

Feline Conservation Federation

January/February 2014 • Volume 58 Issue 1



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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014 | VOLUME 58, ISSUE 1

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A membership to the FCF entitles you to six issues of the *Journal*, the back-issue DVD, an invitation to FCF husbandry and wildlife education courses and annual convention, and participation in our online discussion group. The FCF works to improve captive feline husbandry and 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, 141 Polk Road 664, Mena, AR 71953.

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Contact Us

FOUNDER:
Catherine Cisin

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR:
Lynn Culver
executivedirector@felineconservation.org

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

Vice President
Mindy Stinner
P.O. Box 882
Mebane, NC 27302
336-421-0065
vicepresident@felineconservation.org

Secretary
Debi Willoughby
281 Albee Road
Uxbridge, MA 01569
508-380-4722
secretary@felineconservation.org

Treasurer
Lynn Culver
141 Polk Road 664
Mena, AR 71953
479-394-5235
treasurer@felineconservation.org

DIRECTORS:
Conservation
Pat Callahan
1961 Connecticut Ave
Cincinnati, OH 45224
513-541-7867
conservation@felineconservation.org

Chris Tromborg
217 Baja Avenue
Davis, CA 95616
530-753-2763
director@felineconservation.org

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

JOURNAL STAFF:
Managing Editor:
Lynn Culver

Layout/Copy Editor:
Eden Tran, edentranfcf@gmail.com

Associate Editor:
Judith Hoffman

Journal Reporter:
Brande Redfield

Membership Services:
Jennifer Kasserman
816-674-7277
membershipservices@felineconservation.org

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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.

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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.



Feline Conservation Federation

Letter from the President

This year's convention has the makings for another Old West barn-burner. I hope everyone is making plans to be there. You might want to consider coming early or staying after to enjoy the many special places and beautiful scenery that the Phoenix area has to offer. Of course, the visit to Out of Africa Wildlife Park is the big attraction on Friday of the convention. We are also planning an optional visit on Sunday, to Wildlife World Zoo and Aquarium just outside of Phoenix, in Litchfield. This wonderful zoo was opened 30 years ago by Mickey Ollsen and his lovely wife, Sherry. Mickey was a world renowned aviculturist and master breeder of macropods, who has lived the dream many of us have always thought of...having our own zoo. WWZ has grown to over 80 acres and is Arizona's largest collection of wildlife, including many species of wildcats...lions (including a white lion), tigers, leopards, cheetah, servals, ocelots, and possibly more. In January, they opened a 15-acre African Safari section. They also have Arizona's only public aquarium.

We will be arranging for a special rate for FCF attendees and behind the scenes tours.

Phoenix also has the Phoenix Zoo. They also have a rather large collection which includes lions, Sumatran tigers, ocelots, and jaguars, plus one of the best cheetah habitats. They have over 1,400 animals, so by no means is this a little place either. One nice thing is that the gates open at 7 a.m. during the summer. I know that sounds early for someone on vacation, but even at this early hour, temperatures are often 60-90 degrees.

The Grand Canyon is a four-hour drive north of Phoenix, but it is still worth the trip to see in person. The Grand Canyon is rightly considered one of the natural wonders of the world. Seeing it in photographs is nothing at all like the experience of seeing it in person. The road leading out east of the village has a mountain lion crossing road sign. That would be a great photo opportunity for any cat lover! There are many things you can do there besides just the sightseeing and photo opportunities. The more adventuresome

may want to take a hike, go for a mule ride, see the Grand Canyon from a helicopter, or even go rafting inside the canyon! For those considering going there, bear in mind that the Grand Canyon village is immensely popular in the summertime, so if you want to stay overnight or do some of the activities, you will need to make reservations well in advance.

The legislative season is in full blast right now. So far, I have only heard of bills being brought up in Wisconsin, Maryland, and West Virginia, along with the federal anti-breeding bill. Don't let your guard down though. New bills can pop up at any time, so remain vigilant and fight to protect our rights. Our Legislative Director, Amy Flory, is doing a good job keeping the website current with legislative updates. If you are aware of any legislation that is coming up, contact Amy and let her know. You can find her contact info on the inside front cover.

Kevin Chambers



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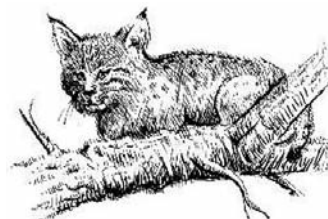
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From the Executive Director

By Lynn Culver

I'm writing this on a much appreciated 70 degree day in February. After an Arkansas winter with four ice storms, and day after day of single-digit temperatures I do believe spring is finally arriving. Even though the month is halfway over, daffodils are still not blooming yet. My old timey ones normally are in bloom by February 5th, and last year surprised me with yellow flowers on January 31st. Weather is extreme and something we all have to prepare for so our felines stay warm and safe. We have insulated wooden houses with baffles to block wind and heated plastic kennel pads on the floor for the African cats. This winter's ice storms interrupted electricity for a couple of days, and Bart has now purchased a whole house generator, because he did not want the cats going without heat again. This decision represents another contingency plan that will not only keep cats warm in the winter, but keep freezers running should spring and summer tornados or high winds cut off electricity.

Another sign that spring is in the air is all the cat calls on our property. Bobcats and lynx, two species that come into heat in February, have been filling the air with their love calls and mating growls. The Geoffroy's boys are chuckling and making that weird call that tells me a female somewhere in my collection is in estrus. Without breeding success, we would not have a next generation of kittens for education, display, breeding, or companionship. In spite of all the difficulties - the animal rights attacks, the draconian regulations, and absurdly high insurance premiums, there is still a core of dedicated facilities devoted to feline husbandry. I am aware of several facilities importing new felines into the U.S., invigorating our captive gene pools.

This issue of the *Journal* contains a photo collage of serval faces. These were selected from the many submissions members sent in response to my call for photos to illustrate a "Cat Fancy" article about servals. This is the second time the FCF has been contacted to assist in the magazine's series on wild felines. FCF Director Debi Willoughby provided information about servals and our members contributed photos. At this point, I do not

know which issue will contain the servals, but I will update you when I find out.

Wildcat Weekend was a big success, and this *Journal* fills in the details for everyone who couldn't make it. I want to thank Kay and Clayton Rosaire and their staff and volunteers for making us all feel so welcome. Big Cat Habitat is a beautiful facility and the Rosaire family is a shining example of professional animal lovers.

If you have not taken the FCF husbandry or educator courses yet, you can still sign up for either class being taught on Wednesday, June 18, the day before Convention starts. Come to Scottsdale, Arizona. Join us for educational classes, kitten sharing, an incredible field trip to Out of Africa Wildlife Park, and interesting speakers, with this year's special inter-

national guest, Alex Sliwa, an expert on black-footed cats. Convention registration forms are included in this *Journal*. You can also register online at the FCF website. Visit "Upcoming Events" and click on the registration link in the top right-hand corner.



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Catching Up with Carson Serval

By Kim Barker

About a year ago, through the pages of this *Journal*, I introduced many of you to Carson serval, a young serval who had been found in a live trap in Virginia. Through a lot of time and effort, we were able to build a relationship with him and help him trust that he was in a loving home with quite a few folks who would love him as long as he lived. Carson has become a favorite of many who visit the Center, as he has gone from a shy and reclusive serval to one who will regularly come out and see visitors, particularly if there is a treat bucket involved. Carson is sweet, playful, and mischievous. It is apparent that he enjoys human interaction immensely. He greets most all of his handlers with a quiet chirp and a head butt, but on occasion will get a little too excited and sometimes pull hair or act out other forms of overstimulation. He drools profusely on his friends and has, surprisingly enough, become a lap cat. A few of us have experienced a sound asleep Carson on our laps a few times. As many of you who work with servals know, it can be difficult to move a sleeping serval, particu-



Misha serval from the Conservators' Center, looking adorable with her tongue sticking out a little.



The first time Carson presented his tummy to one of us, indicating a growing trust. This was a couple of weeks before Easter last spring.

larly when your legs and feet have fallen asleep as well. I still see him following me with his eyes through the compound asking for a visit and I still always oblige as soon as I can. It is next to impossible to resist him.

The end of my previous article was just the beginning of Carson and me really starting to understand each other. Though he and I had been interacting for a while, he had just really started to trust me, and I believed I was just starting to see his personality. A huge mountain had already been climbed in that Carson was going to be open to building

new relationships. Though still relatively young, there was certainly no guarantee that he would allow new bonds to be made, since often exotic cats have a difficult time bonding to new humans. There was still more trust to build and there was still more personality to see. He has found an additional trustworthy friend in Gina Tkach, one of our outreach staff with oodles of experience with exotics and local wildlife, a few of our keepers who go out to spend extra time with him on a regular basis, and his existing friendship with his adopted dad, Jeremy Gillow, remains strong.

A few months ago, that trust in us got a serious test.



Close-up of Carson's nose.

One summer afternoon, Carson and I were sitting in his enclosure visiting. He had climbed onto my lap for head butts and to rub and drool all over me. I happened to run my hand over his tummy and noticed a lump. "Uh-oh," was my first thought, but I did not think that it was anything serious. A couple of weeks earlier, he apparently had gotten stung or bitten by something on his neck that caused a lump which was quickly treated, so I anticipated that this would be similar. I tried to get another feel of it so I could determine what I needed to tell the keepers. The bump on his abdomen felt a little more solid than the earlier sting/bite. It started to make me nervous, but I reserved judgment until I spoke with Mindy and the keepers. It did not seem to be bothering him at all, so it was agreed that we would keep an eye on it. At this point,



Obi serval from the Conservators' Center, napping. As you've read in past *Journals*, I have a special bond with this boy.

Carson was only letting a couple of us touch him all over, so we would have to coordinate our efforts.

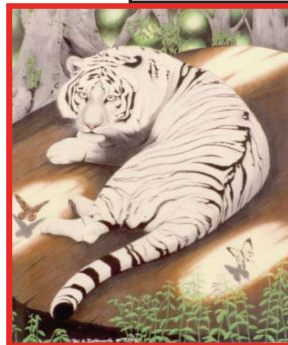
I had been out of town and away from the Center. I had gotten reports from Gina that the lump seemed to be stable, but it was not going down. This seemed to be good news, but what was it? No one had

checked in a few days and I was back in town and needed to see him. The lump was hard and was starting to get bigger. I immediately found keeper Janine and facility director Mindy. Though Carson seemed to be in no immediate danger, it appeared quite possible that he had developed a hernia. My anxiety level jumped, but I knew he was going to get great care. A couple of days later, he was taken to the vet to be evaluated. It was a hernia and he was operated on the very same day. Mindy contacted me to let me know what had transpired and I made arrangements to come out and sit with him in the days following his surgery, to keep him company and check on his sutures during his recovery. We were all looking



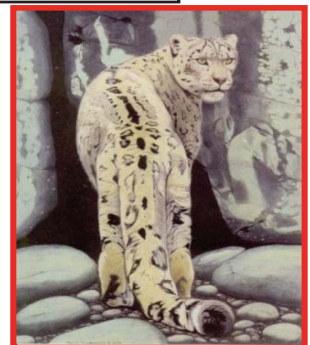
Handsome Carson serval.

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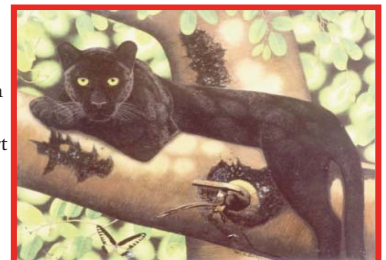
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to make sure he was leaving them alone, since servals and e-collars are often not a successful mix. He welcomed the company. I would take a blanket in with me and sit down near him. He would come over and lie down next to me with his head propped up on my lap and rest. It was obvious he had been through an ordeal and was not feeling his best. He allowed me to check his sutures and make sure he was healing properly. He had trusted us to take care of him and I think he knew that what we had done was in his best interest. He even grew closer to Shannon, one of our talented keepers, who boxed him up for transport and then assisted with his surgery. Those were precious moments, but we wanted him to recover as quickly as possible and be back to his normal self.

After a week or so, he was acting much more normally. At about two weeks post-op, we were easing him back to his normal diet and his sutures were continuing to heal well. It helped that he was leaving them alone and allowing the healing process to happen. We had separated him from Akai while he recovered, and we were able to reintroduce them with no issues. She actually seemed to act like she missed him (inasmuch as Akai lets on that she misses anyone), even though he was just a few feet away during much of his recovery.

We are often asked about whether we have hands-on relationships with our animals, and, if so, what is the purpose? After all, they are not our pets. The answer to that question is, "Yes." There are a myriad of explanations, from emotional, to social, to physical, but it comes down to something quite simple. It is good for them, and sometimes it is even good for us. Carson is a prime example of how having a hands-on relationship and building that trust helps us keep them healthy. Carson was most likely a pet and was used to being indoors and having someone pet him and make him feel safe. Had we not been able to feel his tummy, we may not have found the hernia until he had become very ill or it was too late to help him. And had it not been too late, but escalated to a life-threatening state, his recovery may have taken a lot longer. In addition to being able to feel the hernia, I was able to sit with him during his recovery. This helped him emotionally and provided comfort. We do keep in mind that this is a relationship that still requires us to show respect for their space and



Comforting Carson while he was recuperating.

remember their ability to cause serious injury, and we recognize the boundaries are on their terms, but we keep in mind the whole health of an animal in our care.

Carson is not just an animal to me; he is a valued friend who trusts me to take part, along with a number of other staff and volunteers at the Center, in his care. I, along with everyone at the Conservators' Center, take that responsibility very seri-

ously, and we are all very protective when it comes to him, as well as the almost 100 other animals we have in our care. For as long as Carson is with us and I am breathing, he will always have a friend and protector in me. And with that winning personality of his, I have been able to help make sure I am not the only one he can count on. For that, I am truly grateful.

Registered Exotic Feline Handler Program

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

Kayla Mitchell – Basic
Karl Mitchell – Educator

Gene Wheeler – Advanced
Donna Wheeler – Advanced

Basic Feline Handlers have documented at least one year of experience, Intermediate level is at least five years of experience, and Advanced handlers have more than ten years experience. Update your registration when you obtain additional handling experience or new species experience.

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

Being a registered handler is the first step to becoming a Professional Member. Professional Membership application is also online on the Members-Only website.

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

Debi Willoughby, FCF Secretary

Tall Tales Misrepresent the Real Story behind Bhutan's High Altitude Tigers

Reprinted from
www.theconversation.com/uk

By Karl Vernes, Associate Professor, School of Environmental & Rural Science, University of New England, & Rajanathan Rajaratnam, Biogeography & Conservation, University of New England

In September 2010, the BBC announced a stunning discovery of tigers (*Panthera tigris*) living at high altitudes in the Himalayas. The article claimed that a BBC team had discovered firsthand evidence of tigers living at 4,100 meters above sea level in Bhutan.

This revelation spread quickly, achieving worldwide media coverage within days. In a subsequent three-part television documentary, "Lost Land of the Tiger," BBC claimed that their strategically-placed camera traps had recorded video evidence of tigers, not just in the Bhutanese tropical lowland forests, but also at 4,100 meters above sea level in high-altitude alpine meadows. Global media hailed this as a great discovery and a boon for tiger conservation.

The problem is, the BBC team was not the first to collect evidence of tigers living at this altitude. A country-wide Bhutan survey had found evidence of tigers living at altitudes of at least 3,000 meters above sea level in 1989, more than 20 years earlier.

"Lost Land of the Tiger" was lavish and gripping documentary filmmaking. The BBC dramatically portrayed their team risking lives to achieve their goal, culminating in a final episode showing remarkable high-altitude tiger footage. The documentary was a great success, with approximately 4.5 million British viewers per night.

The documentary has subsequently aired in several other countries, including in the USA and Australia (as "Expedition Tiger") in May 2011, and February 2012, respectively. Judging from the associated blogs, the hype has not lost any momentum and public applause for the BBC's discovery continues.

But the BBC's claim to this discovery is unethical.

Bhutanese wildlife ecologists have been surveying tigers for decades and systemat-

ically documenting their occurrence – including at high altitudes – since 2005, under a nationally mandated ten-year Tiger Action Plan.

The first photographic evidence of tigers at high altitude was reported by the late Nepalese conservation biologist, Pralad Yonzon, who, in collaboration with the Wildlife Conservation Division (WCD) of Bhutan, recorded an adult tiger at a camera trap at 3,000 meters above sea level, more than a decade ago, in 2000. During that fieldwork, the team also discovered

tiger pugmarks (footprints) at 4,110 meters above sea level, firmly establishing the presence of tigers at this altitude before the BBC's discovery.

Follow-up tiger surveys by WCD in 2008, again before the BBC arrived in Bhutan, resulted in camera-trap photographs of tigers and pugmarks at altitudes between 3,700 and 4,300 meters above sea level.

That the BBC overlooked this irrefutable evidence from the scientific community is inexcusable.



This male tiger was caught in 2008, by a camera trap set up by park officials at Domenday, Jigme Dorji National Park, at an altitude of 4201 meters above sea level. JDNP/DoFPS.

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store and can be purchased for only \$5.00 each with \$5.00 shipping and handling to U.S. addresses. You can also use the Membership form/Product order form included in this *Journal* issue. FCF coffee mug profits benefit the Wildcat Safety Net Fund.



A Bhutanese wildlife researcher setting a camera trap. The Bhutanese have amassed a large dataset from thousands of camera trap nights, some of which have yielded images of tigers at high altitudes. JDNP/DoFPS.

Documentary filmmakers peruse peer-reviewed literature, scan media for pertinent information, and utilize their professional networks to identify local experts before embarking on a project. In this instance, the BBC made prior contact with the WCD and received expert guidance to precise locations where tigers had been recorded through pug-marks, scats, live-stock kills, and camera-trap photographs.

As such, the BBC's success is directly attributed to prior evidence already collected by Bhutanese tiger researchers, both in the lowlands and right up to 4,100 meters, where a BBC crew member in the documentary appears genuinely overcome with emotion to see a tiger photographed by one of his remote cameras.

While "Lost Land of the Tiger" was a ratings bonanza and does enlighten viewers about the conservation plight of tigers in the eastern Himalayas, the BBC's detection of high-altitude tigers was not a new scientific discovery. Of greater concern, it failed to acknowledge the local scientific expertise that was integral to the success of the documentary.

Bhutanese wildlife researchers work diligently under the constraint of limited funds, logistics, and human resources. In a country that prides itself as having environmental stewardship as a pillar of its philosophy of Gross National Happiness, countless hours of expensive

field surveys in Bhutan's remote and rugged protected areas, including thousands of camera-trap nights, have been dedicated towards investigating tiger distribution.

Yet none of the Bhutanese tiger researchers who pioneered the discovery of tigers at high altitude and who advised the BBC on camera-trap locations appeared in the documentary. Instead, the BBC chose to portray Bhutan as a remote and under-devel-

oped country, lacking local research expertise under the guidance of effective conservation policy. The only Bhutanese input aired in the documentary came from rural people in the remote regions visited by the BBC crew.

When informed by locals that the presence of tigers at high altitude was widely known, the BBC narrator questioned whether, "...legends of tigers living at high altitude are true," arguing further that, "fact and fiction can become blurred at these extreme altitudes."

Fact and fiction were indeed blurred. Gross misleading statements such as, "...any wild tiger the team finds in Bhutan would be a precious discovery" (Episode 1), "virtually nothing is known about Bhutan's vast forests" (Episode 2), and



A high-altitude tiger caught by a camera trap. JDNP/DoFPS.

"tigers breeding this high in the Himalayas is totally new to science" (Episode 3), are offered as facts, creating an illusion for unsuspecting viewers.

The "Lost Land of the Tiger" has created local distrust, seriously jeopardizing any genuine future collaborative endeavor between foreign media and the Bhutanese government in documenting the nation's rich biological diversity.

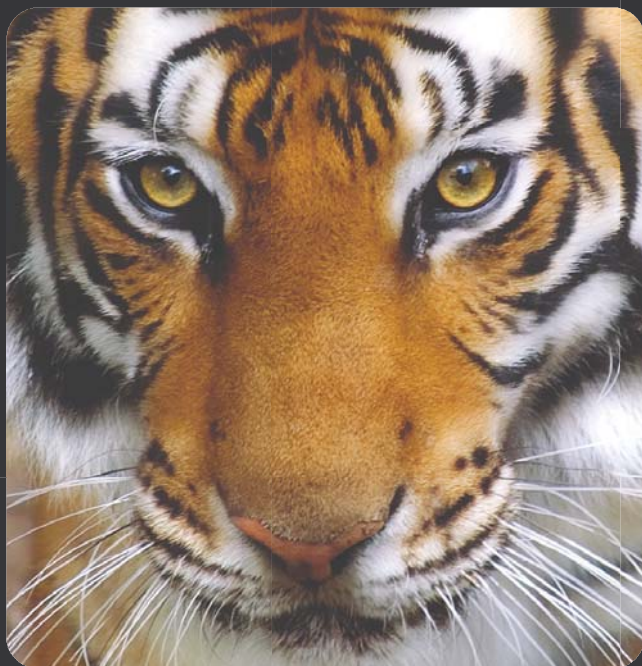
With the concluding statement that, "...nothing was known about the tigers that may live here; we have filled in the final piece of the puzzle," the BBC documentary completes the deception that an exciting new discovery was made and, in doing so, claims false ownership over something that the Bhutanese have long established.



Taktsang (literally "Tiger's Nest") Monastery at 3,120 meters above sea level. Knowledge of tigers living at high altitudes is not news to the Bhutanese.

This article was co-authored by Sonam Wangchuk, Chief, Wildlife Conservation Division, Department of Forest and Park Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Royal Government of Bhutan.

The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance and support extended by Dasho Paljor J. Dorjee, Senior Advisor, and Dy. Minister, National Environment Commission, Bhutan, and Mr. Sangay Dorji, WCD, Bhutan.



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Not Even In Your Wildest Dreams

By Ashley Fitzpatrick

For as long as I can remember, I have loved big cats. As a young child, when I would go to zoos or parks with my family, I could be found sitting in front of a lion or tiger exhibit, completely mesmerized, not wanting to move on. There is something about the way they carry themselves, with this majestic, powerful presence combined with an undeniable beauty that cannot easily be described in words. Living in Massachusetts, it is no easy task trying to find somewhere to gain experience caring for large exotic animals, especially big cats. At the Feline Conservation Federation convention in June, I had the pleasure of meeting Mindy Stinner, one of the two co-founders of The Conservators' Center in Burlington, North Carolina. I asked Mindy if she was offering any internship programs, and she was more than happy to tell me about their program and said that if I was interested in interning, I should go to the website, review the information about the intern program, and apply. I was very excited to be accepted into their fall intern program shortly afterwards. I was not really sure what to expect going so far from home, to work at a place I had never been to. All I could be certain of was that I was on my way to gain priceless experience caring for rare and endangered animals that I might otherwise never get a chance to interact with. I wondered if the people there would be nice, if the other interns would be friendly, and if I would easily adapt to the required daily tasks of an intern.

The Conservators' Center is a nonprofit organization that preserves threatened species in various ways, such as rescuing

wildlife, responsible captive breeding, and providing educational programs to the public. The intern program they offer requires a 240-hour time commitment that can be done over a period of 6-15 weeks. While I was there, I stayed in an intern house that was just a quarter mile down from the sanctuary, which was very convenient. All the girls I interned with were friendly and, although we came from different places (California, Michigan, Massachusetts, Maryland, and England), we bonded during our time there. Five days a week, the other interns and I would get to the main building at the Conservators' Center at 8 a.m. and sign in for work. The next hour or so would be spent at the field kitchen doing food preparation and making diets for all the animals that live at the center. At first, I was overwhelmed with diet preparation, because there is a lot to learn and remember; everything must be done correctly and you must pay attention to detail, because there is no room for error when it could mean an animal getting sick. This internship is not for the weak of stomach; my first day I was taught how to properly prepare chickens, rabbits, and rodents, so they could be fed to the animals. I was happy to find that the longer I spent at the center, the easier diet preparation became and all of the keepers were glad to answer my questions, concerns, and explain the reasoning behind why we do things a certain way. Working with potentially dangerous animals, there were of course extensive safety procedures and rules, all things I quickly learned were essential to my success in my



Target training with a tiger, Arthur, supervised by Conservators' Center staff.

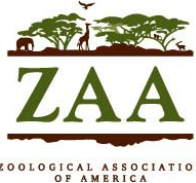
time there, such as their "lock out, tag out" system, which is a way for a keeper to know if someone is in an enclosure and make sure no animal is let out of its shift while someone is still in there. I felt safe during my time there, because the keepers were very serious about the safety rules and keeping your distance from the animals, and they were very adamant about the lock out and tag out system.

After we fed the animals, we would clean their enclosures and make sure they had fresh water and, in some cases, fresh pool water. After lunch, the rest of the day would be spent preparing food for the animals for the next day and, if we were not working on our own projects or enrichment, we would help with cage construction or other things they were doing



Hansen lion. Photo courtesy of Taylor Hattori.

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around the center. During my stay, I helped with the building of an expansion to a lion enclosure for two handsome brothers named Gryffindor and Pacino. While there, I also got to make some fun enrichments every week for different species, which included “blood-sicles” for tigers, frozen bones in ice for lions, a bamboo mat for the binturongs, and boxes with scent for lynx, bobcats, a caracal, and an ocelot. It was very rewarding to see how the animals enjoyed certain things you made for them.

One of the keepers, Carolyn, took us to learn about target training with some of the big cats. This was an amazing experience. The basic idea of target training is that you say “target” and put the target ball to the fence, and when the cat touches its nose to the target ball, you say “good” and immediately give the cat a piece of meat as a reward. If the cat does not do what you ask, you disengage completely. This is positive interaction between the cats and people, and it is also very beneficial to the keepers if a cat is target trained. One example would be that a keeper might choose to use target training if a cat is being stubborn and they need to shift the cat.

The Conservators’ Center has a mission statement of “Conservation, Education, Rescue,” and being there for six weeks, I definitely saw why that is their mission statement. All of the animals there were well cared for and I could see how they really loved the people who care for them.



Kisses from Samara, a New Guinea singing dog.

One of my favorite things about tigers is that a lot of them are quite social and often come over to say hello by doing a noise called a chuffle. I cannot explain the overwhelming happiness I felt when every day that I worked, I would be greeted by more than a couple tigers who were happy to see me and would chuffle my way. I am still working on perfecting my chuffle, but I believe I have finally mastered my lion call, which is referred to as “oofing.” Although I myself am partial to felines, I cannot forget to mention the six New Guinea singing dogs the center is home to, all of which are very sweet and often chime in to do their own part when the lions are oofing. The New Guinea singing dogs are very friendly and they are the only species at the center the interns are allowed to touch and interact with. One of the many rewards of my work there was learning all the animals’ individual stories, where they came from, and how the Center offers lifetime care for animals who needed new homes, including some rescued from horrible living conditions.

I learned a lot during my stay in North Carolina, and I was sad to leave, because I too grew to love all the animals with their unique personalities and behaviors. I can only hope that someday I will again get a chance to chuffle to tigers and oof to lions, as hearing them call back to me made all the hard work I had done truly worthwhile. I am grateful to Mindy Stinner and Douglas Evans as co-founders of the Conservators’ Center, and to all the dedicated animal keepers and staff who work there, because without them my amaz-



Target training with a lion, Ra, supervised by Conservators’ Center staff.

ing experience would not have been possible. I would encourage anyone interested in gaining experience working with rare and endangered species to intern or volunteer at the Conservators’ Center, because it is really an unimaginable experience, not even in your wildest dreams. You can learn more about the Conservators’ Center and what they do at www.conservatorscenter.org.

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*.

**Vera Chaples
Sherri DeFlorio**

Curt LoGiudice

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.

Blast From the Past: Maintaining Mineral Balance

LIOC Endangered Species Conservation Federation, Inc.
Volume 41 Issue 2 - March/April 1997

By Ron Eldridge, BVSc

Minerals should be administered as a group rather than individually. A large number of microminerals are components of metalloenzymes' enzymes that contain tightly bound metal atoms. They are involved in the control of many different biochemical reactions. Dietarily speaking, mineral, especially all the micromineral or so-called trace minerals, should be applied as groups. The intake of one trace mineral in an animal's diet above the requirement, also increases the amount absorbed and/or excreted in the urine or feces.

This excess amount could be harmful and the unabsorbed trace minerals may bind with other minerals to prevent absorption from occurring at all. In addition, these trace minerals could also cause a deficiency or imbalance of other trace minerals.

Sometimes the intake of the additional minerals causes binding to compensate for elevated levels of microminerals, thus causing even more deficiencies in the animal. Excess intake of some micro/macrominerals may actually promote the deficiency of other minerals.

It is difficult to determine what specific

mineral is in imbalance when examining an animal's symptoms.

There are two reasons for this difficulty: First, when a mineral imbalance is present, the clinical signs for one mineral imbalance can be exactly the same as for several other minerals. Secondly, deficiencies of minerals and excess intake of minerals may present the same symptoms. Too much calcium in an animal's diet can yield the same symptoms as not enough.

Furthermore, definitive diagnosis in many cases cannot be determined. One way to correct the problem is to simply discontinue all feed presently being used. Then provide a diet that is known to contain all the proper balanced amounts of micro/macrominerals needed for the species in question. This method is much easier than trying to correct the amount of any one or more suspect minerals'

The only way to be safe without doing serum blood level studies is to know the mineral requirements for your animals and insure that the feed you are providing is adequate for their continued good health.

Macrominerals (trace) assist in an animal's body functions in several ways:

a) They help maintain the acid-base balance. Sometimes called the electrolyte balance, sodium is exchanged or conserved for hydrogen, depending on the acid or base conditions. This helps in the regulation of the pH.

b) Osmotic pressure - this is needed to maintain the animal's body fluid balance. Blood and body fluids contain about 9% salt. Secretions of the digestive HCL of the stomach, pancreas, and intestinal juices all contain the element of salt. The salt mineral in these secretions are reabsorbed and used over again so loss via digestion is negligible.

c) Structural integrity - potassium and magnesium are necessary for muscle contraction and functioning of many enzymes. Minerals join with an inactive enzyme to activate it. This is called coenzyme.

d) Transmembrane Potentials - are needed for a variety of cellular functions including nerve conduction and muscular contractions.

Macrominerals are the major minerals in the animal's nutritional requirements. They are minerals for which the dietary requirements are best expressed as a percentage and are usually required in amounts larger than the microminerals.

Calcium is the mineral which is required in the largest amount in an animal's diet. It must be in the proper proportion to phosphorus and is expressed as the calcium to phosphorus ratio.

Most calcium deficiencies are primarily associated with phosphorus excesses, an example would be when an animal which is fed large quantities of red or organ meat.

Phosphorus is a very important mineral both in the total amount and in its ratio to calcium. The structural substance of bone and teeth, phosphorus combines with oxygen and hydrogen and is found in 80% of all bones and teeth. The soft tissues contain 20% of this mineral. The ratio is 1:2 with calcium in bones. It has other metabolic functions such as buffers in the blood, energy utilization and components of many enzymes. Too much phosphorus leads to an imbalance of calcium.

Sodium is the main cation of extracellular body fluids. If deficient in the diet it will cause the animal to exhibit deficiency symptoms the fastest. Not many feeds contain enough salt to provide necessary levels. Symptoms include a craving for salt - animals will lick metal, wood and dirt. Anorexia, decline in milk production, shivering, lack of coordination and death result in severe cases.

Chlorine is found inside and outside of the body of cell tissue. Its major role is that of acid/base regulator and maintaining osmotic balance. Symptoms of deficiency are the same as for sodium.

Potassium also helps maintain the acid/base and water balance in the animal's body. All body cells, especially muscle tissue require a high content of potassium. A proper balance of sodium, calcium and potassium in blood plasma is necessary for proper cardiac function. Alfalfa meal is a good source of potassium. Deficiencies include irregular heartbeat, heart lesions, muscle and nerve malfunction and osmotic imbalance.

Magnesium is required for the activities of many vital enzymes. It is needed for bone development and maintenance. Some deficiency symptoms include mus-



A tiger enjoying a salt lick.

cle spasms, skin lesions, anorexia, and arteriosclerosis.

All of the above minerals and their lack of or excess of in the diet can cause problems. They cannot be studied individually. Each mineral is dependent on other minerals and or/vitamins to function correctly in the body. When you study one, you must analyze its relationship the other minerals, enzymes, vitamins and hormones they may have an effect on or act as a catalyst for the, mineral in question.

Case Study of Copper Deficiency in a Captive Born Cheetah Population

In the late 1980's, a serious medical problem developed in the cheetah population at a large "state of the art" zoological institution in the Southwestern United States. Over seven cheetah cubs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) were presented with various levels of ataxia which deteriorated from an initial hind limb proprioceptive deficit to complete hind limb paralysis in one cub.

After ruling out infection, inflammatory, traumatic, toxic and parasitic causes,

nutritional problems became a consideration. Copper (Cu) deficiency, a nutritional problem not usually considered in carnivores, was known to cause signs compatible with what was seen in these cubs.

Serum blood samples were taken from all the affected and some of the unaffected cubs to determine the copper levels. The results were extremely low levels of copper in all the affected cats. The unaffected cubs had copper levels that were in the low to normal range. All the affected cubs were treated with both injectable and oral copper supplements. The unaffected cubs were treated with oral copper supplements only. Within four weeks, improvements were seen in all affected animals and after three months on an improved diet, the serum copper levels of all affected cheetah cubs were normal.

It was noted after contacting other zoological institutions around the world that this problem had occurred before. However, copper was not suspect and therefore not a part of the work-up. Some studies suggest that animals maintained on a diet that consists primarily of poultry may be



Bottle-feeding a baby cheetah.

particularly vulnerable to this type of copper related deficiency. It appears that large amounts of chicken without vitamin/mineral supplements in the diet may play a causal role.

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Need to protect your iPhone 4, iPhone 5, Galaxy S3, or

iPad? Order custom cases depicting the FCF logo and your personalized cat image tattooed into the durable plastic resin. Smart phone cases come in 2 styles; slim and tough. Just pay \$35 for the slim style and \$40 for the tough models (plus shipping) delivered to your

mailbox. Order online at the FCF Store and upload your photo to create your own personalized case. With this unique case, you'll be a really cool cat!



2014 FCF Arizona Convention Details

Arrive at the Phoenix International Airport and take the SuperShuttle to Cottonwoods Resort in Scottsdale. Shuttle fees are \$17 each way, and can be made online now at www.supershuttle.com, or by calling (800) BLUE-VAN (800-258-3826).

Scottsdale Cottonwoods Resort and Suites offers a very different experience than other hotel properties in the area. This “at home feel” will take place at a peaceful, green, 25-acre retreat tucked into the Sonoran Desert, just 12 miles from the Phoenix Sky Harbor Airport (PHX). Comfortable and relaxed, we will be at the foot of Camelback Mountain, surrounded by beautifully manicured grounds, with our own private swimming pool. The resort has hot tubs, tennis courts, putting greens, and a nature trail that winds through exotic desert flora where we can view cottontail rabbits, quail, and other native wildlife.



Our traditional 485-square-foot Tucson Casita Suites come with luxury plush-top mattresses, upgraded linen packages, mini-refrigerator, high speed internet, living area with sleeper sofa, front dining patio, and complimentary breakfast for two at the Moriah restaurant each morning. The Moriah restaurant is known for its Spanish Colonial architecture, soothing courtyard fountain, and outstanding cuisine. Cottonwoods will allow exotic kittens up to 30 pounds.

Here's the Schedule of Events:

Wednesday, June 18th: 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. – at the Scottsdale Cottonwoods Resort and Suites, both the FCF Wild/Exotic Feline Husbandry Course and the Wildlife Conservation Educator's Course will be taught. These classes are \$110 each. The FCF recommends all members take the husbandry course.

Thursday, June 19th:

FCF Board meeting starts at 9:00 a.m. Members are welcome to attend and watch.



FCF Hospitality Suite opens at 2:00 p.m. for registration, kitten interaction, auction item drop-off, socialization, and vendor displays.

6:00 p.m. – Cash bar and Southwest Fajita buffet dinner is served. Bring your appetite. Annual FCF membership meeting follows. Afterwards, take a dip in the FCF private pool behind our suites or enjoy a relaxing walk on the nature trail in the evening desert air.

Friday, June 20th:

All Aboard bus service will depart at 9:00 a.m. for Out of Africa Wildlife Park in Camp Verde. First, we'll travel the Serengeti Preserve in our wildly painted African bush safari tour buses. Other activities that follow the Giant Snake Show, Creature Feature, Predator Feed, and the always exciting Tiger Splash Show. Lunch is provided for us as well! At 4:00 p.m., we will meet again over at

the Tiger Splash arena for a special talk that will raise our level of understanding by park founder Dean Harrison.

We'll break up the bus ride home with a stop at Rock Springs Café, a long-established restaurant with an impeccable reputation and world famous pies. Awaiting us will be a barbeque chicken and pork buffet dinner (vegetarian substitution available), and for dessert, fresh peach crumb pie and their specialty Jack Daniels pecan pie.

We'll get back to the resort by 8:30, so there's plenty of time to soak in a hot tub, enjoy a dip in our private pool, take a stroll along the nature trails, and enjoy the beautiful sunset as it turns the Sonoran desert sky deep hues of pink and red. Once refreshed, join others in the hospitality suite for an evening of socializing and kittens.

Saturday's line-up of speakers includes our special international guest, Alex Sliwa, curator of Germany's Cologne Zoo, and the IUCN Black Footed-Cat Working Group project leader. Alex conducted the first ecological and behavioral study on this species in South Africa, and leads annual field operations there.

Other planned speakers are experts on America's big cats, who will talk about both mountain lions and the jaguar research going on in Arizona. Dr. Jim Sanderson will also update us on his world travels this year as well.

We'll give you some time off Saturday afternoon. Check out the Oasis Pool Bar for lunch. Beat the heat and relax poolside with your favorite lunch item. Afterwards, fill the afternoon by treating yourself to the luxury of an individual or romantic massage at Dolce Spa, just steps away from the resort at Borgota Shopping Village (\$25 discount for FCF convention attendees). Borgota Shopping Village has a variety of shopping spots, restaurants, and the Kerr Cultural Center. Or take a short drive to Old Town Scottsdale, Scottsdale Fashion Square, and the city's arts and entertainment district.

Saturday evening, we will gather for cocktails and banquet dinner (choice of London Broil or Vegetable Wellington), followed by the always fun fundraiser auction Saturday night.

Sunday, June 22nd:

And if this is not enough for you, how about staying an extra day at Cottonwoods? Flights are usually less expensive on Monday, or for East Coast travelers, take the red-eye flight late Sunday night so you have another day to sightsee.

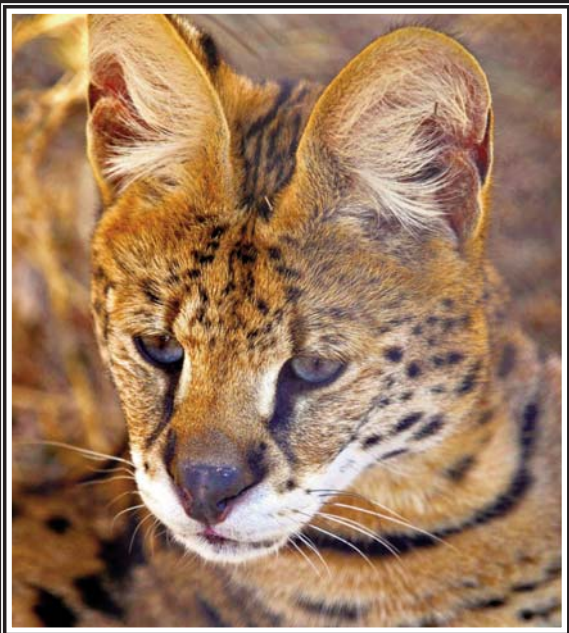
Sunday morning, we have planned an optional trip to the Wildlife World Zoo & Aquarium, located at 16501 W. Northern Avenue in Litchfield Park, just west of Phoenix. It's about a 50-minute ride in your car or, for those without transportation, sign up to ride the van reserved that leaves at 8:15 that morning and returns us at 2:00 p.m. Transportation by van is \$30 a person. Zoo entry fee for this FCF group will be \$27 per person. The new 15-acre Safari Park is open with lions, cheetahs, and servals. At Wildlife

World, we can feed the lory parrots and turaco birds and watch the Wildlife Encounters Show, featuring unique wildlife that demonstrates natural behaviors, like foraging and free flight. Take in lunch at the Dillon's Restaurant, inside the Shark Café. When it gets too hot outside, go into the four different aquarium buildings to view the wonders of sea life in air-conditioned comfort.

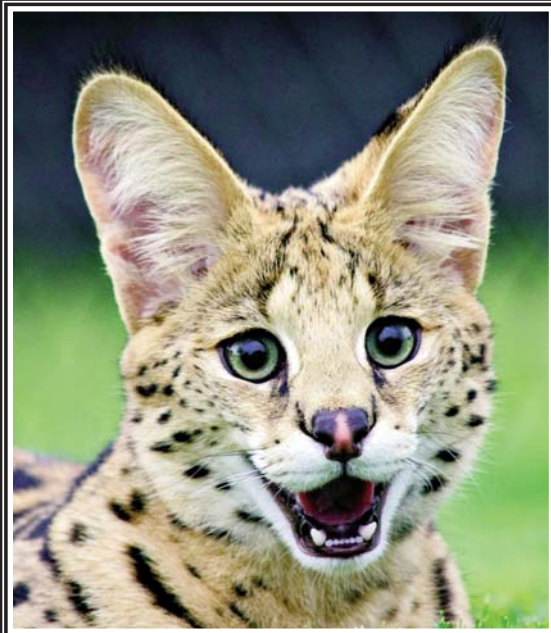
Out of Africa Wildlife Park



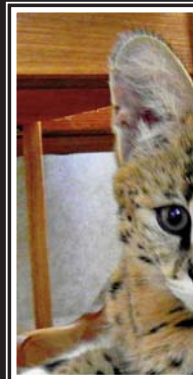
Whether watching the tigers splash around at Out of Africa Wildlife Park or making your own splash in a private pool at the Scottsdale Cottonwoods Resort and Suites, we will definitely be having a WILD & COOL time this June with the FCF in Arizona! So, sign up now for Convention & FCF courses and book yourself a summertime getaway full of felines & feline lovers! We can't wait to see everyone there...



Reign at Serenity Springs Wildlife Center. Photo by Julie Walker.



Buddy, Liz Felton's adolescent serval, smiles. Photo by Kim DiNapoli.



Anisa, Billie, month-old serval, Debi W.



Carson at Serenity Wildlife Center. Photo by Julie Walker.

Serv(al)ing Up Your Best Shots!



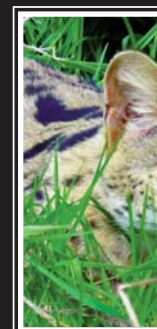
Vega, a 2-year-old male serval at Sunshine Exotics Animal Education Center. Photo by Maxine Sunshine.



Maija at Avalo Cat Sanctuary. Photo by Michell Donlick.



Duma at Palmetto Conservation Center. Photo by Sara.



Meeka at Wildlife Center. Photo by Shallee.



the Lambert's 8-
serval. Photo by
Willoughby.



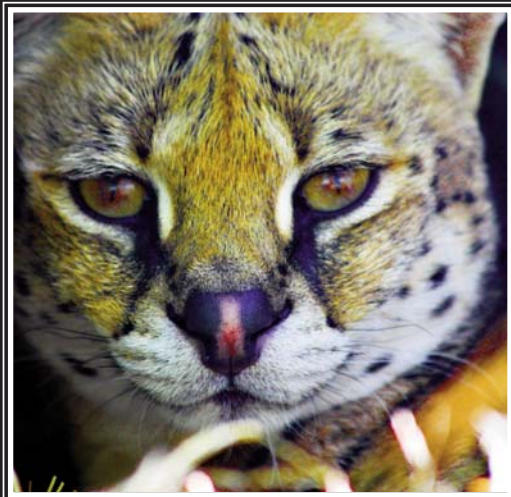
Conservator's
o by Kim Barker.



anther Ridge Con-
Center. Photo by
ah McCoy.



ld Felid Advoca-
er. Photo by
n Mathews.



Cynzer at St. Augustine Wild
Reserve. Photo by Deborah Warrick.



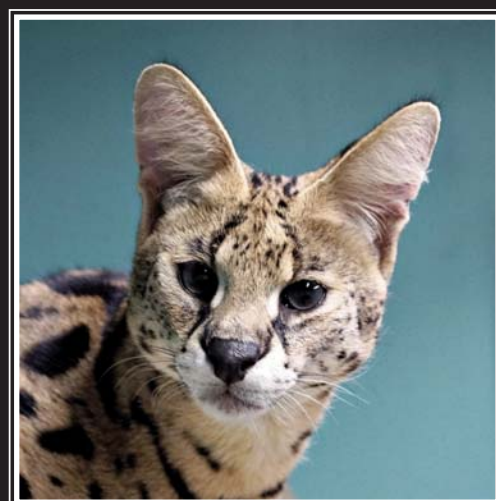
Kiara at Lyon Ranch. Photo by
Lynette Lyon.



Jata at St. Augustine Wild Reserve.
Photo by Deborah Warrick.



Kimba, a 3-year-old female serval.
Photo by Lenard Hughes.



Taji. Photo by Tim Berges.



Phoenix at Hawk Creek Wildlife Cen-
ter. Photo by Charles Bartolotte.

What An Amazing Educational Experience Wildcat Weekend Was!

By Debi Willoughby

The FCF holds its Wildcat Weekend once a year, about halfway between conventions, to offer the public its educational courses. We turn the weekend into a mini-convention by adding fun exposure and hands-on activities around the courses. Each time we hold our courses, students



Clayton asks Handsome the lion for a kiss on the cheek. Photo by Debi Willoughby.

who take the classes write an article about their experience for this *Journal*. I thought it would be nice to write an article written from the perspective of one of the *teachers* of the courses. So now I am going to share with you *my* view of how the latest Wildcat Weekend went at Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary (BCH).

I arrived in sunny, warm Sarasota, Florida, the day before the first course was



Pamela asks Chance the chimp to move his lips, while Clayton throws his voice and tells funny stories to demonstrate some of Chance's movie acting skills. Photo by Jessica Smith.

to be taught. The warm air was very much appreciated, since I had just escaped from the frosty, bone-chilly cold of the Northeast. One of the BCH staff members graciously picked me up at the airport and brought me back to BCH. She showed me to an RV that owner Kay Rosaire offered for the teachers to stay in, which was right on the facility grounds, making it convenient for us to head up the events. From there, I was then brought to the Main Event Building, where I met up with Mindy Stinner and Lynn Culver to watch Kay and Clayton Rosaire perform their daily educational show for the public. We were given the best seats in the house for the event, giving us great picture opportunities!

In the middle of this building is the show arena, enclosed with cage panels, bleachers on three sides of the arena, and a gift shop on the way out. It was set up nicely to allow people the best views of the show and gave easy access to the gift shop as people were walking out of the building after the show. Kay Rosaire came into the arena, made her introduction talk, and introduced us to a good friend of hers who takes in dogs from local kennels and trains them. The first part of the show was with one of the trained rescue dogs. There were number signs lined up on the floor, and Kay would ask the audience to give a question that had a number for an answer (like "What is 2+3?"), she would then ask the dog the question and the dog would have to pick up the number that he thought was the right answer.



Mia the liger demonstrates training for flaming hoop jumps. Photo by Jessica Smith.

The dog always got the answer right and had the audience cheering him on! The show was fun and entertaining! What the trainer did without the audience noticing was to give his dog the right answer with a quiet cue word or hand gesture. Each move the trainer made told the dog which number to pick. It was a funny show that concluded with a valuable message about



Barry White gives Clayton a lick on the hand. Photo by Debi Willoughby.

supporting your local cat and dog shelters.

After the dog and trainer left the arena, Kay's sister Pamela came out with her chimpanzee named Chance. Chance is a beautiful juvenile chimp who showed great love for his trainer. Chance has had some movie experience, so he was able to enlighten us on how chimps "talk" on TV. With a command cue, he would start moving his lips and mouth around to make it look like he was talking. Clayton was behind the scenes with a microphone and

would speak while Chance moved his lips, so it looked like Chance was talking to us. It was quite comical and interesting to see how the training process works with chimps. Chance also showed us how he enjoys playing with a ball and can shoot hoops. Chance's trainer is very much a mother figure in Chance's eyes, and it was obvious to see as the two interacted. Pamela also made sure we understood the strength chimps possess. They look cute and we are drawn to them because of the similarities we see between us and them, but they are so much stronger than we are and we need to respect that. We must not forget that they are not cute, cuddly pets; they are a strong, thinking species.

The grand finale to the show was Clayton's performance with the big cats. Before the cats came out, Clayton delivered his message to the audience, which was to teach them the difference between animal welfare and animal rights activists. He explained the difference between the two and gave some facts/statistics about what animal right activists were doing. He mainly spoke about the HSUS, how much money they raise each year, and what a tiny percent of that actually goes to the care of shelter animals. He urged people to do their research before they donate to an animal organization, to find out how the money is spent and what happens to the animals. He suggested that people give to their local shelters and local organizations where they can see how their money is being used. This was a powerful message to get across to the public, because most people don't understand the difference between animal welfare and animal activists and assume the commercials on TV from the big activist organizations are the best places to donate their money. He didn't give his opinion about these big organizations; he just stated facts and urged the public to make their own informed decisions. I looked around at people's faces as this message was being given and saw a lot of surprised people – that showed me that Clayton was getting a very powerful message across to the general public on a daily basis. That message is priceless.

After Clayton's short speech, he started his big cat show by introducing one cat at a time into the arena to make their debuts. There was Mia, the female liger, Barry White, the male white tiger, Vanna White, the female white tiger, and Handsome, the male African lion. He taught everyone

about each species, each one's personality, and had them show their skills. Each cat sat in a different corner of the arena when not performing. Clayton knows each of his cats very well and treats them with respect, and in return each cat performed well for him and showed him how much they cared for him. His show was geared around each cat's personality; he told a little story about each cat and made it informative and very entertaining. For example, Handsome is a large male African lion who looks very impressive walking into the arena. But Clayton showed a different side of Handsome. He explained that Handsome gives off the appearance of being big and powerful, but in actuality is really lazy and not highly motivated. He used the lion's personality to make us laugh as Handsome performed for us. Clayton's show was fun and informative. Because he used humor throughout his show, you didn't want to miss anything he was saying, since you'd miss a good laugh. That is a valuable key: keep the audience's attention so that you can get your important message across to them.

At the end of the show, I realized the audience was just as impressed with learning about the domestic dog as they were learning about the big cats. You can get an important message across to people by using any species of animal; you just have to know how to do it correctly.

The next day, Friday, we all gathered in the show arena to be part of the husbandry course that Mindy Stinner was teaching. It was a unique venue to hold the class in and it had its challenges. It was a big open room that gave way for noises to be enhanced and echo. So when the maintenance crew was on the metal roof working on it, the sounds were amplified throughout the arena! But there was one amplified noise we all loved and learned to cope with, that of the lions roaring to each other. The lions lived right outside the arena building and loved to talk to one another throughout the day. It was a good thing Mindy and I have loud voices that could be heard over the lion roars. But I'm not convinced the students were lis-



Clayton performs a circus trick by sticking his head in Handsome's mouth. Photo by Jessica Smith.

tening to us during those times; I think they were enjoying the lions roaring instead! After the class, everyone commented about how much they enjoyed the lion ambiance!

On Saturday, the students were able to have a leisurely morning relaxing after a long day of class and didn't have to meet up with us at the facility until lunchtime. Once everyone arrived, Clayton was gracious enough to walk us around the facility and talk to us. He taught us about their cages, the things he liked about them, the things he didn't, and then he gave us a tour of their food preparation area. These were all valuable things that we animal people enjoy seeing and learning about, as it helps us improve our own facilities and practices. The students enjoyed the one-on-one personal time with Clayton, asking him questions and listening to his experiences. Lynn, Mindy, and I were invited to dinner at Kay's house that evening. She graciously opened up her home to us and cooked us a fabulous dinner. We took that opportunity to ask her lots of questions and learn as much as we could from her.

Sunday morning, we got up bright and early to start the educator's course, taught by me. Most of the students already had some experience with doing shows, so we all shared our experiences and ideas as we went through the course topics. I didn't have to work around a maintenance man on the roof, but those lions sure know how

to gab all day long! I think one of the best experiences during the course was the show that Kay and Clayton performed in the middle of the day, which I mentioned above. It gave us all a break from the coursework and the students were able to use their newly-found knowledge while watching the show. They were able to watch the show from a different perspective and learn what the trainers were doing to perform a good show. The educator's course students also got an extra bonus when Kay came in that afternoon and talked to us about working with big cats. She has a lot of experience and knowledge that she shared with us, and the students were grateful that they could ask her questions.

Another favorite moment was delivered by Keith Gault and Billie Lambert. They brought their two four-month-old caracals and one six-month-old serval with them as they attended the courses! They were kept in our RV, and during the lunch break each day, three students at a time were allowed into the RV to interact with the kittens while Keith or Billie supervised. Everyone enjoyed the hands-on experience and the one-on-one time to ask Keith and Billie questions about their cats. During Mindy's class, I snuck back to the RV to "check" on the kittens and let them out of their cage to run off some of their built-up energy. I was a little hesitant opening the cage door, knowing I was letting three energetic cats that didn't know me out to run around the RV. Would I be able to gather them all up to put back in their cage? Time would tell! They came barreling out of the cage and all ran in different directions! It was a good thing the RV was small enough that I could keep tabs on them all at the same time. They were so busy stalking and killing things like the



Kay Rosaire made a special appearance at the Educator's Course and spoke on how to stay safe while working with big cats. Photo by Billie Lambert.



Billie Lambert and Keith Gault enhanced Wildcat Weekend with caracals, Hadley and Lola, and serval, Anisa. Students gained valuable experience with these ambassadors-in-training.



Lola the caracal found the umbrella an irresistible plaything. Photo by Debi Willoughby.

rug, umbrella, and shoes! Despite their high energy, they were well behaved in a strange environment and acted very good towards me, even when I had to pick them up and put them back in their cage. Keith and Billie have done a great job exposing their new ambassadors to new places and people. The kittens didn't have a care in the world, other than killing that big scary umbrella that tried hiding in the corner.

To sum it up: the classes went very well, the students were all eager to learn and share their own experiences, and the weather was wonderful. Kay and Clayton have an amazing staff who were all very friendly and helped with anything we needed. Her staff is comprised of people of all ages and they are very hardworking, dedicated people. Kay and Clayton have made BCH a "community" animal place. They have made both their staff and the general public feel like they are directly involved with the animals and facility. It doesn't feel like a one-owner run facility; it feels like a community effort. With this structure, they have made BCH a success, and that community-based foundation makes the staff (both paid and volunteers) a valuable asset due to the dedication and devotion that they give back to BCH. It's a great place to visit, they have beautiful animals that are well cared for and loved, and they give a great daily show! The caracal and serval experience was the icing on the cake that everyone enjoyed! Thank you Kay, Clayton, and all of your staff, for making our Wildcat Weekend a huge success! And thank you to all of the students who came and shared their own experiences. The students come to learn from us, but Mindy and I learn from them as well. We look forward to holding the next Wildcat Weekend next winter and hope to see you at convention this summer!

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Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the “Other” Government Agency Regulating Your Animal Business

By Lynn Culver

Feline exhibitors are familiar with the USDA and the need to follow the Animal Welfare Act regulations. Failure to maintain a safe and healthy environment for your animals can lead to citations and, if infractions are repeated, even fines; as much as \$10,000 per infraction can be levied. Now that doesn't happen very often, thank goodness.

Animal Care inspectors look at your operations and size you up. They cite you when you fail to meet minimum standards, and they give you a timetable to correct the problem. If you do make corrections, you most likely will not face any penalties. Infractions are divided into direct and indirect. Direct infractions involve the animals, and indirect ones (like recordkeeping) are less serious, because they do not put the animal's health or safety at risk.

But there is another government agency that commercial exhibitors and breeding facilities may not realize also has authority over their operations. Unlike the USDA, which issues the license to do business and inspects periodically, OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, also has enforcement powers over employers. But this agency focuses on job injuries, illnesses, and deaths of the employees, not the animals.

If you have just a single employee, you must follow OSHA standards. There are 22 states that have developed their own safety and health programs; the other 28

states are regulated by the federal agency. A small exhibitor or breeder may never see an OSHA inspector, but if there is an accident or a complaint, they may find themselves dealing with this “other” government agency and its many regulations. Employers are required to report to OSHA, within eight hours, any fatal accident or injury that results in the hospitalization of three or more employees.

The federal government has a vested interest in helping businesses protect their workers and reduce the number of workplace deaths, injuries, and illnesses. When employees stay safe and healthy, there is less government payout on workers' compensation insurance costs and medical expenses.

In general, OSHA “standards” require employers to maintain conditions to protect workers on the job. Employers need to be familiar with and comply with standards applicable to their establishments. Employers must ensure that employees have and use personal protective equipment when required for safety and health. The OSHA Act's “general duty clause” requires that each employer furnish a place of employment free from recognized hazards that are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees.

Now in the big cat world, we all know that working with lions, tigers, leopards, and other feline predators carries with it an inherent risk of injury. But where are the specific OSHA regulations on cats? OSHA will refer to the USDA regulations and your inspection reports. For instance,

if you are cited by the USDA for failing to maintain enclosures in good repair and an employee is injured by an animal and OSHA finds out, OSHA is going to fine you for a workplace safety violation, even if the USDA does not.

Here are some things you need to develop at your workplace:

Safety Program Development – Set up a safety program and make sure your team buys into it.

Accident Investigations – Deal with an accident after the fact and prevent similar accidents from occurring again.

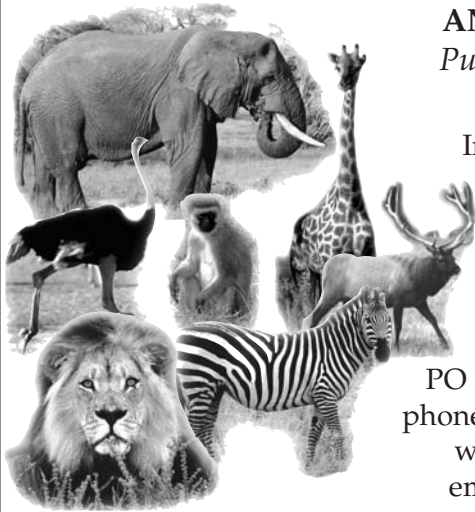
Emergency Planning – Plan for the unexpected. Teach your employees how to handle any emergency situation that may appear.

Safety Audits – Regularly review your workplace, equipment, tools, and materials to ensure all hazards are being addressed.

OSHA is concerned about record keeping. While you know your employees and their qualifications, if it is not documented, then it is not going to be accepted by OSHA. Maintain a written record of each employee's experience, both prior to hiring and while in your employment. If it's not written down, it didn't happen according to OSHA. If you send your employees to continuing education seminars, document it. If you have a period of time where new employees are trained by more experienced personnel, write it down. No records and you will be cited for having employees that lack training. Start instituting daily logs and you will be way ahead if OSHA ever pays your business a visit.

It's not just the cats we have to worry about. . . .

Blood Borne Pathogens - We all know that preparing cat food causes more injuries than any other aspect of cat husbandry. A lot of time is spent using sharp knives, axes, cleavers, and meat grinders. These are recognized employee hazards. Ever been to a chicken processing plant? The employees wear protective cut-resistant gloves to prevent being injured. If your facility processes animals for feeding, then your employees are exposed to blood, feces, and biological hazards. Employees need protective clothing – full-body aprons, boots, and hand protectors,



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even eye protectors could be required if butchering large animals with power tools. Does your facility compost its feline poop, bedding, and the guts of animals being fed? These are considered “biological hazards” by OSHA, and this agency will want employees that work with this matter to be issued protective foot covering.

Hazardous Materials – Have you ever noticed how manufacturing businesses have these material safety data sheets prominently posted on the walls informing employees of what chemicals they may be exposed to and how to react to unintentional exposure? Same holds for animal facilities. Do you use chlorine bleach or other disinfectants? What about pesticides to keep down ticks and fleas, or herbicides to maintain property landscaping? If you are hiring employees to spread these products, you need to have safety sheets available for employees to see. Your employees and site visitors must be made aware of the hazardous materials in your workplace and understand how to protect themselves from these hazards.

How do you make sure your facilities are safe for your employees and visitors?

OSHA will rely heavily on USDA regu-

lations regarding caging. If you have been cited by the USDA and OSHA finds out, while the USDA may not fine you for the infraction, OSHA will. Keep your cages in good repair, your fencing in compliance with USDA standards, and your public barriers of proper height, strength, and material construction.

OSHA has regulations for tools and equipment, for personal protection, for workplace safety, even behavior and attitude. OSHA will investigate how you address the behaviors of employees and workplace visitors that may have an adverse effect on the safety and health of your team. OSHA wants to know how your organization deals with conflict, drugs, fitness, safety housekeeping, and workplace stress and violence.

What must animal facility employers do to comply with OSHA?

Employers are required to keep the workplace free from serious recognized hazards and monitor workplace conditions to make sure they conform to OSHA standards. Here are ten rules to live by:

1. Keep tools and equipment properly maintained prior to employee use. 2. Identify hazards for your employees by

using color codes, posters, labels, and signs. 3. Develop/maintain safe operating procedures and train employees to follow the requirements. 4. Post the OSHA poster (or the state-plan equivalent) informing employees of their rights and responsibilities at a prominent location within the workplace. 5. Report any fatal accident or one that results in the hospitalization of three or more employees to the nearest OSHA office within eight hours. 6. Keep records of work-related injuries and illnesses and allow employees and former employees to access the OSHA Log of Work-Related Injuries and Illnesses (OSHA Form 300). 7. Provide employee medical & exposure records to employees or their authorized representatives upon their request. 8. Identify authorized employee representatives who may be asked to accompany the OSHA compliance officer during an inspection. 9. Do not discriminate against employees who exercise their rights under the Act. Post OSHA citations at or near the work area involved until the violation has been corrected, or for three working days, whichever is longer. 10. Correct violations by the deadline set in the OSHA



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citation and submit required verification documentation.

Animal facilities investigated by OSHA

Recently, a facility in North Carolina, the Cherokee Bear Zoo, was visited by OSHA after a complaint was filed by PETA. I reviewed the USDA inspection reports and a generally full compliant history. There were a few citations, but nothing major. However, this facility has come under increasingly frequent complaints by animal rights organizations for providing less than ideal living conditions for the bears in residence. In fact, it is facilities such as this one that are driving the recent petition to the USDA asking the government agency to establish more stringent minimum standards for the keeping of bears.

When PETA could not get the USDA to shut the facility down, they went to OSHA and complained that the business endangers the employees by allowing them to go in the enclosures with the bears. OSHA agreed and fined the facility \$3,120. OSHA ruled that employees were exposed to potential attacks from captive bears while cleaning enclosures, hand-feeding the animals, and attempting to assist in the mating process. OSHA found that the Cherokee Bear Zoo did not furnish a place of employment free from recognized hazards that were causing or likely to cause death or serious physical harm to employees, due to employees having direct contact with apex predators, such as black and Syrian brown bears, during sanitation, feeding, and mating. This should certainly be a wakeup call to any feline facility that allows employees to enter enclosures with exotic cats inside. Whether it's a bobcat or a Bengal tiger,

they are wild animals; they are considered "potentially dangerous" by the USDA and state governments, and will also be viewed that way by OSHA.

In another case, the Exotic Feline Rescue Center, in Center Point, Indiana, was inspected by Indiana OSHA officials after an employee was seriously injured by a tiger last summer. The rescue facility has a policy against letting employees enter enclosures while big cats are present, but the employee who was injured failed to ensure that the slide gate was down and the habitat empty. Even though human error played a large role in the accident, OSHA fined the facility \$28,000 for the incident and did a full review of every aspect of the business operations and amassed a list of deficiencies, and issued a total of \$69,000 in fines.

Of particular interest to all big cat facilities should be the OSHA finding alleging the feline facility is unsafe because fence heights are less than 16 feet tall, an industry standard only recently adopted by the USDA. OSHA also fined the facility for not properly recording work injuries, not documenting training and work protocols, not having the required protective equipment, using dangerous chemicals without supervision or training, and not providing the employees access to drinking water.

In October of last year, a big cat keeper working at G.W. Exotics Wildlife Park in Oklahoma, placed her arm inside the four by four-inch openings of the welded wire panel enclosure of a tiger and was severely attacked by the big cat, requiring hospitalization. The Animal League Defense Fund asked the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to investigate the attack and the

Oklahoma sanctuary has been visited, though no official report has been released to the press.

In November of last year, at Wildcat Haven in Oregon, a longtime employee working alone was found dead inside a cougar enclosure. Oregon OSHA is investigating the sanctuary's safety protocols and safety training, and may issue fines to the operators of the facility. Cheryl Tuller, co-founder, claims the facility has written protocol stating staff members can enter an enclosure to clean or make repairs only after the animals are locked out of it. Interviews with former volunteers, however, indicate this protocol may not have been strictly followed and, if so, then this facility will most likely face fines from OSHA.

Many facilities allow employees to enter enclosures where small or even large felines reside; after all, these cats may have been born at the facility or were former pets used to human interaction and seemingly tame. However, OSHA sees our cats as dangerous, and OSHA is about removing dangers from the workplace. What we are willing to accept as a part of the risk of this profession does not translate into acceptable hazards to OSHA.

Once an OSHA agency completes an investigation, employers have 15 days to ask for a conference, which could result in a reduction of penalties.

If your business has never thought about OSHA, it is overdue. Workplace safety is part of any professional operation and the government has set up an agency and standards to help ensure that accidents do not happen. You can read more about this at www.OSHA.gov. You can also request a courtesy visit to review your business without risk of being fined.

A New Way to Support FCF

By Chris Tromborg

This past January, I was revising my contributions profile. I had decided that some organizations were simply not productive enough in the areas that I was concerned about and that others were actually detrimental to the causes in which I believe. I found myself wondering which organizations should receive support from me on a continual basis. I contacted Lynn Culver to ask her for her opinions about the quality of some sanctuaries and con-

servation organizations. Lynn suggested that I support the FCF with additional donations throughout the year. I then proposed that we set up a program that enables members to support the FCF on a monthly basis, with funds being deducted electronically from their accounts of participating members. Many successful conservation organizations employ such methods to augment their financial support.

Well, that is what we are proposing. I am going to begin donating \$10.00 each

month to the FCF, the funds to be automatically deducted from my checking account once Lynn has set up the program. Funds can be deducted from checking accounts or payments can be made automatically from Visa or MasterCard accounts. Members will be allowed to designate which programs should receive support from these additional funds. Contact Lynn for more information about this program in early February.



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A Tale of Two Servals

By Susan & Larry Graham

Sometimes the lives of animal owners change; divorce, injuries, death, home foreclosures, restrictive legislation, and ban laws can all force owners to give up the animals that are dear to their hearts. For the safety of all animals, we are sometimes forced to find them a new loving home. This is the story of a pair of owners' love for their serval Talib, who crossed over the Rainbow Bridge, and of the serval Sinbad, who helped to fill the void in our hearts.

Talib was born in December of 2008. He earned his wings on September 12, 2013.

Talib was a serval kitten. He was born at Scott and Teresa Shaffer's Exotic Cats R Us facility. He came into our lives in January 2009. He was so little and so precious. He stole our hearts immediately. Talib allowed us to be his humans. He would sit on the table and eat dinner with us. He shared the bed with us every night. He also loved car rides. He loved to fish in the bathtub. Altogether, we had eight domestic cats, and Talib loved playing with all of them. They enjoyed playing in makeshift tunnels, castles, tents, and playgrounds spread throughout our home. Talib loved lying out on the back porch and soaking in the sun. He loved watching the birds go by. He was very friendly with children and loved being with his Momma and Daddy.

One of our favorite stories of Talib goes like this. Last summer, we had a garage sale, and this lady stopped with her ten year old daughter. Her daughter was begging her mom to go home. Her mother came over to me and said that her daughter was being a pest because she wrote a paper for school, and the mother had told her if she got an A on the assignment, she would take her to the zoo. So I asked what the paper was on. Her daughter piped up and started telling me about servals. I asked her several questions and she answered them all. She had done her research. A little

later, I told the mom that we had a serval and, if she approved, I would let them meet Talib. The look on her face said it all. They accepted the offer and visited for about half an hour with Talib. They kept saying they couldn't believe that they actually got to see a serval in person and being able to touch him was beyond their dreams. It was a wonderful, heartwarming day. Even though I only made \$12 on the garage sale, being able to share an experience with Talib was priceless.

During the past five years, my husband and I have both dealt with cancer. Talib was always there. While I was resting at home on the sofa after having a treatment, Talib would stay by my side. He never left me.

Our wonderful, fairytale life crumbled in June of 2013.

We found out that Talib had a blockage. He had to have surgery to remove the obstruction. For 11 weeks, he seemed to be doing well. This was the time that he shined the most. It had been



Talib recovers from intestinal obstruction surgery and his domestic buddy, Zerk, stays close by his side.

almost five years since Talib came into our lives. Little did we know that Talib was leaving heartfelt memories for us to cherish.



Susan and Talib.

On the eleventh week, he started going downhill. We took Talib back to the veterinarian for another surgery. His last 24 hours were like a movie in slow motion. Around 3 a.m., his breathing became shallow. After speaking with the vet, we were told we needed to get Talib some oxygen. We called our friends the Shaffers. They were able to provide the oxygen and stayed with us. Scott and Teresa were very supportive. They took turns holding the oxygen mask and got us coffee. We cannot ever thank them enough. At 8 a.m., we got to the veterinary hospital with Talib, who still hadn't awak-



Talib sleeps next to Larry on the couch.

ened. I was on the phone with my friends Cindy Hornstein, Sue Arnold, and Shelby. I would have been on the phone with another friend, Sara, but she was having a heart attack at that time. We were all collectively trying to figure out how to save Talib. Sue gave us the best advice. She told us to think of Talib and what he needed. It was hard to put our feelings aside, but we needed to let Talib go. It was one of the most difficult things to hear, but we had to march on. We made the decision to take him home and let him cross the bridge at our house. He went quietly with Larry and me beside him.

We couldn't bring ourselves to put anything of his away, including his tunnels, litter boxes, balls, and food and water bowls. Everything in our home had been the same since the day he didn't wake up. It was too painful. The items smelled of him. We couldn't file his memories away.

"Today I close the door to the past; Open the door to the future; Take a deep breath; Step on through and start a new chapter in our lives."

I was speaking with my friend, Sara, on New Year's Day. I told her I could never shut the door on the past, but we needed to move forward. It had been three months since Talib passed. We spoke about getting a new serval, but we were not ready emotionally or financially. We still owed over \$3,000 to our vet for his services. Our vet was wonderful; he told us not to worry about the money right then. His position was "Let's take care of Talib." I am so blessed I was not working for the 11 weeks my precious serval boy

about this boy that needed another family to love. The emotions were high and we asked ourselves, "How can we offer our home to another cat while we are still grieving over Talib?" We wanted Talib back, there was no way we could love another serval the way we loved Talib. Then something very strange and weird happened. We had this calm come over us. It was like Talib was speaking to us. This was a serval who had to move and needed a family. If Talib was ever in that position, we hoped someone would love our boy just like we did. So, we decided to accept this gift and offer our love to this new "kid."

I was back on the phone with Sara, and she put me in touch with a woman named Lynn. I called and spoke with Lynn for quite awhile. It seemed like she was questioning me to see if we

was ill. I spent all my time with him. Finally, at the beginning of January, I did get a job. We are hoping to be back on our feet by the end of this year.

The next day, I spoke with Sara again. She told me about a six year old serval who had been in a home environment that needed a re-home immediately. It was an emotional mess for us. Larry and I spoke

were ready to take on another serval. She told us that the six year old serval had grown up in a family home situation and, due to emergency circumstances, the serval had been recently placed in a sanctuary. The sanctuary recognized that this was a cat that had potential to adjust to another home life. As long as the adopters were knowledgeable, experienced, and had proper facilities to address the needs of an adult serval, then all should be okay. Lynn was satisfied that we met these requirements and said she would speak with Joe, at the sanctuary where the cat had been placed. Joe called me and told me that this cat had a great potential to re-home. We answered all of his questions. I was ready. I finally asked what it would take to get this serval into our home. He said to come by and pick him up. I agreed and said we would be there on Saturday.

After speaking with Joe, I called Sara to update her on our new baby. She said, "Two days is perfect. Now you have time to get your house ready." I informed her that nothing has changed since Talib left. I didn't have to do one thing except bring him home.

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That night, Larry and I spoke. We thought about it and agreed that this poor baby doesn't need to spend another night in a temporary home. I went to work the next day, but, at 10 a.m., I faked a sickness and drove straight home. I picked Larry up and together we headed to Indiana.

The decision to go was impetuous. The weather was horrible, the temperatures were in the single digits, there was black ice on the roads, and the wind had reached about 50 miles an hour. But there was no way we were going to pull over, because our little guy needed us. All the way to the sanctuary we talked about what to expect with the new boy. We wondered how he would be different from Talib. We wondered if he would accept us as his new humans and what kind of meat he liked to eat. We wondered if he liked getting his belly rubbed and his ears scratched. We were also curious about where he would like to sleep and if he would get along with the other cats we have. The radio was not on the entire eight-hour drive to pick him up. We were missing Talib and talking constantly about the new kid.

We remember the exact moment we pulled up to the Exotic Feline Rescue Center. Larry turned the truck off and we sat there for a while. We knew the minute we got out of the truck, our lives would change forever. We talked about maybe not being ready and being scared that he wouldn't accept us. We thought that maybe we were not worthy of having another serval's love. Larry grabbed my hand and said, "Let's do this." We opened the car doors. It was cold outside. My legs were shaking from being so nervous about what stood on the other side of the door. Joe opened the door and took us straight in to see the serval. He was in his kennel. My first reaction was, "This baby needs to get out of the kennel." He didn't hiss at first. He just looked at us with those begging eyes. We dropped to our knees and spoke with him. He just looked at us. He hissed a little, but it wasn't a scary hiss. We told him we were his second set of parents and that though his parents loved him so much, he had to move and it was time for him to come to our house and to

make our house his forever home. We loaded him up in the back seat of the truck and headed home. I didn't care how bad the roads were. We just wanted to get him to his new home and get him out of the kennel.

We started out by talking to him about his new house. We told him of his new friends. We spoke about everything we could think of, just so he would hear our voices. About an hour into the trip, Larry fell asleep and I kept talking to Sinbad and glancing back. Sinbad actually reached out of the kennel and was cleaning Larry's hair. I stuck my hand inside his kennel and he let me love his chin and ears (The ears were so exciting to me, because Talib would not let you touch his!). He didn't sleep the whole time; he stayed wide awake, taking everything in, listening to me ramble for nine hours. I would have thought he would have fallen asleep so he didn't have to listen to me. He hissed a few times, but was mostly just



Sinbad has a prominent pink stripe down his nose.



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curious.

We finally pulled into the driveway at 3:30 a.m. Reality hit us – Oh, my goodness, we have a new serval. We carried him into the house and thought about where to put him so he would feel safe. We decided the bathroom adjacent to our bedroom would be a good fit; it is 20 feet long by 10 feet wide. He could hide in our closet if he wanted or walk around. Keep in mind, this is the first time we got to see the whole Sinbad. We opened his kennel; he walked out, walked around the room, and then lay down on the rug and stretched. This baby was beautiful and just perfect. We started comparing the differences with Talib. Sinbad had smaller spots, shorter legs, beautiful ears, and lots of small freckles. He was perfect; we were so relieved that he looked nothing like Talib. We wanted to touch him so badly, but I knew that I was pushing it, so we left him with food, water, his kennel, and his toy from his previous home.

We slept for a couple of hours. It felt like Christmas. We couldn't wait to see Sinbad. We thought, why did we put him in the bathroom? If he was not a happy camper and would not let us enter for a while, what would we do? We just laughed. We were so excited and didn't leave much time for thinking a plan all the way through. Larry went in and turned the shower on. Sinbad walked right over to the shower and watched him. There was no hissing. He was just curious. I took my shower next and he did the same thing. I wondered if he took showers with his original human family. After the shower, we just

hung out in the bathroom, and Sinbad was brushing up next to us and rubbing his chin on our legs, so I carefully reached out and rubbed his head and chin. He did hiss, but not in a mean way. He ate his food, drank a lot of water, and used the litter box. He seemed to like our bathroom and we hoped that he liked us. We opened the door and allowed him to roam in the bedroom and bathroom. We let him smell the other cats through the door. We hung out with him all weekend. He continued to hiss, but at the same time he wanted attention. We didn't know him, so it was hard to read his signals. Each time we spoke with him, he would hiss. Whenever we would stop talking, he would stop hissing.

At this point, this was so much more than we expected, but we were in a good position that we thought would take us months to get to. We could pet his head and he would eat out of our hands and play ball. It was meant to be. Both Larry and I were in the right spot in our lives and all three of us needed each other. Larry mentioned that if this was all Sinbad could offer us, it would be perfect. I agreed. I was not expecting an easy road. We have heard such horror stories of people re-homing pets. I cannot explain why, but this has been a blessing.

It is amazing to watch Sinbad grow in his new environment. Each day, he encounters many "firsts." We left the bedroom door open so he could walk around the house. It took a couple of days of speaking to him and us moving around the house for him to try to find us. He would go as far as exploring a different window, stair, toy, etc. He would get sidetracked. He loves running up and down the stairs. He carries his ball upstairs, lets it go, and catches it before it hits the bottom. He will do this ten times before he tires of the game. He loves the tunnels and tents. We roll the ball into the tent and he sends it back.

He loves to eat in the bathroom still. We tried to have him eat in the kitchen, but he will carry it to the



Sinbad makes himself comfortable on top of the antique wardrobe closet.

bathroom. He sleeps in our bedroom, on top of our antique wardrobe closet. He was jumping on top and then jumping down. Larry didn't like it, so he built him a playground next to it so he could get up and down without jumping eight feet. He loves his new playground; it has different

levels and holes to climb through. It has carpet for comfy sleeping. And it is his; he shares with no one.

Sinbad had not played outside. We have a cat door so our cats can play outside if they chose to. Our 20 x 20 screened-in back porch is a wonderful outside experience. I tried to get Sinbad to follow me, but he is still a little cautious. One time, he was playing in his tunnel. I picked it up and carried it to the back porch. Sinbad didn't mind this. He didn't hiss at all. I put the tunnel down outside and he just stood up and hissed. He was nervous, but he did walk all around several times and climbed on the play areas we built. He sat on the seat in the window and looked up at the sky. It was like he was seeing it for the first time. He was smelling the fresh air and hearing the twittering and fluttering of the birds. He was sniffing everything. It was wonderful to experience this moment with him. I hope that he will use the cat door soon so that he can go in and out whenever he likes. It will take time, but I hope this happens sooner rather than later.

We had a big surprise a couple of nights ago. Sinbad crawled under the covers and walked around on the bed while we were sleeping. We have a water bed, so I'm sure the experience was different for him.

He did this several times. We don't push him to love us, but he rubs on us more and more. He loves to get on the bed and act like a young cub by playing with his ball, rolling around on his back, and facing his tummy to the ceiling. He likes to have fun.

Mr. Sinbad hisses a lot. It seems that when we speak to him, he growls or hisses back. I think he is speaking to us. When he growls, he rubs against us. I find that when he is rubbing on my leg, I take a deep breath to calm myself and reach down to pet him. He loves his chin rubbed, but loves getting his neck rubbed even more. I am so happy that he will let me rub his ears. I love his big ears. The whole time he is getting love, he is growling.

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.

Conservation Grants:

Deborah Johnson

General Fund:

Chris Tromborg

Lynn Culver

The FCF appreciates your generosity & continued support.



One of Sinbad's toys is a crunchy tunnel that leads into a little "cathouse."

His ears do not go back and no fur stands up. I honestly believe that he is talking to us. We have yet to scratch his tummy, but it will come with time. We just can't believe how easy it's been so far.

Last night, I was mopping the floors and I closed the door to our bedroom just a little to get behind the door. All of a sudden, the door slammed shut and I could not move the mop. I could not open the door. Sinbad was on the other side, playing with the mop. Now, every day it's a requirement to mop. He loves to hunt the mop and then pounce. I'm so glad that he will allow himself to play.

Sinbad loves shoes. We will put our shoes down and he will run over and get just one and hide it. He is very organized with his toys and our shoes. They are in a neat pile in the tent in our bedroom.

We keep waiting for the hard times to come. We just haven't seen any signs. We are extremely happy that he accepts us. We are not at 100% acceptance yet, but we are months ahead of where we thought we would be by this time. Looking into his eyes, we see a soul looking back, one that wants love and to once again be part of a family.

Sinbad has made such a difference in our lives. Our hearts were shattered when Talib passed. We kept thinking life was so unfair and that Talib left us way too soon.

Now I feel that we have been given another chance to love and to make a difference by living with a serval. We feel very blessed to have been given the chance to have two special servals in our lives. Someday, when the time is right, we will add a baby serval to our family. But right now and for a while into the future, we are giving Sinbad all of our love. He needs us and we need him. I pray soon he will climb on the sofa to watch TV with us. But if that day never comes and we only get what Sinbad is offering now, we can live with that and be happy.

I look forward to each day with him and to see the new experiences through his eyes. We feel the love that he exudes. Sinbad has lost so much, especially with him being apart from his first family. Sinbad's first parents have it much worse. Raising a serval to become a part of your family and then having to give him up out of love can be incredibly painful. Fortunately, I speak with his first family often and send pictures. They are grateful that we opened our door to him. Our story is "the perfect storm."

Through Facebook, we received hundreds of thoughtful messages and made new friends since Talib's passing. Without his passing, we would have not met. We are blessed by the lessons that we learn each day. Sinbad has filled a void in our life by allowing us to help a serval in need. It is wonderful that he will spend the rest of his life with us. When the time is right, we know exactly who we shall acquire another baby serval from, Exotics R Us. Scott and Teresa Shaffer breed the best servals! The Shaffers don't stop supporting you after your new fur baby comes to your house. They become a part of your family.

Thank you to everyone for your support, but I wish to send

a special thank you to:

Scott and Teresa Shaffer, for spending days and nights helping us with Talib. He was so special to you. Your friendship means the world to us.

Cindy Hornstein, you were our rock when we were floating away. You will never know how much I appreciate all your phone calls before and after Talib passed.

Sue Arnold, thank you for being Sue! I appreciate your time during Talib's final days. You helped us see it more clearly by telling us to listen to what Talib needed and not what our hearts wanted. Thank you so much.

Sara McKelvey, you have been along for our journey since the day Talib was born. Your words of wisdom – being there for us, when you yourself needed help, waking in the middle of the night; you are also my rock.

Lynn Culver, thank you for believing in us enough to help us find another serval to love.

Joe Taft, thank you for seeing that Sinbad had potential to be a family member and reaching out to the feline community to help locate a suitable home environment. Thank you for giving us a second chance.



Sinbad has taken up residency and made himself at home.

A Very Educational Weekend

By Lynette Lyon

Every human being needs to periodically be reminded that no one in the world knows EVERYTHING about ANYTHING. It is possible to know a lot, but there is always room for growth.

I have exhibited animals professionally since I was ten years old, and, for the past 15 years, I have never stopped educating myself. Every once in a while, however, I need to remind myself that there is always more to learn. While it's possible to muddle through life and a career in the animal industry on your own, it is a whole lot easier to learn from someone else's experiences and, in some cases, their mistakes.

I understand that people can have reservations about taking the educator's course, as it costs time and money. This class is targeted toward many people who are either educators already or have worked with educators and plan to become educators themselves. Who wants to spend valuable time and money on things one can learn by oneself? The answer is: people who do not want to spend several decades making mistakes and figuring out all those little tips and tricks that the voice of experience can help us bypass.

No two people work with animals using the exact same style and there is far too much variation in human personality for that to be the case. Even learning under

another person will eventually give way to your own unique strengths and weaknesses. One of the things the Wildlife Conservation Educator's class is designed to do is identify our own flaws by looking at different styles and even a variety of mistakes. By having the chance to breakdown different scenarios with a plethora of professionals and newcomers, you are better able to see where your own deficiencies lie.

Trainers and educators have a chance to gain new insight on training and handling techniques. New methods of training can become apparent when "difficult" animals are looked at with fresh eyes. We have all been there with that one animal that is not just difficult as a species, but completely varied as an individual. (*Cough* GEOFFROY'S *cough*)

For those of us who take animals off-site, views on crowd control, animal safety, and dealing with a difficult audience proved invaluable. Opinions on how to keep children entertained for those extra 20 minutes was particularly insightful for me.

Ideas about marketing and business plans, as well as an in-depth look at insurance issues, contained revelations that I had not even considered. Marketing ideas containing everything from social networking to word-of-mouth were thrown into the mix. Outlines for business plans, regardless of business type, reveal issues that commonly come up for animal owners and how to overcome them.

Currently, all animal owners are facing multiple well-funded groups of animal rights activists and extremists. Due to the extraordinary amount of money they are given, these people have influence not just with the government, but with an unsuspecting general public. Being certified with groups like the FCF often gives people pause, even if they do not understand what it means.



Lynette intends to add a caracal to her own educational program and appreciated the opportunity to interact with Hadley and Lola during Wildcat Weekend. Photo by Billie Lambert.

More than just licenses and permits, the certificate indicates that not only are you professional, you are educated. It lends credibility to anyone who has decided to include animals in their career.

While I understand that many people who work with animals do not always find humans that appealing, we have to face the fact that we are not working in a one-person industry anymore. In the day and age of media, the actions of a single person affect the entire field of people who work with animals. Not only do we need to stick together, specialized knowledge and the chance to share it allow us to make intelligent and responsible decisions. Jumping into a situation that you are not ready for could result in injury and even death. By taking this class, people can be well-informed in their decision-making and the impact it will have on their peers.

Anyone new to the industry should still gain hands-on experience with another educator so that they can handle wild animals in public to get a full understanding of the challenge. For those who already work as educators, the class is a wonderful opportunity to network and refresh their ways of thinking. Either way, the course is more than just an excellent base to build from; it is an in-depth look at overcoming difficult situations and the positive effects that we can have, not just on each other or other people, but our world in general.



Billie Lambert carries Lola the caracal, demonstrating to students how to hold a cat with the head pointing away from the public to allow petting of the "safe end" of the cat. Photo by Mindy Stinner.

Two Wildcat Weekend Reviews

By Sharif Yelton

My name is Sharif Yelton and I grew up loving cats. Wherever we lived, we always had two to four cats in the house. I had an interest in animals growing up, from bugs to big game, and was fortunate enough to go on a photo safari in South Africa, where I had some close-up experiences that I will forever remember. Now that I am 23 and have some schooling behind me, I have found my passion as I always find myself in the company of cats. Through my research on the Internet, I learned of the FCF and the Wildcat Weekend, and decided to participate. Being a novice to wildcat education, I thought it would be a great first-time learning experience from qualified educators.

The event, in Sarasota, was very educational and it could not have been in a better setting. The class was held in the center ring surrounded by the roaring lions. Having spent time in mainstream college classes, this was by far a more interesting way to learn. I enjoyed the class being one that was open to discussion and I was able to leave the class with all of my ques-

tions answered. Being new to this field of study, I was glad there were classmates with higher levels of knowledge to learn from, and this left me inspired to learn more. Everyone there was interesting in their own way and I am glad this event brought together such an amazing group of individuals with a common interest and intention. During the weekend, I obtained a great deal of information on the different aspects of the animal sanctuary and caring for the animals.

The husbandry class gave me knowledge of caring for cats that I did not have before, and it was presented in a very clear and understandable way. As a beginner, I was able to keep up with the topics. Day two involved a behind-the-scenes tour of the sanctuary, which was an awesome compliment to the husbandry class. Not only did I learn from the textbook, but a good deal was learned firsthand on how a sanctuary is run. Even though this line of work involves a large team and a lot of self-sacrifices, I was not discouraged at any moment. Being present and sharing space with these animals was very rewarding. Day three of the educator's course was just as exciting and



Sharif came to Wildcat Weekend a novice, but went away feeling much more informed. Here he spends some one-on-one time with Lola. Photo by Billie Lambert.

engaging. I am glad that the lions were there, roaring throughout the day. This was so encouraging and an amazing set of skills was learned that will help me in my future with wildcat conservation.

No longer do I feel like a novice, but rather a well-informed participant in something that is greater than myself. I encourage anyone who has any doubts to take a step into this big world of cats with the right intentions.

By Amanda Trevathen

To All FCF members: By way of intro-



Amanda pets Billie's serval, Anisa, during her visit with the cats inside the instructor trailer at Big Cat Habitat. Photo by Victor Rogers.

duction, my name is Amanda Joy Trevathen. I have been interning at Mystic Jungle Educational Facility for the past year now. My passion for big cats has been with me all my life. Being able to get one-on-one tutoring and education has greatly driven me to preserve these species.

I attended the FCF Wild/Exotic Feline Husbandry course for many reasons, mainly for education and experience. No matter what you think you know, you can always learn more. Safety precautions are extremely important to me. To be able to work with these amazing animals and teach about them can truly save lives.

As my mentor says, "What man does not understand he fears and what he fears he destroys," which brings you to my story of living the tragedy firsthand in the beautiful jungle of Belize, Central America. It was mainly illness and/or injury that would force the native jaguars to come into local villages to hunt prey, and that prey, for me, was my best friend. A dog that I never would have thought could send me on such a mission; a mission that

has led me to my intern position at Mystic Jungle Educational Facility, working to preserve, protect, and propagate these cats, so that life can continue on for everyone.

There was so much information I received from the FCF course. It is amazing to see all the love for these animals. I highly recommend this course for everyone. It was a great atmosphere and a very comfortable testing site. Being inside the big cat preforming arena, hearing lions roaring in the next room, was such an honored experience. I am looking forward to the next course.

Big Cat Habitat is an amazing home for many animals, large and small. Their outlook on life is truly uplifting. If only everyone could share the love and quality of life for big cats; to be considered as equals, as they should be. I highly recommend visiting their facility and participating in the education and teaching they give at every show.

I enjoyed sharing my experience, spreading the word to educate our children, as they too can make a difference.





Feline Conservation Federation

January/February 2014 Volume 53, Issue 1

The mission of the FCF is to support the conservation of wild felids by advocating for qualified individuals to own and to pursue husbandry of wild felines, providing expertise and material support to ensure the continued welfare and viability of these populations, contributing to research, and funding protection programs that benefit felids living in nature.

Front Cover: Puja, a nine-year-old tiger, resides at the Natural Bridge Zoo in southern Virginia. This impressive fellow looks completely at home in the snow. Puja is the breeding male at the park. Photo by Gretchen Mogensen.

Back Cover: Aztec snoozing. The 17-year-old jaguar has retired at Panther Ridge Conservation Center. The Wellington, Florida, center founder, Judy Berens, reports he had just jumped into his pool, caught a five-pound bass, and eaten the whole thing. Now it is nap time... life is good! Photo by Yvonne Veety.

www.FelineConservation.org

