



# Feline Conservation Federation

January-March 2019 • Volume 63 Issue 1





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## JOIN THE FCF IN ITS CONSERVATION EFFORTS - WWW.FELINECONSERVATION.ORG

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.

The author's point of view does not necessarily represent the point of view of the FCF. Reproduction of any material in the *Journal* may not be made without the written permission of the original copyright owners and/or copyright owner, FCF.

Display advertisement space is available at the following prices: \$10 business card, \$25 quarter page, \$50 half page, and \$100 full page ad.

Submit articles on husbandry, conservation, current events, editorials, and photos for publication to the managing editor, Lynn Culver, at [lynnkulver57@gmail.com](mailto:lynnkulver57@gmail.com).



Feline Conservation Federation



## Letter From the President

2019 looks to be an eventful year for the FCF!

Some new board members have joined us, including new officers. Julia Wagner has been elected VP, Dawn Strasser was elected Treasurer, and Phyllis Parks was elected Secretary. We also welcome Brian Braitsch and Billie Lambert to the Board of Directors, and thank Chris Tromborg for returning to serve.

They have jumped into a maelstrom of activity with enthusiasm, and we are conducting multiple meetings this quarter in place of the usual single meeting. Members may follow these meetings on our forum in the Member's-only section of the website.

A new website design with a freshly updated FCF logo was generously funded by Lea Jaunakais of Tiger World. This new mobile-friendly layout will be easier for people on the go to visit using their phones or tablets. The updated look will be more streamlined, but all the core content you rely on will still be available. Our website host is hard at work updating forms and features to ensure everything works smoothly. We look forward to debuting it soon.

We have elected to update our handling of FCF social media accounts, including Facebook. Brian Braitsch is working with moderator Erin Patters to give us a facelift. Our old group allowed anyone, including people with an agenda not conducive to the FCF's mission, to post. Now we will have a public page people can like and follow where our moderators control the content. Public comments are still welcome, but the content of the posts will be limited to items that support our mission. Attached to that public page is a private FCF group that all FCF members are invited to join. In this less public space our members will be free to pose questions and share images that are not intended for the public.

As part of our public facelift, the Board has been discussing the name of this organization. The word "federation" is dated and implies a coalition of groups that is no longer reflective of our structure. The phrase "feline conservation" is tightly attached to this organization's mission and core activities. It is also known to officials and to our advocates. With that in mind, members of the Board have submitted a request to the secretary that members

be polled about amending our Constitution to update our organization's name to the Feline Conservation Foundation. Our FCF acronym and our website domain would still apply and not require modification. This update would place the focus of our name on the supportive work we do for feline conservation of all kinds. Please read the article on page 13.

The Board has voted to establish an Advocacy Fund that will be put to work protecting responsible owners from new laws or regulations that are not in the interests of public safety or animal welfare. At the 2018 conference, presenter



**By artist Michelle Nooney.**

Bill Hanka outlined some of the challenges facing wild cat owners at the federal level. The Board has decided to invest in his services. Board members and other interested members will be heading to Washington to share concerns. In addition, the FCF will continue to advocate for owners at the state and local level as issues arise. The Advocacy Fund will pay for lobbyist representation. We need your support.

This year has been a challenging one for me and my Conservators Center family. We suffered a catastrophic loss at our park. An intern named Alex Black was killed by a lion that was not properly secured in his shift. This incident was in no way Alex's fault. We have not made many public statements about this tragic accident out of respect for her family and recognizing the sensational nature of news reporting on any story involving big cats.

Alex's loss is heartbreaking, and we are devastated for her family. FCF members will understand the sorrow we also feel over the lion we lost during this incident. The decision to put him down was necessary, and not based on our emotion or his behavior. In the wake of this tragedy, the Center has methodically reviewed its safety policies and procedures and has retrained its staff. The Center is confident that those existing policies and procedures, when followed, are sufficient to keep the Center's visitors, staff, and animals safe.

Some news reports have misinterpreted a report drafted at the time of the incident and without further investigatory input. This report included references to statements being made by witnesses at the time of the event, when speculation was rampant. One witness indicated a drop door may have been prevented from closing properly because it was partially obstructed by a ball. The report that the gate to the shift area from which this lion escaped was obstructed from closing by a 28 inch ball is neither accurate nor plausible.

Alex's family has made clear to the Center that they want to work with the Center to ensure Alex's legacy in the zoological world, which she loved. To that end, the Conservators Center will continue to work tirelessly to develop industry best practices, advancing safety precautions internally and with other zoological parks, and will continue its mission to introduce visitors and future animal husbandry professionals to rare, threatened, and endangered species.

We recognize that there will be additional press coverage and speculation as official reports are issued. We also anticipate one or more bills to be proposed in North Carolina to restrict or ban ownership of big cats. We will advocate as needed to protect our park.

We are very appreciative of the support from within this membership and the larger industry across the U.S.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our annual conference. My apologies for my home park issue interfering with me collaborating with our host facility to set the FCF conference dates. We are hard at work and hope to shortly announce conference information on the FCF website, in emails, Facebook, and print flyers.

Mindy Stinner

# First Quarter 2019 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

The Board of Directors meeting for the first quarter of 2019 was held via the FCF forum and three phone meetings, from Jan. 1 – Feb. 15, 2019.

The results from the 2018 election were posted on Jan. 19, 2019. As a result of that election, the following are the new officers of Feline Conservation Federation for the coming two years. President – Mindy Stinner, Vice President – Julia Wagner, Secretary – Phyllis Parks, Treasurer – Dawn Strasser, Directors – Chris Tromborg, Brian Braitsch, and Billie Lambert. As such they participated in the First Quarter Board of Directors Meeting.

Treasurer's Report: \$86,738 in assets as of Dec. 23, 2018.

The minutes from the August 23, 2018 Charlotte Conference BOD meeting. Motion to accept was made by Chris Tromborg, seconded by Brian Braitsch, and approved unanimously.

Items of Discussion:

1) Engagement of lobbyist Bill Hanka of Hanka Advisor to represent our interest. During a phone interview with Mr. Hanka, the Board reviewed what he could do for us, methods of sharing our interest with him, as well as his disbursement of

information to us. The FCF needs to create an agenda of what is important to us for Bill to address in depth. The Big Cat Safety Act is a priority, but lesser known bills can set the way. The FCF also needs to address state laws. A copy of Hanka Advisors Letter of Agreement is available on the Forum.

Motion was made by Mindy to accept his proposal and engage his services, and seconded by Billie.

An advocacy fund with an annual target goal of \$20,000 was proposed by Mindy, seconded by Brian. These funds will assist in paying Hanka Advocators and funding any local or state issues the FCF finds it necessary to address. Members will be requested to donate to this fund. The motion passed.

2) The position of a non-voting advisor for Lynn Culver was suggested by Mindy, allowing us to benefit from Lynn attending board conference calls unless there is a topic that would require executive session.

3) It was discussed at the August board meeting in Charlotte, to change the name of Feline Conservation Federation to better reflect our current goals and focus on

conservation, education, and advocacy. A proposal for an amendment to Article I of the Constitution, to change the name of the organization to Feline Conservation Foundation, was made by Mindy Stinner, seconded by Brian Braitsch, and approved unanimously. Signed letters to this effect have been received from Mindy Stinner, Brian Braitsch, and Phyllis Parks.

4) Member benefits are being discussed. The proposed levels of membership and corresponding benefits and membership fees are posted on the Forum, in the Members-Only section of the website.

5) Discussion is underway for the 2019 Conference. Details will follow as they become available.

6) Changes to the FCF website, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter account proposed. Facebook will have a public page where FCF events, legal issues of interest, and news items will be posted under the control of moderators. A private Facebook group for paying members will open for our interactions with each other.

7) A conservation fund is also needed.

The meeting was adjourned by Mindy Stinner.

## FCF Advocacy Fund

Throughout life, we run into those we don't agree with. If we're lucky, we are able to chat amicably and, on a good day, we may change someone's mind to our way of thinking, or at least come to an amicable resolution. Unfortunately, however, there are those whose beliefs are so rigid they either lose sight of civility or, in some cases, just downright want to punish those who disagree with them.

In our industry, one of our greatest threats falls into that latter category - animal rights activists. The best defense we can have is knowledge, and the best offense is true and honest facts put forth in front of those who can most benefit by it. And in order for that information to make a legislative impact, it must be presented professionally.

At the last annual meeting, engaging an advocate was discussed and widely applauded by the membership.

We are incredibly fortunate to have an advocate in Bill Hanka - he's both a professional lobbyist in Washington D.C.,

and passionate about the animals he's fighting for. FCF Members have worked with Bill on several occasions, including September 2015, regarding the Captive Primate Safety Act, because of the included prohibitions regarding big cats. Those who have worked with him were taken with his ability to successfully navigate them into productive meetings and his ability to communicate reason and fairness without compromising his passion for the animals. He's provided many industry updates over the years, even though we've not been able to engage his services.

Having Bill is imperative to help FCF navigate the complexities of D.C. Capitol Hill is awash with animal rights groups spreading their message (backed too often by misinformation), with the goal of restricting ownership and ultimately taking control of our animals. We must speak up, and we must do it effectively - which means having the help of a professional who can guide us.

Bill has been working in Washington, D.C., for 31 years, including four years in the White House and six years as a House and Senate staffer, and has been a lobbyist for the past 20 years, including as president of his own firm for the past four years – Hanka Advisor. In 2008, Bill began working with UAPPEAL, a coalition of multi-species animal owners. With Bill's assistance, UAPPEAL played a major role in preventing the Captive Primate Safety Act from becoming law.

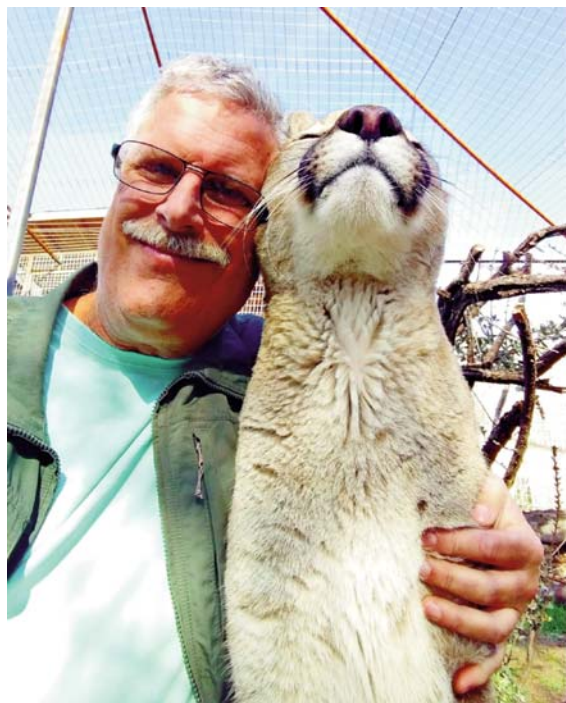
Because of the increasingly challenging political landscape for animal owners, we need the membership to act. We can only engage Bill Hanka if the members give donations to the FCF for the Advocacy Fund. The FCF is a 501(c)(3), so contributions are considered tax deductible donations. You can go to the website and use the "Support Us" page to donate by PayPal, write and mail a check, or call the treasurer with your credit card information. The FCF is counting on YOU!



## Lessons Learned from Experiencing a Tragedy

By Dale Anderson and Wendy Debbas  
Project Survival  
www.cathaven.com

It has been six years since we suffered the worst possible situation a zoo can experience. Nothing can prepare you for the loss of a member of your zoo family



**Dale Anderson and his trainers hand-rear felines starting at a young age to build a bond based on mutual respect. Dale is photographed with cougar Sam.**

by a lion that you have raised. The ramifications rippled through many lives and continue to this today. We did everything possible to make sure this type of accident would not happen, but it did, and the loss will never be recovered.

We work around animals which, under the right circumstances, have the ability to kill you or others. We take every safety precaution possible. Locks, pins, and visual cues are all tools we use to keep ourselves safe. This should be enough with well-trained people, but accidents still occur. The reason why it is not enough is that we are all human. We all can make mistakes that can lead to accidents. No matter what we do, no matter how much we train and no matter how many years of experience, we can all suffer from human error. Human error does not mean we are careless or dumb; it is a

factor that cannot be completely eliminated from any equation.

The recent accident at the Conservators Center in North Carolina, and the previous accidents at Palm Beach Zoo and Hamerton Zoo Park in the UK, highlight that terrible things can happen and we need to always be on guard. We were asked to go to North Carolina to help our friends at the Conservator Center, and anything I write here has no reflection on the cause of any of these accidents. I want to share lessons we learned from what happened at the Cat Haven six years ago.

1. Our keeper staff was well trained, as is the case with most accidents. Training is very important and retraining needs to be enforced. When I flew as a captain for an airline 30 years ago, I was flight checked every six months and had a ground class review course every year. If you did not pass these checks, you were out. It is important to review, read, and even sometimes have someone else look at how you take care of your animals as a check to keep you, your staff, and the animals safe.

2. Just because you hand-raise your animal, it does not mean it cannot hurt or possibly kill you or someone else. Our lion was hand-raised

by our staff and was tractable. If you know people that work around big predators, they all have stories of near misses. Do not be fooled into thinking my cat will never...

3. Accidents can happen at any zoo, at any time, with any animal. Some people in the zoo world and some animal activists want

to make people believe this is only a non-AZA problem. Since our accident in 2013, there have been 24 reported deaths or injuries of people and escapes of cats. The data was taken off the Born Free website, which is not the friendliest organization to private holders of exotic animals. Of the 24 reported incidents, 14 were at AZA zoos. The point here is not to disparage AZA, but to underscore that accidents can and do happen at all facilities which house animals.

4. We encountered a great deal of hostile press coverage. CNN was parked in our driveway for four days and tried to interview me at 2 am, when I was going down to check on the facility. It was chaos dealing with the press, OSHA, and the 800 plus emails; they all wanted to blame us for the tragedy. We were investigated by the sheriff's department, USDA, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and OSHA. All of those agencies found no fault with our training, records, or equipment, but that does not mean we were in the clear. We spent over a year and \$25,000 fighting OSHA. They wanted to change our procedures and methods of cleaning and feeding with no expertise in zoo keeping on their part. The Animal Legal Defense Fund jumped into the OSHA proceeding, saying they needed to represent the lion that was killed. We were able to overcome these assaults, but it was not easy.

5. The local sheriff's department



**Wendy Debbas is an important member of the Cat Haven husbandry team and a mother figure to Jet, the black leopard.**





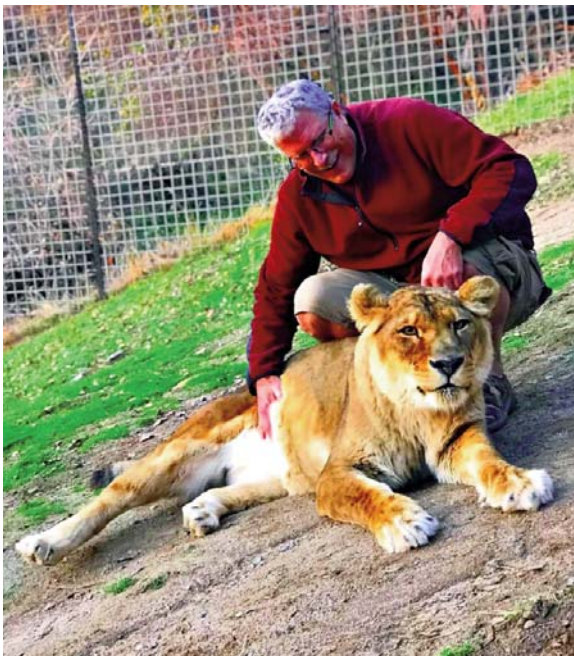
**Tango the cheetah is an ambassador who has traveled extensively to conservation events. Wendy and Tango take a break from their walk.**

responded to the 911 call made by our staff. They had a very difficult time with the situation. They were the ones who dispatched the lion and handled the investigation. They were ill equipped to handle this situation and this made things much worse. Make sure your local authorities are aware of your facility and have a plan in place for them to see. At the time of the accident, Wendy, our assistant director, and I had one of our cheetahs on an offsite program. Our head keeper was on the grounds and did an excellent job of controlling what she could. Realize that when law enforcement is involved, you might not have very much control of the scene. A good relationship with law enforcement can help.

6. Develop good relationships with others in the zoo world. We were so grateful to our friends at other facilities who helped with moral support, expertise, and advice.

7. Our job of taking care of animals does not stop after an accident. Many of us have a small staff and animal care has to continue. It is very difficult to go back out and deal with the cats jumping at the wire or acting aggressive. Many questions run through your head and fear is always a factor. This is why training is so important. It is training that keeps us focused and on track to overcome the fears we might have.

In hindsight, we survived a terrible tragedy. Nothing went back to normal; rather there is now a "new normal" at the Cat Haven. It has made us resilient to other difficult situations. Two years after the accident, we had to evacuate all 32 cats because of the Rough Fire. Under the circumstances, I think the evacuation went well. We had great help from other facilities and the support from the community. The accident is a part of



**Dale kneels next to Pele the lioness. She is 15 years old, a lifespan not achieved by wild lions in Africa.**

the Cat Haven now and there is nothing we can do to change that, but, as in all tragedies, you have to rise above or it will take you down.

Animal activists will try and use accidents like ours and at the Conservators Center to make the case that no one but AZA zoos and sanctuaries should be able to have big cats. They will try to warp people's understanding and manipulate



**Wendy is one of only a few Americans who have had the privilege of hand-rearing a snow leopard. Shes holding Jackson, named after famed snow leopard researcher Dr. Rodney Jackson.**

the media into thinking that is the case. They will use their own special language ("roadside zoos," "backyard breeders," "pseudo sanctuaries," "unaccredited," etc.) to represent private facilities as being shoddy. We need to be ready and willing to push back on this crazy talk. Accidents can and will happen when working around animals that have the ability to hurt and kill, but the record speaks clearly that AZA and sanctuaries are no different than any other facility.

We illustrated our accident on CNN this way. Everyone who drives a car has probably run a red light or stop sign. It does not mean you are a bad driver; it means you made a mistake. Nine times out of ten that mistake does nothing but embarrass the person driving, but that one time the car is T-boned and hence an accident happens. At the Cat Haven, the tenth time occurred and we lost two friends that day. Our keeper was smart and good at her job, but that day was the perfect storm that changed many lives forever.



## A New Approach for the Lion Defenders – Engaging the Women in the Villages

By Amy Dickson  
Ruaha Carnivore Project

Ruaha Carnivore Project works with the Barabaig community to stop the cultural practice of lion hunts. Our lion defenders – local young warriors - work both to reinforce traditional livestock enclosures and find lost livestock, two factors which lead to depredations and retaliatory killings. But there is also the cultural element whereby young men gain status and the attention of women through their hunting escapades. So, we decided to address the issue at the root of their shows of bravado and engage directly with the women they are hoping to impress!

Our park trip team took a group of particularly influential young women in to the national park in order to familiarize them with Ruaha Carnivore Project and give them a first-hand experience of the wildlife in the park. It was their first time visiting the park and seeing the magnificent wildlife up close and, thanks to Stephano, our community liaison officer, they were convinced to stop encouraging



**A “huddle” of lions photographed on a recent trip to Ruaha by the world-renowned wildlife photographer, Billy Dodson, African Wildlife Foundation.**

the young men to spear lions and other wildlife.

*The FCF has awarded two Conservation Grants to Ruaha Carnivore Project; \$2,000 in 2013, and \$1,000 in 2015.*

## Christmas Greetings from the Cats



**Osceola and Abiaka bobcats unwrap their Christmas gifts at Gatorland theme park and wildlife preserve in Florida. Photo by Danielle Lucas.**

**Miriam the serval is a North Georgia Zoo animal ambassador that travels to schools and events. Here she is visiting Santa’s area at the zoo, a great enrichment for her. Photo by Melissa Burns.**





## Observations of an Aspiring Exhibitor

By Bret Haughwort

As a child, my parents sometimes took me to a local nature center that had a bobcat. Seeing the ranger interact with the bobcat planted the seeds of my lifelong dream of having an exotic cat. In Connecticut, there are no provisions for having exotic animals as pets. There are, however, provisions for possessing animals used in educational programs. Thus began my aspirations of becoming a wildlife exhibitor.

As with most things these days, a good starting point is spending time researching information on the internet. Start with learning the state and county laws with which one must comply. During this process, develop a list of requirements that must be met. Aside from any state and county requirements, any commercial use of animals falls under the purview of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Contact the USDA to obtain a "Class C Exhibitor" application package and the contact information



Lynn Culver's bobcat kitten wasn't sure about Debi's big male Bengal cat. Fortunately, he's friendly to all.



Bret and Binx arrived at Debi Willoughby's home prior to attending the Belize fundraiser. Binx made himself at home and found Debi's two marmosets especially interesting.

for the local examiner. I would recommend discussing the construction of the enclosure with the examiner in advance. It is better to get instructions in advance rather than having to redo things to satisfy the examiner at inspection time.

Invariably you will have concerns about your animal's diet, health, and behavior. Having a network of people to be able to call upon is very important. Proper training in the care and handling of these animals is vital not only for keeping your animal healthy, but for protecting yourself from the actions of animal rights groups such as PETA. An exhaustive search for an appropriate training program led me to the Feline Conservation Federation (FCF).

The FCF offers a variety of courses at its annual conference. Their wildlife educator and exotic feline husbandry classes are a must for anyone wanting to get involved with exotic animals and animal exhibiting. Additionally, I would advise anyone considering getting an exotic cat to do an internship somewhere and visit with people who have these types of animals as pets. There is a tremendous commitment of time, money, and emotion involved with having these types of animals. If you cannot make the time or spare the money to get the appropriate experience, then you probably should not be considering an animal like this. Another ben-

efit of the FCF conference is the ability to gain some hands-on time with young ambassador cats in training. In my case, I not only did that, but I drove home with the lynx at the conference, having arranged this transfer several months prior.

Find an existing exhibitor to partner with on projects if you can. For my first ever public exhibit of my Eurasian lynx, Binx, I attended a Belize feline camera trapping/research project arranged by Jungle Encounters. I arrived at the home of Debi and Ed Willoughby several hours prior to departure time to give time for Binx to relax and take in new people, places, and animals.

My lynx got reacquainted with a young bobcat which it was reared with when it still lived at the home of breeder Lynn Culver. Lynn had flown up and was there with a ten week old female bobcat. The two played chase.

My Binx and Lynn Culver's bobcat kitten were on display for several hours during a private dinner and wildcat education gathering held by Debi Willoughby of Jungle Encounters. This event was in



Binx had a nice display set-up with plenty of room to play or nap. Here, Bret climbed inside to feed him his bottle.



Massachusetts, a state that does not allow public contact and limits the display of wildlife to educational presentations only. Display of wildlife for entertainment or commercial activity is not permitted. It was a great learning experience to be a part of this event. Debi is a seasoned exhibitor and provided the display caging, bedding, and toys, plus the barrier fence, ropes, and signage.

The following day, I was fortunate enough to spend time with Craig Wagner, of Great Cats World Park, during his shows at King Richard's Renaissance festival in Carver, Massachusetts. Craig spent some time with me explaining training techniques and the need for many hours of repetitious activity with your animal and rewarding the behaviors you desire. One important aspect is that you need to have a food motivated animal. To increase motivation of your animal, cut back on the size of meal portions before training activities.

It was wonderful to see Craig's act and the response of the crowd. Usually people's exposure to exotic animals happens at zoos, where they see a bored animal lying or standing around doing nothing. Here, the animals are up close and performing. One thing I learned is that your



**Lynn's little bobcat crashed out for a nap after playing with all her new toys.**

act does not have to have elaborate tricks to greatly impress the audience. Just some basic climbing and jumping around in response to your lead as you give your talk is all that is needed.

When starting to exhibit, one should probably only book private, invitation-only events such as the one I participated in for Jungle Encounters, to ensure no animal rights heckling from attendees happens. Once experience and confidence is gained, you will be better able to deal with any troublemakers. On that topic, when setting up your display, take a moment to step back and look at things with a different set of eyes. Make sure there is nothing to give

animal rights people cause to complain.

While your animal is young, you need to get it used to strange noises, people, and situations, so that it will be used to these things when it is time for the animal to "work" in shows. I frequently take Binx to the local pet store and the local state park for this training. Doing this has afforded me the opportunity to meet many people who want to attend events when held, as well as several people who are interested in conducting programs at their facilities, such as children's

summer camps.

At all times, especially when in public, safety must be first. Any incident where your animal injures someone could be a death sentence for the animal. And remember that whatever you do with your animal reflects back upon the animal-keeping community. Every negative story in the media brings us closer to the day when no one will be able to possess these types of animals.



**Wearing matching Belize T-shirts, left to right are Tabitha LaFrancisr, Lynn Culver, Debi Willoughby, and Bret Haughwort.**



**Craig Wagner introduces his little serval girl to Bret and Debi.**



## Cheetah Conservation Botswana Recipient of \$1,000 FCF Conservation Grant

*The FCF, through the support of Wildlife and Environmental Conservation (WEC), granted \$1,000 to Cheetah Conservation Botswana at the end of 2018. This is species enhancement support, part of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Interstate Commerce permit process. WEC is a Moorpark-based wildlife facility with extensive experience in raptors and wild felines. Many of WEC's raptors were rehabilitated at the facility but were unable to be released back into nature. Other animals are specifically acquired for use as educational ambassadors, such as the cheetah brothers.*

*This kind of cooperation between member facilities and the FCF benefits organizations as well as the species being protected. If other members or facilities need guidance in following F&W's Endangered Species Act interstate commerce species enhancement rules, please contact the FCF.*

By Rebecca Klein  
cheetahconservationbotswana.org

From all of us at Cheetah Conservation Botswana, we would like to thank the Feline Conservation Federation for your generous thousand-dollar donation through the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN). This was a wonderful holiday gift and we are so grateful you chose to be part of our cheetah team!

It has been an eventful year at CCB, and thanks to your support we have made some great progress in the fight to protect Botswana's wildlife, people, and their beautiful environment. We have completed some groundbreaking research work deepening our understanding of cheetah numbers and behavior on both fenced ranchlands and communal grazing lands, plus we've explored the movements of livestock to better predict conflict hotspots.

Three wildlife management areas in Western Kalahari – comprising more than 5,700 square miles – were surveyed using camera traps and spoor surveys. Cheetahs were detected in all areas, as well as all of the six large carnivore species.



**Retaliatory killings by livestock ranchers are a significant threat to cheetah. CCB has initiated a ground-breaking radio-collar study of the movements of livestock to better predict conflict hotspots.**

Following the pilot study for testing a gps device for monitoring cow movements, the research department has now placed 11 collars (five in Bere, and six in Kacgae) on cattle. The objective of the study is to monitor movements of cattle, particularly during the wet season where cattle are often not herded and can range vast distances. In particular, we are interested in how much of the wildlife management areas are being utilized by cattle, particularly outside the designated 20 km zone for cattle. Farmers will be informed monthly of where their cattle have been ranging, even if they have been returning to kraals daily, to provide further information about the distance travelled and hotspots that the cattle are utilizing. This information may provide potential insight that can be used for conflict mitigation in the future.

Two further cow collaring projects are also underway in the commercial farms. Nine collars have been placed on the Oasis farm in order to monitor cow/calf movements. As calves are much more at risk to carnivores, the farmer and CCB are interested in how often calves range with their mothers, remain in kraals, or get left in the veld. Understanding better the movements of vulnerable live-



**Cheetah populations in Africa have fallen from an estimated 12-15,000 in 2000, to around 7,000 today. CCB aims to preserve Botswana's cheetahs through scientific research, community outreach, and environmental education.**

stock can improve livestock management to reduce conflict. A further eight collars have also been placed on Kevin Grant's farm, across four paddocks. In this case, the farmer is interested in grazing patterns on the farm and how paddocks are being utilized by herds as the season progresses. In conjunction with these collars, the paddocks, with and without cattle, are being monitored with camera traps to assess whether carnivores are particularly focusing on areas where cattle are present or not. The aim is to test the perception by farmers that carnivores are following cattle rather than natural prey.

Our farmer support program has reached 272 farmers, engaging them to strengthen their livestock management approaches. Our youth education program has inspired 588 children to take pride in their national treasures. We have advanced our Communities for Conservation projects with exciting activities and consultations in the San settlements in the Western Kalahari, supporting them to develop their livelihoods to include those



that value wildlife such as cultural and ecotourism. CCB is piloting innovative carnivore deterrent devices and spearheading the Botswana Carnivore Forum, a group of like-minded conservationists working towards safeguarding all of Botswana's carnivore species.

The FCF contributions have been instrumental in making these activities possible. The FCF inspires us to keep going. With the cheetah as our flagship

species, we look forward to 2019, and further developing our programs to ensure

that this dream becomes a reality.



## Federal Judge Finds PETA Investigative Technique Unlawful

By Duane Morris LLP  
Reprinted from [www.lexology.com](http://www.lexology.com)

The animal rights group, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), has been known to utilize “undercover” video and other methods in conducting investigations of animal enterprises. One of those techniques was recently found unlawful by a federal court district. *PETA v. Tri-State Zoological Park of W. Maryland*, 2018 WL 5761689, No. 1:17-cv-02148 (D. Md. Nov. 1, 2018).

PETA brought the case under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) challenging the conditions in which defendants, a zoological park in Cumberland, Maryland, and its owners and operators, maintained certain animals. “At the direction of its counsel, and in anticipation of filing this lawsuit,” PETA collected evidence against defendants by “deploying undercover investigators who posed as volunteers offering their services to the zoo,” thereby gaining entry to the facility and denying that they had “any affiliation with an animal rights organization.” The operatives made more than 300 photographs and 70 video recordings, some of which appeared to record conversations between PETA investigators and one of the individual defendants. PETA admitted in its deposition that its agents “‘would not have asked for permission’ to record audio.”

Among other motions, defendants filed a motion for sanctions seeking to dismiss the

action for PETA having illegally obtained evidence. Specifically, defendants argued that the video tapes made by PETA operatives recorded the audio of non-consenting persons in violation of the Maryland Wiretap Act. The court agreed with defendants.

Under Maryland’s Wiretap Act, a person must obtain all parties’ consent before recording oral communications. PETA’s own internal memorandum and deposition testimony strongly suggest that certain of its video recordings also include audio.

Further PETA appears to have unlawfully recorded audio without first obtaining consent of those who were recorded. Such recordings violate the Wiretap Act and will be excluded entirely from this case.

The court declined to dismiss the case in light of “the strong public policy in favor of deciding cases on the merits,” reasoning that a lesser sanction, namely, the evidentiary exclusion — coupled with a strong warning to PETA as to future actions — would be sufficient.

As to any video recorded with audio, those videos will not be accepted as evidence for any and all purposes in future court proceedings. Exclusion of such evidence, in the Court’s view, cures any prejudice that otherwise would have been visited on Defendants. At this stage in the litigation, and now that PETA has been specifically put on notice regarding the lawful limits of its investigative techniques, the Court does not believe additional sanction is warranted. Any future violations, however, will be viewed as knowing, willful and contemptuous, and will be sanctioned accordingly.

Maryland is a so-called “two-party” state in which all participants in a recorded conversation must consent for the recording to comply with the wiretap law. Ten other states have similar laws. In other states and at the federal level, only one of the participants’ consent is needed (“one-party consent”) for the recording to be lawful.

The background of the entire section is a close-up photograph of a cheetah's face, showing its eyes, nose, and mouth. Overlaid on this image is a large red title "Donations" at the top. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text thanking donors. This is followed by two columns of names under the headings "Safety Net Fund:" and "Conservation Fund:". A third column of names is listed under the heading "Advocacy Fund:". At the bottom of the section, there is a concluding sentence: "The FCF appreciates your generosity &amp; continued support."

### Donations

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

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

#### Safety Net Fund:

John King  
Gayle Bisland

#### Advocacy Fund:

Gayle Bisland  
Robert Turner  
Mary Carlin  
Bret Haughwout

#### Conservation Fund:

Dean Harrison  
Vincent Enriquez  
Gayle Bisland  
John King  
Wildlife and Environmental Conservation

The FCF appreciates your generosity & continued support.



## The Rationale for Migrating From “Federation” To “Foundation”

*Recently, members of the new FCF Board of Directors discussed a change to the name of the organization, replacing the word “Federation” with “Foundation.” Three board members signed a Constitutional Amendment proposal that changes Article I to state the name of the corporation as Feline Conservation Foundation.*

*Proposals to amend the Constitution can be submitted by any member to the secretary during the months of February and March. Properly submitted proposals are published in the May Journal issue along with instructions for members to vote online. It takes a two-thirds majority of voters to approve any amendment and approved amendments take effect in August.*

By Dr. Chris Tromborg

The Feline Conservation Federation has demonstrated its willingness to change its organizational name in the past. From the time of the inception of the original ancestral organization in the 1950s, until today, the organization has exhibited the ability to change its identity as its mission has matured.

The original name of our ancestral organization was The Long Island Ocelot Club. This was an appropriate designation for an organization that consisted primarily of casual owners of small South American wild cats. At the time of incorporation in 1980, it adopted the name LIOC Endangered Species Conservation Federation or LIOC-ESCF for short. This change reflected a membership expanding to include individuals concerned with propagation and conservation of all wild and exotic felines. However, the title of the organization seemed increasingly inappropriate as it was too long to recite and often people resorted to the old LIOC.

Consequently in 2002, the majority of the members approved an amendment to the Articles of Constitution and the LIOC-

ESCF migrated to a new organization, the Feline Conservation Federation. For nearly two decades, this organizational title served the FCF well.

Now, the Feline Conservation Federation finds itself at another important juncture in its evolution. The FCF, as with many other conservation organizations, is experiencing an aging of and a decline in membership. The organization needs to address these trends by modifying its image.

According to The American Heritage Dictionary, the term “federation” refers to a form of governmental organization wherein sovereign power is divided between a central authority and a number of subordinate constituent political units. The term is essentially synonymous with the terms “league,” “treaty,” or “compact.” Similarly, to federate means to unite or to bring together into a league or federal union. When the use of this word was first proposed in 1980, the LIOC had state chapters and these were important divisions in the national organization. This was long before the internet and mass communication by Yahoo groups and Facebook. It was even back before cell

phones when long distance calls were charged by the minute. So people met in person at LIOC Chapter meetings, and the national organization met annually at its LIOC conventions. “Federation” fit.

The most obvious problem with the term “federation” today is its connotative value. The term has an archaic sense that implies excessive central authority. Clearly, it is stodgy.

Most contemporary conservation organizations employ terms such as “fund,” “trust,” or “foundation.” The term “foundation” seems to possess little of the troublesome qualities that the term “federation” possesses. It is an accurate term, and conveys the important message that conservation is a foundational value of the organization. Adopting the term “foundation” allows the FCF to continue to be the FCF while allowing the organization to modify its image as it expands its appeal in an attempt to increase membership.

This is an example of evolution, not revolution, and represents the newly adopted agility of the energized Feline Conservation Foundation.

## Bhuton the Snow Leopard

*The accompanying photos are Bhuton, a nine month old snow leopard from the Wild Cat Education and Conservation Fund, Rob and Barbary Dickey’s organization. Here, we see Rob and Bhuton working with a lure and meat reward in front of the audience at the annual Snow Leopard Conservancy fundraising event on February 2, 2019, at the Pomeroy Center of The San Francisco Zoo.*

*Photos by Beckett Gladney.*





## What an Adventure in Belize!

By Debi Willoughby

Have you dreamed about getting involved in wild cat research? Being out there in the field in some tropical location, knowing there are wild cats around but you cannot see them, dedicating yourself to help preserve their natural habitat? That is what four lucky people from around the country dreamed about and actually made come true when they assisted us with our trail camera work in the tropical jungles of Belize.

We here at Jungle Encounters have a long-term wild cat field conservation research project based in Belize, Central America. We currently have trail cameras set up at two research stations. One station is at the Toucan Ridge Ecology and Education Society (TREES) based in the beautiful Maya Mountains in central Belize, and the other station is at the Belize Foundation for Research & Environmental Education (BFREE) located at the foothills of the Maya Mountains in southern Belize. Last year, we promoted a group trip for people who wanted to get hands-on experience setting up trail cameras to gather data on the five species of wild cat that live in Belize, jaguar, puma, ocelot, jaguarundi, and margay. We filled the trip with people who were eager to assist us and learn about what we are doing.

We just recently got back from this memorable trip and want to share our



**Jungle Encounters has been capturing wildlife photos for several years now. Belize has numerous species of wild feline, including this jaguarundi caught on camera.**

experiences with you! In total, there were six of us: my husband, myself, two zookeepers, an environmental employee, and one person who just loves field research as a hobby.

The day we arrived in Belize, we started our trip with an authentic Belizean lunch of stew chicken, rice, and beans at a local restaurant. Then we drove into the breathtaking Maya Mountains and arrived at TREES in the late afternoon. The sun was shining and you could smell the sweet aroma of wild flowers in the air. TREES offers small rustic cabanas for sleeping in, outside showers and toilets, a grassy area for people who want to sleep in tents, a dining hall where people gather to talk and eat, and a wet lab for researchers. After we put our belongings in our cabanas, we met at the dining hall, where

I gave an overview of our Belize Wild Cat Research Project and the group learned how to get the trail cameras ready to set out in the morning. They also learned how to spot good trail camera locations and what to look out for. We enjoyed a delicious dinner that the kitchen prepared for us, and then we retired to our cabanas to get some sleep before the strenuous

hike in the morning.

The jungle was pretty quiet throughout the night and, as the sun rose, we gathered for breakfast, eager with anticipation of what we would encounter during the day! The evening before, we had discussed which trails we were going to put the cameras out on and, after a hearty breakfast, we started climbing the tropical jungle mountains. The trail was a little wet from the light rain the night before, which made it a bit slippery on the steep inclines. We taught the group about the flora and fauna of the moun-

tains as we hiked and scouted out good areas to set up the trail camera stations. The ferns and palm fronds are incredibly long and beautiful. As you walk the trails, you come across wild fruit trees growing and beautiful wild flowers like bird of paradise. The Maya Mountains are filled with broadleaf tropical jungle scattered with hidden waterfalls, streams, and watering holes. After we set up all of our cameras and logging their locations, we hiked to another location to show the group a natural swimming hole at the edge of a mountain river, as well as an amazing view of the steep Maya Mountains with a 1,000-foot waterfall in sight! Along our route back to the research station, we passed through TREE's orchard, where an abundant supply of orange and lime trees grow, filling the air with a sweet, citrusy smell. Once back at base camp, we cleaned up after the sweaty, tiring hike and enjoyed some lunch before we hit the road for our next adventure!

After driving south through the winding and hilly Maya Mountains, you come into a flat area where there are a lot of citrus farms and a couple large citrus processing plants. Again, the air smelled sweet and refreshing! After the citrus plants, all you can see are small villages surrounded by jungle or lowland scrub brush. After a while, we turned west and headed towards the second research station, BFREE. The dirt driveway into BFREE is six miles long and usually has some hard-to-pass muddy areas. Almost every time we have driven on this driveway, the vehicle we



**Another endangered feline found in Belize is the margay photographed last summer.**





**This trip allowed everyone to learn about wildlife research and set up cameras along established animal trails.**

are in has gotten stuck in the thick, clayish mud. The entrance into BFREE is where the real adventure begins! The manager of BFREE, Jacob Marlin, and I packed his small Toyota pickup with all of the luggage and equipment supplies while the group started the two-hour walk down the dirt road to get to BFREE's station. The path starts out as lowland scrub brush, morphs into grassland savannah, and ends with lowland broadleaf rainforest. It is an interesting hike with views of the Maya Mountains in the distance.

Jacob and I drove into base camp and unloaded all of the luggage and equipment and waited for our hikers to arrive. It was raining when we left them at the beginning of the driveway, which made their hike in a bit hard trying to traverse through the thick, sticky, muddy patches of the dirt road. They arrived right at dusk, tired, dirty, and hungry! But what a memorable experience they had that will last a lifetime! I showed everyone to their cabanas and shared outdoor showers/composting toilets, where they cleaned up and got ready for dinner. We all used our flashlights in the dark jungle to make our way down the trail to the dining hall, where dinner was ready and waiting for us. I introduced the team to the managers of BFREE and our field assistant, Canti, who is also a head ranger for the Belize Forest Department. We discussed the habitat surrounding BFREE and our plans on where we want to set up trail cameras, and we got the cameras ready for the morning hike. Canti and I met to catch up and discuss the details of our field work while the team relaxed in hammocks overlooking the garden area. Because BFREE is located in such an isolated area, sur-

rounded by jungle and sandwiched between nationally protected reserves, it is rich in flora and fauna. Every time we are there, we see new sights and learn new things. As we followed the light from our flashlights, we could hear the howler monkeys moving in as two troops called back and forth to each other. The nights at BFREE are pitch black and are filled with sounds of the jungle. There is a constant hum of cricket-like insects and frogs, and

throughout the night you will hear animals walking by your cabana. If the howler monkeys are in the area, the air is filled with the sound of their howls, which can be heard up to three miles away.

Each morning, you wake up to the sounds of parrots and various other birds starting their day off as the sun rises over the jungle canopy. It is a nice, peaceful way to start your day! Everyone meets at the dining hall each morning to discuss their plans for the day. Since it was our group's first visit to the jungle, Jacob gave them an overview on safety. Being deep in the jungle, you need to be extra cautious, because there are no hospitals in the immediate area. BFREE does have a helicopter pad and can call in a rescue helicopter if needed, but it's much easier to practice safe habits and avoid the rescue copter if you can! There are a lot of trees in the jungle whose protective bark is covered with thorns or spikes or even worse – burning sap. If you grab a tree as you walk by it to keep your balance, you will most likely get hurt! Also, something as simple as scratching your bug bites can land you in the hospital with a deadly staph

infection. Our bodies are not used to the microbes living in the tropical jungle, and when we scratch, those microbes which get under our fingernails can invade our skin and cause harm. And have I mentioned the venomous snakes and amphibians??? With all of that said, as long as you use common sense and safety in the jungle, you should not have any issues and can enjoy all of the beauty the jungle has to offer.

After Jacob's eye-opening speech, we filled our backpacks with water bottles and camera equipment and set out to set up our trail cameras. BFREE's terrain is pretty flat, so it is easy hiking. Easy hiking lets you enjoy the views a lot easier and Canti taught us a lot about the jungle and everything that lives in it. We saw termite nests in the trees and learned how the Mayans would break off a piece of the nest and rub it on their skin for insect repellent. We were also given the opportunity to taste the tiny termites which are rich in protein. Not everyone was brave enough to try them, but when in Rome....

My husband and I let the team set up each camera location and arm the cameras; we even let them pick a few locations so they could use their recent knowledge of how to pick a good camera site. The team did all of the work with our verbal guidance, which gave them valuable

field experience. On the last part of our hike, when we were almost back at base camp, we heard the howler monkeys again and followed them. When the howlers stopped to rest, we took the opportunity to get pictures of them in the trees. There was the head male, two females, and two babies. What a great sight for our team to see and enjoy!

In the afternoon on our way to learn about BFREE's Hicatee turtle conservation work, Jacob showed us their new cacao processing facility. BFREE has wild



**Debi showed the group how to quench their thirst from a cut vine that drips water.**



cacao trees on its property as well as a cacao garden they planted. Cacao trees are short trees that bear cacao pods. Inside the pod are seeds which can be processed and turned into dark chocolate. Jacob opened one of the cacao pods and let us sample the seeds, which are surrounded by a thick, sticky substance. The sticky substance tastes like sweet candy, almost as sweet as Starburst. It was delicious! After enjoying sucking the substance off of the seed, you can either spit the seed out or eat the seed. The seed has a

dry nutty taste to it. To process the cacao pods, you must clean the seeds and put them on large screens to dry for two weeks. Once the seeds dry, they turn a dark brown. At that point they are ready to be ground down over and over again until you get a fine, powdery substance which is what you use to make the chocolate. The whole process takes two to four weeks. I cannot imagine who designed this process. Who would think to take a sticky, sap-covered seed and go through multiple processes to turn it into chocolate??? But whoever took the time to create this, I thank you! Chocolate has made my life much happier!

After learning about how chocolate is made, we walked to the Hicatee turtle breeding compound. The Hicatee turtle is an endangered river turtle and not much is known about them. The locals have eaten them for years and say they are delicious! BFREE dug out two ponds and fenced them in to keep predators out. The ponds are filled with river water, have fresh water continuously pouring into them, and are set in a natural setting with specific trees surrounding the ponds. The turtles like to eat the fallen leaves. Without much background knowledge, BFREE has been very successful with this breeding program. They originally stocked their ponds with a few wild-caught turtles and combined them with turtles rescued from the pet trade. They have learned in just a few short years that the turtles dig their nesting holes along the edge of the ponds below water level (most turtles make their nests on dry land). During the incubation period, the water levels naturally rise and fall, which increases and decreases the water temperature, keeping the incubating eggs at opti-



**Belize has some enormous trees. Here, the group of six didn't span the diameter of this giant ceiba.**

mum temperature. Periodically, the BFREE staff search out these nesting sites and bring the eggs into the lab to hatch out in vermiculite. Their hatch rate has been very successful and they have teamed up with the Turtle Conservancy to move to the next phase of this project. Our team learned about this project and saw firsthand how everything is done, and then the discussion ended and the baby turtle pond was visited and we got to hold and see a baby Hicatee turtle up close! Turtles have never been of special interest to me, but



**At the Hicatee Turtle Conservation's breeding compound, the team got to hold a baby Hicatee turtle.**

this project is very interesting and who can resist holding a cute baby turtle!

What is next on our agenda? A jungle night hike, of course! With Canti leading the way, we headed down some trails with our headlamps on and armed with insect repellent. We came across the most venomous snake in the country, a fer-de-lance that was about three feet long. Of course we kept a safe distance, but what an amazing sight! We then focused our attention on a lagoon area, straining our eyes to see crocodiles in the water, but did not find any.

Next we came across the eye gleam of a kinkajou in a tree. Canti aimed his powerful flashlight at it so we could see it moving through the trees. What an awesome sight!

Before the sun came up the next morning, the team followed Canti to a metal tower that was built so you could climb it and see the view above the jungle canopy. It is a great place to watch the tropical birds start their morning off as they fly by. The team saw parrots and a variety of other tropical birds. While they were at the tower, I walked down to the river because my fear of heights keeps me from climbing tall towers. I silently sat at the river's edge and watched for birds flying down the river to start their day. It is a beautiful scene of a river winding through the jungle with a backslash of the distant mountains. As I took in all of the sights and sounds of the jungle morning, to my surprise I heard a jaguar calling out! I had always hoped to catch a glimpse of a jaguar, but never thought I would hear one! The sound brought me back to the days of being a zookeeper and caring for them in captivity. But to actually hear one in the wild was AMAZING! There was only one round of calls, and then the howler monkeys took over the sound waves, so I headed to the dining hall to hear about everything the team had seen on their tower climb.

This day's plans were pretty relaxing; all of the hard work of setting up the cameras was done. After checking a few cameras, we were able to spend the day relaxing and swimming in the river. The only other task we had was to set up a camera location near the river where we put scent lure out and a cardboard box.





### **No trip to Belize is complete without a snorkeling adventure to its world-famous coral reefs.**

The goal was to see if wild cats enjoy cardboard boxes like captive ones do. We smoothed the dirt around the box so we could check for paw tracks and we left the area alone for two days. When we came back, we found no signs of any animals using the box. Oh well, it was worth a try. The day ended with another night hike and a quiet night of rest; the howlers had moved on and it was easier to sleep without them “chatting” all night.

On the last morning at BFREE, I was walking by the garden and a tayra (bush dog) ran through the garden in front of me! I must have disturbed its breakfast of fallen fruit in the garden. It was a cool animal to see and reminded me of a trail

camera picture we have of one that was carrying a banana in its mouth down a path. Years ago, tayras were caught and trained like hunting dogs. They used to flush out prey animals for the local people to catch and eat. That practice is not used anymore, but what an interesting animal!

To wrap up our research, we spent the evening lounging in hammocks, reviewing the work we did, doing some data analysis on images we got off of our cameras, and we discussed ideas on how to improve our project.

On the last day of our trip, we indulged ourselves at the ocean for a snorkeling trip off of one of Belize’s many small islands (cayes). Belize sits on the western tip of the Caribbean Ocean, and their islands are surrounded by beautiful turquoise waters and white sandy beaches. The second largest barrier reef in the world runs along its coast and is dotted with over a hundred cayes. The team enjoyed the warm, clear waters while watching the colorful fish swim in and out of the corals that are close to the water’s surface. They also visited a known favorite eating spot for sea turtles and watched as one swam gracefully around.

What a great way to end an amazing trip!

Everyone in the group fully enjoyed themselves. We all brainstormed on how we can improve on our research project. The team came up with some great ideas and we cannot wait to utilize them. We all became friends on this short trip and will remember it forever. During this trip the team was introduced to our wild cat research, learned about trail cameras and how to use them, learned about trail camera placement in the field, did some hands-on analysis of the data we got off of our cameras, and learned about and saw a variety of jungle wildlife. It was a well-rounded trip that gave everyone hands-on experience in trail camera conservation work!

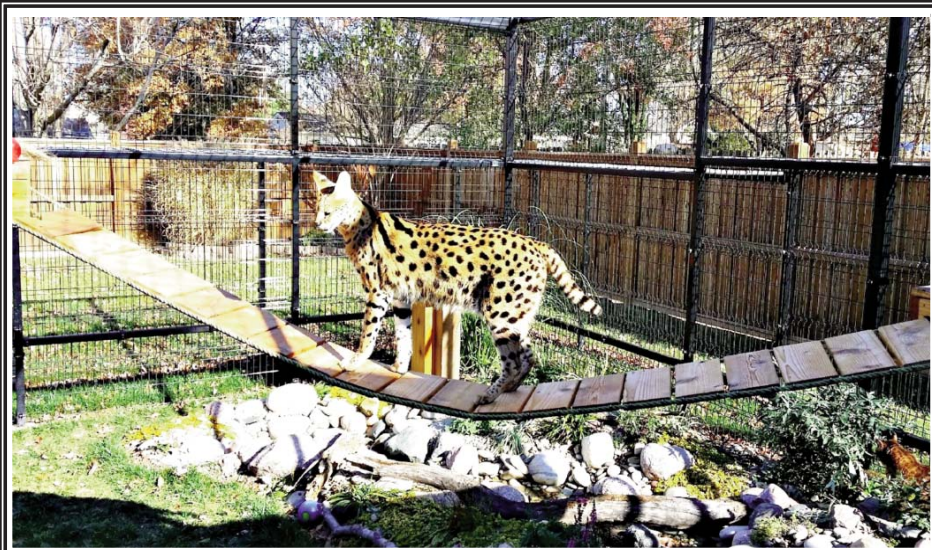
Because the team thoroughly enjoyed the trip, we are planning our next research trip. You can learn about it on our parent website: <http://www.jungleencounters.org/belize.html>. To learn more about our research, visit the research website directly at: <http://www.belizewildcats.com>. If this article excited you to join us on our next trip, please contact us at [Debi@JungleEncounters.org](mailto:Debi@JungleEncounters.org) to reserve your spot! It is a trip full of memories that you will cherish forever, as well as a great way to get some field conservation experience!

The next research trip is scheduled for January 2020, and details will be posted soon.

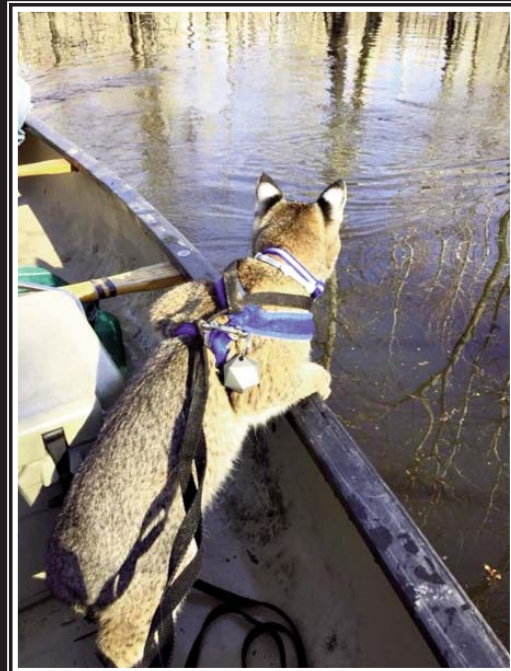


Belize has a small zoo featuring native species that have been orphaned or rehabilitated from the wild and are unsuitable for release. Some of the residents are breeding, and this visit Debi took a few photos of the zoo’s baby margay.





Okay, all you carpenters, here's a great enrichment idea!  
Mia serval loves her wooden bridge in her habitat.  
Photo by owner Nancy Sandroff.



Waylon the bobcat peers at the cypress tree knees and the watery environment from the safety of his canoe. Photo by Katherine Duck.

## Your Best Shots



"Look at me in this cool cat tree I got from Santa," says Rufus the bobcat. Photo by Ginger Mansour.



Binx the lynx cuddles with his little cat buddy. Read about Binx's exhibit debut in this Journal on page 8. Photo by Bret Haughwort.





Close-up cougar comin' at ya! Beautiful native big cat can be seen at North Georgia Zoo. Photo by Melissa Burns.



It may be a cold winter day at the North Georgia Zoo, but this African caracal still wants to go for a walk in the snow with Melissa Burns. Photo by Rachel Heck.



Max the Canada lynx is one of the ambassadors at Wildlife Education by Bernie. Bernadette provides conservation education presentations at libraries, schools, youth and senior organizations, festivals, and even birthday parties. Photo by Bernadette Hoffman.



Rachael Greer at TigerWorld in North Carolina, is the photographer of this stunning Timbavati white lion named Michael.



# King Richard's Faire Features Felines from Great Cats World Park

By Lynn Culver

Wild feline exhibitors are not as common as they once were. Many venues have been disappearing due to public opinion, USDA regulation changes, insurance requirements, escalating costs associated with the business, community ordinance and state law restrictions. For instance, photo booths and cub petting opportunities, once found at small zoos and wildlife centers, shopping malls, and state fairs, are going extinct. Traveling shows must have a strong educational message to meet many state exhibiting regulations. Ironically, for decades, as states overhauled their regulations governing wild feline owners and businesses, the circus industry enjoyed a safe carve out, almost universally exempted from draconian regulations or prohibitions. But those days are over, and now states and even city municipalities that once gave circus wildlife exemptions are actually proposing legislation that specifically prohibits the entertain-



**Only one kitten was flying to Massachusetts for the Belize fundraiser, but all of them wanted to pile into the suitcase and go.**

ment type exhibiting, and specifically, the use of wild animals in circus acts.

An evolution is happening and only exhibitors able to meet changing financial and political environments will survive. One remaining venue for wildlife exhibitors can be found at Renaissance fairs. I have been to the King Richards's Faire in Carver, Massachusetts twice; the first visit in 2009, I reviewed the "Tale of the Tiger" stage show put on by Doc Antle's T.I.G.E.R.S. trainers for *FCF Journal* readers. His show consisted of eight cats, including lots of tigers – golden, tabby, white, and snow, as well as a liger and Eurasian lynx cub. The message was a sobering account of what humanity is doing to nature and tigers in particular. It included strong encouragements to reduce waste, reuse items, and recycle.

Last October, I had another chance to see a different feline show at this same location. This time it

was Craig Wagner and felines from Great Cats World, his park in Cave Junction, Oregon. I attended with my friend Debi Willoughby, founder of Jungle Encounters, a Massachusetts-based wildlife education outreach business. Her passion for the cats led her to reorganize Jungle Encounters to focus exclusively on cat conservation. In recent years, she has set up a wildlife monitoring project in Belize, and works with the local people to keep the camera traps running. Also attending this show was an emerging feline exhibitor, Bret Haughwort, who had just concluded his first ever educational show the day before.

Having a seasoned, multi-species exhibitor and a brand new licensee accompany me to the show provided plenty of conversation and sharing of knowledge and experiences with Craig Wagner, who has been working with all cat species since the 1980s. Craig led us through the

back of the stage area and introduced us to the six performer cats. In addition to the stage show, Craig brought three kittens; a hand-raised serval born at his park and a four month old pair of mother-reared fishing cats. A habitat about 800 square feet was fenced behind the stage, which allowed the two species to have rotated access and plenty of visitors to admire



**Craig takes the serval out of the display habitat for a leash training session.**



**Donnie uses meat tidbits as enticement to train the fishing cat cub to climb the pole and walk the plank.**





**Donnie has one of the fishing cats standing for its treat.**

them. Both species were beginning their conditioning by Donnie, one of Craig's trainers. The serval, being hand-reared, was alternating between leash lessons and running wild playing with all the plants and other features inside the habitat. The fishing cat pair was being operant conditioned to climb a wooden stand and perform behaviors for food rewards. A black plastic pond afforded the aquatic felines ample opportunity to splash and play and show off their talent of fishing for minnows.

Craig's show consists of a white tiger, black leopard, cougar, Eurasian lynx, bobcat, and Geoffroy's cat. Craig brought each cat onto the stage and kept them engaged, responding to his commands to walk, climb, jump, and stand using rewards of meat treats. The adult white

tiger had only to walk onto the stage to wow the audience. Craig's stage assistant, Liz Hall, educated the viewers on the status of tigers and the threats to its survival in nature.

The King Richard's Faire stage is elevated above the audience about six feet or so. Both sides of the stage

are walled high with wooden planks so the cats cannot see what lies beyond. The top of the stage is roofed, and the back of the stage is the large wooden building that holds the cats when not performing. The audience fills the bleachers in front of the stage, making that direction uninviting to the cats. This formula results in the stage becoming a comfort zone for the feline performers. For additional safety, the big cat species, tiger, leopard, and cougar, have a lead that attaches their collars to a heavy cable that runs along the stage floor. It is a secure set-up and the cats are clearly conditioned to their routine, and I did not detect any resistance from any of the performers.

The black leopard demonstrated its jumping and climbing skills, leaping from platforms and walking across an elevated, round wooden pole. He also received meat treats, and the relationship between Craig and cat was exceptional. Craig feeds the apex predator by hand in an impressive display of trust. As soon as Craig removes a meat treat from his leather pouch and raises his arm up over his head, the leopard's front arm swiftly grabs Craig's hand and pulls it to his mouth so it can swallow the reward. This impres-



**The standing white tiger reached well over Craig's head in height.**

sive performance is repeated several times for the audience.

Craig's show presented two of the Lynx family members – a native bobcat and a Eurasian lynx. Each feline displayed affection for Craig and Liz, wandering over to her for petting. They both jumped up on the beam and walked the plank, showing off their balance skills. Craig explained the similarities and differences of the two species, their ranges, and threats these medium-sized cats face in nature.

For Debi and me, though, what really had our attention was the Geoffroy's cat. Debi purchased one of my kittens over a decade ago and, for a time, was the only



**Craig trusts his black panther to reach up, grab his arm, and pull a handful of meat into the panther's mouth.**



**The Eurasian lynx demonstrates climbing and balancing skills.**





**The bobcat was enticed to jump for a furry ball on the end of a stick.**

educator regularly using a Geoffroy's cat in educational outreach shows. Craig's Geoffroy's was also born at my place and this is the third year he has been working Renaissance shows. Sancho was a big hit. He not only performed flawlessly, but a lot of the time Craig did not even hold the

end of his leash. Clearly, this feline has no fear or anxiety about performing in front of large audiences. And even though he is smaller than a housecat, he is beautiful and a compelling sight. I cannot say for sure, but I believe that regular people were just as impressed with him as I was. Craig's running dialog describing a Geoffroy's life in the jungles not only educated, but gave the respect due this tiny, fierce predator.

Craig has been doing Renaissance fairs in Colorado for years, and added this Massachusetts venue a few years ago. I do not know how much longer these exhibit opportunities will exist; outdoor, uncaged, leash acts. Someday, unfortunately, we may only

have our memories of such wondrous events. So, if you happen to be up in New England next fall, I suggest you make a trip to Carver, Massachusetts. I highly recommend it.



**Little Sancho, the Geoffroy's cat, was fearless on stage and clearly knew his routine flawlessly.**



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# How to Deal With the Days That Follow a Fatal Accident

By Hannah Fullmer  
Husbandry Manager, Conservators Center

January 6, 2019. It took me seven days to read my first article about that day.

December 30, 2018. That day, the day that changed me.

I'm a zookeeper. I have basically always been a zookeeper. My childhood days were consumed with animal care. I spent my college days studying zoo science. I've spent countless days working in different facilities across several states. None of them were anything like the one that changed me.

That day. My current facility experienced one of the worst traumas an animal park can experience. A male lion escaped containment and took the life of a beautiful, passionate young intern.

I won't delve into details of the event. That is for the investigators and another time. We may never know every detail, but rather only what can be surmised based on the memories of eyewitness accounts. There will always be questions. Ultimately, we will only know the most likely account. What I am going to share is what I believe we as zookeepers can take away from this tragedy.

The days after. My first thought afterwards was thank goodness for my training. The numerous classes I have attended, including Felid TAG's Fundamental Husbandry and Advanced Safety courses, prepared me as best as I could possibly ask. I laughed the first time I was told I was going to be on a safety committee more than eight years ago. "Yea, sure, I'll definitely be safe," I said as I climbed a fence instead of opening a gate or hopping out from the bed of a pick-up rather than dropping the tailgate. Quite honestly, I mostly saw safety as a possible way to promote my career (we are always looking for ways to get ahead). But my first experience on a safety committee changed my thinking. I came to view safety as not only a wise career move, but an important necessity that can save lives. It left me with the philosophy that a zookeeper should never stop learning and making safe practice part of their everyday job performance. After all, we chose to work with dangerous animals. So I sunk my



**A ray of sunshine breaks through the clouds. After the fatal accident at Conservators Center, everyone was overwhelmed with shock, grief, and uncertainty. Support from the local community and zoo keeping world is helping the facility heal and rebuild. Hannah Fullmer and serval Mojo, one of the "Barker Boys" born at the Conservators Center.**

teeth in. I got certified in First Aid/CPR, participated in Pennsylvania state safety training, and obtained my NRA certification in the safe handling of pistols, shotguns, and rifles. These early trainings – and those that have followed – make me a better and more prepared zookeeper every day.

The next thing that I thought about was thank goodness for my community, the zookeeping community. So many people reached out to me, extending thoughts of love and support, sending me goofy memes so I could crack a smile, checking in on me, and distracting me with ordinary issues. You are all wonderful, amazing people. It was such a comfort to know we were not alone and had the comfort and support of so many.

Future days. What's next? Recovery. We have to heal and rebuild ourselves. The Conservators Center has taught me more about community and support than I could have previously imagined. Our leadership team immediately reached out to those within our industry and in other

supporting roles to get us the help we needed. We had grief counselors to talk to, volunteers feeding us, and time set aside for service dogs. We even had industry leaders helping us wash dishes and fill straw bins. Across the board, we were given invaluable information and tools for recovery. It was immediate and a priority – not just for keepers, but all staff members.

So now we know that we must move forward – for the animals and the community, both local and far-reaching. No one becomes a zookeeper and thinks they will also one day become a grief counselor. However, there is a small group of people that have taught me and others the importance of that transition. People stopped what they were doing to come and be with us and guide us. They showed us the many sides of forgiveness, communication, healing, and empathy.

There are whole committees and teams within our industry dedicated to incident prevention and safety. We will of course use everything we can from this event to help continue that development. We need to continue to develop action items to help other zookeepers with grief, fear, and depression; they may all be a part of our everyday job without us realizing the long term effects. You don't need to have a tragedy occur to be impacted by the weight of the profession we have all chosen. Our world is a heavy one, riddled with endless conservation battles, caregiver's fatigue, animal loss, and behind-the-scenes tours that just got scheduled. To each individual, these events can feel momentous. If we can help create a culture of openness and empathy, we can help shape the future of this field. We can help our managers learn how to help us in real ways, so that in the long run we help the animals, too.

The family and friends of Alex will sadly grieve their loss and find ways to honor her memory. Our community must do the same. Alex was passionate and driven to act on her passions. As we grieve the tragic loss of life, we should honor Alex. I encourage you to find your action for Alex. Enroll in a safety course, speak up at your next staff meeting, share knowledge and compassion. Together we can grow. Thank you all for the endless support.





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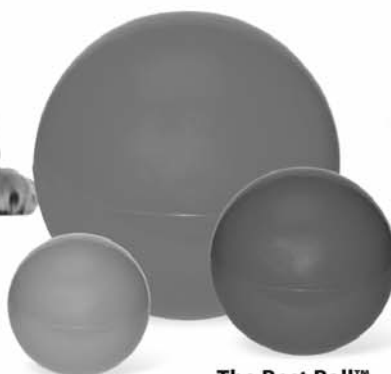
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# Joe Exotic Charged with Murder for Hire, Taking and Sales of Endangered Species, and False Labeling

By Lynn Culver

For anyone who has not been in a coma for the past six months, you probably heard about the arrest of Joseph Maldonado-Passage, better known as Joe Exotic, of the GW Zoo in Wynnewood, Oklahoma. The GW Zoo is a privately-owned facility that housed many big cats taken in from situations where owners needed to give up their animals either because they were unable to afford the cost of care, were unable to comply with state or local laws, or could no longer continue due to changing life circumstances. In addition to amassing a huge collection of displaced animals, the facility was also a prolific breeder of tigers and lions, and various tiger/lion hybrids – ligers, tiligers, and liligers. It is difficult to know how many cats actually resided at the facility because of rapidly changing inventory and numerous USDA licenses associated with the park. Well over a hundred, maybe closer to 200 big cats could have resided there.

Joe has always been a very controversial figure in the exotic feline community. Outlandish, outspoken, and outrageous, he craved attention and he got it. For a while though, he tried very hard to clean up his zoo and turn over a new leaf after being fined \$25,000 by the USDA. He even became a member the FCF community, but that did not last long. He was eventually expelled from the organization by the board of directors.

In addition to his park, for a few years Joe also operated traveling shows at malls, where he drew crowds with his free magic shows and charged fees for anyone wanting to play with the baby tigers and lions he had on display. It seems that was the beginning of the end for him. He adopted the name Big Cat Rescue Entertainment to the ire of Carole Baskin, of Big Cat Rescue in Tampa, Florida. Long, contentious legal battles over trademark violations finally ended in 2011, with the court ruling in Carole's favor and awarding her millions of dollars. Collecting it, howev-

er, was another matter as Joe filed bankruptcy, hid assets, and generally resisted Carole's efforts to collect. In fact, he even signed over his zoo to his new friend (at the time), Jeff Lowe.

Fast forward a few years and Joe has been charged with attempted murder for hire. He is accused of paying an FBI undercover agent posing as a hitman to kill Carole Baskin. Last September, Joe was arrested in Florida, and extradited to Oklahoma. He has been sitting in a jail in Oklahoma, awaiting trial.

Joe is proclaiming his innocence to all his supporters and anyone who will listen. Amazingly, even while he is in jail, he still has an active Facebook page operated by

Then, in December, more federal charges were filed against him. This time, he is indicted for violations of the Endangered Species Act by shooting adult tigers, selling baby tigers, and falsifying federal forms claiming sales were donations.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) provides a legal framework for the protection of endangered and threatened wildlife found within the United States. The Secretary of the Interior determines which species are endangered or threatened under the ESA, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service administers endangered and threatened species permits. Issuance of an ESA permit and CBW registration

require the applicant to demonstrate that their activities will enhance the propagation or survival of the species.

All species of tiger, *Panthera tigris*, are listed. For a time, from September 1998 to May 2016, tigers of mixed subspecies lineage were exempt from the prohibitions against interstate commerce without a Captive Bred Wildlife Registration or an Interstate Commerce permit. But once the "generic tiger ruling" was rescinded in 2016, sales across states lines were no longer allowed without permission from the F&W Service.

Another F&W Service ruling became effective January 22, 2016. One subspecies of lion, *Panthera leo leo*, was listed as endangered under the ESA. Another subspecies of lion, *Panthera leo melanochaita*, was listed as threatened under the ESA. The prohibitions applicable to endangered species are also applicable to *Panthera leo melanochaita*.

The ESA makes it illegal to "take" any endangered species of wildlife within the United States. "Take" is defined as "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct."

According to the indictment, around October 2017, Joe shot and killed five adult tigers allegedly to free up cage space



Photo courtesy of ABC Action News, Tampa.

supporters. Joe insists he was framed by Jeff Lowe and others in the cat world. Several years ago, Joe loaded onto his YouTube account a video showing him shooting a gun at a doll made to look like Carole Baskin, and that's not helping. But Joe insists his video is not evidence of intent to kill, but just "showmanship" designed to increase his YouTube ratings and followers. The evidence referenced in his indictment appears to be substantial, including recorded conversations, deliberate actions in furtherance of this conspiracy, and a \$3,000 down payment to the hired hitman. It remains to be seen how well Joe can defend himself in these matters.



so he could take in some circus tigers and charge their owners a boarding fee. Since being charged for these “takings,” Joe has managed to give interviews to reporters from jail, and he claims that the tigers were euthanized by him because of medical issues. On Facebook, he posted photos of tigers with canines broken at the gum line as an example of why they needed to be euthanized. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service brought backhoes to the park to exhume the carcasses of these tigers, so testimony in court should be interesting.

As anyone licensed by the USDA knows, the veterinarian of record for each facility must fill out a Veterinary Care Program sheet which specifically asks questions about vaccinations, parasite control, methods of euthanasia, and who is authorized to perform euthanasia. I wonder if Joe’s euthanasia protocol lists death by gunshot. If not, then that suggests this was a violation of his veterinarian’s VCP and makes it non-compliant with the Animal Welfare Act regulations, even if their medical issues warranted being humanely put down.

The ESA makes it illegal to “sell or offer for sale in interstate or foreign commerce” any endangered species of wildlife.

The Federal indictment alleges that in November of 2016, and also in March of 2018, Joe sold a tiger cub to Browns

Oakridge Zoo, and in February of 2018, he sold a tiger cub to Wildlife in Need.

The Lacey Act makes it illegal for “any person to make or submit any false record, account, or label for, or any false identification of, any fish, wildlife, or plant which has been, or is intended to be transported in interstate or foreign commerce.”

The government believes Joe has falsely labeled sales as donations. The Indictment charges Joe with mislabeling 2016 USDA transfer papers and Oklahoma state veterinary health certificates on an adult lion delivered to the Monterey Zoo in California. USDA transfer forms on a lion cub delivered in 2017, and a tiger cub delivered in 2018, to Wildlife in Need, are alleged to be falsely labeled as donations. Three more 2018 USDA transfer forms are alleged to be mislabeled; a tiger delivered to Brown’s Oakridge Zoo, a lion delivered to Animal Haven Zoo, and lion delivered to Branson Wild.

The U.S. F&W Service does not take kindly to claims that endangered species are donated, but the crates they travel in are being sold and cost thousands. Or that the animal is free, but receivers are being charged for hand-rearing services. These kinds of defenses have resulted in convictions.

At this time, charges are only pending against Joe, not the other zoos and facilities that the government alleges paid Joe for endangered species. One of the facili-

ty owners mentioned has been contacted by F&W law enforcement to inform him charges were pending. He denied the allegation to law enforcement and has not yet been charged. And I am aware of another facility owner who proactively contacted F&W to deny any commerce occurred.

In these cases, the government must have provided the grand jury some evidence that Joe received financial compensation to convince them to indict. Perhaps cancelled checks or credit card receipts, tape recorded conversations, or electronic message – either email or texts, or even eye witness testimony has convinced the Grand Jury. It is curious to me that these other zoos have not yet been charged. Maybe they are working on cooperative agreements in exchange for immunity.

Endangered Species Act violations are serious business and it is worth noting that unlike most instances where you are presumed innocent until proven guilty, the ESA operates on the “rebuttable presumption of guilt.” What this means is that if you do not have F&W permission to conduct activities, you’d better have some sort of documentation that verifies your actions and intent. Fortunately for Joe and these other zoos, Americans are protected by another piece of American jurisprudence that mandates you must be found guilty “beyond a reasonable doubt” to be convicted. The court date for all charges has been reset to March 12, 2019.

## Deadly Lion Attack Highlights Zoo Worker Safety

Reprinted from Bloomberg News

The fatal lion attack on a 22-year-old who was cleaning a supposedly empty lion enclosure at a North Carolina animal sanctuary in late December last year is renewing focus on zoos’ protection of animal handlers.

Zoos must figure out how safety practices work with unpredictable animal and human behavior, zoo professionals told Bloomberg Law.

“You are dealing with dynamic beings at all times,” said Jonathan Miot, who oversees courses in animal care as director of the Santa Fe College Teaching Zoo near Gainesville, Florida.

Fatal attacks at zoos are rare—four between 2011 and 2017—according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, which

estimates about 6,700 people are employed by U.S. zoos as animal caretakers and veterinarian staff.

While the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has rules protecting workers from metal teeth on rotating gears and requirements to lock machines in safe positions during repairs, the agency doesn’t have specific rules protecting zoo employees from animal bites or mandating locking procedures for animal cages.

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums, based in Silver Spring, Maryland, sets accreditation standards, including safety, for 215 wildlife parks in the United States. The North Carolina sanctuary, the Conservators Center, in Burlington, isn’t among the accredited zoos.

The association’s standards are always open for review by the group’s accredita-

tion committee, President Dan Ashe told Bloomberg Law. There aren’t specific standards for handling big cats, but current practice for handling large mammals is at least one barrier between workers and animals that aren’t restrained.

“I can’t think of a single person who feels they would be safe inside an enclosure with a big cat,” Ashe said.

Miot said that though the Gainesville zoo doesn’t have large cats, its policy requires that at least two locked doors separate a potentially dangerous animal from caretakers.

When OSHA or its state counterparts cite an employer for an animal attack, they often use the “general duty clause,” a law requiring employers to provide workplaces free of known hazards that can be corrected.



North Carolina's Occupational Safety and Health Division opened an investigation into the December 30th death, said Mary Katherine Revels, public information officer for the agency. The state has six months to issue citations.

According to a Conservators Center release, an intern, Alexandra Black, was helping to clean a lion enclosure when she was attacked by a lion that was supposed to be in a separate locked area.

A spokesman for the center wouldn't discuss the incident with Bloomberg Law. The center is awaiting reports from North Carolina OSHA and the federal Department of Agriculture, which regulates how animals are treated.

The best-known federal OSHA case began in 2010 when a killer whale at SeaWorld of Florida, near Orlando, grabbed a trainer by her hair, pulled her into the water and she drowned.

OSHA issued a citation, saying a barrier should have separated the trainer and the orca. SeaWorld fought the citation, eventually losing the case, SeaWorld of Fla. LLC v. Perez, in a 2014 decision by the U.S. District Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

OSHA also has used the clause to cite the Animals of Montana zoo for the 2012 fatal grizzly bear attack on a worker cleaning a cage while the bear was inside the enclosure. In 2016, the Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park, in Oklahoma, was cited for allowing workers to be in physical contact with lions and tigers.

The Association for Zoos and Aquariums' Ashe said safety requirements were less stringent a decade ago. For example, handlers often walked and stood near elephants.

A string of deaths and injuries prompted reconsideration of the practice in 2011, and the association issued new guidelines calling for a barrier between handlers and elephants, Ashe said. That requirement forced many zoos that wanted to keep their accreditation to modify or build new elephant enclosures.

OSHA records show at least a dozen elephant handlers died between 1984 and 2011. Investigation summaries reveal that in many of these cases, the elephant knocked the handler to the ground and then crushed the handler with its head or feet. In some cases, the elephant may

have been startled by another elephant or the sudden movement of a handler.

While association members are required to follow the elephant handling standard, the mandate doesn't extend to nonmembers. In 2014, a handler working alone at an unaccredited sanctuary died after an elephant stepped on him.

Of the approximately 2,800 facilities of all sizes licensed by the Department of Agriculture to exhibit wild animals, less than ten percent are association members.

Lewis Greene, Ohio's Columbus Zoo and Aquarium senior vice president of animal care and conservation, has spent 40 years working with wildlife.

More zoos are requiring staff to work in pairs, instead of alone, to prevent mistakes, Greene told Bloomberg Law. Other zoo professionals said training new zookeepers to work with animals begins with small creatures not likely to cause harm—only the most experienced animal handlers oversee large cats and elephants.

"Until we can figure out how to eliminate the human element, there will always be the chance of a mistake," Greene said.



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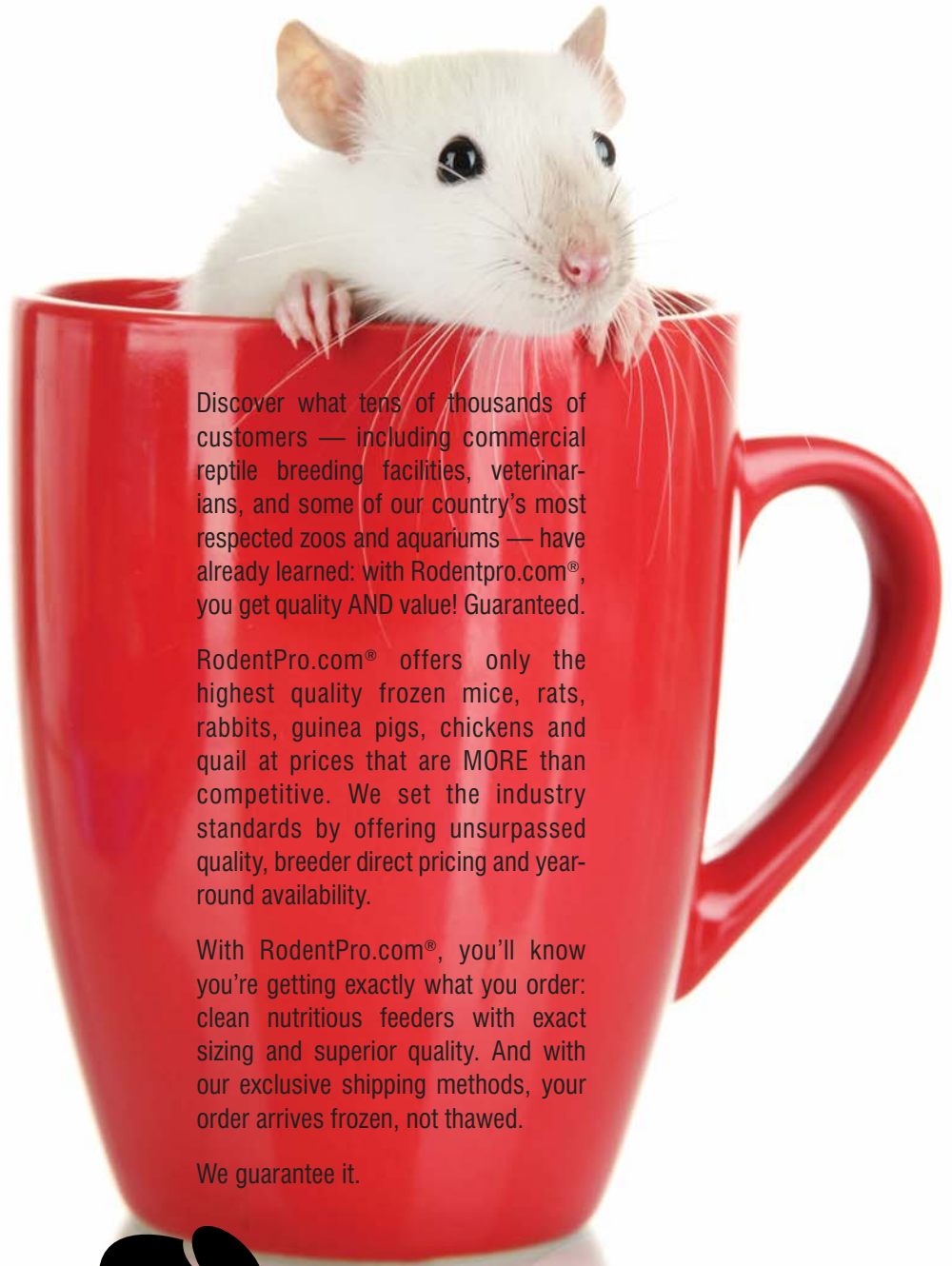
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# Wildlife Conservation Expo 2018

By Chris Tromborg

On Saturday, October 13, 2018, The Wildlife Conservation Network held its annual conservation event at the Mission Bay campus of The University of California in San Francisco. Scores of conservation organizations were represented, including many concerned with the conservation of felines. A partial list of these includes The Wildlife Conservation Society, Felidae, The Cheetah Conservation Fund, Cheetah Conservation Botswana, The Snow Leopard Trust, The Snow Leopard Conservancy, Niassa Lion Conservation, The Andean Cat Alliance, The Small Cat Alliance, The Puma Project, The Mountain Lion Foundation, and The Feline Conservation Federation.

The annual WCN Wildlife Conservation EXPO allows those involved in wildlife conservation to gather together and to compare notes about successes and failures of the past year. It provides conservationists with an opportunity to exchange ideas about tactics and strategies that can be employed in attempts to stem a seemingly inevitable tide of imminent extinctions.

The general news for animal conservation around the world is as troubling as ever. For example, the Niassa Lion Research Project reports that lion numbers in South Saharan Africa have plunged to levels below 18,000 individuals. Cheetahs, always on the edge, are holding their own relative to lions and tigers. Snow leopard numbers are difficult to estimate, with the level of turmoil in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As of this writing, however, the conservation status of the snow leopard has been changed from endangered to threatened. The trapping of bobcats for their fur has been outlawed in California.

The FCF table was located near good company, in a row of exhibits including that for Felidae, The Puma Project, and The Mountain Lion Foundation. The FCF table was operated by FCF board member Dr. Chris Tromborg, FCF member Sherilyn Dance, and FCF member Julie McNamara,

who contributed the photos to this report. Dr. Tromborg also supervised the Mountain Lion Foundation exhibit, with assistance from MLF representative Dr. Kathryn Klar, Ph.D.

The FCF exhibit offered information about member organizations including The Endangered Feline Breeding Center, The Wild Cat Education and Conservation Fund, The Lyon Therapy Animal Ranch, and Safari West. It was directly across the pedestrian path from a table from the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. This table displayed confiscated wildlife parts and products, including a tiger skin, a tiger head, a leopard head, a snow leopard head, a clouded leopard head, a lion paw, and other anatomical elements from felines and other species whose disarticulated body parts command high prices on the black market in wildlife products. All of this material was confiscated in San Francisco, a city generally regarded as being friendly to wildlife. The situation is probably worse in other places.

It should be noted that the officers of the U.S. Department of Fisheries and Wildlife were at the EXPO on their own time, since many of the interdiction and prosecution activities of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service have been profoundly disrupted by a change in government policies toward animal conservation under the current administration.

The FCF's message was well received. Many of our sample brochures and journals were given to interested visitors to the FCF table. The FCF message was made more effective by the location of its table, directly across from that of the



**Youngest visitor at the WCN event picks the FCF table and gets herself a tiger!**

F&W Service exhibit, with its disturbing evidence of the unbridled destruction of felines in the wild. The importance of captive conservation, the maintenance of adequate alternate gene pools in captivity, and the absolute necessity of enhancing the need for feline conservation through the use of ambassadorial animals became self-evident as visitors viewed images of

living captive felines at the FCF exhibit to the display of the remnants of deceased felines at the DFW exhibit.

Once again, and even in the face of natural and anthropogenic challenges, the WCN EXPO was an altogether productive event. The FCF will continue to disseminate its conservation message and will present its perspective on feline conservation at this coming year's Wildlife Conservation Expos in both the spring and fall. Hope to see you there.



**Chris Tromborg represented both the FCF and California Mountain Lion Foundation at the Fall Expo. Photo by Julie McNamara.**



## Sex without Consequence

By Lea Jaunakais  
President and Founder, Tiger World

At Tiger World Endangered Wildlife Preserve, our focus is always on the cutting edge of science and research to find the best techniques to care for animals. Since our inception, we have utilized various methods of sterilization to prevent unwanted pregnancy and unethical breeding. Specifically, we have implemented sterilization for:

- Permanent birth control,
- When pregnancy could be a risk due to pre-existing conditions,
- Eliminating the possibility of passing down a genetic disorder,
- Population control,
- Changing behaviors between animals in a habitat, and
- When medically necessary in response to conditions such as pyometra, endometriosis, infection, uterine cancer, and ovarian cysts/cancer, etc.

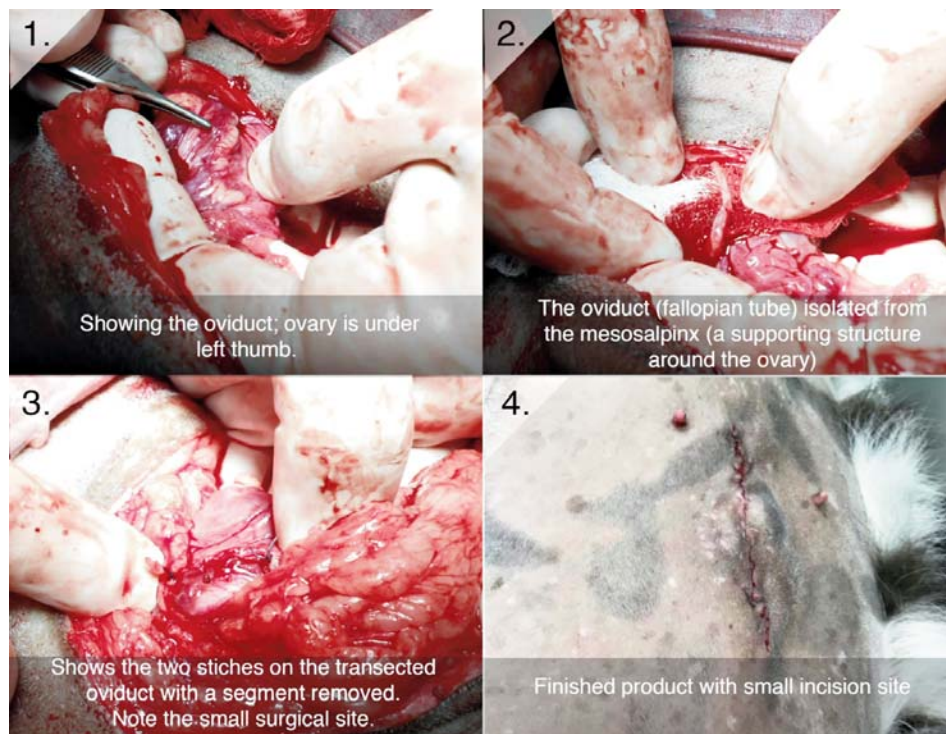
Although the various sterilization procedures have numerous debates on the risks and benefits, it is our opinion to weigh all the pros and cons and make decisions based on what is best for each animal and the circumstance.

The various methods used include:

- Male sterilization,
- Neuter – orchiectomy or castra-



**Following successful surgery, Brandy is feeling great.**



tion to remove male testes, and

- Vasectomy – vas deferens are cut, tied, cauterized, or blocked preventing movement of sperm from the testicles.

- Female sterilization:

- Spay – ovariectomy or removal of the female ovaries, oviduct, and uterus, and

- Tubal ligation – or getting the tubes tied, oviduct (fallopian tubes) are cut, tied, cauterized or blocked preventing movement of the egg from the ovaries.

Compared to the more invasive neuter and spay, vasectomy and tubal ligation have numerous benefits including:

- The incisions are smaller,
- The recovery time is faster,
- The procedure is less invasive making it safer,
- Reproductive organs remain in place and the animal maintains normal hormone balance and cycles,
- The animal can continue to lead a normal life including engaging in copulation behaviors,
- Animal behaviors are not impacted so the animal continues to have a drive to run, play, and exercise, reducing any potential of becoming lazy and obese, and

- Reversible if desired.

Apart from sterilization, we have used Depo-Provera (medroxyprogesterone acetate) injections as a successful birth control method and have found it to be completely effective. With its use at Tiger World, we have determined through research over years that the same concentration for humans, 150mg, over a 12-week period, has yielded 100% success rate. This is in comparison to an 800mg dose recommended by other zoological associations every eight weeks. Additionally, with repeated use of Depo-Provera, there are negative behavior changes of aggression that go along with it, so although it is effective, it should be a short-term solution.

“Regarding tubal ligation and total ovariectomy, the pros certainly outweigh the cons in large captive felids. Some of the key benefits of tubal ligation over ovariectomy are as follows: smaller surgical sites, less hemorrhage (bleeding), reduced tissue damage, reduced healing time and faster return to activity, as well as reduced chance of ligature failure and potentially severe hemorrhage or resultant evisceration seen with catastrophic surgical site failure among others.

“Furthermore, patients also maintain higher overall physical activity post-heal-

ing and better overall metabolic function thereby reducing the probability of obesity, which is commonly seen with the reduction in hormone production that is noted with complete ovariectomy and castrations. I am of firm belief that tubal ligation and vasectomies are respectively a better method of reproductive control in large captive felids when considering surgical methods. Simply put, it allows the patient to maintain a better quality of life.” (Dr. Juston Schmidtke, DVM 2015)

In our experience at Tiger World, the tubal ligation procedure once sedated and on the surgery table, is completed quickly

and recovery is very fast. Our animals were up and eating and back to their normal selves in one day. However, we keep activity minimal until the stitches are completely healed and dissolved which is approximately 7-10 days.

We have found that most veterinarians are not as familiar with performing tubal ligations and vasectomies, since the vast majority only conduct neuters and spays. Neutering and spaying animals are not a one size fits all, although the mantra still holds strong in the veterinarian community.

With vasectomies and tubal ligations being vastly superior, we have moved

away from doing neuter or spays unless it is medically necessary or the desired result includes eliminating hormones and certain behaviors based on dynamics in a habitat.

Our “matriarch” Bengal/Siberian tiger, Brandy, underwent a tubal ligation at age 12. Over her lifetime, she has had three litters producing strong healthy offspring with her mate Zeus. Tiger World has achieved our goal of giving Zeus and Brandy the ability to live the rest of their lives together without changing the dynamic of their relationship and allowing them to enjoy sex without consequence.

## Hawaii Second State to Ban Wild Animal Circus Acts

Edited from an article in *Maui Now*

Hawaii became the second U.S. state to ban wild animal circus acts when Governor David Ige signed into law rule amendments to ban the import of elephants, tigers, bears, and other “dangerous” wild animals for circus and carnival performances and exhibitions.

The revised administrative rule was signed on Friday, December 21, 2018, and prohibits the importation of dangerous wild animals for exhibition in circuses or carnivals in Hawaii.

The Hawaii ban comes just a week after New Jersey became the first U.S. state to introduce a ban on wild animal circus acts. A number of states have similar measures under consideration, including Massachu-

setts, New York, and Pennsylvania. Meanwhile, a federal bill to end the use of wild and exotic animals in traveling shows nationwide – the Traveling Exotic Animal and Public Safety Protection Act – is an even bigger threat.

Around the world, 45 countries have passed national prohibitions on the use of wild and/or exotic animals – and in some cases, all animals – in circuses. A total of 88 jurisdictions in 31 states have taken action to restrict the use of wild animals in



traveling circuses, including New York City and San Francisco, which have banned wild animal circus acts.

## Legislation Breakdown: H.R.1818 - “The Big Cat Public Safety Act”

By Rachel Garner, Blogger  
<http://blog.whyanimalsdothething.com/>  
(Updated 9/14/2018)

The Fast Facts: H.R.1818 would implement a number of significant regulatory changes on both commercial and non-commercial big cat ownership in the United States.

Non-commercial big cat ownership (hobbyist or “private collection” situations) would become completely illegal. Current owners of the big cat species prohibited by H.R.1818 would be grandfa-

thered in, but would be prevented from acquiring, selling, or breeding their animals and would lose their exemption when their animals died.

After the enactment of H.R.1818, aside from grandfathered situations, big cats would only be found in the United States as part of commercial collections, state-run organizations, or sanctuaries.

H.R.1818 would allow for four different types of continuing exemption from the restrictions on commercial trade in or breeding of big cats. The requirements for different entities to gain an exemption

are incredibly inconsistent: commercial exhibitors have the most stringent requirements, wildlife sanctuaries have far fewer and less detailed requirements, and transport agencies and state organizations have none at all.

Under H.R.1818, only the staff of commercial exhibitors is required to prove a clean record regarding citations or fines for animal abuse or neglect. Sanctuaries, transport agencies, and state organizations are held to no such requirement.

Unclear language in H.R.1818 could potentially require big cat population



management programs to be peer-reviewed by professionals external to the organization facilitating the program, or even by experts external to the zoo industry.

H.R.1818 includes a provision to exempt state organizations in perpetuity that appears to cater directly to one university's interest in continuing to have a live tiger live on campus as a mascot. This exemption does not impose any restriction or regulation on how state-based organizations or their licensed vet-

unintentional litters as for intentionally bred ones. If the owner is not an entity exempted from restrictions set forth in H.R.1818 or belongs to an exempt entity that is not allowed to breed (such as a sanctuary or a Class C exhibitor not participating in an approved conservation breeding program), they would be guilty of a criminal wildlife offense as detailed above. It remains unclear according to the language in the bill if, in such a situation, the owner would only be charged with one

(1) criminal offense - that of breeding - or if they would be charged with another offense per cub born due to birth potentially counting as an "acquisition."

**What H.R.1818 Prohibits:** The next section of the bill sets forth that if passed, it will be illegal for "any person to import, export, sell, receive, acquire, or purchase in interstate or foreign commerce, or


are only allowed to keep their extant cats on the conditions that they do not acquire or breed more, H.R.1818 as written will end all hobbyist (pet or private collection) big cat ownership in the country and will result in all big cats in the country being part of either commercial collections, state-run organizations, or sanctuaries.

**What Entities Are Exempt:** Most of the text of H.R.1818 is concerned with defining the qualifications of the entities exempted from the restrictions on ownership of big cats that it creates. However, it's worth noting that the requirements imposed on different groups in order for them to qualify for exemption are highly inconsistent in regard to ensuring the welfare of the big cats involved. USDA Class C exhibitors have a long list of requirements, whereas wildlife sanctuaries have a much shorter and less stringent list, and state entities such as colleges and universities have literally no additional requirements regarding animal use or public contact - they simply need to be state-run.

**Class C Exhibitors:** USDA Class C licensed facilities, as mentioned above, must be conducting and receiving a majority of their income from commercial activity; they must be open to the public to at least some degree. Both individuals and entire facilities can be licensed as Class C exhibitors after a USDA inspection finds that they are in accordance with the policies set forth by the Animal Welfare Act. Any unaccredited zoo that is open to the public is also licensed as a Class C exhibitor, as well as any organization which uses warm-blooded animals performing for the public, or which are used in educational presentations. This list includes, but is not limited to, circuses, zoos, petting farms/zoos, animal acts, wildlife parks, marine mammal parks, and some sanctuaries. All of these types of Class C facilities must fulfill a list of additional requirements as detailed in H.R.1818 to qualify to receive an exemption from the moratorium on owning, transferring, or breeding big cats.

**Class C Exhibitor Additional Exemption Requirements:** A Class C exhibitor looking for exemption from H.R.1818 is not allowed to have a history themselves or employ anyone with a history of being convicted or fined for any type of animal abuse or neglect under any level of law. They also may not have or employ anyone who has recently (within three years) had a license or permit related to any sort of

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erinarrians might use, breed, transport, or acquire their big cats.

H.R.1818 could be interpreted in a way that would severely restrict the ability of wildlife sanctuaries to get their big cats medical treatment, due to unclear wording regarding the restrictions on off-site transportation.

Any entity found in knowing violation of H.R.1818 would be subject to a fine of not more than \$20,000, up to five years in jail, or both, for each offense. It is not clear from the text of the bill how the number of offenses committed would be counted in ambiguous situations.

**H.R.1818 Content Breakdown:** Defining "Breed": The Lacey Act and Captive Wildlife Safety Act do not prohibit the actual act of owning a big cat or breeding it to obtain more. Breeding is not mentioned in either act, therefore the definition must be added through the proposed amendment in order for restrictions on breeding to be part of the scope of the law. The definition of "breed" used in H.R.1818 ("to facilitate propagation or reproduction [whether intentionally or negligently], or to fail to prevent propagation or reproduction") would hold owners equally accountable for accidental or

in a manner substantially affecting interstate or foreign commerce, or to breed or possess, any prohibited wildlife species." Whereas the Lacey Act was originally only concerned with banning the ownership of invasive and heavily poached species (none of which are big cat species), and the Captive Wildlife Safety Act simply restricted any sort of commercial acquisition, sale, or transport of big cats to within state lines (except for entities who received exemptions), H.R.1818 goes beyond the precedent set by these two laws. H.R.1818 not only completely bans all commercial acquisition, sale, or transport of big cats no matter where it occurs, but also makes it illegal for people to acquire big cats by breeding more themselves, and actually goes so far as to ban owning them, period. The only exemptions to this complete ban on owning big cats are those entities listed above: USDA Class C facilities (by definition, facilities that conduct exhibition as the majority of their commercial activity), state facilities or veterinarians, wildlife sanctuaries, transport groups, and non-commercial ownership situations that would be grandfathered in when H.R.1818 is implemented. As grandfathered entities

animal management suspended or revoked by any level of governmental authority. Prospective Class C exhibitors also cannot have been cited within the preceding year for any repeat violation under the AWA that deals directly with the most basic elements of captive animal welfare: adequate veterinary care, inappropriate handling that risks harm to the animal or the public, insufficient access to water and adequate nutrition, or failure to allow themselves to be inspected by the USDA. A ban on repeat violations means that a facility that was cited once for an issue but found to have corrected it appropriately on repeat inspection would still qualify for exemption, but a facility that had been found to have not corrected an issue after citation and had to be cited again, would not.

**Direct Contact:** Under H.R.1818, only trained professionals and licensed veterinarians (and the associated trainees and students for both positions) may have any direct contact with their big cats. Direct contact is not defined specifically within the text of H.R.1818 or the Captive Wildlife Safety Act. However, the 2007 regulations regarding the enforcement of the Captive Wildlife Safety Act defined direct contact as “any situation in which any individual other than an authorized keeper or caregiver may potentially touch or otherwise come into physical contact with any live specimen of the prohibited wildlife species,” and it seems likely this is the definition of direct contact that would be used regarding H.R.1818, even though it is never directly referenced by the text of the bill. H.R.1818’s prohibition of direct contact for anyone but trained professionals means that the number of people at any given facility who are able to assist with training sessions for big cats would likely have to decrease, as volunteers, docents, and interns are often highly involved in big cat training but would be unable to participate without disqualifying their facility due to the potential for some form of contact occurring during a training session.

Class C exhibitors looking for exemption from H.R.1818 must also ensure that big cats and hybrids of, except clouded leopards and cheetahs, must be at least fifteen feet removed from members of the public at all times unless there is a permanent barrier in place that is guaranteed to prevent any and all direct contact. From a perspective related to guest safety, this requirement makes perfect sense. However,

a lack of definition of “the public” for this regulation leaves up to interpretation the standing of non-staff with legitimate access to behind-the-scenes areas.

**Permissible Breeding:** In order for a Class C exhibitor to be exempted from H.R.1818, it has to be shown that all their breeding is done “pursuant to a species-specific, publicly available, peer-reviewed population management plan developed according to established conservation science principles.” There are a number of confusing things about this requirement. It is not clear whether a prospective facility had would be required to have already been doing all big cat breeding through such a population management plan previous to the implementation of H.R.1818, or if this requirement simply means that the prospective facility would only have to agree to participate in one of those programs going forward from the implementation date. A facility that does not participate in a breeding program appears to still be able to get an exemption from the H.R.1818 regarding the acquisition or transfer of big cats (for instance, in order to house geriatric or surplus cats), but would still be considered to have committed a criminal wildlife crime if an accidental breeding did occur and could lose both their exemption and their big cats to forfeiture.

The proposed text requires Class C exhibitors to be participants in population management programs that are “publicly available” and “peer-reviewed,” which poses some interesting questions about what implementation of the bill would require. Currently, none of the main population management plans in the zoo industry (AZA’s SSP and TAG programs, ZAA’s AMP program) are truly publicly available, as they’re only accessible through a paid membership to the organization. Since the text of H.R.1818 does not define what constitutes public availability, it is possible that enactment of this bill as written would require all facilitating organizations to remove the program documents from behind the current paywalls so participating facilities would be able to receive their exemp-

tion. The peer review requirement is ambiguous, as there is no specific language in the bill regarding what individuals or organizations would be expected to conduct the process of peer review. There are not many groups that contain professionals with appropriate levels of expertise on big cats to perform peer review of this type that remain external to the zoo industry. As those groups that do fulfill both criteria are often politically at odds with zoos (e.g., wildlife sanctuaries and conservation organizations), this lack of specificity about the intended source of peer review could easily become a very contentious issue if not clarified before the bill is enacted.

**Other Requirements:** Class C facilities looking for an exemption from H.R.1818 would also have to maintain liability insurance for not less than \$250,000 for each occurrence of damage caused by any big cat they owned. They must also have a written response plan detailing emergency preparedness plans in the case of animal escapes that contain but are not limited to how staff is trained to recapture dangerous animals. This plan must be available to local law enforcement, state agencies, and federal agencies at different points in time.

**State Institutions:** The shortest exemption from H.R.1818 in the entire bill states that an entity may be exempted simply if it is “a state college, university, or agency, or state-licensed veterinarian.” There are no other restrictions put on the organizations that would be pursuing this exemption, which seems inconsistent regarding the thorough detail written into the rest of the bill. There are none of the common-sense restrictions on the state exemption that there were on the Class C exhibitors, not even those that prevent people with an animal abuse history from working with the big cats or those that disqualify a facil-

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ity from exemption for repeated AWA violations. There is also no regulation about if state entities can breed their big cats, unlike that seen in the regulations for both Class C exhibitors and sanctuaries. It appears this exemption exists because of Louisiana State University's interest in continuing to be allowed to keep their mascot, a live tiger who lives in a habitat on the school campus. During the congressional session, Louisiana Senator David Vitter questioned the proposed Big Cat Public Safety Act on whether a) the bill would allow LSU to keep their tiger, b) LSU would be able to obtain a new tiger to replace their current mascot when he died, and c) ascertain what types of facilities LSU would be able to obtain a new tiger from after the bill went into effect.

**Wildlife Sanctuaries:** There are more requirements for a sanctuary to get exemption to house big cats under H.R.1818 than for state institutions, but not nearly as many as those required of prospective Class C exhibitors. This might make sense if the difference was that Class C exhibitors had commercial activity where sanctuaries do not, but that is not accurate to the reality of how modern sanctuaries work or the USDA definition of commercial activity. While H.R.1818 does require sanctuaries seeking exemption to be registered as 501(c)(3) organizations, many of those facilities still conduct commercial activity through advertising and inviting donors to visit and see the animals. Some sanctuaries are also Class C exhibitors (they have robust paying visitorship, as well as gift shops and concessions), and it is unclear under the text of H.R.1818 which set of standards for exemption a facility that qualifies as both a wildlife sanctuary and a Class C exhibitor would fall under.

Prospective sanctuaries looking for exemption are required by the text of H.R.1818 to "[care] for prohibited wildlife species." Again, it's not clear if the facility is required to already have big cats in order to get the exemption or if a sanctuary that wanted to provide a home for big cats could meet all the other requirements in order to get an exemption and then arrange for the transport of the desired animals to their site. They are not allowed to trade commercially in big cats or their byproducts, which calls into question if the common and harmless practice of selling animal pawprints and paintings would

be allowed, as those could be considered a byproduct of the animals restricted by H.R.1818. To be exempted under H.R.1818, prospective sanctuaries must not breed big cats. It appears they would be held accountable for any accidental reproduction among their animals in the same manner as Class C exhibitors, at risk of being charged with a criminal wildlife offense, loss of their exemption, and the confiscation of their big cats.

Wildlife sanctuaries are also required to prevent direct contact between the public and big cats. However, the bill does not require sanctuaries to ensure that all staff members having contact with the cats are trained professionals. Sanctuaries are also not subject to the common-sense restrictions that commercial exhibitors must follow, such as those that prevent people with an animal abuse history from working with the big cats or those that prevent employment of anyone who has recently had an animal-related license suspended or rescinded. Why the text of H.R.1818 requires that the staff of Class C exhibitors be so thoroughly vetted but sanctuary staff would not be is unknown.

Lastly, for a sanctuary to be exempted under H.R.1818, it must not transport or display any animals off-site. The language in this part of the bill is highly unclear; it's not obvious if the goal is to restrict transport of big cats off-site to specifically exhibition situations or if all travel off-site is to be restricted. If taken literally, all veterinary care for big cats in sanctuaries would have to occur on-site, and would remove the option of transporting them to specialists. It would also prevent sanctuaries from writing emergency management plans that deal with transporting their residents off-site in the face of an impending natural disaster or other emergent situation.

**Transporters:** Entities that exist solely for the transport of big cats between facilities exempted from H.R.1818 will also be exempt from H.R.1818 in order to be able to do their job. There are no restrictions placed on this type of exemption in regard to employee history. It is not clear why there is no requirement for a history clean of animal abuse charges, although it is reasonable to assume that the authors of the bill assumed that the same level of vetting was not necessary for a temporary transportation situation.

**Grandfathered Non-commercial Ownership:** Even though H.R.1818 effectively

ends all non-commercial big cat ownership (hobbyist and private collection situations), it's still necessary for any new legislation to grandfather in the ability of current owners to keep their existing cats. As a result, non-commercial owners would be allowed under the text of H.R.1818 to keep any cats born before the date the bill would be enacted. They would also be prohibited from acquiring other cats, breeding their cats, or letting the public have any direct contact with those animals for the rest of the cats' lives. They would also not be able to sell or give those cats away to any non-commercial entity without being found guilty of a criminal wildlife offense, even if it was because they no longer had the ability to care for them adequately.

**Penalties:** As discussed above, every violation of the restrictions set forth by H.R.1818 would be considered a criminal wildlife offense and result in a possible penalty of a \$20,000 fine, up to five years in jail, or both. At first, how this would work appears straightforward; selling a big cat as a nonexempt party to another nonexempt party in the same state would result in a single offense for both parties. Since offenses are deemed to have occurred in any district in which the defendant(s) may have been in possession of the animal, it's possible that each person involved in this hypothetical could be prosecuted for two offenses each, one in the district where the cat originally lived, and one in the district where the buyer resides. It's not clear if someone caught with a breeding violation would be charged for a single offense or with an extra offense for each cub, as their birth could technically be counted as an acquisition of an animal.

**Senate Companion Bill 2990:** The companion bill to the House version of the Big Cat Public Safety Act during the 115th Congress, S.2990, was introduced to the Senate in early June of 2017. In most cases it is a faithful to the text of H.R.1818.

The biggest difference is that, while H.R. 1818 exempts cheetahs and clouded leopards and hybrids from the requirement that the animal must be at least fifteen feet removed from members of the public at all times unless there is a permanent barrier in place that is guaranteed to prevent any and all direct contact, S 2990 does not give this special status to the cheetah.









## Feline Conservation Federation

January-March 2019 Volume 63, Issue 1

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

**Front Cover:** Aires is one of two Geoffroy's cat ambassadors residing at Amazing Animals. This non-profit exotic animal rescue and educational organization serves the central Florida community. Photographer and co-founder Kylie Reynolds says the organization's ambassador animals like Aires promote conservation through education to facility visitors and at outreach educational shows and events.

**Back Cover:** Mutosh is 11 years old and in great condition. Photographer Gretchen Mogensen says the puma has a little arthritis showing, but she's been getting laser treatments which have worked very well for her. You can find Mutosh at the Natural Bridge Zoo, or enjoy plenty of her images on Gretchen's Facebook timeline.

