



# Feline Conservation Foundation

January - March 2020 • Volume 64 Issue 1





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## Contact Us

#### FOUNDER:

Catherine Cisin

#### OFFICERS:

**President**  
Mindy Stinner  
[president@felineconservation.org](mailto:president@felineconservation.org)

**Vice President**  
Julia Wagner  
[vicepresident@felineconservation.org](mailto:vicepresident@felineconservation.org)

**Secretary**  
Phyllis Parks  
[secretary@felineconservation.org](mailto:secretary@felineconservation.org)

**Treasurer**  
Dawn Strasser  
[treasurer@felineconservation.org](mailto:treasurer@felineconservation.org)

#### DIRECTORS:

Brian Braitsch

Sue Steffens

Chris Tromborg

Contact us by email:  
[info@felineconservation.org](mailto:info@felineconservation.org)

#### JOURNAL STAFF:

**Managing Editor:**  
Lynn Culver

**Layout/Copy Editor:**  
Eden Tran  
[edentranfcf@gmail.com](mailto:edentranfcf@gmail.com)



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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: \$25 business card (3.5x2.5in), \$50 quarter page (5.5x4.24in), \$100 half page (8.5x5.5in), and \$150 full page (8.5x11in) ad for a single issue. We offer a 10% discount for running your ad in two consecutive issues, or a 20% discount for running in four consecutive issues.

Submit articles on husbandry, conservation, current events, editorials, and photos for publication through the members-only website link titled, "Submit *Journal* Entries and Photos."



## Letter From the President

Dear friends,

I hope this issue finds us all in a world settling down after the first wave of the pandemic COVID-19 has passed.

No doubt we are all hyper-vigilant about personal hygiene, wiping down surfaces, and maintaining social distancing. We are likely all a bit stir-crazy right now from being stuck at home and have caught up on email, gotten overwhelmed by everyone's social media dramas, and hopefully binge-watched something fun.

I know we are all grateful this virus has not yet made the leap into felids, but, if you are like me, you have decided to over-protect your animals anyway. I step out of my shoes when I step into my house and tuck them away where my cats can't access them. I change any clothes I wore to town or to visit my friends, knowing I am also visiting their pets. Perhaps I am overcompensating for feeling out of control of other areas of my life... but perhaps it's just prudent.

It seems like everyone else wants to tell us all what we should do. I've gotten notifications from the CDC, the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, our state government, our vets' offices, my doctors and dentists, every business collaboration we work with from chambers of commerce to associations of non-profits, and they all give us the same basic advice. Hand washing, social distance, avoiding mass gatherings with people from other places. Things we should do.

So, I'm going to share what we are doing here at our Animal Park at the Conservators Center instead.

I made sure my household has the supplies we need so we don't have to go shopping again right away.

We are ensuring our business has the supplies it needs, secure supply lines, and reliable substitutes for all items we have trouble replacing.

We are reminding our employees and volunteers that they should avoid coming here if they are sick, have traveled overseas, or have any reason to believe they have been exposed to any contagious respiratory illness. We have backup plans should several key employees get sick at once.

We are constantly monitoring governmental guidance and adapting our workplace practices. We are an open-air rural park, so remaining open is fine for us at this time. Conveying being open is itself a challenge, because we need for our visitors to understand that we are aware of the concerns and are mitigating them as well as possible.

Business continuity is a major concern, so we have to plan for significantly reduced visitation or closure for eight weeks or more. We are not taxpayer-funded and are not wealthy. Our proceeds are reinvested in our park constantly. The idea of closing indefinitely is frightening—I'm committed to the care of this collection and to providing for the people who help do that work.

An annual fundraiser we depend on has already been cancelled. That event has consistently provided funding to help us branch from seasonal winter holiday events to warmer days when the daffodils and crocuses bloom and visitors eager to get outdoors and see animals begin to arrive. This year COVID-19 hit during that time when we are already lower in visitation.

We have limited work hours for our part-time employees and guest relations staff.

We have turned to social media to bring attention to our situation. We are building creative online fundraisers and working to build excitement about events we hope will be able to happen in the future.

We have reached out to our established donors, asking them to help sustain us through this time. The ones that have contributed have already sent heartening messages of support, encouraging us. I know some of them work in businesses that may have layoffs if this goes on for an extended period.

It's not just about us. I'm checking in with other facilities and owners, to make sure they feel secure and don't need help.

And I'm writing this letter to you.

I hope that you feel secure and the animals you care for are safe.

Please consider sharing your experience of adapting to life under COVID-19 restrictions on our Facebook members-only page, or in photos and articles in this *Journal*. We would like to hear about your preparations, adaptations, work-arounds, unexpected surprises, and solutions.

The Board of Directors is committed to updating the organization to make processes more streamlined and easier to manage with fewer committed people. We are working toward balancing our traditional way of doing things in an organization established before computers were invented with a process built for today's technology and a more mobile-oriented membership.

You will find in this issue information about changes to bylaws, and a proposed constitutional change. Please read the information carefully and vote in the way you believe will best serve our membership.

Mindy Stinner

### Surviving Covid-19 Impacts to Wildlife Exhibitors Checklist

- Review business continuity plans with an eye for possible long-term impacts of this event.
- Consider people, data, operations, inventory, equipment, and buildings.
- Calculate how long your facility can remain solvent if closed to the public.
- Review insurance policies to understand business interruption coverage for pandemic events.
- Consider what additional revenue streams or loans may be available.
- Apply for SBA's Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program which provides low-interest loans to cover operating expenses after a declared disaster.
- Document the impacts and financial losses due to this event.
- Consider what types of creative fundraising options may work for your facility, such as using social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Patreon.
- Subscription or pay-per-view science programs for children home from school.
- Virtual zoo tours or keeper chats with suggested donation.
- Exclusive content for donors who contribute a certain amount.
- Animal sponsorship opportunities with special perks such as a personalized video message.
- Text-to-give services to allow your visitors to donate instantly from home.

# Contrafreeloading in Zoos and Aquariums

By Kyle Banton-Jones

In this article, I am going to be talking about the fundamentals of contrafreeloading as it relates to a zoological setting. I believe contrafreeloading to be an extremely valuable concept when designing an enrichment program for a wide variety of animals in captivity. First, in order to discuss its value to captive animal enrichment, we will first talk about what contrafreeloading means.

## What Is Contrafreeloading?

Contrafreeloading is a term for a type of behavior in which an organism, when given the choice between food that requires no effort to obtain and food that does require effort to obtain, chooses the food that requires effort. This behavior was initially observed and coined by behavioral psychologist Glen Jensen in 1963. In this study, Jensen gave a group of rats the choice between food from a dish on the floor of their cage or food that could be obtained by pressing a metal bar down 40, 80, 160, 320, 640, and 1280 times. He found that almost every single rat preferred the food that they had to press the bar to get, and even had a rat that left food in the dish but continued to press the bar. He also found that the total amount of food that was consumed by the rat was proportionate to the total number of times they had pressed down the bar.

## The Science Behind Contrafreeloading

This fascinating behavior seems to directly contradict a lot of our understanding of animal psychology as we tend to assume that most animals have a sort of “famine” mindset where they will always choose the path of least resistance. This behavior is actually called the principle of least effort, a demonstrated principle that organisms will generally try to minimize energy expenditure while trying to maximize reward; so how can contrafreeloading exist as well?

Well, there are several theories of how contrafreeloading works, but it is important to note the limitations of this behavior. Not surprisingly, instances of contrafreeloading tend to decline rapidly when there is a decline in food (i.e., the organism is experiencing a food shortage) and when the effort required to obtain the food increases. One of the main theories behind contrafreeloading is the “reinforcement theory,” which most animal care staff is very familiar with as it is the main theory behind positive reinforcement training in which an animal learns to perform a behavior when it is reinforced to do so. While this theory definitely increases the likelihood that a given animal will display contrafreeloading behaviors over a long period of time, many animals have been shown to display these behaviors with no prior reinforcement to do so.

Contrafreeloading is believed to be a product of two major adaptive behaviors, foraging and gathering information about alternate food



**Arctic fox finds his meal inside a wooden box and it takes some digging to reach the prize.**



**Foraging is the time-consuming method of food ingestion utilized by all hoofstock. Grazing on grass is an excellent example of contrafreeloading. Because it is much less energy-dense than commercial pellets or gain mixes, animals must spend much more time to consume a day's worth of calories.**

sources. Foraging behaviors are of vital importance to a wild animal, as many species can spend the majority of their day foraging for food. What constitutes foraging varies greatly based on the species; for example, ungulates often spend the majority of their day grazing, whereas carnivores can spend the majority of their day hunting for food. This desire to forage is an explanation of contrafreeloading, as it often takes a great deal more time to work for a food item than to simply eat what is offered for free. This was demonstrated in a study by Van Os et al, where they demonstrated that domestic cattle were much more likely to perform contrafreeloading behaviors when they were fed a high energy (one that takes less time to fill them up, therefore less time to eat) diet as opposed to cows that were



fed a more natural, low energy diet (takes more time to fill them up, therefore more time to eat). I found this fascinating, as it proves that the cows had a direct need to forage and wanted to spend more time eating/foraging in the day than the high energy food was allowing them.

Contrafreeloading is also potentially a result of the animal wanting to “hedge their bets” against food shortage by taking part in contrafreeloading, as they view it as an alternative food source to the food source they may be getting for free. This was shown by Andrews et al. in a study where they found that European starlings from a non-privileged background (experienced food shortages when they were developing) spent more time contrafreeloading than starlings that came from a privileged background (experienced abundance of resources when developing). This clearly shows that animals may be viewing contrafreeloading as a way to take advantage of as many different food sources as they can.

#### Why Is Contrafreeloading Valuable in A Zoo Setting?

Based on the scientific explanations of why animals display contrafreeloading behaviors, provided above, it is clear how contrafreeloading could be viewed as an extremely valuable tool in a zoological setting. When designing an enrichment protocol for a specific animal, it is important to see if they display contrafreeloading behaviors when offered free food and food they have to work for, as it is clear that many animals have an intense desire to forage for longer than they would get if they simply got all their food for free. Having more to do in the day and expending more physical energy and performing more natural behaviors will most likely result in a reduction of stereotypic behavior in a captive animal.

In a study by Christina Lindqvist, it was found that the wild ancestors of a domestic species of chicken spent much more of their day foraging and were much more inclined to perform contrafreeloading behaviors than their domestic cousins. This could have many implications in a zoo setting, as many of the animals housed in zoos are not domestic, and when much of what we know about ani-



**Cougars are great leapers, known to take down birds in flight. Hanging a meal from the roof rafters encourages this feline to stretch its muscles and sharpen its predator skills.**

mal care comes from the care of domestic animals, this may mean we are falling short on providing wild animals with more foraging opportunities.

At the beginning of this article, it was also mentioned that in Jensen’s rat study the rats that participated in working for their food also consumed more food in proportion to how hard they worked for it. This could also have greater implications on zoo animals, as contrafreeloading behaviors may result in an increase in appetite from the animal.

This goes without saying, but designing items to encourage contrafreeloading in an animal is just plain fun! Thinking of new puzzles and ways to make animals forage for their food can be a challenge and is very rewarding when done successfully. Increased time spent foraging, a decrease in stereotypic behaviors, satisfying wild instincts, and an increase in appetite are all great reasons to encourage animals under your care to display contrafreeloading behaviors.

#### How to Implement Contrafreeloading Into Your Environmental Enrichment Program

So, we know that contrafreeloading is demonstrated to work in many different species, and has greater implications on animal welfare in a zoological facility, but how can you incorporate it into your existing enrichment program?

The best way I have found to implement contrafreeloading into an existing enrichment program is to simply start slowly. Start by getting a list of all the animals that you want to start contrafreeloading with and begin with a small percentage of their diet being offered in a way that they have to work to get to, say 5% to 15%. Right away you are going to notice that some are going to take to it immediately and others are going to be a bit slower at finding and getting the non-free food. Once an animal is easily getting the food it has to work for, slowly decrease the amount of food it is getting for free, until, based on its natural history, you are happy with the total amount of foraging in which it is engaging.

How quickly an animal will take to contrafreeloading depends greatly on its natural history and the life history of that specific animal. For example, a tiger that has been fed in piles for the last ten years is going to be much less receptive to working for its food than say a younger tiger. Either way, starting slowly and decreasing the amount of free food seems to work best in my opinion.

Now go out there and start making the animals under your care work harder for their food - they will thank you later! Here are some devices based on natural behaviors that are designed to encourage contrafreeloading, which will get you thinking about some of your own:

- An Enrichment Zipline
- Hanging PVC Tube Feeder
- PVC Teeter Feeder
- Block Puzzle Feeder
- Wooden Dig Box
- Rolling Hay Feeder

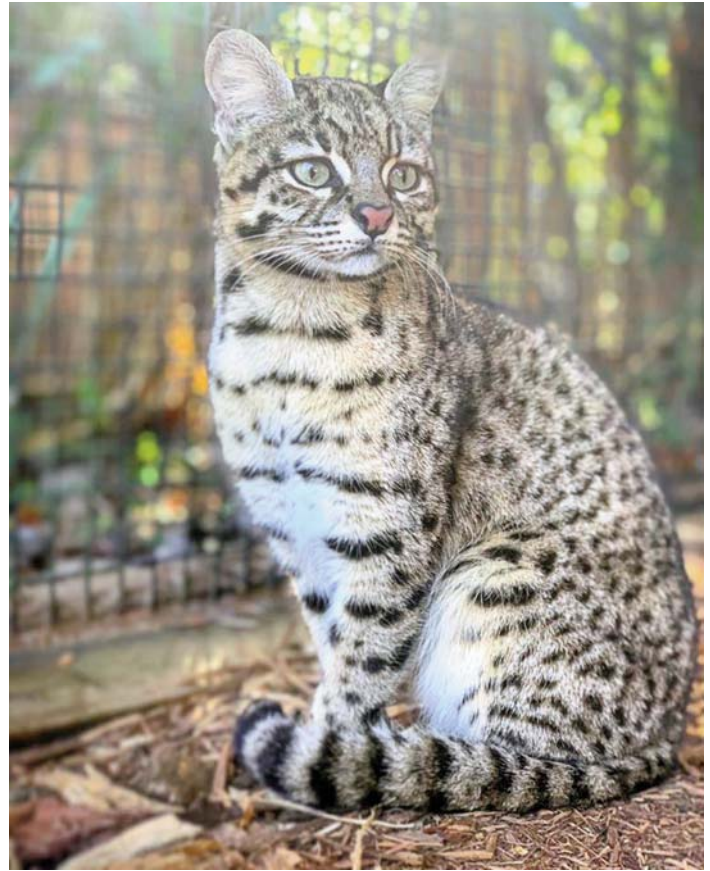
# Geoffroy's Cat Project

By Kylie Reynolds

At Amazing Animals Inc., we house four Geoffroy's cats, one male and three females. We decided to get our first pair three years ago, for education and conservation purposes. These small wildcats from South America are the widest spread felines in their region, yet little is truly known about them. People do not know how to protect things when they do not even know they exist, and many people have never heard of or seen Geoffroy's cats in person. We fell in love with Rio and Aries, our first pair of Geoffroy's, and loved educating our guests about this amazing species. We felt that more needed to be done to help their wild counterparts, so we started the Geoffroy's Cat Project.

We started working with researcher Felipe Peters, who studies Geoffroy's and other small wildcats in Brazil. Felipe graduated in biological sciences from the Universidade Luterana do Brasil ULBRA, Canoas/RS, has experience in zoology,

with an emphasis in mastozoology (mammalogy), taxonomy of recent groups, and ecology. He has been working professionally for 13 years as technical manager for the company Área de Vida, meeting state and federal environmental licensing demands related to wildlife. He is academically active in two lines of research; he is affiliated with the Pró-Carnívoros Institute, where he is part of a study group in Neotropical Feline Ecology; and the ULBRA Museum of Natural Sciences (MCNU), participating in the study group



**Portrait photo of Amazing Animals resident Geoffroy's cat Rio is another thank you gift for the Geoffroy's Cat Project fundraiser.**



**Felipe Peters, Geoffroy's cat researcher in Brazil, holds a sedated melanistic Geoffroy's that has been fitted with a GPS radio collar.**

on Systematics and Evolution of Small Rodents and Marsupials.

After talking with Felipe and learning about the research he does, we decided to team up with him to raise funds for research equipment he can use to further his studies on wild Geoffroy's cats and the other smaller cat species he studies. For the Geoffroy's Cat Project, we made a symbolic adoption kit for Rio and Aries. The adoption kit includes a certificate of adoption, an original painting done by our Geoffroy's cats, a 5x7 photo of

Rio, and a sticker of him. We are donating all of the proceeds from this adoption kit directly back into buying new game trail cams and GPS collars that Felipe can use in his research in Brazil.

To go with our adoption kit, we also host a Paint Night Fundraiser every year at the sanctuary with a certain animal theme. This year, we have decided to make the night all about the Geoffroy's cats! The painting our guests will do is of our male Geoffroy's, Rio. We also will have a silent auction and will sell our adoption kits during the event to raise more funds and awareness about these cats. We hope through education and raising funds for conservation that we can bring attention to all of the smaller cat species and prevent numbers in the wild from continuing to decline. Being a part of the Feline Conservation Foundation has been a great resource for us to network within the wild cat community and continue our mission. There are many ways we





can all raise funds for cat conservation, as well as support our own facilities.

We plan to allow the FCF to give the funds to Felipe. This will help generate more awareness of the Geoffroy's Cat Project, as well as our organization, by giving both of us the ability to cross-promote and share in the successes through social media, the *FCF Journal*, and website. By working together, it is a win-win-win! If you would like to support the Geoffroy's Cat Project, you can visit the Amazing Animals website at: [www.amazinganimalsinc.org](http://www.amazinganimalsinc.org) to purchase an adoption kit. We are excited to be able to support conservation and education, and to be a part of the FCF to support all wildcats throughout the world.

**Amazing Animals is raising funds for game cameras and GPS collars for his research. This is the symbolic adoption kit given to donors who contribute.**

## FCF Washington Update March 2020

By Bill Hanka

With the tumult of President Trump's impeachment trial behind us, Congress is not likely to be doing any large pieces of legislation this year as the clock ticks down to the summer presidential conventions in July and August, and the adjournment of the House and Senate in early October, to allow Members to hit the campaign trail ahead of the November 3rd elections. The House has been passing bills on its wish list, such as a bill to reduce prescription drug prices – but these bills stand little chance of being taken up by the Senate.

One exception will be the reauthorization of the six-year surface transportation bill, which funds roads and mass transit programs, that is due to expire on September 30, 2020. Other than this bill, Congress will likely only be agreeing to pass smaller scope legislation, which means we will have to remain vigilant on bills, including the Big Cat Public Safety Act," H.R. 1380/S. 2561 and the "Captive Primate Safety Act," H.R. 1776/S. 2562, which are viewed as relatively non-controversial and, therefore, more liable to be put on the floor calendars.

The Big Cat Public Safety Act continues to be bogged down because its estimated \$3 million cost will trigger the con-

gressional "pay-as-you-go" (PAYGO) procedure, which requires legislation that would increase the deficit be offset by spending cuts or revenue increases. Therefore, the bill sponsors will have to find an offset for the bill's spending or waive the PAYGO requirement, which then opens the bill up to be challenged on a point of order. The bill has 227 cosponsors in the House, significantly less than the 290 needed to put it on the fast-track House Consensus Calendar, and has only garnered two new cosponsors in 2020.

The Captive Primate Safety Act has not yet received any attention at the committee level, but we will continue to monitor

it closely because it also contains a prohibition on direct contact with bears, tigers, lions, jaguars, cougars, African leopards, snow leopards, apes, gibbons, siamangs, monkeys, and lorises. The bill to date has only 57 cosponsors in the House.

We will also continue to monitor any regulatory activity, as well as H.R. 1042, the "Providing Responsible Emergency Plans for Animals at Risk of Emerging Disasters (PREPARED) Act," H.R. 2863/S. 2121, the "Traveling Exotic Animal and Public Safety Protection Act," and H.R. 4211, the "Animal Welfare Enforcement Improvement Act."

### The FCF Advocacy Fund Needs Financial Support

Activism is more effective with representation.

The **FCF Advocacy Fund** pays to deliver the FCF vision of bridging the gap between professional zoos and private institutions directly to elected officials in Washington, D.C. Conservation of captive breeding programs requires ALL of US to support private ownership.

We need backing from each FCF member.

**We need every FCF member to get involved & make a donation at [www.felineconservation.org/donate](http://www.felineconservation.org/donate).**



# Feline Conservation Foundation Conservation Grant Available in 2020

By Kylie Reynolds  
Amazing Animals Inc.  
Conservation Committee

We are happy to announce that the FCF will offer a conservation grant for the 2020 fiscal year. This is your opportunity to request financial support for an *in situ* wildlife conservation or conservation education project. The amount will be up to \$2,000, which could be two individual grants for \$1,000 each. The new procedure and instructions for the application are posted below, and can also be found under the Conservation tab on the website. If you have additional questions, please direct to the [secretary@felineconservation.org](mailto:secretary@felineconservation.org). We can't wait to see the applications!

Proposal guidelines and the review process are described as follows.

## Application Guidelines:

1. Conservation projects should address habitat or species protection or research, or conservation education. Projects relating to programs in line with the FCF mission will be given preference. Internal grants are given to fund *in situ* conservation projects and conservation education programs.

2. Applications should be returned to [secretary@felineconservation.org](mailto:secretary@felineconservation.org) between March 1st and May 1st, 2020, by 12 p.m. Eastern Time on May 1st.

3. Applications must contain the completed application form, application narrative, and required supporting materials (itemized project budget, two-page *curriculum vitae* for the Principle Investigator, and funding request from Principal Investigator).

4. Application narrative should be no longer than four pages. Applications with narratives longer than four pages will not be evaluated. Incomplete applications will not be evaluated.

5. The FCF Conservation Fund will provide up to \$2,000 to selected projects. Funding requests must state specifically how FCF monies will be spent (i.e., specify budget items to which FCF funds will be applied). This should be clearly identified in both the application narrative and budget.

6. If the applicant has other funding

sources, these other funds should be shown.

7. Please address questions regarding the application, selection process, etc., to [secretary@felineconservation.org](mailto:secretary@felineconservation.org).



**The FCF will award a grant for conservation projects that address habitat or species protection or research, or conservation education.**

## Application review:

- There is a “pass/fail” category for the approval of the organization which is to receive the funding. Only those proposals receiving a “pass” will be submitted to the Conservation Committee for review. If you have questions about your organization, you are welcome to ask about their pass/fail status before working on the proposal.

- Each committee member will group the projects into one of three tiers – highest priority, mid priority, and lower priority. The following criteria will be used to assign the priority: endangered status/importance of species, conservation value, significance to the FCF, quality of proposal, effectiveness of the money, feasibility, and appropriateness of budget.

- A qualitative analysis will comprise of a discussion during the Conservation Committee Meeting/Board regarding the following or similar questions:

- a. Can the project sustain itself in the future?

- b. Or, is it a project that will be completed at the end of the granting period?

- Does the project impact numerous/diverse people or animals?
- Is the project global in nature?
- Will support of the project benefit the

FCF in some way?

- Does the project help diversify the FCF’s conservation efforts?

- Funding levels will depend on the number and quality of proposals submitted and may vary from year to year. Partial funding is sometimes awarded.

- Projects will be selected for funding during the Annual Conference. Funding will be dispersed in November of that year.

## Funding conditions:

- FCF members submitting Conservation Funding Applications will serve as liaison to the funded project/organization. The member will be responsible for communication with the project/organization, including gathering application materials, informing project organization of application and funding status, informing the FCF of project progress and results, and detailing how FCF monies are used. The member will also be responsible for presenting information on the project or coordinating with the project leader to present an article for the *Journal*.

- Recipients of FCF monies are requested to submit a final report or a year-end report in the case of long-term projects. The FCF liaison member will be responsible for obtaining these reports.

- The funded portion of the project should be completed within one year of receiving funds. Projects that continue for several years may receive funding in additional years, but a new application and evaluation will be required each year.

- For projects that have been funded for more than one year, it will be important to include progress that has been made and the tangible benefits expected if support is continued.

- Feline Conservation Foundation must be acknowledged in any publications, presentations, and/or website materials that result from the project. The FCF also reserves the right to publicize financial support of recipients and their projects in FCF publications and in the media.

- The FCF requests copies of any publications on the project.

- If the member does not follow the guidelines, they will be placed in poor standing with the FCF and membership could be revoked.



## FCF 2020 Conference, Wednesday, August 5th, Through Sunday, August 9th

We can't wait to see you at the annual FCF Conference 2020 in beautiful Phoenix, Arizona. We will be staying at Embassy Suites by Hilton, Phoenix Downtown North. Rooms are \$99 single/double, \$109 triple, and \$119 quad. Parking is complimentary for our group. The FCF room rate applies from 8/5/20 to 8/10/20.

Our hosts, Wildlife World Zoo, Aquarium, and Safari Park, will be sure to make this a conference to remember. The FCF Conference is fun, interactive, educational, and full of networking! We will offer professional development courses, hands-on workshops, educational guest speakers, host of annual membership and board meeting, silent auction, awards banquet, and, of course, zoo day!

Conference registration is now open. Visit the FCF homepage at [www.felineconservation.org](http://www.felineconservation.org). Scroll down and click on the green "Registration Open Now" to link to the EventLeaf.com/fcf2020 online form. Below the registration box is more information about the conference, and toward the bottom is a link to the Embassy Suites Phoenix hotel reservation page that takes you to the customized FCF Conference price rates.

### Conference Agenda



#### Wednesday, August 5

8:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Beginner Husbandry Course (additional fee)

This course was designed for volunteers, novice keepers, students, and anyone interested in acquiring a wild feline.

1:00 PM - 5:00 PM - Advanced Husbandry Course (additional fee)

This course is a deeper dive in the husbandry and care of wild felines. It's intended for keepers, volunteers, managers, and hobbyists to further their knowledge and professional development.

5:30 PM - 7:30 PM - Managers' Reception; free drinks and light snacks.

#### Thursday, August 6

8:00 AM - 10:00 AM - Contingency Planning Resources (additional Fee)

The goal of this workshop is to transfer knowledge that is not easily accessible through standard information channels, while maximizing what we can learn from one another within an interactive framework.

10:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Annual FCF Board of Directors Meeting

All FCF members are welcome to join.

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM - Interpretation and Program Development Workshop

This workshop is designed for keepers, educators, volunteers, and anyone who communicates to guests and visitors. We have created a hands-on, interactive approach to interpreting our message and highlighting our conservation goals to the public.

3:30 PM - 5:30 PM - Breeding and Neonate Care Workshop

This workshop is designed for keepers, educators, volunteers, and anyone who is interested in furthering their knowledge of breeding and neonate care of wild felines.

5:30 PM - 9:00 PM - Icebreaker at the Hotel

Come meet other FCF members, network, tell stories, eat, drink, and have fun!

#### Friday, August 7

8:00 AM - 8:45 AM - WITS - Wildlife Interactive Training System®, a multi-nodal operant conditioning system.

A multi-location operant conditioning system and method (U.S. Patent No. 9324244) consisting of a user location and one or more remote networked subject locations.



**8:45 AM - 9:00 AM - Chiropractor Visits A Neonate Tiger**  
A four-day-old Malayan tiger cub needed outside-the-box care. Dawn Strasser, Head Keeper of Neonatal Care and Quarantine, and Hand Raising Resource Center Advisor at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, will walk you through this case study.

**9:00 AM - 9:45 AM - Emergency Drills Game**  
This tabletop exercise is a discussion-based session where the participants will examine a series of emergency scenarios that can and have occurred in zoological institutions.

**9:45 AM - 10:00 AM - Break**

**10:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Regulation and Legislation Hot Topics & Q&A with Lobbyist**  
Hear from the FCF's federal lobbyist, Bill Hanka, and ZAA's state lobbyist, Alan Smith.

**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM - Lunch at Hotel (included in registration)**

**1:00 PM - 2:00 PM - Membership Meeting**  
This meeting is held annually at the conference to go over updates and changes to the organization. Please bring questions and suggestions for future consideration. We will be accepting nominations for vice president, treasurer, and two board seats (if proposed constitutional amendment passes; see page 13 of this *Journal* for amendment and voting instructions).

**2:00 PM - 2:45 PM - Fundraising Panel**  
You will hear from five successful fundraising campaigns at other institutions that you can implement to help raise funds for your mission or the FCF conservation fund.

**2:45 PM - 3:00 PM - Break**

**3:00 PM - 4:00 PM - Small Cat Conservation Foundation**  
Learn from expert small cat conservationist Jim Sanderson about current projects and the state of wild cats around the world.

**4:00 PM - 5:00 PM - Trends in Recordkeeping**  
David Kleven from Animal Care Software will discuss what's new with recordkeeping, its history, and why keeping quality records are important.

**5:00 PM - 5:30 PM - Silent Auction Closes**

**5:30 PM - 7:30 PM - Managers' Reception; free drinks and light snacks**



### **Saturday, August 8**

**8:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Zoo Day; transportation provided**  
**12:00 PM - 1:00 PM - Lunch at the Zoo (included in registration)**  
**2:00 PM - 4:00 PM - Committee Meetings**  
**4:30 PM - 9:00 PM - Banquet Dinner at the Zoo; transportation provided**

### **Sunday, August 9**

**9:00 AM - 12:00 PM - Board Meeting**  
All are welcome to start planning for the next year.



### Conference Speakers:

Alan Smith, ZAA National Legislative Affairs Director

Alan co-founded R Street in June 2012, having previously served as a senior fellow at the Heartland Institute, working on insurance issues. Alan also has served as executive director of ALEC and the Zoological Association of America.

Bill Hanka, Hanka Advisor, LLC

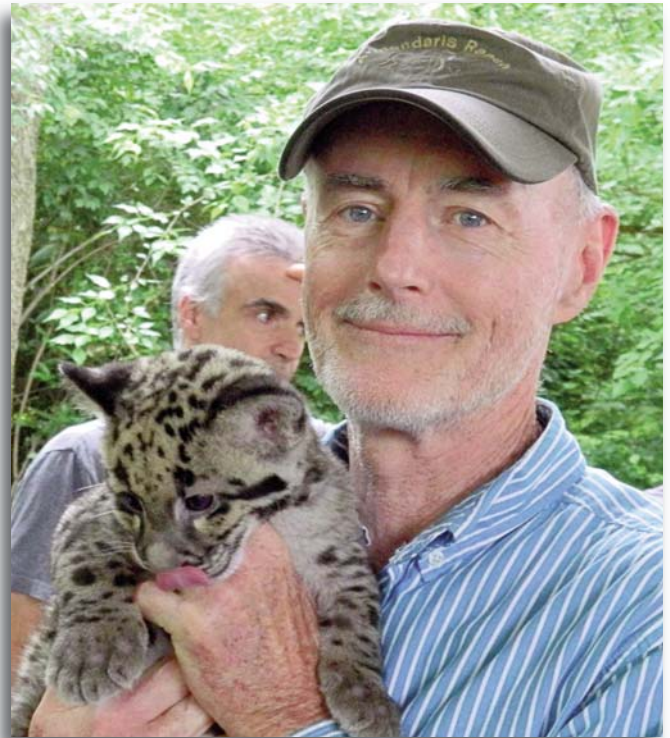
Bill Hanka is a seasoned professional with 20 years of proven success advocating for private sector and government clients at the federal level.

Jim Sanderson, Ph.D., Program Manager of Wild Cat Conservation, Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation

Dr. Sanderson received a Ph.D. from the University of New Mexico in 1976. He is the founder and director of the Small Wild Cat Conservation Foundation.

David Kleven, Co-founder, Animal Care Software

As a wildlife educator, David designed his own animal care database to track records. In 2005, David modified it for use at a small municipal zoo. He has since collaborated with software developer Michael Gagne to co-found Animal Care Software, a recordkeeping system that works for many different animal care facilities and also provides support.



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## A Constitutional Amendment Proposal

The FCF Board of Directors has received a proper motion to amend Article Five of the FCF Constitution, which addresses the nomination and election process. Brian Braitsch, Dawn Strasser, and Chris Tromborg have signed a proposed amendment that would change the current nomination period and holding of elections for the officers and directors of the FCF Board in odd numbered years, to staggered but annual elections, with four seats voted on in even numbered years, and three seats voted on in odd numbered years.

The membership will vote upon this amendment online at [www.electionrunner.com](http://www.electionrunner.com). Members will receive an email

invitation and instructions to vote starting on May 1st, and voting will be accepted until June 4th. If you have not provided the FCF with a current email address, you may contact the FCF Secretary to obtain instructions on how to vote. Please review your profile on the FCF website to make sure your email information is up-to-date so that you will receive an email invitation to vote. You will receive your invitation to vote from [www.electionrunner.com](http://www.electionrunner.com), not from an FCF email address.

If this amendment passes, there will be a nomination period that runs until August 10th, and elections for vice-president, treasurer, and two director seats will be voted upon in the fall, and those elected

will begin their term on January 1, 2021.

The proposed amendment to Article Five reads:

### *ARTICLE V – Nomination and Elections*

*1. The nomination period shall open May 1. In the odd numbered years, the President, Secretary, and one director position shall be elected, and in the even numbered years, the Vice-President, Treasurer, and two directors shall be elected. Nominations must be received no later than August 10th, and may be sent either electronically or by U.S. mail to the Secretary.*



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## Board of Directors' Reasoning Behind Proposal of Constitutional Amendment on Article V – Nominations and Elections

By Phyllis Parks

The Board of Directors agrees that, as stated in the Constitution, a two-year term for officers of Feline Conservation Foundation is appropriate. We understand that usually there are several officers carried over into an additional term, allowing for continuity and understanding of what has happened in prior years.

The 2019 Board began with incumbents President Mindy Stinner, Vice President Julia Wagner, and one board member, Chris Tromborg. The other four members were newly elected and had not previously served in any capacity with Feline Conservation Foundation. What was unusual

for this group was that both the president and vice president worked with the same facility, which was undergoing an extreme situation, occupying an unprecedented amount of time and energy for the first five months of the 2019 term.

Chris had served multiple terms and was a huge help, providing answers to many questions, but having only served in the capacity of director, there were many areas in which he could not assist. Lynn Culver, who we all know understands the inner workings of the organization, made herself available to guide us as well.

The confusion and frustration that resulted made us realize that it would be quite possible, with the existing election

policy of having all offices up for election in the same year, to leave us open to having a whole new slate in any given term.

Having discussed the options, the Board proposes the election of president, secretary, and one director in odd-numbered years, with the election of vice president, treasurer, and two directors in even-numbered years, thereby eliminating the possibility of all officers, or all KEY officers, president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, being new in any one term.

The Board does not propose any changes in the method or dates of nomination or election.



## An Opinion Against the Proposed Amendment to Change Article Five of the Constitution

By Kevin Chambers

There is a proposed amendment to change the Constitution to provide for the election of the board to be split into an election of half of the board every year. I will give you reasons why you as a member should vote "NO" on this amendment to see that it is defeated and the elections should continue to be held every other year.

The main reason that the board has proposed this change is that the number of board members that were changed in the last election helped create confusion in their rolls and difficulty in achieving their goals (see Minutes on page 33). The number of new board members elected then were four, so this change would not accomplish a smaller number of possible new members because four would be elected one year and three the next. Confusion over the duties of a board member has nothing to do with when they are elected. The duties of each office are clearly stated in the constitution and bylaws of the FCF. It is the roll of the

president to make sure that each board member is familiar with the duties of their position and what is expected of them. A confused board member need go no further than to ask the president. That is the reason the bylaws state that the president must have served previously on the board. The president should be familiar with how everything works and provide the continuity of the board.

Continuity is another reason for voting "NO" on this amendment. Granted, there is always a learning curve for new board members. As it is now, the board has two years to interact and work together for the goals of the organization. Changing half the board every year means there is just one year before a shakeup in the board is imminent. This actually hurts the desired objective of achieving the organization's goals.

If a current board member wants to try to be elected to a different position on the board, as is often the case, it would be allowed. However, if the new position is elected in a different year than the office they currently hold, it would require that

they resign their current position when it becomes time to take over the new role. According to the bylaws, if a board member resigns, they are ineligible to accept or run for another office for a year from their resignation date. This means that they would have to take a one- or two-year sabbatical before they could run for an office that is not elected the same year as their current office. Another problem with this scenario of being elected to a different office that would necessitate their resignation from another office is that it would deny the membership the opportunity to elect the replacement since vacancies on the board are chosen by the board for the remainder of the term.

Finally, having an election every year would cost money and time of the organization's volunteers. In essence, the cost and time spent on an election every year versus one being held every two years would double.

Vote AGAINST the adoption of this amendment to keep the FCF strong.



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## A History of Kisa the Lynx

By Lynn Culver

Kisa, the Eurasian lynx, arrived at my NOAH facility in 2014. She was born at Fred Boyajian's Great Cats of Georgia facility and acquired by Joel Slaven for use in the Orlando SeaWorld wildlife show. She was an exceptional ambassador for her species, performing willingly for six years. But, one day, I was contacted and offered Kisa. It was time for her to retire from ambassadorship and move to the next stage of her life, and hopefully produce more of her kind. I gratefully moved her to western Arkansas and introduced her to Bing, my male Eurasian lynx. The two formed a bond and lived together until this past February.

Bing bred Kisa and impregnated her, but her labors were long, and her kitten litters born dead. We were not going to allow her to breed anymore. We had created a beautiful hillside habitat for Kisa and Bing, and could continue to care for her here forever,

but since she was such an outgoing and personable cat, we knew she would adjust to life elsewhere and could fill a role as a good-will ambassador at another facility that had more visitors. I began to take inquiries on her.

I was contacted by veterinarian/teacher Alice Blue-McLendon from Texas A & M University about adding Kisa to their wildlife center, which is a collection of

animals that is part of the veterinary college. Students gain an opportunity to be familiar with the husbandry needs of wildlife, as well as medical issues. Alice had an empty lion enclosure and thought Kisa would fill that space perfectly.

I convinced Alice that Kisa needed much more in the way of a habitat, and that I would hold her for however long it took to raise funds and design and build

her a custom enclosure. We stayed in touch for six months while the college took this project to heart. Finally, the day arrived. Kisa cooperated like the lady she is, willingly walking into the trap cage, then the Sky kennel, and riding peacefully for six hours to the Winnie Carter Wildlife Center. She has made many friends and adjusted well to her new home. We miss her and Bing misses her, but I believe she is, and always will be, exceptional ambassador material, and it was an honor and pleasure to care for her the past six years.



**Lynn and Bart say goodbye to Kisa while she's standing in the trap cage before going into the Sky kennel carrier attached.**



# Lynx Finds Fur-Ever Home at Texas A&M Wildlife Center

By Megan Myers

As the newest exotic animal resident of the Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (CVM) Winnie Carter Wildlife Center, Kisa the lynx has found the purr-fect place to call home.

The 11-year-old Eurasian lynx came to Texas A&M in February, from a conservation breeding facility in Arkansas. Because Kisa (киса, in Russian, means “kitty”) is now considered middle-aged, she is retiring from conservation work and taking on the role of an ambassador species for Texas A&M’s Wildlife Center.

“She will be one of our educational animals; she will help teach students about the special routine care and feeding of exotic cats, including preventative veterinary care,” said Dr. Alice Blue-McLendon, director of the Winnie Carter Wildlife Center.

The Wildlife Center also cares for two other species of small exotic cats, a serval and three Asian leopard cats, so the addition of a lynx will increase the variety of

learning opportunities for students and emphasize the differences between similar species.

“Even though the management of the species might be very similar, the animals’ behavior will be different,” Blue-McLendon said. “The animals have different personalities even though they may be similar in size.”

Kisa’s arrival also provided an opportunity for collaboration across colleges; soon after Blue-McLendon knew she would need to build a habitat for Kisa, she reached out to Dr. José Fernández Solís, an associate instructional professor



**Kisa arrived at the Winnie Carter Wildlife Center just after dusk. She rode the six hours quietly and was released into her new habitat.**



**College students construct a cedar plank platform for Kisa's new habitat.**



**The finished wooden plank house for Kisa sits under an elevated platform which will provide shade, plus rain and snow protection, for the house and nearby ground.**



of construction science at the Texas A&M College of Architecture, for help designing the perfect space.

"It's really been fun to work with Dr. Solís because he just loves students and he loves to have projects," Blue-McLendon said. "His input has been delightful and he has really understood that I wanted to do sustainable construction as best we could. He drew up some plans for us and had all kinds of interesting ideas."

As the vice president of architecture at Lord Aeck Sargent, a design firm headquartered in Atlanta, Solís has experience designing exotic animal habitats from his work on a multilevel renovation and addition to the Atlanta Zoo's orangutan habitat in 1996.

"No two wildlife projects are the same, but all have a common theme—what is the natural habitat of the wildlife that can best be represented in a confined space?" Solís said.



**Kisa gets an ophthalmologist exam while inside the custom-built examination cage. She has a rip in her nictitating membrane, an injury inflicted during a scuffle with her former mate, Bing.**

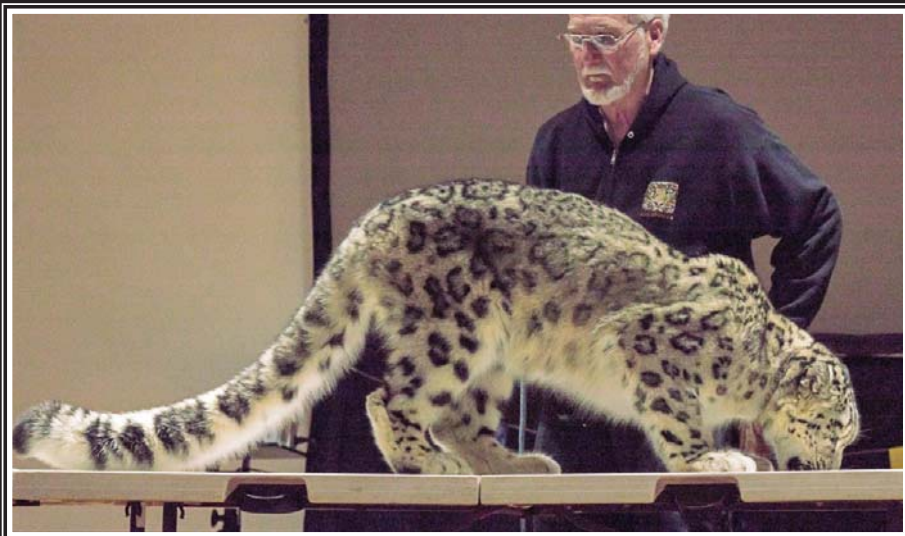


**Kisa rests on the elevated cedar plank platform and views the other animal residents at the center.**



**Kisa grooms contentedly. She has transitioned beautifully to her new home.**





**Bhutan the snow leopard is presented by Rob Dicely at the Wild Cat Fund 2020 event. Photo by Jessie Campbell.**

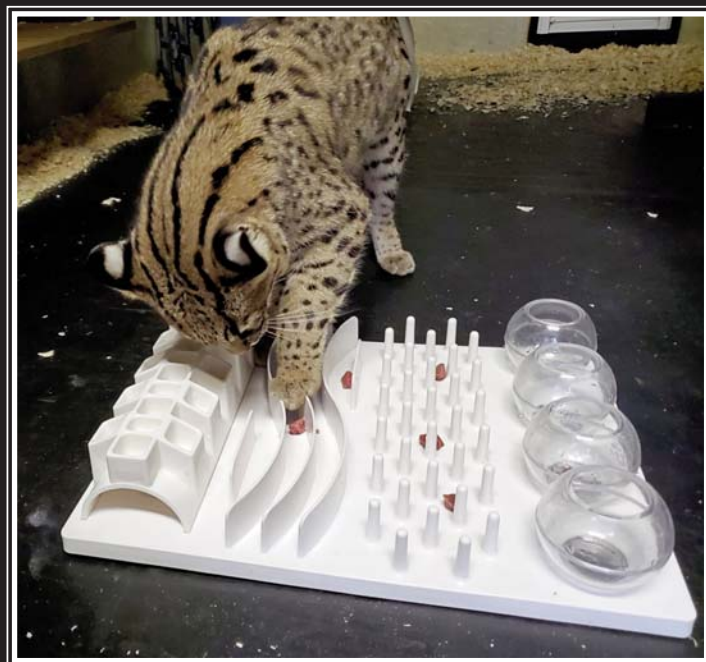


**A nice, comfy lounge chair entices Twin Pines Exotic's resident fish cat, Ruger, to take a nap on a beautiful day. Photo by Sheri Deflorio**



**At the Christmas gifts leftovers enrichment day, Chane Wallace photographs Kawlga the lion at Tigers for Tomorrow ripping into his "present."**

## Best Shots



**Jungle Encounter's Geoffroy's cat, Spirit, shows off his IQ in this food treats enrichment game.**





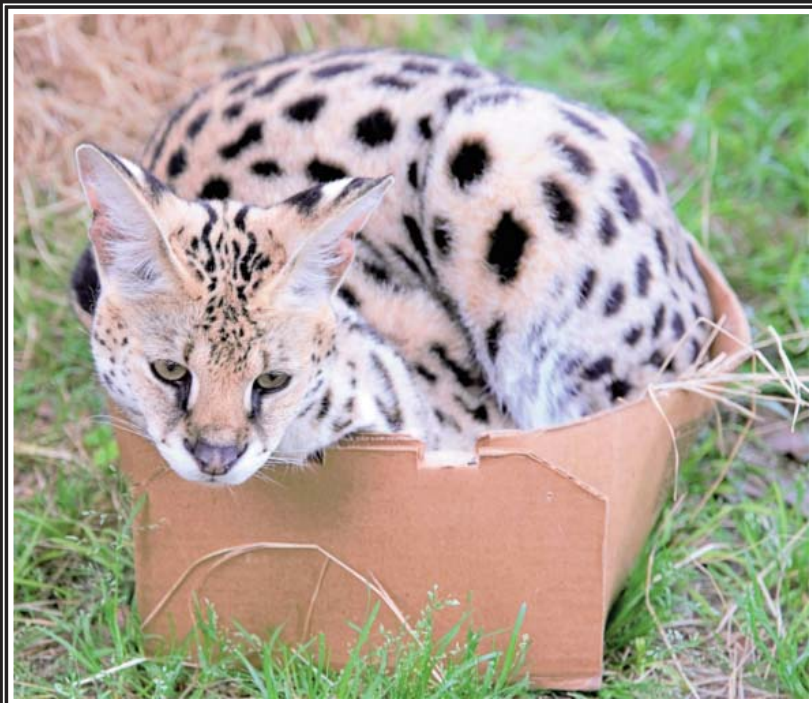
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**A brother-sister pair of Asian leopard cats are the latest additions to Great Cats World Park. Photo by Farrah Conti.**



**Amazing Animals, Inc photographer, Kylie Reynolds, shoots Geoffroy's cat Aries enjoying a cardboard box enrichment item.**



**Athena the serval is all boxed up at Bear Creek Feline Center. Photo by Jim Broadus.**



**Gina Tkach, who works at Conservators Center, photographed the sleek form of Aten, resident jungle cat.**



## Pioneering the Use of Sand Cats as Outreach Ambassadors

By Tonya Lowe

Dune the sand cat struts her way to the stage at the Intrepid Museum. She confidently showcases her hunting ability by snatching a feather cat toy out of the air and then jumps to her trainer's shoulder to walk around the theater to meet her 250 admirers. She is not what they expected when they were told they would meet one of the most elusive wild cats in the world that lives in the desert and hunts scorpions. One look at her beautiful eyes, football shaped head, and furry feet, however, and there is no doubt that this cat is as wild as any of her larger cousins. The audience fixates on her antics and her personality that is far larger than her physical size. This moment is a long time in the making and we'd like to share the journey of pioneering the use of sand cats as outreach ambassadors with all of you.

This journey began when Hawk Creek Wildlife Center, in partnership with the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, welcomed a trio of sand cats from war-torn South Sudan in 2018. The plan was to set up the trio for a breeding project and raise the first known outreach ambassadors of this species. Our research revealed only one sand cat had been used for education, it was at a zoo in Arizona, and the cat performed an A to B behavior onsite at its home facility stage, but we were unable to locate any facilities that have tried to use this species for outreach programs.

The founding trio, despite no positive interaction with humans previously, settled into their routine in quarantine quickly. They were easy to work around and maintained a calm demeanor. Once cleared from quarantine, they were relocated to their new exhibit, including an indoor heated holding (with a dehumidifier) and an outdoor public



**Dune the sand cat has blossomed into a confident feline that will happily enter a room of 25 or 250.**



**After the show, a group of school children got a special treat as they gathered around to watch Dune play. This casual encounter allowed them to photograph Dune up close, ask questions, and learn about training.**

exhibit. We wrestled with ideas for housing these desert cats; after all, we are in the north with cold, rain, and snow! While most facilities maintain sand cats strictly indoors, we wanted to provide them with the same choices as our other felines, including an exercise wheel for their indoor holding (they use it daily) and a 40' x 60' outdoor exhibit for fresh air and sunshine. Apparently, the trio agreed, as they bred within the first hour that they were given access to their outdoor exhibit! We were not sure that the breeding would yield offspring, as the inexperienced male did not seem to have the hang of this breeding thing yet; he was a bit off the mark! As the weeks went by, we were pleasantly surprised that these



adult cats were wonderful exhibit cats that lounged in open view of the public. This gave us encouragement for the future of an ambassador sand cat. One morning, a radio call from an excited staff member let us know it was time for the real work to start, because we had our first litter of kittens! As a side note, since the sand cats have come from a different country than the other lines in the U.S., we are waiting for results from their DNA testing as to their sub-species. We are hoping that not only are they producing great ambassadors, but that they can help their species gene pool in the zoo population.

Mother Sahara had chosen a den in one of the cat trees located in their inside enclosure to give birth. Fortunately, the mom was able to raised them for the first two weeks in the limited den and then they were removed for hand-rearing. Pulling the kittens was uneventful, and they were started on syringe feeding. Compared to bobcats, Geoffroy's cats, and Canada and Eurasian lynx, these kittens were by far the most laid back and social kittens to raise. They are surprisingly dainty!

As the youngsters grew, this laid-back personality became more apparent with the kittens confidently playing and running through a room of staff and volunteers. Hawk Creek started with a male kitten for outreach training, but, due to demand, the male was sent to another facility for outreach. Fortunately, Sahara had another litter, so we were able to train another kitten, and this time it was a female. So far, Dune, has blossomed into a confident feline that will happily enter a room of 25 or 250. In addition to programs and exhibits, Dune has been on TV and at radio stations. So far, we have not noticed any difference between the two genders performing in front of the public. As soon as Buffalo has a warm day, which will hopefully be in her lifetime, we will try Dune at an outside venue.

Two males of the first litter were raised by the Columbus Zoo. From eight weeks

on, they went out on programs almost every day. They were instant stars and, like ours, they seem to enjoy their outings very much. Since we had only one kitten at two different times, we waited longer to try to coincide with the natural timing of the mother taking her young with her in the wild. Both of our kittens also excelled at outreach.

The Columbus Zoo and Hawk Creek Wildlife use the same methods for presentations except that the zoo takes out two cats. We wonder if raising a Geoffroy's cat and a sand cat together would save on enclosure space and give the cats additional security if needed. Small kitten harnesses are used, cats are displayed on a table, floor, or shoulder. They love play-



**Part of our wild cat training is exposing them to dogs.**

ing with or chasing feather toys on a stick.

There is very little information on these tiny cats in relation to their lives in the wild. We found even less on the sand cat's personality and quirks from those in captivity. So we can only share what we have observed with the two litters that we had in 2019. We discovered several consistencies through two litters of kittens. They wiggled a lot if ever restrained, i.e., exams, cleaning bottoms, nail clippings, etc. Crate training and nail clipping had to be started at a very young age. Harness training was quick and typical. Their litterbox manners, for the kittens and adults, have been impeccable. They don't spray or have the notoriously smelly/oily urine

of many wild cat species, even as adults.

They are very intelligent. Perhaps this comes from being a small cat in a harsh environment trying to stay alive, but the adults were witnessed more than once trying to get out of the quarantine area by jumping at the door latch! All of our hand-raised sand cat kittens seek out human contact, more so than the other wild cat species we have raised. They do not like being left alone in a room, and they will follow you everywhere and hop in your lap for a nap any chance they get. They know their trainers, but willingly will go to strangers. Like all young wild cats, they go through phases of shyness, but these phases are short lived and less extreme than in other species. Unlike other wild cats, if they get startled, they rarely bolt; instead they will flatten down on the ground or on the table and then slowly stand back up.

Part of our socialization training is introducing them to domestic cats and small/medium dogs; this prepares them for their future if they see a service animal in the audience. So far, all sand cat introductions have been seamless (sand cat to sand cat, younger kittens to older kittens, sand cat to dog, and sand cat to domestic cat). Our one dog and two cheetahs are used to wild kittens and are not introduced until the kittens

are three months old, and even then they are very tiny and must be supervised.

Our little female is very vocal and very sassy, talking to every person and animal she meets. This trait gives her a very endearing quality that her audiences love.

This journey continues to be educational and exciting as we explore the use of sand cats as outreach ambassadors. We look forward to sharing sand cats with the community and will keep you updated on the progress of this tiny, dynamic species.

For more photos and videos please visit our website at [www.hawkcreek.org/prop](http://www.hawkcreek.org/prop).



## The Cat World Lost a Great Friend in Nanette McGann

By Lynn Culver

Nanette joined the Long Island Ocelot Club (our organization's original name) in 1990. She served on this organization's board as Director of Legal Affairs in the 1990s, and later as a Life Director before the four Life Director seats were eliminated. Nanette was a responsible private owner, and was licensed by the state of Florida. Though she was not a breeder, Nanette had experience rearing many exotic kittens, including caracal, serval, Siberian lynx, jungle cat, and even cougar cubs, for friends who were breeders.

Nanette believed that, as responsible owners and members of FCF, the main focus and commitment should be the preservation, protection, and propagation of captive feline species. She counseled the organization to share its knowledge and dedication to our felines, and to pick battles wisely and apply our resources intelligently. She helped this organization grow both in membership and stature so that as the future unfolds, it continues forward with the privilege of private captive husbandry intact.

I first met Nanette in person at the 1991 LIOC Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada. That year our organization stayed at the Flamingo Hotel, and our field trip was to the Mirage Hotel, where we enjoyed front-row seats to the Siegfried and Roy white tiger magic show. During that annual membership meeting, Nanette announced her Florida Class II personal possession permit would be approved shortly and she was on the lookout for a serval kitten. My friendship with Nanette has lasted ever since.

Nanette eventually did find her serval kitten, a most affectionate boy she named TJ, but he was not her first exotic cat. Kira, a female caracal, came into her life at the end of 1992. It was a year later that TJ, a nine-week-old serval, joined her growing feline family. A few years later, Nanette acquired two rare serval/caracal hybrids from different breeders, a boy she named Snuggles, and a girl

she named Aftica, "Tica" for short.

Sadly, TJ developed hyperesthesia syndrome, a little-understood feline disorder that is also called rolling skin syndrome. Veterinarians are divided on whether it is a viral, neurological, or anxiety disorder. Though Nanette was able to medically treat and improve TJ's symptoms and keep his quality of life at a level worth living for several years, eventually there came a day when he backslid and stopped responding to any medications, leaving Nanette the most difficult decision a loving owner ever has to face. Nanette shared this experience by writing about it so that others might benefit from her heartache (See January 2003 LIOC issue – "How TJ Lost his Purr").

In 2005, during the convention in Miami, Nanette was honored as that year's Lotty recipient for her service to both the cats and the FCF. She had not only served on the board, but also helped revitalize the Florida LIOC Chapter and hosted an FCF husbandry course in Fort Lauderdale. She helped many obtain hours for their Florida Class II licenses and would always be available for a cat person in need. In her

acknowledgement letter to the organization, Nanette closed with the following thoughts:

*It saddens me that the day might come when I won't have to do laundry at 3:00 a.m. because I won't have a Kira to pee on my quilt; that I will not have to make a dental appointment for a crown replacement because there will be no Snuggles to get carried away with his head butts; or that there will be no Tica to search everywhere for her favorite snack – plastic bags! Our cats are a serious commitment and the lifestyle change that this demands is not for everyone. Without our serious and positive efforts, I am afraid that soon it will not be allowed for ANYONE.*

It is with great sadness that I share the passing of Nanette McGann at the age of 76 this past January. She had suffered a lot of pain the last few years of her life, breaking a hip in January 2016, followed by foot issues and then a broken tailbone and spinal pain in 2019. After multiple hospitalizations, she developed pneumonia and a bacterial infection that took her life.

After the last of her four beloved exotic cats passed away, I think a part of Nanette died as well. For nearly two decades, Nanette had cared for a serval named Frazier, who was a rehomed adult cat who never showed any affection. After her passing, he was placed at Lions, Tigers and Bears, a sanctuary in Florida, run by Lynn Whitmeyer. The loves of Nanette's life are all in Heaven, and these fur babies have been waiting for the day when she would join them again.

Nanette's life is a model for other exotic feline owners; caring, conscientious, sharing, loving, and supportive. She has given her time to new owners, and wannabe owners, and she has donated herself to this organization and been a reliable supporter of FCF conservation projects, many times refusing any credit, instead requesting that her donations be marked as anonymous.



Nanette with Kira, her caracal kitten.

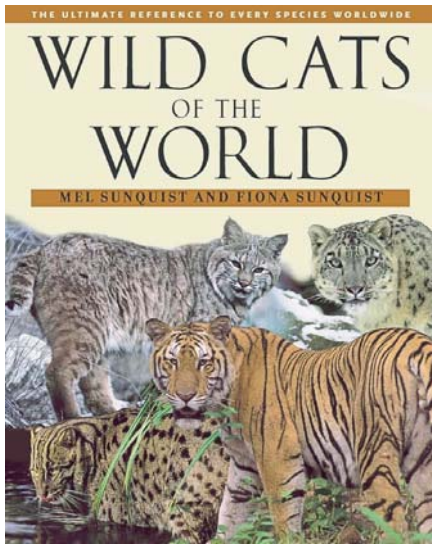
## Good Reads For A Time of Social Distancing and Lockdowns

By Richard Hahn  
Executive Director, Catocin Wildlife Preserve, Maryland

When Lynn asked me if I would write a book report for the *Journal*, I said, "Sure, no sweat." I have probably 50 books just on wild felidae.

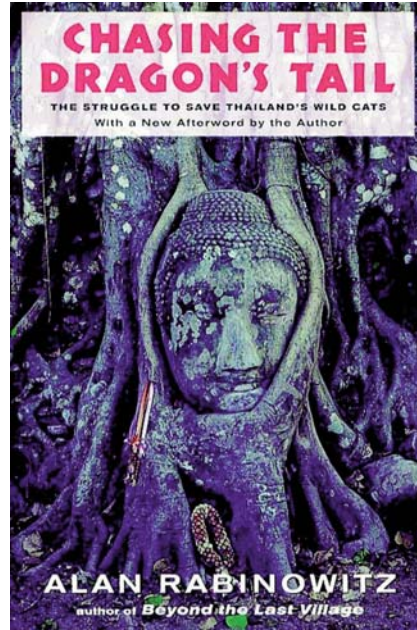
However, upon further inspection, I also discovered that their copyright dates average about 20 years ago - year 2000. So here I am, stewing over what I can offer you that you don't already know about.

For example, *Wild Cats of the World*, by Mel and Fiona Sunquist (2001), is a really good one. It says it is the ultimate reference guide for every species worldwide, and with 452 pages; it probably is or was. It's more like a



dictionary than a novel, but it really is filled with interesting facts. It includes information on the status in the wild and status in captivity for most, if not all, species. Of course, that's about 20 years ago. It comes from University of Chicago Press, with a jacket price of \$45. Well worth it, especially if you can find a gently-used copy for less.

If you are not into big, fat, heavy, older books, I found one that is only 254 pages. It's *The Smithsonian Answer Book: Cats*. This one is only 16 years old, and I picked it up at a used bookstore for a dollar. It came from a library. It's a beautiful book with a protected cover on it and not a mark in it. Looks brand new. This is not a book for kids. If I had more time, I would read it again, as it's chocked full of good informa-



tion. Take my word for it or don't, but for a buck, you should really have this on your library shelves, too.

Everything now is on the internet. Whatever you want to now is there, IF you know where to look and/or how to ask for it.

Just for fun, I'll throw in two more suggestions. First, *Chasing the Dragon's Tail* by Alan Rabinowitz.

This is a true

account about a conservation effort to save Thailand's wild cats. Another used bookstore bargain at \$7.75. Well worth it if you are into cats in the wild or conservation efforts. And finally, *Monster of God*, a novel by David Quammen that is built around man-eating tigers.

Good reading, and if you find really good feline books that are not (plus or minus) 20 years old, let me know.

## Keeping Your Business Going During COVID-19

By Brian Braitsch

Over the last few weeks, the world has grown increasingly panicked about COVID-19. Store shelves are depleted of goods like toilet paper and hand sanitizer. Schools are closing, offices are urging employees to work from home, and small businesses that rely on foot traffic are seeing their in-store sales take a hit.

If you've noticed a drop in patrons, you're not alone.

In our digital world, there are still plenty of ways to stay connected to customers through this pandemic and keep your business afloat.

Here are a few smart strategies for zoological businesses looking to keep their audience engaged and in-the-loop, even if they're self-quarantined or avoiding public places.

**Let Customers Know What You're Doing to Prevent the Spread Of COVID-19**

Send an email to your customers and post signage to assure them that you're doing everything you can to protect their health when they visit your park. Share any increased cleaning, disinfecting, and hygiene protocols you're following, and let them know that you are enforcing self-quarantine among any employees who might be experiencing symptoms. Let them know how your animals are and that you are taking great care of them. Increase your social media presence.

Your customers are already on social media, but these days they are likely checking in more frequently to get the latest updates on the virus. Whether you're posting about the virus specifically or trying to offer light, positive content to help take people's minds off the panic, it can be helpful to increase your posting frequency to ensure you are showing up in their newsfeeds. Animals on Facebook Live, Instagram stories, and educational content are huge right now. Remember that par-

ents are stuck at home with kids and will need educational content to help them teach and occupy kids now more than ever.

### Offer Online Deals

If your business already has an e-commerce component, remind customers that they can still shop for their favorite items on your website. It might even help to offer a coupon or discount to encourage online shopping while your customers are staying home. If you have a gift shop or make animal art, do online auctions and sell products to generate some sort of income.

### The FCF Is Here for You!

We are all in this together. We need to support and lift each other up during this difficult time. If there is anything we can do to help, please don't hesitate to contact us on the website and reach out to our community via the FCF Members-Only Facebook Group.



## Amazing Wild Cat Research Trip

By Sandra Michael

A couple of years ago, while attending the FCF conference, I met Debi Willoughby. She got me excited about her wild cat research in Belize. She mentioned she offers trips from time to time for nature lovers to join and help her do research. I was so excited and could not wait to join her January 2020 trip. I thought the trip would be fun, relaxing, and full of wild

Zoo where we had a guided night tour.

Sharon Matola started the Belize Zoo in 1983, when her filmmaker friends needed a home for a collection of wild animals that had been used to make documentary films about Belize's tropical forests. Sharon took on the major responsibility of building cages and caring for these animals. As word got out, Sharon became the go-to person whenever someone found a sick or injured wild animal. She would

nurse them back to health and release them when possible, but the ones she could not release would stay at the zoo.

Today the zoo has only native species and is a forever home for rescued animals. It is a small, privately run, well-kept educational zoo. I was impressed that the enclosures aren't cement cages—the zoo takes the time to enclose the natural habitat and make it a secure space for the animals to enjoy.

mom and one-year-old baby margay, both of whom seemed interested in investigating our group. One of the margays climbed the fence to get a piece of meat from our guide. Watching those cats climb the fence and run up and down the trees was fascinating—they move like no other cat, facing the ground head-on.

Next, we moved to the ocelot enclosure. Their ocelot was talkative and came right up to the fence to communicate with us. Our group kept moving, and at the jaguar enclosures we learned that many wild cats in Belize are labeled “problem animals” and blamed for killing livestock and domestic dogs. As a result, the zoo is overwhelmed with jaguars that are brought in because they are sick or injured. Most arrive with bullet wounds or broken teeth. No wonder they revert to eating livestock and domestic dogs—they are too injured to hunt their preferred prey. Debi told us part of the zoo's Central Belize Wildlife Corridor initiative is to make a safe environment that will be protected by rangers where they can release some of these jaguars to increase the wild population in that area.

We spent the next morning at the zoo enjoying all it has to offer during the daytime. All the employee-animal relationships were remarkable, and I enjoyed seeing all the native species. After lunch at the zoo, we met up with Reynold (Ray) Cal, who is a zoo employee and does a lot



**Ed Willoughby, Eric Barkalow, Debi Willoughby, Sandra Michael, Nancy Vandermey, and Bret Haughwout hang out at the entrance of Belize Foundation for Research and Environmental Education (BFREE).**

cat research experiences—and I was not disappointed.

I packed my bags and flew down to Belize on January 17, 2020. Debi greeted me at the airport. Once the rest of the group arrived, we were transported to the Tropical Education Center (TEC) located down the street from the Belize Zoo. I was glad to see that Debi keeps these trips small so everyone gets a really personalized experience. I was also happy to learn that this trip included all FCF members. Joining us was Debi's husband, Ed Willoughby, Nancy Vandermey, Eric Barkalow, and Bret Haughwout. Once we arrived at TEC, we unloaded our luggage and met in the communal area of our lodge to get an overview of the grounds and learn what to expect during the trip. We relaxed for the afternoon and enjoyed a delicious dinner put together by the TEC. After dinner, we went to the Belize

Every enclosure looks natural and beautiful, and the animals seemed happy and relaxed.

During the night tour, I was elated to be able to pet and feed a docile, friendly tapir, Belize's national mammal. When we got to the feline area, all the cats were also moving around and active. The zoos in the U.S. are mostly open during daylight hours, so to see the cats at night was a unique and amazing experience for me. One enclosure had a



**This game camera will be set twelve feet high to provide panoramic views above the leaf layer of the cacao trees. After strapping the camera to this 2 by 4, the post will be set vertical.**





**Looking for signs of felines, such as scats, paw prints, fur hairs or territorial scrapes, to determine best possible location for new cameras.**

of wildlife research at a nearby private preserve. He took us down the street from the zoo where Debi has plans to set out trail cameras to monitor newly released wildlife and research jaguarundi.

The area is savannah grasslands with some areas of scrub brush. Under Ray's leadership, we spread out inside the grassland looking for signs of wild cats. It had rained recently, so there were some muddy spots with fresh cat tracks. We found signs of jaguar but not jaguarundi, which I think are especially hard to spot in the high grass. A large depression in the grass showed where a jaguar had rolled around and then padded off into some nearby brush. We followed the trail, and, even though we did not see any cats in the wild, it was great to get out into nature. In the evening, we gathered in TEC's classroom, where a zoo employee, Jamal Andrewin-Bohn, discussed Belize's wildlife threats and conservation efforts. It was an informative lecture, and you could

tell Jamal completely immersed his life in wildlife conservation and loves it. Jamal and Debi often coordinate their research in the wildlife corridor area.

Early the next morning, we traveled south through the breathtaking Maya Mountains and to the entrance of our next adventure, the Belize Foundation for Research & Environmental Education

(BFREE). Most of the group walked the six-mile entrance road through the jungle to get to the compound, but I opted to lie on top of our luggage piled up in the back of a pickup. As we drove, I looked up and watched the grasslands and scrub brush slowly turn into pine forest and then transition into lush, tropical jungle. It was amazing to see the transformation. I had no idea what to expect when we arrived and was happy to find myself engulfed in dense jungle. It was so peaceful, beautiful, and seemingly untouched by the surrounding world. BFREE borders four national parks and reserves, comprising an area of almost two million acres of protected land. The jungle seemed to go on forever.

Debi had mentioned BFREE has rustic accommodations, but I was surprised at how comfortable it was. We stayed in raised mahogany wood cabanas, which were well maintained and not weathered at all. BFREE is also completely off the grid and uses solar panels for electricity, water lines powered by river water, and composting toilets.

As much as I would have loved to see a wild jaguar roaming the compound, I knew my chances were close to none. There was too much human activity to allow that kind of encounter. But I was impressed with the number of animal signs we did find. We saw a variety of mammal tracks on the trails, including jaguar and margay. We also identified numerous bird species and heard howler monkeys in the distance.

BFREE's staff was friendly, and the manager, Jacob Marlin, was inviting and knowledgeable about the area. My favorite was Debi's field assistant, Sipriano Canti, who works for BFREE and is in charge of maintaining Debi's trail cameras when she's not there. He was personable, knew the area well, and went above and beyond to make me feel safe. With his help, I enjoyed all the area had to offer, even the activities that were outside my comfort zone, like climbing a metal tower over 100 feet tall early one morning. I



**They hit pay dirt, a jaguar print in the mud!**



am afraid of heights, but Canti was with me every step of the way. We went at my pace climbing the tower steps, and with Canti's guidance, I made it all the way to the top, where I was rewarded with an incredible 360-degree view of the jungle waking up. It was worth every step!

Above the tree line, we saw things you cannot normally see from the ground, like lightning bugs and birds taking flight. We sat at the top of the tower for a while and listened to three troops of howler monkeys, all in different locations and vying for the loudest call. It was better than watching a nature show on TV.

Another experience that took me out of my comfort zone was hiking down a long jungle trail to an opening near the Bladen River. It was a long walk, but thanks to Ed and Canti, I took my time and did not exhaust myself trying to keep up. Once we arrived, the river surrounded by lush jungle and the mountains in the distance were breathtaking. That was a view I will remember forever.

Another enjoyable adventure was a guided night hike through the jungle. We did not see any cats, but we inadvertently scared something that ran away through the jungle. We also toured the Hicatee Turtle Facility where we learned about BFREE's work with the Turtle Survival Alliance to breed native river turtles, study them, and release the babies back into the wild. A long Belizean tradition is to hunt and eat this turtle species on certain holidays, which has decimated their numbers in the wild. BFREE has made a lot of progress with their breeding program to counteract hunting. Once the eggs are laid, BFREE staff dig them up and incubate the eggs in vermiculite at a lab, where they can continue to collect data and log population numbers. Then, once the babies hatch, they bring the turtles to a small nursery pond onsite for studying. It was nice to see people taking the initiative to do something about the problem instead of just standing around talking about it.

Throughout the trip, we also spent a lot of time learning about Debi's research project and helped set up trail cameras. This year, she started a new project at BFREE in their cacao crops. Belize is big on agroforestry conservation, and cacao growing is a popular solution—it gives the locals

a chance to grow food in a conservation-friendly way. Chocolate is made from the cacao seeds and can be sold to provide income for Belizean families. With integrative farming techniques, the cacao farms can also be used to help support wildlife. Jacob has three cacao crops at BFREE. Throughout those areas, he is introducing three tree species to the crops that provide just enough shade to allow the cacao trees to thrive. These layered canopies also provide a "mini-height" jungle for the wildlife to utilize.

To see which wildlife use the newly introduced taller trees, Debi positions trail cameras at different heights among the cacao plants. From the collected footage, Debi and Jacob will determine how to improve the farming system to increase the number of wildlife species who can use farmed land. Debi's research on margay and jaguarundi usage, in particular, could provide farmers with the information they need to improve crop-planting and make it environmentally friendly. To support this initiative, we learned how trail cameras work and how to find good shooting locations. Then, we spent a few days setting up trail cameras.

After three nights at BFREE, we left the reserve and met up with a tour guide who took us to Red Bank, an area where scarlet macaws spend a few months every year.



**The group took a nighttime tour of the Belize Zoo, a privately run facility that houses only native species. This margay found the visitors interesting and came over to investigate.**

After mating, the macaws migrate back to western Belize, where they lay eggs and raise their young. To reach an opening where we could see the macaws, we had to walk down a narrow and muddy trail alongside a steep mountain ridge. Again, it was worth the hike! I do not have any words to describe the brightly colored scarlet macaws flying free throughout the valley. It was amazingly beautiful. We also saw a white hawk nearby and listened to the macaws squawking that were perched above us high in the trees.

At the end of the day, we spent the night at a resort along the Caribbean Ocean, where we hung out at a beach bar, met some locals, and relaxed. In the morning, we went on our last adventure to the Maya King swimming hole, which is surrounded by tall mountains. Here I was able to check off "swim under a waterfall" from my bucket list. The mountain water was cold but refreshing, and I am glad we visited this incredible space.

After the group left, my son and daughter-in-law came down, and I spent another week in Belize visiting tourist attractions, including the Xunantunich Mayan ruins, Laughing Bird Caye, and Nohoch Che'en Caves Branch Archaeological Reserve. It was great to make lasting memories with them, too. Looking back on the entire trip, I think the people in our group made it exciting and enjoyable. Everyone was so nice and got along well, which made the whole experience better.

In Belize, I experienced what most people will never see in their lifetime. I left my comfort zone, and it paid off. I thoroughly enjoyed all the beauty Belize has to offer, loved being surrounded by jungle wildlife, and was happy to see firsthand the hard work Debi is doing to help protect wild cats. I cannot wait to see the images collected from the trail cameras we put up and work with Debi to identify individual jaguars in the BFREE area. We were fortunate that Debi and her husband stepped up to help protect the wild cats of Belize, and I admire their efforts.

All in all, I would have to say this was the best adventure, vacation, and animal research expedition I have ever attended. Thank you, Debi, for the much-needed field conservation research to help protect the wild cats we all love!



## Blast from the Past: TJ and Kira's Continuing Adventures

LIOC Endangered Species Conservation  
Federation Newsletter  
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November/December 1995

By Nanette McGann

It is hard for me to believe TJ was two years old the end of April. Having a serval in the house has been a different experience from sharing the house with Kira (caracal). Realizing that each cat is as individual as we humans are, TJ has still been surprising.

I have tried to keep the house rules to a minimum. The cats are not allowed in the kitchen, so there is the "No Kitchen Rule." Since the arrival of TJ, the kitchen now includes the bar area. It seems that TJ rather enjoys knocking down wine bottles. Kira used to lie on the bar and peer around the corner to watch me in the kitchen. Unfortunately for Kira, TJ can stand on top of the bar and reach the shelf above it. This shelf is the home of expensive crystal, so the top of the bar is now off limits for both cats. The top of the TV cabinet is also off limits.

When Kira was a kitten, it took one "NO!" and one spray with a squirt bottle containing water to convince her that this was not a pleasant place to be. I had a much tougher time with TJ. Since the squirt bottle went unnoticed by TJ, I added some vinegar. Well, it has become something of a chuckle when guests visit. You see, TJ really likes the vinegar spray. I have only to pick up the bottle and call TJ's name and over he romps, sits up, squints his eyes, opens his mouth a bit, and waits to be squirted. One of my friends thought this

was so cute that she picked up the bottle and was giving him quite a spraying when I mentioned that I was not too thrilled by the thought of sharing a bed with a serval that reeked of vinegar. She laughingly apologized and stopped the game. I slept with a vinegar-smelling serval that night.

House rules also include that the cats not hurt each other, me, or my guests. "No bite" has been something both cats learned as kittens, and there is yet to be a violation of this rule - except the couple of times my hand happened to be holding TJ's favorite "snake toy." TJ has trouble differentiating between where the toy ends and my hand begins. He just looks surprised when all of a sudden, during our game, I have dropped the toy on the floor and he still has my hand in his mouth. Even then, I only suffered a small break in the skin from those sharp canine teeth of his. I tell other people that they play with the snake toy and TJ at some risk and explain TJ's view of this game.

The breaking of house rules has consequences. The offender is banished to their room. Kira seldom breaks any rules because she really wants to be in the living room. Kira is also easier to banish because she will go to her room when told. TJ, of course, does not like to be scolded or banished. At this point, a serious chase around the living room ensues - TJ running at top speed over any furniture obstacle, while I am going around. By the time I catch up to him, he has half-forgotten whatever "No!"

started the chase and hopes I am now joining him in a new game. He is so funny, and such a love that it is mostly impossible for me to grab him to place him in his room without laughing. Servals are almost impossible for two hands to hold - let alone when the person attached to the hands is laughing uncontrollably.



**TJ wants to check out what's on the couch while Kira watches from behind.**

I read George Stower's "Serval Speak" article in the Jan/Feb 1995 *Newsletter* with interest and a smile. It seemed to me that George has certainly learned to read his Max perhaps a bit better than I have been able to read my TJ. Kira's eyes are very expressive. I have come to believe that she is a cat that understands every word I say to her. Her eyes have always told me exactly what she is thinking, so I have found myself at a real disadvantage with regard to reading TJ by looking into his eyes. He has only one expression. His eyes always look a bit surprised as if to say, "Who? Me? Did you mean ME?" It is almost as if no one is home in there. His body language is another matter. He fluffs up his fur when he's being petted and loved especially his tail and ridge along his back. I have never seen him do this when he is afraid. He has only one vocalization usually. He makes this sort of cough/bark noise which he uses when he wants me to let go of him. He also uses it when he wants something. Mostly, he is one silent kitty. Until a couple of weeks ago, I had never heard him hiss. Finally, he actually hissed back at Kira. I was really surprised!

From what I had previously experienced with servals, I thought one of their favorite things was to hiss. I thought it strange that TJ did not hiss or meow. He



**TJ shares cappuccino with a friend.**



has in the last two weeks actually hissed twice at company, although it was quite soft - almost under his breath. TJ does purr quite frequently and often quite loudly. Kira purrs occasionally, but so softly that it is something I feel rather than hear. TJ seems to have a heart of gold - and a large one at that. He is also a bit of a stinker. He often glances over his shoulder to see if I'm watching. If I am, I know he's planning some mischief - when he sees this, he casually changes direction as if that were his plan all along.

I believe that the nicest thing I have ever done for Kira is to get her TJ. I often hear them playing together in their room when I'm busy in another part of the house. If I have been busy all day, or feeling a bit poorly, I sleep in their room at night. I would probably do this more often but for two reasons. While Kira will settle down immediately on the bed, TJ spends 45 minutes guarding the perimeter of the mattress. He literally marches stiff-legged around and around, and around and around. This makes it difficult to fall asleep. But I guess I would have trouble falling asleep while laughing anyway.

And then there is Kira. I believe Kira gets up in the middle of the night to consume large quantities of water so that she can pee on the quilt. Once I am aware that she has done this, I am immediately doing laundry - sometimes in the wee hours of the morning. This is probably the only problem I have with Kira. It could be worse. Since Kira was about 12 weeks old, she has used the litter box on command. Certainly, the first time it was a coincidence. I must have told her she was so smart and so good for five minutes. She never forgot. She still beams at me when she uses the litter box when I tell her to. It does not hurt that custom that she may not come out of her room until and unless the litter box is used. Kira really would prefer to use the quilt instead



**Nanette believes TJ has a heart of gold, but he can also be a stinker.**

of the litterbox all the time. I just think it's too hard on the washing machine and embarrassing if there is company in the house.

In the evening, I get out the quilt and curl up on the couch to watch TV or read while the cats play with each other. After they run around a bit, they attempt to include me. They both like to fetch, and TJ loves playing "sneak up and pounce." For any of you serval people out there, I would suggest that you never play "peak-a-boo" with a serval. The swelling goes down and the green goes away, but a pounce on your nose is something you will not soon forget.

Some of my favorite observations - a few might interest others who have house kitties:

Kira no longer maintains her once long and lovely caracal ear tufts. This is apparently due to some serval genetic gene thing, most likely suppressed in the wild. You see, it is TJ, the mad barber at work. TJ eats Kira's ear tufts and she lets him. TJ isn't the only house-serval displaying this quirk. The Bellinghams' serval Zaire has three sets of caracal ear tufts he keeps trimmed.

I bought the Tellington Touch video in a weak moment one night. I have been amazed by Kira's response to these touches. Very late at night she will chirp at me, come over and curl up on top of me to be petted and stroked. As she relaxes, she sometimes rolls over on her back, places her head under my chin and licks me while purring ever so softly. This cat who normally truly gets miffed if any attempt is made to touch her feet will stretch out her leg, spread her toes apart, and actually let my fingers get between them for these touches. I find myself wondering what the effect of these touches would have on a cat's personality if they started as a young kitten.

My discovery and use of a pine-pellet-

ed kitty litter made by Nature's Way has been most pleasant. The solid waste is removed and flushed. The litter box gets a little shake and that is that. As the pellets get wet, they turn to sawdust. This is less tracking, no urine smell, and just a hint of pine. I empty the box and start over every two to three weeks. The pine goes into the garden as mulch.

Nature's Miracle is a wonderful product for the occasional accident. This stuff looks and smells like plain water. I have poured this stuff on the floor, carpet, pillows, and on many other surfaces. Any pet mess stain or odor is truly removed.

TJ will play fetch, sit, sit up, and respond to "TJ, kiss-kiss" with a lick or two. He used to jump up and put his paws around my neck in response to "TJ, up." He has modified this to suit himself. He decides for himself when, but he jumps straight up into the air with no attempt to touch me, but very close. He expects to be caught---to end up actually sitting in my arms. When this happens as he plans, he snuggles into my neck, purrs loudly, and kisses my ear. What a cat!

I do not think that I will ever be able to put into words all the feelings I have as I consider how fortunate I am to be able to share my world with TJ & Kira. Or the awe I am filled with as they share their world with me. They continually fill me with wonder and special warmth. As each day ends, I am thankful for their health and happiness and the trust and love we share.



**Kira does purr so softly, Nanette says it's something she feels more than hears.**



# Coronavirus May Stem Illegal Trade in Wildlife

Reprinted from TheConversation.com

There will be few positives to take from coronavirus. But the global pandemic may yet prove to be an important moment in the attempts to address the illegal wildlife trade.

The media has generally concentrated on effects rather than causes, in particular the global implications for public health and economies. But it is also vital to unravel the timeline of the pandemic and categorically determine its initial cause.

What we do know to date is that the epicenter of the disease was in the Chinese city of Wuhan, an important hub in the lucrative trade in wildlife – both legal and illegal. The outbreak is believed to have originated in a market in which a variety of animal-derived products and meats are widely available, including peacocks, porcupines, bats, and rats. It's also a market where regulatory and welfare standards are rudimentary at best.

Some of this trade is legal under Chinese domestic law but the existence of a parallel illegal trade – often within the very same market or stall – allows some traders to launder illicit wildlife products into the system. This situation is very difficult to regulate and control.

We are also reasonably certain that the spill-over event involved the crossover of the virus from animals to humans, similar to the situation with previous contagions like the Ebola and SARS viruses. In each of these cases, the existence of large, unsanitary, and poorly-regulated wildlife markets provided an ideal environment for diseases to cross over between species. In a country like China, where wildlife consumption is so deeply embedded in culture, such contamination can, and did, spread rapidly.

The Chinese government has long advocated a “sustainable utilization” approach to the country's wildlife. It nonetheless responded to the current crisis by enacting a temporary ban on such markets, effectively closing down a significant sector of its domestic wildlife trade.

In the longer term, the pandemic may

provide the impetus to properly address the issue. This is because, while the illegal wildlife trade was once criticized almost purely in terms of conservation, it is now also being considered in relation to broader themes of biosecurity, public health, and economic impact.

It is only in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak that the full scale of China's industry is emerging, with the temporary ban covering some 20,000 captive breeding enterprises and 54 different species allowed to be traded domestically. A report by the Chinese Academy of Engineering estimates the wildlife farming industry is worth around US\$57 billion annually. These breeding centers are allowed to operate under loopholes in



**A vendor sells bats at a market in Sulawesi, Indonesia, on February 8. Ronny Adolof Buol / AFP/ Getty**

Chinese domestic law, arguably against the spirit of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

The parallel illegal trade is less easy to quantify, but globally it is valued by the UN at around US\$23 billion. Given the resulting pandemic could cost as much as US\$2.7 trillion, even on purely economic grounds there is a strong case for increased regulation.

There are compelling arguments for dismantling the trade anyway: animals are kept in abject conditions, and the trade hastens their demise in the wild. But in

China, the temporary ban remains just that – temporary. Critics argue that we have been there before with SARS and once the dust settled on that particular outbreak, China resumed business as usual.

What would seriously tackling the wildlife trade actually mean in practice? First, breeding centers for endangered species like tigers or pangolins would be permanently closed. This would make it much harder for their products to be laundered through legal channels and sold as more valuable “wild-caught.” Enforcement agencies currently need to monitor these centers closely to check against laundering, and shutting them down would free up resources to disrupt the supply of illegal products entering China from outside.

Such a move would also help reduce demand. Public education campaigns tell people about how the wildlife trade (both legal and illegal) harms endangered species, but the message is mixed: the presence of a parallel legal market still provides such products with legitimacy and sends a message that it is okay to purchase them, thereby increasing rather than decreasing demand.

In any case, the new Chinese ban excludes products such as tiger bones that are used in traditional medicines. Some conservationists and activists are concerned that this exemption will lead to legalized trade under the assumption that better regulation will protect against future outbreaks. This argument is extremely difficult to validate and most conservationists continue to favor blanket trade bans.

Another worry is that, given humans have short memories, once the danger has passed, public concern will turn to the next big problem. COVID-19 clearly represents an unparalleled opportunity to combat the wildlife trade, and ensure that animal-borne diseases do not mutate and cross over to humans.

But only time will tell whether this opportunity will be taken or put off once again until the emergence of the next – perhaps even more virulent – pandemic poses an even graver global threat.



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## Best Friends!

By Sue Steffens

The beauty of working with animals is that they always amaze me. You will never know it all or even understand half of it, and if you think you do, the world of nature will certainly throw you a curve ball. In this case, two very special cats surprised us all.

Over the years, we have had people drop off cats, domestic cats that is. Most of the time, even the nicest of house cats are scared and trying to figure out where they will fit in. We catch them up, get them spayed and neutered, and give them all their shots, then turn them back out to hunt for mice and greet guests at the barn. This particular spring, we had a litter of kittens that we were raising in the gift store. Flint was one of four kittens. He is a beautiful grey, long-haired domestic cat who grew up at the preserve with his litter mates plus one.

The plus one is a young male bobcat named BeBe. When BeBe arrived, he was dehydrated and covered in ticks. BeBe was very young and untamed, and he was lonely and looking for a littermate. I figured what could it hurt to let BeBe go up and play with the kittens in the gift store. At first while they were small, they were housed in a large dog cage, but by eight weeks old they all wanted to explore all the time. BeBe took to the rafters and decided if he stayed up high in the rafters, no one would see him. This went on for months, and Flint and BeBe became best friends.

At the preserve we get to



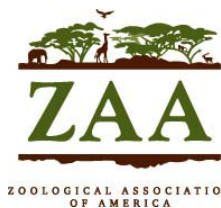
**These two little felines have been living together for over a decade now, and Sue doesn't think she's ever heard them fight.**

ships. We have had goats that lived with the donkeys, a sheep that lives with a llama. An interspecies friendship is a non-sexual bond that is formed between animals of different species. Usually each species benefits from the friendship established with the other. At a year old, we started taking BeBe to his enclosure with Flint to get him acclimated to his new surroundings. As BeBe became confident and comfortable in his new home, we foolishly thought that we could take Flint back up to the gift store. As soon as we got him there and put him down, Flint took off full-speed to the preserve looking for BeBe. Watching Flint focused and determined to find BeBe, we were afraid he would end up in the wrong enclosure. It was decided for Flint's safety that he could live with BeBe. Full grown BeBe is now almost twice as big as Flint. As best friends, they eat out of the same pan, groom each other, and tussle around like teenagers. Last year,

BeBe got a hematoma on his ear. In order to take him to the vet with minimal stress, Flint agreed to go along for the ride. He was also with BeBe when BeBe woke up from his surgery.

These two little felines have been living together for over a decade now, and I don't think I have ever heard them fight. If you have two animals that have a particularly wonderful relationship, tell the FCF about it. We want to highlight your animals' relationships.

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## Community and Enrichment: Claws, Paws, and Unicorns

By Wendy Wallace  
Volunteer Enrichment Coordinator,  
Tigers for Tomorrow

The holiday season brings families together, and gifts are given. Presents are brightly wrapped and tissue paper is bursting from bags. Have you ever wondered what to do with all the boxes and paper once they are all unwrapped? Tigers for Tomorrow's Untamed Volunteer Enrichment Group (UVEG) decided to invite the public and all their gift leftovers to a special event called "Claws, Paws, and Unicorns Holiday Leftovers Event" this past January.

All ages were welcome to come make toys for the tigers and all the other animals on the preserve by bringing all their holiday gifting leftovers. What a great way to recycle cardboard boxes, gift bags, tissue paper, wrapping paper, bows, and ribbons. People were also encouraged to create a unicorn at home, made from cardboard boxes, papier-mâché, and other paper products for a unicorn contest. It was amazing to see the creativity and time that people put into making these unicorns. All of them were so very different in color, size, and style. There was no shortage of creativity and pizzazz.

Our goal was to involve the public in



**A smorgasbord of homemade presents for the felines and other wild animals at Tigers for Tomorrow are laid out before being placed in each animal's habitat.**

recycling while having them create enrichments and learn the importance of enrichment for all the animals. The novel enrichment items were not just made to put in on that day, but the goal was to make enough toys so that keepers could give them out to the animals on the preserve throughout the entire month.

As people came, the tables started filling up with their holiday trash, but with some masking tape, paint, and a lot of helping hands, the trash quickly transformed into box unicorns for the cats to shred and the bears to play with. There were also tissue paper pom poms to toss in the air, and even a tunnel of tissue paper and cardboard for bunnies to jump through.

While making these items, staff and volunteers had the opportunity to talk to the public one-on-one about the importance of enrichment. They explained that through enrichment we could stimulate the animals' minds and encourage natural behaviors that their wild counterparts display daily.

Several of the unicorn enrichments were chosen, and we set

off on a community tour through our preserve. People's eyes lit up when they saw the animals interact with their masterpieces. Yonah, our grizzly bear, was thrilled to have a brightly colored unicorn. As curiosity took over, he dragged it around and inspected every part of it. Our guests enjoyed watching the tigers, lions, and ligers swat, shred, and pounce on the box unicorns as they might do to prey in the wild.

Throughout the tour, guests were filled with delight knowing they helped make this possible with things that they were just going to throw away. We also gained some more volunteers to join our Untamed Volunteer Enrichment Group that meets once a month to create enrichments, share ideas, and



**This bear tears into the enrichment item.**



**The king of cats investigates a novel package on his throne.**

come up with new ways to reach out and get our community involved. "Claws, Paws, and Unicorns Holiday Leftovers Event" was a huge success and a fantastic way to bring the community together to learn about our animals, their natural behaviors, recycling, and our preserve's dedication to enriching our animals' lives.

# Meeting Minutes of the FCF Board of Directors

By Phyllis Parks

**Date: July 15, 2019 – Feb. 27, 2020**

The Board of Directors met via phone and email in an ongoing discussion format with Mindy Stinner, Julia Wagner, Brian Braitsch, Dawn Strasser, Chris Tromborg, and Phyllis Parks in attendance. Director Billie Lambert did not participate.

**Agenda Item: Change Article II of the Constitution from “Object” to “Mission”** – Since the focus of the FCF has evolved through the years, the Board of Directors felt a mission statement to better describe our purpose and goals as an organization was appropriate. Board members Mindy Stinner, Dawn Strasser and Chris Tromborg requested this amendment be proposed in writing and submitted the request to the secretary.

Proposal: It is proposed by Mindy Stinner, Brian Braitsch, Phyllis Parks, Dawn Strasser, and Chris Tromborg, that the membership vote regarding amending Article II of the Constitution read:

Mission: Conservation of wild felines through educational opportunities, responsible ownership, and advocacy.

**Agenda Item: Change in elected term on the Board of Directors** – The Board discussed that the number of board members that changed for 2019-2021, helped create confusion in our roles and difficulty in achieving our goals.

The group agreed to draft an amendment proposal for the Constitution and Bylaws requiring that elections be held annually in a staggered format to allow for better overlap and historical memory. Assuming the Board needed to propose actions within its elected time frame, it was proposed that the President, Secretary, and one director from the current Board would serve their full elected term, and the Vice-President, Treasurer, and two directors would be up for re-election this year, with those positions alternating yearly from there. All Board members were amenable to this impact on their elected roles. Board members Brian Braitsch, Dawn Strasser, and Chris Tromborg requested this amendment be proposed in writing and submitted the request to the secretary.

Proposal: It is proposed by Mindy Stinner,

Brian Braitsch, Phyllis Parks, Dawn Strasser, and Chris Tromborg that the membership vote regarding amending the FCF’s Constitution to read:

“ARTICLE V – Nomination and Elections  
1. The nomination period shall open May 1. In the odd numbered years, the President, Secretary and one director position shall be elected, and in the even numbered years, the Vice-President, Treasurer, and two directors shall be elected. Nominations must be received no later than August 10th, and may be sent either electronically or by U.S. mail to the Secretary.”

**Agenda Item: Membership Procedure** – Becoming a member, from application to acceptance, needs to be primarily accomplished online in order to streamline the process. Applicants must be vetted by qualified members selected by the Board to ensure their visible social media presence is in alignment with the organization’s mission and values. Preferably they will be referred by an existing member. A letter of acceptance will be issued once their application has been reviewed and they have been vetted. If an application is denied, a personalized letter of explanation will be sent. The process should all be accomplished within a two-week time span. PayPal will “hold” fees until approval. With the new online process, memberships would run for a year from their actual start date, eliminating the need for pro-rating. The previous unified renewal date of October was established to streamline processes conducted by hand and U.S. Post. Going largely electronic eliminates the need for such a unified renewal date. New members will receive access to the online *Journal*, followed by regular mailing of print *Journal* (unless opting for digital only), access to members-only area of website and members-only Facebook, and a welcome phone call. Member Janice Cohen has agreed to do these calls.

Letters to potential professional members were written by Brian and reviewed by the group, then mailed by Phyllis.

Motion: A motion was made by Brian to adopt a new membership approval procedure including vetting by board-appointed members, and focused on providing as many services as possible online to streamline the process. Seconded by

Dawn and approved unanimously.

**Agenda Item: The Annual Financial Report** – Submitted by Treasurer Dawn Strasser in December.

Motion: Motion to accept the report by Brian, seconded by Phyllis. And approved by Mindy and Sue.

- A copy will be posted in the *Journal* for membership viewing.

- Annual taxes were submitted in January 23, 2020.

**Agenda Item: Planning for the 2020 Conference** – Due to the heat in Arizona in August, as many activities as possible will be scheduled for indoors at the hotel, and the zoo visit will take place early in the morning.

We will expand the class offerings to interest new members and still have something different enough to engage existing members. Possible classes include Educator Interpretations and a contingency class part two, focused on how to assign roles during an adverse event. Other ideas under discussion are workshops on record-keeping and an enrichment workshop perhaps focused on paper to fit in suitcases or creating more substantial work to donate to the zoo.

- An online registration site, Eventleaf, will be used so most of the registration process will be automated. Brian will oversee its setup.

- Letters to potential sponsors for the conference (and *Journal* advertisers) were also written by Brian and reviewed by the Board before mailing. The response has been substantial.

**Agenda Item: The new website is up and running!** – Depending on interest by members, some things will be left visible for historical purposes, others will be moved so available for administrative access, but not visible to members.

**Agenda Item: The Lottie** – A play on the word “ocelot,” it will still be recognized, dependent on the existing previous recipients’ participation. The name does not indicate to members what the award means.

Motion: A motion was made by Dawn to rename the Lottie the “FCF Lifetime Achievement Award.” Seconded by Brian and approved unanimously.



**Agenda Item: Content for the Journal**  
– It should reflect our professional image. It is the plan to accumulate a stockpile of proposed articles and images so each *Journal* will not be such a last-minute task for them. Details on the process are listed in the members-only section of the website, along with a link for submissions.

**Agenda Item: Director Billie Lambert**  
– She resigned verbally from the Board November 11, 2019, to President Mindy Stinner, due to personal reasons. She indicated she would send a written letter of resignation, which was received via email on March 3, 2020.

During a phone meeting on November 12, 2019, the Board discussed a possible replacement director. An ideal candidate would have experience with marketing that could be applied to a membership drive, and experience fundraising/grant-writing to assist with those aspects of the FCF's business needs. Susan Steffens of Tigers for Tomorrow, in Alabama, has expressed interest in the position. Motion: Mindy made a motion to appoint Susan Steffens to serve the balance of Billie's term. That motion was seconded by Phyllis and the vote to invite her was unanimous.

Graciously, Sue accepted via phone to Mindy on November 13, 2019.

These minutes were reviewed and a

motion to accept was made by Dawn Strasser, seconded by Mindy Stinner, and accepted unanimously.

The next board meeting is scheduled for April 5, 2020.

#### FCF Income and Expenses Report for 2019

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expense</u>	
Donations	4,290.36	Conservation	1,000.00
Membership	9,080.01	Advocacy	11,473.01
Conference	10,425.32	Journal	3,423.79
Interest	747.78	Conference	8,875.42
Husbandry class	400.00	Website	2,242.65
Other	995.50	Other	1,283.30
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,538.97</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>28,298.17</b>
<u>Accounts</u>			
PayPal	1,476.53		
Checking	21,202.29		
Money market	62,048.26		

#### Notes from Dawn Strasser, FCF Treasurer

In 2019, we redid the FCF website at a cost of over \$2,000, but this will save us a few hundred dollars every year now that we can make our own changes to the website. The new website design allows us to run our conference registration through the website and allows us to keep our website current without additional fees for changes.

A large percentage of our budget was spent on advocacy. This fund is directly supporting targeted education of legislators to preserve your rights as exotic feline owners. We are now making 2% interest in our money market account.

Some changes we are making include electronic voting, which saves hundreds in printing and postage fees and accounting services.

The *Journal* will not be in an envelope, saving us ~\$300 annually I hope.

Director Brian Braitsch was instrumental in finding corporate sponsors so the 2019 Conference was not held at a loss. We continue to look for more sponsors or advertisers to help offset future costs. We are building additional professional classes to bring in more revenue.

## FCF Board Welcomes Sue Steffens as Director

In November 2019, FCF Director Billie Lambert stepped down for personal reasons. She remains a valued member of the organization. The Board has appointed Sue Steffens, from Tigers for Tomorrow preserve in Alabama, to fill this position for the 2020-2021 term.

Sue is a cat lover, as well as a lover of all animals. As a young girl in school, she fell in love with horses and worked for the local veterinarian. Once out of college in 1991, with a background in accounting and marketing, Sue began working for an animal media firm in New York City, handling all kinds of exotics for media.

By 1997, she was ready for a new life and began managing a privately owned, USDA-licensed big cat facility in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. There, she fell totally in love with everything about big cats. Shortly after that, Sue began working at The Zoological Society of the Palm

Beaches during a 50-million-dollar redevelopment.

In 2002, Sue established the Tigers for Tomorrow preserve in Ft. Pierce, Florida. After taking a beating from four hurricanes during 2004 and 2005, Sue decided to relocate. In November 2005, Tigers for Tomorrow moved to Untamed Mountain, a 140-acre preserve at the gateways to the Appalachian Mountains in Attalla, Alabama, with plenty of room to spread out and grow. The facility cares for lions, tigers, Eurasian lynx, bobcat, clouded leopard, puma, leopard, and serval, as well as bear, camel, llama, wolves, bear, fox, and other animals. These days, that's where you'll find Sue.

Sue hopes by serving as a board member of the FCF, she can help the membership and board achieve their new mission and excite a new generation of keepers to aspire to be passionate, empathetic, and

proactive caregivers of animals.







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The FCF mission is conservation of wild felines through educational opportunities, responsible ownership, and advocacy. The FCF works to bridge the gap between professional zoos and private institutions to strengthen the genetic diversity of felines within zoological settings. The FCF supports our members by offering resources that are current and progressive that promote optimal welfare and safety.





## Feline Conservation Foundation

January-March 2020  
Volume 64, Issue 1

**Front Cover:** Kisa, the Eurasian lynx, relaxes on her custom-built walnut slab loafing platform at the Winnie Carter Wildlife Center at Texas A & M University. Photo by Alice Blue-McLendon.

**Back Cover:** Fuzzy Woo, a 21-year-old bobcat living at NOAH Feline Conservation Center, yawns, showing off his pearly white canines to photographer Alice Blue-McLendon.



**Feline Conseration Foundation**  
**3400 Vine Street**  
**Cincinatti, Ohio 45220**