



Feline Conservation Federation

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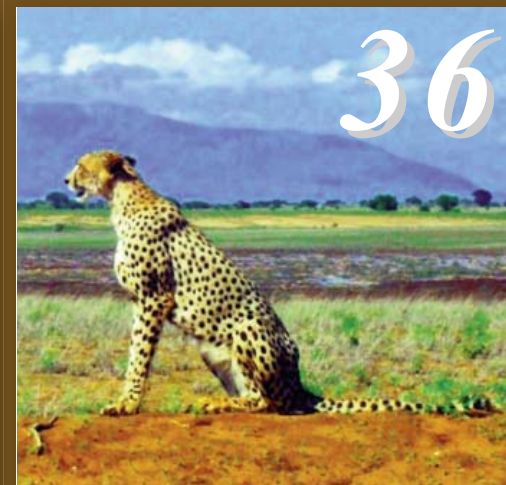
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The FCF supports conservation of wild felids by advocating for qualified individuals to own and to pursue husbandry of wild felines, providing expertise and material support to ensure the continued welfare and viability of these populations, contributing to research, and funding protection programs that benefit felids living in nature. Send \$35 annual dues (\$40 Canada, \$50 international) to FCF, 141 Polk Road 664, Mena, AR 71953.

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The FCF is a non-profit (Federal ID#59-2048618), non-commercial society devoted to the welfare and conservation of exotic felines. The FCF publishes the *Journal* quarterly.

Members are encouraged to donate older copies of the *Journal*, with permission of the resident, to vet offices, dental or medical waiting rooms, or public libraries or public officials, to increase awareness of the FCF, its members, and mission.

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Submit articles on husbandry, conservation, current events, editorials, and photos for publication to the managing editor, Lynn Culver, at [lynnculver57@gmail.com](mailto:lynnculver57@gmail.com).



Feline Conservation Federation

## A Letter from the FCF's Newest Director on The Board

Dear valued members,

It is an honor to be joining the Feline Conservation Federation as a new member of the board of directors. Felids have been a foundational part of my life and career for over two decades, and I am proud to be appointed to this organization during such a time of pivotal change. The world of captive cat management today is very different from the one I was first introduced to in my youth, and it is continuing to evolve as the degradation of wild habitat necessitates caring for more numerous and diverse collections of animals. The FCF is uniquely positioned to teach and inspire the next generation of cat conservationists. By building a community in which long-term FCF members can connect with young professionals, the FCF will preserve and protect generations of cat-related knowledge and skills as well as facilitate educational and professional opportunities for anyone interested in wild felid management. Collaborations across our membership base are crucial to helping FCF members provide the best care for their extant cats as well as ensuring

their future ability to conserve increasingly threatened felid species.

I look forward to lending my skills and experience to this organizational evolution. As part of my role as the assistant director at the Conservators Center, I have been a frequent presence the last few years at zoo industry conferences and gatherings. This level of exposure to different sectors of the exotic animal management industry has given me an appreciation for the scope of our world, the variety of our peers, and the depth and breadth of the knowledge contained within this community. One of my main goals in my role with the FCF is to enhance the existing relationships between our organization and relevant industries and to forge new partnerships with sectors for which a working relationship would be mutually beneficial. In addition, I have had the opportunity to work on both state- and federal-level legislative and regulatory



**Julia at convention helping raise money at the live auction.**

matters related to exotic feline ownership, and I look forward to using this expertise to empower FCF members to more fully participate in the political processes that directly impact both their careers and the animals they care for.

In the past 20 years, I have been involved with everything from the direct care of exotic felines to managing many aspects of a small zoological park to helping develop materials and collaborations to enhance the

exotic animal industry's preparedness for disasters. I fell in love with exotic cats at a very young age, and like many of you, I know they will play a major role in the rest of my life. It is my mission to ensure that that same experience is available to generations of future wild felid enthusiasts, and I see the FCF as being a critical organization in ensuring that reality.

Julia Matson Wagner



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## FCF Conservation Grant Awarded to Tsavo Cheetah Project

By Lynn Culver

The FCF Board of Directors is proud to share news of their August board meeting vote to approve a grant request of \$2,850 needed to fund the vehicle running costs associated with hiring two additional cheetah scouts and the printing of a year's supply of educational materials for schools and communities. This is the second time the FCF has approved a grant request from Cherie Schroff, principal investigator of the Tsavo Cheetah Project. In 2015 the FCF approved \$2,400 for cheetah research and mitigation of cheetah/human conflict in Tsavo, Kenya. FCF will be partnering with both the Felidae Conservation Fund and Sea World Busch Gardens Conservation Fund in support of the Tsavo Cheetah Project.

Since late 2015, the Cheetah Scouts program has increased the projects ability to obtain credible, thorough information on locations of cheetah presence, instances of human-cheetah conflict and cases of retaliatory killing of cheetahs, while strengthening relationships with tribal elders, group ranches, and local communities. Cheetah scouts resolve conflict, provide education on the species and encouragement of 'cheetah-friendly' livestock for mutual benefit, and change per-

ceptions of cheetahs and other local predators.

FCF financial support will cover vehicle costs associated with the hiring of two additional Maasai Mara cheetah scouts in an area with reported and verified livestock loss and retaliatory killings of cheetahs and lions. A measurable improvement in attitudes towards the cheetah and other predators is expected, based on past success in similar locations resulting in the reduction of retaliatory and opportunistic, indiscriminate killing of cheetahs.

A Tsavo Cheetah's Ecosystem school-based program has shown steady success and as the number of schools in this program increases, so do the knowledge and awareness of the species.

FCF Director Dr. Chris Tromborg urged board members to approve funding for this educational effort, stating, "As a teacher, I think it is important to educate the next generation. You can perform conservation all you want, but if you do not get the local people behind you, then the conservation effectiveness is reduced."

Dr. Tromborg's opinion is backed by results. Since inception in 2014, evaluations by the principle investigator, Cherie Schroff, have demonstrated an exceptional increase in knowledge on the cheetah, which correlates with a decrease in

human-caused deaths of the species.

The FCF funded educational materials focusing on physical and behavioral differentiation of spotted cat species, basic physiology and ecology of the cheetah, the Tsavo ecosystem, and the integral role that large cats play in its sustainability, as well as the role that human beings play in a healthy ecosystem and the value of tourism in the neighboring national park.

Only two strongholds for connecting cheetah populations remain in the species range countries; the largest, southern African population, and the next largest, occurring in the Serengeti National Park - Tsavo National Parks region of eastern Africa. Threats to the species within the Tsavo region include habitat loss due to human encroachment, actual and perceived conflict with residents and smaller-bodied livestock, retaliatory killing of the cheetah, and, less commonly, indiscriminate poaching.

FCF members can be glad to know that our support for this project is making a difference. From December 2015 through June 2017 alone, this project has prevented the deaths of at least 25 individual cheetahs, including three sub-adults and four young cubs; a total of 17 cases of retaliation on cheetahs, due to both actual and perceived livestock loss incidents.

## USDA Invites Comments on Proposed Regulatory Changes

By Lynn Culver

The USDA is seeking comments on potential regulatory changes on licensing applications and processes, licensing fees and renewals, and changes to prevent part-time exhibitors from obtaining a license. The comment period ends October 23, 2017. Comments can be made online at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). The docket ID is APHIS-2017-0062.

I am not sure why this has been proposed, but I can tell you the animal rights community has their agenda and has followers already keyed up to flood the USDA with comments. Here is an example of one of nearly 1,400 rubber-stamped responses received in the first three days after the comment period opened: *I urge the USDA to stop rubber-stamping AWA license renewals. It is well established*

*that licensees frequently fall out of compliance with the law after their initial inspection. Rubber-stamping permit applications circumvents the purpose of the Animal Welfare Act.*

Potential regulatory changes under consideration are below, along with some comments in italics from me to help spark discussion and thoughts on how these changes may affect you and this industry.

**Establishing a firm expiration date for licenses (e.g., after a 3-5 year period), after which the licensee would once again be required to affirmatively demonstrate compliance before obtaining another license.** *I assume this means we apply once, our license lasts three to five years, and then we apply again, and we must be in full compliance before a new license is issued. That would end the*

*cycle of chronic non-compliance that can go on for years and years.*

**Specifying procedures to ensure licensees have ample time to apply for licenses and demonstrate compliance prior to the expiration of an existing license, and issuing conditional licenses to licensees with histories of compliance should they be in jeopardy of an inadvertent lapse in licensure during the license application process.** *I assume this would help a few who can't take care of paperwork in a timely manner, or who had some sort of life event - accident, illness - that caused a delay in renewal. It would be nice if you needed it, to have the government say, "It's alright, you can continue business and we will wait on you to fill out your form and pay us," but I can't see that happening.*

**Requiring licensees to affirmatively**

**demonstrate compliance when making noteworthy changes subsequent to the issuance of a license in regard to the number, type, or location of animals used in regulated activities.** *You couldn't make any major changes if you are written up. That could be a real bother, especially when the write-up is a small item for one species and you want to add another.*

**Eliminating the application fee and annual license fee and assessing reasonable fees only for licenses issued (as in the example above, such as every 3-5 years).** *So you apply and there is no fee until you are licensed? How many people apply and then never get a license? Seems like the government would lose money on that. I don't see that the present system needs fixing.*

**Requiring license applicants to disclose any animal cruelty convictions or other violations of Federal, State, or local laws or regulations pertaining to animals.** *Any animal cruelty or violations? What if it's 20 years ago? Certainly, if you can be licensed having a conviction and the inspector knows about it, you probably will be treated and inspected differently. I think it would color the inspector's view of you.*

**With respect to pre-licensing inspections to assess compliance, reducing from three to two the number of opportunities an applicant has to correct deficiencies and take corrective measures before the applicant forfeits his or her application and fee and must reapply for a license.** *I would imagine most people get it right on the second try, but it could be a communication problem, and if the regulations are going to change to two times, then the waiting period for reapplying should be eliminated.*

**Closing a loophole in the current regulations that allows individuals and businesses, although they do not operate as bona fide exhibitors, to become licensed as such in order to circumvent State laws restricting ownership of exotic and wild animals to AWA-licensed exhibitors.** *This one really worries me. You are not allowed to exhibit without an exhibitor's permit. If the government is going to consider denying licensing because you are not "bona fide," then it needs to remove the requirement for*

*USDA licensing and allow "non-bona fide" exhibiting, i.e. "limited exhibiting," without a USDA license. You can't have it both ways. States are trying to limit exotic animal ownership and shift regulatory burdens to the USDA. People who want the animals and are serious enough to go through the USDA and agree to abide by the Animal Welfare Act regulations should not be denied licensing just because it's a part-time activity. If they are exhibiting at all, they are exhibitors.*



**Strengthening existing prohibitions to expressly restrict individuals and businesses whose licenses have been suspended or revoked from working for other regulated entities, and prevent individuals with histories of noncompliance (or orders suspending or revoking a license) from applying for new licenses through different individuals or business names.** *I can think of a few exhibitors out there who lost their licenses and then found themselves working for other licensed facilities. I just don't know why the USDA doesn't write up the license holder for having an employee that is a known violator. I guess this would solve this problem. If you can't hold onto your own license, you can't work for someone else under their license.*

**Streamlining the procedures for denying a license application, terminating a license, and summarily suspending a license.** *I am not sure that streamlining is a good thing. I know the government can be maddeningly slow at times, but it can also trample on your rights unfairly. A lot of this is subjective. And as much as I care about animals and animal welfare, I also recognize the need for due process. I can think of a few new licensees that I helped obtain their first*

*license, and the USDA was definitely working against them and trying to deny the license, but we prevailed. I don't want to see a system where good people trying to get started are stopped.*

The USDA would like to receive data and information regarding potential economic effects, including benefits and costs, on dealers, operators of auction sales, and exhibitors, and potential alternatives to reduce regulatory burdens and more efficiently and consistently ensure sustained compliance of licensees with the AWA. In addition, the USDA wants comments on the following questions:

1. Should we propose to establish a firm expiration date for licenses (such as 3-5 years), and if so, what should that date be and why? Please provide supporting data.

2. What fees would be reasonable to assess for licenses issued? Are the existing license fees (9 CFR 2.6) reasonable or should they be adjusted to take additional factors into consideration, such as the type of animals used in regulated activities? Please provide data in support of any proposed adjustments to the license fees.

3. In addition to the existing prohibitions on any person whose license has been suspended or revoked from buying, selling, transporting, exhibiting, or delivering for transportation animals during the period of suspension or revocation (9 CFR 2.10(c)), should such persons be prohibited from engaging in other activities involving animals regulated under the AWA, such as working for other AWA-regulated entities or using other individual names or business entities to apply for a license? Please suggest specific activities that should be covered and provide supporting data and information.

4. Do you have any other specific concerns or recommendations for reducing regulatory burdens involving the licensing process or otherwise improving the licensing requirements under the AWA?

Read the proposed changes and make your comments before October 23, 2017 at <https://www.regulations.gov/docket-Browser?rpp=50&so=DESC&sb=posted-Date&po=0&dct=PS%2BPR&D=APHIS-2017-0062>.

## Chiropractor Visits a Neonate Tiger

By Dawn Strasser  
Head Keeper Neonatal Care & Quarantine,  
Hand Raising Resource Center Advisor,  
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

On February 2, 2017, a four year old Malayan tiger (*Panthera tigris jacksoni*) gave birth for the first time to three female cubs. Her initial reaction to the parturition event was something no one had seen before or expected; she was trying to move away from the cub emerging from the birth canal and, in the process of flicking her tail, propelled the cub onto the floor. The pair was monitored on camera for thirty minutes, during which time the dam sniffed the cub, but refused to clean it and then abandoned it. During this same time, the cub was observed breathing, but did not have normal movement for a neonate. The curator of mammals and veterinarian made the decision that intervention was warranted for the safety and health of the cub.

When the cub, Chira, arrived at the nursery, it initially looked good, just cold (core temperature 79.12°F) and wet, so we proceeded to tie the umbilical cord and begin to warm it up. In the meanwhile, the dam proceeded to give birth to two additional cubs and repeated her pattern of sniffing them, not cleaning them, and then abandoning them. We decided to remove these cubs for hand-raising as well. The two (later) cubs were vigorous and had strong sucking responses, however it was noted that the first-born cub could not hold up her neck. Upon closer examination, it was determined that Chira's neck was abnormally positioned at a 45° angle

off her back, so we proceeded to start manipulating the neck slowly in an attempt to get it back into a normal position. When she would lie on her side, her neck would be over her back, resulting in whining or screaming vocalization and the inability to move her head in a normal manner or hold a normal position. The veterinarian felt she had full rotation of her head, but could not find any other cause of this discomfort. When she was fed, she would do so in a slow and steady manner and would assume an unusual posture of pushing her head into the palm of my hand. As feedings continued, her response was getting softer and she was not as vigorous as her littermates, who were active or moving their legs during nursing. The CBC and I-STAT analysis results were all within normal parameters and the physical examination of heart and lungs were unremarkable, but she continued to be listless. Nothing was amiss except for the slight head tilt to the right; by the time she was 24 hours old, we had been able to return the head to a normal position (90° angle) for a short time frame with only a slight head tilt to the right. Even though by all standards the cub appeared normal, she was not thriving and meeting her physical milestones, such as suckling and active movement. It appeared, from my experience, that Chira was a "failure to thrive baby," meaning that although we cannot find anything medically wrong, she is clearly not thriving.

As luck would have it, I had an appointment with my chiropractor, Dr. Mark Sperbeck, D.C. DACO, that afternoon, and we were discussing this unusual head positioning when he remembered a six month old baby who was failing to thrive. His physicians did everything they could, but the infant continued to deteriorate. The infant's father, a chiropractor, was holding his

baby and began to check him out when he discovered that the C1 in his neck was out of alignment. Making an adjustment on his child, the father commented that the baby seemed to be reborn again, meaning he started to meet his physical milestones like a newborn. He informed me that 95%



**Chira, first born cub of Cincinnati Zoo's Malayan tiger, sustained a neck injury during the birthing process. In addition to the head tilt, she was not thriving or meeting her physical milestones.**

of the nerve impulses travel through this small C1 vertebra to the rest of the body. Dr. Sperbeck is not only a licensed chiropractor, but has a historical background working on horses and dogs since 2003, under the supervision of a veterinarian. So, at 48 hours, the cub was in obvious decline with no causative factors able to be determined, and I went to our veterinarian with the information regarding spinal alignment from my chiropractor and convinced him to try something new. Being willing to think outside of the box is how we ended up having a chiropractor come evaluate a tiger cub.

When Dr. Sperbeck arrived, I had him examine another cub first so he would have a point of reference before looking at Chira. He proceeded to manipulate her neck utilizing chiropractic techniques and he palpated restrictions in lateral bands on both sides. With the aviator, an instrument that chiropractors use to apply pinpoint pressure to a spot, he adjusted the C1 BL and C3 BR (meaning the body of the vertebra C1 and C3 to the left and right side) with four oz. of pressure from the aviator, see figure 1. I noticed almost immediately that Chira appeared more



**Chiropractor Dr. Mark Sperbeck manipulates the cub's spine and detects that she needs an adjustment to the C1 and C3 vertebra.**

Vertebrae	Areas	Effects
1C	Blood supply to the head, pituitary gland, scalp bones of the face, brain, inner & middle ear, sympathetic nervous system	Headaches, nervousness, insomnia, head colds, high blood pressure, migraine headaches, nervous breakdowns, amnesia, chronic tiredness, dizziness
2C	Eyes, optic nerves, auditory nerves, sinuses, mastoid bones, tongue, forehead	Sinus trouble, allergies, crossed eyes, deafness, eye troubles, earache, fainting spells, certain cases of blindness
3C	Cheeks, outer ear, face bones, teeth, trifacial nerve	Neuralgia, neuritis, acne or pimples, eczema
4C	Nose, lips, mouth, eustachian tube	Hay fever, catarrh, hearing loss, adenoids
5C	Vocal cords, neck glands, pharynx	Laryngitis, hoarseness, throat conditions
6C	Neck muscles, shoulders, tonsils	Stiff neck, pain in upper arms, tonsillitis, whooping cough, croup
7C	Thyroid gland, bursae in shoulder, elbows	Bursitis, colds, thyroid conditions
1T	Arms: elbow down; hands, wrist, fingers; esophagus and trachea	Asthma, cough difficult breathing, shortness of breath, pain in lower arms and hands
2T	Heart: valves and coverings, coronary arteries	Functional heart conditions and certain chest conditions
3T	Lungs, bronchial tubes, pleura, chest, breast	Bronchitis, pleurisy, pneumonia, congestion, influenza
4T	Gall bladder, common duct	Gall bladder conditions, jaundice, shingles
5T	Liver, solar plexus, blood	Liver conditions, fevers, low blood pressure, anemia, poor circulation, arthritis
6T	Stomach	Stomach troubles: nervous stomach, indigestion, heartburn, dyspepsia
7T	Pancreas, duodenum	Ulcers, gastritis
8T	Spleen	Lowered resistance
9T	Adrenal and supra-renal glands	Allergies, hives
10T	Kidneys	Kidney troubles, hardening of the arteries, chronic tiredness, nephritis pyelitis
11T	Kidneys, ureters	Skin conditions: acne, pimples, eczema, or boils
12T	Small intestines, lymph circulation	Rheumatism, gas pains, certain types of sterility
1L	Large intestines, inguinal ring	Constipation, colitis, dysentery, diarrhea, some ruptures or hernias
2L	Appendix, abdomen, upper leg	Cramps, difficult breathing, acidosis, varicose veins
3L	Sex organs, uterus, bladder, knees	Bladder troubles, menstrual troubles: painful or irregular periods, miscarriages, bed wetting, impotency, change in life symptoms, many knee pains
4L	Prostate gland, muscles of lower back, sciatic nerve	Sciatica, lumbago, difficult/painful or too frequent urination, backaches
5L	Lower legs, ankles, feet	Poor circulation in the legs, swollen ankles, weak ankles and arches, cold feet, weakness in the legs, leg cramps
SACRUM	Hip bones, buttocks	Sacro-iliac conditions, spinal curvatures
COCCYX	Rectum, anus	Hemorrhoids (piles), pruritis (itching), pain at end of spine on sitting

For further explanation of the conditions shown above and information about those not shown ask your Doctor of Chiropractic.

**EFFECTS OF SPINAL MISALIGNMENTS: The nervous system controls and coordinates all organs and structures of the human body. Misalignments of spinal vertebra and discs may cause irradiation to the nervous system and affect the structures, organs, and functions that may result in the conditions shown above.**

relaxed and had stopped crying. In addition, at her next feeding she readily began to nurse and was even heard chuffing. We felt that her body needed to heal and not disturb the re-alignment, so we shifted her to an isolated area so any movement from her siblings would not jeopardize the process, and for the next 24 hours all she did was nurse and sleep. Dr. Sperbeck informed us that the soft tissue that was damaged at birth might take six to eight weeks to heal. He felt she would probably take four or five adjustments within an eight week time frame to maintain proper alignment. So we continued to monitor her and contacted Dr. Sperbeck when her

behavior and/or posture indicated that an adjustment might be needed. There is no written manual for this procedure. I am using my experience from being around neonates and good observation skills to monitor her. Neonates will tell us what they need if we just learn to listen to them. After the adjustment, Chira was starting to be a little more mobile like a newborn cub, but was obviously not as developed and strong as her siblings. We permitted her interaction and playtime with her siblings, but when she became tired she was removed for sleeping. By the time she was six days old (three days after adjustment), she had a noticeable head tilt again,

poor suckling response, was no longer chuffing, and had resumed crying. Dr. Sperbeck was notified and he came for another adjustment. This time he palpated restrictions in lateral band and extensions, meaning her neck did not have full range of motion and there was stiffness in her back. When he first examined her at three days of age, he was primarily focused on the neck, since that was her main source of discomfort. And, with any adjustment, you cannot proceed too quickly or make too many changes at one time; the body needs to relax, heal, and renew before the next obstacle can be attacked. Since Chira's body was growing at such a fast rate, he needed to make small adjustments each time. The second adjustment was made to C1 and C3, both BR (body right side of vertebra), and T12 and L3. While he was doing his examinations, Dr. Sperbeck explained that you feel resistance or lack of mobility when you apply slight pressure to the vertebrae. This is where you make your adjustments. We questioned him about getting an x-ray of the area prior to, and after, an adjustment. We were informed, however, that you could lay these images on top of each other and they would appear the same, since the picture is only a one-dimensional view. The area may appear to be in the correct position on the x-ray, but does not take into account freedom of movement, a range of motion, only placement within the column. It would be like taking a photo of a door hinge. The hinge might appear shiny and gray in appearance, but there is no way to tell if it moves freely, much like the vertebra.

After the adjustments, we let her rest for a day and initiated some physical therapy. Her therapy involved scratching her behind an ear and/or under the chin, resulting in her pushing into our hands, thereby strengthening muscles as she grows. At this point, she was still behind her siblings in motor skills, such as being weaker in crawling and not able to climb up on low, soft objects, etc. At 12 days of age, the head tilt resumed and she was observed sleeping in an abnormal posture in an attempt to get comfortable. While she was still nursing normally, her behavior and demeanor had slightly shifted to the point I felt Dr. Sperbeck needed to be called again. During this visit, the adjustments were SI R, T10 BL, T6 BR, T1, C1, BL, C2, and BR. All adjustments were based solely on the cub's reaction.



As Chira continued to grow and heal, the adjustments did not need to occur as frequently (fourth adjustment was not required until after eight days from her third adjustment). The fourth adjustment came after we observed a noticeable change in her locomotion and mobility. This adjustment was C1 BR and C2 BL. Chira's final appointment occurred at 11 weeks of age and required C1 BR, (L) SI adjustment. This was accompanied by a complete follow-up by the veterinarian, at which time her case was released from active care.



**Chira received five adjustments by the time she was three months old and her case was released from active care. Here she plays with her sisters, now a happy and normal little tiger.**

Chira and her siblings were moved to a larger enclosure at 12 weeks of age, and all are adjusting to the new area. To help build their confidence in this new area, Blakely (nursery canine) and I would

spend time daily socializing and playing with them while in their new area. Of course, tiger cubs will be adventurous and, on their fourth day in the new area, Chira struck her head on the wall of the enclosure.




sure. She staggered briefly and went on her way in a somewhat normal manner, but her behavior indicated something was wrong. As time progressed, the head tilt returned and Dr. Sperbeck stopped by to adjust this 25 pound tiger. He had joked in the very beginning, "How long do you think we can adjust this two pound cub?" and my reply was, "As long as we can." So this time, since she no longer fit into the cradle of our hands, we used a favorite toy to distract her while she laid across my lap for what turned out to be her last adjustment.

Personally, I felt that Dr. Sperbeck's adjustments were integral to her well-being and, if he had not made these adjustments to Chira, she would not be alive today, so for that I thank him.



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## Bart's Tiger

*Have you ever looked into the eyes of a tiger? It was a question Bart asked of me and I struggled for the answer. I've been before a tiger and stared at their magnificence, drawn to their eyes. But somehow I instinctively knew that this was not what he was asking.*

*Written in my own words, the following is my recollection of a true and inspiring story as told to me by Bart Culver.*

By Teralee Harral

Princess had pneumonia and had refused all food offered to her for a good many days. I watched helplessly as she steadily declined. I was drawn to this tiger as she was drawn to me, a magnetic pull so great that it was undeniable.

We would stare at one another, sharing the same time and space, breathing the same air, communicating our mutual warmth for each other. As I pleaded with Princess and with the Universe, I begged her to eat. "Princess, I need you to fight, to survive; your time here is not yet over," I cried out in desperation. I pulled from every fiber of my being in an attempt to transfer my strength and a will to live. The exquisite tiger slowly raised her head and looked into me with those vast, soulful eyes, and suddenly she dropped the veil of inscrutability, the penetrating, impenetrable stare of the predator. Through her eyes, I could see a million miles, a million years, culminating in this moment where this Lord of the Forest conceived of gratitude and gentleness towards an inferior being. The connection she generously offered to me was sublime, a union of souls of such divine intensity it etched that moment into my heart and will never, ever fade. It truly was a spiritual and sacred experience, one that forever

changed my life.

I knew that I had to do something to save this tiger before she slipped away and was gone forever. I observed a multitude of deer that appeared every night at the perimeter fence of the compound and wondered why a prey species was congregating around these hungry tigers. The last night, a symphony of coyotes howled in a frenzied crescendo. The deer were of increased restlessness, as if something was spooking them, yet they stayed, drawn to the dying tiger. As a collective, they were trying to tell me something. Did they not know that I, more than anyone, could see Death was looming with ominous, wicked intent, his scythe poised to strike? The clouds released the moon from a smothering hold and the moonbeams broke free, reflecting off the frictionless blue ice from the worst blizzard in memory, illuminating the multitude of creatures that were drawn like their ancestors to a manger long ago. This triggered a revelation and all became clear; an offering was being made to Princess. Bold, beautiful, and selfless.

Now, I have not hunted since I was a young boy and I took the life of a grand buck that attained an intricate and massive crown that he wore proudly on his head. I did this to prove to my father that I could. But I could never do it again. Until now. I knew what I had to do, what I was summoned to do. For my precious Princess. The following night I was able to present Princess with a warm liver, directly from the offering, and she ate gently from my hand, gaining vitamin B and iron. I hastily inserted her antibiotics and hand fed her more deer. Princess continued to eat from me, and for me, and



**The deer were of increased restlessness, as if something was spooking them, yet they were drawn to the perimeter fence of the compound.**

recovered to the majestic creature she was born to be. I've never forgotten Princess. She shared her soul with me. I was truly loved by a tiger.

This profound last statement was said quietly without any pride or brag; it was a fact and I tried to fathom it, but I couldn't as the reality of it was absolutely too staggering to comprehend.

To have the fortune of a soul-rocking experience is the treasure of a lifetime. To be truly moved by someone that was gifted with that experience and was able to convey to the extent possible with the constraint of mere words and with such intensity, is something that I didn't know was possible. How was Bart to know that years later, his story of such an ethereal experience would touch another human so deeply and completely and hold her in awe? Princess would not be forgotten by her either.

Bound in spirit, Princess and Bart shall meet again one day. Creature to creature, it matters not, for Love transcends time.

Have you ever looked into the eyes of a tiger? "I have," said Bart, "and she truly was a Princess."



**Princess dropped the veil of inscrutability, the penetrating, impenetrable stare of the predator.**



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## FCF Convention Review

By Teralee Harral

Greetings, fellow FCF members!

Our 2017 convention provided yet another memorable experience full of fun and information. Held in Sarasota, Florida, we stayed at a beautiful hotel with a choice of rooms overlooking the bay or the marina. The FCF had a schedule that one would expect from any destination learning convention. Events included an icebreaker dinner, classes, speakers, and field trips. But these FCF conventions are



**Mia, one of the two performing cats in Clayton Rosaire's show, is a lovely and very intelligent liger.**

so much more than a schedule of events! The people that attend share such an extreme bond that non-animal people cannot even begin to fathom. We meet together not only to learn, but to re-enforce our belief in competent private ownership. We share a common goal of protecting the entire feline species through conservation, education, and sustaining a genetically diverse population.

I have been lucky enough to attend the past three conventions. The first two years that I attended convention, I attended as a person who dreamed of owning a caracal, serval or lynx. This year, my third year, I am proud and blessed to be the mom of a bobcat I named Sapphire Moon.

The excitement really begins on field trip day. They get you out of the hotel and

into the location you are visiting. The destinations always prove to be worthy and a pleasurable way to spend the day. This is where the benefit of membership really comes into play. We are allowed access to things the general public does not get to experience. This year, we had the Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary to ourselves the first few hours AND a private big cat show with Clayton Rosaire. It was my first time seeing a human interact with a liger and it was truly amazing. The habitats were spacious and definitely designed specifically for the species they held. Visiting this facility was an enjoyable learning experience. Kay Rosaire and her son Clayton have been caretakers of big cats for decades and their goal is protecting these cats from extinction. Their fire for doing so is uplifting and contagious.

Next stop was the Ringling Brothers Circus Museum, which in reading the destination I was slightly disappointed. Where were the live animals? Goodness, was I pleasantly delighted! The art, the grounds, the history, and the presentation were all so interesting. It turned out that I wished we had the entire day to see this amazing place and I'm sure that wouldn't have been enough time. There was a replication model of the Ringling Brothers circus that took up an entire room, and, if I remember correctly, took 50 years to make. The intricate detail involved was incredible! I thoroughly enjoyed reading all of the history that was made through the years with this family and all of the other families that came together to bring the world human-animal interaction and the bonds that can be made from it. The costumes were beautiful. The grounds themselves were a botanical delight in their own right. The mansion is set right on the bay and is magnificent.

Our speakers each contributed knowledge to add to our brain banks. We were honored with appearances of Kay and Clayton Rosaire from Big Cat Habitat, speaking on that most important human-animal bond, achieved through mutual respect between humans and big cats.

A different perspective was given by



**LaVon Fabian and Gloria Johnson admire Zuri, Billie Lambert's young serval.**

Officer Robert O'Horo from Florida Fish and Wildlife. He allowed a window into seeing that regulations, laws, and the enforcement thereof can be done by animal-loving people who are also trying to do the best they can for the animals. He put a face to the human aspect of enforcement. It is not just a bureau of villainous head hunters.

The last speaker was Dawn Strasser, head nursery keeper at the Cincinnati Zoo



**The live auction was a sparkling event, in part because of the many beautiful jewelry pieces donated by Gloria Johnson. Here she clasps a necklace on the neck of auction model Julia Wagner.**

and advisor at the Hand Rearing Resource Center. She took us through the rigorous process of saving cheetah cubs. She had a multitude of pictures and the presentation was very moving. There was no way for one to not see the deep dedication that she and her colleagues have and the efforts they are making to benefit cheetahs and other cats.

There is a buildup of anticipation beginning at registration and continuing through the final banquet for the annual fundraising silent and live auction. The auction is an interactive show in and of itself that has provided wild fun and entertainment and, of course, raised funds for the FCF. Our guest sponsors, Fox Valley Nutrition and Jeffers Pet, both made donations, as did the majority of members. Make it a tradition to support the FCF by buying a T-shirt to randomly wear throughout the year. Hopefully it will spark a question



**Teralee Harral debates on whether to raise her bid on a tiger ring.**

from someone about who we are and what we stand for. This year, I was the lucky winner of a Canadian silver piece with a bobcat pictured on it, donated by Robert Hohn, who, by the way, I nominate to be auctioneer again next year.

I saved the best for last, Lynn Culver's kittens. She has brought bobcats, caracals, Geoffroy's cats, and Eurasian lynx. This year she brought another Eurasian lynx subspecies, called the Carpathian lynx. Kittens are what pulled me into the convention life, and they are always the highlight of my entire

trip. The hands-on with these kittens is truly life changing. The antics of Natasha, made me laugh numerous times; I could not keep my eyes from her because she is such a beautiful Carpathian lynx. The tiny Geoffroy's kittens, named Angel and Adonis, have huge personalities that steal your heart immediately. You can't help but

want to hold them. The photo opportunities with these kittens provide the best memories and are always my most prized souvenirs. My family and friends are always quite envious as I share my experience through these pictures. Other members, including Florida residents Billie Lambert and Keith Gault, shared their serval and provided personal interaction as well; I thank each and every one. Sharing these kittens is yet another example of our FCF members' willingness to extend the opportunity for a personal experience that is sure to increase the desire and hope of doing it again and again.

Before attending the FCF convention, I never found or was given the opportunity to touch or play with exotic cats to the extent allowed at convention. The trust and experience gained here, however small it is, opened the door for other private encounters. Attending the convention has brought me face-to-face with people I would never get to meet otherwise. It has provided me with connections that have taken me across the United States, where members have shared their knowledge, experience, animals, and even their homes. We can and do learn from each other for the cats. As we become better people through knowledge, we provide our kitties with an improved guardian.

## Husbandry Course Review

By Tarelee Harral

This year, I took the Wild Feline Husbandry course and I not only thoroughly enjoyed the class, but I know that I will be a better bobcat parent because of it. This class provided an opportunity to benefit from the expertise of Mindy Stinner, executive director of the Conservators Center, whom I found to be a competent and effective teacher. Questions were encouraged throughout the eight-hour course and were answered in depth without judgment of any kind. The course covered everything from the feline lineage, nutrition (one of my favorite subjects), enrichment, enclosures, health, and everything in between. It is a very comprehensive class that is highly recommended. With so much information to digest, it is wonderful that the course comes complete with a handbook to reference. Who would benefit from this course? Well, I found that we had multiple learning objectives. One person was trying to decide which species he wanted to keep, another just received their baby mere months before and wanted to learn, and others had jobs in the field and wanted to expand their knowledge to apply to their jobs. Even attending was Officer Robert O'Horo of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission. He stated that he learned so much from the content in the course about the species he is sworn to protect, and that he is sure it will make him a better officer because of it. So there was a wide spectrum of interests and people. The achievement of passing an exam and receiving your certificate is icing on the learning cake. Any and all knowledge gained is of direct benefit to your cat or the cats in your care.



**Teralee shows off her Wild Feline Husbandry Course certificate and her new little lynx buddy Natasha.**



**Rebecca Krebs gets a second opinion from Tristan Cavalli on whether to raise her bid on a jaguar ring.**

In conclusion, the FCF convention offers an action-packed full spectrum of

experiences, all of them rewarding. The FCF convention is truly a spectacular opportunity for not just the people who already share their lives with cats, but also for a person who wishes they could work with or own cats, to come together and benefit immensely from the collective knowledge and experience. In addition to creating fantastic memories, attending the convention will take you places, broaden your knowledge, and build a network of relationships. I encourage my fellow members to not only attend this annual event, but to extend the invitation to other animal lovers of all kinds, for they are potential members that can fight with us to promote our mission. With strength and power in unity, the convention brings us all together to fight the battle against the people and organizations creating the laws that are trying to extinguish the existence of private ownership and the facilities dedicated



**Billie Lambert shows her serval Zuri the Catching Koi Fish computer game on her tablet.**

to allowing contact with these beautiful cats.

Working together we will make a difference. Together we fill “the mission to conserve wild felines through preservation, education, and research.” I start the wait to see old friends and meet new at the 2018 FCF convention. See you there!

## Handsome, the Kind King

By Danielle Rosaire

The bond between a human and animal is often a special connection formed



**Clayton Rosaire and his best feline friend and star of the show, Handsome the lion.**

between two hearts. These relationships can be shared with the smallest, biggest, and sometimes the most exotic animals. Being in a human/animal brotherhood is exceptional and that’s what took place between one amazing African lion and a man. This brotherhood bond was true. Love and respect were the foundations and it was undeniable.

“Handsome,” the lion was not just any lion, he was **THE LION**. His name said it all; a huge, majestic creature whose dark mane continued down his belly to his hind legs, and his tall stature and proud walk were breathtaking. Truly a perfect specimen in every way.

In 2009, at nearly two years old, Handsome showed up at Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary in Sarasota, Florida, needing a new home. Unsure at first if the sanctuary could handle taking in another lion, the decision soon became crystal clear;

this one was special! Clayton Rosaire and family had found a diamond in the rough. Handsome soon became the ambassador for all the animals that resided at the sanctuary. Clayton and Handsome showed the world that man and beast could lovingly coexist. They were a true example of the human/animal bond. Teaching young and old about the responsibility of humans caring for animals with love. Many people loved and witnessed this relationship. Some were truly awed by the spectacle of such a friendship.

It is with great sorrow that we must announce the passing of our beloved and cherished Handsome. Cancer shows no mercy. The entire family, crew, and volunteers at Big Cat Habitat and Gulf Coast Sanctuary are devastated and hope you will keep us and the animals in your thoughts and prayers. Handsome will be forever in our hearts, in our minds, and forever in our memories.

Rest in Peace

2007-2017

Handsome  
“The Kind King”

# FCF Convention Guest Speaker Florida Fish and Wildlife Officer Robert O'Horo

By Billie Lambert

One of our guest speakers at convention this year was Officer Robert O'Horo from Florida Fish and Wildlife. I live in Florida, hold a FWC Class II license, and personally own servals and caracals.

I didn't think the guest speaker topic would be relevant to all of the convention attendees, because many people came from out of state to attend. In hindsight, I found the presentation to be very informative. Not just for myself, but for all exotic animal lovers throughout the United States. Florida has a rigorous process to obtain a license... difficult, but not impossible.

I believe Florida has struck the right balance of the "regulate, not ban" concept for private ownership of exotic animals. If other states were to look at Florida as a model for exotic animal laws, perhaps we could reverse the alarming trend of states enacting outright bans or laws that are impossible to comply with.

The Florida Captive Wildlife Office is a division of law enforcement and the field staff personnel are specially trained law enforcement police officers who conduct investigations and facility inspections. This office handles regulation of wildlife in captivity throughout the state to include public safety and animal welfare.

The Captive Wildlife Office was established in 1967, and was tasked with regulating native and exotic captive wildlife. In 1970, their new regulations became effective. In 1973, the Wildlife Inspections Program was created. Inspectors were law enforcement officers with a background in biology and they received husbandry and safe capture training. In 1974, the Personal Pet Law was enacted and all captive wildlife was categorized into a class system.

Class I - Wildlife that poses the most significant threat to people. (Private ownership for commercial use only and substantial experience required for license.)

Class II - Wildlife that poses a threat to people. (Broader ownership permitted and experience required.)

Class III - Any wildlife not specifically listed as Class I or II.

How do these classes break down for

captive exotic cats?

Class I - Leopard, snow leopard, jaguar, lion, tiger, cougar, cheetah.

Class II - Serval, lynx, bobcat, caracal, fishing cat, ocelot, clouded leopard.

Class III - All other small cats: Geoffroy's cat, margay, jaguarundi.

Each class level has specific requirements that must be met in order to receive a license for ownership of captive wildlife. I will use the African serval to illustrate an example of steps taken to acquire a license in Florida. (Disclaimer: this is an example of some of the steps and is not all inclusive. Florida's extensive regulations relating to captive wildlife are Chapter 378, Florida Statutes and Chapters 68A-6, 68A-9, and 68A-12, Florida Administrative Code.)

African serval

- 1000 hours of internship/experience; every hour must be accounted for and written in a cumulative log book or journal. Or 500 hours of internship/experience and passing a two part test administered by Florida Fish and Wildlife. First part, 100 questions regarding general wildlife knowledge. Second part, 100 questions regarding Class II felids.

- A finished outside enclosure made with 11.5 gauge material and a double-door entry. If the serval lives in or is allowed access to your residence, then your home requires a double-door entry (a porch) and windows covered with the same gauge material or bolted shut.

- Other considerations include: amount of land required, perimeter fence, public contact rule, and cage size, etc. (refer to the state regulations for complete info)

- An application from yourself requesting the license and two letters from other people who have

knowledge of your experience with servals.

- A detailed contingency plan in case of emergency and/or evacuation.

- Mail in application forms and fees to Florida Fish and Wildlife

- Finally, the Captive Wildlife Office will send a field officer to your residence or facility and conduct a visual inspection to ensure compliance. If you pass inspection, your license should arrive by mail within 30 days.

- Once per year, as long as you have the serval, an on-site inspection is required for license renewal.

Whew! Does this sound like a lot to get a license? Yes, it is a lot, but it can be done. Any person who accomplishes these steps and acquires a Class II Felid license in Florida will be completely aware of what they are getting into and how to care for their serval (or other Class



**Florida Fish and Wildlife Officer Robert O'Horo spoke on the history of captive wildlife. Florida created a class system to regulate wildlife species and relies on specially trained law enforcement officers to conduct facility inspections.**

II cat).

Now here is the most interesting part of Officer O'Horo's presentation and why I think it's so important for other states to sit up and pay attention.

If there is ever an incident, whether minor or major, regarding captive wildlife in Florida (escapes, bites, etc.), then we have a regulating arm already in place to handle it. There will not be a knee-jerk reaction by state government to move in and completely wipe out captive wildlife or suddenly establish ridiculous and impossible terms for ownership. Licensed captive wildlife owners in Florida benefit from the protection of our state. There's

no danger of state laws suddenly running amuck and taking away our rights and our animals.

Do I think Florida's system is perfect? No. But they do try. Fish and Wildlife are happy to work with the stakeholders and seek their input regarding laws and future changes. The Fish and Wildlife's seven commissioners meet five times per year and move their meeting location all around the state so members of the public may attend and provide input.

Florida is known to be one of the more stringent states for exotic animal ownership. I believe we have a fair system and Florida has struck the happy medium for

private ownership. Many states have an "all or nothing" policy where captive wildlife is either completely banned or there are no restrictions. Obviously I don't like the idea of banned exotics. But, if there are no guidelines in a state, then the climate is perfect for an incident-driven reaction and animal rights groups are more than happy to help a state incorporate bans. If you live in another state and protecting private ownership is important to you, then consider contacting your state legislatures and ask them to take a look at Florida and adopt similar laws.

## Convention Board of Directors Meeting Minutes 2017

The third quarter Board of Directors meeting was held at the FCF annual convention in Sarasota, Florida, on July 25th, 2017. Board members present were: President - Kevin Chambers (via teleconference), Vice President - Mindy Stinner, Treasurer - Lynn Culver, Director - Robert Bean, Director - Chris Tromborg (via teleconference), and Secretary - Rebecca Krebs.

### Voting And Motions:

Ratify the 1st Quarter 2017 Minutes: Moved by Chris Tromborg, seconded by Robert Bean, that the minutes be ratified as previously approved. The motion carried with a unanimous "yes" vote.

Two action items of discussion: 1) Completion of the job description for the potential Executive Admin with pay rate. 2) New FCF direction and regrouping of the organization to be discussed at the general membership meeting held at the FCF annual convention in Sarasota, Florida, on July 25th, 2017. Moved by Kevin Chambers, seconded by Chris Tromborg. The motion carried with a unanimous "yes" vote.

### Treasurer's Report:

To be submitted at the next board meeting held on the forum August 6-13, 2017.

### Important Topics of Discussion:

1) Next board meeting will be held on the forum from August 6-13, 2017.

2) Board is encouraged to review the Tsavo East grant proposal.

3) Board is encouraged to review Ashwin Naidu's project.

4) New FCF direction will be focusing on animal management and husbandry with a professional zoological emphasis. The FCF will continue to support private animal ownership, but will redirect attention to keepers and individuals working in zoological situations. The FCF will continue to support feline conservation projects.

5) New FCF direction and regrouping of the organization with the following steps:

a) Determine the FCF's membership focus.

b) Review constitution and by-laws. Review or extinguish committees.

c) It is assumed that the FCF will continue to keep the annual convention, *Journal*, grant program, educational Wildcat Weekend, website, and forums.

d) It is recommended the FCF have a cost census, wildcat safety net evaluation, and determine the needs of the accreditation program.

6) Position of potential Executive Admin was discussed. This position would be directing the marketing campaign to groups such as AAZK and ZooKreepers, clarifying the benefits of membership, providing membership services, assisting with the *Journal*, and assisting with the annual convention.

7) With the new FCF direction, marketing will also need to be refocused.

a) It is recommended that the Wildcat Weekend be offered to the new target audience with the specific location and date included.

b) Marketing will focus on social media to reach the target audience.

c) Flash Fundraisers will also be implemented.

d) Costs and benefits of currently offered programs shall be reviewed.

### Business Report Topics:

1) Review of membership services:

a) The FCF will continue to discontinue mailed welcome packets.

b) Obtain a census on membership (number of cat vs. non-cat owners).

c) Make efforts to vastly increase membership with a focus on the new target audience.

d) Recognize the changing demographic of membership.

2) Conduct a committee assessment to determine if the current committees are still needed.

3) Donor management – Should the FCF use an outside forum to pull in money from donors? An analysis of cost to use outside forum will be examined.

4) *Journal* talk – Articles selected for printing in the *FCF Journal* should reflect the FCF's new direction and be worded appropriately. Articles and images should show less free contact images and focus more on non-free contact animal husbandry and management. *Journals* may be smaller than they have traditionally been while the FCF is adjusting to new direction and selecting appropriate articles that reflect this direction.

5) Create a new video to be placed on the homepage of the FCF website that shows the FCF's new direction.

Rebecca Krebs





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## Anne-Laure Michelis Reviews the FCF Convention

By Anne-Laure Michelis

Having attended the conference in Fort Lauderdale last year, I had high expectations for this convention. They were all surpassed!

For the many members (most members!) of the FCF who do not know me, let me give you a little background. I was born and raised in France, in a household with domestic cats. I now have the great



**Kurt Beckelman watches Gloria Johnson entice Zuri the serval with a big feather toy during the Tuesday afternoon social mixer. Photo by Keith Gault.**

fortune to live in Wellington, Florida, about ten minutes from FCF-accredited facility Panther Ridge Conservation Center. I have been volunteering there since 2010, and I even worked there for a few months a couple of years ago under my mentor, the gifted Judy Berens. I am currently spending the summer doing some volunteer hours in order to eventually be able to apply for a license to have the privilege of having my own family of exotic cats.

Upon arriving at the hotel, I was delighted to see some familiar faces; friendly Kurt Beckelman welcomed me with open arms, I chatted with reptile and cat enthusiast Lenard Hughes who I had met at Panther Ridge Conservation Center a few years ago when he was doing his hours for his serval license, and I caught up with Teralee Harral, who had taken the big step of owning her first exotic, a bobcat, since the Fort Lauderdale convention. I also enjoyed meeting some new people, like the divine Phyllis Parks, and interacting with some Geoffroy's kittens and a

lynx cub.

The evening started with a delicious buffet dinner with a mushroom soup to be remembered! Vice President Mindy Stinner presided over the FCF membership meeting, where the main subject was how to grow the FCF membership.

The next morning at breakfast, I ran into Fred Boyajian, an experienced owner/breeder of exotics and a longtime member of the FCF. Fred always has great stories to tell and he made my breakfast a very instructive experience.

The bus took us to Big Cat Habitat, where we were welcomed by founder/owner Kay Rosaire, who has been working with and rescuing big cats for over 30 years. The zoo was exclusively open for us in the morning. We viewed servals, cougars, lions, and tigers, as well as a rare liger and an even

rarer tigon. Big Cat Habitat also exhibits some bears, lemurs, and birds, as well as some monkeys, among other exotics. Because Kay is so passionate about the human/animal connection, she made sure that Big Cat Habitat also has a petting zoo designed especially to inspire future generations. We were treated to a private show in a welcoming air-conditioned arena. Clayton Rosaire presented his white tiger and his liger. The show was very entertaining as well as instructive, emphasizing the importance of working with the natural skills of



**Natasha, a six week old Carpathian lynx, made many friends at convention.**

each cat and to make them do what they like to do, using positive reinforcement only. Big Cat Habitat had some much appreciated cold bottled water available for us and a great concession stand for the members who had built an appetite. We returned to the arena, which has a gift shop wisely located by the entrance, to see Kay's sister performing with her parrots. They rode scooters and shot parrot size balls into a hoop, among other tricks.



**Jordan Joseph visits with the Big Cat Habitat's petting zoo goats. Photo by Keith Gault.**



**Clayton Rosaire up close with Barry White at the Big Cat Habitat arena show.**

Once the show was over, we boarded the bus for the Ringling Museum. I have to admit that visiting a circus museum did not appeal to me that much when I had seen it on the convention program. It turned out to be a fantastic experience. The main attraction of the museum is a model of what the circus of the late 19th early/20th century entailed. The Ringlings were moving a “village” and a zoo every day! What a logistics achievement for the time! The many tents, multitude of animals, entertainers, workers, blacksmiths, leather smith, food, cooks, and everything and everyone else needed was moved on carriages themselves loaded onto wagons to go to the next town every day! The Ringling circus may have produced “The Greatest Show On Earth,” but for sure it also produced the best logistics for the time. We saw some original carriages, costumes, accessories, and other circus paraphernalia. We also learned that the Ringlings had a clown school! Knowing that the circus had closed

its doors recently, it was bitter-sweet to see such a long-standing tradition disappear. I could not stop thinking about how things change over time. Television had irreversibly led to “The Greatest Show On Earth” becoming obsolete and, as of May of this year, Ringling has disappeared. Similarly, are we humans, as the most successful species on Earth, irremediably forcing other animal species to disappear forever right in front of us like television did to the circus?

Once back at the hotel, it was time for a dip in the impressive pool with its waterfalls, a relaxing and refreshing break before heading out to dinner. Once refueled, we drove to the beach to watch the beautiful sunset on the Gulf of Mexico.

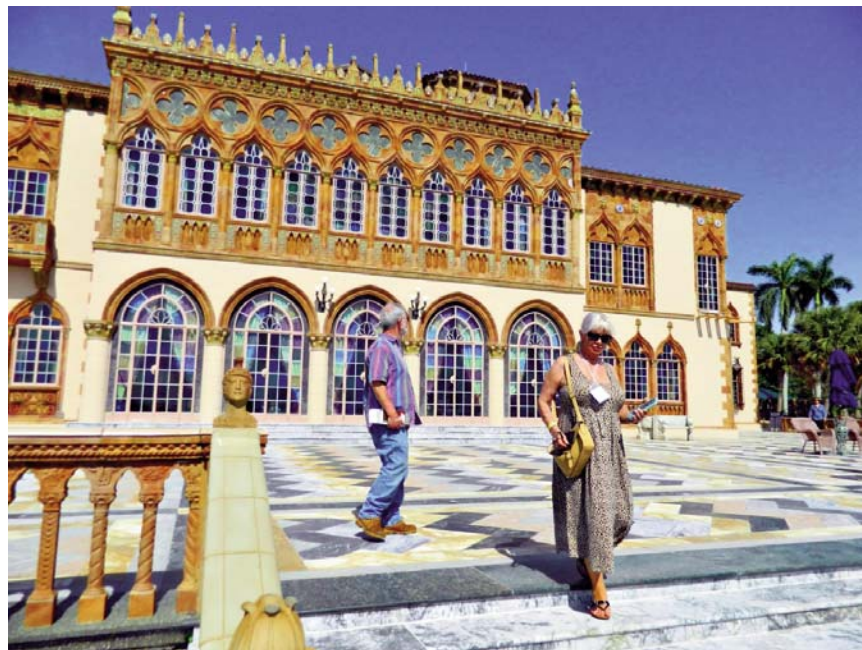
The next morning, an excellent and copious breakfast buffet preceded the speaker presentations. Kay and Clayton Rosaire spoke frankly about the importance of the human-animal bond. Educating the public about this special bond is a true passion for the Rosaire family. Florida Fish and Wildlife inspector Robert O’Horo followed. He explained the role



**Linda Rosaire presents macaws and parrots, showing off their amazing intelligence during the Parrots in Paradise show.**

of his organization and how it functions, his law enforcement role as an inspector, as well as what he could foresee regarding regulation changes in the future. The last speaker was Dawn Strasser, the head of the neonatal department at the Cincinnati Zoo. Her lecture was based on her 35 years of experience raising newborn babies from many different species. It was entertaining and interesting to see how the zoo functions compared to smaller facilities I have volunteered at.

Unfortunately, I could not stay for the banquet that evening. My duties were calling me back the next morning. Overall, I had a wonderful time at the convention; I learned a lot and spent time with great people with a similar passion for cats. I am looking forward for next year’s convention, so see you all there!



**The winter home of John and Mable Ringling was an incredibly ornate mansion on the bay. Here Gloria Johnson and Paul Bunyan take in the splendor of the estate.**

## Premature Cheetahs Become Healthy Ambassadors

By Dawn Strasser

On March 8, 2016, an emergency C-section was performed on Willow, one of the cheetahs at Cincinnati Zoo's Mast Farm breeding facility. At one week premature, there were five live births, three females and two males. The cubs had many hurdles to overcome.

First, their lungs were not fully functioning, so they stayed on oxygen for several days until the lungs sounded clear and breathing was not labored.

Second, the inability of the cats to maintain body temperatures for weeks was a problem. They were in an isolet or heated area of 86°F until five weeks of age, when we could finally lower the air temperature somewhat and they were finally becoming slightly mobile.

After a few days of nursing, it became apparent that they were unable to digest, absorb, and eliminate the formula offered. We started with one part Milk Matrix 33/40, mixed with two parts sterile water and lactaid. We tried diluting the formula more and more but it became apparent these products were too complex so we switched to a goat milk based formula. They were able to process the goat milk



**Five cheetah cubs were successfully delivered by emergency caesarian section one week premature.**

formula, but the volume consumed was so low we were barely able to meet their caloric needs every day. One could physically see that all the calories were going into just surviving, exhibiting an extremely low growth curve, including lack of hair and no nail growth to name a few obvious signs.

There was a cascading series of problems every day, such as bloating and blockages that required subcutaneous fluids, enemas, and IV fluid therapy for instance. When we switched to goat's milk Esbilac, we had to add taurine. The taurine was such a large amount to get into them every day we switched to a smaller volume taurine substitute - clam juice. The juice, however, caused the cubs to develop ulcers in their mouths, probably due to their compromised and immature immune systems. The nursery and vet staff were challenged every day trying to determine ways to help these cubs. They were only eating about 10ccs if we were lucky. It was questionable each day as to who would survive. We lost two cubs during this time even though we provided

nursery care 24 hours a day. I was able to get Willow and Cathryn over the ulcers, but Redd would not get over the hurdle and he was headed downhill quickly.

Willow, named after her mother, had an entropion eyelid, along with ulcers in the eye caused by the eyelashes abrading her cornea, which prevented her from using that eye. At five weeks, we finally felt she was strong enough to handle anesthesia to have her eyelid tacked back to alleviate the inability to see. At 17 weeks, when the last stitch fell out, the eyelid was holding itself up, so the traditional corrective surgery, where a section of skin is removed from the affected eyelid to reverse its inward rolling, was not needed. I think she has a sultry look now or a lazy eye at times.



**Willow with her upper eyelid tacked up to stop the eyelashes from abrading her cornea.**



**Redd after surgery to install a feeding tube "button." To prevent him or his littermates from disturbing the "button," he was dressed in infant pajamas.**



The zoo's nursery dog, Blakely, rests with the three cubs, Redd, Willow, and Cathryn.

Because the cubs did not care for the texture of the meat, at six weeks they were bottle fed a slurry of kitten food to get the calories they needed to grow. It was a struggle for all three cubs to get enough nutrition each day, especially for Redd.

At eight weeks, they still weighed less than two kilograms. Finally we could see slight improvement with Willow and Cathryn, while the male cub, Redd, was just hanging on. He was not getting over the ulcers and it was making it difficult for him to consume enough food for proper development, so we decided to put a feeding tube or "button" in this cub and then fed him ground kitten chow and milk as a slurry with lots of calories. At eight weeks, he only weighed 1.45 kilograms, but within a short time of initiating this feeding tube routine, he started to grow and catch up to his sisters.

Along with everything we did for these

cubs, we now had our vet sewing onesies to prevent his button from being pulled or chewed on by the other cubs. The onesies needed to be altered to accommodate his tail and ended up looking like an old-fashioned swimsuit. During this entire time, these cubs did not seem to mind anything we did to help them. Redd would sit on our laps five times a day to be tube-fed and have his clothes put on. At six months, he had begun to eat enough meat to promote daily weight gain, so we were able to remove his button.

At 16 weeks, the cubs were finally healthy enough to be introduced to the cheetah yard and given a chance to exercise in their soon-to-be new facility at the zoo. On September 16, 2016, at roughly six



At four months old, Redd was still wearing his onesie and receiving five meals by tube feeding each day. At six months, the tube was removed.

months old, all three cubs (Cathryn, Willow, and Redd) had become healthy enough to join the rest of their cheetah family.



After months of round-the-clock care, Redd, Willow, and Cathryn finally developed into normal, healthy cheetah cubs.



Cathryn Hilker, founder of the Cincinnati Zoo Cat Ambassador Program, gets an affectionate lick from Cathryn, her namesake. These lucky cubs are now in ambassador training school.

## FCF Convention Review by a New Member

By Lara Ottombrino

I was born and raised in San Diego, California. Since my first words as a little girl and throughout my life, animals have been my primary passion and a consistent source of joy. Much to my father's exasperation, I brought home every stray, injured, or unconventional animal I could find. I had horses, dogs, cats, rabbits, ducks, snakes, a skunk, and an opossum, in addition to a baby alligator and a red-tailed hawk, just to name a few. At age ten or 11, when I asked my dad if I could PLEASE buy a mountain lion cub that was for sale locally, he just about lost it. Mind you, I didn't grow up in the backcountry of San Diego County, but rather a middle-class, suburban neighborhood on a cul-de-sac with a pool and Jacuzzi in my backyard. Granted, it was a big backyard, but obviously not even close to being big enough for a mountain lion. Fortunately for all concerned, my dad didn't respond with a flat out NO, but instead he talked me out of buying the cub by explaining how it would be unfair and cruel to have an animal of that size in a cage, and heaven forbid if it got loose, as the sheriff would shoot and kill the lion for fear of public safety, etc. All valid points, but I made up my mind then and there that someday I would own an exotic cat.

I did my research, which back in those days meant going to the library. I set my heart on a cheetah and it is still my dream. As the years went by, I realized a cheetah



**Lara Ottombrino and her partner Graham Bryan soak up the atmosphere at the Hyatt Regency Hotel where the FCF Convention was hosted.**

was an impossibility, so I started looking at other exotic cats that would likely be easier to obtain and maintain. I was looking for a serval when a five week old bobcat picked me instead. I was truly blessed to have Dillon in my life for 14 wonderful, albeit sometimes challenging, but always extraordinary years. It was because of Dillon that I had heard about FCF and planned on becoming a member someday.

When I saw the Wildlife Conservation Educators Course being offered at the convention this year, I immediately joined and set my flight on Sarasota. Graham and I arrived a couple of days early to

do some sightseeing and rest up for the week ahead. The hotel pool with its waterfall was beautiful and very inviting. I loved the exotic tropical feel and imagined having something similar at my house someday with my big cats walking across the rocks above the waterfall.

I was so excited about the Educators course, I could hardly sleep Sunday night. Michelle McKay, our instructor, was great; she was very personable and knowledgeable. The class was very interesting and informative and I feel much better prepared for a future with wildlife education. During our lunch break, we got to go upstairs to a couple of the rooms and meet the kittens; what an honor, especially to see them in a normal human environment, i.e. a hotel room as opposed to just being on display.

As a new member to FCF and the first time attending the annual convention, I'd like to express my sincere appreciation for such a wonderful group of people and for such an informative, fun and inspiring event. Meeting various members throughout the day and into the evening added to the overall experience and enjoyment of being with like-minded people. The formal meet and greet on Tuesday night with the kittens was such a treat; just meeting and talking with other members and owners sharing our experiences regarding our beloved cats was an exceptionally good



**Night lights cast the hotel pool's waterfall in purple. Everyone soaked in the tropical waters and let the waterfall massage tired shoulders.**



**Instructor Michelle McKay spent the day with Lara and the other students covering all aspects of public education using wildlife ambassadors. Here she is holding a young ring-tailed lemur brought to convention by Liz Felton.**

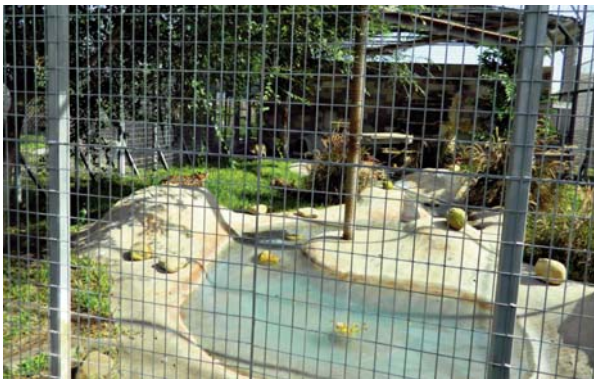


**Zuri up-close. This beautiful serval was raised by Billie Lambert and Keith Gault.**

time. It was also very educational just in and of itself. I learned as much from these conversations as I did from the course. Everything from health issues to legislative news.

The field trip to Big Cat Habitat was very inspirational. Kay Rosaire and her son Clayton, the owners and founders of the facility, were there to greet us and they were very accessible the entire time we were touring the sanctuary.

The Ringling Brothers Museum was



**One of Big Cat Habitat's feline enclosures held five servals and included numerous elevated platforms, ramps, and a watercourse, and plenty of grass, bushes, and trees.**



**Natasha lynx draws a crowd of admirers Tuesday afternoon.**

incredible. My only wish was that we had more time to explore and enjoy the various museums and the winter residence of John Ringling and his wife.

I relaxed that evening with a frozen mai tai in hand and eagerly looked forward to Thursday, but was also disappointed knowing that it would be the last day of the convention. It had gone by so fast.

Thursday morning guest speakers included Kay Rosaire and her son Clayton from Big Cat Habitat, once again making themselves available to all of us. Florida Fish and Game Officer, Robert O'Horo gave us great insight to what we as cat owners should be aware of and pay close attention to. He was very informative and very approachable, which really helped connect the dots. The speaker from the Cincinnati Zoo nursery, Dawn Strasser with her video's especially of the baby tiger needing Chiropractic Care was an inspiration.

The additional information and educational value I received just by meeting and socializing with fellow members and conservation experts including Mindy and Julia Wagner was invaluable. I am more inspired and dedicated to this cause than ever before. The difference being, now I am

armed with more knowledge. Knowing the FCF's wonderful group of people with the experience and knowledge I can fall back on, when and if I need it, is worth its weight in gold. I can't wait until next year's convention and I will become more involved with the FCF in the future. I am looking forward to making a positive difference in the lives and conservation of these majestic animals.



**Kay Rosaire was one of the speakers on Thursday morning. She shared the stage with her son Clayton, and the pair spoke passionately about human/animal bonds.**

## Animal Rights Extremists Turn up the Heat on Wildlife Exhibitors

By Lynn Culver

On October 12, 2016, PETA filed in Federal court a lawsuit against Dade City Wild Things (DCWT), alleging that they remove cubs from the mother tiger shortly after birth, and DCWT “harms” and “harasses” endangered tiger cubs by using them in swim-with-a-tiger-cub public encounters.

PETA cites a July 2015 USDA-filed suit against DCWT for “willfully violating the AWA by forcing tiger cubs to swim with members of the public, causing unnecessary discomfort and/or behavioral stress.” PETA also alleged adult tigers are held in enclosures too small and lacking in enrichment, which they allege constitutes “harm and harassment” of endangered species in violation of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). PETA wants the tigers moved to a sanctuary of their choice.

This court case is moving forward and is in the discovery phase. On August 4th, accompanied by law enforcement personnel, PETA conducted an inspection of the zoo and the enclosures that once housed adult tigers. Twenty-one of the zoo’s tigers were transferred to other facilities, 19 of them to G.W. Exotics in Oklahoma, ahead of this inspection.

PETA sent a letter July 2, 2017, to Wildlife in Need (WIN) to put the non-profit organization on notice that PETA intended to sue them for violating the ESA prohibitions against “harming and harassing” endangered wildlife. PETA contends WIN takes cubs from mother tigers prematurely, declaws them, forces them to engage with visitors, and confines tigers in conditions that do not “meet social, physical, or psychological needs of the species.”

Wildlife in Need offers “baby tiger playtime,” allowing groups of visitors to interact with tiger cubs. PETA alleges this activity is “traumatic and causes permanent chronic stress to such an extent that it can activate genes that can be passed in turn to offspring, potentially affecting big cats and their young for the rest of their lives.”

PETA alleges WIN enclosures are too small and too barren and “can lead to elevated cortisol levels from boredom and stress.” PETA cites USDA inspection

reports that cite WIN for failure to provide adequate shelter from winter wind, cold, and snow. PETA asserts these are both examples of “harming” and “harassment,” prohibitions listed in the ESA.

It demands that all evidence be preserved and that the Starks respond by August 3rd, that they will enter into a preservation order and allow PETA to conduct a site inspection within 30 days. PETA’s letter of intent to sue wants the tigers removed and placed at a sanctuary of their choice and gives the Starks 60 days to agree to give up their cats in exchange for dropping the suit.

On July 31, 2017, PETA filed suit against Tri-State Zoo for practices that “harm” and “harass” the ring-tailed lemurs, tigers, and lion in violation of the ESA’s “take” prohibition by causing them psychological harm and distress, injuring them, and significantly disrupting and impairing them from carrying out their natural behaviors in a manner that puts their physical and psychological well-being at risk of further injury. PETA’s suit uses the Tri-State Zoo’s history of AWA non-compliance citations to support their claim that this zoo harms and harasses endangered tigers by denying them safe, appropriate caging, housing, and adequate enrichment. PETA wants the endangered animals removed to a sanctuary of their choice.

In March of 2016, Animal Legal Defense Fund filed suit against Animaland Zoological Park. The suit alleges Animaland confines a Siberian tiger, named Baby, in a small, barren cage, which disrupts and impairs her normal and essential behavior patterns. “Baby lacks adequate access to fresh water, her cage is often dirty, and the toys in her small cage pose choking hazards.” Such treatment constitutes a “take,” and violates the ESA. ALDF cites the USDA compliance record of Animaland, which shows 63 violations in six years, many concerning sanitation and enclosure maintenance. ALDF wants the animals transferred to a sanctuary of their choice.

All of these cases have something in common: the USDA-licensed facilities have been cited for non-compliance, and repeat non-compliance with the animal welfare act regulations. While the license holders may have appealed these citations

believing they were unfairly, incorrectly accused of violating the animal welfare act regulations, they have not prevailed. Their record of operations fails to meet the minimum standards.

If a zoo wishes to be protected from lawsuits by animal rights organizations alleging Endangered Species Act violations, they need to seriously look at their AWA record. Non-compliance and repeat non-compliance have been interpreted in a previous court ruling, in the case of ALDF vs. Cricket Hollow Zoo, that husbandry which does not meet AWA minimum standards can be ruled as “harming” and “harassing,” and, therefore, a violation of the Endangered Species Act’s prohibition against “taking.”

To give another example, in PETA vs. Cherokee Bear Zoo (CBZ), August 14, 2017, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit set aside the lower court’s March 2016 ruling in favor of PETA. The Court of Appeals found that although the Cherokee Bear Zoo’s bear pits are “archaic” and the bears could “undoubtedly” be held in “a better environment,” CBZ’s confinement of the protected grizzly bears was not considered “harassment” as defined in the Endangered Species Act.

The court explained in its ruling that to establish harassment in this case, Plaintiffs (PETA) must prove (1) that the zoo’s animal husbandry practices fall within the Endangered Species Act (50 C.F.R. § 17.3) definition of harass, which is: *Harass in the definition of “take” in the Act means 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* and (2) that those practices do not fall within the first enumerated exclusion from that definition, which is: *This definition, when applied to captive wildlife, does not include generally accepted: (1) Animal husbandry practices that meet or exceed the minimum standards for facilities and care under the Animal Welfare Act.*

The appeals court based its conclusion that the zoo did not “harass” its bears because the plaintiffs (PETA) did not introduce evidence that the zoo had been cited by the USDA for these enclosures.



Therefore, the zoo's animal husbandry practices complied with applicable standards under the Animal Welfare Act. The case will now return back to the District Court for the Western District of North Carolina and PETA can argue their case all over again.

It should be mentioned that Cricket Hollow Zoo, which has been litigating against ESA violation suits brought by ALDF for the past two years, has appealed the lower court ruling in favor of ALDF to the United States Court of Appeals Eighth Circuit. The appeal brief argues the trial was based upon using USDA inspection reports as evidence of violations, even though in an administrative proceeding they can be contested. The brief also poses the question "Does a facility that has non-compliance immediately fall out of the protective umbrella 50 C.F.R.

17.3?" It noted that every expert that testified for the plaintiffs (ALDF) had, at one time or another, been non-compliant with USDA regulations. This appeal has yet to be ruled on.

The takeaway here is that USDA exhibitors in possession of endangered species need to meet the minimum standards of the Animal Welfare Act or they may find themselves in these same kinds of lawsuits by PETA and ALDF. Not only are you facing stiff fines from the USDA for non-compliance and possible suspension or termination of your business license, legal suits can be brought against you by animal rights organizations. It goes without saying, justice is not free. It is very, very expensive. If you wish to survive in the business world, you must find a business model that enables you to pay the bills and meet animal welfare reg-

ulations. This new tactic is only just now getting ramped up. The court decision against Cricket Hollow Zoo is being appealed and we will report the results.

Captive husbandry of wild felines is definitely under attack. First they came for the pet owner, and states forbid the ownership. Then they came for the breeders and states forbid breeders. Then they came for the exhibitors, and states are passing laws requiring zoos be accredited members of trade associations. Captive husbandry is shrinking. Only the most determined and smartest business-minded professionals are going to survive this separation of the wheat from the chaff. Watch what you do and do it well, if you wish to survive this ongoing extinction crisis.

## Counting Cats (And Other Creatures)

By Andrew Tkach

Times are changing. In geological terms we are currently in the Holocene era, which is characterized by the development of human civilizations. Humans have undeniably had substantial impact on the entire planet. From simple land development to our complex vehicle and energy needs, we effect our environment. These effects can be difficult to track, especially with the deluge of varying information that can be obtained from copious sources in today's information age. What kind of shape is our world taking and how will it affect our feline friends? There are a few reasons why exact numbers are difficult to get hold of. Accurate estimation of an animal population is challenging and costly to obtain, there are many factors and uncertainties involved with calculating future biodiversity loss, and our world is a delicate interconnected system where affecting one creature or environment may have widespread ramifications.

Currently, the most popular method for calculating the population of animals is the "mark and recapture" method. How this is done can vary depending on the species in question. Predators are particularly difficult to count, because they travel to find prey and are generally elusive in nature. So how would one go about finding a cat in its natural habitat? If a cat can

be captured, it may be outfitted with a GPS telemetry collar to track its movements and easily assess that a particular cat has already been counted. Trail cameras are also implemented quiet often, though there can be the problem of identifying one animal from another. Individual cats can, at times, be identified visually, for most have a pelage unique in their spots or stripes, although this is not always an option depending on the angle of the shot or the species (a cougar has no spots to speak of). Once a satisfactory number of animals are marked, the entire population will continue to be observed. After the data is obtained, estimated population is calculated by multiplying the total number of captured animals and the total number marked, then dividing that number by the number of marked captured again throughout the process. Obviously, this procedure takes a fair amount of equipment and man hours. In order to keep an accurate estimation of a specific species population, this ordeal must be repeated periodically. The information obtained by these tests helps us understand how well a species is adapting to the rapid change of this era and helps us predict how well they will do in the future.

Predicting the future is difficult work. Numerous factors are involved in the future of our planet and the creatures that live here; so many factors that there is no

textbook equation to determine the biodiversity loss that we expect to see in the decades to come. Depending on where one obtains their information, one could believe any number of possible scenarios for the future. The current background extinction rate could be 100 to 10,000 times above normal. The expected loss of biodiversity we face in the decades to come is anywhere from 0% to over 50%. Different studies conducted on climate change and future extinction rates tend to vary in particular assumptions, species, methods, and locations, and therefore do not produce a complete picture of what will come to pass. An article published by *Science* magazine compared an accumulation of 131 publications on the subject of extinction rates increased by climate change. One of the largest discrepancies from one study and another is the impact of climate change.

Considering biodiversity as a whole is important for our wild felines. As predators they are intimately bound to their prey in order to survive. This means that each cat is not only dependent on the surrounding habitat, but the animals that reside "lower on the food chain" as well. A cat needs a mouse, a lion needs the gazelle. In order to ensure the future of cats, we must pay attention to the environment as a whole.

## Manul Conservation in Mongolia

By Jim Sanderson, Ph.D.  
Global Wildlife Conservation  
24 April – 26 May, 2017

Mongolia and International Snow Leopard Meeting in Russia

Mongolia is 1.565M km<sup>2</sup> (0.972M square miles), the 19th largest country in the world, and slightly smaller than Alaska at 1.723M km<sup>2</sup> (1.071M square miles). Mongolia has four species of wild cats: Eurasian lynx (*Lynx lynx*, north and southwest), manul (*Otocolobus manul*, typically shown as common throughout Mongolia, but not well known), snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*, central and west), and wildcat (*Felis silvestris*, south and west) (Batsaikhan et al. 2014).

In addition to wild cats, Mongolia's wildlife heritage is rich and interesting. Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*), Gobi bear (*Ursus arctus gobiensis*), Mongolian wild ass (*Equus hemionus hemionus*), also known as Mongolian khulan, goitered or black-tailed gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*), ibex (*Capra sibirica*), and argali (*Ovis ammon*) are all found in Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area, the sole area where livestock is prohibited. Przewalski's horse or takhi (*Equus ferus przewalskii*) occurs in three protected areas. Mongolian gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*) and saiga (*Saiga mongolica*) are found in eastern Mongolia that I did not visit. I also did not visit northern Mongolia, so will not mention wildlife found there (see Batsaikhan et al. 2014).

Imagine a mountainous country of three million people with 50 times that number in livestock. Snow leopard/ibex/argali conservation efforts are successful throughout central and western Mongolia, where snow leopards occur. Yet in lower elevations, wildlife is often scarce throughout Mongolia, even in protected areas. Why is this? In one word: livestock. Livestock - cows, sheep, horses, goats - graze up to the mountain foothills throughout Mongolia, and herders manage

their private herds. With the single exception of Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area, a nature reserve in the drier part of the Gobi desert, situated in the southwestern part of Mongolia at the border with China, all areas have livestock. Moreover there is no private land, so Garrett Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons applies (Hardin 1968). Numbers of livestock, not quality, is the measure of success. Goats are raised mainly for wool production.

The presence of livestock, which implies wildlife below mountain slopes, is rare and often non-existent. In the high elevations of snow leopard-land, all is generally well (away from international borders where poaching is a threat) because there is less livestock. Below all is not well. Herders have all day to add to their meager income by killing wildlife. Bactrian camels are relegated to Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area, while their domestic counterparts graze in plain view throughout Mongolia. Elsewhere, Bactrian camels do not occur and gazelle are hunted. Without private land, small-scale gold mining is done anywhere anyone wants. No real protection for wildlife exists outside protected areas. Protected areas lack staff to adequately patrol. Wildlife is skittish.

Closer to international borders in western Mongolia (Russia, Kazakhstan and China), poaching is a threat, but here snow leopard programs are well supported by park rangers and international NGOs,

including WWF, Snow Leopard Conservancy, Snow Leopard Trust, and Panthera. Even TNC has a piece of the action.

In Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area (the only protected area without livestock grazing), Gobi bear occurs. Less than 50 individuals (the current estimate is 38) remain. A long-term study and monitoring program has been underway for at least a decade. Global climate change is the main threat, causing a lack of food in late April and early May. Feeding stations are stocked from mid-April to early May, when bears emerge from hibernation. Without supplemental food, it is believed the bears would disappear. A genetic study is underway to determine if inbreeding is an issue (most likely it is).

Przewalski's horse, or takhi, has never been domesticated and is the world's only true wild horse. Przewalski's horse has been successfully introduced into three protected areas in Mongolia. One of the areas, Khustai, southwest of UlaanBataar, also has elk (*Cervus elephus*). Another reintroduction site is Great Gobi B Strictly Protected Area (that has livestock), located at the western edge of the Gobi desert in southwestern Mongolia and bordering China, but the presence of livestock and herders poses a threat to wildlife.

Snow Leopard, Argali, Ibex

Snow leopard conservation efforts have a long history in central and western Mongolia. WWF, TNC, Snow Leopard Conservancy, Snow Leopard Trust, and Mongolia academic institutions and the park service are all involved. As mentioned above, close to international borders, the main threat is poaching. Argali, ibex, and snow leopards are found at high elevations where livestock rarely ventures, probably because of the presence of snow leopard and wolf (*Canis lupus*). Below high elevation (that likely varies from place to place depending on the elevation of lower mountain slopes merging into rolling hills and plains), livestock and



**Jim Sanderson and Rod Jackson of the Snow Leopard Conservancy, at the International Snow Leopard Conference in Altai Republic, Russia.**

herders pose a significant threat to wildlife.

Manul conservation appears to be more difficult than snow leopard conservation. This is because manul are limited by >10cm of snow in higher elevations, and are found mostly in lower elevations than snow leopards, where livestock grazing is extensive and herders have all day to kill Siberian (or Mongolian) marmot (*Marmota sibirica*) and manul.

Manul are found where the following conditions are satisfied:

- (1) rodent prey that does not hibernate [gerbils (*Meriones spp.*), hamsters (*Crictulus spp.*), alpine pika (*Ochotona alpina*), voles (*Microtus spp.*), and other species];
- (2) marmot that excavate holes where manul den [Asian badger (*Meles leucurus*), most likely discourage manul];
- (3) lack of snow cover >10cm since manul cannot dig through snow to reach prey.

Manul co-occur with snow leopards in high elevations where snow or ice cover does not persist for more than a few days. Indeed, most records of manul come by camera traps set for snow leopards.

Great Gobi B Strictly Protected Area is a nature reserve in the western Gobi desert, situated in south-western Mongolia adjacent to China. Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area is a larger reserve in a drier part of the Gobi further to the east. Established in 1975 and declared an International Biosphere Reserve in 1991, the Gobi B is about 9,000 km<sup>2</sup> (900,000 ha) of desert steppe, arid mountains, and deserts. Temperatures range from -40 °C (= -40 °F) in winter to +40 °C (104 °F) in summer. Average snow cover lasts 97 days per year (not good for manul). There are low mountains in the east of the reserve and rolling hills in the west (livestock). The lowest parts are about 1000m and 2840m on the Chinese border.

Przewalski's horse, which was completely extinct in the wild, has been reintroduced to Gobi B. Other larger ungulates found in the reserve are goitered gazelle and the Mongolian wild ass. Bactrian camels are not found in Gobi B. Siberian ibex are common in the mountains, whereas argali have become rare.



**Pallas's cats inhabit barren, treeless landscapes, where they use marmot excavation holes as dens.**

The main predator is the grey wolf. Snow leopards and lynx are rare. Smaller carnivores are red fox, corsac fox, manul, and wildcat. Several years ago, an estimated 110 families with nearly 60,000 head of livestock (545 head per family) lived in the reserve. In areas where there is livestock there are few marmots and hence few manul.

International Snow Leopard Conference, Altai Republic, Russia

We attended the conference for two days. I gave the third camera trap data processing workshop. WWF Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan were most interested in using the methodology. A Russian colleague said he had many hundreds of thousands of pictures from the Russian Far East that he would like to analyze but he needed help.

Rod Jackson, Snow Leopard Conservancy, presented an interesting talk on the current estimated snow leopard population. His numbers were 4,500 – 7,000 individuals. This number and slower rate of decline indicate that snow leopards should be assessed at Vulnerable and no longer IUCN Red List Endangered. Note that the most recent assessment is based on new knowledge and not attributed to conservation efforts alone. Conservation efforts are vital in China, since China borders all range countries but Uzbekistan (that shares its

snow leopards with Kyrgyzstan). Numerous conservation programs are active in all the range countries.

### Summary

With extensive heavy grazing throughout Mongolia, even in all protected areas except Great Gobi A that is an extreme stony desert, conservation efforts are vital for manul. In Great Gobi A, the Gobi bear continues to hold onto the edge of extinction. Harry Reynolds, who started the Gobi Bear Research Center, told me he personally provided much of the funding to keep the project running. The center is one ger, a tented camp with a few Russian-made 4WD vans, a Mongolian museum counter-



**The manul, also known as the Pallas's cat, is a solitary and secretive feline. Slow but purposeful in its movements, it uses its environment to conceal itself and blend into its background. A stocky build, dense coat that is nearly twice as long on the under parts and tail as it is on the top and sides, and low set, rounded ears are all adaptations to conserve heat in the frigid temperatures of its habitat. Photo by Nancy Vandermey.**



**Month old kittens huddle together in their cozy den. This litter was born in captivity at the EFBC Feline Conservation Center, but they appear much as they would in nature if their mother had used a marmot hole for a den. Photo by Nancy Vandermey.**

part, and a dozen Mongolia students. Bactrian camels, goitered gazelle, and wild ass are found in Gobi A, but live sparsely in very small groups or solitary and travel from oasis to oasis, often long distances over stony tableland desert. Able to hear approaching vehicles at a great distance, they are shy and flee at once.

Przewalski's horse is found in three protected areas (Hustai and Gobi B are the largest, but not Gobi A) and an attempt is being made to establish another population in Kazakhstan. Snow leopard conservation efforts are widespread and well-funded, enough to support attendance at international meetings. By default, wolves, ibex, argali, and other wildlife are covered but not monitored under this umbrella. Livestock is found in the rolling hills and plains; consequently marmot and manul are cleaned out by herders. Thus, there is an apparent mid-elevation below >10cm snow and above livestock herds where marmots and manul might continue to exist.

We do not know, because camera trap efforts are at high elevation for focal snow leopards. Eurasian lynx, manul, wildcat, marmot, and other species are simply considered by-catch. Hence, the need for more camera trap data processing workshops and more extensive camera trap monitoring programs that cover lower elevations.

#### Tost Mountains

There are few manul in the Tost Mountains, Mongolia. Tost Mountain lowlands are similar to Gobi A lowlands: a hilly sand desert with shrubs lacking a stony substrate needed for marmot dens. Marmot dens always have rocks outside the den indicating a substrate laced with rocks. While there are snow leopards in the high elevations, Tost Mountains are more likely to have wildcat in lower elevations. The site, three hours' drive SE of UlaanBataar, where Steve Ross did bios PhD research on manul, is far better habitat for manul than Tost mountains. Currently nothing is going on in this area.

Sailugemsky Nature Reserve, Altai Republic, Russia



**Adorably cute five week old manual kittens. Thankfully, through field research and captive breeding, we are broadening our understanding of this unique feline species. Photo by Nancy Vandermey.**

Ongoing camera trap efforts in Sailugemsky Nature Reserve and surrounding areas in southeastern Altai Republic has a good population of marmots and manul. There is also grazing and cameras are regularly stolen by herders. WWF Russia has a new two-story office nearby and the park service has new well-built field buildings.

#### Predicting The Future

It could be that we are witnessing the last generation of herders. This will be accompanied by a sharp decrease in the number of livestock. Most herding families now have solar PV, batteries, flat-screen TVs, and a dish to receive television broadcasts. Children see a different life on television. In fact, the television is the most important form of entertainment. Herding families are large, but children are sent away to receive their education. These children are likely more educated than their parents. Armed with mobile phones and other modern conveniences that enable a different lifestyle, more educated young people might decide that the traditional herding lifestyle is not for them. For wildlife, such a trend cannot arrive sooner. The presence of solar PV and LED screens that lead children to attend school might well prove to be the most important conservation strategy. While education is free to all Mongolians, schools lack resources. Since children live at the school, upgrading their standards might well lead to a sustained decrease in livestock numbers. Probably not more than six years has passed since herders acquired flat TV screens. In another 20 years, we will know.

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# Moving 25 Big Cats to a New Home

By Phyllis Parks

I have been a volunteer with Central Florida Animal Reserve and its predecessor for 19 years. In that time, there have been many changes, lots of plans for bigger and better, lots of smiles, and lots of tears. In the last four years, we have been constructing a new home for our lions, tigers, cougars, and leopards, with the goal of a better home for them, an easier site for staff to work, the expansion of our educational program, and the opportunity to grow as an organization.

Our previous facility was “inherited” and so many things were not done as we wished. Of course, as you all know from your own facilities or from building a home, there are always things you wish you had done differently, no matter how many times you look at the plans. Given more land, we thought there was room for all our hopes. Then you have to work around protected plants and protected species, required setbacks from roads and wetlands, and suddenly things shrink. The next factor to finding solutions is a tight budget, so things shrink again. But we still managed to live up to most of our goals.

On the plus side, the old facility had a lot of tree coverage for shade and privacy. This could also be a negative during Florida hurricanes. At the new facility, there were few trees of any size. We designed



**Overview of the new site with the tiger pole barn habitats.**

our new enclosures based on a pole barn. The structures were composed of 8x8 poles, set in six feet of concrete, all engineered to meet the 145 mph wind load required in our area. The metal roofs eliminated the need for installing and taking down tarps for additional water and sun protection. This method did require some special construction skills. It did not fit fencing, and did not fit carpentry. Our sources were limited, but we did find someone to help.

Another of the issues at the previous site was a common wall to enclosures, an ongoing problem as neighbors didn't get along. We were determined there would be none of this at the new site. So some of the “barns” are single enclosures, with either one or two residents, and others are “duplexes” with two single enclosures separated by a work space in the center. Another plus of this arrangement is staff is covered during bad weather.

The new enclosures have a shift cage for each cat, and we feed in the shift cage. This allows us to better monitor the food intake of the cats and avoids any food aggression. The cats have adapted to the new system quickly.

During our construction, a contractor donated elliptical concrete culverts for many of the dens, as well as round culverts, which were cut, laid flat, and bottoms plumbed and poured as tubs. Previously, we had used steel cattle

troughs, which tended to rust and needed replacement every few years. We are hoping the dens and tubs will be permanent. The cats seem to really like them.

After all the hard work, hammering hundreds of thousands of nails, digging ditches, begging and pleading with contractors, and bribing volunteers, the big day was actually going to happen!

We had made arrangements with Loving Friends Transport to assist in the relocation. They provided a large, air-conditioned transport truck capable of holding five transport cages at a time, along with a few senior handlers, all in comfort, which made the trip smooth and easy for all.



**The vet staff sedates Kukla cougar in preparation to be loaded into a van and transported to the new site.**

Our FWC inspector plus three others were the escort for our group on each of the days. He was there in the planning process and wanted to be a part of the move. They were courteous and respectful of our knowledge of the cats, and the need to keep only familiar faces close by. Should there have been any issue with outsiders, or with a cat, it was reassuring to have them there. As Robert O'Horo, the inspector who spoke at the convention said, it is better to have them involved upfront so, should something happen, they know first-hand and can address the situation immediately.

The last few months, we had to confirm dates with all necessary groups. We needed senior handlers, a vet, the transport company, and Florida Wildlife Commis-



**Staff moving Anpawi from the transport vehicle to the new habitat awaiting the tiger.**

sion all on hand for the move. Licenses from FWC and USDA had to be confirmed. Our transport cages had to be renovated to fit the newest requirements of FWC as well as the transport company. Access to all enclosures at the current and new sites had to be inspected to be sure we had clear access to all cats to load, then for ease of placement.

Items needed for the first few days at the new site had to be in place. Water had to be tested, food had to be delivered, cleaning and food prep tools present on site and, of course, staff arranged not just for the new site, but since the process was scheduled for three days, for the old site as well!

We are fortunate to have eight licensed staff members and 30 additional staff members. Not everyone, however, was available every day. Some staff members are better at the maintenance end of things than the animal care end. Some staff



**Keke cougar in her new concrete culvert den.**

members are relatively new and inexperienced. As you all know, there is a big turn-over in volunteers. So finding the right combination of people available to do all the necessary jobs for three days at two sites, plus on the road, was not the easiest task.

Keeping the dates quiet was another chore. We needed staff to know when, where, and what, but to keep things quiet to avoid people who had in mind to help, but would only be added stress to the staff

and the cats. No onlookers. No press till we say. Moving is difficult anytime! But with cats that have never been away from their home, do not care for change, and do not care for strangers, it could be a real problem.

The first big day was set for July 22nd. As of July 21st, there was still a “punch list” of things to complete. All staff, other than those usually there on Saturday, was instructed to stay out of sight and sound until told otherwise. When I arrived at the “old” site, I was still checking text and sending a list of the first round of cats to be sure their enclosures were ready. The Saturday crew had the first five cats in their transports and ready to go! After they were loaded in the truck, staff was free to come in and start other tasks.

Off went our first five cats! What a big moment. I did not cry at the time, too much to do, but I am tearing up now, thinking what a momentous occasion it was. This was something we had dreamed of for years and worked so hard for for so long. Of course, all those we lost through the years, two- and four-legged, who would not get to share the joy came to mind.

Then I got the text that they were there! All five were unloaded and all went well! Now to load the next five!

It had been pre-decided that the smaller cats, two cougars, and a melanistic (black) leopard, would be more comfortable traveling in my minivan rather than in a large truck with tigers. Since none of these three had had a physical recently, we took the opportunity to check them out completely. Once the second five tigers were loaded, the vet sedated the first of the cougars so we could draw blood, clip a problem nail, do a physical exam, and load her. Of course, my girl was perfect! She woke up about half way through the trip and, when we reached her new home, we put the transport in place and she walked right out and into her new home.

Most of the cats were not sedated completely. It was determined that they would do better just keeping them mellow and alert. Otherwise,



**Anpawi entering the new enclosure. The move was far more stressful for the humans than the felines.**

the time under would be too long, and loading and unloading a 400-600 pound cat that is knocked out is not easy! Our experience proved this to be the way to go.

Actually, it was amazing to watch as the three days progressed and each load found his or her new homes; almost every cat walked in proudly and just seemed “at home.” Some seemed to have a different personality, more confident, like they knew this was all done for them and they are all special.

It has been three weeks now and, yes, there have been the usual issues with a move. Who brought toilet tissue? Do you know where the reset button is for the well? Which enclosure is Mickey in?

Actually moving 25 big cats was easy! Moving 30 plus staff was the more difficult task!



**Mickey and Raz sharing a tub for a relax afternoon soak.**

## Blast from the Past: The Geoffroy's Cat

*Editor's note: Much of this well researched article from 1980 still rings true, with the exception that Geoffroy's cats were upgraded to CITES Appendix I protection status in 1992. Though not listed as an endangered species by U.S. Fish and Wildlife, nonetheless this species enjoys maximum protection internationally and international commerce of live animals or their pelts is restricted to scientific and conservation purposes only.*

Long Island Ocelot Club Newsletter  
March/April 1980  
Volume 25 Number 2

By Patricia Nell Warren

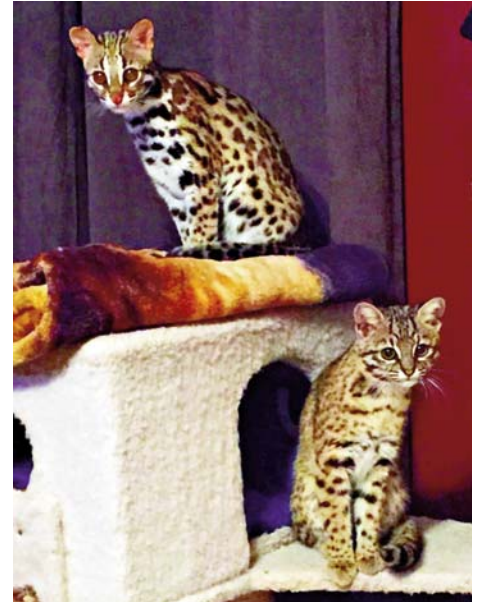
For centuries, the Geoffroy's cat has had the dubious honor of being one of the smallest and most ignored felines in the world. But these days, this fairly gentle wildcat is a little better known – in a good news/bad news sort of way.

First the good news. American cat folks are becoming aware of the beauty and fascination of the smaller wildcats. Examples: A recent *Cats Magazine* article

import of endangered species, one doesn't see many ocelot or cheetah or leopard coats walking around Manhattan these days. This lady, however, had a coat that was made unmistakably from Geoffroy's pelts. And the Geoffroy's cat is not currently listed as endangered. To make the coat, the furrier had used only the backs. These are the choice portions because the markings are arranged in neat rows along the spine. An exhibitor who knew something about the furrier business sadly estimated around 100 cats had been killed to provide a few moments of chic for one uncaring New Yorker.

Just what is this good-tempered little cat with the funny name? I don't own any Geoffroy's cats, but I know a number of people who do. Thus I have had the opportunity to visit them and their cats.

The Geoffroy's cat, fondly called "G cat" by some of its admirers, is native to the southern half of South America. Its scientific name, *Leopardus geoffroyi*, derives its name from the name of a 19th century French biologist, Isidore Geoffroy St. Hilaire, who traveled Latin America. However, the first Europeans to actually note the cat's description for scientific posterity were d'Orbigny and



Asian leopard cat above, Geoffroy's cat front right. Both are similarly sized small felines, with the leopard cat having larger markings, and the Geoffroy's cat having a rounder face. Photo by Sheri DeFlorio.

Gervais in 1843.

Long before the Europeans of course, the Indians knew the Geoffroy's cat at close hand. A number of ancient South American textiles have startling designs of small spotted cats with long tails. Some of these could be Geoffroy's cats. The pre-Columbian Indians stood in awe

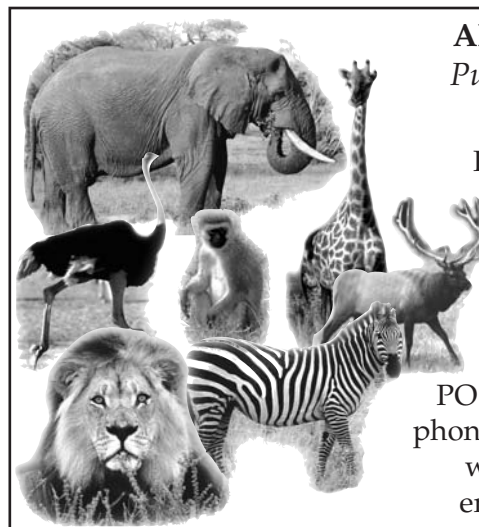


Private owners who hand-raise Geoffroy's cats as pets swear that they have the kindest disposition of all the wildcats. Photo by Lynn Culver.

celebrated the Pallas' cat. The leopard cat enjoys a long standing appreciation. Last year, the Western Reserve Cat Club (a Midwest CFA club) held a benefit show in order to purchase a pair of captive-born Geoffroy's for the Cleveland Zoo. The club is proud of "their" cats and eager to educate the public about them.

Now for the bad news. Though never fashionable in its own right, the gentle Geoffroy's is hunted for its pelt as a legal substitute for the now illegal ocelot.

At a recent Empire cat show in New York City, a visiting spectator drew indignant stares from visitors. She was wearing a mid-length coat made of real spotted cat. Because of the new restriction on the



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of cats. They worshipped the big ones – jaguars, cougars – and they also respected the little ones. The gentler of the small species were semi-domesticated, kept as pets or for rodent control. If the Spanish Conquest hadn't destroyed Indian culture, it might have developed its own domestic cat.

Geoffroy's cats are among the tiniest



**Melanistic and spotted Geoffroy's kittens are litter-mates. Photo by Lynn Culver.**

wildcats on earth. A grown Geoffroy's male might tip the scale at 12 pounds. The mature female runs as little as six pounds. Thus, they compare in size to the domestic cat.

They have a wide distribution in the southern hemisphere - over more than 30 degrees of latitude, which is nearly 2500 miles. The cat has been recorded north of 20 degrees latitude, in Bolivia. In between, it frequents parts of Uruguay and southwestern Brazil. And it has been seen south of 50 degrees on the Rio Gallegos in Patagonia. Apparently, the Geoffroy's cat is found only on the east side of the Andes. West of the continental divide in Chile, is found the rare kodkod. For a long time, the kodkod was confused with the Geoffroy's. But now it is recognized as a distinct species.

The Geoffroy's is a rugged little cat. It has to be. It thrives in some of the most forbidding terrain on earth. In Bolivia, for instance, it is found at 12,000 feet on the antiplano. This is a vast, barren, windswept plateau glittering with salt flats. Poverty stricken Indians scratch out a living growing potatoes in the poor soil.

In northwestern Argentina, the cat is found right in the Andes. Many Geoffroy's cats are found in the Gran Chaco. This vast central lowland lay along the eastern slope of the Andes, mainly in

northwestern Argentina. Part of the Caco is known as "the green hell." It is swampy and forested. There, the Geoffroy's cat has to contend with swarms of stinging insects, summer, and the hottest temperatures in all of South America. Other parts of the Chaco are dry. There is open, rolling bush country, alkalai flats, and little forests of quebracha trees.

There, the Geoffroy's cat is at home amid the thorn bushes, giant cactus, and low grasses. But the most intriguing haunt of this cat is Patagonia, that vast and sparsely inhabited southern quarter of Argentina.

In Patagonia, powerful and cold winds are always blowing. Dust storms drift along the horizons. Stretches of the dry prairie support lonely estancias, or sheep ranches. The last handful of aboriginal Indians, the Tehuelche live there.

For a living, the Geoffroy's cat can hunt little desert rodents such as the cuis or the murine opossum. Or he can try to catch rare birds like the tinamou and the tawny-throated dotterel. In the southern hemisphere, the Geoffroy's cat, the cougar, and the pampas cat are the only felines found south of 50 degrees. All three species range down to the Strait. And both the pampas cat and the cougar have longer or heavier coats.

That leaves the Geoffroy's cat as the only truly short-haired cat to thrive so far from the equator - how does he manage?

Because of their wide north-south range, Geoffroy's cats obey some basic rules of wild animal genetics. The bigger specimens are found near the poles. Their larger size evolved as a thermodynamic trick to help conserve body heat. The smaller specimens get along better toward the equator. Thus, the biggest Geoffroy's are found in Patagonia and the smallest in the Gran Chaco. The Geoffroy's has also improved his chances of survival by evolving a special type of short coat. Closer to the equator, the coarse coat does lie close to the

body to help fight the heat. But down toward the South Pole, the coat becomes longer and bristly. It's resilient, water-proof like a seal's pelt. The stiff guard hairs are very shiny; the undercoat is plush and dense. Finally, the Geoffroy's cat tints his coat to blend with the geography where he lives. The big cats from Patagonia have a ghostly pale look, light tan or silvery gray. This gives them more camouflage in the dusty desert or in snow and fog.

By contrast, the little Geoffroy's from the subtropic Chaco have a burnt orange or egg yolk color. This helps them blend in among trees and grasses. In the wooded reaches of the cats' range, one also finds a good number of the rare melanistic specimens. These cats have a dark brown ground color. The spots show only when sunlight strikes and only at a certain angle. One of the two animals donated to the Cleveland zoo was such a "black."

Dots are the theme of the Geoffroy's markings. By contrast, the ocelot or oncilla usually wear some type of rosettes. And the margay wears large egg-shaped spots.

The body of the Geoffroy's cat is covered by small dots, evenly spaced. The dots travel down his legs, shrinking in size to pin-sized dots on his toes. Sometimes the dots cluster into loose rosettes. There may be a few tabby barrings on the lower shoulder and haunch. The head is attractively streaked and dotted.

The tail is dotted and ringed. Even each



**The body of the Geoffroy's cat is covered by small dots, evenly spaced. The head is attractively streaked and dotted, and tail is dotted and ringed. Photo by Lynn Culver.**



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whisker sprouts from a tiny black dot.

Of special interest are three white dots found on the very tip of the tail and the other found on the backs of the neat, rounded ears. The ear dots are found on the backs of most wildcat species, both large and small, and are called ocelli.

The paw pads are usually dark. Eye color ranges from clear gold to smoky amber. The nose leather is usually brick red. On a Geoffroy's that carries the melanistic recessive gene, these markings are usually very heavy and dark. The nose leather may even be black.

To date, as far as I know, the new biologists have not dignified this cat with a formal and long term study in the wild. But



**Geoffroy's cats breed fairly easily in captivity. This female nurses her kitten on her owner's bed and let Sheri handle the it from birth. Photo by Sheri DeFlorio.**

Avenue with their pet ocelot on a leash.

In the wild, the Geoffroy's cat is not a creature of wide open spaces. He likes to keep cover handy. He stays in the rocks or the brush. As a pet in the home, he doesn't cross a large room directly, but zigzags happily from beneath one chair to another.

Though they don't mind climbing trees, they are mainly terrestrial. They are bold hunters and will try to take prey far bigger than themselves. I once heard of a pet Geoffroy's who got loose and grabbed a turkey gobbler by the neck.

During mating, the male sometimes carries the female around by the scruff like a kitten.

Litters are small, only two or three kits. The babies are born with their plushy undercoats fully spotted. Like most wildcats, the mother probably rears them on her own without help from the male. Sexual maturity usually comes at about one and a half years, although I heard of one precocious male who sired at ten months.

Geoffroy's cats breed fairly easily in captivity. One man I know has a wild-born female who is quite tame and nests casually in his closet or bureau drawer. She lets him handle the kittens from birth.

Many of the Geoffroy's cats now in the U.S. are second- and third-generation domestic. There are enough unrelated bloodlines to maintain genetic vigor.

Private owners who hand-raise them as pets swear that they have the kindest disposition of all the wildcats. In fact, in recent years there has been a kind of trend toward Geoffroy's cats; of course, when not hand-reared, they show the same wariness as any wildcat.

we do have quite a bit of knowledge about the cat thanks to his sojourns in captivity.

Most of the original imports came in by mistake, passed off as ocelots by ignorant or dishonest animal dealers. This was during the great "ocelot craze" of the 50s when everybody wanted to walk down Fifth



**Geoffroy's cat performs the "meerkat pose" to get a better look. Photo by Paul Malagerio.**

If a male Geoffroy's has been raised with a domestic cat, he will mate her readily, and the result is a striking hybrid with all the Geoffroy's markings, including the spots on their ears.

The pet Geoffroy's response to his human in many ways is uniquely his own. The Geoffroy's cat has a very loud purr for his size. He also likes to bump gently against his owner's and give him little "kisses." One has to watch for quick, little love bites on the nose. A light tap on the head and a firm "no" and the cat quickly learns that these love bites are not good manners.

The Geoffroy's talks a lot in his hoarse, chirping, complaining little voice. People who know the different species tell me that the Geoffroy's voice is different from that of the other *Leopardus* species. For instance, the oncilla utters a sharp, bird-like cry. The ocelot has a deep, loud, harsh call.

The tame Geoffroy's cat can be aggressively curious and affectionate and not at all shy. One little female pattered straight to the door to greet me. She stood on her back legs and tapped my hand gently with a paw to make sure I noticed her. Geoffroy's cats, at least the hand-raised ones, seem to be curiously polite with their claws and don't bare them unless they mean business.



**Inca, a young Geoffroy's kitten, is displayed by educators of A Walk on the Wild Side to show the public little-known, small cat species. Photo by Olivia Robertson.**

The intelligence and sensitivity of these little cats is worth noting. Not long ago, a male Geoffroy's got hung up by the buckle of his flea collar as he darted through his swinging cat door into his outdoor run. By the time the owner noticed, the struggling cat was half choked to death. When this kind of a pickle occurs, most wildcats don't recognize their owners and go bananas if you try to help them.

However, this cat did not scratch or bite while his owner extricated him. He was drenched with sweat, and so weak with terror he could hardly walk. Nevertheless, he staggered and flopped over to his owner. There, he purred weakly, kissed him, and bumped heads with him.

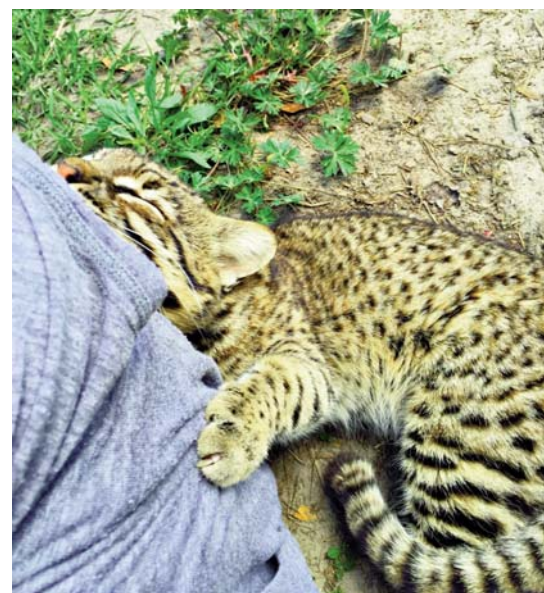
From that day on, he was more affectionate and demonstrative. Clearly he knew and remembered that his human had saved him.

Geoffroy's cats have some other curious traits, too. They like toys and they like to carry things. One Geoffroy's always carries pinecones into the house from his outdoor run so that he can bat them

around the house. Several owners report that Geoffroy's are fond of sucking on their owner's ear lobes. They adore the smell of good leather. Purses and shoes send them into an ecstasy of chin rubbing. They trot with an arched back and a tuck up like a greyhound, but they run with a curious, supple, side-winding motion like a galloping otter. Sometimes they sit straight up on their hocks, like a chipmunk, so they can see better.

When it comes to ankle rubbing, the Geoffroy's cat is not content with the mere sedate rub of the domestic. He enthusiastically flings his haunches sideways against your ankle, something like the disco step called the Bump.

Like most wildcats, Geoffroy's cats are very clean and very predictable. If litter trained, they will use a pan. If they have an outdoor run, they will pick a single spot where they will build up a neat little mound of hard, whitish pellets.



**Geoffroy's cat rubs affectionately on his owner's leg. Photo by Sheri DeFlorio.**

Both males and females spray when grown. This is territorial behavior. One connoisseur tells me that he can distinguish the smell of Geoffroy's from that of the other small wildcats.

They like raw chicken necks or wings. One owner has a commercial meat grinder and makes a special "hamburger" for his four Geoffroy's. It consists of raw beef hearts, chicken necks, and Vionate. A few cats can be coned into eating Zupreem or other commercial calcium-rich diets.

Like all wildcats, they adore greens. They like to chew coarse grass and have a healthy vomit - nature's way of ridding them of hairballs and some parasites.

The Geoffroy's cat in the wild pits his ten pounds and his bristles against some of the most rugged terrain on earth. He is truly a stormy little petrel among the cats. He makes his home where the gales of the Roaring Forties sweep across the bottom of the world.

We could do worse than link our own future survival as a species with that of this fascinating little cat.

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## Stories of Tsavo Cheetah Project: Saving Cheetah Lives

By Cherie Schroff

On December 15th, we received a call from the Taita chief of Maktau, reporting a female cheetah taking goats from some homesteads not far (eight kilometers) from the gate into Taita Hill Wildlife Sanctuary. This report came only a few weeks after we met with this chief and discussed the school programs and any potential issues with predators in the town. We left him several business cards and handouts about the cheetah and were to reconvene a month later at a community forum. However, our visit came sooner.

dence of bite marks, which would have been much easier to confirm while the animals was still intact, but based on the habitat and with cheetah spoor found at an intermediate location, while none of the leopard, we moved forward in documenting these two cases as *probable* goat depredation by a cheetah and requested a photo of the cheetah if she returns. One of the men



**Upon our initial visit, goats were still left to graze unsupervised during daytime hours. In the first photo, grazing all the way by the town railway tracks in cheetah habitat.**



**Maktau, new boma constructed to keep goats in overnight.**

As we reached Maktau, he accompanied my assistant and me to two particular homesteads that were experiencing present incidents of livestock loss, namely goats. Like all of our initial visits, upon reports we document information on when exactly the incident occurred, if anyone saw the incident, if anyone was watching the goats at the time, and ask the person to point out which predator it was if they saw it, on a sheet we bring with us. The two men on these occasions were elderly and were quick to point out the cheetah and also described its behavior correctly. My assistant, Jeremy, also Taita, had to translate for me as they knew very little English, but even from their mannerisms I knew this was in fact a cheetah that they had seen. Now we just needed to figure out if in fact a cheetah attacked the goats as the men claimed she had, and why.

The five goats were deceased and we were shown their hides. Three had evi-

attack; three sheep had been taken overnight and residents were becoming angry. He told us that we should come immediately.

Upon arrival a few hours later, he stated that he was watching his goats more carefully and frightening the cheetah away as we had discussed. He showed us the photo of the cheetah he claimed was the same one that had been talking goats, and said that he would accompany us to the other homestead where the sheep had been taken. He and his two neighbors claimed that they themselves would not harm the cheetahs, but that this other man who owned

did have photo capability on his mobile phone and agreed. Eight days later, we received a call from the man, who wanted us to return to see a photo he had taken of the cheetah. He claimed there was another

the sheep had killed a cheetah before and also lions. We met this younger man, his wife, and children, who were all waiting outside their small, rural home. He was noticeably angry and began shouting that he could not afford to build a better boma and lose livestock, because he needed to pay his children's school fees, and he had not reported the incident to the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), because they would not offer any compensation.

We always like to encourage reporting to them first, but many residents know that the process can take months or even years, if they're going to be paid at all, so often do not report livestock loss incidents to the wildlife department. As we were able to talk with the man a bit longer and



**The chui spoor we discovered at the third man's home, who lost the sheep.**



**The state of the boma at this manyatta. It's easy to see where the cheetahs had entered for an easy meal.**

get him to calm down, we proceeded with investigating the area (his homestead and boma) for recent cheetah presence and livestock depredation. We showed him the photo on his neighbor's phone and he responded that it was the same animal, but that this one who took his sheep was "bigger" and he now also feared for his family, so he would kill it like he did the others if we did not help him or trap the cheetah.

His wife, who spoke better English, described how he had killed a cheetah about 17 months prior and two lions almost two years ago. She stated that they knew it was not legal, but because no one was helping them, they had to protect themselves. Upon investigation, the boma at its tallest point measured four feet, three inches and was lacking acacia thorn branches in some areas. The boma was certainly not lion or leopard proof and even a domestic cat could make it through on effort. There was no sign of a struggle in the boma, but outside about 15 meters we identified chui (leopard) spoor. The man had claimed the attacks had taken place inside the boma and by a cheetah, but his claims weren't correlating with evidence. There was no sign of cheetah spoor and certainly no struggle inside the boma, only normal sheep and goat prints. The man showed us the hides of the sheep, but only one skinned carcass, claiming to have sold the others already that morning.

The one hide did have evidence of bite marks and was indeed fresh, but at this point we were fairly certain that the

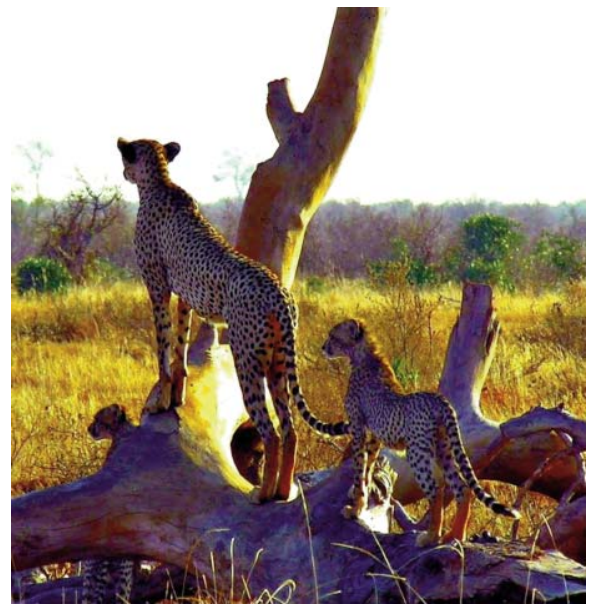
animal that attacked this one sheep, at least, was a leopard. There was also a rocky outcrop about 200 meters from the scene, so it had made sense. However, we concluded that the sheep had actually fled from the boma either to escape the leopard that was approaching, or otherwise. That is when they were attacked, as evidence of a

struggle was found

outside the boma; both sheep prints and leopard spoor were found. Nevertheless, the man still insisted that the cat was a cheetah, even with our material and the picture on the phone that we showed him. He admitted that he did not actually see the attack, but that he saw the cheetah a few days before and saw no other cats around for some time, so that had to be to one, the same one who took his neighbor's goats. We also asked him if he saw the attack that he claimed to be a cheetah 17 months ago. He replied the same, that it was the only cat that he saw around, but he didn't see that attack either. He said he had killed that cheetah because he knew it was the one who had taken his animals. However, he never saw the attack and the attack happened the same way this recent attack occurred, so in all likelihood the previous case was also a leopard attack, with a cheetah being

killed in retaliation.

This scenario is very common in Kenya, unfortunately. There are so many attacks that occur primarily in the night that are not witnessed, so the herder or resident check the cheetah off as being the culprit in areas of cheetah presence, since they see the diurnal cheetah during daylight hours. Obviously, this case indicated a need for education on the behavior and ecology of the cheetah. We knew initially that one cheetah would not kill three sheep in one night, so either the man had been mistaken or was not providing the facts. Even though, we always have to follow up with an investigation both for our own documentation and to show the



**Mama Ndara and her three cubs (sub adults) the month of the reported attack. This photo taken by Joseph, about 100 meters from his manyatta.**

resident themselves the evidence and then work on reciprocal, viable solutions, so that both livestock and cheetahs (as other predators) do not get killed. In this case, we were successful in working with all of these men through education and reconstruction advice and demonstration of the two bomas to prevent livestock escaping and being preyed upon by a leopard or any other predator. He will still occasionally phone us to let us know he has seen the cheetah and for this reason we will revisit him and his neighbors, but in these particular locations

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### Cheetah spoor found at the manyatta.

there have been no further cases of livestock loss due to any predator or any retaliatory predator killings.

In January 2017, through networks from a cheetah scout, Simon, we were alerted to an incident where a mother cheetah and her three sub-adult cubs were returning to a Maasai homestead close to the Bachuma Gate entrance of Tsavo East National Park. This Maasai family is not related to Simon's, who occupy three manyattas (settlements) several kilometers west along the stretch (closer to Voi). The middle-aged man claimed that four cheetahs kept returning to take his goats, making their way into his (shallow, makeshift) boma from across the ranches on the Mombasa road. He lost one; another was attacked but rescued by him scaring the cheetah off, though the goat later had to be slaughtered due to its injuries. He had no evidence on that day, but we did witness cheetah spoor in his direction from the park boundary.

He told us that sometimes his herd of 82 goats were attacked inside the boma in the early daytime hours, but also in the early evening hours when left to graze on the periphery of the manyattas and the Mombasa road. When asked who was in charge of watching the goats, he answered that they were left to graze on their own, because he also had cattle and it was only him, his wife, and two small children. Customarily, Maasai have their boys, from age eight to 15, watch the livestock, and younger ones tend run from any predator in sight.

While talking more extensively, joining the family for tea on a wood bench under their one shade tree, both Jeremy and Simon translated what I could not fully understand in Kiswahili. While this resident claimed to appreciate the importance of the cheetah and other wildlife in the area for the national park, he could not understand why the park could not be fenced off to keep the animals inside, therefore preventing the loss of their livestock and crops and also the retaliatory deaths of the wildlife. He went on to state that while he lives in peace with the animals because it's the nature of his tribe, that he, like his family and neighbors, will kill an animal if it causes repeated trouble for them. He confirmed, as did Simon, that his single

manyatta also had joining manyattas of his family members past Bachuma gate, and that they shared his opinion.

Solutions in this case were assisted boma improvement and Simon arranging a young man from the man's extended family to herd his goats and watch over them during the day. We also discovered that five children on his family's manyatta were students at Mashanyi Primary School, also close to Bachuma gate, so our team worked with them and promoted junior "Cheetah Scouts" on their homestead and their uncle's/cousin's, in close



### Mama Ndara inside Tsavo East, on the opposite side of the manyatta several kilometers, in 2017.

liaising with Simon and our team. The students regularly share literature and activity material from our sessions at their school with the man and their other family members, as do many other students who participate in our education program.

Simon follows up for updates on sighting and conflict with any predators in this location and the project stops by when in this area. There have been no further retaliatory killings in these manyattas since our initial meeting with this man. We have continued to receive reports of sightings on "Mama Ndara," the mother, and her three cubs are on their own now, frequently spotted by a pilot over Rukinga Sanctuary and vicinity.



### Some of the Mashanyi students promoted as "Junior Cheetah Scouts."





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

**Front Cover:** Ten week old Pallas's kitten. This kitten and two siblings were born in 2005, the first litter of this species born at the EFBC Feline Conservation Center in Rosamond, California. Photo by Nancy Vandermey.

**Back Cover:** Editor Eden Tran caught this leopard enjoying the cooler weather after an afternoon summer shower at the Saigon Zoo & Botanical Gardens, Saigon, Vietnam. The zoo was established in 1865, and is the largest in Vietnam.

