

Feline Conservation Federation

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



Feline Conservation Federation

Letter from the President

Here we are entering the summer months, and it is time for you to start thinking about the legislation season for those of you who don't have year-round legislature. Every year we are seeing more and more legislation being introduced by the HSUS and similar animal rights groups. The time to fight this legislation is now rather than waiting until after the legislation is introduced and it becomes an all-out effort without the necessary time.

You should make contact with your legislators now and introduce yourself. Legislators are much more likely to respond when you need them if they know you. Face it, a person that keeps wildcats isn't the normal acquaintance for most people and the legislator is very likely to remember you even if your meeting or correspondence is brief. This familiarity can help you immensely later on.

It isn't hard to meet with a legislator this time of year, when they aren't being kept busy with the legislature in session. Many will be attending fairs, festivals, and parades to keep their public images

up. These are perfect places to catch them and have a brief discussion with them. Explain who you are, that you voted for them (a little white lie never hurts in this regard), and that you hope they will keep abreast of any anti-ownership bills that may come up. Don't count on them contacting you if one is introduced, but it is good to tell them that so when you contact them during legislation, they know you are serious.

In Indiana, a recent court ruling eliminated the state's ability to issue possession permits and game breeders' permits for everything, including native species. At first, this sounds great, but you can rest assured that the Animal Rights (AR) groups are scrambling right now to fill that void with their own biased legislation. I will be getting with other Indiana stakeholders to come up with our own version of what we think will work best. Hopefully, we can get our points across to the ones in the Department of Natural Resources, who will undoubtedly be writing their own bill. We will need to work with them to make their version stronger so that the

animal rightists' versions aren't the ones that get introduced. Any work we can do now will cut the work load we have once legislation begins. We know that regardless of whose bill is introduced, the HSUS and friends will be doing their darnedest to shut us down.

One thing that is in our favor is that the Indiana State Attorney General led Indiana to be the second state to initiate investigations into fraudulent fundraising practices of the HSUS. Oklahoma was the first. Hopefully, other states will follow suit and all of the states will rule against the HSUS. As it is, the HSUS doesn't have many backers in the Indiana legislature. The fact that they have had an investigation opened against them even further sullies their reputation.

So, get out there and make your contacts with legislators to protect our abilities to keep the wild cats we love so much!

Kevin Chambers

From the Executive Director

By Lynn Culver

The FCF website has been undergoing a complete overhaul and facelift. It should be live by the time you are reading this *Journal* issue. The new website has many of the original pages and a lot of updating on the "Conservation" section. As admin of the website, it was another duty to select which pages to move, review all the text and make improvements, and then place them into the new website. About two years ago, the original website developed code problems, causing errors and making it frustrating to update. The overhauled site has addressed these and more. Websites are always a work in progress, as there is more to load, some to remove, and it requires oversight. I want everyone in the FCF who has an interest in this organization and is familiar with maintaining websites to consider volunteering to be trained for this position. With hundreds of members, this duty can certainly fall on another loyal FCF member's shoulders. Drop me an email anytime at executivedirector@felineconservation.org if you think you have the time and talent to keep up the FCF website.

This issue of the *Journal* contains an account of a yearlong lawsuit filed against one of our member zoos, Cricket Hollow Zoo, in Iowa. An animal rights extremist organization, the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), has filed suit in federal court alleging that the zoo has violated the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Pam Sellner has shared all the legal papers and it is amazing to read how ignorant of the law the ALDF is, and yet they can drag someone into court with false charges. The original case included species that are not even covered by the ESA, such as lions and a serval. The case alleges trafficking violations involving tigers when none occurred, and even if there were commerce in tigers, they are exempt from the requirement due to the generic tiger ruling. Five zoo-visiting ALDF investigators joined the suit, alleging emotional distress over the condition of the animals. The case is now before a judge to rule on the ALDF motion for summary judgment and decide if it will go forward with a

trial. This is an extremely expensive tactic being used as a weapon in the AR's ongoing war against private ownership of wildlife. A ruling in the plaintiff's favor could be a precedent for future cases. Anytime an AR investigator disapproves of an exhibitor's handling of endangered species, they could be forced to answer a suit in federal court. I will be watching and praying for the Sellners.

This issue contains some great commentaries on the positive side of animals in captivity and how to battle the Animal Rights arguments. Be sure to read these two and add them to your arsenal of responses when questioned by visitors that have been brainwashed by these extremist groups.





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Why Zoos Are Animal Prisons and Why That Doesn't Matter : A Guest Editorial

By Melissa A. Smith

Hello, my name is Melissa Smith, and I write captive animal welfare-related articles on Hubpages, as well as on my blog "Captive Animal Logic." This hobby is a great way to blow off some steam regarding the hypocritical attitudes brewing about exotic pet owners and zoological facilities among the general public, as well as raising awareness for "fence sitters" on the topic. My approach to anti-zoo and anti-pet criticism is simple—I believe all the outcry stems from what I call the domestication myth, or the belief that keeping a so-called wild animal in captivity is somehow inherently cruel and unique from keeping culturally popular pets. I embrace manipulative terms like "slave," "prisoner," and "exploitation" to remove their emotional spell. I myself own a green aracari, spotted genet, reptiles/herps, and a dog, but would love to acquire many more exotics in the future, perhaps one day achieving my pipe dream goal of getting a caracal. Keeping even one exotic mammal has allowed me to garner a lot of insight into animal behavior and how their minds work.

Animals—You Think You Know What They "Want"—You Have No Idea

One particular reason that the animal rights and animal liberation movements gain so much momentum among not just the public, but some members of the scientific community with reasonable intelligence, is due to what we do not, and technically cannot, know about animal minds.

Animals in Prison

Q. Are zoo/pet animals prisoners?

Prison: noun

1. A building for the confinement of persons held while awaiting trial, persons sentenced after conviction, etc.
2. State prison.
3. Any place of confinement or involuntary restraint.
4. Imprisonment.

A. Yes! According to definition #3, if animals are confined, they are imprisoned. This applies to all animals; dogs, cats, squirrels, dolphins,

starfish... any confined animal. And this is all regardless of whether or not you think they like it there. There are, however, a few giant differences between human correctional facilities and zoos or pet environments, and differences between humans and animals.

Is Captivity Immoral?

The field of animal cognition has a lot of unexplored territory, as we seem to keep discovering surprising facts we did not know about our non-human peers.

Due to limited and feebly understood evidence that suggests some species might not do well in captivity, this creates a great environment for people to make up any conclusions that they wish, and this most certainly will be heavily supplemented with what the human prefers for oneself.

Selfish Ego?

Selfishness is an irrelevant part of whether or not holding captive animals is ethical. When humans keep pets, any pets, it is undeniably selfish—humans began their relationship with animals in order to further their own benefits. Our society's beloved use and ownership of dogs, horses, and cats are no exception. Very few people actually fully object to "animal exploitation," and instead favor culturally acceptable forms, including the debilitating selective breeding of canines.

What truly matters is, if by holding animals as captives, we are harming them by causing them unreasonable distress or

physical deterioration from denying them access to wild living. I am willing to state that I cannot undeniably know for sure the preferences of my animals, domesticated or otherwise (or if they have them). What I can do is make something called an educated guess, applying what I and neutral science knows about animals, my experience with the individual animals, and orchestrating some "free-choice" experiments with my pets, of which I will explain further. But first, to fully comprehend the ethics, we must have a clear understanding of the alternative to captivity.

This Is How "The Wild" Produces "Happy" and Healthy Animals

When a rehabilitated animal is released into the "wild," it is gone, and everyone feels good, as images of the animals persevering in the iconic landscape dance in their heads. Nature thrives in the eyes of romantic humans with its cloak of invisibility—perhaps we only get a small glimpse from the work of dedicated wildlife documentarian filmmakers—those who do not use phony methods.

In reality, animal populations undergo nature's rigorous and ruthless initiation process called natural selection, which is the driving force behind evolution.

Like the selective breeding we accomplish with dogs, certain genes are favored in the process, and the "fittest" genes are "chosen" in the wild (and biological fitness is not about physical strength, like the term gym fitness), but, unlike most dog breeding, nature simply executes the "inferior" genes in its system or, at best, denies them breeding access.

In other words, natural selection is partially powered by death, most of it wreaking havoc on cute little babies.

It is not good. It is not bad. It is just simply the means of which there is life on Earth. Do animals find their premature death any more pleasant because they were sacrificed for the glamorous?

"Circle of Life?" No.

Captivity, on the other hand, keeps all of its players



The author's pet genet, given the choice, only explores for minutes before returning to the familiar comfort of the bedroom.

alive, so this could unintentionally produce less healthy or less mentally fit individuals (we have intentionally done this with dogs). Everything that goes on in captive situations is on full display, while dead wild animals are mostly quickly consumed before any safari-goer sees them.

Here is an example of how captivity can be far more humane and forgiving. Some species of monkeys might give birth, determine that a deformity in the baby is too costly to devote precious energy toward, and drop it on the ground to starve to death.

In responsibly conducted captive situations, discarded or poorly cared for baby monkeys are pulled and given individualized attention. Some may claim that mental illness from the captive environment is the result of such maternal neglect, yet it simply is not acknowledged that this is proven to occur in nature—and given that

we can see and assess every aspect of captive animals while nature is a largely hidden world, much of the atrocities that go on there can be neatly swept under the natural rug.

You also never get to see animals looking “bored” either. That is because they are too busy trying to survive, or they are fearful of the human holding a camera gawking at them. No wonder animals look so bored in zoos!

The Animal-Human Comparison Fallacy

“Would you want to live in a cage?”

This is a typical appeal to an emotion remark exclaimed by those who are against keeping animals in captivity.

My answer is, “No, I would not want to live in a cage. And, for that matter, I would not want to only be allowed out of my house on a leash either.”

Most importantly, I would not want to

be cast out into the wild and placed against natural selection's rigorous test of fitness, as I am an animal that is used to living a modern existence. The same is likely true for all other animals raised in confinement.

Animals Are Not Humans (The word animal here will be considered to mean non-human.)

Q. If a zoo lion could talk, what would it say?

A. If a lion could talk, it would not be a lion. It would be a person; a non-human person.

What Are Animals?

This is how I see it, and this is what drives my ethics. Most (warm-blooded) animals are akin to human infants under six months of age, but without the innate need for maternal attachment and with the instinctual and physical prowess for self-sufficiency in their adult stage. Yes, this is simplifying to a huge degree. Animals are equipped with a myriad of unique sensory and cognitive programming, and infants are, of course, developing humans, so they likely are developing cognitive milestones at different points in this period that I am not equipped to discuss in depth.

Animals are not literally human infants, but they have these essential elements in common: no language (no, seriously), little or no self-awareness, instincts (and food-seeking) that dominate behavior, as well as highly stereotyped behaviors. I have suggested that humans are the only species of which you cannot answer the question “describe the behavior of (humans)” with a generalization, yet this can be done with human infants and animal species. (When you talk to an animal, does not it sound like you are talking to a baby? Coincidence?)

Human behavior is mostly dictated by culture, society, values, morals, and ethics. Genetics comes in to a smaller degree. This is why humans are so extraordinarily individualistic. On the other end, some of the most impressive examples of “animal culture” lie with food forging methods and other aspects strongly grounded in immediate survival (that probably power fitness).

There are undoubtedly parallels in human and animal cognition. That is because there is continuity in the evolution of our brains that even exists in the invertebrates that the majority of people have no problem stepping on.

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I see consciousness as layered; we have the near universal sub-consciousness that powers mechanisms like classical conditioning, another level of cognition in the form of social awareness that invites other individuals into the animal's mental "world" (or theory of mind), and the very high order of thought that occurs in humans. We possess complex cognition so rich it allows the development of true, infinitely expressive and inventive language. This combines many elements of cognition that no other animal has been proven to achieve (yes, this includes Koko the gorilla, Alex the parrot, and Kanzi the bonobo).

If A Pet Bird Escapes, It Wants To Be Free. Right?

But why am I rambling on about this? Now that I have explained to you my human-infant theory, I want you to ponder how we treat infants or young children. If a toddler wanders off into potential danger, do we not stop them? We understand that even toddlers, who have language and complex self-awareness, are still not aware enough to understand the consequences their actions might have; consequences that are certainly not desirable for the child, even though the child does not know that yet.

Just like animals. Even domesticated animals will run off. Yes, this includes dogs, especially when they are not neutered or spayed (which, shockingly, most non-domesticated pets are not). Yet no one interprets this behavior as a cry for freedom. They probably understand that their dog or cat got confused and headed in the wrong direction, or hormones won the instinctual fight over rationality. We understand that these animals have limited awareness, react compulsively, and cannot rationally weigh the costs of their actions. Should even a "wild" animal instinctively

run away, that does not mean they are making a conscious, rational choice. Even an injured animal will hobble away from the aid of humans, and why is this? Because it does not and cannot understand that a human will help it. Of course, not even all "wild" animals run away. Trained parrots (and toucans), like those used in the numerous "free flying" videos that can be found on YouTube, can simply keep flying away and never look back, but do not. This training simply involves shifting an animal's motivation to a behavior it is not normally instinctively equipped for (returning to a human owner vs. flocking with a group of birds). Once these non-domesticated birds develop a mental foundation for recalling upon command, they are far less prone to fleeing out of confusion. This is one reason training is so enriching for all captive animals.

What Do Animals Want?

My research and limited understanding has led me to two generalizing conclusions that seem to make sense: animals raised in captivity prefer captivity, and animals raised in the wild prefer the wild. Both of these settings typically provide the five freedoms, but there can be exceptions or deficiencies in both.

- Animals can suffer both in the wild and captivity, depending on the situation.

- Many captive situations are undeniably superior to wild situations.

- Animals probably do not dwell on human-constructs like the words "prison" or "slave."

- Instead, they mostly think compulsively and address their immediate needs.

Freedom... To Starve?

What is freedom? Humans like to think of it as the ability to move around wherever you want. But other important freedoms they might overlook are the

freedom from starvation or thirst, freedom from not having shelter or territory, and freedom from no medical care if needed.

What about the freedom to age comfortably? Most animals are condemned to death once they begin to ail. Humans seem to value this freedom, but it is lost on anti-captivity proponents. So saying animals should be "free" is not so simple after all.

Animals are actually very practical. They more than likely do not plague their minds with human self-aggrandizing thoughts. Humans are terrible judges of what animals "want" because most humans have fanciful perceptions and expectations about their lives.

Of course, many will resent that I think most animals are fine with living in the same space. These are often the same people who do not object to it being done to cows, horses, cats, hamsters, chickens, etc., because of nothing other than culturally-propelled domestication myths.

Five Freedoms of Captivity

Freedom from hunger or thirst,
Freedom from discomfort,
Freedom from pain, injury, or disease,
Freedom to express (most) normal behavior, and
Freedom from fear and distress.

This is more than the "golden rule" of maintaining any animal; it is also the basic interest of all living beings, save modern humans. The five freedoms rule is a heavily simplified grouping that means different things for different species. For instance, with more complex animals, like great apes, stable social situations are a requirement, but it is not for hamsters.

My Bird Hates Going To Work with Me!

Both my spotted genet and green aracari (toucan) return to their cages on

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their own. The genet generally does not have an interest in leaving my room, and, so far, my toucan has never left the room on his own. Sometimes, I carry him out and he flies back into my room, right to his cage (yet I have little doubt that should I take this bird outside, he will fear-fly away from me). While they were both raised in cages, I have encouraged them to explore on occasion. Genets are solitary; toucans are not.

The toucan does appreciate time out of his cage, but mainly stays in one area of the room, seeming content with this space. I do not even bother closing my door.

My genet occasionally, but not often, leaves the room, explores the balcony, and sometimes goes downstairs, but usually comes running back up at the speed of light in minutes to his cage. I view this activity on a web camera, since he is too nervous to leave with me there. This video shows his return complex as I lure him out with food rewards. Unsurprisingly, since I do not free feed, my genet seems more apt to “explore” depending on how hungry he is. In fact, as I tried to encourage him to have positive out-of-room “excursions” with treats given in my room upon his return, he began to associate this reward with staying in my room and eventually refused to leave again.

This led me to two conclusions: an aviary around the size of my room would be perfectly suitable as permanent housing for green aracarís (my cage is not big



Melissa's green toucan does spend time out of his cage, but mainly stays in one area.

enough for this); and permanent housing for spotted genets requires room for running and climbing, but enrichment is most important. Since my pets live in small cages, they are allowed time out of them as I see fit. These are my methods for hypothesizing a suitable environment.

I feel these animals have adapted to their situation. Their behavior is not natural, but that is because they are in an unnatural environment. When raised in the wild, animals explore more territory dependent on how many resources they are able to secure in order to survive. For genets, this might require acres of forging. In my house, it requires 50 feet, or successful harassing of their caretaker.

Cognitive Bias and Appeal to Nature

Unfortunately, despite the vast “intelli-

gence” of the human race, we struggle with our diverse cognitive and methodological flaws. In science, objectivity is our only saving grace, and as soon as we deviate from it, our thought processes can no longer be considered reliable.

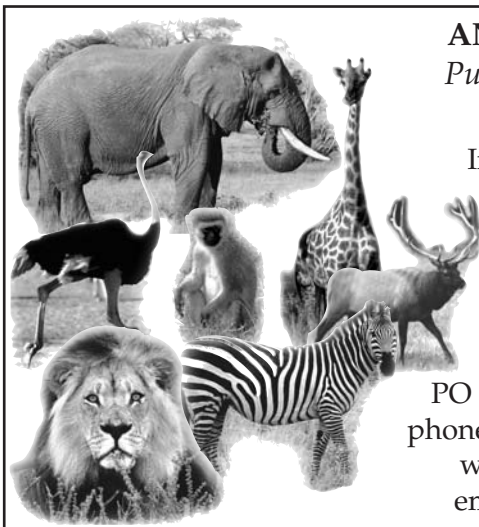
Much of the captivity criticism is about appeasing human emotional needs. Prevalent in our society is a mentality about “nature” being an inherent force of goodness, so much to the point that it is often not thought objectively about.

It comes as absolutely no surprise that “credible” researchers will make dramatic and unscientific claims about animal minds to push animal liberation goals to the scientifically illiterate (most of the populace, including our legislators who are educated in law, not cognition). However, I believe that, in our ignorance, there are still steps we can take to unearth truth and decide who to trust.

What Is At Stake?

Why should we consider captivity? Animal rights ideology is appealing because it seems like a win-win solution. Since most believe that life in the “wild” is the pinnacle of existence, even if possibly incorrect about how animals are faring in captivity, many are not willing to objectively consider the benefits of zoos and pet keeping for animals and people.

What if they are wrong about animals “suffering” in captivity? In the worst case scenario, animals are denied access to a comfortable existence and humans lose numerous wonderful professions, lifestyles, and educational opportunities that were not inherently causing harm. The quality of wild animal rehabilitation suffers and our understanding of animal psychology diminishes. Potentially successful conservation efforts are also undermined. And the reason will be because of irrational generalizations about how animals respond to captive conditions. Anyone who understands that domesticated animals are suitable for captivity is required to consider the same of any other species. Animals should be judged on a species and individual basis to determine their quality of life.



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Animals in Captivity

By Andrew Tkach

Humans have sought the companionship of animals throughout history. However, in the present, there can be much controversy over the captive holding of what are considered to be exotic or wild animals. It is imperative that we regulate the private ownership of these animals rather than ban the practice altogether. When done responsibly, the captive holding of wildlife fights extinction and is beneficial to both the animals and the humans involved.

First and foremost, keeping a population of any particular animal in captivity directly prevents the species from going extinct. Many factors can strain the numbers of any populace, such as disease, human development, or poaching. However, it is possible to breed animals in a controlled environment and introduce them into the wild. For example, according to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, in the 1980s there were 23 California condors left in the wild. Scientists captured what population remained of these birds of prey and started a captive breeding program. A census in 2013 showed that there were over 180 condors living in the wild. Captive breeding brought the California condor back from the brink of extinction.

Next, by keeping animals in captivity, there is a unique opportunity to learn about them. Caretakers gain a unique perspective of whatever species they steward. As Douglas Miller explains in his book, *Cats of the World*, zoos will play an important role in the future of the animals they house with two specific methods: by conducting research that will improve wildlife management and by educating the public. Zoos and conservation centers alike share their knowledge and grant an opportunity for the average person to observe unique creatures they may never even know about otherwise. Most people have never heard about the binturong – also known as the Asian bearcat. This

arboreal carnivore has barely been studied in the wild. However, after years of captive breeding and observation, we now consider the binturong a keystone species. When a binturong eats the fruit of its natural habitat, its digestive system breaks down the outer coating of the seeds and causes a significantly higher rate of germination. In other words, the Asian bearcat is directly responsible for keeping the forest canopy healthy, a forest that houses

them, and follow them. In this way I bond with them.” Associating with the nature around us enriches our lives. Unfortunately, in our busy lives we often forget about things not in our immediate surroundings; out of sight, out of mind. One could not possibly care about the binturong if one does not know it exists. Having animals in captivity helps remind mankind that we share this world; this teaches us to live a humbler and more mindful existence. A culture that knows humility will fight to keep these beings in existence.

Now consider how the captive holding of animals helps the specific being when properly regulated. There are those who are licensed to take in injured or orphaned wildlife and release them after they have grown and healed; he or she would be known as a rehabilitator. Often these people work other jobs and care for the unfortunate out of their personal homes and pockets. The local Game and Fish Commission require these individuals to apply for a license. This ensures that they are

knowledgeable and regulated; nevertheless, this practice can be controversial and is considered captive holding on privately owned land. Rehabbers directly combat the population loss brought on by human development. Whether a hawk is hit by a car or a songbird is attacked by a domestic cat, there is a specialized rehabilitator who could save a life. The individual animal kept must certainly appreciate a second chance at life. Without the laws and regulations to allow this practice, there would be even fewer wild animals today.

Additionally, animal husbandry can be invaluable to the specific creature, as well as their wild counterparts. Ambassador animals are tame animals with human relations that participate in educational shows. Rather than merely being observed in an enclosure, these envoys give an opportunity to the public to interact with the animal; this helps us to appreciate them on a deeper level. The Association of Zoos and Aquariums has



Andrew explores the flower and vegetable garden with a pair of young lynxes. Sharing experiences with wild animals enriches all their lives.

thousands of other species of plants and animals. With this knowledge, we can take action to protect and preserve them. Without captive breeding, we would have undoubtedly lost some of this world's most precious inhabitants.

What is more, by bringing these animals into our environment, we teach ourselves something more than mere facts or science. We share this world with so many species other than humans. Each and every one is an important part of our planet. Those who work with these animals learn to love them and are inspired by them. Zoo patrons are left in awe by merely looking at a tiger in person. World-renowned scientist and feline expert Dr. Jim Sanderson has explained what brings him the motivation to preserve and protect these cats in the wild by writing in the *Feline Conservation Federation Journal*, “I think it is because I get to touch them.” He wrote, “I sometimes capture them, radio collar them, release

researched this phenomenon in their 2009 Felid Tag Report; the data of this study shows that patrons of the same zoo would stay twice as long at an exhibit with an ambassador animal present. Even more important, the visitors were asked questions about the animals to see if they could give cognitive responses. In the *Feline Conservation Federation Journal*, Kevin Chambers explains what is meant by a cognitive response; "For example, saying that a snow leopard has a long tail is not a cognitive response. Saying a snow leopard uses its long tail for balance in its habitat of rocky precipices is cognitive." Out of the visitors who saw only the zoo's basic exhibit, only nine percent could produce cognitive responses, significantly lower than the 69 percent of those who saw an ambassador animal. These ambassadors clearly captivate the public. A passionate and knowledgeable culture will help animals in captivity and the wild; this is why it is so important that we continue the practice of private ownership.

Moreover, animals may benefit from captivity even when there is no specific job or purpose. The luckiest animal in the world is a properly cared for companion. Mankind agrees to sacrifice certain freedoms for things such as community, food, and modern day medicine; the tradeoff is the same for animals. Certain animals are technically exotic even though they have become more socially acceptable, like most birds or reptiles. The important matter is that the animal be given suitable food, space, and mental or emotional stimulation as is needed with the species. There are laws and regulations in place to help ensure the ethical treatment of these animals, as well as the safety of those who work with them. The Animal Welfare Act and the Captive Wildlife Safety Act are just a couple of the federal regulations in place to allow private ownership to continue in a responsible manner. If exotic animals are held in captivity responsibly, then it is foolish to ban the practice entirely. In a situation where an exotic animal is abused or devoid of stimulation, the problem is not the exotic nature of the being. It is commonly accepted that having companion animals can enrich the lives of humans and pets alike. It is true that most people are not equipped to care for something as powerful as a tiger. However, if someone is willing to dedicate the time, space, and money, both

human and animal alike can benefit; therefore, laws and regulations should be set, rather than trying to stop captive ownership.

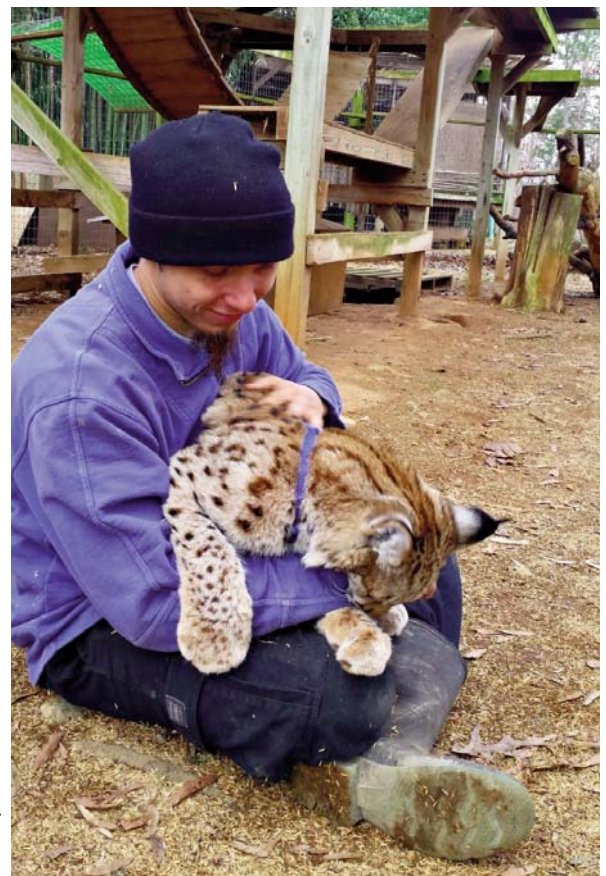
In all honesty, having animals in captivity also brings an obvious benefit to humans as well. No matter where one stands on the subject, animal research has irrefutably increased the quality and length of our lives. According to the organization Americans for Medical Progress, animal research is directly responsible for some of the latest advancements in treatments for cancer, HIV, heart disease, diabetes, and many other ailments. Without these treatments, our susceptibility to many modern diseases would be dramatically increased. There is no adequate substitute for an entire living system when performing medical research. Without a living specimen, it is nearly impossible to ascertain the full effects a treatment will have on the various interconnected systems that form a whole body. This process is regulated by the Animal Welfare act to ensure ethical treatment, and the animals themselves benefit from the results. Once this knowledge is obtained, it is known forever after. Therefore, having animals in captivity has directly saved countless lives.

Furthermore, another benefit that must be considered is entertainment and commerce. People simply enjoy seeing these animals. According to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, there are over 175 million patrons each year that visit zoos in the organization, which is more visitor attendance than the NFL, NBA, NHL, and MLB combined. Together, these facilities generate over \$16 billion yearly, supporting more than 142,000 jobs. Within this association, this money is used to create better enclosures, educate the public, and pursue conservation efforts in the wild. It is apparent that the majority of the public supports these endeavors. If proper regulations are set and followed, and humans enjoy having them around, much good can come from this.

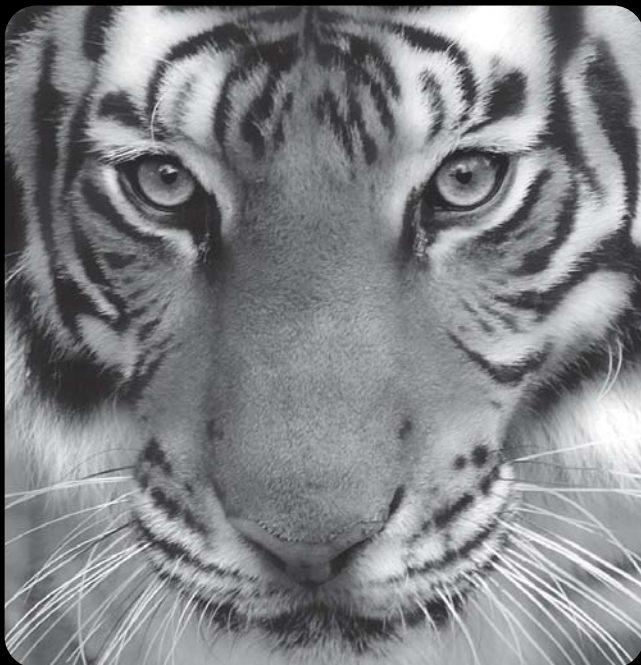
Finally, in many cases mod-

ern humans have lost touch with the natural side of our world. As long as people eat food that comes out of the ground, we will be tied to this natural world. We are reminded of this connection by seeing these animals and interacting with them. Seeing a picture is not enough, and often we do not look past the billboard of our cities. The variety of life adds a poetic depth to our existence, even if we do not realize it. A lion symbolizes nobility and strength, and the owl represents wisdom. It is necessary to be able to reach out to these creatures if we truly wish to connect with them, to remind ourselves of what a gift this world is with all of its splendid diversity; in this way, having animals in captivity helps the human race.

In conclusion, having animals in our captive world brings incalculable benefit. This practice can, and should, be done responsibly. It is important that regulations be set to ensure that this practice is continued responsibly; to ban this practice would be folly.



The luckiest animal in the world is a properly cared for companion. Andrew and Vladamir share a quiet moment together.



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Facility Spotlight: Panther Ridge - Wellington, Florida

By Maxene Price

Panther Ridge Conservation Center was founded by Judy Berens in 1999, and houses 17 exotic felines in Wellington, Florida. Though only a few minutes outside of Palm Beach, it feels like stepping into paradise; a special secret that only you, your friends, and a few big cats know about.



One of the perks of interning is that Maxene was able to establish relationships with many of Panther Ridge's resident felines. Maxene embraces a clouded leopard, one of four at the facility.

The facility is committed to the core purpose of connecting species representatives to the larger picture of conservation. Keepers, interns, and volunteers challenge high expectations of husbandry and training, putting Panther Ridge on the map as an animal care organization, educational resource, ark, and advocate for big cats around the world.

This past spring, I had the opportunity to complete an internship at Panther Ridge. As the owner of a three year old serval, I was already familiar with the antics of smaller felines, but wanted to gain experience with other species. Panther Ridge houses four clouded leopards, four ocelots, two jaguars, two servals, two cougars, a caracal, a black leopard, and a cheetah. Each of the cats won my heart by the end of my stay.



Why are places like PRCC important?

Panther Ridge focuses on species representation as a means of conservation. Studies have shown that species representation and visibility directly correlates with conservation funding. With education as the focal point, visitors learn not only about the individual cats housed there, but the current status of their species in the wild.

"It is difficult to be concerned about the fate of an animal you have never seen. Even a two-dimensional film representation of an animal does not have anywhere near the same effect as seeing one in the flesh, hearing it, smelling it. The usual response to such a real-life sight – whether in a zoo or in the wild – is emotional." - Jake Page

Panther Ridge also supports several programs that influence conservation on the ground. One of their favorite programs is the guarding dog program. This program pairs Anatolian shepherd dogs with farmers and their livestock in Africa. The dogs protect livestock from cheetah attacks, barking loudly whenever they see a cheetah or predator, scaring them and other big cats away.

With a combination of approaches, Panther Ridge hopes its contributions to conservation help to inspire and encourage others to become actively involved in the



global effort to preserve species.

What sets PRCC apart from other facilities?

Panther Ridge houses a small amount of animals compared to other facilities in the area. This allows for a large keeper to cat ratio, resulting in highly individualized care and training of animals. The individualization is even represented in their diet, which exceeds industry standards by offering a varied supply of horse, goat, chicken, turkey, beef, lamb, and diverse whole prey items. The small staff also allows for input and collaboration from members. Everyone at Panther Ridge has an opportunity to bring their knowledge and experiences to the table. By encouraging enrichment and training think-tanks, Panther Ridge is able to make positive contributions to the cats quickly. Fire-hose hammocks, a fresh herb enrichment garden, and musical enrichment are just some of the innovative ideas that were implemented during my stay.

Veterinary Progress at PRCC

Panther Ridge has started a new medical training program using operant conditioning to draw blood from feline residents' tails without having to sedate them. There has already been success using this training process with Charlie, the ambassador cheetah, and Aztec, the jaguar. Using training in place of sedation, you can eliminate the risks involved with inducing anesthesia. Cats are given food as keepers desensitize their tails by petting and poking them. Once the cats no longer react, they are ready for a blood draw. This process takes several weeks. Due to these preventative blood tests, Panther Ridge has been able to catch health prob-



Charlie the cheetah began losing weight, even though he was eating every meal. A full diagnostic work-up was scheduled. Charlie's procedure included digital X-rays, multiple blood tests, and a teeth cleaning.

lems before they have time to develop into full-blown medical ailments.

During my stay, we got an unusual reading from one of the blood tests on Charlie, the cheetah. It had also been noticed that he was not maintaining his weight as usual, despite no diet changes. It was decided he should undergo a medical procedure to test all body systems.



Toltec and three other ocelots live at Panther Ridge. Ocelots were at one time a commonly possessed companion animal in the 1960s through the 1980s. Today, however, this species is an extremely rare sight at privately-owned facilities.

Through this procedure, it was discovered that the weight loss was due to an absorption problem called exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (EPI), also known as maldigestion syndrome. Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency is thought to be rare in cats. However, new research suggests veterinarians should look more closely at EPI as a potential cause of diarrhea and chronic

weight loss in big cats.

In big cats with the disorder, there is a decrease or lack of digestive enzymes being produced by the pancreas. Proteins, starches, and fats from the diet aren't broken down sufficiently enough to be absorbed through the intestinal wall. This means nutrients are unable to enter the bloodstream and supply nour-

ishment to tissues. Much of the food that is eaten remains undigested in the GI tract, and ultimately leaves the body in feces. If left untreated, a cat with EPI can literally starve to death despite how much food is consumed. Charlie has started to regain his weight with a combination of synthetic and natural pancreatic enzymes. Panther Ridge should see his health continue to improve. Charlie is nine years old.

Memorable Residents




Brandy the Cougar

Brandy was kept in poor conditions as an exotic pet, housed in a small bedroom. Because of this, she is afraid to enter small spaces. Keepers must feed her and clean her enclosure in free contact. A spotter is always present to narrate the location and body language of the cougar, and to standby in case of emergency. After being confiscated from the house she was raised in, Brandy spent six years in a facility with concrete floors, no enrichment, and limited human contact. After coming to Panther Ridge in 2013, she has begun to play again. Once a cat is accepted at Panther Ridge, they are pro-



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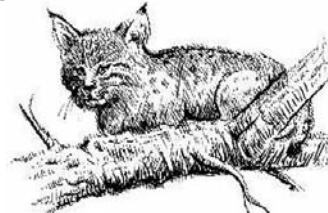
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vided care for the duration of their life span. Brandy has found a forever home.

Cody the Ocelot

Cody is the oldest resident at Panther Ridge. At 21 years old, he would be considered 105 in human years. Cody began life as an exotic pet. His owner decided that his needs were beyond her abilities. He was compassionately released from his owner to Panther Ridge ten years ago. He thrives with human companionship and enjoys the attention of his keepers. He frequently reaches out of his enclosure to scent keepers with his paw glands.

Mingtoo and Mei

Mingtoo and Mei were brought to Panther Ridge for their retirement from Nashville Zoo. The brother-sister pair has done well away from the excitement and stress of being on exhibit. They are often found snuggling in their canopy bungalow or eating their favorite treat, frozen cantaloupe.

Duma the Serval

Duma was found left behind at a pet shop. It appeared he was a pet who had started to spray. Duma is also known for giving keepers "Duma-dos." These are hairstyles created by rubbing his scent glands from his cheeks on his keepers' heads. He is one of the friendliest residents at Panther Ridge.

How do I visit?

To visit the facility, you book one of two tours. Standard tours are an hour long and given by staff members. Director's tours are two hours long and more personal, including feedings and an indepth look at the human-animal bond between the director, Judy Berens, and the cats.

The benefit of having private tours over a free-roaming facility is the individualized attention groups get to experience. Essentially, you



Brandy came to Panther Ridge in 2013. She has blossomed under the care provided and it is hoped she will enjoy many more years of life.



Charlie the cheetah was born in Africa, and came to the facility as a yearling. He serves as an educational ambassador. Charlie gets special care to address his digestive disorder.



Amos is a stunningly beautiful black panther. His shiny coat and joker personality are evidence of his good health and happy life.

are getting a keeper talk for each animal, the ability to ask questions, and interaction with the cats up-close. Tours can be tailored to age groups and knowledge levels. In this intimate setting, you get a closer look at the work that goes into conserving the cats, as well as their everyday routine, diets, and quirks.

How do I get involved with PRCC?

You can connect with Panther Ridge through their website, <http://www.pantherridge.org>. There, you can book tours, adopt resident felines, and donate to Panther Ridge Conservation Center. To see more media and get updates about upcoming events, you can "like" Panther Ridge on Facebook. Panther Ridge also accepts volunteers to those who are local to the area.

Special Thanks

My experience at Panther Ridge Conservation Center was a remarkable opportunity that I am forever grateful for. The keepers, interns, and volunteers I had the privilege of working with have helped me become a better keeper and animal advocate. Saying goodbye was a difficult process, but I know that I will return to Panther Ridge to visit the humans and felines that make the facility so special. I encourage others to make their way to Wellington, and treat themselves to an unforgettable experience.

A special thank you to Judy Berens, Brenna Valencia, Emily Martin, Elizabeth Felton, Bette Cannon, Anne Michelis, and my husband, Aaron Price, for holding down the fort while I was on my animal adventure.



Tim Berges took this stop-action photo of Ameeka chasing a toy when he visited the NOAH facility.



Tim Stafford, a guest of Bear Creek Center, took this beautiful photo of tain lion, Cleo, who recently crossed "Rainbow Bridge" at the age of 1

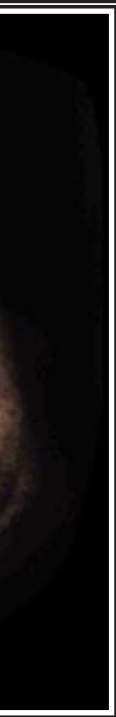
Your Best Shots!



Patrick Kelley and his best serval friend, Stewie.



Saber, a beautiful white tiger, calls Florida's his home. Photo by Rachel Arnot



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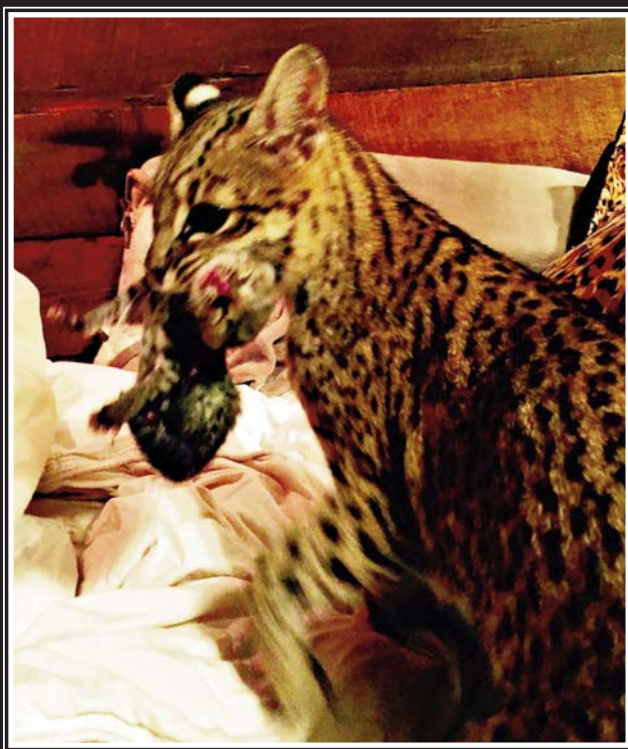
Courtney Frenchak took this photo
of Hunter reading the *FCF Journal*.



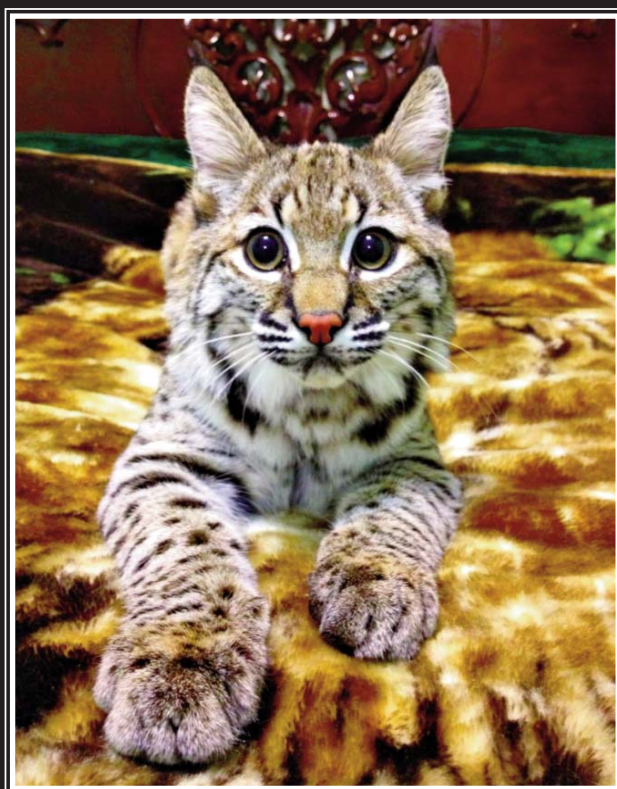
Stephanie Wells says her kids baked
this birthday cake for their bobcat Ban-
dit's first birthday.



C.L.A.W.S.
tt.



Sheri DeFlorio was surprised by her
Geoffroy's cat, Midori, choosing to
give birth on the comforter of her bed.



Rachel Arnott's male bobcat, Ozlow,
is a beautiful boy.

Rearing a Carpathian Lynx By Hand



Little Vladamir was removed for hand-rearing after his mother lost both his siblings.

By Anett Engelhardt

I work for the Tierpark Gotha Zoo, in Germany, as a zookeeper. On May 14, 2014, we changed the enclosure of our Carpathian lynxes. The enclosure area is about 900 square meters (~3,000 sq. ft.), and has two extra parts of about nine square meters (~30 sq. ft.) each where the lynxes can sleep. We separated the two lynxes, since the female was pregnant to give them time to get used to the new arrangement.

The female gave birth to three babies

and, for the next

three to four days, she cared for her cubs very

well. But then we discovered that one baby was dead. We separated the mother to check inside the box and found that there was only one baby left alive. The third cub must have already been eaten by the mother. We don't know why this happened; maybe she felt stress from being moved or maybe there was something wrong with the cubs. The single male lynx was in poor condition, so I decided to rear it by hand.

When he was five days old, his weight was 320g (11.3 oz.)— which is the nor-



Feeding the lynx was challenging, but eventually he took to the bottle.

mal weight of this species at birth. I took the lynx home with me every evening and brought him back to work every morning.

I fed him with special milk for cats available in Europe, called "Royal Canin," and added fennel tea. The tea, I found, helped with the digestion. And I have had good results using it with a monkey, a porcupine, a mara, a dingo, and African jumping hares.

The first time I attempted to bottle feed the cub, it was really difficult, because it didn't take to the nipple. The cub clearly objected, biting and scratching. It took a



Vladamir would spend time outside at the zoo each day and return in the Anett's home every evening.



Vlad sleeps on Anett's husband's arm.



In mid-September, Vladamir wasn't acting right and Anett brought him home for two weeks during her vacation to watch over him.

lot of time, care, and patience to be successful.

The first week, the cub drank 20-30ml (0.7-1 oz.) per meal. Feedings were offered every three to four hours, all day and throughout the night. Nevertheless, the change of food proceeded to cause a real critical case of diarrhea. I took the cub to the zoo vet, and it received an infusion containing sodium chloride (NaCl) and antibiotics. After that, I also added a preparation against diarrhea to the milk formula and he finally got better.

On June 8, the cub weighed more than 500g (17.6 oz.). I had been weighing it every day and it was consistently gaining weight. The cub was very bonded to me and very friendly by now.

After six weeks, I offered the cub some beef for the first time. He didn't like

it. Three days later, I tried a chicken heart and found that he really liked that. In fact, he liked hearts so much I had to limit the number of hearts offered, as he would not have stopped eating them.

During the day, the cub was at the Tierpark Gotha Zoo and every evening I brought him home with me, where he would spend the night in an extra room where he couldn't demolish that much.



Naptime at the Englehardt home.

He usually slept in a box in his room. I placed litter boxes throughout the house and he faithfully used them all, making it easier for me to keep the house clean.

At the beginning of September, Vlad (short for Vladamir), as we called him, moved back to the zoo full-time. He stayed in the old enclosure of his parents. The separation was hard for him, but I think even harder for me. But he grew well and was happy any time I came to visit him. After three weeks living full-time at the zoo, one morning when I visited, he didn't try to contact me and he was eating mud. That was unusual and I felt something wasn't right. The zoo vet checked him but there was no diagnosis. Vlad was given some vitamins and some medicine to increase his appetite, hoping it might help. But I didn't think it would. Then he started to vomit.

The next two

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.

Laura Walker - Intermediate
Donna Whitaker - Advanced

Della Jacot - 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



A bittersweet good bye hug between Vlad and Anett. The young lynx would soon be boarding a jet for the USA.

weeks I was scheduled to go on vacation, but I couldn't leave Vlad on his own. I talked to my husband and he had the same concerns, so I took him home again so that I could monitor him. His situation got worse and worse. Vlad didn't eat, drank only a little water, and then he would vomit 30 minutes later. I took him to the vet every day, but nothing helped to improve his situation. They checked his blood, but found no hint of a disease. He didn't eat for a week and lost a considerable amount of weight. Finally, the vet decided to perform exploratory surgery to exclude the possibility of an alien element in his intestines. It was high risk, as he had lost a

lot of liquid from his intestines and he was in poor condition. An alien element was not found. But when he recovered from surgery, he felt much better. He had an appetite, he was

livelier, and slowly and carefully I could feed him. He didn't vomit. It was a success.

He improved day by day. We never found out what the reason for his illness was; perhaps some sort of poisoning. Nobody knows.

Vlad was healthy again and this was the most important thing for me. At the end of September, he returned to his parents' enclosure at the zoo. He could stay there all night.

On January 22, 2015, he started his "big trip" to the USA. It was really hard for me to leave him, especially knowing he was going so far away. Then I saw the pictures from his new home at the NOAH Feline Conservation Center and I feel much better.

I am happy for Vladimir. It was a lot of work to care for a young lynx, but it makes me happy to have watched over him, cared for him, and raised him to be a healthy, happy Carpathian lynx.

Andrea "Critter Doc" Sobotka

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

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

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From Donors and Dollars to Cats and Conservation

By Ashwin Naidu

PhD Candidate, University of Arizona
Wild Cat Research & Conservation Center
Representative, IUCN Species Survival
Commission – Cat Specialist Group
Co-founder and Director, Fishing Cat
Conservancy

Hiking down the trails of the Santa Catalina Mountains of Arizona, my friend Rufus barely noticed that he was just photographed by a unique paparazzo – a remotely-triggered wildlife camera. We undid the camera from a pine tree trunk that had previously been scraped by an animal, and while we uploaded the pictures to my computer, I told Rufus about our research on wild cats, only to hear his first exclamation, “Dude, we’re in the same place as that mountain lion was yesterday at this time!”

From photographs of mountain lions and bobcats in the desert mountains surrounding Tucson in Arizona, to tigers and fishing cats in the deciduous and mangrove forests in India, we know that wild cats are surviving in island-like habitats surrounded by seas of human development.

We may be very fortunate to see wildlife right outside our backyards in many places in the United States, but what about the backyards around the globe, where many magnificent, yet endangered, cousins of our domestic cats are often so hard to see? Even though we may spend most of our lives indoors or in offices, we never forget to wonder about animals like wild cats. We connect with wild cats during live encounters at places like sanctuaries and zoos, or even when coming across their tracks and scats while hiking trails. These experiences get us to think about their status in the wild, what threatens their survival, and how we can help protect them.

In early 2013, when the University of Arizona Wild Cat Research and Conservation Center (UA Wild Cat Center) gave me a scholarship based on a generous donation to the center, I invested all of it in wildlife cameras and related field equipment for the Hyderabad Tiger Conservation Society (HyTiCoS). I intended for all this equipment to be used to train local people to work for wild cat conservation. The biggest impetus behind this was my personal association with Shankar, a local

person – now also known as an ace “animal tracker” – who lives near the Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary (Kawal) in south-central India.

I heard about Shankar from Imran Siddiqui, one of my first mentors in field-based wildlife conservation in India, and also the co-founder of the HyTiCoS. I learned that Shankar used to harvest bamboo for a living. One fine day in 2011, while chopping away in the forest, Shankar was approached by Imran, who was on a survey for tigers and leopards within Kawal. Shankar was initially apprehensive about talking with Imran for fear of being reported to the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department (APFD) for harvesting bamboo, but later found himself in a conversation about his own knowledge of the forest, the animals around him, and his innate interest toward protecting wildlife. Imran asked Shankar how much money he made through bamboo harvest, and Shankar said in the local language – Telangana – “around \$100 a month.” Impressed by Shankar’s knowledge of the forest, Imran asked Shankar if he was willing to work with the HyTiCoS for a monthly salary of the same amount. Today, Shankar works full-time with the HyTiCoS for wildlife conservation in Kawal, now India’s tiger reserve, number 42. Kawal is primarily a dry-deciduous forest that is not only home to tigers and

leopards, but also to other small cats like the jungle cat, wild cat, and rusty-spotted cat, as well as other endangered and threatened species, like the dhole and the sloth bear. Shankar and several other animal trackers employed by the APFD work collaboratively to monitor poaching and habitat degradation activities in this vulnerable, human-dominated landscape.

The story does not end there. In late 2013, I was able to establish a partnership among the Reid Park Zoo, the UA Wild Cat Center, and the HyTiCoS. Teen volunteers at the Reid Park Zoo were fascinated by how wildlife cameras functioned to generate photographs of tropical animals, document their behavior, and inform authorities about their presence in many areas where they were never documented before. Above all, the teens and their zoo staff mentors recognized that their volunteer efforts helped educate not only themselves about wildlife on the other side of the world, but also empower local conservationists who now take pride in protecting their backyards.

If you meet Shankar today at Kawal Tiger Reserve, he would proudly take you on a tour of the forest on his motorcycle – a gift to him from the HyTiCoS. He has been using this vehicle for over two years now to patrol forest areas and collect evidence on illegal activities. Shankar’s job also involves documenting livestock over-



The fishing cat in mangroves. Photo by Devan Sewell, Wild Oasis (www.wildoasis.org).



Pandu and Venkatesh setting up a wildlife camera outside Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary.

grazing and depredation events, dismantling traps set by poachers, and deterring logging, sand mining, and habitat encroachment activities.

Being a student associated with the UA Wild Cat Center over the last half-decade, I was able to quickly learn about the impact of such initiatives and the scope of wildlife research and education across the world. From assisting management agencies to help mitigate impacts of urban sprawl in Arizona to educating local people to lessen poaching of animals in Andhra Pradesh, I realized that research of endangered animals is an outcome of conservation-motivated programs. Since we want to conserve wild cats, the more we learn about them, and the more we become fascinated by them, the more questions we raise and seek to answer about them with the ultimate objective of protecting them in the wild. I also realized that outreach and education are essential to helping us better understand and alleviate human-wild cat conflicts.

In about a decade of pursuing research and education for wildlife conservation, I learned that local people living in rural environments in developing nations, like India, yearn for an opportunity to be involved in educational experiences like fieldwork to protect endangered wildlife. Today, as a conservation scientist and doctoral candidate from the University of Arizona, I stand amazed at how even my life was shaped out of others' passion and ded-

ication. I still remember how two field guides, Thomas (Tom) and Jerry, in the Serengeti of Tanzania, influenced me on my first international trip out of India. I was enthralled to not just see, but also learn about much of the charismatic megafauna of another continent. What drew me to work for wildlife conservation in the first place were Tom and Jerry's expressions of knowledge on wild animals, their behavior, and the importance of their habitat. Above all, I connected with them through their enthusiasm and pride for their landscape despite all the human pressures that threaten African wildlife to date.

Delving deeper into studying other endangered wild cat species that have not yet been brought to light in the global conservation scene as much as tigers, lions, cheetahs and snow leopards have been, I focused my attention on the lesser known wild cats listed as endangered from a global perspective. Satellite images of mangroves on the east coast of South India will show you how much mangrove forest landcover has been lost and degraded due to human encroachments for agriculture and aquaculture – primarily fish and shrimp farming. Incidentally, with gleanings from local knowledge, I learned that mangroves are carbon sinks that shield communities of wildlife and humans from natural disasters like climate change and tsunamis.

As a reader of this *Journal*, you are probably aware of the fishing cat conservation story and how Fishing Cat Conservancy came to be. In less than two years, our donors have effectively helped create a robust support system for local community members who are willing to dedicate their lives for a unique water-loving wild cat that lives on fish for most of its lifetime. As we speak, Pandu and Venkatesh are collecting photographs and data on fishing cats among the Krishna River delta mangroves in coastal Andhra

Pradesh. Dear donor – you directly support their work and the equipment they are using. They wish to work full-time for the same salary as Shankar, and pretty soon, they will educate their children about how essential it is to protect not just the fishing cat, but its globally important ecosystem: a livelihood platform that can create new, sustainable jobs such as conservation ecotourism.

I believe many of us are driven to a cause when we feel good about some action, which then transcends into rational actions and practices stemming from the cause. I hope these stories bring us closer to fully appreciating the impact individual donors can have on the lives of people, who live across the globe and have no clue about where this support is coming from and why in the first place, but later understand and live enriched lives.

My friend Rufus is now a citizen scientist; he has two wildlife cameras in his backyard, and adopts a camera each year to send to India, for wild cat research and conservation. One of his cameras helped document a fishing cat in an under-protected mangrove habitat, which we are now working to establish as a protected area managed locally by the surrounding community. I will leave you with the thought that small contributions make a big difference, just like the grains of sand that make this pleasant land!



Shankar helping Imran collect leopard scat at Kawal Tiger Reserve.

Cricket Hollow Zoo Vs. ALDF

By Lynn Culver

The Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF) filed for a declaratory and injunctive relief in federal court on June 11, 2014, against Pam and Tom Sellner and their Cricket Hollow Zoo. Joining the Animal Legal Defense Fund as parties to this lawsuit are ALDF members Tracey and Lisa Kuehl, Kris Bell, Nancy Harvey, and John Braumann.

The case is brought under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and alleges Pamela and Tom Sellner of the unlawful “taking” (e.g., killing, wounding, harming, injuring, and harassing) of federally listed and specially protected species at Cricket Hollow Zoo, their exotic animal walk-through zoo. The injunctive relief is specifically addressing the plaintiffs’ claims of the Sellners’ “taking of lemurs, tigers, gray wolves, serval, and lions at Cricket Hollow Zoo in violation of the ESA and its implementing regulations.”

The plaintiffs in this case are backed by the Animal Legal Defense Fund, an extremist animal rights group that everyone should already be familiar with. ALDF has been filing lawsuits since 2011, to have Tony the Truck Stop Tiger removed from his owner Michael Sandlin, and given to a sanctuary of their choice. This AR group has been terrorizing Mr. Sandlin with endless litigation designed to bankrupt Mr. Sandlin. ALDF has sued the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, and more recently, has sued the state of Louisiana over the passage of legislation that would retroactively exempt some owners (such as Michael Sandlin) from the ban on possession of tigers and other large cats.

The lawsuit brought against the Cricket Hollow Zoo has been progressing through court for more than a year and has cost the Sellners tens of thousands of dollars in attorney fees and lost revenue. How can this be happening, you may ask? Aren’t violations of the Endangered Species Act normally brought by the Fish and Wildlife Service? If the Sellners are violating the ESA, why are ani-

mal rights organizations and their members the plaintiffs, and not the F & W Service? The answer is frightening; anyone can be sued over anything. Lawsuits such as this one can destroy reputations and lead to bankruptcy. Welcome to the latest weapon in the war on captive wildlife and the community that keeps them.

The Sellners are not the first to be attacked in this manner, and will surely not be the last. Let me refresh your memory of a high profile case. On September 26, 2003, ASPCA, Animal Welfare Institute, Fund for Animals, and Tom Rider filed complaints in federal court for declaratory and injunctive relief under the Endangered Species Act for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus “taking” (i.e., harming, harassing, and wounding) endangered elephants in violation of the ESA. Eleven years later, on May 15, 2014, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), along with their co-defendants, paid Feld Entertainment, Inc., the parent company of Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, \$15.75 million to settle cases stemming from the lawsuit they brought



Cricket Hollow Zoo is in rural Manchester, Iowa. The zoological animal collection consists of big cats, reptiles, primates, small mammals, and an assortment of sheep and goats and wolf/dog hybrids.

against Ringling Brothers over the care of its Asian elephants. This historic settlement payment to Feld Entertainment was the victorious conclusion of litigation between the parties. The court found that the animal rights groups’ star witness was paid by the AR plaintiffs to give false testimony and had no standing to bring suit.

The Sellners are a family-owned dairy farm and also operate a non-profit exotic animal collection that exists primarily for exhibition to the children in their rural community. The Sellners do not have the assets of Feld Entertainment, but they face a giant of an adversary, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, which is based in California and reports annual donations of more than \$8.5 million.

Animal Legal Defense Fund attorneys have brought this suit and used five of their Iowa members to gain the organization standing in federal court. The suit alleges that the Sellners have harmed, injured, and harassed their own endangered animals at their own zoo. The testimonies of the Iowa plaintiffs are suspiciously similar. They have all visited the zoo, and all have found fault. They have all written letters of concern to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) and the



Whimsical Loch Ness Monster guards over the visitor rest area.

USDA. The plaintiffs spoke with Delaware County Supervisors and asked the Delaware County sheriff for welfare checks on the zoo animals. After reading the history of the Feld Entertainment case, I wonder how much instruction these people received from the Animal Legal Defense Fund attorneys to tailor their complaints in preparation for establishing legal standing for this lawsuit.

And what gives these people standing to file ESA violation charges, you may ask? After all, these are the Cricket Hollow Zoo's animals, not the property of these visitors. Each of the plaintiffs is a self-described animal lover and zoo fan. Each ended their personal

testimony in the complaint with the same sort of statements. One example is from Tracey Kuehl, who experienced "distress and anguish" as a result of the trip to the Cricket Hollow Zoo, and her observations of animals held in what she referred to as "unnatural, inhumane, and harmful conditions" causing abnormal behaviors that indicated "psychological distress." She claimed conditions under which the animals were kept at the zoo "seriously impaired her aesthetic enjoyment of the animals."

Lisa Kuehl believes the conditions of confinement and exhibition of the animals "harms her aesthetic, recreational, educational, and personal interest in enjoying seeing the animals in humane, safe, and psychologically enriching conditions."

John Braumann claims he has refrained from continuing to visit the animals at the zoo for fear of "becoming depressed and upset by viewing the animals in their living conditions."

Each of the five plaintiffs' testimonies ended with statements that if the endangered animals at the zoo were relocated to a more humane and natural setting, such as a reputable sanctuary where they would be allowed to live in an appropriate environment and receive humane treatment, the plaintiffs would visit the animals again. Having the animals removed from the Sellners was the end goal, and the Animal Legal Defense Fund gave Pam and Tom the option to donate the big cats, wolves, lemurs, and serval to an accredit-



Cricket Hollow Zoo houses seven tigers. Because tigers are an endangered species covered under the Endangered Species Act, the ALDF has filed a suit against the zoo, alleging the care provided to the big cats amounts to a "taking" prohibited by the ESA.

ed sanctuary of their choice and the league's attorneys would not proceed with the lawsuit.

Specific false charges which the Sellners' attorney must refute in this lawsuit include allegations about poor husbandry of species which are not even endangered and are not covered or protected by the Endangered Species Act, such as their wolf/dog hybrids, their serval, and their lions. The plaintiffs acknowledge in their complaint that only the Barbary subspecies of serval is listed as endangered, and they provide no evidence that the Sellner's serval is such an animal. The suit acknowledges Asian lions as endangered, and mentions that African lions are "under consideration for endangered species listing." However, being under consideration does not mean they are endangered, so any allegations about the mistreatment of the Sellners' African lions cannot legally constitute a violation of the ESA. And the wolves, according to the Sellners, are actually wolf/dog hybrids, not grey wolves, and are not listed as endangered species by Fish and Wildlife. The only species actually endangered are the tigers and the lemurs.

How could a zoo owner "take, harass, or injure" an endangered species, you ask? The suit mentions a tiger that is declawed and, therefore, "injured." The suit alleges the lemurs are kept in enclosures not large enough, which "harms" them. The plaintiffs were upset that the Sellners allowed some of the lions to be "harassed" by flies

on their noses, and an elderly lioness was skinny and has since passed away. The suit alleges the tigers' enclosure is not large enough because, according to the plaintiff's complaint, "Tigers require large, environmentally rich, natural spaces that allow them to express a wide range of movements and behaviors, such as seeking food and escaping competition and confrontation." The plaintiffs claim the tigers are "harmed" by excessive feces in the enclosures, as identified by USDA inspections performed in the dead of winter, December 2011 and February 2013, when several days' worth of feces had frozen to the ground and not been removed. In

addition to complaints about the real and non-real endangered species, there is a general laundry list of complaints about the zoo's husbandry which, according to Pam, are outright lies. For example, one of the plaintiffs stated the "animal pens had standing water and garbage bins were open and overflowing." The Sellners responded to that complaint, stating that in June of 2012, over the course of 30 days, the zoo only had 1.7 inches of total rainfall. Further, the Sellners state there are no garbage bins in the zoo and no garbage strewn about. The hoofstock is located on dry lots and the cats are on pea gravel.

Plaintiffs claim "two lemurs are confined to barren, dimly lit, and deteriorating cages, which significantly disrupt and impair the lemurs' normal and essential behavior patterns." Defendants answered that the red ruffed lemur is not compatible with the ring-tailed pair, so the two species are housed separately, but adjacent, for their safety. The Sellners state, "The enclosures are ten feet tall and 15 feet long outside and attach to an inside space half as large. The enclosures have lighting indoors and natural lighting outdoors. They also have enrichment programs approved by the veterinarian for the zoo."

The plaintiffs claim the Sellners confine tigers and lions in "small, barren cages, which also disrupt and impair the large cats' normal and essential behavior patterns." The Sellners responded by stating, "The cages have pea gravel four inches

deep for drainage, and the tigers have scratch bars, pools, and bowling balls, in addition to whole prey enrichment in their cages.”

The plaintiffs make reference to an Associated Press news article that mentions one of the Sellners’ tigers is declawed. The Sellners responded that the article in question quoted Tom Sellner as stating the tiger arrived at the zoo already declawed by the former owner.

On July 13, 2013, John Braumann and Lisa Kuehl, who happen to live more than 80 miles apart, somehow found each other (perhaps with the assistance of the ALDF) and visited the zoo together. They claimed “flies were everywhere, and that there continued to be a lack of water, and Braumann saw excessive algae in water bowls and debris in food bowls.” The Sellners deny the allegations, stating that animals all had automatic waterers and the bears drink out of a “hog sipper” connected to a live water source.

These allegations and many more form the basis of the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s lawsuit that “the inhumane conditions amount to unlawful taking of the ESA-listed species.”

Each of the allegations was refuted in a response by the Sellner’s attorney on July 17, 2014.

On January 19, 2015, the Sellners and their attorney received a 26-page request for documents dating from 2005 to the present. Examples of documents requested were lists of all endangered species acquired, born, sold, donated, or died, and names, addresses, and USDA licenses for all animals received or dispersed, and all written documentation related to every transaction; a list of all volunteers, employees, interns, contractors for the past decade and their full contact information, as well as their positions, titles, job responsibilities, hours worked, compensation for each, and the education, training, experience, and qualifications for husbandry of endangered species of the defendants and all their volunteers, employees, interns, and contractors. Additionally requested were daily care

plans, veterinary care plans and records, shipping plans, safety plans, emergency plans, annual revenue, operating budget, daily attendance, income tax returns, and visitor logs.

In July of 2015, the Sellners and their attorney received three expert witness testimonies in support of plaintiff’s motion for summary judgment. None of the experts had been to the Sellners’ zoo; they based their testimony on the documents supplied by the Sellners during discovery and by the statements from the Animal Legal Defense Fund’s Iowa member plaintiffs. One expert, who has conducted studies at the Duke Lemur Center in North Carolina, concluded his testimony by stating the Sellner’s facility “is neither currently suitable for housing lemurs nor could it become suitable for housing in the future.” Another expert was a California veterinarian who started the PAWS project that influenced the USDA to ban the practice of declawing of big cats. She testified that the Sellners essentially did not spend enough on annual veterinary bills and their animals were not living long enough and, therefore, she recommended “the animals be rehomed immediately to someone who was capable of caring of them.” The final expert was a former zoo director for several AZA zoos. He found that the number of non-compliant items identified by the USDA and the Sellners’ minimal emergency plans and lack of staffing noted in a 2011 USDA inspection report “to be extremely concerning” and that management of Cricket Hollow Zoo is

“creating a tragic fate for the zoo animals.”

The expert testimonies were disheartening to read and demoralizing for the Sellners, I would imagine. Reading these testimonies, one might be convinced that the Sellners have no business raising animals, and yet, they do have decades of experience. Some of the condemnation in these testimonies is probably based upon a lack of detail in answers provided to the interrogatory request for documents. I can understand not wanting to spend forever answering all those fishing expedition questions and digging up all those records for an adversary determined to destroy your way of life. But this case shows that everything you produce or do not provide can be used against you.

On June 16th, the USDA suspended Cricket Hollow Zoo’s license until July 8th for non-compliant items that the Sellners had appealed. Losing the busy holiday season income when animal rights extremists are costing the zoo thousands was another hardship the Sellners had to endure. But Pam is stubborn and will not give up the fight for her animals and her zoo.

I just visited a Facebook page called Cricket Hollow Zoo Concerns. It seems to have been created in 2013, and consists of mainly posts by the page owner and mostly they are USDA inspection reports and the latest news that the zoo was closed for three weeks.

Cricket Hollow Zoo has a Facebook page rated as four out of five stars. One



The ALDF wants the Cricket Hollow Zoo tigers removed to a sanctuary, where the cats would have larger enclosures in a more natural setting.

patron, Christina Marie Therese, wrote, “I hope to come this summer. I was looking at the pictures and I was sad to see how many negative comments certain persons were posting about the living conditions of these animals. I have been there many times and have never felt that they were being mistreated. They are all well fed, they have enough room, and most importantly, they are all happy. You will always have those hippies with their protests. When attacks from these people come your way, keep your chin up. God created these animals as an expression of

His love for you and He placed them under your care for a reason. Trust that as long as you take care of His animals as best you can, He will give you the strength to go through whatever troubles your zoo might face.”

The Sellners’ attorney filed a resistance to plaintiff’s motion for summary judgment on June 19th. This well-written response questions the standing of the plaintiffs by referencing previous court decisions that found that one must suffer a concrete or discernible injury, not a “conjectural or hypothetical” one, to bring an action in federal court. The Sellners’ attorney asserts that the plaintiff’s declarations only contain anthropomorphic statements about cultural and spiritual bonds with animals that they saw for moments once or twice years ago.

Additionally, the resistance motion explains that the Endangered Species Act does not regulate possession of endangered or threatened species, or the welfare of those species that are possessed. It regulates the movement of those species only when interstate commerce or a “take” is involved. The word “harass” in the term “take” is defined in the ESA as “an intentional or negligent act or omission which

creates the likelihood of injury of endangered wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns, which include, but are not limited to, breeding, feeding, or sheltering.” The same regulation goes on to exempt other practices, including “animal husbandry practices that meet or exceed the minimum standards for facilities and care under the Animal Welfare Act.”

As for actual “taking,” the Sellners’ enclosures have always exceeded the requirements of the USDA. Their enrichment programs are signed off by the veterinarian, as part of their veterinary care program. The behaviors witnessed by the plaintiffs were, according to Pam Sellner, incorrectly interpreted as being an indication of “psychological distress.” The Sellners’ attorney goes on to refute the assertion that the Sellners’ wolf/dogs, serval, or lion are endangered species. The resistance defends the Sellners’ skill set, their financial security, their volunteer labor force, and their veterinarian’s qualifications. The resistance concludes by denying the alleged trafficking violations of the ESA.

The judge will have three choices in this matter. Either rule that the plaintiffs

have overwhelming evidence and grant the motion for summary judgment; rule that the defendants have shown that the plaintiffs have no standing and no case against the Sellners, and rule in their favor; or decide that the case has merit, but can only be decided in a trial, which, if that is the decision, is scheduled for five days in September.

It is a fact that this family-owned zoo has been cited by Animal Care inspectors for non-compliance to USDA regulations; however, many of the items cited have been appealed by the Sellners. What is at issue, however, is whether these animal welfare deficiencies meet the definition of “taking” and “harassment” in the prohibitions in the Endangered Species Act, and whether the testimony by the plaintiffs is relevant, truthful, or accurate.

This is a potentially groundbreaking case that, while designed to break the backs of the Sellners and their family-owned zoo, if successful could also be used by well financed animal rights groups to attack even more animal enterprises that have non-compliant USDA inspections.



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Redesigning a “Problem” Area of a Cage

By Debi Willoughby

I’m sure everyone who has ever built a cage can agree that we try to design our cages with four important things in mind: animal/human safety, animal psychological/physiological needs, ease of use, and ease of cleaning. We build the best enclosure we can that will encompass all four areas. But after we are done...at some point...we wish we had designed some part of the cage differently.

A few years ago, I built two new enclosures for my small cats, one for the bobcats and one for the hybrids and Geoffroy’s cat. I used an existing building and separated it into three sections, one for the bobcats, one for the other cats, and a human area used as a double lock-out area. I attached outside pens to the building so the cats could go inside and outside on their own through cat doors with flaps.

I use my cats in wildlife educational shows, so it is important for me to have them crate-trained. I decided to design an



There is only one area where the crate fits and gives me access from outside the cage – right beside the entryway door. The Geoffroy’s cat likes to scent mark that entire area because of the doorway.

attachment to crates to allow me to feed the cats inside their crates. This way they associate crates with a good thing – feeding. I attached runners to the crate opening and positioned

the crates along the edge of the wire inside their houses, with the runners sticking out into the “human” area. This way I can call the cats into their crates and slide thick Plexiglas through the runners to close the cats inside their crates. Then I slide their food trays into the crate through a slot I cut on the side of the crate. This creates a safe lockdown area to contain the cats so they can be fed and their cage cleaned without the cats roaming free around us. This method of safety is pre-

ferred, especially when I am away and my staff needs to feed my cats.

The crate idea has worked great, except for one unexpected thing. My Geoffroy’s cat likes to scent mark the Plexiglas on his feeding crate when he is not in it. Unfortunately, the way his inside cage is set up, there is only one small area that I can fit the crate into and still access it from outside the cage. And that area is right next to the door I use to enter the cage. The Geoffroy’s cat likes to scent mark that entire area because of the doorway.

So, every day he would scent mark the whole area and every day I would clean the feeding crate, Plexiglas, wire fencing on and under the door, and the floor both inside and outside the cage.

Every morning I was greeted with a pee-marked floor. After a while, it gets old cleaning this whole area every single day only to come back later on to find it a mess again. I decided something needed to be done to fix this daily issue. Not only was it hard to keep the half inch by one inch coated wire clean from crud buildup, but the urine was starting to rust the treated pipe frame around the door. I thought long and hard about how to fix this. The biggest obstacle was this was the only area of the cage that the crate could be accessed from outside the enclosure. So my first question was how can I adjust the crate and Plexiglas to stop the urine from

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puddling up in the runners and dripping out onto the floor? But I couldn't figure out how to fasten something clear onto the top runner, so that when it was peed on, the urine would run down the clear flap and into the shavings. I wanted something clear so that I could easily see the cat inside the crate to know when he was fully in, so I could slide the Plexiglas closed and also so I could see when he was done eating or if he was having an issue like choking.

After failing at fastening something clear over the Plexiglas and runners to protect them, I called a couple of people to ask their advice. These people got me away from obsessing over covering the Plexiglas/runners and thinking outside the box on maybe repositioning the crate or raising the crate, etc.

I finally decided to try raising the crate up higher and replacing the small holed wire on and around the door. This would hopefully alleviate two issues: daily cleaning of the crate runners and trying to clean in between the holes of the wire. I wasn't completely confident that it would resolve everything, but it should make daily cleaning a lot easier.

I got rid of all of the half inch by one inch wire around the door. Before I replaced anything, I took the time to scrub all of the door frame piping and re-treat it to protect it from urine. I then replaced the wire with fiberglass sheeting which is super easy to clean. After the cage was secure again, I put a plastic shelf (plastic storage shelving from Home Depot) where the crate originally was and set the crate on top of the shelf. I made sure the shelf was bigger than the crate so there was a lip sticking out that the cat could use to walk on to enter the crate. I fastened the crate to the wire so it couldn't fall off of the shelf. I also drilled a hole in the side lip of the crate and slid an eight inch screw through it. This way, if the Geoffroy's cat tried to slide his food tray back out of the slot opening, it would be stopped by the long screw that blocked the slot (after eating chicken for a couple days, he wants something different and will let me know by sliding the tray of food back at me)!

To my amazement and delight, after everything was changed out, he hasn't scent marked that area AT ALL! Not sure if the fiberglass sheeting provides

him with more mental security than the wire did, but he immediately stopped peeing in that area. So, thanks to other FCF members' advice, I have not only redesigned the area to be cleaner, I spend less time disinfecting the area! Less cleaning means more quality time spent with the cats.

I guess the moral of this story is if you need to redesign part of an enclosure, think outside the box and come up with different ideas on how to do it, and then decide which one you think would work best. I was so obsessed with protecting the Plexiglas and runners that I didn't think of a simple thing like raising the entire crate so there wasn't something at pee-level to pee on. It's always nice to have fellow FCF members to get advice from, no matter how small or big the project is!

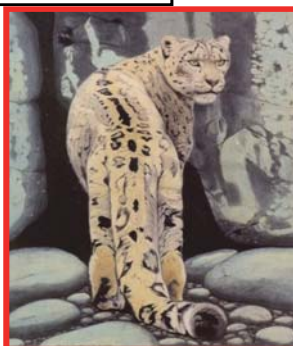


Debi repositioned the crate onto a table and replaced the small-holed wire on and around the door. To her delight, after everything was changed out the Geoffroy's cat hasn't scent marked that area at all.

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Pick the black leopard, "Hanging Around," the lounging white tiger, "Paying a Visit," or the snow leopard, "Standing Guard."

Go to the FCF website to make a donation with PayPal today. Or call the treasurer at 479-394-5235 to use your credit card and support this worthy cause.

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







Feline Conservation Federation

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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: Macho-Man is one of four ocelots that reside at the Panther Ridge Conservation Center, in Wellington, Florida. Maxene Price took this photo of him last spring while she was interning at the facility. Maxene says her experience at Panther Ridge Conservation Center helped her become a better keeper and animal advocate. Read more about Panther Ridge starting on page 13.

Back Cover: This stalking fishing cat was photographed by Fred Hood at the Le Parc des Félines, near Paris, France. Fishing cats are losing their habitat as mangrove forest cover is destroyed and degraded due to human encroachments for agriculture and aquaculture – primarily fish and shrimp farming. The FCF and its members are financial supporters of the Fishing Cat Conservancy. Read more about the conservancy's work in the article by Ashwin Naidu on page 22.

