of successful and committed exotic cat owners.

4. Courses of instruction and evaluation on care of captive wildcats.

5. Raising the commercial prices for pet exotic felines (i.e. for margays and ocelots--from the current average of \$300 to at least \$600 or more).

6. Inspections to ensure that exotic cat owners are "living up" to the suggested guidelines and regulations.

The use of such guidelines would discourage many people from prospective ownership, once they became aware of the duties involved in sharing a household with one of these cats. Those who were chosen as meeting such requirements would probably have a sincere desire (plus the proper knowledge) to adequately care for pet wildcats.

Once qualified, prospective owners were chosen, a method of random selection or selection by order of receipt of application could be utilized to decide which persons would obtain cats from a limited supply (from breeding centers, zoos, private owners, or from pet stores) in each established region.

The task of enforcing such control measures and guidelines seems formidable. However, if conducted on a regional basis, under proper coordination, I feel that competent zoologists, veterinarians, conservation organizations, and concerned members of the previously mentioned exotic cat club could accomplish such a feat.

Some educational methods with respect to wildcats have already been mentioned. Leopold indicates that the common Mexican couple that lives in areas where many species of exotic cats thrive can be educated and convinced of conservation princi-

ples. Speeches and printed material alone are not sufficient. He feels that movies, slides, and other demonstration materials would be quite effective if shown beginning at the primary school level. He also suggested coordinated use of Mexican personnel and sportsmen groups with conservation training.

I might suggest also that such groups as missionaries, the Peace Corps, and others be educated with respect to wildcats and, in turn, they could pass this knowledge on to the natives in inaccessible areas; in this manner, many more people could be reached than before.

The cost for implementing the proposals as presented in this paper would be great. Possible sources of revenue for such a program might include the U.S.



Canada lynx reproductive cycles are strictly tied to day length and temperatures, so it rarely reproduces in southern states. Canada lynx are not nearly as common in captivity as bobcats.

government, state governments, foreign governments, conservation organizations, private donors, and the large exotic cat club.

In summary, this paper has dealt with the realization that certain species and subspecies of wild felids are not protected by the Endangered Species Conservation Act with respect to importation for the pet industry, or to depletion in numbers because of habitat destruction.

The proposals for regional breeding centers, for regional control of the wildcat pet trade and prospective ownership, for cooperation by and between present exotic cat owners, and for proper educational methods are deemed as possible alternatives for perpetuation of wild felids. Perpetuation will be accomplished by reducing mortality associated with the pet industry and by creating a source of supply for the pet industry and for possible repopulation programs.

FCF Accreditation for Tigers for Tomorrow

By Lynn Culver

Tigers for Tomorrow on Untamed Mountain meets the high standards of feline care and facility management that are hallmarks of the Feline Conservation Federation facility accreditation. Doc Antle, chairman of the accreditation board, visited the preserve and was so impressed he donated to it a trio of his very rare tiger cubs. Visitors can now view a golden tabby and a royal white tiger, as well as an orange Bengal tiger, playing together in their roomy new habitat. The accreditation committee reviewed the extensive written application and approved Tigers for Tomorrow to be the next FCF accredited facility.

Sue Steffens decided a long time ago that she would devote her life to housing homeless animals. In fact, she filed for Florida non-profit incorporation in July 1999 and in May of 2002, moved to Fort Piece, Florida to establish a facility. But while Florida offers beautiful scenery, lots of tourists, and a booming economy, all essential elements for a successful business, there is one downfall . . . or in this case, three – and their names are Frances, Jeanne and Wilma. Two hurricanes landed in the month of September 2004, and a year later, the passage of Wilma, the

fourth costliest tropical cyclone in United States history, resulted in hundreds of damaged or destroyed homes, with damage reaching \$20.6 billion. Sue and her new husband, Wilbur McCauley, spent the next year cleaning up after Jeanne and Frances before riding out the final hurricane Wilma in what was left of their trailer. In fact, she says that Wilma went out and came back so quick, they couldn't do anything, except gather up their five dogs and a lion into their half a trailer, with a tree left crashed into it from the previous hurricane.

In the search for a new location for Tigers for Tomorrow, Sue considered Colorado, Arizona, and Tennessee, before finding a 140-acre piece of property in Attalla, Alabama, at the base of the Appalachian Mountains. The scenery and topography reminded her of where she grew up in New York. Not only was the property beautiful, but also its location was attractive as an established tourist destiny, and as every business owner knows, location is everything. Nearby attractions include Little River Canyon, Orbits Class Blowing factory, numerous wineries, Cathedral Caverns, Desoto Caverns, Chestnut Bay resort, and a couple of nice bed and breakfasts, just what tourists crave. And the deci-



Rare Bengal color mutations include this royal white (white with black stripes) and tabby tiger (cinnamon with darker red stripes), which share habitat with a normal orange colored tiger at Tigers for Tomorrow.

sion has proven to be the right one for Tigers for Tomorrow. Visitors come from neighboring big cities like Birmingham, Nashville, and Chattanooga, to see this beautiful, peaceful assembly of some of nature's crowning creations, the apex predators.

Over a seven-month period, beginning in November 2005 and ending with the transport of the last five cougars in March of 2006, a total of 30 animals were safely relocated from the Florida property to what is now known as "Untamed Mountain." Wilbur and board member Don Knapp made seven of the eight trips needed to transport animals from Florida to Alabama. Sue says someone was always at the new preserve to keep the enclosure building moving forward.

In the six years since she has settled in, the animal population has grown to 87 predators, consisting of 30 tigers, eight lions, 13 cougars, 19 wolves, two serval, a Canada lynx, and a Siberian lynx, two leopards, one bobcats, four black bears, and one grizzly bear. Presently a 10-foot perimeter fence suitable to hold predators encloses 18 acres. If more animals come to the mountain preserve, Sue says the perimeter fences will need to be expanded.

To run the facility, Sue and her husband Wilbur work full time, along with four other full-time keepers, one to two interns, and ten volunteers in a core group, with about ten more who help with functions and special projects. Tigers for Tomorrow



Luna is one of 30 tigers that reside at Tigers for Tomorrow on Untamed Mountain, located in Attalla, Alabama, about an hour northeast of Birmingham.

is open all year, every Friday through Sunday, 9am to 5pm, with additional hours during Spring Break and summer. The preserve also hosts private tours, environmental education tours, home school groups, and the occasional wedding or birthday party. There is even an environmental education outreach component to Tigers for Tomorrow and a “legacy living classroom” that houses species such as snakes and possums to teach about native wildlife.

Tigers for Tomorrow is a participant in the Quest Recycling program, which signs up facilities to pick up from Wal-Mart any unsold or overstock of meat products. They have contracts with five stores and pick up on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. It takes 700 pounds of meat to feed the population at Untamed Mountain, so, in addition to the Wal-Mart products, she also purchases additional chicken from stores. Commissary volunteers help prep the meat and small mammal food, wash dishes, and get food ready for each day. Food is distributed using four-wheelers to pull the food cart. A team of two works from 8:30am to 5pm every day. Cats are shifted to their lock-downs and cages are cleaned, poop removed, water freshened, and any scraps removed. Then the pair sets out the day’s meal and releases the cats back into their habitats to eat.

Tigers for Tomorrow enclosures are built using nine-gauge chain link, even for the smaller cats. The smallest cat enclosure is 1000 sq feet; the largest is 7500 sq feet, and the wolf pack runs inside a one-acre enclosure. All of the large, open-topped enclosures are ten-foot high and have a three-foot, nine-gauge, 45-degree kick back, and an associated lock-down area that is roofed. Tigers for Tomorrow is licensed as an exhibitor by both the USDA and Alabama state wildlife department.

When the USDA began to implement its new open-topped fence height policy after Mahesh escaped from Jungle Island Zoo, Tigers for Tomorrow was one of the first facilities visited, and

it was written up for its containment fence heights. In October 2010, USDA inspector cited the preserve under the new, unwritten, not quite yet defined, and as it has turned out, very randomly applied, “policy.” But Sue had been in touch with USDA from the time she first purchased the property and had discussed her caging plans with the USDA before she even built the first habitat. Everything had been approved by the USDA headquarters. She appealed her October 2010 citation and won. Her report was amended to state: 3.125 for Structural Strength. The tiger enclosures were reviewed by the Regional Office and Field Specialists for Large Felids (Laurie Gauge) and determined to be in compliance with our currently accepted housing standards. The preserve has changed its construction style and now all new enclosures are topped.

Sue says the preserve is very frugal, utilizing used building materials when possible and recycling and reclaiming to keep costs low. But it still takes about half a million dollars annually to provide for so many animals at the preserve. Admissions and donations, the Guardian Angel adoption program, and the outreach educational programs generate the bulk of the operating expenses. There is also a gift shop on-site and a popular item offered is the annual Tigers for Tomorrow animals’ calendar. Sue is about to launch a three-state area direct mail fundraiser campaign to expand advertising of the preserve. A new book written by Sue and Animal Communicator Debbie McGillivray, titled

“Untamed Voices,” has just been released. It contains animal stories from the preserve, and Sue hopes the book will bring greater awareness of the thoughts and feelings of animals at the preserve.

Sue Steffens and Wilbur both share relationships with every animal on the property. Sue says, “We tell people that the animals are here because they either lost their owners or lost their jobs.” As for rescues, she says, “My philosophy is that the day they arrive is the only day they were rescued; after that, they are the responsibility of Untamed Mountain. This is their last stop, and they have a home for life. We don’t dwell on sad, depressing, neglectful stories, as most don’t even have them. We welcome visitors to the preserve to meet our animals, and we tell them about their personalities and teach them about what challenges each species faces in nature.

Sue uses homeopathic medicine with the cats. For instance, one of her cougars had fleas and she used a flea spray called “flea flee,” which is added to the drinking water, and it worked. Older cats get regular doses of royal jelly. “It keeps the weight on, adds vitality, and boosts the immune system,” says Steffens. And for arthritis she uses glucosamine chondroitin. The preserve has not suffered many losses, thankfully. Causes of death have included blastomycosis, a southern fungus that is very hard to diagnose. Another tiger had bone cancer in its tail. First the tail stopped moving, then within about a month, the big cat started dragging a back

foot and Sue made the merciful decision that it was time to put the cat to sleep. Another cougar suffered an embolism and was partially paralyzed and also needed to be put to sleep. Sue says the cat knew it was time and accepted everything peacefully. When interviewing for a veterinarian for the preserve, Sue says one of the first talks she had was a discussion on euthanasia and protocol. Together, they work through each new medical challenge, sharing a commitment to provide “quality of life over quantity of life.”



Zena's habitat has several elevated loafing platforms, a big wooden house, and an in ground swimming pond.

Stressors for Captive Exotic Felines - *Part One of a Two-Part Series*

By Chris T. Tromborg, Ph.D.

The large number and variety of felines with whom we humans interact, are equipped with physiological and psychological mechanisms for adapting to various challenges from their surroundings. Among these adaptive mechanisms are what can be inclusively termed stress responses. Stress can be operationally defined as "the totality of the adaptive response patterns (behavioral and hormonal) employed by an animal which effectively act to alleviate the stress-producing condition." Stress-producing arousal is frequently indicative of the presence of environmental conditions over which cats have no control and from which they cannot escape. Perhaps physiological stress results from a cat's efforts to avoid aversive environmental contingencies while psychological stress is the consequence of the cat's realization that it cannot escape from them.

In general, stress responses involve increased autonomic activity and shifts in the metabolic profile of a cat as it adjusts to some perceived threat from its surroundings. Psychologically, the cat prepares to exhibit the classic "fight-or-flight" response; physiologically, the cat's metabolism is shifted to promote the mobilization of energy resources at the expense of biosynthetic activity. Felines confronted by environmental stressors (sometimes termed environmental adjustive demands),

display two primary patterns of response to stressors. The first of these is the acute stress response, observed as cats respond to short-term stressors, and are typically associated with alarm and vigilance behavior. Components of the acute stress response profile include tachycardia, rapid ventilation, increased glucose metabolism, and an increase in various forms of glucocorticoids, stress hormones which shift metabolism toward energy mobilization

and away from energy conservation. The second of these is the chronic stress response, observed as cats respond to long-term stressors, and are typically associated with the animal attempting to adjust to continuous provocation from the environment. Components of the chronic stress response profile include a long-term increase in various forms of gluco-corticoids, which shifts metabolism away from biosynthetic activity and towards preparations for a long-term siege metabolism. While acute stress responses can be considered adaptive, enabling cats to contend with immediate challenges, chronic stress responses are fraught with danger to the long-term health of captive felines. Occa-

Ironically, perhaps the greatest stressors for captive felines are those over which the cats perceive that they have no control and from which they cannot escape.

Cats, and other animals, confronted by environmental stressors, exhibit a classic response pattern called "the general adaptation syndrome." This is a three-stage response to stress consisting of: 1. The alarm Phase: The cat responds to short-term threats with an acute stress response; 2. The Resistance Phase; the cat responds to persistent stressors with a chronic stress response, during which the cat's immune system is not adequately maintained; and 3. The Exhaustion Phase; the cat's immune system has been compromised during the resistance phase and now the cat is very susceptible to disease.

The concept of stress, stressors, and the stress response, though well investigated, is still poorly understood. Stress responses are difficult to assess. Some behaviors that have been considered reliable indices of stress responses are, in fact, simple normal components of the behavioral repertoires of many captive felines. Not all environmental stressors and their associated responses are necessarily undesirable. While it is probably not desirable to unnecessarily provoke those captive felines used in education and entertainment, or those which are companion animals; those held in captivity for purposes of education, conservation, and ultimate reintroduction into the wild should be con-

fronted by some of the same provocative environmental contingencies that their wild forbears experience.

As discussed elsewhere, Heinrich Hedi-ger advocated taming captive wild animals to facilitate their successful long-term husbandry. Taming is considered a useful husbandry management technique since it appears to reduce reactivity to many stressors, including handling by humans. Reductions in reactivity are asso-



Stress-producing arousal is frequently indicative of conditions which cats have no control over and from which they cannot escape. This serval hisses to express discontent over some aspect of its environment. Photo by Eden Tran.

sional exposure of captive felines to environmental provocation might be considered as legitimate components of environmental enrichment schemes to promote alertness and responsiveness; but the relentless exposure of captive felines to persistent stressors can lead to impaired health, especially if the immune system is compromised. This is an especially important issue for some small, highly inbred populations of rare or endangered felines.

ciated with reductions in vigilance and decreased wariness. Over generational time, taming might lead to increased docility and other changes in behavior, as has been observed in free-living finches and captive silver foxes. Yet, increased tractability can also result in animals that experience less severe stress reactions to factors in their artificial environments, especially humans.

Prior to the introduction of the concept of environmental enrichment (by Hal Markowitz, who reposed while writing this article) in the early 1970s, artificial environments were structurally simple and unresponsive. Typically, these environments did not provide felines with opportunities to interact with their surroundings in ways that promoted the development of their sensory and cognitive abilities.

As a consequence of this realization, over the past several decades, many of us working with and for captive felines have developed strategies for improving the conditions of captivity. We have investigated the effects of modifying the structure, complexity, and interactivity of traditional and artificial environments on the behavior and health of captive felines. Contemporary methods for improving artificial environments include, but are not limited to, enhancing enclosure size and complexity by introducing elements from nature into artificial environments. Not only do these imbue them with an apparent naturalism for visitors, but also increases their ecological relevance to captive felines. More complex, enriched environments offer captive felines greater opportunities to manage time and energy while they interact with their surroundings. In some instances, interactive or automated technologies have been employed to increase opportunities for felines to engage in complex problem solving while contending with variation in the physical properties of their environments. In essence, intelligently managed artificial environments attempt to preserve behaviors evolved over millions of years and which have no relevance in artificial surroundings.

While environmental enrichment strategies have undoubtedly improved the conditions of captivity, they have underemphasized the role of artificial environments in the generation of environmental stress.

Conditions of captivity are replete with provocative sights, unpredictable sounds, and unfamiliar smells. All of these are potential sources of stress, but the most important stressors are unpredictable phenomena over which cats have no control.

Among the many potential stressors for captive felines are acoustic stressors. Surprisingly, there has been relatively little research on the audio vocal behavior of felines, either in the wild or in captivity; much remains to be learned. This lack of knowledge prevents adequate assessment of auditory risks to feline welfare. In the feline facilities in many zoos, theme parks, private facilities, and research institutions, relatively high levels of anthropogenic noise is routinely produced. Paging systems, audio entertainment units, air-conditioning systems, cleaning equipment and people, creates noise. Many of these sounds can, over the short-term, result in increased vigilance, startle responses, and high heart rate.

Over the long term, anthropogenic noise can result in changes in behavior as extreme as shifting normal activity patterns from night to day. In zoos and aquaria, the intensity of anthropogenic noise increases with the number of visitors, this is correlated with increased vigilance behaviors in a variety of feline species. This noise problem is exacerbated by the highly reflective nature of the hard surfaces of floors, walls, and work surfaces commonly found in cages and other holding facilities. Sound pressure levels in "cat rooms" at research institutions and zoos regularly reach 75 dB and often exceed 85

dB. In zoos, where cats are on exhibit, sound levels are regularly influenced by the presence of visitors, the intensity of their conversations, the presence of caretakers, the presence of maintenance machinery or exhibit water features, and the amplitude of the noise of surrounding urban transportation systems. During cage cleaning in all types of facilities, sound pressure levels can exceed 90 dB for short, intermittent periods of time.

These sound pressure levels contrast sharply with sound levels in natural environments. In the wild, sound pressure levels approach those recorded at zoos or in laboratories. In riverine habitats, sound intensities range from 27 dB in the morning to 37 dB in the early evening. In savannah habitats the levels range from 20 dB in the morning to 36 Db at mid-day. In rain forest habitats, ambient noise levels range from 27 dB in the morning to 40 dB in the afternoon. In riverine habitats, ambient noise arises largely from bird vocalizations, insect stridulations, and the rustling of leaves. In savannah habitats, virtually all noise arises from wind. In rain forests, noise is primarily a consequence of wind and the rustling of leaves. These are not the acoustic conditions under which captive cats are maintained. Many laboratory animals, including cats, begin to exhibit symptoms correlated with elevated stress when ambient sound pressure levels approach 85 dB (spl) for extended periods of time. The typical sound pressure levels measured in most zoos and laboratories are lower than this most of the time, but still substantially higher than the 20 dB to 40 dB characteristic of various natural habitats.

Sounds with elevated intensities, especially those presented in either regular or irregular bursts of high intensity, have been shown to exert deleterious influences on the behavior of laboratory cats. These intense bursts of sound are associated with obvious changes in behavior, including ear flicking, orientation of the head, piloerection, startle responses, and reclusive behavior. More problematic are periodic or constant sounds which do not appear to have overt behavioral effects but which can subtly influence the physiology of some particularly sensitive felines. Compared with chronic background or repetitive noise, high amplitude punctate, aperiodic, or

FCF Professional Membership

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

**Pat Callahan
Felicia Frisco
Cathryn Hilker
Mark McCarthy
Wilbur McCauley
Debbie Mogensen
Gretchen Mogensen**

**Karl Mogensen
Charlie Sammut
Heather Sammut
Jim Sanderson
Maria Tabraue
Mario Tabraue
Chris Tromborg**

Professional members have registered their handling experience, entered their felines in the census, agreed to abide by the code of conduct, and meet the policy definition of an FCF Professional.

unpredictable noise is particularly effective at provoking startle or distress responses. This type of extreme reactivity is especially evident in easily aroused wild felines, or those that have not been socialized, and those that have not been acclimated to anthropogenic noise. The smaller species of cats, themselves targets of predation, are especially reactive to provocative sounds. In cats, and virtually every other species studied, prolonged exposure to intense noise is associated with increased activity in the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system and increased activation of the HPA (hypothalamic pituitary adrenal) system. Activation of the "HPA axis" is associated with elevated metabolic rates, increased blood pressure, and heart rate. Chronic activation of the HPA axis can compromise the immune system and make cats more susceptible to disease. Prolonged stress responses also can have negative effects on embryos and fetuses in pregnant cats. Pregnant cats, exposed to prolonged excessive noise, produce kittens exhibiting immunosuppression, decreased hearing sensitivity, increased disturbance behaviors, impaired learning, impaired social behavior, and suppressed exploratory behavior.

Sounds, especially the vocalizations, of historic ecological enemies can function as stressors. On the other hand, sounds, including music, the sounds of prey, and the sounds of conspecifics have been used as stress-reducing enrichment strategy for some captive felines. The rationale behind this type of acoustic enrichment strategy is to provide felines with a "naturalistic acoustic tapestry" reminiscent of the wild. Sometimes, they are employed to provide felines with ecologically relevant sounds to encourage the development and expression of normal audio-vocal, social, or predatory behavior.

The hearing range of the domestic cat extends from around 30 Hz to over 60 kHz; the hearing range of humans with uncompromised hearing extends from 20 Hz to 20 kHz. Frequencies of sound below 20 Hz are termed infrasound, while frequencies of sound above 20 kHz are termed ultrasound. Many technologies common in artificial environments, e.g., computer monitors, closed circuit security cameras, televisions, and fluorescent lights produce high frequency sounds approaching 60 kHz. In one study of noise in a feline research facility, the sound

pressure level of ultrasound noise exceeded 75 dB. For many felines, these sounds might be extremely intense, despite their being undetectable to humans.

Larger felines, such as tigers, detect infrasound. Trucks, pumps, filters, and other engines produce sounds with frequencies below 20 Hz. These technologies can even generate seismic vibrations, detectable not by ears, but by skin receptors. As yet, there have been few studies of the effects of infrasound on feline behavior and stress. Clearly more needs to be done to describe the acoustic nature of artificial environments and the anthropogenic sounds that they produce. Lighting conditions in artificial environments are primarily designed for human convenience, and this could present a host of potential problems for captive felines. Humans are, as with most primates, diurnal felines, in general, are crepuscular or nocturnal. Traditionally, captive felines have been housed under a typical 12/12 LD lighting regimen, with illumination being presented for 12 hours and reduced or eliminated for 12 hours. In some situations, either due to outmoded facilities or inadequate staffing, illumination is constant. Cats exposed to constant illumination exhibit changes in circadian activity, sleeping and waking cycles, and reproductive cyclicality. Research shows that the ratio of the sleep hormone melatonin to the social hormone serotonin decreases under constant light, resulting in disturbed patterns of sleep. With decreased sleep, cats exhibit elevated levels of plasma corticosterone, reduced latencies for aggression, and longer periods of tonic immobility. As anyone who has ever suffered from jet lag can attest to, sleep deprivation is both a source of and a symptom of stress.

Light intensity can also be a potential source of stress. For a multitude of reasons, animals are maintained under constant illumination. Sometimes, this is done to enhance safety to handlers or to monitor the behavior of animals under veterinary care. Many cats exhibit a preference for lower intensities of illumination compared to higher levels, as suggested by choice tests, where cats actively migrate to less highly illuminated areas in a test enclosure. High levels of illumination have been associated with increased arousal, fearfulness, and tonic immobility. In some extreme instances, lesioning of the retina has been observed in laboratory animals under extremely high levels of

illumination. Another potential stressor is the presence of strong contrasts between light or dark areas in the environment. In some instances, dark areas are treated as either the location of a potential threat, or, sometimes as a refuge. Here, the feature can be a stressor or a release from stressors.

And, there is light. The spectral composition of artificial light could function as a source of stress. The effects of the presence or absence of different wavelengths of light on the health and well being of captive felines has not been well studied. Compared to humans, felines are sensitive to a slightly different spectrum of visible light; they are more sensitive to wavelengths of light near 550 nm (green) and less sensitive to wavelengths of light above 600 nm (red) wavelengths than humans. For cats, the short and medium wavelength regions of the electromagnetic spectrum are emphasized, and are necessary for optimal visual perception. Some of the information content contained in these upper regions of the electromagnetic spectrum might inform decisions about foraging or social behavior, including reproductive behavior. In a few studies, deprivation of critical light wavelengths appears to affect physiological measures in ways indicative of stress. Fluorescent lighting, highly favored because of its high reliability, features spectral compositions different from natural light. Laboratory cats exposed to light deficient in some wavelengths can exhibit elevated levels of plasma cortisol and decreased exploratory behavior.

The light provided by fluorescent lights is not continuous, but intermittent. When these lights begin to fail, they emit a noticeable flicker. Humans can detect flickering if the frequency does not exceed 60 Hz, beyond which the light is perceived as being constant. Laboratory cats seem to have a higher "flicker fusion frequency than humans." The flickering of failing florescent lighting and the noise associated with this is possibly distracting, if not stress inducing.

In part two, Chris Tromborg will discuss stress due to olfactory, temperature, restricted movement, substrates, and the presence of humans, as well as feline adaptive strategies to stress.

What *Untamed Voices* Can Teach Us about Life

By Dr. David Cummings

Cody, the Black Bear, is one of the most popular residents of Tigers For Tomorrow, an exotic animal preserve in Northeast Alabama. He lives among tigers, lions, wolves and other animals that are spending their lives in an atmosphere of love and respect. When you visit him, you may wonder, "What could he tell me about himself?"

"I wish sometimes that I was small. Not so big, but small so that I could stay in the house maybe. I would like to be something different than a bear. I do not want to eat people, but that is what they think sometimes. Some of the tigers and lions here think that bears are not as smart as them. I disagree."

That is what he told Debbie McGillivray, a Professional Animal Communicator from North Carolina. Cody's story and many more stories told by many other exotic and domestic animals are in the new book "Untamed Voices," published in August and available from Amazon.com.

Debbie traveled to many exotic animal preserves and zoos compiling the stories of dozens of animals to share them in this book. In it she asks them to tell us something about themselves and their lives, and the stories they tell are amazing in their clarity and message. Debbie explains, "This book will allow you to look into the spirit of these magnificent beings and share their wisdom, emotion, intelligence, and psychic awareness."

"Untamed Voices" is a book to enjoy with an open mind. Some may say that these stories are what the animals would say if they could talk. "No," Debbie insists. "This is actually what they tell me."

These shared thoughts show impressive wisdom. The animals talk about themselves and their neighbors, and they share concern for the state of our planet.

Barney, the Java Macaque wonders, "How do you humans move so easily with such a long body? I keep waiting for you to fall over, but you move pretty well. I just love to watch people. Ladies always catch my attention and I cannot help but want to reach out and touch them. They have a way of getting my attention that I really like."

Roxy is a Golden Retriever that lives at Tigers for Tomorrow. She has helped Sue Steffens, the preserve's owner, raise many of the baby tigers and lions that have lived in Sue's house while they were bottle-fed cubs. Sue has depended on Roxy to teach the felines how to behave while they were small. As grown-up adult cats, they still remember the lessons that Roxy taught them. Roxy is a wise old soul nearing the end of her life.

Through Debbie, Roxy has told Sue that she is not afraid of leaving the earth, and shares the nature of Love: "When a heart loves fully you will know what it feels like for a dog to love. We do not hold back. We love others with our whole being. For you, we put on a display of pure joy and the raw energy of Love."

Roxy has also told Sue that she does not want Sam the Dog raising the young ones after she is gone -- not until he grows up some, anyway. Sam is the youngest and most active dog at Tigers for Tomorrow. He is always getting into trouble. "I am not really good at following the rules because I forget them. But I will try. I admit I like to cut to the chase. I tell the other dogs the rules are for them and that I am special. It is hard when I get in trouble."

Exotic animals are intensely in touch with the Earth. Many of them have told Debbie about the cataclysmic changes that

will affect the earth in the future. They warn that humans are the cause of these problems, and humans have the responsibility to try and improve things.

Willow the Cougar tells us, "We are aware of the earth's changes. We have seen the warning signs and we must alert the others. Be prepared for unstable times. It will be more disruptive than you can imagine with violent storms, mud slides and tornadoes. Native American people with heavy hearts will congregate and try to heal the land. Their tears will rain down on you."

Debbie makes it a point to explain the animals' concern in the book. She writes, "Despite the damage we have done to the earth, oceans and skies, animals stand beside us. Their plea is that we reclaim our connection to the earth and nurture her because it is we that have hurt her."

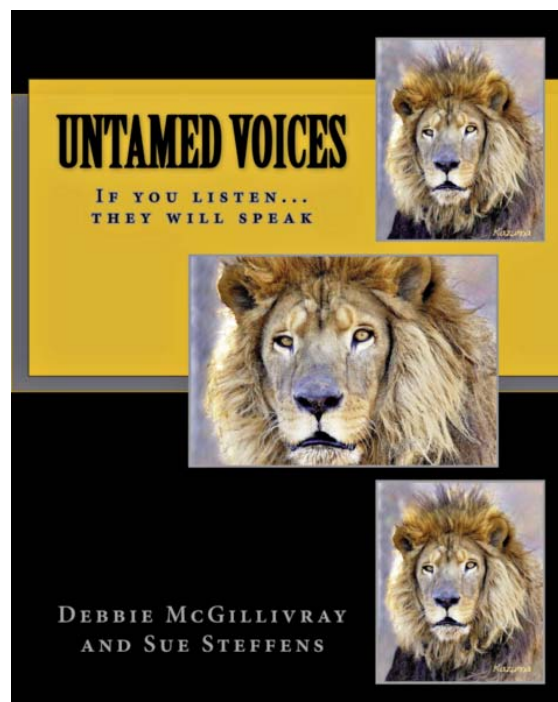
It is encouraging to learn that Tsunami the Tiger has maintained his dignity while living at Tigers for Tomorrow: "Tigers embodies the spirit of the wild. We should not be declawed, caged, or mounted as trophies for your enjoyment. I am here for all people to know that I am wild and free in my mind. You can never take that away from me. People can learn from this."

After reading "Untamed Voices," you will understand our animal friends much better. You will be in touch with the things that they are in touch with: love, understanding, forgiveness and the need to protect the Earth from the damage that humans have caused. You will feel sympathy for exotic animals trying to maintain their dignity while living in conditions they cannot control, and you will relate better to domestic animals that live with humans.

Most of all, you will be uplifted by the messages that we read in their own words. When they explain their nature to us, it helps us understand how to help them.

If you would like Sue & Debbie to visit your facility, please contact us at info@untamedvoices.com.

To purchase the book you can go to our web site [untamedvoices.com](http://www.untamedvoices.com), <http://www.createspace.com/3885049> or amazon.com.



Planning for Any and Every Contingency

By Julie Walker
Director of Operations
Serenity Springs Wildlife Center

It began in the fall of 2008, it was a long and arduous process but I believe it is for the best. It has also got me thinking about how this could help not only every large facility like ours, but to the owners of any exotic animals. To give those of you who are not familiar with our facility a little background, Serenity Springs Wildlife Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and home to approximately 140 exotic animals. We are licensed by the USDA as an Exhibitor, and we are licensed by the Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW) as a zoological park, as well as an exhibitor park. The majority of animals that come to our facility are through rescue or re-homing efforts. We have evolved over the years and have taken on many roles. This article is not intended to upset or alienate anyone with any connection with exotic animals, whether it be an AZA zoo, sanctuary, professional or private owner. It is merely to tell you of our journey and perhaps give you some thoughts and insights or ideas

for your animals.

How did it begin? In 2008, the Colorado Division of Wildlife adopted new regulations for those commercial parks housing members of the families Canidae, Felidae, or Ursidae. The Wildlife Commission Regulation required that each facility have on file a contingency plan in case of abandonment, the facility's license expiring, or the facility's license being revoked. Required in the plan were provisions for the care and ultimate disposition of the animals in these three families, as well as a cost estimate to perform the specified activities. The contingency plan was to be updated every year as a renewal requirement or whenever the disposition or acquisition from the families Canidae, Felidae, or Ursidae resulted in an aggregate population change greater than 10 percent during the year. The regulation further required a bonding sufficient to fund the contingency plan.

If you can imagine, our first response was a negative one. More paperwork than we already have to do for the USDA and the CDOW? How is this going to work? Do they really think I am going to abandon my facility? Not on my life will I

ever let them shut me down! Many thoughts were running through our heads. Several conversations took place back and forth with the office that was supposed to review the contingency plan, resulting with very little guidance. We were told we could get a bond; "Oh, just call any insurance agency and they can get you one." We did our research, looking for any other state with the same requirement; surely someone else had already been through this and could give us guidance, but that was not the case. Finally, in 2010, we were told that it was going to be a requirement to receive our 2011 license, so we needed to figure it out. The instructions from the DOW were simple: it is your facility, so you figure it out. We sat down at the computer and began to write. First, the contingency plan and the way we looked at it was this: If Nick and I were in a plane crash, who would we want to 1) Run the facility in our absence; and 2) If the board had no other choice and decided to shut the facility down, how would we want that to happen? The steps as we saw it were these:

1) Write the contingency plan as detailed as possible.

A) Why? (Would the facility be caused to close?) There may be many scenarios.

B) Who would run the facility in our absence and who has the authority to authorize that person? (In our case that would be the Board of Directors, in the case of a private owner it may be a Last Will and Testament.)

C) How would they facilitate the closure? This would include, but not be limited to, how long it would take to place the animals, who would oversee the day-to-day activities of the facility, who would be facilitating the closure, where would the funds come from, and what would the cost be? Who should be contacted to help with the contingency plan?

D) Contact list:

- Veterinarian
- Other facilities that have agreed to take in animals
- Other organizations that may have agreed to provide assistance

E) Once the facility is closed, who would receive any of the equipment, enclosures, etc.?

2) Contact anyone you have listed to

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

Pat Callahan - Advanced
Sara Comstock - Advanced
Richard Hahn - Advanced
Cathryn Hilker - Advanced

Mark McCarthy - Advanced
Debbie Mogensen - Advanced
Tim Stark - Advanced
Thomas Tyler - Advanced

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

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

The online registration form can be filled out directly in the members-only section of the FCF website and the \$30.00 registration fee can be made through PayPal. Being a registered handler is the first step to becoming a Professional Member. The Professional Membership application process is online on the Members-Only website.

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

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

David Lewis, FCF Secretary

be sure they are committed to your plan and provide them with a copy. Get a letter from these individuals that they have read and understand the plan and agree to be a contact.

3) Develop a Cost Schedule for your facility contingency plan in detail and secure funds in a trust that can be accessed in the event of imminent closure and be sure to appoint a trustee you have confidence in who will follow your plan.

It took almost a year for the CDOW to approve not only our closure plan, but also the closure plan for all the facilities that were affected by the new license requirements.

The process, however, got us thinking. Over the 19 years that we have been in business, have we ever encountered a facility or anyone that had such a plan? The answer was no. Would this have been a simple process had they had a plan? How many times had we been called to take in an animal from a private home and received not only no monetary support in the transport or ultimate care of the animal, but no guidance, such as what is their primary diet, favorite toys, etc. It would have been nice when we took 15 animals from a facility if there had been a provision for us to receive the fencing. Even

African lion George was well loved by his owner, but when she passed away, the family was not prepared to keep him. Serenity Springs was asked to give him a home.

things as simple as vet records, in most cases, are not received. We now believe that anyone with ANY animal, whether it be a personal pet (dog, cat, bird, etc.) or exotic animal, or even a sanctuary, should have a contingency plan.

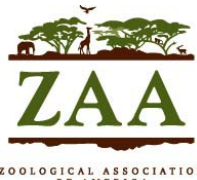
It reminds me of a lion named George that came to our facility in the year 2000. To the best of my recollection, it goes something like this... There was a lady in Little Rock, Arkansas, who had a small sanctuary on her property for primates. One day while picking up a couple of primates, she was offered a lion cub. She had never cared for a big cat before, but accepted the little guy anyway and provided him a home. George grew up to be a beautiful lion, but the lady got older and was having health issues and eventually passed away. As the family came in and tried to decide what to do with the animals, a tornado came through the town and, according to the papers, monkeys were running everywhere! We received a call from the son, who simply said please come get the lion, we are afraid of him, we do not know anything about him,

and are not sure the enclosure will hold him. Had there been a contingency plan, we would have gotten his records and possibly some monetary assistance in the transfer of the animal and building of a new enclosure. Right now, facilities like ours primarily rely on the public for help and we are constantly raising funds to help these animals that someone once loved and cared for.

How about the story of Tabou the serval? In the summer of 2008, we received an email from a veterinary assistant in Memphis, Tennessee. It was a rather odd email, but as always we were glad to help. The email stated that an eight-year-old serval was dropped off at the vet clinic in the middle of the night, it was tied to an ashtray, and had a note with it. The note said, "This is my eight year old serval, Tabou. I have owned him since he was only a few months old. He had lived with me in my house. I have lost my job. I have lost my home. I have tried calling the zoo, animal rescues, the Humane Society, and no one will take him. I hope you have better contacts and can find him a home." The vet tech simply asked, "What do they eat? He constantly hisses and doesn't seem to like anyone." We wrote her back, giving her information on servals. Apparently, he was being fed cooked chicken breasts and was severely

Tabou was dropped off at a Memphis vet clinic in the middle of the night, with a note written by his owner, explaining they lost their home, job, and ability to care for him. Lucky for him, Serenity Springs agreed to give him a permanent home.

Join the **Zoological Association of America**



Several levels of membership include commercial, educational, facility, and individual. Facility Accreditation is also available.

promoting the responsible ownership, management, and propagation of animals in both private and public domains

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www.zaa.org

over-weight. He was wearing a harness that was so small and had been on him for so long that it had grown into his skin and they had to cut it out to remove it. After a few weeks, the clinic wrote us back and asked if we could take him in, as it was illegal to own one in the Memphis city limits and they felt we could provide him a better home. Thankfully, the vet clinic actually covered the cost for the transport and has adopted the serval and sends funds for his care every month.

Taitu, another serval, came to us in the spring of 2008. A serval was in need of a forever home. The story goes something like this... A veterinarian in California received a call and ended up with a four-year-old serval that had been confiscated by California's Department of Fish and Game. They had originally planned to turn him over to a drive-through wildlife park, but the park turned him down and did not want him. He had been in a dog crate for about three weeks and no one wanted to go near him or clean it. We had been in contact with a lady that ran a wildlife education program near there and already had plans to go to California to pick up some animals. We asked her to check in on the serval and see if she could temporarily care for him until enough snow had melted that we could get the truck and trailer through the mountains to pick him up. She agreed. However, when she arrived at the vet center to pick him up, she was shocked at the site. Taitu was not only standing in urine and fecal matter, but it had actually burned off most of his hair. The vet had insisted on sedating him to transport him. She rushed him back to her facility and immediately called us. While he was sedated, she was able to remove all the fecal matter and bathe him, but most of his fur was gone

from his rear and stomach. However, he would not come to and she could not get him to another vet in her area. We gave her instructions on how to give him oxygen and it took 36 hours for him to come around. What a horrible situation! Can you imagine if this was your beloved pet?

Although in these cases with George, Tabou, and Taitu, things worked out, the transition could have been much smoother and easier for all parties involved had these owners developed contingency plans.

My final thoughts are this; if you care for your animals, please consider a contingency plan, not only to financially care for your beloved animal(s), but also to make sure that animal can be cared for in the manner they are accustomed to. The facilities and/or individuals who take in the majority of these animals do it because they love the animals and they have big hearts and want to care for them for the rest of their lives. Make the transition easier for

This stunningly handsome serval, Taitu, was confiscated by California Game & Fish because the owner did not have proper permits to keep him. He now lives as Serenity Springs.

the animal, keep records, and write a little bit of information so that the new owner/facility knows about their favorite toys. Do you have an enclosure that they enjoy? Maybe it can go with them as well and help make the transition even easier.

The FCF and other organizations may be able to help, providing assistance in developing a contingency plan to help with placement of your animals.

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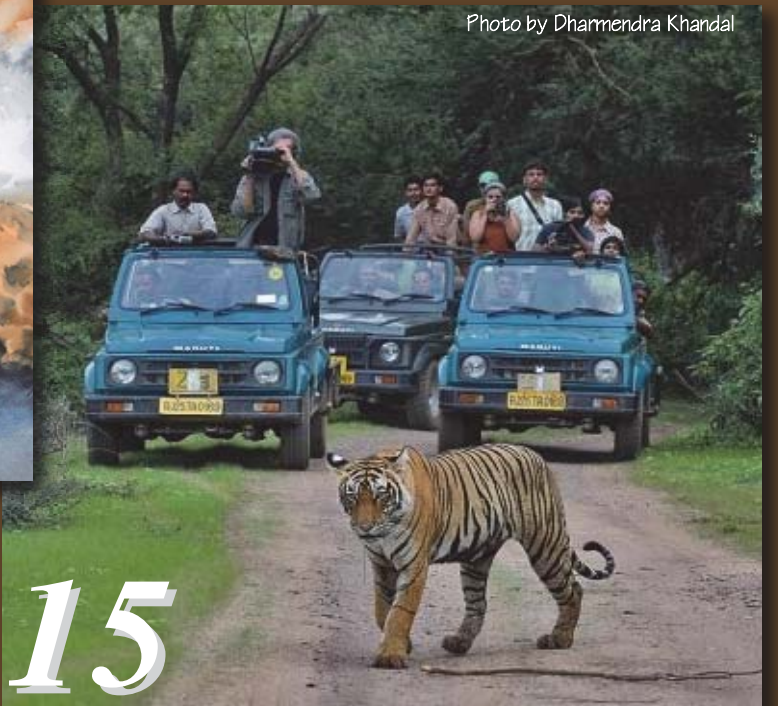


Photo by Dharmendra Khandal

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The Feline Conservation Federation is a non-profit organization that conserves wild felines through preservation, education, and research.

Cover photo: Eurasian lynx Taz is an incredibly well-adjusted gentleman and one of the Conservators' Center's most charismatic animals. He is known for his artist flair. Taz loves nothing more than to roll around in non-toxic paints, then paint a canvas, himself, and anything else nearby. The paint washes out quickly, however, for the remainder of the day, Taz's already gorgeous coat is highlighted with bright colors. Photo by Kim Pernicka.

Back photo: Hagar, one of a pair of brother jaguarundis that were imported from Zoo Dortmund in Germany. Bear Creek Feline Center houses Hagar and three others of this species. Jim Broaddus, facility founder, plans to breed Hagar with a newly arrived female imported from Zoo Novosibirsk in Russia. Photo by Mark Sandoval.

