



Feline Conservation Federation

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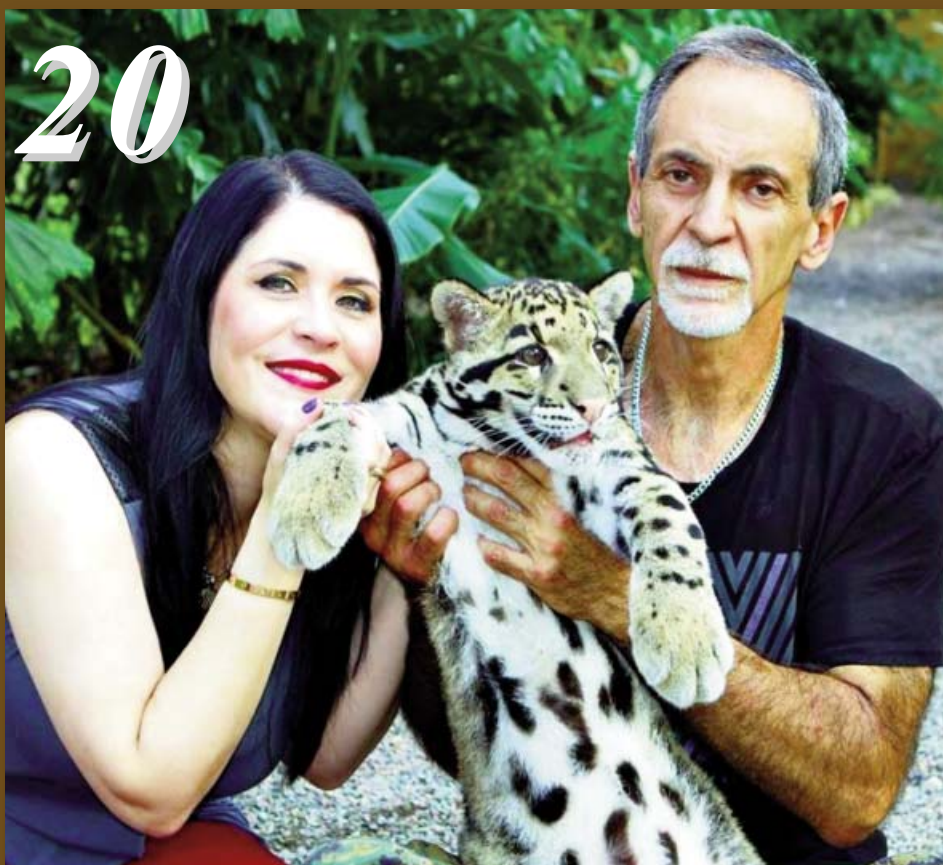
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A membership to the FCF entitles you to six issues of the *Journal*, the back-issue DVD, an invitation to FCF husbandry and wildlife education courses and annual convention, and participation in our online discussion group. The FCF works to improve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

lynnculver57@gmail.com, or
sent by postal service to: 141
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Feline Conservation Federation

Letter from the President

In the last issue, you read about the passing of Joe Maynard, director of the Exotic Feline Breeding Compound, in Rosemond, CA. Joe's commitment and love for wild felines was unsurpassed. The FCF Board of Directors decided it would be appropriate to make a donation to his facility for \$1,000 in his memory. It was the least we could do to say thanks from the hundreds of cats that Joe's life had, and continues, to have an impact on.

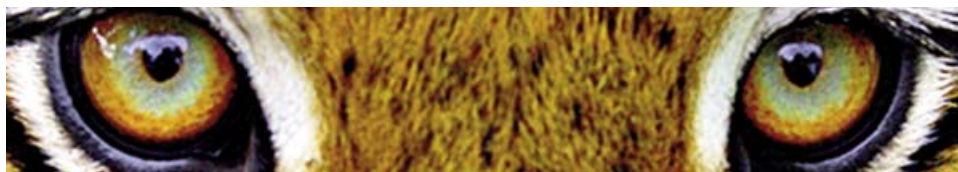
Joe was originally from western Kentucky, before heading west to California. He drove a semi for a living and years ago actually traveled around the country with

a tame leopard as his companion in the cab. As time went by, Joe became more and more interested in breeding and saving cats and started keeping them at Rosemond. Leopards have always been one of his favorites and, at one time, he owned almost all of the genetically valuable Amur leopards in North America. This caused much chagrin with the ASA's Amur Leopard Species Survival Plan (SSP). With other species, of which AZA member zoos owned the animals, it was easy for the SSP to say which animals should be sent where. With Joe controlling so many, they could only do so with

his permission, effectively making him the man in charge. The species never suffered because of this. Joe always had the well-being of the animals and the species as the number one priority rather than political issues. He kept the SSP honest.

I considered Joe a friend. Though there were times where it seemed like Joe could send five year olds running to hide behind their mothers, he was always honest and willing to share his vast knowledge. He will be greatly missed.

We received the following note from his wife, Sandy:



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On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers of Exotic Feline Breeding Compound, Inc., we thank the members of the Feline Conservation Federation for your generous donation of \$1,000.00 to the "Joseph W. Maynard" memorial fund.

We were all saddened by Joe's passing. His compassion and commitment to saving the world's wild felines for future generations was his life's work and EFBC will continue to carry on that commitment. The story about Joe published in the FCF Journal was wonderful and I know he would have been deeply honored. (Of course - he would have said "You people need to get a life," but that was Joe.) He was always there for an animal, and always there for the people that needed advice or just needed to blow off steam. Battles we face trying to do what we do were just challenges to him and he never compromised his beliefs. That guidance allowed EFBC to grow and make major contributions in the areas of breeding, research, and public education.

EFBC is governed by a board of directors that has always believed in the mission of the organization and will insure that Joe Maynard's legacy will continue to live on.

Thank you again for your continued support of EFBC's Feline Conservation Center.

*Warmest regards,
Sandra A. Masek
Director*

Kevin Chambers

From the Executive Director

By Lynn Culver

There is a lot of bad news out there for the feline community. This issue of the *Journal* looks at several court cases and how they have affected/will affect feline owners. Every legislative season we face new challenges. Animal rights are now hitting hard against holding wildlife. Ringling Brothers ended using elephants in their traveling shows to stop the harassment by animal rights, and now the circus world is facing animal rights calls to end use of **all** performing animals, from tigers to horses. Even AZA-accredited facilities are taking fire from the animal rights movement. You won't see trainers swimming with orcas at Sea World anymore, and we could see the end of captive orcas entirely in the next few years. And the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is now in court over their approval of permits for three AZA-accredited zoos to import 18 elephants from drought-stricken Swaziland. Friends for Animals files the lawsuit stating zoos are inherently cruel and these wild elephants will suffer forever in captivity.

Born Free has just filed a petition to the Iowa District Court to force the state's Dangerous Animal Law to be interpreted differently. Since the passage of the Iowa Dangerous Wild Animal Law in 2011, the Iowa Department of Land Services (IDALS) has followed a separate "permit" procedure for USDA-licensed owners of

dangerous wild animals. This permit process does not correlate with the "registration" requirements listed in the statute for grandfathering in individual owners. It defers to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) expertise in the area of animal husbandry. Federally-licensed Class C exhibitors do not have to meet the burdensome and punitive requirements of the Dangerous Wild Animals Law, except for the registration requirements. Thus, where a non-USDA licensed registrant must pay anywhere from \$10 (for a breed of swine) to \$500 (for an elephant or rhinoceros) per animal, a USDA-licensed facility need only pay \$175, no matter how many dangerous wild animals they own or possess, and no matter the species of these animals. If Born Free can get this rule changed in Iowa, zoos like Cricket Hollow Zoo in Manchester, Iowa, would owe \$6,650 to the state of Iowa for possessing thirty-three animals listed as dangerous wild animals, instead of just paying a flat registration fee of \$175 annually. And if this Born Free lawsuit wins, you can bet the animal rights extremists will try petitioning the courts in other states that grant any divergence of their registration fees and process to licensed USDA facilities.

In the state of Wisconsin, Senate Bill 241, as introduced, prohibited the possession of large cat species and all public contact with wildlife. After the bill's

author was educated by zoos in the state, he amended the bill to exempt USDA- and ZAA-accredited facilities and drop the public handling prohibition clause. But this good news faces an uphill battle. In response to comments sent to the committee on this bill, I received an email letter from Senator Taylor, informing the FCF that he would not be supporting the bill:

I am opposed to recent amendments that provide exemptions to poorly-run roadside zoos accredited by the Zoological Association of America, which does not meet the same high standards as organization such as the AZA. At these roadside zoos, individuals are allowed to directly interact with these dangerous animals, which are not treated with proper, humane care.

It's clear that the animal rights slanderous propaganda has influenced many elected officials and our work is far from over.

On a slightly brighter note, Kansas Senate Bill 97 is getting another chance before the legislature. SB 97 removes the prohibitions against public contact with baby ambassador felines. This bill almost passed last year, and we know the HSUS presence will be lobbying in force to try and stop its passage this year.

The latest news comes from the USDA APHIS. A new policy is about to be unveiled to the stakeholders pertaining to public contact with dangerous wild animals. This activity is already regulated, but in 2012, APHIS received two animal rights petitions requesting the ban of all public contact with dangerous animals and the ban of pit-type enclosures for bears. In 2013, APHIS posted on Regulations.gov, asking for public comments on these petitions. It has taken more than two years, but APHIS is now ready to issue new policy statements to clarify the regulations, and APHIS will also publish fact sheets and technical notes to educate the industry on current scientific and animal welfare guidelines. Since this policy is not on the APHIS website yet, and calls to representatives have gone unanswered, we do not know at press time what "clarifications" are going to be in the new policy.

Additionally, APHIS announced it will be considering the revision of the AWA regulations to further address public contact with dangerous animals.

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.

Linda Drabova - Basic
Chris Comstock - Advanced

Roy Comstock - Advanced
Thierry Plaud - 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.

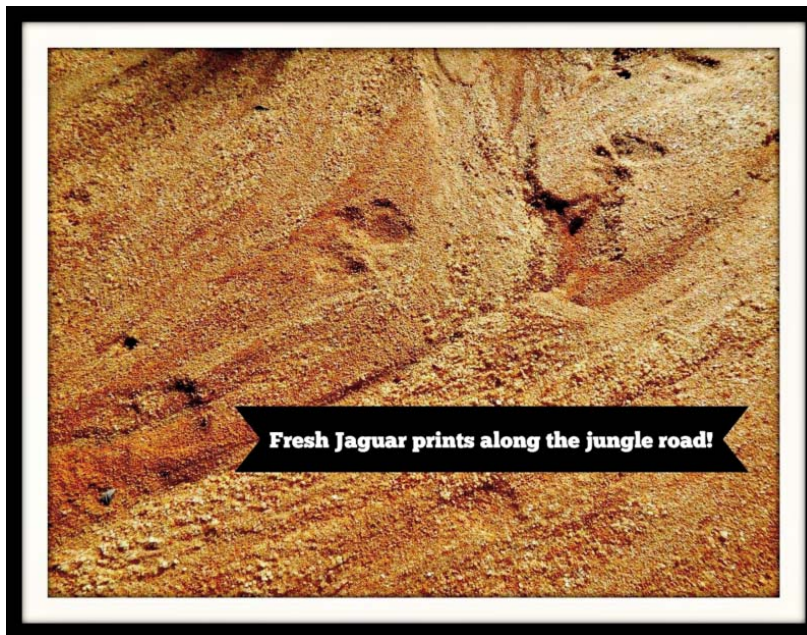
Congratulations to all of these members for their dedication to their cats.

Debi Willoughby, FCF Secretary

Belize 2015: A Journey into the Land of Jaguars, Pumas, Ocelots, Margays, and Jaguarundis (and Other Neat Stuff!)

By Shelleen Mathews

In December, my husband Mark and I travelled to Belize, with FCF members Deb and Ed Willoughby and Lynn and Bart Culver. The moment my feet hit the ground of this tropical ground rich in flora and fauna, I expected to see - at least - a jaguar greet us! It did not, but the following week our search relentlessly continued. It was thrilling to think that our time hiking in the jungle might actually be witnessed by any one of the native wild cats.



coast, leaving the interior jungle/mountainous areas untouched. The atmosphere is very warm and wet, making it a haven for jungle life. Mangrove swamps and cays along the coast give way to hills and mountains in the interior. Due to its vast array of flora and fauna, a large portion of the country is protected land. Most of the protected land is made up of jungle and beautiful mountains. There are just five main roads throughout the country and the rest are secondary dirt roads.

Despite the country's small size, there are five

species of wild cat that live within its borders: the jaguar, puma, ocelot, margay, and jaguarundi. All of these species are pretty widespread across the country. The biggest threat these species face is habitat loss due to farming; this also includes farmers killing wild cats which cross their land. There are a couple of small conservation facilities scattered across the country that are working with the local people to teach them about wild cats and how these animals are beneficial to their agricultural land. The most well-known research facility is the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, the world's first jaguar preserve. Alan Rabinowitz started the first research on jaguars there, and the protected area has grown to over 128,000 acres and is now managed by Panthera and the Belize Audubon Society. The forest at Cockscomb is a tropical, moist forest and is home to spectacular waterfalls, mountains, and hundreds of species of plants, birds, and mammals. Jaguar field research is still on-going at the reserve, and the public is welcome to enjoy its many nature trails and beautiful scenery.


We were all elated as we stepped off the plane onto the tarmac and the warm tropical air hit our faces. As we viewed the landscape on our two-hour drive to the western border to our lodge, we learned all about Belize and what it has to offer from our guide Andy. The first lodge we

The history of Belize dates back thousands of years. Several major archeological sites, including Cahal Pech, Caracol, Lamanai, Lubaantun, Altun Ha, and Xunantunich, reflect the advanced Mayan civilization. Great Britain first sent an official representative to the area in the late 17th century, but Belize was not formally termed the "Colony of British Honduras" until 1840. Full, internal self-government under a ministerial system was granted in January 1964. The official name of the territory was changed from British Honduras to Belize in June 1973, and full independence was granted on September 21, 1981. So, it is a relatively "young" nation.

Belize is situated on the Caribbean Sea, south of Mexico, and east and north of Guatemala, in Central America. It is about the size of New Hampshire. The population estimate in 2014 was 340,844, and the official language of Belize is English. Most of the population lives in the five major cities and along the

Mark and Shelleen Mathews find the illusive Jaguar Palm





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stayed at is called Crystal Paradise. It is run by a small local family and is nestled in the mountains of western Belize. We each had our own cabana to stay in, and the lodge had an open-air dining area so we could enjoy the native birds and wildlife that came in to join us.

countless questions were answered without hesitation. Once they realized we were “cat people,” they went out of their way to help us locate a thrill of a lifetime. Our guide told us that just a few days

We visited the Caracol temple site. Our Belizean guides impressed us with their knowledge of their country, and our

before, he had seen a jaguar. We did not get to see El Tigre, but the guide found us fresh tracks alongside the dirt road we

were traveling, so we knew we were in his/her regular territory. All major Mesoamerican civilizations worshipped a jaguar god. The black phase was the Jaguar God of the Underworld, and the golden was the Jaguar God of the Upper World. At Caracol, we examined beautiful relief carvings on temples that included images combining feline and human characteristics.

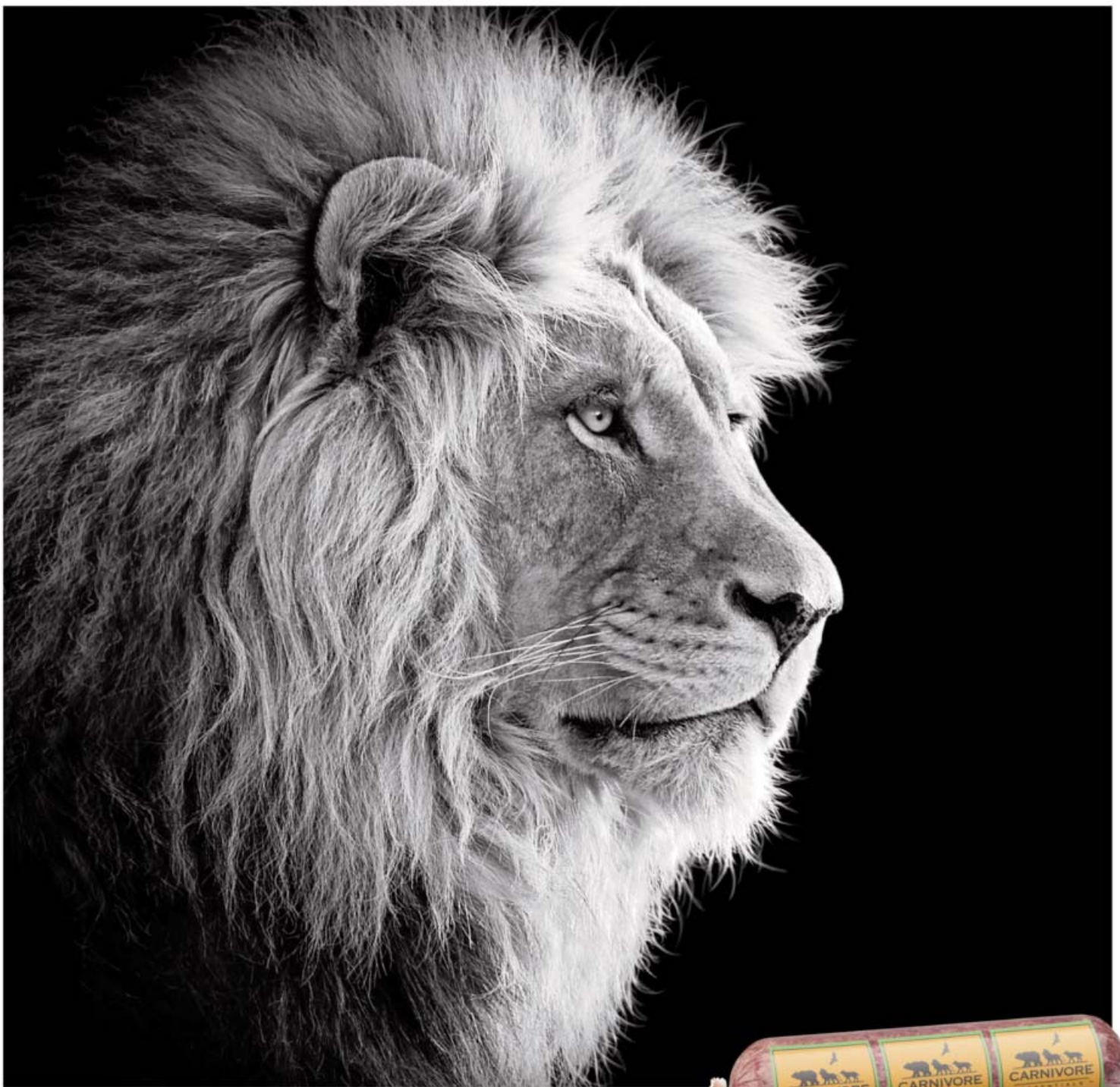
We also made a brief side trip to a research station called the Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society (T.R.E.E.S). It is a small, grassroots ecological conservation organization that has established a great little research and education center nestled in the



foothills of the Belize Maya Mountains. The facility is managed by a biologist who graciously welcomed us and showed us around. We were told that a margay frequents the fruit orchard on the property and a jaguarundi visits around the cabins, but we saw neither of these felines that day.

Other activities we enjoyed in Belize included “tubing” down a jungle river through an amazing system of caves, snorkeling off the barrier reef, quality beach relaxation, and daily feasting on the food (and yummy tropical “beverages” - my personal favorite being the Bailey's Cola-da) of Belize. American fare is also readily available. When the time came to say goodbye to Belize, it was a hard thing to do. Our guide arrived at the beachfront hotel to drive us to the airport. I kidded him that I was just positive he would have a jaguar waiting in the back of the van for us! I cannot rave enough about how wonderful our week was and can guarantee we will return as often as we can. The search for the illusive jaguar is not over!





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Are Bobcats Really Dangerous Wild Animals According to Law?

By Lynn Culver

One of the more interesting court cases concerning our exotic felines has been the suit between Adam Federer and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR). Adam is a bobcat owner who has been licensed by this state agency since 2003, when he purchased a female bobcat from Bitterroot Bobcats in Montana. Adam is not a member of the FCF, but I spoke with the Ohio man and learned that he is not highly connected with the feline community. In the spring of 2014, he received a letter from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, stating that they would not be issuing him a propagator's license for his bobcat because it was considered a dangerous wild animal according to the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), and the Dangerous Wild Animal Act passed by the legislature prohibits the propagation of dangerous animals.

Mr. Federer was told he would need to apply for a license from the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Mr. Federer retained the legal services of Johnathan Tyack and filed an administrative appeal of this decision before the Department of Natural Resources. A ruling made on July 7, 2014, by the ODNR hearing officer concluded that the General Assembly had ambiguously worded the Dangerous Animal Act so that there was an ostensible weakness in the inclusion of bobcats into the meaning of "lynxes" by the Department of Agriculture (ODA), but he was also of the opinion that the ODA was not clearly and convincingly wrong to interpret R.C. 935.01 to include the bobcat species. The hearing officer acknowledged the evidence presented showed the animal task force made official recommendations to the legislature that advised not including bobcats or coyotes into the list of dangerous and regulated wildlife. But the hearing officer noted that he was powerless to rule in a manner that contradicted the interpretation of the administrative code by the Ohio Department of Agriculture, and so he concluded that the ODNR acted properly in this case when it



denied Mr. Federer's application for an animal propagation license. In the ruling, the hearing officer acknowledged that Mr. Federer had a very legitimate argument that his bobcat should not be included as a "dangerous wild animal" and was of the opinion that only a court of law could determine whether ODA exceeded its jurisdiction when it promulgated O.A.C. 901:1-4-95, which added bobcats into their regulations.

Since the Department of Natural Resources administrative hearing ruled against Mr. Federer and recommended that the issue be decided before a court of law, Mr. Federer's legal counsel appealed before Judge Serrott of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas on September 5, 2014. Johnathan Tyack, attorney for Mr. Federer, submitted his brief and included the history of the case, i.e., that bobcats were never

specifically listed in the legislation, but "lynxes, including Canada, Eurasian and Iberian," were. This list of lynxes was interpreted by the Department of Agriculture to be the entire genus of *Lynx*, which includes bobcats. This interpretation is in conflict with other wording of the Act, namely, that the list of regulated animals was described as a "species list" and there is not another case of a genus being used in the list. Mr. Federer's attorney argued that throughout the revised code, the legislature continuously refers to specific species of animals by their common names. The word lynx must be given a narrow interpretation as a common name for specific species. The common name for the appellant's cat is a "bobcat," not a "lynx," and nowhere does the word bobcat appear in the statute. Additionally, Attorney Tyack argued that the revised code specifically prohibited the Ohio Department of Agriculture

from adding any species of animals to be included in the definition of "dangerous wild animals" without the approval of the General Assembly.

Attorney Tyack made the case that the legislature very intentionally left the term "bobcat" out of the statutory framework. Bobcats and coyotes were intentionally left out of the definition of dangerous wild animal by the taskforce, and likewise bobcats and coyotes were very intentionally left out of the definition of "dangerous wild animal" by the General Assembly. Furthermore, the General Assembly never spoke in terms of an animal's genus, but only articulated the law in terms of various "species" identified by their common names.

Attorney Tyack's brief requested Judge Serrott rule that the Ohio Department of Agriculture overstepped its authority by inserting the species of bobcat into Ohio Administrative code 901:1-4-05. Attorney Tyack asked the judge to rule that bobcats do not qualify as dangerous wild animals under Revised Code 935.01. Tyack ended by stating that Mr. Federer's bobcat may be licensed by the Division of Wildlife pursuant to Revised Code 1533.71, notwithstanding the attempt by the Ohio Department of Agriculture to inject "bobcats" into the definition of "wild dangerous animal" by promulgating Ohio Administrative Code 901:4-05.

Judge Serrott ruled on Adam Federer's attorney's appeal on January 15, 2015. Judge Serrott found that the appellee (ODNR) erred in refusing to issue the requested permit. Judge Serrott found that the denial of the appellant's application was not in accordance with law and was not supported by substantial, reliable, or

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probative evidence. The decision of the agency's administrative hearing was reversed.

On February 13, 2015, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources filed an appeal of Judge Serrott's decision against them to the Court of Appeals, Tenth Appellate District of Franklin County. ODNR argued that the common pleas court erred in its interpretation of R.C. 935.01. ODNR attorneys stated that the common pleas court's review of the administrative record is neither a trial *de novo* nor an appeal on questions of law only, but a hybrid review, in which the court must appraise all the evidence as to the credibility of the witnesses, the probative character of the evidence, and the weight thereof. The case once again rested upon whether or not the listing of "lynx" was meant to include bobcats.

In the Court of Appeals December 22, 2015 decision, it overruled ODNR's first and second assignments of error, and it affirmed the judgment of the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas. The appeals court noted that it is telling that the legislature used the plural form of "lynxes," whereas the genus name is *Lynx*. The court decided that by utilizing "lynxes," the legislature was referring to multiple species that are referred to by the common name of "lynx," of which bobcats are not one. Finally, the appeals court agreed with the common pleas court's reading, which was consistent with the testimony of Scott Zody, the Chief of the Division of Wildlife at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Zody testified that he was the chair of the task force that submitted to the legislature recommendations for ways to regulate certain dangerous and wild animals in Ohio. Zody testified that in discussions about bobcats by the task force, a recommendation was made to not include bobcats in the dangerous wild animals list.

Apparently still not convinced that the Department of Agriculture was overstepping its authority in listing bobcats against the wishes of the legislature, and in violation of the Dangerous

Animal Act which prohibits the Ohio Department of Agriculture to add any species without the consent of the legislature, the ODNR filed another appeal on February 4, 2016, this time to the Ohio Supreme Court.

In this appeal, ODNR uses the argument that the case "is of public and of great general interest," one of the grounds for having the Supreme Court review a lower court's decision. ODNR claims the Tenth District's decision disadvantages law-abiding animal owners who have already complied with the laws regarding animal care, housing, and permitting, while rewarding recalcitrant animal owners (i.e. Adam Federer, a Columbus, Ohio violent crimes detective) who thus far have not. And, ODNR writes, this ruling "increases the risk to the public posed by unregulated dangerous wild animals."

The ODNR appeal puts forth the argument that the appellate court decision handed down in December 2015 is flawed on three points. The state attorneys argue that neither Federer nor the Tenth District has offered any compelling evidence that the General Assembly meant to depart from the ordinary meaning of the term "lynxes" to exclude bobcats. They argue that caracals are also commonly known as desert lynx, yet they were listed separately as caracal, though there was no need to do so if the appellant's argument was correct and the legislature meant "lynxes" only to mean "all animals with the word lynx in the common name."

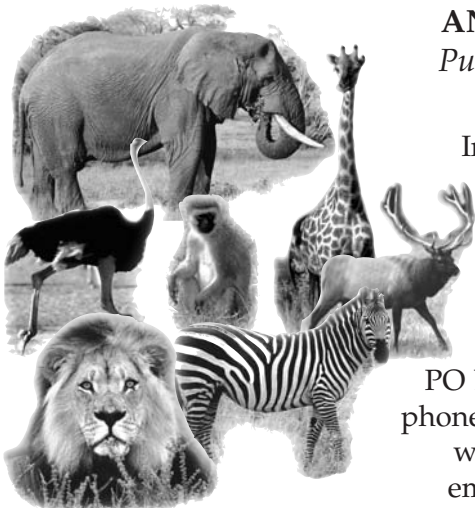
The second point, and perhaps the most compelling, is that the General Assembly had the opportunity to reject the Department of Agriculture's determination that bobcats fell within the scope of R.C.

935.01(C)(7)(b) and chose to leave it undisturbed. Whenever an administrative agency in Ohio adopts administrative rules, those rules must be reviewed by the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review before they take effect. Among other things, the committee is tasked with determining whether the rule "exceeds the scope of its statutory authority" or "conflicts with the legislative intent of the statute under which it was proposed." At the hearing on the rules implementing the dangerous wild animal statutes, Polly Brittan of the Ohio Animal Owners Association challenged Ohio Administrative Code, arguing that the inclusion of bobcats in the rule was contrary to the statute. The committee took no action on that objection and allowed the rule to go into effect as written.

The appeal's final point is the Tenth District's reliance on the report from the governor's wild animal taskforce was misplaced, as it overlooked the fact that the General Assembly departed from the report in significant ways, choosing to add some species not recommended (bobcats and bears) and choosing to regulate fewer species than recommended by the report (removing lemurs from the non-human primates). The ODNR argues the discrepancies between the final report and the statute make the report largely meaningless when attempting to determine what effect it had on the General Assembly's decision about which animals should be classified as dangerous.

Appellee's attorney, Johnathan Tyack, has until March 4th to file a memorandum in response to the ODNR appeal. Generally, the court announces whether it will accept an appeal for a full merit review

approximately three to six months after the appellee's memorandum in response is filed. If the Ohio Supreme Court accepts this case, then each side will file briefs and have oral arguments. The lesson learned here is that government has unlimited power and will not let up without a fight; a long, expensive, and time-consuming fight.



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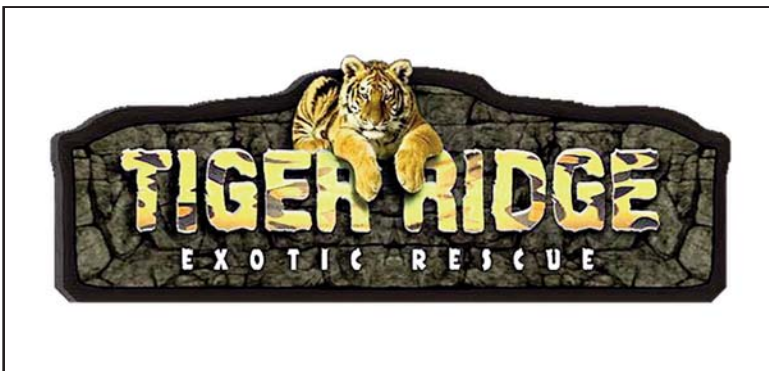
Update on the Ongoing Legal Battle to Regain Possession of Animals taken from Tiger Ridge Exotics

By Corrina Coffman

On February 4, 2016, Tiger Ridge Exotics finally got their day in court in Wood County, over a year after the animals were seized, on January 28, 2015. The purpose of this hearing was to show that ODA arbitrarily and capriciously interpreted and applied the ORC (Ohio Revised Code)

and, as a result, Tiger Ridge Exotics was denied equal protection under the law. It was also to introduce additional evidence into the court record for the permit hearing that was not allowed in the administration hearings in Columbus. Many new documents were presented of owners who had not registered their animals by the deadline (if at all), who have an active permit. Documents were also presented to show some owners who were still non-compliant as of February 4, 2016, and yet had a permit issued. Attorney Karen Novak showed numerous registrations, permit applications, and inspection reports of owners who were in violation of the law, yet have an ODA permit. Every question that was asked of Melissa Simmerman (veterinarian in charge of the "Dangerous Wild Animal Program" for Ohio Department of Agriculture) was objected to by the state as irrelevant and that it's not similarly situated to the case. The questions were most definitely relevant. The judge noted the objections and will consider whether the evidence will be allowed. The questions and answers show a very clear history of the ODA picking and choosing who they wanted to work with in order to have a permit.

We must obtain our information through public Freedom of Information requests to the ODA legal department. This has been one of our biggest challenges, as most requests are ignored or are answered lacking much of the information requested. We wait months and months for the requested documents, only to receive minimal amounts. Attorney Novak requested that ODA provide imperative documents that were extremely important to the case and, despite numerous objections by the state, the judge ruled



that these documents must be released. ODA was given 27 days to provide such documents. Attorney Novak will then have two weeks to submit a final brief, and the state will have two weeks to submit objections to that brief. A final hearing has been set for the middle of April.

This is the first, huge step of many, but we feel that it was a very good day for Tiger Ridge Exotics and their steadfast supporters.

All this could have been ended a year ago, and saved an immense amount of money on both sides. The ODA sent a letter the middle of January 2015, informing us that the agency purposed to deny the permit application, and listed what the agency considered violations. The official notice gave us 30 days to appeal their decision, yet in less than two weeks they came and seized the animals. When we received the letter listing the violations, we immediately started correcting them. We were still waiting on a response from the ODA about the variance requests we had made in October, knowing that others had been granted similar variances in some aspects of the law. Our request was never answered.

We completed all requirements and then some shortly after the confisca-

tion. We had both an AZA veterinarian and a former ODA inspector inspect the facility and neither found any issues. ODA could have inspected our facility to verify our compliance and returned the animals right then and there. Had this agency put the welfare of the animals first, all this would have been over and the true winners would have been the animals.

Our main concern throughout this legal battle is, of course, the well-being of the animals. We have requested care logs and reports from the holding facilities through ODA public information requests and still have received no answer to date. Many of the animals are elderly and there were reasons to be greatly concerned on the last set of care logs that we received, so we are hoping that their conditions have improved since leaving the ODA holding facility.

We are determined to see this all the way through, no matter what it takes. We feel as though this case will be heading to the Ohio Supreme Court. We are always in need of monetary donations to help offset the legal fees. You can visit the webpage at www.savetigerridge.com or visit us on Facebook at "Save Tigerridge Exotics."



Ohio Department of Agriculture's chief veterinarian and director of the dangerous wild animal program, Melissa Simmerman testifies during hearing held at the Woods County Court.

Cheetah Conservation Botswana: Working Hard to Secure the Cheetah's Last Stronghold in Africa

The FCF made a \$1,000 donation to Cheetah Conservation Botswana to support the initial training and care of four livestock guarding dogs. FCF member Wildlife and Environmental Conservation contributed these funds to the FCF Conservation Fund for the specific purpose of supporting cheetah conservation. According to CCB director Rebecca Klein, "Botswana has an incredibly important role to play in cheetah conservation globally. It is one of the last and best hopes for the maintenance of the cheetah population."

By Jane Horgan

Over the last century, the worldwide cheetah population has plummeted by 90% and has lost 76% of its historical range. Today, the remaining 7,000-10,000 cheetahs are spread sporadically through sub-Saharan Africa, the population dangerously segmented, leaving little ability for genetic movement. The last solid, uninterrupted population lives across Botswana and Namibia, spilling over the borders into parts of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Zambia. Conservation of this population is crucial to the survival of the species, particularly the southern sub species, *Acinonyx jubatus jubatus*. Forced out of reserves due to the competition from larger predators, cheetahs establish more viable populations in non-protected areas such as farmlands. However, in these habitats, cheetahs face competition with livestock farmers, a fight that results in many cheetah deaths due to shooting, poisoning, trapping, and poaching. The fate of this unique and beautiful animal lies not in protected areas, but instead depends on whether coexistence is possible between cheetahs and the livestock farmers.

Community Work

Cheetah Conservation Botswana (CCB) has been working since 2002, through a combination of research, education, and intense work within communities to try to battle the decline in cheetah populations. This holistic approach to conservation tackles all the aspects and perspectives that drive the predator-farmer conflict. It is not enough to simply educate locals as to the plight of threatened species and the important role they play in the ecosystem. Imagine a farmer has only ten cattle to farm with and no supplementary income to provide for his entire family. For a cheetah to kill three of his calves is a life-threatening problem. In the depths of the Kalahari Desert, where farming is fraught with challenges at the best of times, a farmer will do everything in his power to

protect his livelihood, and that includes killing a protected species in defense of his livestock. Part of CCB's research and community work is to discover, test, and promote different management techniques that can help farmers protect their livestock from predation. If a farmer is not losing livestock to predators, they are less likely to retaliate against threatened predators such as cheetahs. Finding cost effective protective methods that are easily available and easily implemented is not easy, however an array of methods are now being promoted for African farmers to choose from. One technique that is proving successful for many farmers is the use of livestock guarding dogs to protect their stock from predation. These dogs, if trained correctly, can completely eliminate livestock losses due to depredation. They scare away predators by barking, chasing, and in some instances attacking predators who approach their flock, protecting them as if they were one of their own species. CCB is undergoing groundbreaking research into the way the people of Botswana are using local breeds of dog to protect their stocks against predation. Although neighboring countries are using Anatolian Shepherds, a specialist breed that has been bred for livestock guarding in Turkey for over 5,000 years, they do not perform well in the harsh environment of the Kalahari. Initial results from this study are indicating that local breeds are not only hardier in the local conditions and cheaper, but are doing an excellent job of protecting Botswana's livestock from predation.

Other management techniques are also helping farmers to protect their stock. Research into predator behaviors on

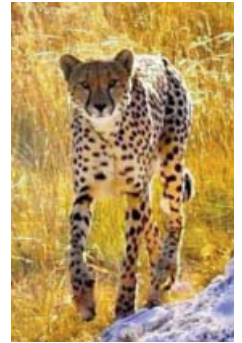
farmlands has shown that predators most often take sick, injured, and young livestock, as their vulnerability triggers hunting instincts in predators. Farmers can reduce their losses significantly by keeping these specific animals in pens (corrals or bomas) and by corralling animals at night when predators are more active.

Herders are also a very effective way of protecting livestock, not only from carnivores, but also from human predators; however this trend is dying out in modern times. As education and employment levels rise, herding is being seen as a low-income job that has negative social implications. CCB and other NGOs are working to promote the importance of herding in farming communities and through farmers workshops, promoting the use of herders as an integral tool for farming in Africa. Herders protect livestock from predators, but they also can alert farmers to injuries within the flock, treat illness, monitor pregnant animals, keep thorough health and calving records, and alert farm

managers as soon as possible if animals go missing. All these factors can increase the productivity of the herd and the farm, a fact that can decrease conflict between farmers and predators.

Education

CCB has conducted numerous school talks and teacher training workshops and covers the country conducting farmers' workshops and helping farmers with predator problems, spreading the word of



CCB training facility raises puppies with stock animals to train them for guard duty before placing with farmers.

predator-friendly farming nationwide. Where in the past farmers killed predators indiscriminately with no reason, no question, and no consequences, farmers now have an understanding of how important these animals are for the health of the ecosystem and are taking on the responsibility for protecting their own livestock from predators.

Research on Farmlands vs. Protected Areas

In the past, the majority of cheetah research has been conducted in reserves and parks. In Southern Africa, however, most cheetahs are found outside of protected areas, where the environment is considerably different and little is known about their behavior. With CCB's focus on conservation and community work, our research team dedicates itself to finding out how cheetahs are living in the farmlands around Botswana. The more thorough the understanding of these dynamics, the more effective the education programs and support for farmers will be.

In the eight years since its inception, CCB has conducted innovative research, with the emphasis on conservation and community coexistence. Many preconceptions that people have about cheetahs are often based on a lack of accurate information. After many studies into population, diet, morphology, social structures, and behaviors of cheetah, and through communication with locals, it would seem that cheetahs on Botswana's farmlands seem to be living very different lives from those in protected areas, and often very differently to the way farmers perceive them. Our research is aimed at identifying these differences, understanding why cheetahs are behaving differently and what the consequences are for their survival.

What makes farmlands so different? Firstly and most obviously, they are not protected areas and, as such, animals are more vulnerable to being persecuted over conflict with humans (killing a protected species is legal in Botswana, if the animal is threatening your life or livelihood). Because of this, many of the larger predators, like lion and spotted hyena, have become locally extinct due to persecution. This makes these habitats ideal for smaller predators that thrive in the absence of the larger, more dominant predators. Secondly, the habitat is dramatically different.

The beautiful, open grasslands you see in documentaries are non-existent in many of these farming areas, where overgrazing of the veldt with cattle has led to bush encroachment of local acacia species. This means the vegetation is dense with thorn bushes and visibility is less than 100m in most areas. One would think that this would not be ideal hunting grounds for cheetah, as there is not enough room for them to stretch out to their impressive top speeds. Yet they thrive here. Clearly, they cannot rely on their speed in the long, straight chases that they are famed for, so how do they bring prey down? CCB's research is indicating that cheetahs in this area are larger than those in eastern



The biggest cheetah in CCB's history was caught in March of 2015. "Legolas" weighed in at a whopping 156 pounds, which is more than 40 pounds over the average weight of a male. CCB's research team together with Royal Veterinary College of London collared the cheetah.

Africa, where grasslands prevail, most likely because they don't need to compromise heavy weight for speed. Due to their larger size, they are bringing down larger prey species such as kudu, zebra, gemsbok, and wildebeest, using an ambush hunting style rather than outright sprint-chases. Ambush hunting may also be a reason why cheetahs are seen in larger groups in the farmland areas, though this may be a simply by-product of higher cub survival rates brought on by the lack of lions and spotted hyenas. Unfortunately, the thick bush encroachment in the farmlands makes direct observational research almost impossible. As such, CCB is investigating new research techniques to try to explore how hunting behaviors and social interactions are unique in farm-

lands. In May 2012, CCB teamed up with National Geographic to use a new technology of National Geographic's "Cittercam" technology to study wild cheetahs for the first time in history. The micro-processor-controlled video units mounted on collars were placed on four cheetahs within one of Botswana's largest farming areas to see what their daily lives entail. Because of constraints due to battery life, footage retrieved from the drop-off collars unfortunately missed hunting sequences, but showed them feeding on free-ranging kudu, their top choice of prey in that area. CCB plans to team up with National Geographic's Cittercam team again in the near future to try to utilize this technology in the quest to find out more about the farmland cheetahs.

Cheetahs have adapted over the years to live in the thick, bush-encroached environment and to hunt in this competition-free paradise that is the farmlands of Africa. The only problem is that the farmers aren't as enthusiastic about it as the predators.

Why do Farmers Hate Predators So Much?

It sounds like a silly question, because when you farm alongside lions, leopards, and other large carnivores, a natural part of life is losing some livestock to predators. But there are many factors that contribute to the conflict that occurs between predators and farmers. Farmers in Africa have very little income to live off – one dead animal can have a serious economic consequence for a low-income subsistence farmer, meaning conflict is more pronounced in areas where socio-economic standings are low. CCB promotes having multiple sources of income, so that farmers can economically sustain small levels of livestock losses from predators, however, this is often difficult for farmers. Of all the predators, cheetahs and African wild dogs often have the most negative press within farming communities, because they are more visual (they hunt during the day rather than in the cover of darkness), they aren't available for trophy hunting, so they serve no apparent economic value (photographic tourism is not common on the farmlands), and they are seen as the bad guys – wild dogs because they hunt rather crudely and cheetahs are seen as wasteful because they often don't finish eating what they kill.

In the past, farmers would kill predators



Legolas, whose collar had dropped off at the time of his death, was a victim of poaching in October 2015. Police, The Botswana Defense Force, The Anti-Poaching Units, and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks are doing everything in their power to bring those responsible for Legolas's death to justice.

on sight even if they hadn't experienced losses of livestock, fearing that all predators were livestock killers. Diet analysis research conducted by CCB has shown that not all predators kill livestock. In fact, contrary to popular belief, an ongoing study being conducted by CCB shows that only 4% of a cheetah's diet is livestock. Furthermore, game farmers who stock expensive wildlife species, such as antelope, giraffe, rhinos, elephants, and hippos, also complain that cheetahs are killing their stocked game, costing them money. Diet analysis of cheetah scat from game farms indicates, however, that cheetahs are mostly feeding on the free-ranging wild game, such as kudu, warthogs, and small antelope, rather than the larger stocked game that the game farmers have paid for. Sharing this research with farmers is the starting point in the fight against conflict. For a farmer to understand that not all predators are a threat means that they won't hunt predators indiscriminately. This alone can have a dramatic decrease in the numbers of threatened species that are killed.

Removing any predator from the ecosystem is always problematic. Once an animal is taken out of the environment, it creates an open territory that surrounding predators will automatically try to fill. So if you remove one predator from your farm, you may suddenly be faced with numerous cheetahs converging on your farm to try to win over the territory. What

compounds the problem is that the cheetah that you removed was likely a territorial animal – a strong, fit animal that is more capable of hunting wild prey and less likely to kill livestock. Transient individuals who try to claim the newly vacant territory are more likely to be young and inexperienced or older and weaker and are less fit, therefore more likely to take the easier livestock kill. So by shooting one animal, you have invited a group of others into your farm who are even more likely to take livestock. This so-called “sinkhole” effect is one of the reasons we use to dissuade farmers from using lethal control or translocation on non-problem animals. Problem animals, however, are a different story. Once you persuade a farmer to stop indiscriminately targeting predators, the next goal is to stop them from killing predators at all.

Combating Problem Animals

Problem animals are defined as animals that are causing damage to your livelihood (infrastructure or animals). The first step in this process is to make sure that farmers correctly identify how their livestock has died. Often predators are the first to get the blame when livestock dies from natural causes, snakebite, or disease. Farmer's workshops conducted by CCB in conjunction with the local Department of Wildlife and National Parks, teaches farmers what evidence to look for to decipher what was the cause of death and if it was a predator – and which species is responsible. The location of bite marks, the size of prey killed, and what parts of the animal were eaten are all indicative of which species has killed and/or fed on it. Knowing which predator was responsible is crucial in being able to combat the predator problem on that farm. For example, if leopards are causing damage, night corralling of stock is the best preventative measure; however the boma must be secure enough to stop agile leopards from entering it. If cheetahs are causing damage, keeping small stock with a livestock guarding dog and corralling small calves is the best measure. Larger calves and adult cattle

are usually safe, because it is unlikely for cheetahs to take down large livestock. Because livestock killers are usually weaker individuals, they are more likely to be transient individuals. In most instances, a farmer will have one incident of livestock loss but will never see the perpetrator again. Regrettably however, there are instances where problem animals make a home where they kill livestock and cause repeated damage.

On the rare occasion that you have a farmer who protects his livestock to the best of his ability but still has a problem animal causing repetitive damage to livestock, a solution needs to be found. Recently, a new craze swept the conservation world where problem animals were cage-trapped, sedated, fitted with tracking collars, and relocated to a safe area. This is a wonderful idea in theory; however, in practice it is fraught with difficulties. Firstly, you need to find a suitable release site. This needs to be an area where there is no livestock (as predation on livestock is a habituated trait in problem animals), preferably a protected area where they will not come in contact with humans. The problem here is that animals often cover 200km or more to return to their original habitat, so the area needs to be not only far from farmlands, but also far from where they were caught. The area needs good sources of water and good natural prey populations. If possible, you want the environment to be similar to where you caught the animal; however, when moving from farmlands to reserves this is very difficult. Sadly, other predators already occupy most of the suitable release habitats, and usually larger predators like lion are present, making relocation highly problematic. Many animals that come from farmlands are not accustomed to competition with larger predators and are henceforth particularly susceptible to death due to intraspecific competition. In the rare case where a perfect release site is found, survival rates of translocated animals are still low. For sensitive species like cheetah, survival chances are especially small and release sites where no lions occur are almost impossible to find. On top of these issues, translocation is a costly endeavor, costing in excess of \$4,000 for each animal (if collared). Only in cases where farmers are using every possible management and conservation initiative to protect their stock but are still experiencing problems,

despite alternative attempts to move the predator away, will translocation be used by CCB to remove a problem animal. Because of the sinkhole effect, translocating non-problem animals will not solve a farmer's problems and has the potential to increase his maladies. Until mitigation of the conflict between farmers and predators occurs and new release areas can be sourced for relocations, this technique is unlikely to solve many problems in human-wildlife conflict. No one really

knows how many threatened predators such as cheetahs and African wild dogs are shot on the farmlands each year, however many believe the numbers to be significant. Conflict with farmers is the number one cause for the declining populations of threatened carnivores in southern Africa. By finding ways to mitigate the conflict between farmers and predators, we can start taking those ever-important steps towards coexistence.

Although there is still a long way to go

in the fight for the cheetah's survival on the farmlands of Africa, from the progress seen so far, it is clear that the holistic, community-based approach to conservation conducted by CCB is certainly proving successful. It is our hope that with continued support, CCB can continue their good work in the hope that cheetahs will not face extinction at the hands of the human race.

New Workshop Being Offered at This Year's Convention!

There is a new educational workshop being offered at this year's convention! You have been asking for advanced classes to be offered and we heard you loud and clear! It is called the "Advanced Wild Feline Husbandry Education Workshop." This is one of a variety of advanced workshops we will be offering in the future.

What are the topics this new workshop will cover?

Contingency Planning – taught by Mindy Stinner

Contingency planning is such a critical part of owning any animal that every owner should have one at the ready. Business owners licensed by the USDA will soon be asked to have a comprehensive contingency plan as one of their licensing requirements. The initial creation of such a plan can be daunting and even updating an outdated draft can be both time consuming and frustrating. Changes to weather patterns, rising sea levels, and new foreign animal disease concerns mean that animal owners need to pay attention to larger concerns around them to ensure they are able to adapt their plans to include new circumstances.

An introduction to this process has long been a part of the FCF Wild Felid Husbandry Course. However, students have requested an opportunity to have time to begin outlining and writing their plan in a workshop setting. It is always easier to independently finish out a project later if you are starting with a solid map for how to proceed.

In this workshop, we will review the basics of contingency planning, including deciding what situations require planning ahead, reviewing available assets and training resources, understanding how to reach out to officials when necessary, and beginning the process of creating or

updating a plan. The workshop will also offer an opportunity to ask questions of others who may have already gone through an emergency situation or who have experience drafting a plan.

Advanced Training and Enrichment – taught by Debi Willoughby

Training and enrichment go hand in hand when it comes to enriching your animals' lives, as well as being very important tools that aid in the safe handling of your felines. In this portion of the workshop, we will review basic training and enrichment practices, and then dive into advanced training techniques that cover pet training, display training, behavior training, health maintenance training, traveling show training, and how to avoid training sinkholes. We will also talk about "difficult personality" training for those cats that have a vibrant personality! Then we will turn our attention to creative enrichment ideas, safe enrichment practices, and animal enclosure enrichment. This section holds valuable information for every animal owner and will include meaningful exercises that you can take home and use with your own animals.

Attendees will receive a certificate of participation upon completion of each course.

Where and when will this workshop be held?

This workshop will be held at the convention's hotel, Bahia Mar Hotel, in the Clipper Room from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., on Sunday, June 19, 2016. If you plan on attending the optional Panther Ridge Conservation Center tour on Sunday morning, you will be back in time for lunch and this workshop!

If you have already graduated from the Basic Wild Feline Husbandry Course, you don't want to miss out on this brand new

workshop! It is full of beneficial information that you will use in your life working with exotic felines!

Also Being Taught is the FCF Basic Wild/Exotic Feline Husbandry Course

The single-day FCF Wild/Exotic Feline Husbandry Course is offered on Sunday, June 19, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., at the Mariner Room of the Bahia Mar Doubletree Hilton hotel. The course covers important aspects of wild cat husbandry. Any owners, trainers, handlers, or those contemplating ownership of wild felines should be interested in this course.

Topics covered include natural history, regulatory guidelines, and maintenance of a variety of species of large and small captive felids. The information presented would be of interest to individuals from many fields, including private owners, wildlife rehabilitators, researchers, and students.

Natural history of the Felidae focuses on status in the wild and how captive husbandry can contribute to conservation. Regulatory laws and permits outline the federal and local regulatory agencies that oversee trade and maintenance of wild animals. Appropriate building materials, facility and enclosure design, space requirements, and safety equipment are covered in this course, as are nutritional requirements and feeding, health care, handling, and enrichment. The course places an emphasis on public safety, addressing the many issues that could potentially arise through contingency planning for dealing with unexpected events.

The course includes a textbook with reference materials, a text, and certificate of completion. Lunch is included as well.



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FCF Convention 2016... Fort Lauderdale, Here We Come!

Convention kicks off Thursday afternoon, June 16, 2016. We'll be in Bahia Mar's beautiful ballroom with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the beach and ocean. Doors open at 2 p.m. This is where you can get checked in for convention and drop off your donated items for the silent auction and the live auction on banquet night. This is the only annual FCF fundraiser, so I hope everyone will bring something that the members will love to bid on. Always popular are exotic cat-themed shirts and clothing items, as well as kitten and cat supplies, travel bags, heavy duty toys and enrichment items, and souvenirs from your zoo or park gift shop. If you cannot make convention, arrange to ship your donated items to one of the convention committee members; contact Lynn Culver for more details. Then

start having fun - visit vendor exhibits, socialize with members, and interact with exotic kittens on display. The silent auction starts as soon as items are listed and you can begin bidding. It's a chance to reconnect with old friends and make new ones and network with facilities and owners who share your passion for cats. At 5 p.m., loosen up at the cash bar, and at 6 p.m., enjoy a delicious fajita buffet. If you are vegetarian, don't worry; there are

items on the menu to satisfy everyone.

After dinner, we'll conduct the annual membership meeting. If there is a topic you wish to bring before the members, please email it to the secretary now and it will be added to the agenda. This is an election year for the FCF Board of Directors. Nominations for office open May

Interactions with their varied collection of hand-raised wildlife are offered in addition to a full tour of the facility. ZWF provides beautiful natural habitats in a botanical garden setting. ZWF is world-famous for its hand-reared, socialized ambassadors, including hyena, sloth, gibbon, tiger, leopard, cougar, caracal, white lion, amur leopard, snow leopard, Asian small-clawed otter, and plenty more. For the FCF convention goers, we have contracted for some very special exotic feline experiences that will include plenty of photo opportunities and some hands-on interaction with several of ZWF's young ambassador felines. Bring your cameras!

After a great morning at ZWF, we will check out the AZA-accredited Miami Metro Zoo. We have reserved an air-conditioned pavilion for our catered deli lunch.

At 3 p.m., be sure to gather at the amphitheater to watch the Miami Zoo animal show, which will include the zoo's ambassador cheetahs. After the show, the cheetahs will be brought out for us and there will be a Q & A session with the trainers.

We'll arrive back at the Bahia Mar at dinnertime and you are free to eat where you like. You can refresh yourself after the long day with a dip in the pool, a swim in the ocean, a walk on the beach, or visit with kittens in members' rooms. Enjoy a



Zoological Wildlife Foundation.

1st, and close August 10th. Any nominated candidates attending convention will be given time to speak.

Friday morning we head out early (7:45 a.m.) for the Zoological Wildlife Foundation (ZWF). Our hotel does not include breakfast with our rooms, but there are two places to eat in the morning - Breezes has a continental breakfast buffet (\$13.95), and a full buffet with made-to-order omelets (\$21.95). If this is out of your price range, consider visiting the Fresh Market Deli for yogurt, rolls, fruit, and breakfast sandwiches. If you want to sleep in, drop by the day before; our rooms have refrigerators, microwaves, and coffee machines.

ZWF is the #2 attraction in Miami according to Trip Advisor. This zoo is owned and operated by FCF members Mario and Maria Tabraue. They have made a reputation for themselves by offering visitors unique experiences based on their specific interests.



Speakers will include Jim Sanderson.



Saturday night's feline-themed auction.

drink during happy hour at Bahia Mar's Breezes Tavern, dine at the restaurant's outdoor seating overlooking the ocean, or pull up a chair by the pool and order some appetizers, drinks, salads, and sandwiches. The sky is the limit!

Saturday morning starts our lineup of speakers, including Jim Sanderson, Ph.D., and Brian Davis, geneticist. We will be announcing more on the speakers in the next issue of the *FCF Journal*.

Saturday afternoon, we have left a few hours open for beach time before the 6 p.m. cocktail hour, followed by the Saturday evening Caribbean banquet. We will conclude the fun with a live auction of our most prized donations. This is always entertaining, as the auctioneers bring out the competitive spirit in bidding.

Sunday, the convention continues with several optional events. The FCF Basic Wild Feline Husbandry Course will be taught starting at 8 a.m., in the Bahia Mar Hotel. This is an eight-hour course covering natural history, regulations, enclosures, veterinary care, enrichment, contingency planning, and more. It is suitable for novice owners and prospective owners, as well as experienced keepers and educators. This course provides a broad base of feline knowledge and students take home a comprehensive textbook for future reference.

Or, if you have already graduated from



Miami Metro Zoo.

a previous offering of the husbandry course, consider staying another day to tour Panther Ridge Conservation Center in Wellington, Florida. We will leave at 8 a.m. to visit this facility located about an hour north of the hotel. You will need to provide your own transportation. Since we expect so many Floridians to attend, there should be enough vehicles to allow us to coordinate carpooling. If not, we will order a bus and advise you of this transportation cost. Let us know when you register. Panther Ridge is a non-profit, FCF-



Panther Ridge Conservation Center.



Bahia Mar, Fort Lauderdale.

Zoological Wildlife Foundation Promises To Be Wild!



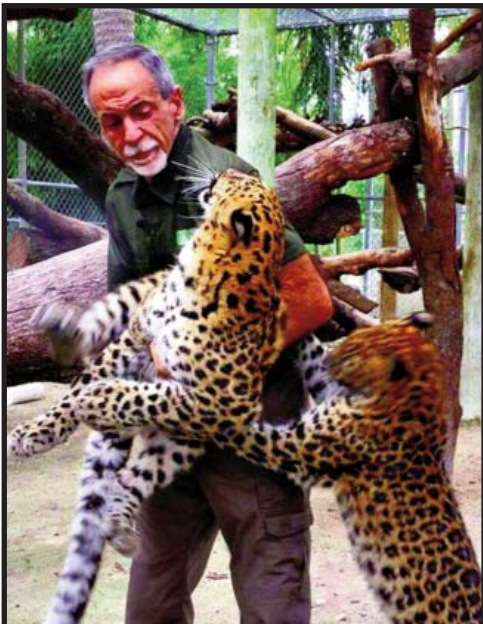
By Lynn Culver

I recently met with Mario and Maria Tabraue at the Zoological Wildlife Foundation in southern Miami. I was touring Florida facilities and the FCF Convention hotel and field trip destinations. The moment you arrive at the ZWF, you sense this is more than a zoo; it is a labor of love. Lush tropical jungle growth is everywhere. Unique thatched-roof pavilions are inside spacious enclosures. There seemed to be sensitivity to both the animals' needs, and those of viewers and photographers. I was joined on this trip by FCF member Liz Felton, a new transplant to Florida, and my traveling companion, Cheryl Rose.



We stopped at the ZWF welcome station, where guests assemble before their tour guides lead them through the Foundation. The room was comfortable, the walls covered in awards, appreciation certificates, and amazing wildlife photos building expectations and excitement for any guest. A Trip Advisor certificate noting that ZWF is rated the #4 zoo in the U.S. and the #7 zoo in the world caught my eye. Clearly, ZWF has found a recipe for success to gain so many favorable reviews from travelers. I wanted to find out more for the FCF members who would be visiting this ZAA-accredited attraction as part of the FCF convention in June.

Mario was a busy man and we waited for our turn to have a few minutes with him. His gracious media representative visited with us. Finally, Mario and Maria arrived and introduced themselves. They are such a warm and welcoming couple. I wanted to know more about what led to ZWF, and Mario explained that his start was as a wildlife importer where he ran Zoological Imports 2000, a successful business importing animals into Miami from all over the world. But success did not equate to financial success, as the profit from so many reptile transactions was small. Mario says it was Maria's inspiration to start exhibiting their animals in 2000, and the reviews were all positive. Their intimate tours on the five-acre property and opportunities for up-close viewing of wildlife and even hands-on contact with some of the bottle-raised animals seemed to be a winning combination, and the couple has been building upon it since.



The success of the ZWF as a tourist destination is also due to the passion that Mario and Maria inspire in their employees, interns, and volunteers, who truly care about the animals in their charge, and they all share in a mission to change social attitudes about wildlife conservation and bring this global issue to the forefront of public discussion. ZWF is a financial supporter of Cheetah Conservation Botswana, the Niassa Lion Project, and the Zambian Carnivore Program. Visitors are invited to donate as well.

The ZWF is a mix of birds, reptiles, and mammals. Some were rescued, and others specifically acquired for captive breeding and exhibition. Big cats are a passion of Mario's, and at





ZWF some of the most endangered species are represented, including Amur leopards, jaguars, clouded leopards, and snow leopards. ZWF is best known for their small, private tours of the facility, which they offer by appointment, and visitors can have their tours customized with encounters and photo sessions with certain animals.

I asked Mario about what he has in mind for the FCF convention and was delighted to hear that we would be experiencing not only the guided tour, but also have photo opportunities with an assortment of animals. Mario will cater to our collective obsession with felines by bringing out a few of his ambassador cats, whatever is appropriate in June, likely tiger cubs, but also other species, perhaps a cougar cub, caracal, or other feline, for us to interact with. A customized ZWF tour with endangered felines such as Mario describes is valued at around \$250. The FCF is extremely grateful for Mario's generosity to accommodate our members with promises of such rare and wonderful experiences at such a deep discount.

We did not tour the ZWF that day, only the animals around the welcome area, where we saw some of the white lions Mario has imported from South Africa to save them from being hunted there, and a pair of the highly endangered Amur leopards. I am excited knowing I will have the full experience in June, along with all the other FCF convention goers. We did get a peek at the animal interaction area, which is a brilliant design. Mario gives credit to his wife Maria with the vision; under a shady thatched roof, surrounded by sunlight, tropical flowering plants and sparkling water, and enclosed only by a lattice of natural tree branches artfully woven to create a see-through wall, animals are brought out for the guests to enjoy and photograph. This is going to be a memorable experience for sure!



A Labor Of Love

By Audrey Loya
Panther Ridge Conservation
Center

Throughout my entire life, I have fancied felines... the young and the old, the small and the large, the domestics and the exotics. They have captivated me with their antics and charmed me with their mystique like no other species could do.

So naturally, in an effort to save lives and be a voice for those who cannot speak, I began volunteering at a no-kill shelter,



Beautiful black panther Amos is one of the original residents of Panther Ridge. He never fails to evoke admiration from interns and visitors alike.



Macho Man was born in at a California licensed breeding facility 2004.

cleaning, fostering, fundraising, and finding loving, forever homes for domestic cats. Exotic cats were just a dream, and I would have to admire them from afar. That is until one day someone brought to my attention that there is an exotic feline facility in Wellington, no more than 15 minutes from my house. I would have to investigate this further. Someday!

That someday came when I met Judy Berens, Director of Panther Ridge Conservation Center (PRCC), quite by chance, actually, and it was not long before I attended an event being held at PRCC. I

was hooked. I wanted to help, learn, and be a part of this AWESOME place! The rest, as they say, is history. I began volunteering for PRCC on August 23, 2015.

So, when I was asked to give an insider's view of my volunteer work at PRCC, I was honored to share my experience. Admittedly, I write this with a certain degree of bias, as there are no words to fully describe the devotion, passion, and love that Judy puts into every single one of her feline residents. Her hard work, years of experience, infinite knowledge, and a touch of her magical dynamism shows in her facility and her cats!

jaguar, a black leopard, and our ambassador cheetah named Charlie (whom I have nicknamed Prince Charles!). Each one has its own dietary requirement catered to, including special requests (right down to the size of the meat cubes) and like any fine five-star hotel, there is always a mid-afternoon snack. PRCC boasts large enclosures that are exquisitely maintained; in fact, Charlie has one of the largest cheetah enclosures in the country, boasting a spacious two and a half acres! Some enclosures actually have pools and water features, as well. The dens are routinely deep cleaned, the shade cloths are periodically taken down, washed and replaced, and fans are taken apart and scrubbed. Although I was not personally involved in the activity, I have witnessed the chain link fencing being cleaned with a toothbrush. The cats are groomed, enriched, and, most importantly, loved by all of us here.

Volunteering at Panther Ridge has not only given me the privilege of hands-on experience and learning feline husbandry (and I have learned a lot in such a short period of time), but what a big difference the little things can make in the lives of the residents.

Judy holds high standards at PRCC. She truly goes above and beyond food and shelter. It is the difference between just living and living WELL!

Personally, I have acquired much more than basic feline husbandry skills. I have



Judy Berens with Ming Too, one of two clouded leopards that starred in Animal Planet's "Growing Up: Clouded Leopard." Ming and his sister Mei arrived at Panther Ridge as cubs.

learned many interesting facts and statis-

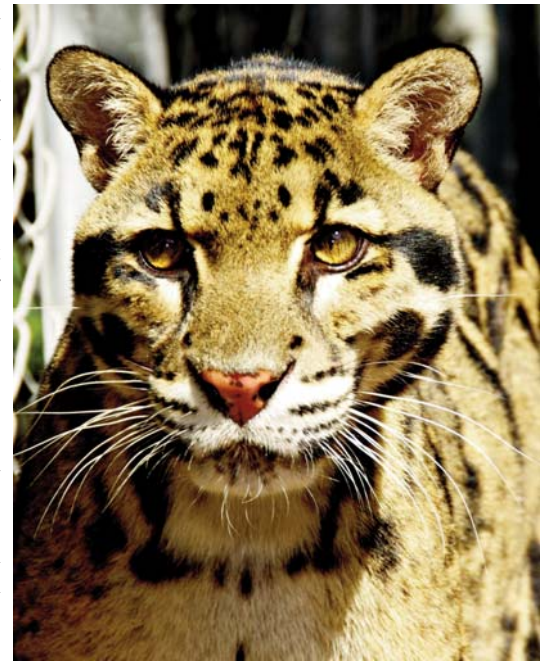
tics, some of which could be obtained through research. Although, more importantly, by observing Judy interact with the cats, her mannerisms, tiny nuances, and all things left unspoken, the true gifts of being at PRCC shine through. Additionally, the opportunities and education that Judy provides not just to her interns, externs, and volunteers like me, but also to her visitors, are absolutely priceless!

As for my future aspirations, well, I hope to someday become the proud parent of a serval, and of course I will continue volunteering at PRCC!

Panther Ridge Conservation Center is a premier destination for feline enthusiasts and animal lovers alike. So if you find yourself in Florida, and you are looking for a unique experience, make sure to schedule a guided tour and stroll through the grounds to observe these majestic residents, for the education, and mostly for the AWESOME!



Aztec the jaguar arrived at Panther Ridge in 2004, retired from circus life. Aztec he has left his mark in the world, siring Izabella (Bella for short) in 2009.






Another of Panther Ridge's four clouded leopards. This species is problematic in zoo settings, prone to stress-related stereotypic behavior. Smaller, private settings like Panther Ridge are better suited to this shy and endangered feline species.



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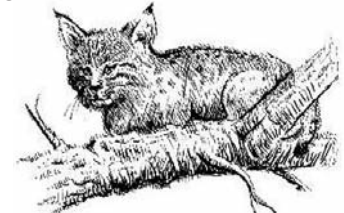
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What Gives You That Warm And Fuzzy Feeling?

By Cheryl Garvey-Rose

Through the eyes of an outsider, I present our whirlwind travels of the sunny state of Florida, where I got enough warm and fuzzy to satisfy anyone. Lynn Culver had invited me to accompany her on a nine-day road trip to visit lots of animal people she knew and to pick up a serval. I have always been an animal lover and admired the many kinds of cats and kittens Lynn and Bart care for, although I have never owned one myself. I am always up for an adventure, and this would be a great opportunity to meet other animal people like Lynn and me.

With all the differences between exotic animals, during this trip I found each of their owners created fresh ideas for feeding and habitats, making for thriving, happy animals. I learned about new species, had lessons in trusting relationships, and witnessed the bonds of enthusiasm and love that cannot be broken.

Besides the business of life, there are the little things that make us who we are. It is that commitment, the spark, the bond, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which matters. Pure devotion was evident at the zoos, the rescues, the sanctuaries, the botanical gardens, no matter if it was a jaguarundi or a tiger; I saw it everywhere.

Our first visit was with Bertie and Jim Broaddus, at Bear Creek Feline Center in Panama City. We met a jaguarundi named Yoda, who was allowed inside the house. Yoda, such a character, captured my heart. Outside, Jim showed us many other cats; cougar, serval, bobcat, and lynx. We spent the night upstairs in their home and our room had an outside balcony that was enclosed in wire fencing. Jim warned us not to open the door, because the mountain lion could be in that balcony area. Jim said it used to come inside the house. The beds were comfortable, but we awoke at 2 a.m., to the



Cheryl tries her hand at bottle-feeding Mystic Jungle's newest arrival, an eight week old tiger cub named Jar Jar Binks.

sound of our cellphones warning us of possible tornados. The rain was heavy on the roof, and the next morning we saw items blown onto the driveway, but no tor-

nados, thankfully.

We were off to visit Vera and Mark Chaples, who created Mystic Jungle. I had the once in a lifetime opportunity to bottle-feed a tiger cub. The reason we were there was to pick up a serval that Vera had been housing for Sara McKelvey, a friend of Lynn's. Spooky the serval was ready to travel, but she would remain with Vera until we returned on our way home. Mystic Jungle had ancient live oaks lining the long driveway and all around the enclosures. It was beautiful. We met some black and spotted leopards that were hand-raised and so loving to Vera. Vera had tigers she had rescued and plenty of other animals, not just cats. Birds and snakes were her son Robert's interest. I learned a lot from Robert; he was so knowledgeable and he had such



Jim Broaddus strokes his proudest achievement, Yoda, a jaguarundi born at Bear Creek to imported parents and hand-reared by his wife, Bertie.



Christine Janks catches an enthusiastic Geoffroy's cat born at Carson Springs last year.



Christine offers some browse to the tallest resident of Carson Springs Wildlife.

a way with the animals.

We left Mystic Jungle, and Christine Janks met us at the entrance of Carson Springs Wildlife Foundation and Sanctuary to give us a personal tour. This was a beautiful facility with spacious habitats for the many kinds of animals. The facility seemed to be a mix of rescue cats and breeding pairs of rare species. I particularly liked the giraffe, the lions, her red river hogs and African warthogs, her black and white

ruffed lemurs, and an adorable red lemur that played with the dog through the cage walls.

The next day we visited Single Vision. Carl Bovard, the facility founder, is an amazing animal person who has raised tigers, leopards, cougars, lions, and bears. He still bottle-feeds his big cats, and I witnessed him offering bottles to giant tigers standing way over his head. He went in with all of the cats, and they all appeared to love him. Part of the reason we stopped by was to visit with cats born at Lynn's place, including a pair of bobcats that lived with a caracal and a Eurasian lynx. There was also a serval that was born at Lynn's and a pair of Lynn's Geoffroy's cats there, too. Carl invited Lynn in to visit with her bobcat, lynx, and cara-



The commercial slogan says, "You never outgrow your need for milk," but in this case, Carl Bovard is towered over by the bottle-drinking tiger.

cal. Rampage, the big, beautiful boy bobcat, rubbed all over her shoes. It was a cold morning for this visit (I think I actually saw a snow flurry or two), but we had



Carl gives some one-on-one hugs to his Eurasian lynx cub.



Carl reacquaints Lynn with a bobcat and Eurasian lynx she raised on the bottle. Rampage the bobcat checks out the smells on her shoes.

a really great time with Carl before heading further south for some warmer Florida weather.

Our next stop took us to the home of Chris and Roy Comstock, whom I met just a few months ago when they lived in Oklahoma. Such nice people, and I was sorry to see them leave, but happy to visit them in their beautiful new home in Dade City, Florida. We all spent the afternoon at the home of Kathy Stearns, owner of Dade City Wild Things, where she and her friend Liz Felton were doing a photo shoot with some adorable baby gibbons. I would have taken both gibbons home if they would have let me. I met Randy Sterns, Kathy's son, and her husband Kenny while being entertained in the living room of their beautiful, historic home. The day was short and, unfortunately, we did not have time to tour the Stearns' zoo.

The next morning was still chilly as Chris proudly showed us around. They managed to transport camels, donkey, lamas, goats, kangaroos, lemurs, a spider monkey, a capuchin, horses, dogs, and servals from their Oklahoma home to their new property in Florida, and pass strict Florida Fish and Wildlife caging requirements. Their ten-acre spread is beautiful and I would love to return when they get their pool installed!

Then we drove to Orlando, where we spent the day at SeaWorld. We watched

four very different shows, one with sea lions, one with Julie Scardina showing off all sorts of animals, one with orcas, and, my favorite, the Pets Ahoy show which had dozens of domestic dogs and cats, as well as pigeons, geese, ducks, skunks, rats, and pigs, all trained to perform onstage without any people at all. It was funny and fast-paced, and Lynn told me the show was produced by Joel Slaven's Professional Animals. Joel is an FCF member who is an incredible animal trainer. Lynn has one of his Eurasian lynxes, named Kisa, who was retired from Joel's, and she is such a sweet, sweet cat.

The next morning, we arrived at Central Florida Zoo in Sanford, Florida, just north of Orlando. Lynn had sold a pair of serval kittens to this zoo to be trained in their



Roy Comstock has a new gibbon friend while visiting the home of Kathy and Kenny Stearns.

wildlife show. The zoo director, David Tetslaft, gave us a personal tour, pointing out cages that he designed, and ones he had upgraded, and showed us the new area under construction for a huge bear habitat. The zoo was a beautiful botanical



Cheryl visits with Duchess the bobcat at Wild Florida, a new, five-acre zoo private wildlife exhibit an hour south of Orlando.

garden and I was very impressed. The enclosures were well designed, the animals were alert and active, and everything was landscaped beautifully. The otters were in an especially nice enclosure, with a deep pool to swim and play in and a glass wall for the visitors to see their antics underwater.

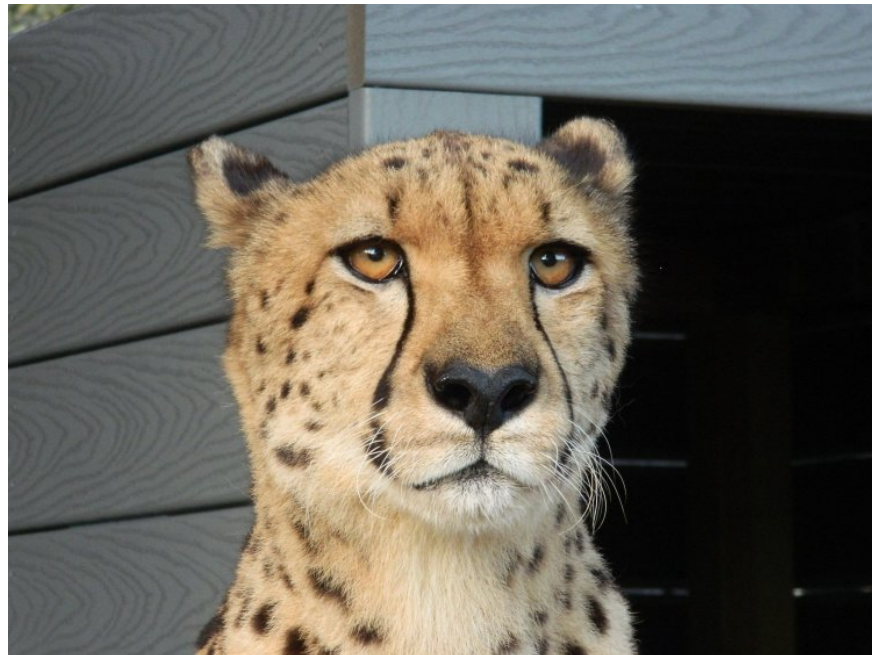
Our next stop was Wild Florida. Kylie Reynolds met us at the gift shop/learning center. Wild Florida is a new attraction, only two years old. It exhibits native and exotic animals and offers airboat rides. The zoo was built right at the edge of the swamp and it is intertwined with the native habitat. It was a nice size, and everything seemed to be hands-on. Animals were raised like family. I got to go in with a momma sloth and her baby named George. He was so cute hanging on his momma, both of them repeatedly yawning at us. I was thrilled; they affectionately came right up to my face. I took a video of it and everyone I show it to is so envious. We had stopped there so Lynn could see a pair of her bobcat offspring, Duke and Duchess. What a happy pair they were and what a reunion! Duchess was literally all over Lynn – draping herself on her shoulders. Lynn says Duchess's mother, Jewell, had the same personality. Wild Florida had built the bobcat pair a really nice enclosure with a pool,



Central Florida Zoo is a medium-sized zoo just north of Orlando, which features a nice assortment of wildlife and creative habitats.



Who can resist the cuteness of Wild Florida's yawning sloth momma and her baby named George? Cheryl can't.



Cheryl is in awe of Charlie, the ambassador cheetah at Panther Ridge Conservation Center.

platforms, hanging logs, and a heated bedroom, and right behind their back wire wall were two peacocks keeping them busy trying to figure out how to get them. What a spark Kylie adds to the zoo. We really, really liked that place and I am sure it is going to continue to grow. It was the perfect size for a zoo.

After another three hours of driving, we made it to Panther Ridge Conservation Center around 5 p.m. That left us just two hours to tour the beautiful grounds and animals. Judy Berens met us and invited us to watch six year old Charlie the cheetah being fed dinner and then groomed. I was totally awed, and made sure I did not move one inch to disturb the pair. Judy placed a bowl before the big cat, and he crouched down and politely ate. Then she sat by him and used a napkin to wipe away any meat particles from his cheeks and neck. Talk about the royal treatment. Then Charlie was groomed with a brush; his neck, his back, his head, all of it gently massaged by Judy. When we first saw Charlie, we could hear him purring from about 30 feet away. And as Judy attended to him, the purring was constant. I now understand why he was purring so much, since we arrived just before his daily dinner routine. Once Charlie was fed and pampered, Judy led us to the rest of her cats. We met the sweetest pair of clouded leop-

ards who had the cutest voices as they greeted Judy. But what I remember most is Bella, the jaguar. Bella was raised by Judy right from birth, and it showed. Judy told us that everyone said Bella would become dangerous as she matured. Bella is now six years old, and Judy goes in with her daily. I watched as she threw a ball for Bella to chase, and then she made a hay

bed and lay down so that Bella could cuddle with her. By now it was getting late and I think if we were not there, Judy would have just spent the night with Bella. Judy has beautiful ocelots, too, very endangered. They were prowling around in the dark.

We spent the night in nearby Lake Worth, where we connected with Liz Felton again and met her wonderful husband, Bob. They are owners of Buddy, a serval that was famous on the internet, but sadly passed away from unresolved problems with vomiting. I can tell that Liz still hurts from this and is not ready to take on another cat, but she sure was smitten with the grey kangaroo joey she was bottle feeding at Kathy Stearns's place. It was our first home cooked meal in a week and



Judy Berens reared Bella the jaguar from birth. The bond of love and trust between the two continues to this day.

it was delicious. Fruit smoothies, mozzarella cheese with exotic vinegars, hot chicken wings, spinach with smoked Gouda cheese, and home baked non-gluten peanut butter cookies. The Felton house gets a "ten" on our Trip Advisor review.

The next morning, Liz drove the three of us down to Miami, where we had an appointment with Mario Tabraue at Zoological Wildlife Foundation. My first impression was, "Wow!" This was like being in the tropics, with lush vegetation everywhere and birds above. The place is not very large, only five acres, but very full of landscaping and animals. Many of the enclosures had thatched gazebos for shade. We walked down an elevated wooden pathway over a big lake area to

reach an open-air, thatched pavilion with really neat woven wooden branches, where animals are brought out to visit with the people. It was very unique and apparently the design of Mario's very creative wife, Maria.

A few miles away is the Miami Metro Zoo, where we had an appointment to meet with zoo media relations man, Ron Magill. The entrance to the zoo is lined with about a mile of royal palms

on both sides of the road. Liz informed us that those trees are very expensive. There was a lot of construction at the entrance to the zoo, and we waited outside under a small cabana for Ron to return from the other side of the zoo. We were not the only ones waiting. A news crew was there, too, waiting to interview Ron about the zoo's Sumatran tiger cub being unveiled to the public the next day. Ron is a man of great stature; my son is six-five, and Ron was definitely taller. He invited us into his office, the walls of which were full of photos and certificates. He told us his most cherished accomplishment was a program he started in Panama, to get the harpy eagle adopted as a national bird and thus protect its habitat and save this great raptor. Ron was a busy man, and he gave



Mario and Maria Tabraue have reared an impressive assortment of charismatic wildlife ambassadors, like this young white lion, at their Zoological Wildlife Foundation.



Owl waits for visitors at the Zoological Wildlife Foundation, in their stunning, nature-inspired interaction area.



Miami Metro Zoo's beautiful Bengal tiger exhibit lets you imagine that these majestic creatures are basking among the Indian ruins of their motherland.

us more time than we expected and we thanked him. The zoo is huge, and the animal exhibits are spread out. By now it was late afternoon, we were starting to get tired, and it appeared most of the animals were tired, too. We saw sleeping hyenas, sleeping orangutan, sleeping painted dogs, and sleeping sable antelope. Then we saw Ron in a golf cart, guiding several visiting VIPs through the zoo. There was a rhino walking around making some really unique sounds. We stopped a zoo person to ask if it was a normal sound, and they said they had never heard it before and were going to report it to the keeper. She told us a new female rhino was in quarantine on the other side of the park and was due to be introduced shortly. This rhino was aroused down below, if you know what I mean, and he obviously got the memo about the lady rhino.

That evening, we checked into the FCF Convention hotel, Bahia Mar Double



Miami Zoo rhino on exhibit was vocalizing for the newly arrived female still in quarantine.

and... wow ...the beach, the wind, the waves, the beautiful water; it was sunset and a perfect ten! We had dinner at the Breezes restaurant and then went for a walk along the marina docks to view the mega yachts, each one larger and grander than the previous ship. It was breathtaking. I am sure the FCF members are going to have a wonderful time at Convention; the hotel is so beautiful. The

Tree Hilton. We walked across the elevated bridge

location is perfect.

The next morning, it was time to head back to Arkansas. One final stop at Mystic Jungle, to pick up Spooky, and we were on our way. Two days of driving and we were back in our home sweet home, with plenty of good memories and a phone full of photos and a new serval for Lynn to care for. I met so many nice animal people. FCF members... You are going to love your convention location and field trips this year!



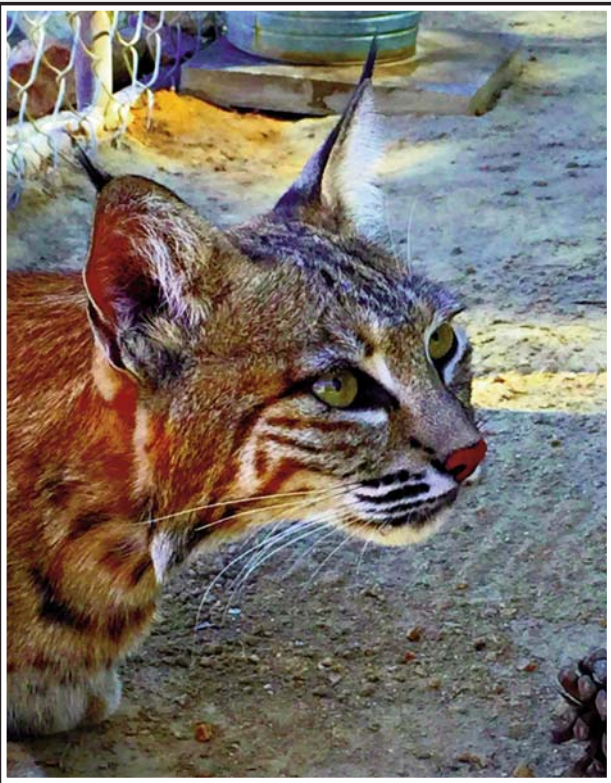
The Bahia Mar was the last stop on the trip. Cheryl soaks up the wind, surf, and setting sun on the beach in front of the hotel.



Kubwa and Trio tigers enjoying the snow at Valley of the Kings. Photo by Susan Reinholz.



Lynette Lyon reads the *FCF Journal* while Shiva rests on her chest.



Sage is one of the beautiful bobcats at the EFBC's Feline Conservation Center in Rosamond, CA. Her purrs and little squeaky "mews" will melt your heart. Photo by Missy Koop.

Your Best Shots



Sasha cougar really got into the holiday spirit! Photo by Lenore Infanti.



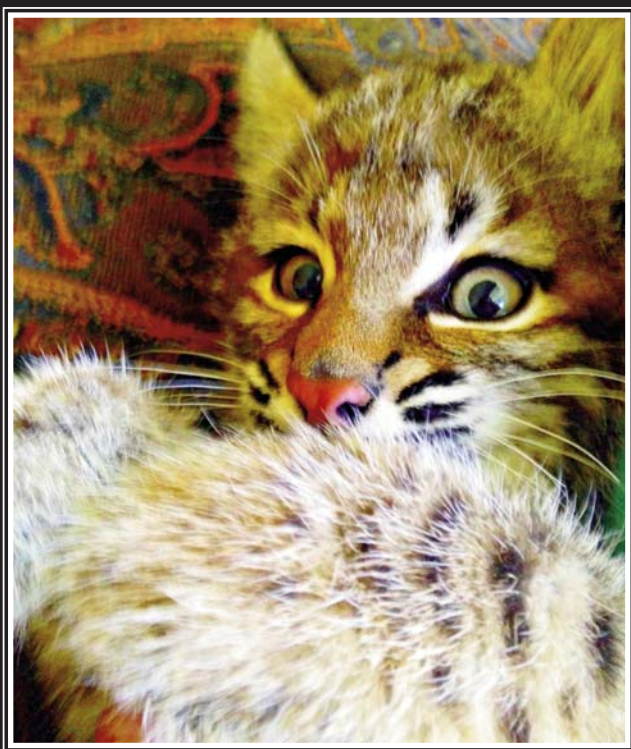
hile caracal



Jennifer Kasserman's Canada lynx Sookie likes her chin scratched.



Doug Kildsig's bobcat IMOS as a kitten.



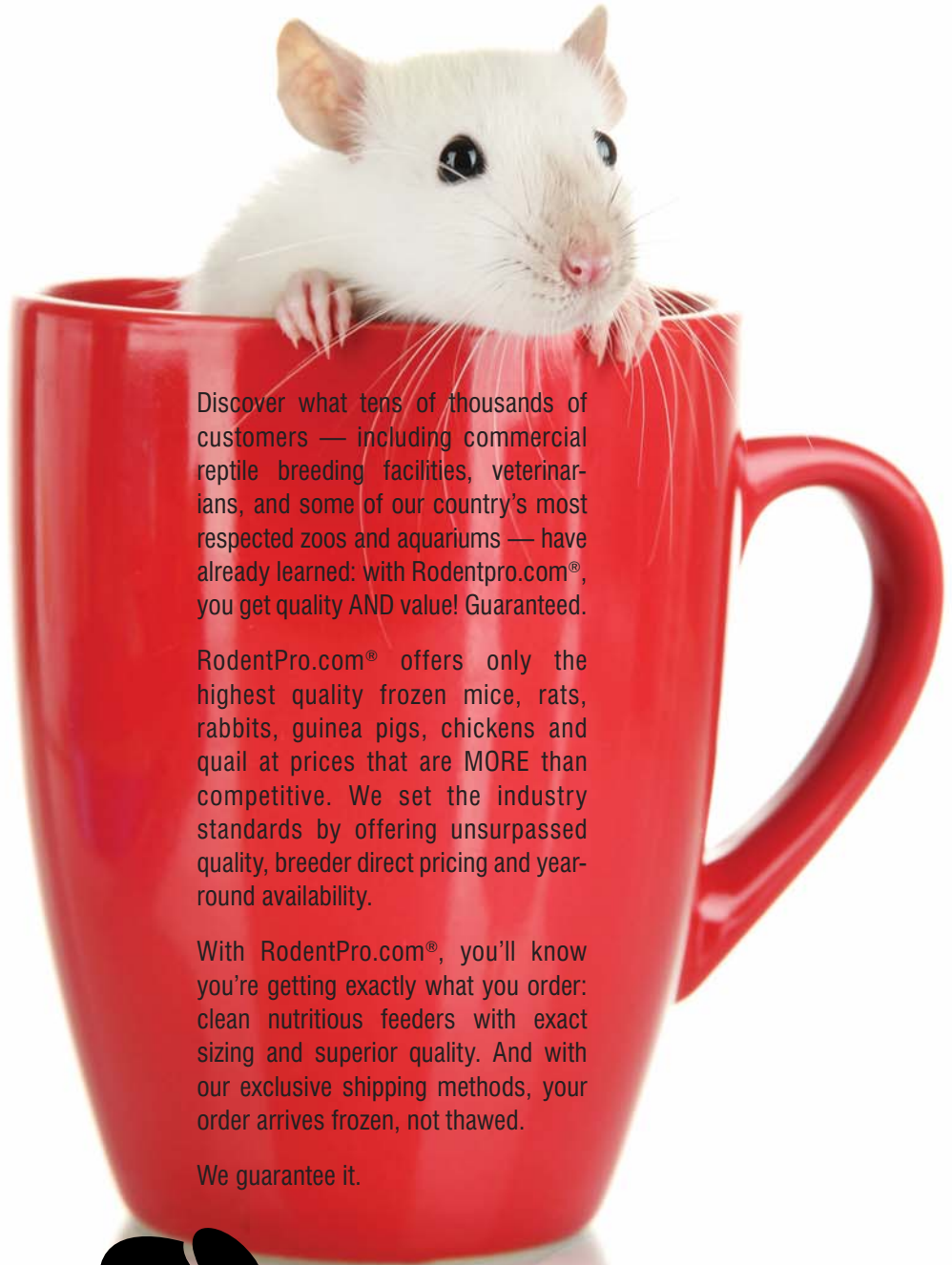
Mishka bobcat kitten. Photo by Amanda Godin.



This serval cutie was raised at Wildlife Wonders. Photo by Hope Bennet.

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Blast From the Past: The Pros and Cons of Vaccinations

Feline Conservation Federation
Volume 48, Issue 4 - July/August 2004

By Jona Sun Jordan, DVM

The practice of vaccinating ourselves, our children, and our animals to prevent disease is the subject of a great deal of debate. Heated discussions arise over what to vaccinate with, when to vaccinate, who to vaccinate, and even whether to vaccinate at all. Every side has strong arguments for why their way is the right way and can show statistics and tell horror stories to prove their point. I am here to tell you that the bottom-line is that there is no such thing as a risk-free life. Each one of us must make the decisions about who, what, when, where, how, and why to vaccinate ourselves, our children, and our pets – and no matter what decision we make, there are risks involved.

In the past, veterinarians and clients alike demanded “standard protocols” like “Every cat should be vaccinated with every vaccine available for cats every year.” In reality, the world is much more complex than that. A more intelligent plan would be to create a vaccination protocol that reflects the fact that every animal is an individual with individual needs and tolerances. This is not really as complicated as it sounds. Here are the factors that I use to evaluate my patients’ need for vaccines:

1) Age:

a) Young animals are protected by maternal antibodies in mother’s milk as long as they are nursing. If they are bottle-fed, they are at risk for developing disease until their immune systems are exposed to enough virus particles to develop their own personal immunity. Whether they get sick or not depends on numerous factors including nutrition, their own innate ability to respond to virus challenge, the number of viruses they are exposed to, and the potency of that virus. The goal in creating a virus vaccine is to take street virus and alter it to be potent enough to stimulate a response while not being potent enough to create illness. This is a delicate balance, since statistically in any population there will be patients with stronger or weaker than average resistance to disease.

b) Older animals have multiple challenges to their immune systems over

the years, which leave toxins imbedded in their bodies, as well as generalized weakening of all systems just from the normal wear and tear of living. A healthy older animal that has been vaccinated multiple times in the past may not need any more vaccines. There is typically little or no information available on how long many vaccines last beyond the tested period. Running vaccine trials beyond a year or two is not only costly and depressing (remember that to test a vaccine you must expose the patients to set amounts of street virus and see how many of them get sick and/or die), but it is also impractical because the vaccines themselves are changing rapidly. Vaccines from ten years ago are pretty much obsolete now due to ongoing improvements in efficacy and safety.

2) Previous Vaccination History:

a) How many times has this patient been exposed to this vaccine virus in the past, and on what schedule? More is not necessarily better! Some breeders have been known to vaccinate their animals weekly or every two weeks – this is severe over-vaccination and has been shown to cause a number of problems, including blood thickening from immune system protein complexes that can damage internal organs like the kidneys, failure of the immune system to fight off bacterial or fungal infections because it is too busy fighting vaccine “infections,” and increased risk of vaccination reaction – including death.

b) Note: It is my understanding that there has never been a documented case of rabies virus infection in the U.S. in a pet vaccinated at least twice, as an adult, by a veterinarian.

3) Reproductive Status:

a) Live virus vaccines are generally contraindicated in pregnant or breeding animals. Please note that males who are in breeding programs can pass live vaccine virus to the females they are breeding. Pregnant females should not be exposed to other animals that have been recently vaccinated with live virus vaccines. (Killed

virus vaccines cannot be passed accidentally from one animal to another.)

4) Lifestyle:

a) Likelihood of exposure to street virus: Animals that are being shown or taken places where there are large numbers of other animals (parks, grooming parlors, shows, boarding facilities, day care facilities, shelters, etc.) or where they will be touched by the public are at much higher risk for being exposed to street virus than animals that stay home in a restricted environment with few contacts to the outside world.

b) Environment: Animals kept in clean and sanitary environments are exposed to fewer diseases than those kept in dirty environments – not only because more pathogenic virus/bacteria/fungus can grow in filth, but also because these environments often damage the patient’s immunity. For example, the build up of ammonia in poorly cleaned and/or inadequately ventilated pens or cages damages the lungs, making animals more susceptible to respiratory diseases.

c) If an animal’s lifestyle changes, their vaccination plan should be re-evaluated in light of the new risk level(s).



Photo by Nancy Vandemey.

5) Genetics:

a) Is there a history in the family or the breed of being extra susceptible to a particular disease? Is there a history in the family of having problems with any par-

ticular vaccine? If so, this should be a factor in your decision about whether or not to vaccinate. If you must vaccinate an animal that has had problems with vaccines before, that animal should be protected against *reactions before, during, and after vaccinating* by the use of antihistamines or homeopathic remedies.

6) General Health Status:

a) Most vaccines include a disclaimer stating that they should not be used in sick or debilitated animals. I would expand this to include any condition that may be exacerbated by vaccinations. This would include any chronic disease, like kidney disease, skin disease, recurrent infections, diabetes, autoimmune disease, immunodeficiency, inflammatory bowel disease, cancer, asthma, or allergies, and any inflammatory “-itis” type disease, like arthritis, thyroiditis, hepatitis, endocarditis, or gastritis.

7) Legal Requirements:

a) In some areas, the most life threatening risk is actually not from the disease, but rather from the authorities concerned with human health risks. This particularly pertains to rabies vaccination. A cat that bites someone may be more at risk of losing his or her life from rabies

testing than s/he ever was at risk from rabies itself. Government officials are often more concerned with rules and/or liability than logic, and it would be unwise to put your cat at risk unnecessarily.

b) Some states may require vaccinations in order to license an exotic cat facility. Occasionally, the PTB will allow the facility veterinarian to certify (in writing) that specific animals should be exempt from specific vaccinations for medical reasons. You should verify this (in writing, and get names) with the appropriate licensing agency.

I recommend putting together a spreadsheet to simplify evaluating the risk factors and appropriate vaccination schedule for every individual you keep so you can



Lion cub gets a vaccination at the Omaha Zoo. Photo from www.omaha.com.

vaccinate accordingly. I understand that for some facilities this may inspire a few moans and groans, but it doesn't really need to be complicated. Once you've practiced thinking of each animal as an individual, it's a pretty simple process. And truthfully, if a facility has so many animals that they can't take care of them as individuals, perhaps they have too many animals!



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Cricket Hollow Zoo Post-Trial Brief by Attorney Larry Thorson

Edited by Lynn Culver

The four people who filed a suit against the Sellners alleging violations of the Endangered Species Act have visited the Zoo in various combinations and with various other individuals during 2012 and 2013 during which time they violated the zoo's policies by taking hundreds (if not thousands) of photographs and videotaped various animals. These plaintiffs have descended upon this zoo and the Sellners in a well-orchestrated effort to distort what is going on at the zoo and paint a picture that is not representative of the zoo or the Sellners.

Pamela Sellner and Tom Sellner have run a nonprofit Iowa corporation, Cricket Hollow Zoo, located near Manchester, Iowa, for the community and educational reasons to allow the public in Eastern Iowa to see animals they normally wouldn't be able to see. Mrs. Sellner started working with exotic animals in 1986, and the Sellners got their exhibitors license from the USDA in 1992. Besides having the zoo, the Sellners also run a Grade A dairy farm at their location, which is the top classification for milk producers. Mrs. Sellner also worked as a Delaware County DHIA (Dairy Herd Improvement Association) field supervisor for 25 years.

The Endangered Species Act, passed in 1973 by Congress, does not regulate possession of endangered or threatened species, nor the welfare of those species which are possessed. It regulates the movement of those species only when interstate commerce or a "take" is involved.

The word "harass" in the term "take" is defined in the ESA as "an intentional or negligent act or omission which creates the likelihood of injury to wildlife by annoying it to such an extent as to significantly disrupt normal behavioral patterns, which include, but are not limited to breeding, feeding, or sheltering." The same regulation goes on to exempt other practices including "(1) animal husbandry practices that meet or exceed the minimum standards for facilities and care under the Animal Welfare Act, (2) breeding procedures, or (3) provi-

sions of veterinary care..."

It is questionable that the plaintiffs have standing to bring this cause of action. The plaintiffs' declarations do not contain any concrete or discernible injury - just anthropomorphic statements about cultural and spiritual bonds with animals that they saw for moments once or twice years ago. Stating that general emotional harm, even if deeply felt, cannot suffice to show injury-in-fact for standing purposes. As the First Circuit Court of Appeals explained, "A mere interest in an event no matter how passionate or sincere the interest and no matter how charged with public import the event - will not substitute for an actual injury."

Plaintiffs attempt to interpret what the inspection reports from APHIS (USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) show with regard to the zoo, and plaintiffs put equal effort into hiding from the court inspection reports that do not show "non-compliances" of any sort - direct or indirect.

Plaintiffs attempt to prevent the court from viewing the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Services (IDALS) reports that were generated from complaints by the plaintiffs because those reports are favorable to the Sellners.

The claims pursued by the plaintiffs in this action have many unanswered and maybe unanswerable questions. Does a facility that has a non-compliance immediately fall out of the protective umbrella of the ESA (50 C.F.R. § 17.3), which exempts "animal husbandry practices that meet or exceed minimum standards for facilities and care under the Animal Welfare Act..."? If so, every expert that testified on behalf of the plaintiffs was from or had represented an institution that at one

time or another was not in compliance with the AWA. Dr. Conrad testified the zoo she had worked with as a veterinarian had non-compliances from the USDA, Dr. Klopfer admitted that Duke University had "lots of non-compliance reports with the USDA," and David Allen admitted that Blank Park Zoo had AWA violations.

The one source for unbiased reports in this case would appear to be the reports of the IDALS. In most instances, the IDALS inspector, Doug Andersen, conducted joint inspections with the USDA of Cricket Hollow Zoo. Some of the written comments by the IDALS Compliance Investigator include:

*On July 24, 2012 - "At this point in time, I find there is [sic] no standard of care issues at this facility. The animals are safe and appear to be well taken care of and I believe there are no conditions which would cause adverse health or suffering."

*On May 15, 2013 - "Large hoofed animals were out grazing in the pastures, the rest of the animals looked active, healthy, and happy."

*On September 25, 2013 - The IDALS inspector, along with two USDA inspectors, performed a site visit as a result of the complaints filed by the plaintiffs against the facility. There were a number of housekeeping issues, "None of it critical or excessive. The animals appeared to be content, playful, relaxed, comfortable, well-fed and well-watered."

Based upon a complaint filed by Tracey Kuehl, one of the plaintiffs, on May 21, 2014, Doug Andersen accompanied USDA personnel Dr. Kate Ziegerer and Dr. Heather Cole for a regular USDA inspection. According to Andersen, "All the discrepancies/inadequacies listed on

the USDA Animal Care inspection report for this date are accurate. However, in my opinion, most of the issues come down to a good cleaning and a weekend of maintenance. On the upside, Ms. Sellner is very knowledgeable and does pretty well at the herculean task of caring for the numerous animals. She always has cooperated with remedying issues found during inspections."

The plaintiffs and their

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experts listed a series of hypothetical problems that they said could occur at the zoo with the tigers because of the Sellners' husbandry practices. Among other alleged deficiencies listed by Dr. Conrad were the following claims:

*The zoo could be subject to skunks or raccoons bringing rabies into the enclosures of the big cats.

*The zoo should do a dental exam each year on the tigers.

*Bowling balls were an improper form of enrichment for the tigers because they could break their teeth.

*Dr. Pusillo's formulas are not easy to use and there is the danger of calcium deficiency which could cause brittle bone disease in big cats.

*Pea gravel is not a good surface for the animals.

*There should be a platform for animals to eat off of that is easily scrubbed off.

*Caspar the white tiger was an indication of neglect by Mrs. Sellner and/or her veterinarian.

*The older tigers should be vaccinated for rabies and distemper.

*"Excessive" feces are occasionally found in some enclosures.

*Only the tiger named Sherkan was of full age when he died.

Mrs. Sellner testified that Sherkan's mate Sheba died when she was 20 years old. These clearly were some very old tigers. Caspar appeared to be an old tiger and may have been older than the ten years that was estimated for his age, because his background was shaky at best. Blank Park Zoo lost one of its two tigers at a much younger age than that of Sherkan or Sheba. Mrs. Sellner has acted as a sanctuary for big cats that have had troubled pasts in order to save them from being euthanized. Some of these big cats are not in good condition or those sending these big cats have lied about their condition or their age. Sometimes she has taken in animals in need of extreme help. Dr. Pusillo refers to her place as a refuge.

The plaintiffs keep referring to the 300 animals in the zoo and do not bother to

mention to the court that among that 300 count, over 30 are birds, some are herd animals, and the endangered animals that are in question in this case number only seven.

The plaintiffs also denigrate Mrs. Sellner's "self-taught" skills in dealing with animals - even though she has been in animal husbandry for 50 years.

The plaintiffs complain that the Sellner's veterinarian, Dr. Pries, is not able to provide adequate veterinary care. The USDA has never stated this. Dr. Pries testified that he has consulted with the Henry Doody Omaha Zoo or Iowa State University on issues he may not be that familiar with.

The plaintiffs allege that Mrs. Sellner somehow violated the ESA by trafficking in endangered species. Mrs. Sellner always documented any transfer, and when an animal was donated it was so noted on any necessary permit or form. This argument is rank speculation without a shred of evidence and bald assertions of wrongdoing.

The plaintiffs would like this case to be about their testimony of the alleged defects in the zoo. There is no doubt that the Cricket Hollow Zoo is not the Lemur Center at Duke University. Manchester, Iowa, is not Los Angeles, California. There is no doubt that there are facilities that are more luxurious for the tigers than the Cricket Hollow Zoo. Some are AZA-

certified. But that is not required under the AWA.

A good deal of the plaintiffs' case is an attempt to cast the Sellners and their attendant professionals as unsophisticated rustics barely able to handle their dairy herd, let alone handle exotic animals for the past 30 years. When the sheriff did not respond to the continuous complaints of the plaintiff s (even though the sheriff was with Doug Andersen on one inspection), that was characterized as a typical small town sheriff's department response. Dr. Pries was supposedly unable to diagnose and deal with the variety of animals - even though he has more experience as a veterinarian than the plaintiffs' expert witness, Dr. Conrad, and he has the assistance of not only additional veterinarians in his office but also the staff at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Nebraska, and the staff at Iowa State University, among others. Dr. Pusillo was not criticized in the same manner because he is an international expert in animal nutrition, but the criticism was aimed at Mrs. Sellner, indicating that Dr. Pusillo's formulas were "too difficult for her to use."

Neither the zoo nor Mr. or Mrs. Sellner have engaged in any actions in violation of the Endangered Species Act. The zoo is subject to the jurisdiction of the USDA (APHIS) under the Animal Welfare Act - not the private cause of action brought by the plaintiffs in this case.

The plaintiffs lack standing to bring this case for two reasons - first they have alleged they had emotional trauma, when clearly they concocted these trips to the defendants' zoo after careful planning, including aerial reconnaissance, aerial photographs, and research online. Their complaints parrot the APHIS inspection reports.

Standing is also an issue because this facility is a licensed USDA facility. The Sellners still have a license. They are like every other licensed facility mentioned in this case; they have had some non-compliances - the vast majority of which are "housekeeping issues."

Donations

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

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

Conservation Grants:

Patty Perry

Wildcat Safety Net:

Julia Wagner

The FCF appreciates your generosity & continued support.

District Court of Iowa Grants Order for Declaratory Judgment and Injunctive Relief

In the May/June 2015 issue of the FCF Journal, I reported on a suit filed against FCF members Pam and Tom Sellner, owners of Cricket Hollow Zoo. The suit brought by Animal Legal Defense Fund attorneys and four plaintiffs asked to have the Sellners found guilty of violating the Endangered Species Act prohibitions against taking and harassing endangered animals. This kind of suit is a rather new weapon in the arsenal of the animal rights extremists' battle to end captive husbandry and exhibition of wildlife.

I am saddened to report that the case did go to trial. The plaintiffs were unwilling to accept negotiations to improve the conditions of the animals, which instead left the Sellners no choice but to spend thousands of dollars and countless hours of time away from their animals to defend themselves in court. It was truly David against Goliath, a small rural zoo being sued by a multimillion-dollar, non-profit organization of animal rights attorneys.

The court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. This ruling is potentially groundbreaking because any exhibitor with endangered species that has repeat husbandry violations cited by the USDA can now become a target for a future lawsuit. I do believe especially in the case of exhibitors using baby tigers for public contact, if there have been citations by the USDA on this activity, it will not be long before we will see ALDF testing the waters again with another ESA violation case.

Pam plans to appeal the case and file an injunction to keep the tigers while the appeal is heard in court. The plaintiff's expert witness, from Duke University, stated that to meet the psychological needs of lemurs, troops of these primates needed to number at least ten individuals. Pam cannot add to her population, so she will be transferring three lemurs to another facility.

Judge's ruling edited by Lynn Culver

Plaintiff Animal Legal defense Fund and four individuals sued Cricket Hollow Zoo in the Northern District of Iowa Court over violations of the Endangered Species Act. Plaintiffs claim Cricket Hollow Zoo has "taken" and continues to "take" endangered lemurs and tigers by harming and harassing them.

The Endangered Species Act authorizes "any person" to bring an enforcement action seeking to enjoin an alleged violation of the ESA. However, to establish the existence of a "case or controversy," as required by Article III of the Constitution, the plaintiff must establish that they have suffered an "injury in fact." The injury must be "judicially cognizable," "concrete and particularized," and "actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical."

The district court ruled that the plaintiffs met this definition by virtue of their "aesthetic" interest in viewing endangered species living in humane conditions. Importantly, the four plaintiffs assert a "concrete and particularized" injury to themselves. That is, plaintiffs are "'directly' affected apart from their 'special interest in the subject' because they live within easy driving distance of Cricket Hollow and would return to view the animals if conditions improved."

The suit argument is based on five points: (1) inadequate veterinary care, (2) inadequate sanitation, (3) inadequate housing and caging, (4) inadequate environmental enrichment, and (5) inadequately implemented nutritional protocols.

Concerning the tigers, the district court judges found only two of the plaintiffs' allegations had merit. Plaintiffs proved the Sellners' failure to provide timely and appropriate veterinary care to their tigers constituted a "harming" within the definition of "take" in the Endangered Species Act.

Pam Sellner would generally contact Dr. Pries, their veterinarian, by phone call, describe the animal's symptoms, and sometimes ostensibly diagnose the problem. Dr. Pries would prescribe a course of treatment telephonically. This approach, the court ruled, was not adequate. The Sellners did not have necropsies performed after death. Without substantiation of the cause of illness and death, the Sellners could not successfully defend against the ALDF accusations of failure to provide proper medical care that caused tigers to die prematurely.

The court ruled that the Sellners' failure to provide adequate sanitation to the tigers constitutes "harassment" within the definition of "take" in the Endangered Species Act. ALDF's expert Dr. Jennifer Conrad, was of the opinion that, "the 'most egregious' violation is the repeated failure to remove feces in a timely manner." According to Dr. Conrad, accumulated feces can attract flies and harbor parasites, both of which may transmit disease.

The Code of Federal Regulations provides that "excreta shall be removed from primary enclosures as often as necessary to prevent contamination of the animals contained therein and to minimize disease hazards and to reduce odors." The USDA inspection reports entered into the record

cited repeat violations of this regulation.

The court ruling stated:

Despite the Sellners' best efforts, cleanliness throughout the Zoo has been a chronic problem. I believe the Sellners care about the animals housed at Cricket Hollow, and it is clear they are extremely hard-working, but they are simply unable to keep up with the demands of caring for 300 animals. The Sellners have a large dairy farm which, in and of itself, demands a substantial amount of work. In addition, Tom Sellner apparently works full-time off the farm. During the months when the Zoo is open, Pam Sellner is generally in the reception area selling tickets. Because of the Zoo's low budget, it is unable to hire additional employees. It appears to the Court that the Sellners, despite their best efforts, are simply unable to keep up with the demands of providing clean water and sanitary conditions for the animals at Cricket Hollow.

On February 11, 2016, the court granted the ALDF's motion for declaratory judgment and injunctive relief. The case involved lemurs and tigers and both these species are to be transferred within 90 days of the court decision to an appropriate USDA licensed facility capable of meeting the needs of the endangered species.

ALDF requested the court to award the costs of litigation, including attorney fees and expert witness fees, but after considering all of the facts and circumstances, the court declined to assess litigation costs against the Sellners.

Minutes of the 2016 First Quarter Board of Directors Meeting

The 2016 first quarter FCF Board of Directors meeting was held on the FCF forum from January 31 – February 7, 2016. Board members present were: president - Kevin Chambers, vice president - Mindy Stinner, treasurer - Lynn Culver, secretary - Debi Willoughby, director - Pat Callahan, director - Robert Bean, and director - Chris Tromborg.

Ratify the 2nd Quarter 2015 Minutes: the minutes stand ratified as presented, no changes or comments made.

Voting and motions:

Donate to Joe Maynard Memorial: Pat Callahan moved that the FCF donate \$1,000 to EFBC toward the continuing conservation efforts and captive breeding done there in memory of Joe Maynard. Kevin Chambers seconded it. There were 6 YES votes, 0 NO votes.

Ratify sending two members to represent the FCF at Take Back the Conversation: Pat Callahan moved that we ratify the expenditure of \$542.20 to send Mindy Stinner and Julia Wagner as FCF representatives to the Take Back the Conversation event March 5-6, 2016. Chris Tromborg seconded it. There were 4 Yes votes, 0 NO votes.

Allocate current/future Conservation Grant funds for other use: Pat Callahan moved that the FCF suspend the Conservation Grant Program and appoint a committee to investigate the idea of supporting a conservation project that already exists. Mindy Stinner seconded it. There were 1 YES vote, 4 NO votes, and 1 ABSTAINED vote.

2015 Executive Director: Chris Tromborg moved that we approve compensation to Lynn Culver for her executive director services performed during calendar year 2015, to \$6,000. Mindy seconded it. There were 5 YES votes, 0 NO votes.

Journal frequency: The FCF constitution requires six FCF printed journals every year. Lynn informed the board that only five issues have been published the past two years. She intends to submit a Con-

stitutional amendment to reduce the production schedule by either one or two journal issues a year. Lynn asked for board input and comments. The majority of the board supported a quarterly publication, printing four journals per year. A discussion was had about printed journals vs emailed pdfs and it was suggested that a cost savings should be reviewed by the board.

Treasurer's report:

ASSETS as of December 31, 2015

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

91,342.33

Accounts Receivable

800.00

Total Current Assets

92,142.33

TOTAL ASSETS

92,142.33

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Equity

92,142.33

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY

92,142.33

Feline Census update: Julia Wagner will be sending a proposal on the cost of updating and maintaining a feline census soon for the board to review.

Studbook update: The studbook system is functional and the web interface is working, but not currently practical for bulk importing. Once the bulk importing, report features, and testing have been addressed, Mindy will give an update on the project.

Committee Updates:

- The Members Committee would like to send out a survey to our members to get an update on what our members are involved in. With this updated knowledge, we could harness the talents and strengths of our members to help combat against regulatory changes across the country.

- The Education Committee has been working on the finishing touches of the new website with Lynn Culver. A majority of the website is complete, but changes and updates are always ongoing.

- The Conservation Grants committee

would like the board to continue discussion of the above voted on topic of using a portion of the grant funds to support an existing conservation project that FCF members can be directly involved in.

- There were no other committee updates.

FCF Course change updates:

The existing husbandry course is too dense, so some of that information is being pulled out and put into two- to four-hour workshops. Mindy and Debi are also working on creating two- to four-hour workshops for the popular topics that came out of the survey given at the 2015 convention. A couple of these new workshops will be rolled out at the 2016 convention in lieu of offering the Educators Course. The Educators Course will still be offered, but not twice a year as it has been in the past. No other new business was discussed.

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18



6



16



24



13



Feline Conservation Federation

January/February 2016 Volume 60, Issue 1

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

Front Cover: Panther Ridge Conservation Center's stunning black panther Amos is a visitor favorite. He never fails to look regal and dignified in photos. FCF Convention attendees can have the opportunity to meet Amos on Sunday. Read more about Panther Ridge Conservation Center starting on page 22. Photo by Audrey Loya.

Back Cover: Wild Felid Advocacy Center in Washington has a new resident cougar. Harley prefers his handlers to be women. He knows he's handsome and that the ladies appreciate his stunning looks! Photo by Dee Dee Murry.

