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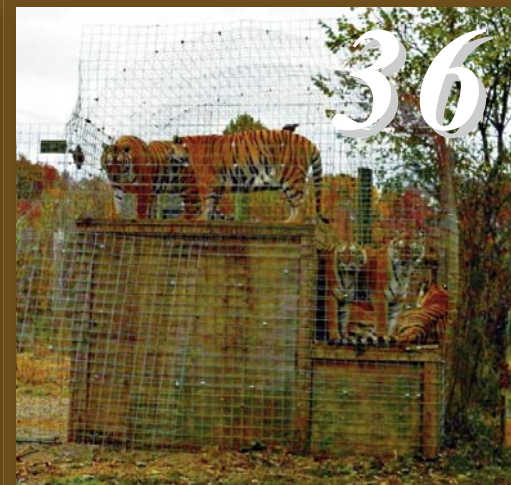
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A membership to the FCF entitles you to six issues of the *Journal*, the back-issue DVD, an invitation to FCF husbandry and wildlife education courses and annual convention, and participation in our online discussion group. The FCF works to improve 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 Feline Conservation Federation publishes the *Journal* bimonthly. The FCF is non-profit, (Federal ID#59-2048618) noncommercial, and international in membership, devoted to the welfare and conservation of exotic felines.

The *Journal* publishes articles on exotic feline conservation and husbandry, management, and regulatory and legislative issues affecting ownership for our members. The author's point of view does not necessarily represent the point of view of the organization. Reproduction of any material in the *Journal* may not be made without the written permission of the original copyright owners and/or copyright owner, FCF.

Letters to the editor and guest editorials are also published.

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

Submission deadline for articles and advertisements is the 10th of even numbered months. Please submit high resolution photos and articles to the *Journal* Managing Editor. Photos and articles may be emailed to

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



Feline Conservation Federation

Letter from the President

In October 2015, two perfectly preserved cave lion cubs were discovered in Siberian permafrost. This was the first time any cave lion with soft tissue has been discovered in such pristine condition. They are so well preserved that all of their fur, and even their whiskers, are intact. They appear as though they fell asleep and were frozen yesterday even though it is estimated that they died 12,000 years ago. The cave lion is believed to have become extinct 10,000 years ago. These two cubs were apparently less than a week old since their baby teeth had not yet fully erupted. Scientists speculate that the cave den in which they were born collapsed and the resulting lack of oxygen helped to preserve them in such immaculate condition. Plans are already being made to return to the site in 2016, in hopes of finding more cubs or possibly even their mother. The cubs are now on display in the Kingdom of Permafrost Museum in Yakutia, Siberia.

This particular species of cave lion roamed Europe and Asia, and DNA analysis of materials found in bones had shown that the American lion, which was slightly larger, was evolved from this subspecies



Two well-preserved 12,000 year old cave lion cubs were discovered complete with fur, ears, and whiskers, in a Siberian ice sheet in Yakutia, this past summer.

when the Bering Sea Bridge disappeared and isolated individuals in North America. Analysis has also shown that the cave lion is a direct ancestor of the present day African and Asian lions. The cave lions were about 10% larger than their present day counterparts. Estimates from complete skeletons have them standing less than four feet at the shoulder, with a body length of nearly seven feet not including the tail. Paleolithic cave drawings and clay figurines show that these lions had rounded upstanding ears and tufted tails just like their modern day counterparts.

These also show that they had ruffs like a Siberian tiger, or primitive manes that weren't as large as those on present-day lions. The paintings also represent these lions as hunting in prides.

This news is really exciting for me. How wonderful that nature was able to give us a snapshot of an amazing animal that while it lived thousands of years ago, is so similar to the lions we have today. With the advances in cloning and technology, could the cave Lion eventually be brought back to life?

Species are not a fixed and final result of evolution. They are constantly

evolving, even if it is imperceptible in our lifetimes. These cubs from 12,000 years ago are easily recognizable as lions, though a little different than what we have today. In fact, the scientists have determined that the cave lion is just a sub species of the present-day *Panthera leo* species.

Provided we keep current species from becoming extinct, who knows how they will evolve in another 12,000 years. When you put things in this perspective, it makes you realize that our time on earth is just a drop of water in the ocean, yet what we do with our time here can affect everything that happens after our time.

Kevin Chambers

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.

Craig DeRosa - Basic

Hope Bennet - 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

FCF Professional Membership

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

John David Wagner

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

From the Executive Director

By Lynn Culver

Convention Announcement

Convention will be held in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, June 16th through June 19th. The FCF hotel is the Hilton Double Tree Bahai Mar Hotel. Our FCF room rate is just \$99. The Bahai Mar is the only hotel that is both on the beach and the intercoastal waterway. Plan your vacation around the FCF Convention. Come early, stay late, and have a fantastic, feline-filled time. See you there! Convention details are on page 40.

EFRC Canine Distemper Outbreak

This issue of the *Journal* contains an article on page 38 about the Exotic Feline Rescue Center. I visited the facility in October. While I was there, two of the tigers were being treated for pneumonia-like symptoms. Shortly after my return home, I learned that they both perished. It was the beginning of an outbreak of canine distemper, a deadly virus that can cross over from dogs to raccoons and even to the large panther species of big cats. Joe Taft thinks that the outbreak started with a sick raccoon. So far, seven big cats have died at the center. My heartfelt condolences go out to Joe and all the staff of EFRC.

One Bright Note

"The Life of Tyra," published on page 24 of this *Journal*, recounts a recent small victory in North Carolina. A city law was actually changed to specifically exempt servals from the definition of dangerous wild animal. Tyra's owners Jonathan and

Vivian Freed are just pet owners, but are using their pet serval to give back to the community that has come to offer their support. This is an interesting true story and it reminds me of another private owner who is not USDA-licensed, but is frequently interviewed and filmed by curious news agents wanting to understand what pet wild cat ownership is like. The Freed's will not be able to continue to be on exhibit as exotic pet owners. I encourage them to take the next step and apply for a USDA exhibitor's license.

FCF Conservation Grant

FCF has continued its support of WildCRU conservation efforts in Ruaha, Tanzania, at the request of FCF member Wildlife and Environmental Conservation. Read about this \$1,000 donation on page 20. The goal of this donation is to help African leopards. Helping cats in nature is a reasonable extension of our love of the species we are so fortunate to share our lives with. This is also a legal requirement by the F&W Service to engage in interstate commerce in threatened species. What I find particularly interesting is the sentiment expressed in this issue's "Blast from the Past" on page 41, written in 1964, years before the Endangered Species Act. LIOC member William Engler proposed that ocelot owners are obligated to give back to the cats in nature. And a few years later, when it comes to endangered species, F&W agreed and made it a "pay to play" scheme for gaining their license.

Lions Are Now Listed As Threatened and Endangered By the F&W Service

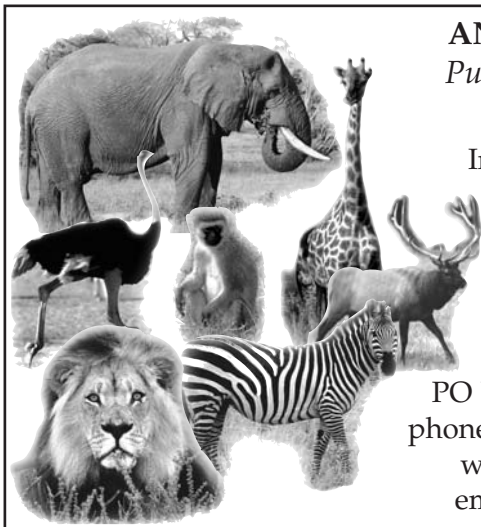
On Monday, December 21st, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service officially listed the lions of West and Central Africa as endangered species, and the lions of East and Southern Africa as threatened species. This listing will end all trophy hunting of endangered lions, and regulate the harvesting, sales, and commercial transport of threatened lions. Lions under AZA SSP management are the threatened subspecies. F&W Service permits can be issued for both commercial breeding and interstate sales, as long as the purpose is consistent with the enhancement of the survival of the species in nature. The proposal to list lions as threatened was posted October 29, 2014. Nearly 7,000 comments on this proposal were received.

Hawaii Bans Performing Animals

Hawaii is the first U.S. state to ban wild performing animals. The move will ban the use of bears, elephants, tigers, primates, rhinos, hippos, hyenas, crocodiles, and big cats used for entertainment purposes. The Hawaii Department of Agriculture board unanimously approved a proposed rule change Tuesday, to define dangerous wild animals and prohibit the import of them for exhibition or performance in public entertainment shows such as circuses, carnivals, and state fairs, except animals used for commercial filming in television or movies.

Another ALDF Lawsuit, This Time Suing Karl Mitchell

The Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), PETA, and Lions, Tigers, & Bears ("LT&B"), Keepers of the Wild, and Big Cat Rescue have appealed the Pahrump Regional Planning Commission's (RPC) issuance of a conditional use permit to Kayla Mitchell to keep ten tigers. The groups argue that permit issuance to Kayla Mitchell is improper, given that her husband, Karl Mitchell, their business, Big Cat Encounters, and their landlord, Ray "Flagman" Mielzinski, have refused to comply with a Nye County District Court order, issued following the county's revocation of Karl Mitchell's permit due to his violation of its conditions—including illegal exhibition of tigers without a USDA license.



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Mandy the Cougar Tells It Like It Is

By Peggy Jane Knight (Writing for Mandala, nicknamed Mandy)

“Hello, over here, over here in the tall grass, under the tree,” says Mandy, the beautiful fawn colored cougar. “That’s right; I am over here, where I blend in with the tall, brown grasses of the fall season. If you keep looking, you will see me,” continues Mandy. “I knew if you kept looking, you would see me,” adds Mandy. “Do you remember me now? I am the 15 year old cougar that lives in

to time. There used to be a subspecies called the eastern cougar which lived in North Carolina, but the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently declared cougars extinct east of the Mississippi River, with the exception of panthers (which is what they call them in Florida), which live in Okefenokee Swamp and the Everglades of Florida. The cougars that roam free in North Carolina today would likely be western cougars.

“Do you know how the western cougar found its way into North Carolina?” asks

studied western cougars with radio collars and learned that they sometimes travel over 700 miles looking for new territories. My cousins in the Black Hills of South Dakota are finding their way to states as far away as Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, and Louisiana. The panthers in South Florida are being crowded out by humans, and someday they might travel north and reach North Carolina.”

“I would like to tell you more about my kind,” shares Mandy. “My species starts life off weighing in at about a pound at birth. We are covered with blackish-brown camouflage spots to help us blend in with our environment to protect us while mother is off hunting. We retain these spots for about 18 months, even though they start to fade at about 12 to 14 weeks of age. These spots protect us from predators, as well as from male cougars. Kittens begin nursing within minutes after birth. Their eyes open at about ten days, and over the next few weeks the kittens grow very rapidly, enabling them to move in and around the den. Their canine teeth first appear at about 20 to 30 days, with the molars following a few weeks later. Their permanent teeth begin emerging at about five and a half months. The mother cougar will leave the young kittens alone for brief periods of time as she hunts for food to sustain herself and her young. In the beginning, she will hunt close to the den, and, with time, she will broaden her range as the kittens mature. At first, she will bring meat to her young, but after about seven or eight weeks she will bring the kittens to her kills. At about three months, when the kittens are weaned, she will begin to move them to other sites in her home range for their protection. Kittens remain with their mother for about 18 to 24 months while their mother teaches them the hunting skills necessary for survival. When they are ready, and the mother returns to estrus and wants to mate, she will drive off her offspring. They will have learned all the skills they need to feed themselves and they will set out to establish their own home range,” adds Mandy.

“Yes, we are cute and cuddly at birth, but we are like human offspring. We do not stay little for long. At maturity, we grow to weigh between 60 and as much as 200 pounds. Now, that is a lot of power



Cougars use rock caves for dens to hide their young when they are out hunting. Cougar Country has a rock den built in the habitat. A six week old cub named Sadie looks out at Steve and hisses.

Cougar Country Compound, located in Traphill, North Carolina, near the Stone Mountain State Park located in Wilkes County?” says Mandy. “You read about me and my Great Dane friends, Harley and Sable, in the January-February 2015 issue of the *FCF Journal* -- yes, this very magazine,” exclaims Mandy.

“Now, I would like to tell you more about me and my relatives, which are seen in Wilkes County on rare occasions. Steven Sidden, my handler, and North Carolina Wildlife officials believe there are wild cougars roaming in isolated areas of Wilkes County. I know this to be true, because they come to visit me from time

Mandy. “Decades ago, many people bred and sold cougar cubs. Once the cubs reached adulthood and full strength, some cougars actually escaped their enclosures. Other cougars were released by their owners into the wild, because they wanted to unburden themselves from the responsibility of raising such a powerful cat like me. Not every owner understands how to handle my kind; we can easily take down a full grown man when we are playing,” continues Mandy. “But, more likely, the wild cougars in North Carolina are actually the result of wild cougars that dispersed from their original territories and wandered hundreds of miles. Biologists have

for people to deal with, even for you big guys out there. You now understand why people become overwhelmed with a species of cat that they did not understand from the start. Many of my kind have been turned over to sanctuaries by their owners, and there are probably some of us which have escaped or been released into the wild. Our lifespan in the wild is about ten to 11 years, but my handler Steven has seen 20 year old cats in captivity,” states Mandy.



Ginger, another cougar that lived at Cougar Country in North Carolina, nursing her kittens. Cougars are born with big black spots. The spots fade usually around four to six months and they look more like miniatures of their mother.

“I have included a photograph of a couple of kittens that once lived at Cougar Country Compound, so you can see just how beautiful our babies are when they are little. These were bred here in captivity and they belonged to a former resident by the name of Ginger,” continues Mandy.

“As you can see, our babies are beautiful and it is our responsibility to keep them safe and out of harm’s way. One way to protect them is through communication. We communicate with each other through visual, scent, and postural signals, and our threatening vocalizations are low growls, spitting, snarls, and hissing. We also purr like a household cat when we are happy, but it is much louder. We make another sound called a ‘gurgle.’ This is a close-range, friendly greeting. It is also used as appeasement, or reassurance, in situations where a younger or subordinate cougar meets a dominate one. This vocalization is the equivalent of a tiger’s ‘chuffing.’

“Cougar mothers growl or hiss when their nurseries are threatened. Nursing cubs emit high-pitched, birdlike chirps and mews. Cubs and young adults emit whistles that sound like birds. Other sounds include an ‘ouch’ call and a yowl. The most spectacular sound is that of a cougar caterwaul, which is an eerie sound that can resemble a child crying or the screaming of someone in pain. The caterwaul sounds are made by females during mating season, especially when males are competing for the same receptive female,”

adds Mandy.

“We are always protecting ourselves and our young, not only by communications, but also by avoiding our predators. In the wild, my kind is highly secretive, especially when we have young ones with us. We prefer to avoid contact with mankind at all costs, since man is our worst foe. We will make our living by hunting early in the morning or at twilight, when we will least be disturbed by man. But if we see you, we will watch you from a distance just to make sure of your intentions as we catch your scent in the air. If you are no threat to us, we will let you pass by and you will never know we were so close. And to let you in on a little secret, in the dim light, we can see six times better than man,” states Mandy.

Mandy continues, “To keep you from seeing our young, we hid them in a den until they are about six weeks old and strong enough to follow us when we hunt. Then we use daybeds for rest and protection from the weather and to raise our young. We do not use dens like bears, but just as a place to rest until our young can travel. If a cave is not available, we will use a

nook on a cliff face or an outcropping of rocks. In less mountainous areas, we build daybeds in the forest among the thickets or under larger roots of trees and under fallen logs well out of sight,” clarifies Mandy.

“Included is a picture of my den, which my owner, trainer Steven Sidden constructed for me. It is a cave that resembles a huge rock to protect me from the elements. It happens to be quite roomy and a comfortable place to sleep during the cold winter snows here in Wilkes County, North Carolina,” says Mandy.

“My handler, Steven Sidden, has been raising cougars for 30 years here at Cougar Country Compound. Because my species is nearly extinct in captivity in North Carolina, it will be very hard for him to obtain more big cats to live here with me. But I am quite happy playing with my Great Dane pals, Harley and Sable,” concludes Mandy.

“So if you see a cub out in the wild while hiking, please protect yourselves, because the mother may be nearby, and, please, leave the cubs where you found them, free and happy in the wild. Please keep your distance from the mature cats, too, so you will be safe and so they will not feel threatened by mankind. They need to breed and repopulate without any interference, so our kind will exist in the future. We can all live together in peace and harmony,” declares Mandy.

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Joe Maynard Passes

By Nancy Vandermeay

A big name in captive wild feline breeding has passed on. Joe Maynard, a cofounder of the Exotic Feline Breeding Compound's Feline Conservation Center ("EFBC") in Rosamond, California, in 1977, died after a brief battle with cancer in October 2015.

Joe's involvement with wild cats began in the 1970s, when he saw an ad in the local paper for leopard cubs. After getting one (and naming it "Spot"), he did a lot of research into proper care and handling and learned that many zoos were still importing wild-born cats that did not adjust well to life in captivity (no surprise there!). Joe decided that captive-bred cats raised in a stress-free situation would not only breed better, but be more relaxed on public display and help educate the public better about the plight of their wild cousins. Originally not open to the public, that changed in a few years, as friends and neighbors told THEIR friends and neighbors and regular operating hours were soon required to handle the number of visitors. At that time, in 1983, EFBC incorporated as a non-profit 501(c)3.

Leopards were joined by tigers, cougars, jaguars, and smaller cats.

EFBC's jaguar pair, Twilight and Jesse, produced nine cubs in the 1990s, and those offspring are still reproducing today, with great-grandchildren in many zoos. The fishing cat breeding program has been especially successful, with six breeding pairs over the years producing over 100 offspring. EFBC started the interest in Amur leopards in this country by importing cats from Europe and Russia, with EFBC's first litter in 1995, and the subsequent offspring are still going strong today in many facilities. EFBC is one of a handful of places with Pallas's cat kittens surviving to adulthood.

EFBC has recently started breeding new small cat species, sand cats and black-footed cats, and hopes to participate in ocelot and margay breeding programs soon, as well as Malayan tigers. Joe's main job the last few years has been as curator – he knew everyone in the captive feline world! That knowledge takes years



Joe Maynard plays with a fishing cat cub as Jim Sanderson watches.



Joe holds a Northern Chinese leopard cub. EFBC is one of the only facilities in the country working with this subspecies of leopard.

to gain, but our head keeper, Seth, and new board president, Dr. Kristi Krause, are versed in ZIMS and learning all about the paperwork required to transfer cats between facilities. Attending Felid TAG and ZAA meetings will get them up to speed on the important personal connections needed. EFBC works with a lot of European zoos and has a female snow leopard on her way from Germany soon. The paperwork is being processed for a Persian leopard from another German zoo, as well.

While EFBC is not a rescue facility, work is being done with the local Fish & Wildlife officers to assist when needed in placing animals. Some of their non-breeding animals come from this avenue, to enhance visitor experience by showcasing the vast variety of wild cat species. EFBC also always makes sure to have two local wild cats, the bobcat and cougar, on display. Too many people are unaware of what lives in their own "backyard" and are fascinated to see these cats and learn how close they live to us.

Many changes have happened over the years, such as transitioning from an all-volunteer staff to paid keepers, managers, maintenance, and gift shop personnel. The keepers are supported by volunteers

and interns from all around the world. Several have gone on to found their own cat facilities or become wildlife veterinarians.

My own involvement at EFBC began in 1991, when I first moved to California. I had volunteered at an animal shelter during college and was thrilled to find a place where I could volunteer and actually work with big cats. The volunteers are basically full-time zookeepers; we learn all aspects of cleaning and feeding the cats, as well as educating visitors. My relationships with these cats, Joe, and the other volunteers and workers over the years has helped me destress from my everyday job as an engineer flying spacecraft for NASA. Twenty-four years later, I am training kids who were not born when I first started!



Keepers and volunteers work on a leopard at the onsite clinic.

I also attend the Wildlife Conservation Network expo most years to represent the EFBC, and I love meeting the wild cat field researchers there. I have travelled to Africa several times and met the black-footed cat research group and many people who knew Joe.

I am especially proud of the very high percentage of donations which go to EFBC's program services, over 90%. Fundraising expenses are kept low, and nothing is spent on advertising. A new

restroom facility, additional small cat breeding enclosures, and a wildlife museum are all planned for the future. While losing Joe has been personally very hard, the organization is in great shape and will continue his dream of wild cat conservation.



Ktusha, a seven week old Amur leopard cub. EFBC has the most successful Amur leopard breeding program in the country.



Tiga, a Malayan tiger, in the new exhibit Joe worked very hard on completing.

11th Annual Conference for the Zoological Association of America

By Brittany Gonzalez

The Zoological Association of America was formed in February 2005, to promote responsible ownership, management, conservation, and propagation of animals in both privately funded and publicly funded facilities through professional standards in husbandry, animal care, safety, and ethics. The conference is held to promote networking, continued education, and fellowship to ZAA. This year, the ZAA Conference was held at The Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, on November 7-10, 2015. Attendees and speakers represented many different members and professionals in the zoological field.

The first day of the conference, we visited Lion Habitat Ranch and Wayne Newton's Casa de Shenandoah. Lion Habitat Ranch is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization which advocates for education about lions in the Las Vegas community. They also support Conservation International in Kenya. They provided attendees of the conference with a very beautiful experience and positive message about lion conservation. Wayne Newton's Casa de Shenandoah was a great opportunity to explore beautiful grounds while networking with members of the zoological community. The newcomer mixer was also held on the first night of the conference in one of the private bars of the hotel. I, along with many others, found this location to be difficult to network in because it was extremely loud and impossible to hold a conversation. It was, however, a great time to unwind and have fun.

The conference provided attendees with very informative and educational lectures. There were a few in particular that really peaked my interest. One of these was "Economical Exhibit Design and Construction," by Nick Rich of Tiger World. Nick's lecture was very enlighten-

ing as far as what facilities can achieve in enclosure design on a minimal budget. His designs focused on promoting natural behavior, enrichment, providing a complex environment, and photographic opportunities for guests. The enclosures also provided submerged pathways to enhance the visitor experience. He and his crew at Tiger World successfully used many recycled materials and natural materials found around their facility. Some of these items includ-

ed leftover materials from previous projects and excess eucalyptus. The eucalyptus was made into poles and then used to create an entire fence line, providing another barrier between enclosures and the public. The team at Tiger World has also been very successful at soliciting donations from local businesses. They have received copious amounts of donated materials and much needed volunteered time from skilled contractors. When constructing the landscapes in the enclosures, Nick almost always purchased vegetation



at a discounted rate. The end product of such a low budget often falls below normal standards. Tiger World staff, however, has done it correctly. Their enclosures are not only high quality and beautiful, but they offer great enrichment for their animals and the public. For more information on Tiger World, visit <http://www.tigerworld.us/>.

One lecture that really captivated and motivated the audience was "Fishing Cat Conservation," by Ashwin Naidu of the Fishing Cat Conservancy. Mr. Naidu provided a passionate, personal, and informative lecture on fishing cat conservation. His passion for the conservation efforts and public awareness of fishing cats really inspired his audience to engage and reconnect with their own conservation goals. The Fishing Cat Conservancy mission is focused on public awareness, working with local people and authorities near fishing cat habitats to enhance their protection. The lecture was very educational about the efforts being made toward fishing cat conservation. Ashwin Naidu's incredible focus and passion for the cause is what really captivated his audience. He made his lecture personal and mean-



In addition to the speakers, there was time for fun. Brittany, a graduate of Moorpark College, met up with fellow graduates now working at the Mirage's Dolphin exhibit. Pictured here are Robert Johnson, Brittany Gonzalez, Michelle McKay, and Patty Perry, doing some hand signal training with the dolphins.

ingful, leaving everyone with a sense of community and self-worth. He is the kind of speaker that people really look forward to learning from. For more information on fishing cat conservation, visit <http://www.fishingcatconservancy.org/>.

In addition to the lectures above, another very interesting and informative presentation called "Independent Social Media Marketing: The Keeper, the Carpenter, and the Bus Driver," was given by Jocelyn Monteverde of Bearizona Wildlife Park. Jocelyn really focused her presentation on social media being the new and only way to network and market. She explained social media from such a clear perspective. She broke down each social media network into outlets that will target different audiences. She also explained how to assign different social media tasks to a small staff. For example, animal keepers are responsible for Twitter posts, because Twitter is in "real time" and keepers are typically with the animals throughout most of the day. Jocelyn broke down each social media network and explained how to post, when to post, and what to post on each, and it was very much appreciated by her audience. The task of social networking is a full-time job in itself and for facilities which do not have the time or budget, it is really important to find a way to successfully advertise. Jocelyn has a very productive and effective way of doing this. She also explained how to engage your staff to post positively without any negative repercussions. Her clear vision on how to use social media correctly also gave her opportunities to use social media creatively. This topic was very important because social networking is such an incredibly fast growing industry and truly is the most successful way to market your business. For more information on Bearizona Wildlife Park, visit <http://www.facebook.com/Bearizona> or <http://bearizona.com/>.

A beautiful banquet was held on the last night of the conference. This was another great opportunity to network with other professionals and facilities. ZAA hosted a wonderful silent auction and live auction. The silent auction was displayed during cocktail hour and included a wide variety of items. The live auction was held during dinner and was highly entertaining. One of the more memorable items auctioned was the "Ugly Tie," which apparently has been a tradition at the banquet for several years. Every year, the same

"Ugly Tie" makes its way back to the auction and every year an attendee happily buys it. It is a tradition that is fun and entertaining. It has actually led to a new tradition called the "Ugly Bag." The "Ugly Bag" follows the same concept as the "Ugly Tie," but is geared toward women. Dinner was delicious! A full course meal was served and there was also a vegetarian option. Overall, the banquet was the highlight of the conference. It was the last chance to introduce yourself to the people you had yet to meet and a good chance to say goodbye to friends. Everyone looked fantastic and it appeared to be a successful fundraiser for ZAA.

The 11th Annual ZAA Conference was a very interactive, educational, and fun opportunity. The location was a key component of the entire conference. It provided a perfect venue that was convenient, fun, and safe. It was located in the entertainment capital of the world, which

allowed for an unlimited amount of activities outside the conference. I heard on more than one occasion that it was possibly the best ZAA conference yet! I really cannot express how educational and engaging the speakers were. They left me feeling even more excited, motivated, and passionate about conservation. It is hard to explain how exciting it is to share common goals and ambitions with others. The sense of community provided by the members of ZAA and attendees was unreal. I am very appreciative to Patty Perry, Director of Wildlife & Environmental Conservation, Inc. She not only is a very compassionate person with an extreme dedication to wildlife conservation, but she is also a very inspiring mentor to me. I would like to thank Patty and Wildlife & Environmental Conservation, Inc. for funding my attendance and a fantastic experience at the 11th Annual ZAA Conference.

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Ameeka the Bobcat

By Eugene Culver

Once again, the divine has manifested itself to me as a feline; her name is Ameeka. She is 15 months old and already the biggest lady bobcat I have ever known, at about 40 pounds of solid muscle. But what is really special about Ameeka is that she is a wild-born bobcat, found orphaned and brought to a rehabber at about two weeks of age. The rehabber fell in love with her and was soon consulting with us about diet, medical care, and bobcattiness in general. Then she was confronted by the state with a bitter choice; either release Ameeka or give her to an out-of-state, USDA-licensed facility, or the state would seize her and euthanize her. We were asked if we could give Ameeka a home and we agreed.

We received her at the age of five and a half months, already weighing 20 pounds. Ameeka, like all bobcats, has a beautiful face, but her pelage is very plain. We have been selectively breeding for beautiful spots and rosettes, but Ameeka will

not be denied a chance to breed. If her kittens have her personality and her plain appearance, I intend to tell prospective buyers they can have the spotted and rosette kittens for one price, but for Ameeka's kittens, they will have to pay more, because Ameeka's beauty is through and through. Ameeka is an enlightened being.

Ameeka came to us during kitten season and there were bobcat, lynx, and serval kittens in the house, which we expected could be a problem. But Ameeka thought it was great. Soon, she convinced us her only desire was to mother these kittens. She loved them all, even the tiniest Geoffroy's kittens that would fit in the palm of your hand or make a nice snack for a predator. But Ameeka has never shown any predatory tendencies toward any of these animals.

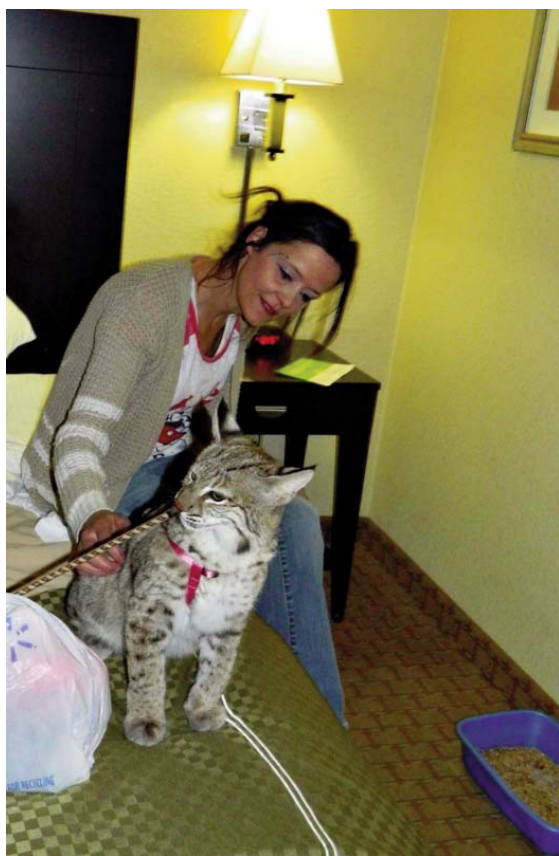
All the kittens trusted her and loved her as their anointed surrogate mom and tribal leader, except for one.

We are currently caretaking a bobcat from another facility who is a fearful and sometimes hostile, five month old bobcat. When cornered, he makes terrible growling/screaming sounds I have never heard out of any of the countless bobcats we have raised. He is so freaky he cannot even pick up on Ameeka's wonderfulness. When Ameeka approaches him, he threatens her and has slashed her face. He is a real problem child. What does Ameeka think? "No problem." She responds to his hostility with the most demonstrative exaggerated head bobbing and wooing, all the while purring. I have never heard Ameeka growl back at this cat, or at anything. She is going to win him over, and I honestly think she is the only one who can.

Although we did not raise or train Ameeka, we can put a harness on her, and we can pick her up and put her anywhere. And



Ameeka was brought to a rehabber just before her eyes opened and was raised with this domestic kitten at Lisa's home.



Lisa Wood says good-bye to Ameeka at the hotel where Lynn picked her up.

Ameeka, unlike most cats, does not hate the word "no." Ameeka is past the age where bobcats start looking up to find the highest point in your house and how to get there. From that exalted position, they will rule and conduct their gravity experiments. I call this "going vertical;" it is also known as "wall sailing" or the "feet do not touch the ground game." Usually this can only be detoured with scat mats. So, when Ameeka started staring at the venetian blinds, wondering if they would hold her weight, I rather ruefully said, "Ameeka..." She looked at me, I said, "No," and Ameeka, using her heightened wild sensitivity, understood and decided that testing the structural integrity of the venetian blinds was not as important as her relationship with me, and she made that clear by coming over to me and purring and possessing my foot. So far, every time I tell Ameeka, "No," she never does whatever it is again.

One of the most wonderful things about Ameeka has been her relationship with another young bobcat named Stormy. A lot of good people put a lot of effort into helping Stormy recover from being orphaned. It was thought starvation had caused him to be stunted and unthrifty.

When he came to us at five months of age, he seemed to be making a comeback and was feisty enough to tell us he was tired of people messing with him. But he loved Ameeka on first sight, and the pair spent the next five months together.

Then Stormy crashed. We were only able to treat him for hypothermia and dehydration because he was so weak. But he definitely did not understand that we were trying to help him. That is

when Ameeka arrived like the flying nun. It was love at first sight. Ameeka went right to work helping us nurse Stormy. While we stuck him with needles and pumped fluids, she licked him and purred incessantly, forcing him to purr in resonance. Ameeka guarded Stormy constantly. After we finished attending him, she would lie against him with one arm cover-



Ameeka made friends with Stormy, an orphaned bobcat who also lived with Lynn and Bart. Little Stormy was just six weeks younger and about two thirds her size.

ing him protectively, grooming him like he was her own. Unfortunately, Stormy did not recover fully; he was diagnosed with polycystic kidney disease and had to be put to sleep. But, thanks to Ameeka, Stormy's short life was full of love and he knew it. If a human did what Ameeka did, we would recognize it as an act of passion. Only dogma seeks a different

explanation when a wild animal does it.

Of course, when we took Stormy away and did not bring him back, Ameeka did not have anyone to blame but us for her loss. She punished us by doing the same to us as we had done to her. She took herself away from us. For four days she would not talk to us or look at us. And then, after justice had been done, she came back to us as sweet as ever.

I spoke to Lisa Wood, the rehabber who raised




Ameeka. She sent me her story with permission to edit it, saying, "I can't write." I found Lisa's words to be inspired and I include them here, unedited:

In August of 2014, only a few months after I had started rehabilitating wildlife, I had gone out to a fellow rehabber's home (one who has been rehabilitating wildlife



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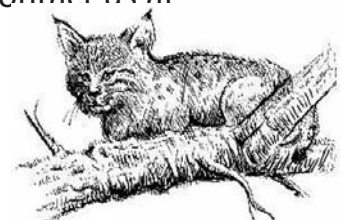
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for over 15 years) to see all the beautiful animals she had in her care. As I was watching her feed an orphaned baby deer, I mentioned to her that my ultimate goal was to care for a bobcat and a crow. She quickly replied by saying that in the 15 years she has been rehabilitating, she had only gotten two bobcat calls and a single crow call, so it would be highly unlikely that I would get a chance any time in the near future. Two days later, I got a picture message from her and it read, "Look at my new baby!" It was a photo of a baby bobcat. I asked if I could go out and see the baby, and she said yes.

The next day, I drove back out to her house and, as I was walking in the basement, I heard a sound unlike any sound I have ever heard. It was what I would describe as a very high pitched sound over and over; I looked down and saw a beautiful baby bobcat. When I sat in the chair and reached down and picked up the bobcat that was covered with little stickers in her matted fur, immediately the crying stopped. For the next



Ameeka gets a warm hug from Chris Comstock. Ameeka greets new people with purrs and gentleness.

30 minutes, I held that beautiful baby. I knew in my heart that it was love at first sight; the baby bobcat stole my heart at that very moment. I went home with the bobcat on my mind and texted the fellow rehabber and told her that if she ever needed a babysitter, please consider me, with hopes I would get that chance.

Two days later, she called me and said,

"Lisa, you know how you offered to babysit the bobcat? Well, my grandson just stopped breathing and I have got to go to the hospital and I need someone to take the bobcat and a baby squirrel." I felt horrible because of what she and her family were going through and all the pain that they were bound to feel, but at the same time my heart was singing because I was on my way to bring the bobcat baby home. I felt as if it were meant to be, I couldn't explain why it all played out the way it did, other than destiny.

I brought her home and my daughter looked at her and called her Ameeka, so that was her name. From the first moment I saw her, I knew there was

something very special about her. As she grew older, she not only loved me, my family, and everyone she came into contact with, but she developed bonds with every animal she came in contact with as well. She shared meals with a blue jay, played on a swing with a Chihuahua daily, snuggled with a grown pit bull, and took care of kittens that came into the home. You could see that she had a soul; she was compassionate and caring. Ameeka the bobcat took a large piece of my heart, and to this day she still has it. She opened my eyes to so much. I never taught her how to love; she loved from the start. That beautiful girl taught me a different kind of love; a love I never even knew existed.

Ameeka has dispelled the notion that the dozens of sweet bobcats I have befriended were sweet because they were many generations captive-born and raised. They were "tamed." According to our rehabber friend, Ameeka is not the result of training; it is simply the way her natural proclivities developed in an atmosphere of love. A doting human surrogate mother raised her in a protected environment. Ameeka is what she would have been if nature were very, very kind. Perhaps Ameeka is not so unusual. Perhaps all she proves is that you can tame a bobcat in one generation. But that is even more wonderful, because it means there are a lot more Ameekas out there. My extensive experience with this species compels me to hypothesize that wild bobcats are often monogamous and mate for life, that the young make friends with other species, even prey species, and that they feel loyalty, empathy, and compassion.

Yes, one of the sweetest, friendliest, most cooperative people ever to enter my home is a truly wild animal. What then is the meaning of wild? I am grateful to Ameeka for helping me to know, but I am saddened that a society, trained to fear anything "wild," will probably NEVER KNOW and, therefore, NEVER CARE about the precious things it is destroying.



Tim Berges takes a stop-action photo of Ameeka in her outside enclosure chasing a lure from a fishing rod.

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We'll be announcing more exciting details as the Convention committee finalizes our speakers, field trips, and special events. Mark your calendar and plan to take your vacation with fellow FCF members. Florida is home to many fine zoological facilities, including Miami Metro Zoo, Dreher Park Zoo, and FCF member facilities, Panther Ridge Conservation Center and Zoological Wildlife Foundation.



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Branson Has Everyone Covered - Even Us Animal People

By Lynn Culver

This past October, I had the pleasant experience of visiting a family-owned wildlife collection in the heart of America's vacation city. Branson is situated in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, and features many lodges, restaurants, and entertainment theaters. Folks come from all the surrounding states to enjoy the scenic beauty and wide variety of tourist attractions. Competition for tourist dollars is stiff; there are theme parks, water parks, zip lines, theaters, lakes, water sports, museums, events, shopping, and the FCF-accredited Promised Land Zoo. It's holding its own and is rated #15 in Trip Advisor's "Top 150 things to do in Branson."

I was spending the night in Branson, and took a chance that I could meet with Laura and Josh Remenar on a moment's notice. Lucky for me, they live at the zoo, so Laura invited me and my driving companion Cheryl over for a tour. We arrived just before the zoo closed, so we didn't see any of the live animal shows or the animal interaction sessions, but we still had a great time walking around and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

Only about five acres of the zoo property are developed, but plans are already in the works for more habitats and attractions next year. The zoo is on Shepherd of the Hills Expressway, one of the main highways through Branson. The land slopes down from the entrance, so the animal enclosures are arranged in levels and paths take you along an assortment of paddocks holding various species of exotic goats, deer, zebras, wallabies, ostriches, camels, and alpaca. Enclosures house small and medium-sized animals like kinkajou, lemurs, spider monkeys, sloths, African porcupines, even wolves and a pair of gorgeous hyenas. For us cat lovers, there are serval, caracals, a lion, and a tiger. The small cats have been hand-raised and used

in their shows. The adult caracals are still very tractable and successful breeders, too. The lion and tiger are compatible, so they share a grassy yard with a cement pool in the corner. The cage posts are cedar logs, a c o m m o n

species on the property. In fact, too common, says Laura, and the zoo's ibex goats are busy eliminating some of these evergreens by eating the bark. Laura explained that the city of Branson has very strict ordinances on trees. Permits must be purchased to cut down a live tree. With the ibexes' help, they will be able to thin out these trees without having to pay the city a cutting fee on each tree.

The walk is easy and the hillside is shady. There's an outdoor theater where "Jungle Josh" and the other trainers put on



an animal show with some of their ambassador animals. Josh and Laura each spent time with us, talking about the zoo and its animals and answering our questions. Many of the animals at this zoo were born at the family's other Promised Land Zoo, a drive-through park an hour away in Eagle Rock. This zoo houses younger animals born at the wildlife park, and when they outgrow the habitat here, they return to the drive-through and are replaced by younger animals. That's great, because people get much closer to the animals at Branson, and younger animals are less "hormonal" and more relaxed around the visitors.

I was very aware of the high cost of exhibiting in such a high-end location. Most city zoos are city-owned and tax dollar supported. This one is not. It has to pay its way without a government handout. Zoos have high overhead, live animals take a lot of man hours to maintain, and ambassador animals need extra attention. Branson has carefully chosen its animal collection to create loyal fans and return visitors.

Being a small zoo means it's great for families with kids. There are enough animals to satisfy, without exhausting you.



"Jungle Josh" Remenar shares a moment with the Promised Land Zoo's tiger. Josh and Laura spent the evening showing Lynn and Cheryl the family's wildlife collection.

The shows, parakeet feedings, and the animal interactions are clearly a favorite with the visiting public. That hunger for connection with nature is universal and this zoo delivers. I have copied a few excerpts from Trip Advisor reviews of Branson's Promised Land Zoo:

"Got to feed baby goats and got to pet a bullfrog, prairie dog, possum, snake, and an armadillo!"

"The animals were gentle and ate out of our hands. This is a smaller zoo, but a perfect size for a small child."

"The animals are so well cared for. The hands-on and educational shows make this place unique! Highly recommend Branson Promised Land Zoo!"

"Being from a town with a world-class zoo, I wasn't expecting much, and this was way beyond my expectations."

"The best part was feeding the para-

keets and petting the animals in the live show!"

"The animal encounters available here are unlike anything I have ever experienced."

"Despite this zoo's small campus, every other zoo will pale in comparison. This zoo is not just a chance to see animals. It's a chance for an experience with them."

It was wonderful to experience this zoo that earned the FCF Accreditation Committee seal of approval. I look forward to visiting again. Laura and Josh are off to a

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great start. Their children have an idyllic life, living in the middle of a zoo. I am sure they will grow up animal lovers and probably be the next generation of zoo keepers, too.

2015 Wildlife Conservation Network EXPO

By Chris Tromborg

On October 10, 2015, The Wildlife Conservation Network held its annual WCN EXPO at the Mission Bay Conference Center of the University of California, in San Francisco, California.

Over 70 conservation organizations were represented, with many of them maintaining exhibits. There were also over 30 well-known speakers, including primatologist Jane Goodall, cheetah biologist Laurie Marker, small cat biologist James Sanderson, snow leopard biologist Rodney Jackson, African lion biologist Colleen Beggs, and many other conservation biologists, including a respectable number of feline conservation biologists.

The Feline Conservation Federation was represented by FCF board member Chris Tromborg, nationally respected animal handler Lynette Lyon, and FCF volunteer Sherilyn Dance.

The FCF exhibit featured informational materials representing the FCF, an impressive number of past *FCF Journals*, and a large stack of "An InCatvenient Truth" DVDs, all but one of which were taken by EXPO visitors. The exhibit also had informational materials from the Lyon Therapy Animal Ranch, The Exotic Feline Breeding Compound (EFBC), and Safari West, a progressive, forward-looking zoo

emphasizing African species presented in large, open environments.

Chris Tromborg is also a board member of The Mountain Lion Foundation, which maintained an exhibit adjacent to that of the FCF. The MLF was represented by MLF member Chris Tromborg, MLF development officer Leslie Anastassatos, and long-time MLF volunteer Kathryn Klar.

This was the most well attended EXPO in over seven years. The tickets were completely sold out. All of the cds of "An InCatvenient Truth" were taken by visitors. Our stack of *FCF Journals* was greatly depleted. We engaged in many robust discussions about the morality, practicality, and efficacy of captive feline possession and management. In general, people left the exhibit



FCF table at the Wildlife Conservation Network Expo is manned by Director Chris Tromborg, and Lynette Lyons and Sherilyn Dance.

appearing to be thoughtful about these issues. Perhaps, with a better informed public, the future of captive felids could be looking up, even if things continue to go south in the wild.

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Update from the Legislation Director

By Amy Flory

SESSION STATUS - In session for 2015: Michigan, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Prefiling for 2016: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Washington.

NEW MICHIGAN BILL - This bill is currently in the Agriculture Committee.

On December 10th, a new Michigan bill (SB 658) was introduced that modifies the Large Carnivore Act. The bill, as introduced, will allow ANY facilities that meet the new requirements to breed, transfer, and receive large carnivores. However, the facility must participate in "scientific, cooperatively managed breeding programs that identify specific and typically threatened or endangered large carnivore species that are composed of large carnivores of known provenance and pedigree." Furthermore, the facility may not breed hybrids or breed to sell, barter, or trade the offspring. The main purpose of this bill is to allow the five AZA zoos in Michigan to breed large carnivores, as the current law does not specifically exempt them from the breeding ban. In addition, the bill will replace the American Sanctuary Association exemption with a Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries exemption.

OHIO ANIMAL CONFISCATIONS

In June, several Ohio facilities that did not complete their permit process received a quarantine order from the Ohio Department of Agriculture, requiring them to keep the animals on their property until further notice or transfer them out of state. One of the facilities, Best Exotics, has since moved their facility to Texas.

This quarantine order has been followed by a number of raids and seizures. On October 5th, they raided Paws & Claws Sanctuary and removed five tigers after owner Mike Stapleton was forced into signing them over. This was followed by a raid on Daniel Chamber's facility on October 7th, where four bears were seized (the tiger and cougar in the quarantine order were no longer there). Both owners have lawsuits pending.

In September, the Tiger Ridge Exotics animals were temporarily moved from the

Department of Agriculture facility to facilities in Florida, South Dakota, and Arizona. The owner will get three days of evidentiary hearings starting February 3rd, to present new evidence in the case. Those wishing to stay updated on the case can follow their Facebook page, Save Tiger Ridge Exotics.

On November 9th, the Department of Agriculture was granted \$500,000 for the transportation of seized exotic animals, along with \$250,000 to contract with a facility way out in California, to transport the animals despite objections to not finding someplace closer. This is in addition to the around \$3 million that they had already received.

WEST VIRGINIA DANGEROUS WILD ANIMALS LIST

The West Virginia rule containing the dangerous wild animal list was approved by the West Virginia Legislature on March 14, 2015, and took effect June 1, 2015. The legislature removed servals from the list. The felines on the final list are the lion, tiger, jaguar, leopards (includes Sunda clouded leopard, clouded leopard, and snow leopard), and the following, including domestic hybrids: cheetah, lynx, cougar, and caracal. Current owners had to get a permit to keep their felines and pay a \$10 application fee, plus \$150 per feline, along with getting liability insurance and marking them with a unique identifier.

WISCONSIN BAN BILL

A public hearing was held on Wisconsin SB 241 on October 1st. An amendment draft, which was never officially introduced, was presented to exempt USDA and ZAA facilities from the ban. There were 15 speakers, including three small, private zoos that had concerns about the impact the bill would have on their facilities. The rest were in favor of the bill. The sponsor announced that he would continue working on revisions to the amendment before officially introducing it.

After the hearing, animal rights groups spoke out in the media requesting stricter requirements for grandfathered animals, which currently only require registration. The requested requirements include five (5) acres of land, two (2) years of experience or a written exam, liability insurance, minimum 21 years of age, and microchips.

CLARK COUNTY, NEVADA

On November 17, 2015, the Clark County, Nevada, Board of Commissioners adopted a new exotic animal ordinance with a vote of 7-0, after holding a public hearing where about one third of the testimony was in support of the ordinance and 2/3 was in opposition to it.

The ordinance classifies Panthera species, puma, and cheetah, along with bears, crocodilians, elephants, rhinos, hippos, apes, hyenas, and herps whose venom is deadly to humans as "inherently dangerous exotic or wild animals." The rest of the felines are classified as "exotic or wild animals." Inherently dangerous exotic or wild animals may not be exhibited or kept, except for AZA, GFAS, and Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums, USDA or US FWS facilities not subject to the special use permit, veterinary clinics, animals transported through within five hours to or from an approved person or location, current locations that do not breed or replace animals, temporary exhibitions of up to 20 days, and current owners that do not breed or acquire new ones. Exotic and wild animals may be kept with a permit, but one of the permit requirements is a statement that they will not be bred.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

The Big Cat Public Safety Act HR 3546

"The Big Cat Public Safety Act," HR 3546, claims to help crack down on the supposed illicit interstate trade of protected wildlife species and keep the public safe from unqualified big cat owners by prohibiting the breeding and ownership of the seven large cat species. Three types of big cat owners are exempted from this bill; AZA zoos, sanctuaries, and traveling circuses.

On December 11th, Carole Baskin of Big Cat Rescue, Tim Harrison of Outreach for Animals, and Ron Kagan, Director of the Detroit Zoo, gave a very misleading briefing to House and Senate staff members. The 51-minute presentation can be viewed online at: <http://www.ifaw.org/united-states/news/congress-briefing-urges-support-big-cat-public-safety-act>. This video gives a stark look at the many lies being told to further this piece of animal rights legislation.

FCF Grant to WildCRU

By Lynn Culver

In 2013, the Feline Conservation Federation Conservation Grants committee approved a \$2,000 grant request from Amy Dickman of Oxford University's Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU). I am pleased to report that the FCF has again made a \$1,000 conservation donation to the Ruaha Carnivore Project through the generosity of one of our FCF members, Wildlife and Environmental Conservation (WEC) in Moorpark, California. This donation is a continuation of that organization's financial support for African leopard conservation. Previous donations were made to the FCF co-managed Rare Species Fund.

WEC is a rescue, rehab, and educational facility, specializing in the rehabilitation of raptors, as well as the husbandry and educational exhibiting of these birds and large felines. This past year, WEC added a pair of African leopard cubs to the current population of tiger, cougar, Eurasian lynx, and serval. In keeping with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulations, interstate commerce of threatened species (African leopards) is limited to conservation breeding facilities and educators who are also involved in wildlife conservation to enhance the species in the wild. By financially contributing to programs with established track records of protecting wild felines, and meeting the stringent service standards on husbandry, handler experience, and public educational messaging, WEC gained approval for an interstate commerce permit to purchase these young educational ambassadors. The spotted and melanistic leopards will enhance WEC's conservation messages and further compel visitors to not only understand, but also empathize with and care about the conservation of wild felines in nature.

Tanzania's Ruaha Carnivore Project has made significant headway in terms of collecting baseline data on large carnivore

populations in Ruaha, training local researchers, disseminating information, mitigating human-carnivore conflict, and improving local capacity around Ruaha National Park, and will continue this important work. In 2014-2015, the project had three main goals: (1) To provide data on large carnivore distribution, relative abundance, and ecology across the Ruaha landscape, including both protected and unprotected land; (2) To reduce the costs and improve the benefits associated with living alongside carnivores for local people, thereby reducing human-carnivore



Obi spotted leopard and Moshi black leopard are alongside handlers at Wildlife and Environmental Conservation at a conservation fundraising event at the facility. In addition to local education programs, a financial commitment to ex-situ conservation is required by the Fish and Wildlife Service to gain an interstate commerce permit.

conflict in this critically important area; and (3) To improve conservation knowledge amongst local communities, and improve capacity amongst Tanzanian researchers to help them build their careers in wildlife conservation.

To meet the first goal, WildCRU initiated a carnivore sightings database. During 2014, 2,981 large carnivore sighting events were reported to WildCRU, bringing the overall total reported to 7,587, but many of the sightings will represent the same individual or groups being reported repeatedly. Nearly three-quarters of those ($n = 2,442$, 81.9%) were of lions, with group size ranging from one to 42 individuals. Despite Ruaha being known to have particularly large lion prides, the average lion sighting comprised only 6.3 individu-

als, with over half the lion sightings ($n = 1,382$, 56.6%) involving five or fewer animals. In contrast, African wild dogs were the rarest carnivore sighted, with only 16 reported sightings in this period, making up only 0.54% of total reported sightings. The group size for African wild dog sightings ranges from one to 30, but 75% of all African wild dog sightings involved eight or fewer animals, giving an overall mean group size of 7.9. Cheetahs were reported 201 times, representing 6.7% of all sightings – 55% of the time they were seen alone, with a maximum observed group size of five animals, and an average group size of 1.8 animals. Leopards were reported slightly more than were cheetahs, with 288 reports. The vast majority of these sightings ($n = 273$, 94.8%) involved lone animals, with an average group size of 1.1 and a maximum of three leopards observed together. Spotted hyenas were observed relatively rarely, with only 33 reported sightings, representing 1.1% of all reports. Group size ranged from one to eight, with around half the sightings ($n = 17$, 51.5%) of lone animals, and an overall average group size of 2.2 animals.

To meet the second goal of reducing human/predator conflict, data collected by the conflict monitors revealed that approximately 65% of attacks occur in livestock enclosures (bomas), so WildCRU has focused on continuing to predator-proof those, using strong diamond-mesh wire. Wooden poles have been used for the bomas, but increasingly now there is a switch to metal poles, as they are longer-lasting and are cheaper for the householder in the long-term, as there is very little need for replacement over time. In addition, the new bomas are being built in a square or rectangular shape, rather than a circle, as it is easier for the livestock keeper to construct shade over it and is easier for them to maintain well. WildCRU reinforced 21 bomas, bringing the total predator-proofed to 86 by the end of November 2014. The 21 new bomas were

placed across seven villages and six ethnic groups and collectively protected 3,304 head of livestock (1,494 cattle, 1,797 smallstock, and 13 donkeys). In total, all the predator-proofed bomas protected 12,245 livestock (5,658 cattle, 6,472 smallstock, and 115 donkeys).

The boma program appears to be very successful; among the bomas improved during 2014, there were eight carnivore attacks resulting in 16 livestock deaths during the three months before predator-proofing. After fortification, there have been no attacks to date in any of those improved bomas.

Another way to mitigate conflict caused by livestock loss by predators is the Anatolian guard dog program, which is in the testing phase right now. The dogs were imported from the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF) in Namibia. Guard dogs require considerable investment in terms of time, as they are frequently monitored by RCP staff, and in terms of money, as they require high-protein food during the first year, as well as veterinary treatment. They are unlikely to be highly protective during their first year of life, but, despite that, they have been extremely well received by local pastoralists, and there is a growing list of people who are interested in receiving one of the project's dogs. WildCRU is monitoring losses at all the recipient households, as well as other households without specialized dogs, so over time it will be able to assess the success and cost-efficiency of this program compared to other methods of conflict mitigation.

To meet the final goal of increasing conservation awareness of the local villagers, the project took 99 villagers (46 men, 16 women, and 37 school-children) into the Ruaha Park on educational visits during 2014, bringing the total number of participants over time to more than 500. These visits are conducted in collaboration with Ruaha National Park's community officers, who, whenever possible, meet with the villagers and explain the role of the park and its value to

the local area. These trips have been extremely valuable – people get to learn about wildlife and its conservation in an interesting, non-threatening environment, and for most people it is their first visit to the park. The trips have significantly improved peoples' attitudes towards wildlife and the national park – of the respondents during this reporting period, 64% said the visit made them more positive towards wildlife like lions, 82% said the visit made them more positive towards Ruaha National Park, and 88% said it made them more positive towards the Ruaha Carnivore Project. These changes in attitudes are critically important for reducing conflict, so WildCRU is keen to continue and extend this work.

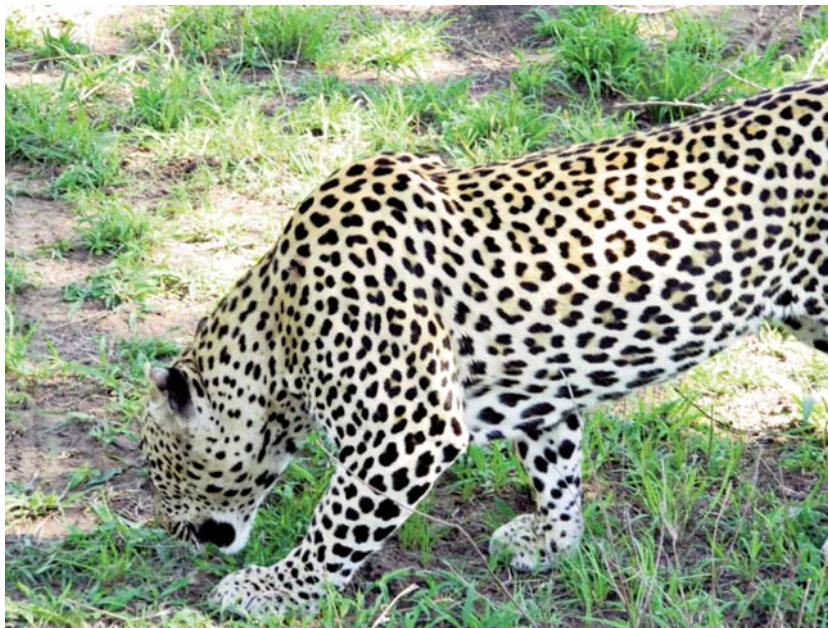
WildCRU has recently gained international press for its work studying lions, and specifically Cecil the lion, a well-known male lion living in Hwange Game Reserve, in Zimbabwe. On July 1st of this year, the big cat was lured away from the



The latest boma design is a square rather than round enclosure, and uses metal instead of wooden posts.

sanctuary of the park and illegally killed by an American big game hunter with the aid of his African guides. This disgraceful crime sparked worldwide outrage and calls to end trophy hunting. The loss of Cecil ended years of radio-collar data and opened the door for documentation of the cascading effects to a pride when the dominant lion is removed. Now more recently, news has reported further tragedy which has struck another pride of African lions, stars of the long-running and hugely popular BBC series called "Big Cat Diary."

The victims come from the Marsh Pride, a family of lions living in the Maasai Mara National Reserve in southwest Kenya. This latest loss by poisoning highlights the urgent need to continue educating the livestock herders and villagers living among big cat predators, and to continue devising methods and programs that protect livestock from predator loss so that other poisonings do not occur. Hopefully, WildCRU efforts will pay off in the Ruaha National Park and FCF members can take pride in knowing that they are part of an organization of cat conservationists who support this important work.



Leopards represent about 8% of the carnivores in Tanzania's Ruaha landscape. With the help of FCF donations, research, protection, and education efforts by WildCRU will help secure the future for these threatened felines.



Kae Hamilton's serval, Princess Tiger, is ready for Christmas.



You can practically hear this male lion roar. Jordan Joseph took this photo at the Crowsnest Ranch Wildlife Sanctuary.

Your Best Shots!



Who needs a Christmas elf when you have caracal ears? Photo of Ginger by Brandi Chism.



Phil Cooper's Canada lynx, Bella, checks out presents under the tree.



“ooffing.”
Catty Shack



Bobcat Reeno rubs up to
Santa's beard. Photo by
Tammy Schrader.



Asher caracal held by Melissa. Photo
by Hope Bennett.



out the pre-



Carol Cochran took this photo of
Phaedra when she was just a little
serval. Today, she is all grown up
and lives at NOAH Feline Conserva-
tion Center.



Hollywild Animal Park's lioness Icic,
a name meaning “divine.” Photogra-
pher Kim Atchley says Icic is the
mate of Mandela, the zoo's white
lion.

The Life of Tyra

By Jonathan & Vivian Freed

My name is Jonathan Freed. My wife Vivian and I share our home with Tyra, the now infamous, 37-pound serval from Morganton, North Carolina. My quest to add a larger feline to our cat family actually began almost 26 years ago, when Vivian and I were married.

Vivian is a cat *lover*... I don't just mean enthusiast; I refer to those people who are literally LOST without a cat. I tried... I really tried. I did not like cats, not at all. My only experiences had been a run-in with a Siamese while visiting my grandparents as a child, and later as a wildlife admirer watching our neighbor's outdoor cat wipe out every bird, duck, squirrel, and snake in their yard and then ours.

I thought I could break Vivian of her cat habit once we were married and she was out of her parents' home, away from the influence of cats. She was not complete without a feline and, after a few months' of her withdrawal, I think she started losing her mind. I couldn't take any more of the begging and pleading. I



Tyra gets babied by her dad, Jonathan Freed. Being comfortable enough to be held in his arms like this makes it obvious how bonded to her humans Tyra has become.



Baby Tyra has the big job of growing into her very prominent serval ears.

broke. Our first was Frieda, a classic tabby, soon followed by Nellie, a smaller, sleeker classic tabby, and then a gray calico tabby stray named Emmy Lou, aka "Bubbie." Vivian took Nellie to Cat Fancy shows until Nellie decided they were tiresome and began behaving badly. Nellie was a true ambassador of cats; loving, smart, and beautiful - swinging me from ambivalent into a total fan. I had lost the argument - big time. Our time with her was sadly short. She died of unknown causes at about two years of age. Since then, we have had other cats for long and short periods; as beloved pets and as half-way points on their final destination to other loving homes.

Our current clowder has been stable for some time, with "Siggy" (a.k.a. Sigmund Freud... I could not help myself!), a 20 lb. male classic tabby that is totally bonded to Vivian and vice versa. Then

there is Bindi, a sweet, little classic calico female feral that we took in from Vivian's parents after they rescued her. Lastly, Archer, a beefy newcomer tuxedo cat that Vivian begged me for as a birthday present - who, in typical cat fashion, bonded with me. All are precious rescues.

After 20 years of living with, learning about, and loving each of our domestic cats, I was a fan. I decided that I wanted more... a CAT with which I could wrestle and play hard. Vivian was against it about as firmly as I was against cats in general when we got together. She felt that an exotic cat didn't belong inside a house. She held her ground while I researched for nearly a year, emailed other big cat owners, surfed dozens of wild cat sites (like FCF), gathered data and opinion, and finally presented Vivian with my research. She knew I was serious at this point and figured, since it was her fault I was a cat fanatic, she should start listening. I decided on an African serval and she finally agreed. There were very few breeders in the U.S. at the time, and Europe had a head start in having these cats domestically bred. Unfortunately, I fell for a scam and lost \$400 on a male serval kitten - supposedly in Leeds, England - which probably never existed. Vivian said it was



Tyra and her brother Siggy show just how easy it is for the two species to get along. Catnapping at its finest!

a “sign” that we should probably stick with our domestics. I had already made up my mind and was not about to let this experience stop me.

I can’t remember how I first heard about Noah’s Landing. It is a nature center that focuses on conservation and preservation through education of countless types of wild, rare, and exotic animals, including servals. It was less than 90 miles away, and we made tracks getting there. The owner thoroughly interviewed us as we walked the facility, meeting many kinds of amazing animals. She was not about to let her kittens go to just anybody. We were introduced to a big male serval from an earlier generation of the parents, named “Tut,” who was tame. He was magnificent and sealed the deal for us. We left stunned, educated, amazed, and excited. Soon we received the call that we were approved.

Three kits had been removed from their mother and were being raised indoors. One was already claimed by a veterinarian – the daughter of the woman who owned the center. That left a male and a female. They had both been declawed (people sometimes assume we did this) by the nature center as a condition of adoption and had begun the process of being hand-trained and acclimated to people. I further rationalized my desire for the last little female with the idea that the alternative to her adoption by us was her life as a breeder animal or in a cage in a zoo, etc. She

would be infinitely better off as part of a loving family with the run of a large home, indoor and enclosed outdoor access, good food, regular vet visits, and lots of love and attention. Vivian was hooked. We named the new baby “Tyra.” We brought her home near Christmas in 2008, as our big present that year for the whole family.

Vivian built two “catios” (one from a re-purposed 14-foot trampoline enclosure that the kids no longer used and a 5x10-foot kennel), both attached to the lower level of the house. Tyra and the domestics were free to roam inside or outside

through a window with a pass-through doggy door. I built a large ledge shelf that straddled two of our corner windows, and Vivian built two large cat perches, all sturdy enough for Tyra, but enjoyed by all our cats.

Things were going great. We had her spayed and microchipped. We constantly researched new information and tips for raising a serval. Tyra was flourishing in our household and had many new admirers. There were some hiccups along the way and learning curves, especially when it came to potty training.

Tyra taught herself how to use the toilet, which was great – until she got too big and started missing the bowl. We moved her to puppy training pads and a box system with washable pellets, since she refused to use litter boxes like the domestic cats. Later, we were able to remove the pellets, which were a hassle to clean anyway, and she simply used the empty boxes with a tray underneath. She is very particular (as are all servals) and will not use pads or boxes that have already been used without having been cleaned.

While in South Carolina, we took her out frequently, making sure she was socialized to other people and situations. She caused quite a stir on her visits to restaurants where dogs were welcomed. She never minded dogs; they amuse her. We took Tyra to an outdoor shopping complex near where we lived, sometimes announcing her visits in advance, but



Out for a boatripe on the lake with Mom, Vivian Freed. What a lucky kitty!

always posting photos of the event afterward. She became famous among the locals who kept up with her whereabouts.

After ten years in South Carolina, we were up for a move. The kids had graduated, and the area was getting very busy with its proximity to Charlotte. We decided on a smaller town in North Carolina called Morganton. Over the next year, we looked at over 60 houses and set a new record with our realtor as the clients with the most houses shown. We looked at surrounding towns and areas, and even made offers on a couple of homes. We had very specific things we wanted, along with specifics of what we did not want. As fate would have it, what we thought we wanted began to change, and what we eventually decided on was nothing like what we started looking for. It's an adorable bungalow, built in 1923, in town, surrounded by other homes, with no pool, and on a moderately busy street. There was something special about the house. It had been on and off the market for a few years and we decided we had to have it.

I researched the rules for exotic cats and found the county website banned venomous snakes and dangerous exotics. No problems there. Morganton was the county seat, and the county and state both allowed all sorts of exotic cats. My oversight in not checking the city ordinances is the reason for this entire article.

Tyra was being watched and cared for by a friend of ours while we were in the process of selling and moving. Having Tyra around during this time was not conducive for strangers coming in and out of the house while we weren't there. We tried in the beginning, but local realtors and home buyers couldn't handle it.

Our friend, Sean, was determined to make Tyra comfortable, a part of his family with two black labs, and even wanted a serval of his own. Tyra would quickly break him in on the difficulties of caring for an exotic cat. If you have never met or raised an animal like Tyra, nor heavily researched them, you can't begin to understand what it's like to have one share



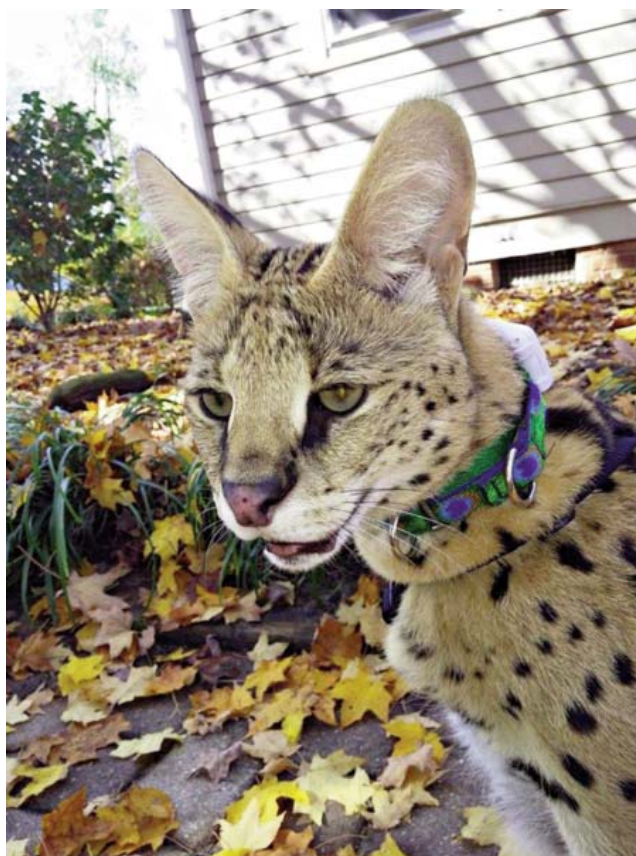
Tyra isn't in the least bit "purr"turbed by her canine visitor during an outing to Morganton's Catawba Brewing Company.

your life. Believe it or not, we have cautioned more people *against* owning one, because they require serious commitment, time, money, and patience. When the honeymoon wears off and you are left with an animal in your house that has not had primal behaviors "bred" out of it - life gets interesting. This is where many people surrender them to sanctuaries, zoos, or someone else who has always wanted one because they are "cool." We have had our struggles. We tried to rehome her once. It didn't work out, and the gal who adopted her traveled over nine hours to bring her back. We re-committed to making it work.

When we visited Tyra at her temporary home during our move, Vivian greeted her with the infamous serval "chirp." We couldn't hear that signature squeaky meow-bark she used to communicate with us for years. Instead, it was a faint, hoarse, breathy noise as she tried to communicate her happiness upon seeing us. She had lost

nearly a third of her body weight. We figured she had been calling out for us non-stop during the previous weeks while Sean was at work. It was heartwrenching and we had to get her HOME. But we couldn't do it immediately, as we were still in the selling/moving process. Servals usually bond once, especially at her age, and when that bond is broken it usually has a devastating outcome, as they can become depressed and reclusive. Once a serval bonds with its chosen humans, there is nothing that can take their place.

It was the middle of August, and we learned that our friend took a new job and had to go to out of town for training earlier than planned, so we needed to bring her home ASAP. We were still finishing her accom-



Tyra gets lots of sunshine and fresh air in her new hometown, Morganton, North Carolina.

modations. I thought we were ready, but Vivian knew better and was concerned it wasn't secure enough yet. She is more than a little handy and I should have listened to her. Tyra escaped her enclosure on her first night in the new house. Vivian never berated me by saying, "I told you so." We had bigger things to worry about than our egos. We were frantic. She was in a new area with car traffic. She could be attacked by dogs (albeit crazy ones to go after a larger cat), shot, found and sold... any number of horrible things came to mind. For three frantic days, we put up signs, searched, prayed, and hoped. Public Safety, the newspaper, TV news channels, Humane Society, and Animal Control were all notified, as were the neighbors. The upside was that we had a quick introduction to the entire neighborhood.

The Morganton Herald and local TV stations were all on high alert and covering her story. While Dan from WCNC 36 Charlotte was here doing an interview, someone knocked on the door and yelled, "TYRA'S DOWN THE STREET!! SOMEONE'S GOT AN EYE ON HER SO SHE DOESN'T GET AWAY!!" Dan quickly piled the camera back in his van and we all raced the half-mile down the street looking like a tornado-chasing crew. Instead of an interview about Tyra being lost, it was a real-time rescue! Vivian got out of the car and raced for Tyra, who was creeping deeper into a wooded area. She

lured her with shrimp and snatched her up into her arms on her back, like a baby. The adrenaline was pumping through all who witnessed it. We had our baby back! First on the agenda was a meal, an inch by inch examination, a bath, and, lastly, the "I told you so" from Vivian. It was interesting to note that Tyra was very hungry, so it was likely that she had not eaten much, if at all. We noticed that her "business" was very minimal, which led us to believe that she most likely didn't kill anything to eat, although we for sure.

During this time, Tyra's Facebook exploded from several hundred to a couple thousand. She was famous and Morganton loved her. Even Animal Control came out to meet her. We were surprised and asked if there was a problem, and they said, "Not at all, we just wanted to meet her."

About a week later, on September 4th, we planned on taking her to Catawba Brewing Co., a local brewery, to introduce her to her many new fans. On the date of



On the patio at Catawba Brewing Company is a great place for Tyra to mingle with her adoring fans. Her owners and friends banded together to fight for her right to do just that.



Tyra's saga showed up in local papers and on the news several times during the past few months. What a great way to publicize and promote private ownership of exotics!

her debut, we received a letter via certified mail from the local public safety office, stating that she was an exotic, banned by local ordinance, illegal, and had to be removed by September 28th. We were devastated, heartbroken, confused, and angry. How could this happen!?! Apparently, when Animal Control came out, it wasn't just to meet her, but to confirm

that she was, in fact, a serval, banned by a catch-all ordinance against exotic animals within the city limits. They could not deny that Tyra was a loving, docile creature and not a dangerous exotic animal (banned by county ordinance). Public Safety had to follow the law, and we had to respect it. We later learned that not one complaint was registered for us having her. There were probably people who did not like the idea of an exotic cat in their hometown; however, their voices were drowned out by the hundreds of supporters.

We updated her Facebook page with an apology to her fans that she could not attend that evening because of the letter and that she was illegal. People were very, very upset at the City of Morganton. Trying our best to keep our composure, we did not want cause a disturbance or blast nasty things on Facebook about our new hometown. After all, we had only been residents for a month. We explained via Facebook that, although it was definitely unfortunate, Public Safety was just doing their job and enforcing the law (written in the 1980s), which we had unintentionally broken. No explanation was good enough for Tyra's rapidly growing fan base, and there was going to be an uprising. She had already won the hearts of hundreds, and now thousands were going to help us fight to keep her. A petition site that was linked to her FB page made it to over 3,300 signatures, from Morganton and the surrounding area, to allow us to keep her. Within a couple of



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Tyra's meeting with Morganton's mayor, Mel Cohen, definitely helped the serval and her family get the support needed to have the local exotic ordinance updated.

hours of her outing's cancellation on Facebook, there was a knock on the door. It was the Mayor of Morganton.

Mel Cohen had been mayor of Morganton for 30 years. One of his close friend's daughters was a friend of Tyra and had alerted her dad to reach out to Mel. With response time amazing even for a smaller town, the mayor arrived to get a handle on the situation. He met Tyra, fed her some cheese, and was reassured to find that she was not a menace to his community. We were invited to speak on Tyra's behalf at the upcoming public discussion segment of the city council meeting. The half hour before the official meeting was carved up into three-minute segments to allow for public discussion. Vivian and I quickly booked our spot, as did Larry Whisnant, an ex-city official and author of the original ordinance, Jeff Stark, our next-door neighbor and another longtime city employee who had met Tyra, plus several other new friends and supporters. Before the meeting commenced, Mayor Cohen remarked that he had never seen that many people at a meeting during his tenure. Our goal at the city council meeting September 14th was to get the ordinance changed

to match Burke County (of which Morganton is the county seat) that *dangerous* exotic animals and venomous snakes are banned.

The meeting went exceptionally well, with about seven speaking for her and none against. To his credit, Mel stayed in touch with us through the process of working to modify the ordinance to one that maintained public safety while making allowances for a growing list of unusual, but generally harmless, pet choices. Times are changing and they respect that. We wish more state and county officials would take the time as Morganton officials and Mayor Cohen did. They researched the facts and implemented a solid law that excludes dangerous exotics. They did not take the easy way out by doing an "all or none approach." It took WORK, and city officials rose above by renewing the outdated ordinance. Between the outpouring of support on Tyra's Facebook page, the petition, public commentary at the Town Hall meeting, and the efforts of Morganton's tireless mayor... the ordinance was changed!

This is what Tyra accomplished in her new town:



Vivian Freed made her appearance during the public discussion segment of Morganton's city council meeting to voice the need for change in the local law regarding exotics.

<http://www.ci.morganton.nc.us/index.php/residents/news/news-releases/1837-backyard-chickens-some-exotic-pets-now-allowed-in-morganton>

The community support was more than what we could have ever hoped for. People worldwide were behind our movement, but Morganton was where the light really shined. We were humbled beyond words. Our cause for her legalization has turned into a way for us to give back to the community and pet-related causes. In the end, we were able to turn this victory and Tyra's new friends into a powerful mission. Vivian wanted to do something for the community on our behalf to show how much we appreciated the support. I was skeptical, as were some of the supporters we came to know locally, as we didn't want to take anything away for the fight to keep her. We needed to focus on changing the law. However, Vivian was also insistent that we show our appreciation. She dug in her heels and didn't care what anyone thought about strategy. We made sure she got Mayor Cohen's permission first. Since Facebook lets everyone know of an upcoming birthday, she knew people would flood Tyra's page with birthday wishes. September 21st, three days before Tyra's birthday, Vivian made up her mind. While she was a little nervous on how she would be perceived by people who (she thought) typically do not support exotic animal ownership, she contacted Friends for Animals - The Humane Society of Burke County, our local animal shelter, about hosting a little birthday

party for people to get a chance to meet the infamous Tyra while donating to the shelter. The Humane Society happily agreed to do it, and the next three days were focused on getting the word out there about the event. People loved the idea and were very excited about the chance to finally meet this famous cat that many also wanted to name as Morganton's mascot. September 24th came and we were due to begin at three o'clock. We printed up a couple of pages about servals, with tips on how to behave around them, because an African serval's trademark is its cobra-like hiss, which might put people

off. We got there a little early, to get settled and for Tyra to get acclimated to the sights and smells before meeting total strangers. All of her previous outings had prepped her for this day. Her patience would be appreciated. We didn't know what to expect. We knew she would be tolerant, but had no idea what would happen next.

The volunteers at the Humane Society had a little room set up where Tyra would receive her visitors. She gave a couple of obligatory hisses as she jumped out of what we call her "red chariot" and onto her big birthday chair. There were many people waiting, so we decided to begin. Outside the door was a container for the donations people could give in order to see her. For two and a half hours nonstop, one by one, people would enter the room and go up to her for a pet and to take pictures. She did not seem to mind at all. The volunteers did pause the event for 15 minutes so that Tyra could rest and grab a shrimp or two. The *News Herald of Morganton* was covering the story as well. We had a friend from out of town who volunteered to help and arrived late. She didn't want to barge through all the

patiently waiting people, so she lined up with everyone else. Later, she said she was happy she got there late so she could witness what people were saying and doing in the excitement of seeing Tyra. She said people were lined up out the door waiting for 30 minutes to see her. As people were walking out of the building, she noticed some were speechless and stunned, and some were giggling with euphoria. Comments such as, "She is so much bigger than what we expected!" and "It was so worth the wait to see her!" as well as numerous comments about her stellar behavior and beauty were commonplace. Some individuals were actually so overcome at seeing her that happy tears were even shed. There was even a gentleman, brought by his son, who served in World War II and



Tyra gets into the holiday spirit by attending a local Halloween event in Morganton.



Tyra loves her time riding in the car. After all, it means she'll probably get to be adored by some of her new fans!

worked for the Department of Investigative Services, now known as NCIS, for the Army and the Air Force, who insisted he see Tyra. It was as special for us as it was for him that he came.

Tyra's appearance raised over \$500 in cash donations, plus countless items for the shelter that were much needed. THIS is how we thank the community.

Since then, Tyra was also asked to make an appearance at an annual "Bark in the Park of Morganton" on October 17th. Surrounded by tons of dogs, she didn't bat an eye. She had many dogs come up to her to sneak a sniff while she just sat there taking it all in. She was also asked back to the Humane Society for a Halloween event, the Zombie Crawl, where people could see her again.

More recently, Tyra has been asked back to the Humane Society for people to

have their photos taken with her for Christmas, with proceeds going to the shelter. We intend on keeping the community outreach momentum going.

If you have never met or raised an animal like Tyra, nor heavily researched them, you can't begin to understand what it's like to have one share your life. We have cautioned people against owning one until they have thoroughly researched the topic. These magnificent beasts require serious commitment, time, money, and especially patience. While the idea of having one can be exhilarating, it is a long-term undertaking. When they grow up, the "honeymoon/kitten phase" becomes the caring for a wild animal that you "promised would be with you forever phase." This is where many people sadly surrender them to sanctuaries, zoos, or to someone who thinks it would be cool to have one but may not be suited to care for one. You have to be a hard-core cat/animal lover and truly understand felines to appreciate and respect having one as magnificent as Tyra.

We Can All Support NAIA

By Mindy Stinner

I attended the annual National Animal Interest Alliance (NAIA) conference in Florida, October 31st-November 1st, 2015. The group's focus is on protecting the rights of responsible animal owners, and their membership includes champion dog breeders, pet retailers, horse breeders, cowboy and rodeo organizations, and exotic and performing animal owners. The organization serves both individuals and businesses, though its programs are more focused on business protection and regulation than on issues that impact individual owners.

While there were no presentations directly related to wild cat species, the issues around protecting ownership rights are in some cases universal. There is a great emphasis within NAIA on ensuring that part of our role as owners of animals includes encouraging, modeling, and supporting strong husbandry and housing standards and ensuring the healthy and continued existence of breeds and species. The organization strongly supports the work of individuals and groups that have come together as a community to support each other in times of duress. I was especially impressed by the working relationship between the Amish community and some individuals in the AKC and retail pet organizations that has produced some amazing results, including helping a dog breeder with a small business that was falling into disrepair. Before the situation degraded to the point where a confrontation with local officials or a confiscation hit the press, this collaborating group quietly stepped in to assist with facility repairs, husbandry help, and even some short-term animal placement to support the business's recovery. By assisting prior to the situation becoming an emergency, they not only helped the animals and owner involved, but they also removed the opportunity for activist groups to use the situation to publicly back their claims that all breeding is bad.

It is clear that dog breeders with specific breed interests are dealing with many of the same issues wild cat breeders face. Their gene pool is relatively small and must be managed well to ensure that breed standards are kept while not creating a situation with damaging levels of inbreeding. Wild cat breeders have to

work with an even smaller population of animals, with limited ability to import more of most species. Some breeds face public concerns about safety that may be reflected in insurance companies dropping homeowners' insurance policies, communities creating covenants to ban certain breeds, and some local governments having special requirements for containment or limits on the numbers of these animals one owner can possess. Wild cat owners have been dealing with these same issues, including local and county bans, restrictions for animal housing, and insurance policy concerns. When it comes to individual animal ownership (as opposed to business), I believe wild cat owners have far more in common with the owner of a Rotweiler, chow, or pit bull than they may think.

Perhaps it is time for us to work on pulling together as a much larger collaborative group of animal owners. We all share the desire to work with our chosen species, and do so under the laws, regulations, and best practices set before us. Because we commit our lives to this work, we know best what is right for the animals and for us. We all need to have a voice in policy changes that may impact us and our animals, and we will be better heard when we speak with one collective voice. Maybe now we can move past the point where differences, like the species we own and the kind of businesses we run, are dividing us into "types" of owners, and instead we can focus on becoming a united force of people who work with animals, and who will stand and fight to keep doing so.

NAIA can serve as a home for all owners of animals, from all backgrounds. There are not a lot of exotic animal owners involved with the group at the member level, but the group's board knows and understands the issues any animal owner may face. This group is capable of helping an owner stand up against unreasonable actions and

speaking out as needed to defend animal ownership rights. I strongly encourage any owner of an animal-based business to consider membership, and would also encourage any person who believes in animal ownership and who would defend it



NAIA 2015 National Conference
Joining Forces to
Save Our Animals



October 31-November 1, 2015
Orlando, Florida

to join and donate your time and funds to help ensure the organization's success. Find out more at their website: <http://www.naiaonline.org/>.

Progress at Tiger Creek

By Lynn Culver

It has been a few years since I have visited Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge (TMLF) and much has changed. The facility has been around for 20 years and presently houses around 35 big cats. Tiger Creek started out like many other struggling sanctuaries, building temporary cages for rescue cats and working to raise funds for better, permanent habitats. Funding and business management is the key to success of any sanctuary, and Tiger Creek has mastered both challenges in the past decade.

According to the 2012 annual 990 returns, Tiger Missing Link Foundation, the tax-exempt corporation that runs Tiger Creek, reported nearly 13 million dollars raised between 2009 and 2013. You can definitely build a first-class facility with that kind of financial support. The non-profit's annual income is now over \$3,000,000. To raise this kind of money, Tiger Creek relies on the direct mail marketing company, Fundraising Strategies, which serves the organization well, raising the lion's share of all the donations.

Tiger Creek is rated number three of the



Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge lion habitat offers large, fenced-in yards, loafing platforms, and sturdy rock buildings where cats are locked down at night or in bad weather.

top 33 best things to do in Tyler, Texas. The refuge looks more like a municipal zoo than a sanctuary. I visited this past November, and I was impressed with its expansive habitats, black vinyl-coated chain link fencing with recurves, and cement block buildings housing its big cats. The cat house exteriors are covered with beautiful, natural rock. Tigers and lions can be safely locked down at night

or in bad weather, and the buildings would probably survive a direct hit from a tornado.

The refuge is just one part of Tiger Missing Link Foundation. TMLF is dedicated to conserving genetic diversity and eliminating inbreeding of captive tigers. It has initiated DNA research with a goal of determining a genetic snapshot of tigers in the U.S., to further conservation of captive tiger populations. TMLF increases awareness of the tiger's plight through public tours of its Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge, which cares for big cats that have been abused, neglected, or displaced.

Tiger Creek has rescued large exotic cats such as tigers, lions, leopards, and cougars from all over North America. Like at many sanctuaries, the big cats at Tiger Creek come from a mixture of former homes, from pets that could no longer be cared for, to animals retired from the circus, to surplus cats from zoos. Tiger Creek tour guides tell the visitors about each cat's personal story, as well as enlighten them about the plight of the species in the wild. The refuge has an



Inside the cathouse buildings are night houses and feeding areas. Keepers can operate remote slide gates to lock cats in or out.



One of Tiger Creek's workers interacts with one of the two ambassador servals in their enclosure.

intern program that enables college students interested in veterinary care, biology, field work, or zoological employment, to gain practical exotic feline experience by cleaning, feeding, and training the cats.

In addition to big cat educational messages, Tiger Creek has taken the first steps toward adding small cat educational programs. In the past year, a few hand-raised small feline species have been acquired. I had the pleasure of meeting their pair of six month old servals. The serval habitat was originally built for cougar-sized cats,

so there is plenty of room for running and playing. The serval littermates were placed with Tiger Creek on permanent loan to be ambassadors in Tiger Creek's educational program. Lisa Werner, Director of Programs and Services for Tiger Creek, showed me around, and she and two of the Tiger Creek trainers joined me as I visited with the servals. The adolescent cats were playful and curious and very well behaved. Animal keepers at Tiger Creek have

been working with them daily, leash-training and conditioning them for outreach work and interaction with patrons. This must be a pleasant change of pace for the animal handlers, since Tiger Creek protocol restricts employees to hands-off with the big cats. Most recently, the facility has added another small cat species for its ambassador program. I was touring that day in addition to delivering a melanistic Geoffroy's kitten to be a companion and future mate with the spotted male Geoffroy's cat already there.

Like many sanctuaries, the mission of Tiger Creek has evolved over the years. From rescue, to intern training, to first-class exhibit, and now adding small cat outreach education, Tiger Creek has grown tremendously in its nearly two decade existence. Future plans include a very impressive veterinary hospital, office building, and conference space. The building is already under construction, and Lisa showed me around inside where the framing for the various rooms are up and ready to be walled in. The future looks bright for the cats at Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge.



The food preparation building is the envy of any big cat facility. Stainless steel sinks, walk-in refrigerators and freezers, and trays full of carnivore diet.



Dogloos are modified with strips of fire hose to provide warmth, privacy, and easy cat access.

FCF Joins UAPPEAL at the Capitol

By Mindy Stinner

The FCF Board was contacted by UAPPEAL (Uniting a Political Proactive Exotic Animal League) and invited to attend a day of meetings at the Capitol, arranged by Bill Hanka, that organization's lobbyist. Mr. Hanka had made firm appointments with staff for key legislators and committees identified as important to this bill. The full day schedule included time with a variety of staffers who represent pivotal voting legislators from Florida and the Midwest, and staff assigned to work with committee chairs to help determine what bills will move through. The point of the meetings was to educate the representatives about the unintended consequences of the Captive Primate Safety Act (CPSA). Although the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) had not been introduced at the time of the planned visit to D.C., it was common knowledge that it would be introduced. And, in fact, on September 17th, Representatives Jones, Farenthold, Fitzpatrick, Jolly, Frelinghuysen, Lobinodo, and Sanchez introduced H.R. 3546, known as the Big Cat Public Safety Act.

My goal in representing the FCF's interests was to take this opportunity to educate staffers in key positions on the kinds of issues associated with both bills, as well as plan to follow up with them via email when the BCPSA was introduced.

The Captive Primate Safety Act (HR 2920) would amend the Lacey Act by adding primates to the list of "prohibited wildlife species" that are not allowed to travel across state lines, except when moved by sanctuaries or USDA-licensed facilities. This list of "prohibited wildlife species" was originally established in the previous amendment known as the Captive Wildlife Safety Act, which focused on wild cat species.

Nested within this bill, and of special concern to the feline

community, is an additional restriction on the existing exemption for USDA-licensed facilities. If the Captive Primate Safety Act passed as written, any USDA exhibitor that allows any public contact with any of the "prohibited wildlife species" would no longer be exempted from the prohibition on interstate transport.

Limitation on Application Paragraph (1) does not apply to any person who allows direct contact between any member of the public and a live bear, tiger, lion, jaguar, cougar, African leopard, snow leopard, ape, gibbon, siamang, monkey, or loris, regardless of the age of the animal.

UAPPEAL's lobbyist, Bill Hanka, is a genuinely delightful man. He does not know a great deal about the animal industry, but has had UAPPEAL as a client for

a decade at a very low cost point, because he believes in the organization's cause. He broke off from the Ferguson Group about a year ago and is now working independently. He had previously worked in the Vice President's office in Legislative and Congressional Affairs, from 1989-1993. He is very knowledgeable about D.C.'s movers and shakers and has a solid understanding of the political process.

For this trip, we were joining UAPPEAL's president, Eileen Perez-Carrion, and Treasurer/Membership Secretary Nancy Nighswander to lend more depth to the concerns they have been expressing each time this bill arises and to bring the power of economic impact and educational program limitations more to the forefront of the discussion. Because UAPPEAL largely represents responsible pet owners of primates, they have not been able to effectively leverage an economic argument against further restricting animal movement in business functionality. The potential impact on contract employees like veterinarians, interns, volunteers filling a staff role, and veterinary students learning their trade is also more demonstrable in a business setting than in most pet owner scenarios. We wanted to lend the strength of all the concerns of multiple ownership models across both primates and felids to this discussion.

I accompanied the group, representing the FCF, and brought my assistant director, Julia Wagner, also representing Coalition Solutions (her newly launched business designed to track and assess regulatory and legislative trends and address concerns with legitimately sourced and verified data and statistics), to give her the exposure to the experience. She is very talented in this kind of the arena. It does not hurt that she is the perfect demographic to speak to the staffers—a well-educated, nearing thirty year old female who has worked with wild cats and other wildlife since she



Mindy Stinner, Bill Hanka, and UAPPEAL's lobbyists, Eileen Per-Carrion, Julia Matson Wagner, and Nancy Nighswander, at the Capitol.

Captive Primate Safety Act (H.R. 2920)

114th Congress (2015-2016)

Harmful to Animal Welfare, Species Survival, and Federally Regulated Businesses

The Captive Primate Safety Act is a proposed modification to the Captive Wildlife Safety Act (2003), an amendment to the Lacey Act (1900), that will broaden the list of prohibited species to include all non-human primates. **Though its name implies otherwise, the species covered by the Captive Primate Safety Act include felines and bears, and these proposed changes expand the scope of the Captive Wildlife Safety Act from 8 to 512^{1,2} impacted species.**

The Captive Primate Safety Act will adversely impact animal welfare and species survival; and it will lead to unintended experiential and fiscal consequences that will negatively affect the operations of federally regulated businesses working with impacted species.

Because of the complex network of federal, state, and local laws and regulations that already govern the ownership of most wildlife species, even what appear on the surface to be minor changes to existing laws can have a catastrophic cascade of unintended consequences.

Changes needed for the Captive Primate Safety Act (H.R. 2920):

**Sec. 3. Captive Wildlife Amendments
strike
subsection (a)(2)(B)(i-iii)**

Without changes, the Captive Primate Safety Act (H.R. 2920) will harm:

Animal Welfare:

- ▶ Elimination of "direct contact" with the "public" has far-reaching unintended consequences (*see right*)
- ▶ State-licensed wildlife rehabilitators working with cougars and bears will face additional regulatory burdens

Species Survival:

- ▶ Additional restrictions on animal movement adversely impacts conservation breeding program sustainability

Federally Regulated Businesses:

- ▶ May interfere with the existing regulatory authority granted to USDA-APHIS
- ▶ Increased costs and decreased revenue due to changes in personnel practices, business operations, and program offerings*

**If cub encounter programs or sustainability concerns regarding adult animal housing exist, they are a regulatory matter for federally licensed businesses, with a reporting mechanism already in place through the two regional offices of USDA-APHIS*

Unintended Consequences: A lack of clarity regarding what constitutes "public" will eliminate a critical support network of personnel whose "direct contact" impacts animal welfare:



Veterinarians in training learning critical hands-on skills during procedures and surgeries as a result of partnerships between veterinary schools and wildlife facilities across the country



Experienced volunteers working in animal care who are critical supplements to compensated staff at many facilities



Internships that allow students to work hands-on alongside trained zookeeper staff, which are invaluable educational experiences for university and post-graduate students pursuing degrees in animal husbandry, zookeeping, and related fields

Reference List: 1. International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Primate Specialist Group. "Who are the primates?," accessed September 5, 2015. http://www.primare-sg.org/who_are_the_primates/. 2. International Association for Bear Research and Management, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Bear Specialist Group. "Bears of the world," accessed September 5, 2015. <http://www.bearbiology.com/index.php/bsg-24/>.

was ten, with a master's degree in Criminal Justice. Also, Julia had a previous career in a giant pharmaceutical company where she dealt with regulatory issues and sales training materials. All of this is very useful.

The schedule designed for us was heavy on Ohio and Florida interests, both because Nancy and Eileen from UAPPEAL are from these two states, and also because the votes from those states can go either way on wild and exotic animal issues. It is convenient in that these are political hotspots in the cat world, too.

We began with a breakfast strategy meeting with Bill Hanka, before meeting with Democratic Staff for the House Natural Resources Committee. Next we met with staff from the Office of Senator Rob Portman, then from the Office of Rep. Jim Jordan (Nancy's congressman), followed by a meeting with staff from the Office of Senator Sherrod Brown. The afternoon wrapped up with a meeting with a member of the Republican Staff, House Subcommittee on Federal Lands.

I believe Bill Hanka chose the best possible venue for these meetings. He chose key staff to meet with representing both

legislators and relevant committees. I was concerned at first about him choosing to schedule the meetings on a Jewish holiday, since most legislators were not on the Hill, but the staff was much more relaxed than normal and willing to offer a little extra time and patience. I think we accomplished more in the meetings because of this slightly less frantic atmosphere.

UAPPEAL is coming from a challenging point of view, addressing mostly pet owner concerns with the Captive Primate Safety Act. They are looking at amendments and addressing long-term ownership concerns that will have less impact on USDA-licensed businesses. Even staff with a history of being a little brusque to them was receptive to their concerns, though clearly the idea of an impact on the zoo industry held more interest for some of them. I suspect the staffers would have had a similar reaction to pet wildcat owners, so I studied UAPPEAL's methodology, successes, and losses to learn from them.

I do not think the CPSA or the Big Cat Public Safety Act, introduced only a couple of days after our meetings, will move

this session. In our favor is that both will have to pass through the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. Senator Inhofe, the committee majority co-chair, is very opposed to legislation like this, and he and Barbara Boxer, the minority co-chair, have been effectively cancelling each other out for months. Neither one's legislation has been allowed to move forward by the other.

This stalemate is not great for progress in general, but it works in our favor right now. This is where the CPSA is parked, and Senator Inhofe has put a hold on it twice in previous sessions. I am not as sure about his support of the BCPSA, but I suspect he will not feel kindly about it, since many of the considerations are similar.

In a follow-up email to the staffers we met with, I mentioned the BCPSA introduction and our overall concerns. I will follow up with them later as the bill gains momentum. It is critical that the folks on the Hill see the FCF as a resource of valid information and data that can help them make solid decisions. We have made a good start with that.

Exotic Feline Rescue Center

By Lynn Culver

This fall, I had the opportunity to travel to Indiana, to deliver Geoffrey's kittens and I took advantage of the trip to visit the Exotic Feline Rescue Center (EFRC) in Center Point, Indiana. The facility was founded by Joe Taft. The Exotic Feline Rescue Center was one of dozens of start-up sanctuaries founded in the 1990s. Many non-profits, like EFRC, came into existence to provide lifetime care for animals seized by authorities or given up by owners. For nearly two decades, the building of new sanctuary habitats nationwide struggled to keep pace with the number of animals needing homes because of new state and local laws prohibiting

or over-regulating their existence, or by the inability of owners to obtain required

liability coverage, and by unexpected challenges to owners' health, employment, and economic situations.



Joe Taft gets his beard cleaned by one of the tigers. The big cats enjoy the company of compatible social groups, large habitats, and keepers, like Joe, who are devoted to their well-being.

In 1990, Joe started the EFRC with two tigers and a single leopard. In the September 1997 *LIOC Newsletter*, an article reported on the EFRC accepting ten circus tigers. These retired performers joined four other tigers, 26 lions, nine cougars, two leopards, and a bobcat on the 26-acre tract. Less than a year later, FCF members toured the EFRC in 1998, during the annual convention in July. The population of lions and tigers were now at 60. Thirteen years later, in 2011, the EFRC had more than tripled its population, with 190 residents of nine different species; three bobcats, two Canada lynx, 18 leopards,



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one leopard cat, 36 lions, three ocelots, 15 puma, five servals, and 117 tigers. The May 2013 USDA inspection listed 220 felines residing at the facility; 12 bobcats, two Canada lynx, 14 leopards, one leopard cat, 36 lions, two ocelots, 15 puma, nine servals, and 133 tigers. Today, the most recent count is finally declining due to the ageing population passing away from a variety of natural causes. Presently it holds 198 cats; ten bobcats, one Canada lynx, 13 leopards, one leopard cat, 23 lions, one ocelot, eight puma, nine servals, 127 tigers, and two new species, a single

Geoffroy's cat and four Savannah hybrids. Only the number of servals has increased at EFRC, indicative of the popularity of the mid-sized African cat, and the fact that with popularity comes displacement.

Joe Taft designed and oversaw construction of an impressive array of natural habitats nestled under a regenerating forest growing amidst slate mine tailings. A series of settling ponds and small hills, remnants of a time before when this area was strip mined, gives the property plenty of different habitats. We visited in the fall, during a beautiful and rather warm weekend in October. Understory pawpaw trees were bright yellow all around Joe's home, and beautiful multicolored sweetgum trees and orange maples blazoned above many cage tops.

Since the refuge was started, an additional 100 acres of land has been donated. Much of it was open, overgrown pasture. Big cat habitats were constructed in these open areas, with only a few trees, but plenty of tall grass and native wildflowers and brush provide privacy and cover around the complex of welded Barker panel-enclosed big cat habitats.

We toured the public area of the rescue center with Joe. Several of the tiger habitats have large ponds dug for swimming and most of these habitats were construct-



A lush natural barrier of wildflowers and brush between the public road and the Exotic Feline Rescue Center's big cat habitats makes them nearly invisible. A lone tiger looks out from the highest platform in its habitat.

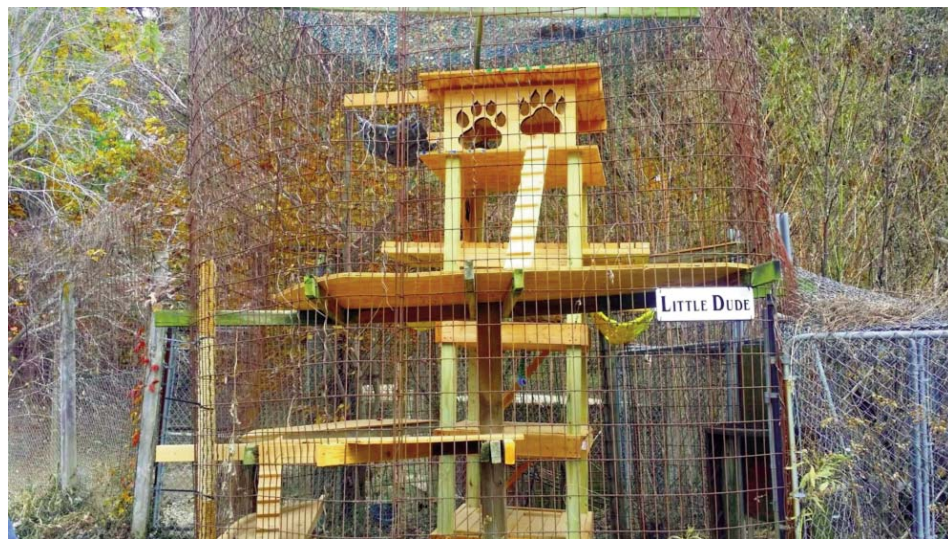
ed ten to 25 years ago. There is plenty of overgrowth, especially the wooded cougar enclosures. The once small trees enclosed by 12 foot high chain link fencing have grown into mature hardwoods towering over the fences, largely untrimmed and natural looking. Many of the resident pumas that once occupied these diverse habitats have passed on, and the areas are now empty. It was bittersweet to see large, natural habitats barren, imagining

the former occupants spending their lifetime in these benevolent captivities, having passed on, and the rescue center has no plans to renovate these enclosures back into usefulness. Joe explained that the amount of tree removal would necessitate fencing being taken down, heavy machinery would tear up the native ground cover, and many trees anywhere near the fences would have to be cut down and hauled away. It is easier to build new habitats in the more open area of the undeveloped acres across the road.

The Exotic Feline Rescue Center operates on visitor fees, special fund-raising events, grants, and merchandise

sales. In 2013, three quarters of a million dollars were generated. Forty percent of this pays salaries and taxes, the rest is spent on food, vet care, habitat construction and maintenance, and other operating expenses.

Two trucks operate daily, driving to horse ranches and cattle farms to pick up freshly dead livestock. The donated animals are eviscerated into the bucket of a bobcat and driven to a nearby lot of shred-



The latest habitat was built for Little Dude, a Geoffroy's cat, and his four Savannah friends.

ded wood to be buried and composted. A large, metal food processing building equipped with electric chain hoist and concrete floor with water drains enables efficient processing of the carcasses before they are moved into one of an impressive array of walk-in coolers. Each day, keepers distribute rib cages, leg bones, and slabs of beef and horsemeat to the many cages and remove the bones from the day before. Bones are burned daily and the ashes are mixed into the compost pile.

Joe also led us through the expanded part of the rescue center, not normally open to the public unless the tour is prescheduled. This is where newer habitats enclose concrete swimming pools that can be filled and drained by underground plumbing. When possible, large social groups of either lions or tigers are maintained. All of the lion and tiger habitats are constructed with a roofed cage lockdown area with big plywood boxes for sleeping and loafing. These cage areas are attached to the high fenced exercise areas. Newer facilities are constructed with fences 16 feet tall; older ones are being retrofitted to raise the fence height from 12 feet to 16. But the extra height catches extra wind and becomes weighted in winter with extra snow and ice, actually making the habitat more susceptible to damage and possible escape than older habitats with lower fence heights. But USDA has demanded that sanctuaries and zoos nationwide begin raising fences and has moved



Joe walks by another tiger habitat and is greeted by one of the inhabitants.

the standard to 16 feet for the big cats.

We spent the night in Joe's home. It is a two-story structure. At ground level is a big cat themed bedroom and bathroom that opens up onto the yard area that can be rented for the night. The yard is surrounded with cat cages, housing an ocelot, bobcat, leopard cat, tiger, black leopard, and cougar. A couple from Indianapolis

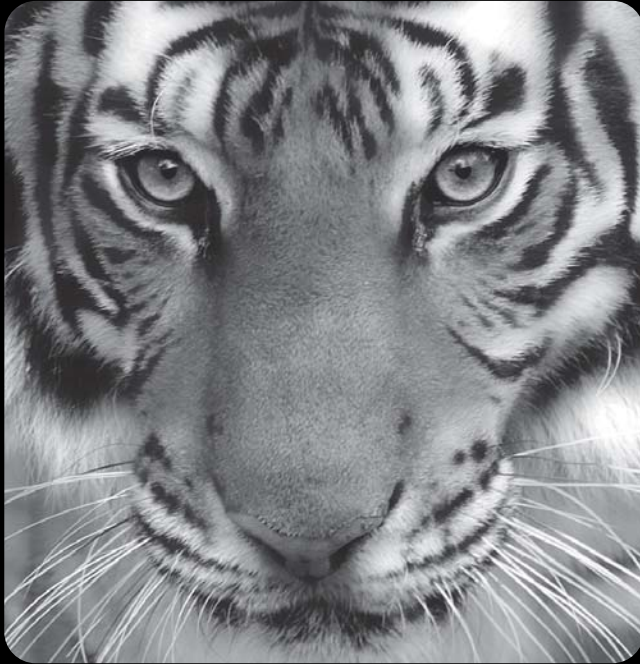


Joe takes us past an empty enclosure, now overgrown with tall grasses, which once served as home for a rescued leopard, until it passed away from old age.

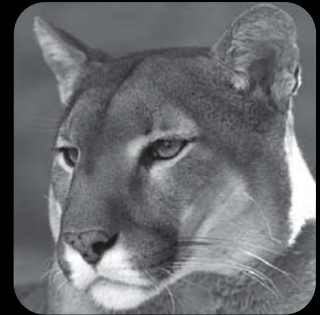
was spending the night while we were there. The visibly pregnant wife worked at Indiana State University and was a big cat fan. Spending time so close to nature's great cats was a dream come true for her. We all watched as the cat keepers arrived in the morning to clean the cages and feed the cats around the house, and then followed the ladies as they fed lions and tigers housed nearby. The keepers worked in teams, and both were long-time employees, familiar with all the cats and their personalities and needs.

It was a great visit and uplifting to see so many big cats living in large spaces. Fortunately, placed like the Exotic Feline Rescue Center exist and the public generously supports their mission to give unfortunate felines a second chance at a good life in captivity. Many of the felines truly came from heartbreaking situations. These stories are a sad commentary on the inability of so many owners to keep up with changing state and federal regulations, to fail to meet expected standards of husbandry, to afford the higher operating costs, and to keep their commitments to the animals in their care.

I do believe that the entire feline community has experienced a reduction in breeding, but is supply and demand balanced, considering the now much smaller number of owners and loss of potential for new captive habitat? I hope so. Every cat deserves a decent life in captivity, right from the start. Tragedies happen, and lives change, that is going to happen; someday, I hope that is the only reason any cats will need refuges like EFRC.



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Before the 1973 international treaty known as CITES, which protects plants and wildlife against international trade and over-exploitation, and before Congress authorized the Endangered Species Act to provide for the conservation of endangered and threatened species and their ecosystems, the Long Island Ocelot Club members recognized the need to stop removing ocelots and other wild cat species from nature, and instead, turn to captive breeding. And this message is just as relevant and important today – as exotic cat owners, we have a special obligation to further conservation of cats in nature.

Long Island Ocelot Club
Volume 8 Number 1
January 1964

By William Engler
P.O. Box 52
San Fernando, California

Please let Long Island Ocelot Club have your comments, questions. If any

responsible person who is a lover of and an owner of one or more of the exotic cats were asked the question, "Have the cats done anything for you?", his answer would have to be a definite, "Yes." If he were asked if he in turn has done anything for the exotic cats, could he answer, "Definitely yes?"

Could you answer the same? There is not only a definite need but an urgency -- for all lovers of the exotic cats to do something for them. All over the world, they are rapidly losing ground and, within the lifetime of many of us, some may very well become extinct, and most will be well on their way to extermination.

The number of us who know these cats for what they are, is few indeed, which makes the urgency that we do something for these creatures even greater. The only chance that these cats have for not being wiped from the face of the earth is that we, I repeat WE, who know and love them, do something about it. I do not mean that we get someone else to do it, but that we do it ourselves.

This unfortunate dilemma of the cats is

the result of several factors: the population explosion, the greed of hunters who kill them for their furs, and the vanity of those who buy and wear these furs. The sportsman (?) who feels that he can raise his stock by killing these "savage monsters," and our sordid public officials who pay out money they have collected from our taxes in the form of bounty for the killing of some of our feline friends.

It appears that there is little we can do about the population explosion which is rapidly exterminating a number

of species in their wild state. Human nature being what it is, means there will always be a demand for furs by the unprincipled merchants who use and furnish them. Psychology tells us why the sportsman is what he is and history proves that public officials do not improve with an aging civilization, so there is little hope of attaining conservation by public effort at this stage.

I have been in the business of importing, obtaining, and selling exotic cats for a number of years now, and with each succeeding year, I find them increasingly harder to obtain. Quite a few former dealers of these cats have been forced to turn their efforts elsewhere, as they have been unable to make a living on the lessening number of cats available.

The only means that I can see to save our friends, the exotic cats, is their being bred in civilization, much as are dogs and common cats. Those of us for whom the exotic cats have given a better lot should feel obliged to work for this end. By this, I do not mean to endeavor to get others to do this, but to begin by doing it ourselves.

Some of the cats breed well in captivity, such as the lion, the puma, the leopard, and the bobcat. With others, such as the ocelot, it is difficult, but not impossible to breed. It is not yet too late to begin an effective breeding program with these cats, yet I fear it is too late with such noble cats as the cheetah, clouded leopard, snow leopard, marbled cat, and golden cat, all of whom have become so rare and expensive that few could afford parent stock. I have no knowledge of, or experience with the breeding of jaguars or jaguarundis, but would guess that both would breed well.

There is need for knowledge of means in breeding ocelots and margays, and the only way to get this is through our attempts to breed them with such professional and technical help as we can get. A technique for breeding them by artificial insemination would seem a logical course to develop due to their reticence to breed naturally.

I am in contact with several people who are successfully breeding pumas and bobcats on a commercial basis. The stock that I obtain from them is superior in disposition and condition to that caught in the wild.

A small group of us in Southern Cali-



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fornia are now working on a breeding program. Each of the group has one breeding stock female cat and I arrange the stud service. The cats thus far included in this group are one lioness, two pumas with another on order, one bobcat, and one chati. [Editor's note: It seems that mention of a "chati" cat started from a single member who named their feline Chatti. It was described as margay-like, but was believed to be a different species. Other members also possessed similar cats. It is not known if these chati cats were a subspecies of margay that had different appearances from the main population or perhaps were oncillas, a distinct species also native to South America.] These are all young cats, but we hope and expect to have kittens from some of them within the next year.

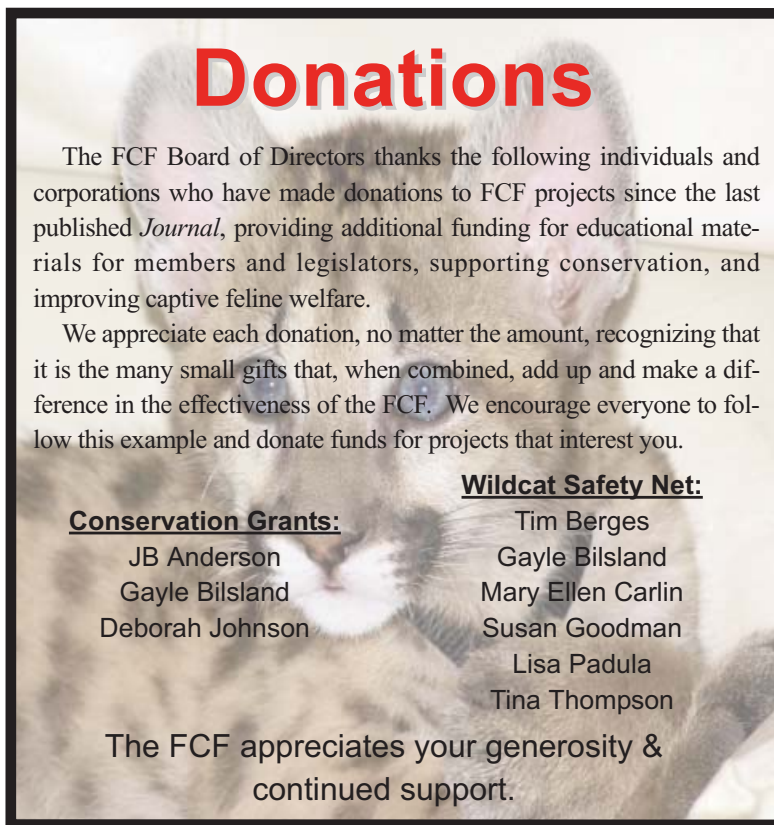
To be significant, this program needs to be expanded to all parts of our country

and additional species of cats be included in it. Long Island Ocelot Club has facili-

ties for arranging breeding. All that is needed is for YOU, dear reader, to help the exotic cats survive. Note: This cannot be done with neutered cats. These cats being bred and sold by individuals in their respective neighborhoods will do far more to popularize them and to interest others in breeding them than the cats which are sold by dealers. As well, a litter of exotic cats is worth an interesting sum of money, even though the litter is not large.

It is easy to find excuses for why it is not practical for you to breed cats and that it is better to let the other fellow do it, but exotic cats will not survive on excuses. Search your heart and FIND THAT YOU CAN AND WILL HELP!

Please let Long Island Ocelot Club have your comments and questions.



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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.

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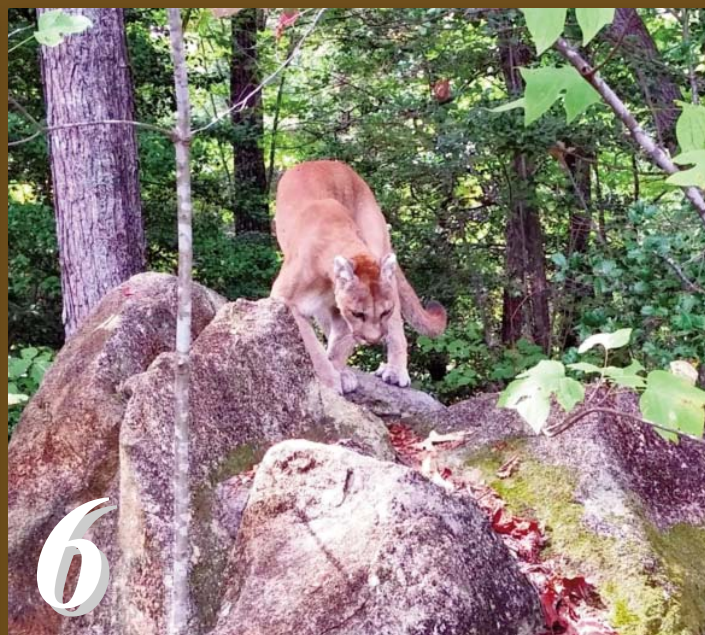
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Feline Conservation Federation

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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: Ameeka bobcat poses for photographer Tim Berges. Ameeka is a Kansas-born bobcat that lives at the NOAH Feline Conservation Center. Read about Ameeka on page 12 of this *Journal*.

Back Cover: These two cuties are female fishing cat kittens of parents Ducky and Rajah 2. Kapi'yva Exotics breeds these rare felines for zoos and educators. Wouldn't you love to find this pair under your tree? Photo by Brandi Chism.

