



Feline Conservation Federation

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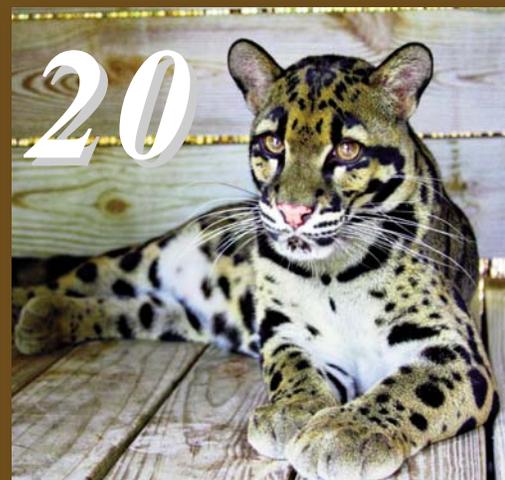
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JOIN THE FCF IN ITS CONSERVATION EFFORTS - WWW.FELINECONSERVATION.ORG



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

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

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

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

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

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



Feline Conservation Federation

Letter From the President

What an amazing conference we just had in Charlotte! The speaker slate was exceptional, covering a wide array of topics ranging from husbandry and construction to legislative advocacy.

Tiger World, the host facility, blew us away with their carefully crafted presentations. The highly interactive professional training they delivered was a highlight of the conference.

And the enthusiasm from the members who attended this year's conference has given our board of directors the confidence to move forward with re-envisioning how the Feline Conservation Federation can accomplish our mission.

At our core, we remain dedicated to the protection of wild felids worldwide. Our membership has significantly evolved over the years, now representing more zoological facilities and animal care professionals. This year, we will launch a membership drive specifically aimed at attracting this demographic.

Our well-recognized educational courses provide opportunities for professional development that exist nowhere else. We provide the only husbandry course for wild cats outside the AZA's professional development course, which runs several days and has limited space in its annual presentation. Our course is a solid introduction to the care and keeping of wild cat species, and it can be taught semi-annually in varied locations. In the past two decades, approximately 450-500 students have attended, including wild cat owners; zoo and sanctuary owners and board members; zookeepers, facility volunteers and docents; and federal, state, and other regulatory officials.

Our strong support of wild cat conservation programs, especially projects focused on the protection of small wild cat species, is well documented. Our partnership with Dr. Jim Sanderson and the Small Cat Conservation Alliance has allowed us to target the projects where our funds will have the most significant impact on direct conservation efforts. We have supported research that has a direct impact on conservation, including identifying areas inhabited by rare species and identifying the threats they face. We have supported educational programs around the world for native and indigenous populations, especially school age children, living alongside these species. We have

endorsed and helped to fund mitigation programs and practices designed to curb the impact wild cats have on livestock owners.

We advocate at all levels of government for our members to legally and responsibly own and propagate wild cat species. The FCF's advocacy work is imperative, as we are the only organization with a specific focus on wild felid ownership and the related considerations. It is critical that we learn to be better advocates for ourselves and the facilities at which we work. Please see the article in this issue by lobbyist Bill Hanka and FCF board member Julia Matson Wagner to understand why the FCF considers advocating our position one of our highest priorities.

The FCF has long provided services to our members in support of advocacy, including reviewing proposed regulations and legislation, writing letters and speaking on members' behalfs, and even traveling to Washington, D.C., to speak with members of Congress about the issues that impact our members significantly.

In order to provide those services with the greatest efficiency and professionalism, the FCF would like to retain the services of professional Washington, D.C. lobbyist, Bill Hanka. Mr. Hanka spoke at our conference about the importance of well-informed and selective advocacy. He has agreed to work with us to create a plan we can afford. Board members Julia Matson Wagner and I will work with Mr. Hanka to represent our members in D.C. by providing guidance on our interaction with the federal government and regulatory agencies. Julia and I have already worked in D.C. with Mr. Hanka, representing the FCF's interests in modifying the Captive Primate Safety Act, which proposes to limit public contact with animals, including big cats, even at professionally managed federally-licensed facilities. He is highly efficient and effective, and is already knowledgeable about the exotic animal industry.

To launch this initiative, member Dawn Strasser, a professional zookeeper from Cincinnati, generously donated \$500.00. She challenges other members who value protecting ownership of wild cats to donate to this fund. Please consider making a donation today by sending a check or donating via PayPal through our website! To ensure we know your donation is

for this fund, please note the contribution is for the legislative fund.

Also on our minds this time of year are the inclement weather events across the states. To the west, we have witnessed wildfires that have caused member facilities to evacuate their homes. In the North, members prepare and brace for cold weather, and in the Southeast, we are headed into hurricane season.

Hurricane Florence just came crashing onto the shores of the Carolinas, causing damage as far inland as Charlotte and the mountains. Our conference host zoo park, Tiger World, lost some of their lovely trees and had some other wind and water-based damage, but the modified dens they demonstrated during their contingency planning class on zoo day held up well, and their people and animals are all safe and sound.

As we have done historically, including during Hurricanes Harvey, Maria, and Irma, the FCF seeks out members in affected areas and attempts wellness checks on them before, during, and after events. The FCF works with the ZAHP Fusion Center (a zoo and aquarium all-hazards preparedness, response, and recovery collaborative effort supported by funding from the USDA and AZA) to identify which members may be in the path of major storms. Our goal is to ensure our members are prepared for contingencies, and have the resources and support they need to evacuate or shelter in place, and to recover as quickly as possible.

We have relied in the past on informal networks and the capabilities of owner-operators, and now it is time to build an enduring relationship between facilities of different size, capacity, resourcing, experience, and philosophy. The FCF supports the work of the ZAHP Fusion Center to bring together all stakeholders to help us as businesses and individuals to be better prepared for all types of emergencies.

Another part of our movement forward as an organization is to re-energize our most important committees. At the conference, several volunteers stepped up and expressed a willingness to help us with re-branding, marketing, and to provide some content for our *Journal*. We need your help! Please consider volunteering in your area of expertise or enthusiasm.

Thank you all for helping us have a

wonderful conference and for supporting our new direction with such passion.

Your participation is critical. Don't forget -- volunteer or send support today!

--Mindy

Candidate Statements for the FCF 2019-2020 Board of Directors

The FCF Board of Director elections will take place online at the www.ElectionRunner.com website. Every member who joined prior to November 1, 2017, is eligible to vote. In order to vote, you must have an email address registered in the FCF database. This includes both the primary member and their partner/spouse. Only one person per email address may vote. If you have not reviewed your membership profile in a while and you have changed email addresses, the FCF may not have the current address in our database, so you may not receive an invitation to vote on ElectionRunner. Please take the time to log into the members-only website in October and review all information under My Profile to insure that it is accurate and up-to-date. I will be sending an official FCF membership list for voting at the end of October, so please make sure your email is current. If you are an FCF member, but do not have an email address or access to email, you may contact me, Lynn Culver, by phone at 479-394-5235, and I will mail you a paper ballot.

All eligible FCF members will receive instructions and an invitation to vote from the ElectionRunner website when the voting period opens in November. Voting will last a month.

There is one candidate for president, one candidate for vice-president, one candidate for treasurer, two candidates for secretary, and four candidates for director. The FCF election process uses preferential balloting. The candidate that receives the most votes for secretary and the three candidates receiving the most votes for director will serve in the 2019-2020 term.

Please review these candidate statements and participate in selecting the next board of directors to serve a two-year term starting January 1, 2019.

Mindy Stinner – Candidate for President

I'm Mindy Stinner, co-founder of the Conservators Center, in North Carolina, with partner Douglas Evans in 1999, and now its executive director. The Center specializes in carnivore species, including these wild cat species: lion, tiger, leopard, serval, caracal, bobcat, jungle cat, Eurasian lynx, Geoffroy's cat, and more.

Beyond the public education programs onsite, the Center partners with colleges and universities to provide training for veterinary students and people seeking animal-oriented careers, consults with other facilities in development, and provides husbandry expertise to conservationists working in the field.

My background as an educator has shaped the trajectory of the Center as an educational entity and will help ensure the long-term relevance of that organization in the continuing evolution of the professionally managed captive wildlife industry.

I graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill, with a degree in secondary education, and taught for most of a decade. While transitioning out of a formal classroom setting, I spent several years volunteering and working at other facilities with varying business models and philosophies. I worked as a zookeeper for over 250 individual animals, managed a private zoo, served as a breeding facility's office manager and bookkeeper, provided education

programs, and assisted with innumerable veterinary procedures. Concurrently, I engaged in training and research on wild animal husbandry, non-profit management and development, international conservation efforts, and emergency response situation management. I have assisted with the management of several crisis situations, ranging from unscheduled facility closures to the emergency transport of big cats.

As part of launching the Conservators Center, I trained with the North Carolina State Animal Response Team in 2000. Since 2015, I have also actively taken part in the Secure Zoo Working Group, a USDA-funded initiative designed to provide contingency planning guidance for the zoological community. My role in the Secure Zoo Working Group includes helping represent the interests of independent USDA-licensed facilities.

I am interested in understanding the impact of regulatory and legislative changes on the wildlife owner industry. Since the mid-2000s, I've worked with others to ensure responsible wildlife owners in North Carolina are protected from poorly conceived legislation. This group is in favor of reasonable regulation to ensure that public safety and animal welfare concerns are being addressed, but is not in favor of closing down legally operating businesses or removing a person's property without due process.

I've served on the FCF Board since 2013, stepping up as President in January

2018, when the current president resigned. I'm a primary instructor for the Wild Feline Husbandry Course, responsible for several major revisions to the course over time. I'm working with other instructors to develop shorter module courses as requested by the membership. I was the FCF Journal editor from 2001 to 2004. Thanks to the efforts of several active board members, the newsletter grew during that time from an average of 18 pages



in length to more than 40 pages per issue. I worked on the committee to author the original accreditation standards for the FCF, and the committee to screen and select conservation programs for FCF funds. I was also a Lotty Award recipient.

I am working to encourage the directionality of the FCF to provide more educational programs and materials and to expand the membership to include more young professionals learning to work with these species. The vast experience of FCF members must be passed down intergenerationally. With the ever-shifting dynamics in this industry, people who work with wild cat species will require an increasingly sophisticated understanding of not just husbandry skills, but also the applica-

Julia Wagner - Candidate for Vice-President

I am part of the leadership team at the Conservators Center, working for over a decade in roles that included husbandry, long-term planning, strategy development, budgeting, networking, program development and evaluation, business partnerships, contingency planning, and representing the Center to the media and at national conferences. In the wider industry, I've been a member of the Secure Zoo Working Group since its inception in 2014, and serve as a consultant for the Zoo and Aquarium All-Hazards Preparedness Center Fusion Center, a program funded by the USDA and operated by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The Fusion Center aims to bridge the gap in communication between the managed wildlife community and the emergency management sector by developing tailored materials and better networking-relevant stakeholders. I have helped provide both teams with information on how best to reach out to different sectors of the industry and communicate to varied audiences, which includes having a working knowledge about and database of the country's exotic animal industry. Additionally, I launched Coalition Solutions, which provides information to varied business and industry groups on state and federal legislative and regulatory matters pertaining to exotic animal ownership; my focus is on precision of word use and definitions, statistics, and the true implications of proposed legislation and regulation.

For my entire professional career with exotic cats, I have been aware of the importance of the FCF due to the Conservators Center's extensive involvement. I have come to understand that the future of the industry, which includes our ability to own cats is largely dependent on our suc-

cessful participation and influence in local, state, and national politics. Caring for and protecting our cats requires many different skills; I deeply admire those who provide excellent husbandry, training, veterinary, and other care considerations. My area of expertise is more focused on how to ensure we maintain legal ownership of our felines, and how to plan for all contingencies that may place them at risk. It is my belief that the FCF is imperative to

I firmly believe that individuals and organizations must work together to pre-

serve and manage the species held around the country and beyond. Entities with related goals need to work together to facilitate the success of collaborative efforts across the industry. I believe protecting ownership rights includes providing quality educational opportunities for people both within and outside of the industry, and providing strong support for the scientific community studying these species.



these goals, and I hope I am re-elected to the board to continue this work.

I have been immersed in the wonderful culture of exotic cats for most of my life, which means that the FCF membership has been a pleasure to better know. In 2012, I attended my first FCF conference; over the years, I became more heavily involved in the organization as I assisted in several advocacy efforts and began my work with the FCF Big Cat Census. It has been my pleasure to represent the FCF on Capitol Hill, and to assist with multiple state-level legislative issues. Through 2016, I provided analysis of the census and aided in the dissemination of the information throughout the industry,

including a presentation of the findings to the AZA's Felid TAG in 2017. Additionally, I prepared and delivered contingency planning workshops at the FCF convention in 2018. Because of my role with contingency planning and other projects, I have the privilege of traveling extensively to professional conferences, other facilities, and to meet with regulators. At times, these opportunities allow me to discuss the work of the FCF, and to identify connections for the organization in the larger industry. In 2017, I had the honor of joining the FCF Board of Directors, and I hope to continue in that role.

In the next year, I look forward to enhancing the federal legislative and regulatory agenda for the FCF and ensuring we are better represented in these matters. I'm involved in several efforts that are underway to better publicize the census data, and plans are in development for a future census, which is critical for advocacy efforts. Additionally, I will continue tailoring the contingency planning workshop for our members' needs, and I look forward to teaching it at future gatherings. I have an interest in understanding what the membership feels is most vital to receive in contingency preparedness assistance.

The exotic animal industry is not appropriately advocating for itself, and we must do our part to ensure we have a future as responsible and legal exotic cat owners. Advocacy for the FCF encompasses regulatory and legislative monitoring and taking action as appropriate at the federal and state levels, aiding our members as needed in their counties and localities, being a source of accurate information regarding our industry, and enhancing our networking with membership and trade associations that have similar goals. If I am elected as FCF Vice-President, I look forward to carrying forward these objectives.

Rebecca Krebs – Candidate for Secretary

My passion for the natural world began a very young age. At ten, I started working with exotic animals as part of my family's zoological business. This upbringing ignited my passion, so much so that I was certain that this would be my life's work.

I received a Bachelor's of Science in

Environmental Studies from Florida Gulf Coast University, and subsequently embarked on a seven year career as an environmental consultant. In 2008, I began my career as a full-time zookeeper, which enabled me to work with a multitude of species of mammals, birds, and reptiles.



I've worked in both private and AZA zoological institutions, affording me a broad perspective. The message of conservation and sustainability really resonates. I hope the FCF, in all its facets, has a deep and lasting impact on future generations.

Phyllis Parks – Candidate for Secretary

I am Phyllis Parks, a graduate of Judson College, Marion, Alabama. I have lived in Vero Beach, Florida, for 29 years, with husband Jim and son Steve.

For 20 years, I have been a volunteer with Central Florida Animal Reserve, located in St. Cloud, Florida, and its predecessor. Currently I am facility manager and events coordinator, along with duties as a senior handler for that organization. In this capacity, I am responsible for the

care of lions, tigers, cougars, and leopards.

An ongoing love for big cats and prior personal ownership of a cougar, led to membership in the FCF approximately 15 years ago.

I am excited about the changes in the future of the FCF. It's necessary to evolve and fit the needs of our organization, bringing together private owners, sanctuaries, zoos, and research groups for the common goal of protecting wildlife in captivity and in the wild.



Dawn Strasser – Candidate for Treasurer

I am Dawn Strasser, Head Keeper of Neonatal Care & Quarantine, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, Hand-Rearing Resource Center Advisor. I hold a bachelor's degree in business management from College of Mount Saint Joseph, and I served as a weapons specialist in the U.S. Air Force. I have been at Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden since 1983, primarily with



neonates (25 species of cats alone), but have also been elsewhere in the park. I created parturition plans and neonate observation protocols for a variety of species based on their specific husbandry requirements. I expanded the expectations of the area to include operant conditioning principles and positive reinforcement practices to establish preliminary programs prior to an animal's disposition to the final area.

A recognized leader in the zoo community, I have been a founding member of the local American Association of Zoo Keepers chapter, International

Rhino Keeper Association, and the Animal Behavior Management Alliance. I'm a member of the Nutritional Advisory Group and an advisor for the Hand-Rearing Resource Center. I have also served as advisor to the Felid Taxonomic Advisor Group and Bonobo Species Survival Plan, as well as working as a volunteer for Cheetah Conservation Fund, Emperor Valley Zoo in Trinidad, and Nairobi Animal Orphanage in Kenya.

I published "Successful Strategies for Hand-Rearing Underdeveloped Okapi" and the great apes chapter in *Hand-Rearing Wild and Domestic Mammals*, edited by L.J. Gage, and also wrote "Chiropractor Visits a Neonate Tiger," published in the *FCF Journal*.

Brian Braitsch – Candidate for Director

I am Brian Braitsch, a Central Floridian, with 17 years of professional zoological experience working with wild felines, dolphins, small mammals, reptiles, and a variety of other species. I hold a master's in education and have worked in AZA-accredited zoos, nonprofit sanctuaries, and science centers. I founded and am executive director of Amazing Animals, Inc., a 501©3 nonprofit exotic animal sanctuary

and educational facility.

My passion is for conservation and I am committed to educating people about wildlife and wild places. Three years ago, I joined the FCF. I am committed to the mission and new direction of advocacy, education, and conservation. My passion, education, and experience will benefit the FCF in obtaining new memberships, partnering with facilities, social media marketing, and helping to grow the organization to save wild felines from extinction.





Michelle McKay - Candidate for Director

My name is Michelle McKay, and I've lived in North Carolina for the past 21 years. I'm originally from a small town south of Buffalo, New York. I was a veterinarian technician during graduate school and have degrees in psychology, education, and a master's degree in counseling. My path of working with large cats and exotics began when a private zoo opened up only a couple miles from my house in North Carolina, almost ten years ago. I started to volunteer and became the manager. I knew I needed guidance to raise the tiger cubs now in my care and found an article Mindy Stinner wrote online. I emailed her and, within five minutes, she emailed me back inviting me to her facility. Mindy has been my mentor ever since.

In the last decade, I've learned proper husbandry and training for large and small cats and all different kinds of exotics. Having the experience as a veterinarian

Dr. Chris T. Tromborg, PhD - Candidate for Director

I teach at the Department of Psychology, Sacramento City College, and Department of Psychology, University of California, Davis. I have been a member of the FCF since 1992, when it was then known as the Long Island Ocelot Club. This reflects a nearly three decade long interest in feline behavior, conservation, and husbandry.

Actually, I became interested in the plight of free-living and captive felines

Billie Lambert – Candidate for Director

I began to work with small and medium sized exotic cats while I was active duty in the Air Force in 2008. I retired from military work in 2010, after 28 years of service. After completing my military career, I began working in animal care at a local zoo and quickly rose to be one of the head large cat keepers (lions, tigers, jaguars). I worked as a large cat keeper for five years before deciding to leave the zoo and work full time at home with our small zoo of eight servals and two caracals. Since then, I have branched out into

technician has been a huge help. I've worked at three different facilities now and I started my own educational outreach business. I'm licensed with the USDA and North Carolina Department of Wildlife. I also do wildlife rehabilitation. Three and a half years ago, I was offered a job as the education coordinator of the Conservators Center. I relocated my family and my business, moving so I could work there.

I've been involved with the FCF since 2011, and have helped numerous times with the auction for the convention. Being a previous teacher, I was thrilled to be offered the chance to teach the Wildlife Conservation Educator Course and have done so for a few years now. In my earliest years, I definitely learned so much from



the exotic cat community and see the need to educate the public about the role of responsible private exotic animal ownership. Responsible ownership is balanced with a tool box of husbandry knowledge, safety, contingency planning, enclosure building, and enrichment. The Feline Conservation Federation is a great platform to highlight these positive considerations of exotic ownership as well as preserving exotic felines through conservation. I look forward to working with the community of the FCF organization and our members to help accomplish our goals.

listening to the stories of the long-time professionals and having them answer my questions. It is my hope that the new direction of this organization will grow to include some of the professionals who were previously involved.

I feel that this organization must become a group that is respected, is looked to as a knowledgeable resource, and one that will work together and fight for our rights to have animal ambassadors that will connect people with wildlife in a way that TV cannot do. I love educating people about these animals, about our industry, and about the need to have these animals in human care to ensure that generations to come will care about the lives of the animals with which we share this planet.

earlier than that, when, in 1969, I became involved in efforts to change the management status of the mountain lion in California, where they had been poorly studied and were virtually unprotected. The Coalition to Save the California Mountain Lion succeeded in achieving a high degree of protection for the mountain lion. Years later, the Mountain Lion Foundation, a successor to the original coalition, and of which I am a member, would achieve even more protection for cougars within the state of California. Recently, the MLF, along with other conservation orga-

nizations, succeeded in supporting the passage of legislation outlawing the use of steel jawed traps on bobcats in California. My continued interest in conservation of free-living cougars and other felines motivated me to become more involved in the plight of other felines, both in the wild and in captivity. In order to better serve free living felines, I became a member of the board of directors of the Mountain Lion Foundation. Shortly thereafter, an interest in the plight of captive felines motivated me to become more involved in the activities of the Feline Conservation



Federation, culminating in my becoming a member of its board of directors in 2012.

Over the past 49 years, I have worked for the protection of wild mountain lions and bobcats in California; the preservation of free-living cheetahs, snow leopards, and tigers; and the improvement in the management of populations of captive felines in both public and private institutions, both accredited and non-accredited alike.

I am a member of both the American Zoo Association and the Zoo Association of America. Historically, membership in both of these organizations has provided me with access to important information about the management of populations of captive felines. My interest in the husbandry of captive felines prompted me to serve as a member of the AZA's Animal Care and Husbandry Advisory Board (Feline TAG), and to conduct and publish several studies focusing on behavioral enrichment for captive animals in zoos. In cooperation with Dr. Hal Markowitz, the developer of the concept of behavioral enrichment in laboratories and zoos, I have spent over 30 years conducting research that focused on improving the conditions of captivity for a variety of captive species, including many feline species, with the goal of enhancing their cognitive opportunities and their overall quality of life.

Over the past six years of serving on the board of the FCF, I have come to reconsider my relationships with many organizations claiming to be concerned with the future of animals in nature and captivity. Consequently, I have eliminated my associations with some organizations and realigned my associations with others.

Recently, I have de-emphasized my relationship with the AZA, while enhancing my relationship with the ZAA, which I now consider my primary zoo-related professional association. In fact, as of 2018, I am no longer renewing my membership in the AZA due to a severe dissatisfaction with some of its underlying philosophies. I also maintain associations with important feline oriented organizations, including the Mountain Lion Foundation, the Small Cat Conservation Foundation, the Endangered Feline Conservation Center, the Snow Leopard Conservancy, the Cheetah Conservation Fund, and the Wildlife Conservation Network. I also support the conservation efforts of others, including Niassa Lion Project, Cheetah Conservation Botswana, Andean Cat Conservation, and Panthera, as well as others.

As a long-term member of the Wildlife Conservation Network, I attempt to represent the FCF at its many West Coast events, including the fall and spring Wildlife Conservation EXPO events. I have supervised the FCF exhibits at these events for over half of a decade. Further, whenever it is possible, I attempt to assist FCF member organizations, such as the Wildcat Education and Conservation Fund or the Lyon Therapy Animal Ranch in

bringing their ambassadorial animals to public events in an attempt to spread the message about the importance of maintaining viable populations of socialized wild animals to enhance the conservation message. For example, the Cheetah Conservation Fund has featured live cheetahs from WCEF, and the Snow Leopard Conservancy has featured camels and servals from the Lyon Therapy Animal Ranch in their presentations. We have found that the presence of living felines at these events dramatically enhances the effectiveness of the conservation message being presented. Whenever such events occur, I attempt to provide FCF members with an account of the presentation by providing a summary of the event in the *FCF Journal*. In fact, whenever possible, I have published articles in the *FCF Journal* providing important information about taming and domestication, stress in captivity, and enrichment for captive felines. I have even delivered one presentation on the history of behavioral enrichment to the 2016 FCF Convention. Finally, I support the work of Dr. James Sanderson, in his relentless attempts to preserve the habitats of many of the world's smallest felines.

Registered Exotic Feline Handler Program

The FCF Board of Directors congratulates the following individuals for being accepted into the Registered Exotic Feline Handler Program since the past *Journal* issue.

Recent Handler Registrations:

Barbara Benck - Basic
Keith Gault - Intermediate
Brian Braitsch - Advanced
Ellen Chester - Advanced
DeTraci Regula - Advanced
Jim Sublet - Advanced

Updated Handler Registrations:

Kimberly Barker - Advanced
Sheri DeFlorio - Advanced
Jennifer Kasserman - Advanced
Sandra Michael - Advanced
Laura Walker - Advanced

Basic Feline Handlers have documented at least one year of experience, Intermediate level is at least five years of experience, and Advanced handlers have more than ten years experience. Update your registration when you obtain additional handling experience or new species experience.

The online registration form can be filled out directly in the members-only section of the FCF website. The \$30.00 registration fee can be made through PayPal.

Being a registered handler is the first step to becoming a Professional Member. Professional Membership application is also online on the Members-Only website.

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

Rebecca Krebs, FCF Secretary

USDA APHIS Animal Care: What's New for Wild Feline Facilities?

Summary of a Presentation at the FCF Conference by Mary Ann McBride, DVM, MS
Veterinary Medical Officer, USDA APHIS Animal Care, Raleigh, NC

Animal welfare refers to the state of the animal. Assessment of welfare includes consideration of the animal's health, behavior, and biological function. In 1979, the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council defined it with the "Five Freedoms" - freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, injury, and disease, freedom from fear and distress, and freedom to express normal behavior.

The Federal Animal Welfare Act was signed into law in 1966. It provides stan-



dards for humane care and treatment for certain warm-blooded species used in certain performances), registered research facilities (facilities where regulated animals are used in research, education, and experimentation), and transportation (air, rail, and vehicle). The regulations cover

licensing, registration, program of veterinary care, identification of animals, recordkeeping, standards of care (enclosures, space, food and water, sanitation, and more), and handling.

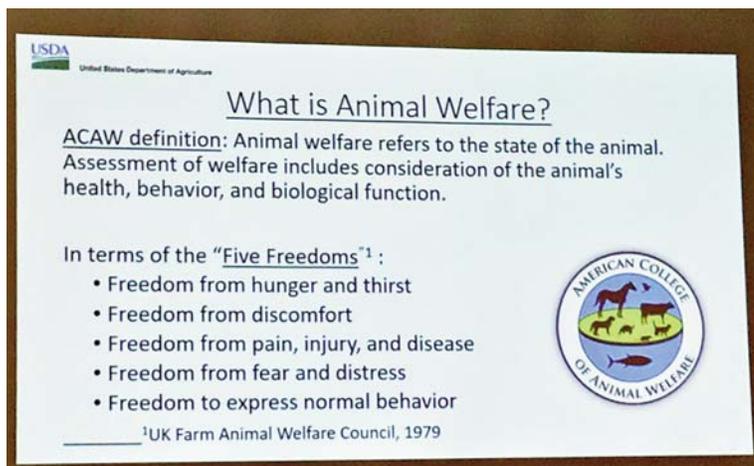
In December 2017, the USDA issued a tech note to licensees reminding them

of the requirement for daily observations of all animals. This may be accomplished by someone other than the attending veterinarians if a mechanism of direct and frequent communication is in place to convey timely and accurate information on problems of animal health, behavior, and well-being to the attending veterinarian. This was followed with a letter to attending veterinarians announcing Animal Care's desire to partner with them to support compliance

with the AWA veterinary care requirements. This letter to the veterinarians informed them that when animal care inspectors have questions about treatments, they will be contacting the attending veterinarian.

This past May, the USDA published a tech note containing incentives for identifying, reporting, correcting, and preventing noncompliance with the Animal Welfare Act. This is a new approach by the agency and reflects the current administration's desire to work in partnership with stakeholders, and reduce regulation. Essentially, Animal Care wants licensees to proactively identify, report, correct, and prevent issues involving animal welfare. In other words, licensees are being asked to self-report incidents and non-compliant items, and to take action to correct them and bring them back into compliance without government oversight or write-ups. This new approach builds trust and cooperation between licensees and Animal Care, and enables Animal Care to focus its limited resources of facilities with unresolved compliance challenges.

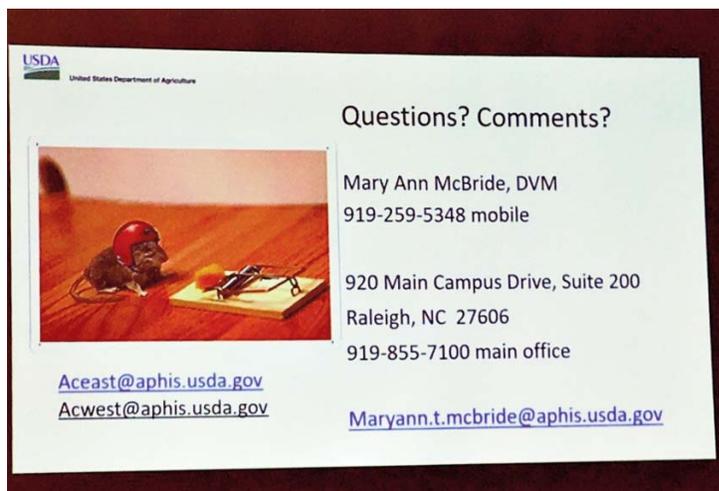
The most recent announcement, made in June of 2018, actually reduced the need for USDA licensing for some small-scale exhibitors and breeders. However, this *de minimis* ruling has no effect upon wild felines, no matter the size, even Geoffroy's cats. If you are breeding and selling, or exhibiting any wild felines, you still must be licensed. But, if you are breeding eight or fewer small exotic pet species, like hedgehogs, or exhibiting domesticated farm-type animals like goats and lambs, you are exempt from the AWA licensing requirement.



dards for humane care and treatment for certain warm-blooded species used in certain activities.

The Animal Welfare Act (AWA) is administered by Animal Care, APHIS, USDA. It establishes acceptable standards of humane care and treatment for regulated animals. The USDA monitors and achieves compliance through inspections, education and outreach, cooperative efforts, and enforcement. Presently there are 120 Inspectors in the U.S., both Veterinary Medical Officers (VMOs) and Animal Care Inspectors (ACIs). Over 12,000 regulated facilities in the U.S. are licensed under the AWA.

Facilities required to be USDA-licensed are breeding facilities (certain facilities that breed, buy, and/or sell certain regulated animals), exhibits (zoos, circuses, educational demonstrations, outreach, and



Dr. McBride closed her presentation with Animal Care's commitment to honesty, integrity, accountability, reliability, and responsible stewardship. The USDA

engages people and ensures the humane treatment of animals by building relationships with and services for the regulated community, partners, and stakeholders.

And, it works collaboratively within Animal Care and the USDA to promote the efficiency, effectiveness, and integrity of this program.

Social Media and You: Engaging Younger Audiences and Covering Your Bases

By Rachel Garner, Blogger
<http://blog.whyanimalsdothething.com/>
(9/14/2017)

Whether you run a facility that's open to the public, maintain a sanctuary, or simply have a private collection of exotic felids, it's important to make sure that whatever you post on social media accurately represents your brand. Even if you're not a business or an entity that needs to advertise yourself, people will interpret your work and your animal care through the lens provided by your social media posts. To make sure you set yourself and your animals up for a positive reception on the internet, there are a number of things worth considering before you hit "post" on any non-personal social media account.

One of the biggest pitfalls with social media and the algorithms that control how content is shown to users is that you can never be sure which of your posts will be the first one your audience will see. As we all know, first impressions matter - so you have to make sure that all of your social media content represents you in the best possible way. At a minimum, all social media content should be spell-checked and proofed before being put online. It's important that you maintain professionalism in your posts, so avoid using baby talk, don't write posts in the first person perspective of your animals, and keep personal politics/non-animal related topics out of your official content. It's worthwhile to avoid making your own versions of memes or riffing off of current internet jokes unless you're completely sure you understand them. In general, you want to focus on posting content that makes you (and by extension, your facility, business, or personal animal care) look knowledgeable, credible, and professional. If it doesn't meet those criteria, don't put it online.

When you're looking to reach millennials and younger internet users, keep in mind that you're messaging to people who

have grown up with the internet; it's intuitive to them, and they're regular, if not frequent users of multiple social media platforms. Because the internet is often omnipresent in younger users' lives, they're more selective about what they consume. While just posting cute photos is a great way to engage with demographics that primarily get online to relax, younger audiences want more engaging content - while they adore cute animal imagery, they're also looking for new things to learn and stories that draw them into the husbandry or conservation efforts surrounding the animals they're seeing. The other crucial thing to know is that because of the sheer amount of animal media on the internet, younger internet users are very invested in making sure they're only engaging with content in which the featured animals have stellar welfare. Messaging about how certain types of animal management are incorrect or even abusive is omnipresent - and often contradictory - and so that demographic often ends up feeling conflicted about liking content when they've been told that it might have been produced to the detriment of the animals featured.

The best way, then, to address both the need for meaningful content and the concerns about animal welfare is to turn each social media post you create into a story. Providing context for the photos and videos you share increases user engagement as readers feel drawn into the animals' world, and the added context helps establish your credibility (or that of your facility) as a knowledgeable animal caretaker. Once you've proven to younger audiences that they can trust your animal welfare standards and that you'll be honest and engaging as a content creator, they'll be far more comfortable engaging with and sharing your content. When you're dealing with contentious subjects, such as free-contact work with exotic felids or hand-raising, attempt to identify potential reader questions or areas of concern and address them in the body of your

posts. Doing so indicates that you're not only socially aware, but that you're purposefully proactive about communicating about complicated topics to your readers. In all cases with exotic animals, it's important that you make sure you're realistic in your representation of what working with or being around exotic animals is like; downplaying the risks of working with predators, over-emphasizing the danger aspect, or glamorizing things is the fastest way to draw criticisms and lose younger audiences. Prioritize quality over quantity when it comes to crafting these posts - a few really stellar pieces of content a month is far more valuable to your brand than a large amount of less-than-perfect posts.

One of the best ways to represent yourself well is to get multiple people involved in social media content creation - engage your volunteers and staff in brainstorming and writing, if you have them, but make sure that all posts are vetted and proofed by the person in charge of your social media before they get put online. Make sure everyone involved with your animals is briefed on your facility's social media policy and that they understand why following it matters. If you take photos specifically for social media, do so with an eye towards emphasizing professionalism - make sure staff is in uniform, ideally with logos or name tags visible. Putting captions on all videos helps prevent your posts from being taken out of context, and increases engagement when people are scrolling social media in public. It's always a good idea to watermark your photos to prevent both misuse and copyright disputes, as well.

At the end of the day, the best social media representation is an honest one. Share your love for the animals you care for and the moments that make it all worth doing - that's what people want to see. Just make sure that when you choose to share things, you do so in a professional manner, with context, finesse, and a spell-checker!

Lions, Tigers, and Bears, Oh My!

By Sandra Michael

After months of anticipation and a 12-hour drive, I arrived at the FCF conference in Charlotte. I've been a member with FCF for ten years, and I was excited to see so many familiar faces—and people I haven't met before, but for whom I had an instant connection. The conference is a highlight every year, because I get to spend time with other people like me who are passionate about wildlife rescue and conservation. It's a tribe where the secret handshakes are animal print and fur on your clothing.

More than just a social event, the conference was also a fascinating learning



Lea Jaunakis presented a talk of feline nutrition and vet care to the FCF visitors at Tiger World Wildlife Park.

framework lays the groundwork for how we understand diseases and genetic banking, with real-world applications that will make us better zookeepers, conservationists, and handlers. It also shows just how much we still have to learn about nature and the world around us.

The conference also included an exclusive, behind-the-scenes tour of Tiger World, a champion for endangered species worldwide. At Tiger World, president and founder Lea Jaunakais taught our group about veterinary care and nutrition and introduced us to new ideas about how we define animal welfare in captivity. The preserve goes to extraordinary lengths to give the animals the highest possible quality of life and an environment that mimics their ideal conditions in the wild. As an example, the veterinarians perform vasectomy

procedures instead of neutering the animals, which has several key advantages. First, it preserves the animals' endocrine system and won't interfere with their natural behavior. It's also reversible, which is important

when you want to preserve the lineage of endangered species like tigers. Jaunakais also explained that anesthesia is one of the greatest risks to animals in captivity, and a vasectomy, which is much less evasive than neutering, limits their exposure to the medication. This level of consideration goes far beyond traditional standards for animal care—and the practice proves that even a man-made setting can be as fulfilling for the animals as it is for their visitors.

On the final day of the conference, I traveled to the Conservators Center, home to more than 80 wildlife predators in Caswell County, about two hours east of the convention. Kim Barker, the "Serval Whisperer," showed us the park, which spans over 45 heavily wooded acres. She introduced us to a woolly, four-week-old serval kitten and led a discussion about establishing trust with rescue animals. Her work—like



Tiger World's Eurasian eagle owl underwent a full exam in front of FCF members interested in raptor care.

experience. Presenters covered topics that ranged from political lobbying to enclosure design and genetic research. Dr. Brian Davis, a geneticist from Texas A&M University, described new discoveries about DNA that challenges our criteria for categorizing tiger subspecies. This



Kim Barker uses a target training tool to elicit a stand from Arthur, Conservators Center's white tiger.



so many of my interactions through the FCF—demonstrated nuance, compassion, and, above all, a keen appreciation for wild cats.

When our group arrived at the Conservators Center gray wolf enclosure, Kim surprised us with a bellowing call. After a momentary pause, one of the wolves responded with a full-throated, spell-binding howl that resonated to the heart. When we reached the lions, Kim, along with other employees, called again, and this

time, a chorus of cats roared back at us. A New Guinea singing dog was happy to join in with a few lilting barks and yips. In this moment, it felt less like a guided tour and more like a direct communion with the wild—something I get to enjoy whenever I'm surrounded by animals that are happy and meticulously cared for, with a rich environment and intimate companionship with their handlers.

This year's conference was amazing. I love the FCF for putting together such a rewarding adventure and thoughtful panel of speakers. I'm already looking forward to next year!

It was a beautiful sunny Sunday, and a perfect day for a catnap. Conservators' Center has one of the largest lion collections on the East Coast.

Why Animal Owners Must Be Good Advocates

By Bill Hanka and Julia Matson Wagner

Most animal owners lead busy lives with precise routines balancing their everyday responsibilities caring for their animals with the other usual chores of the workaday world, leaving very little time to worry about how their local, state, and federal governments may be impacting their lives. But it cannot be thus; owners *must* exercise their right to be heard at every level of government.

Why is this important? The animal rights movement is spending vast sums around the country sitting down with your mayors, city councilmembers, county commissioners, state legislators, U.S. congressmen and senators, and regulatory agency officials at every level, not only to lobby for their extreme agenda, but also to persuade them that their views are the only legitimate voice on animal issues.

Animal owners, in order to preserve their way of life in the face of the aggressive campaign by activists to limit or outlaw the possession and/or breeding of big cats and other exotics, must stand up and be heard. There *is* another legitimate viewpoint out there, and it is yours.

How do I do this? At first, this task may seem daunting. Start locally. Many people say that they don't know who their representatives are or don't have any special relationships with them. But it is achievable. Start by attending your local city or county council meetings and introduce yourself. If your state representa-

tives or senators are having a town hall, stop by and say hello afterward.

Relax. You don't need to do a hard sell on any issues at these introductions. It's enough to have mentioned your name and that you live in their district. Later, when you might want to contact them, you can start by telling their staff that you met the councilmember a couple weeks ago at a meeting or other event.

When it comes to federal legislators, by being a member of the Feline Conservation Federation, you are helping to support the organization's advocacy efforts on federal matters. In this increasingly challenging ownership environment, the FCF plays a critical role in protecting responsible exotic feline ownership. In the coming year, the FCF will be enhancing those efforts by developing and beginning to implement a more comprehensive advocacy agenda, including enhanced representation on federal legislative and regulatory matters.

If you are interested in advocacy or have questions or considerations regarding the ongoing development of the organization's advocacy agenda, email the FCF board members.

What happens if

I remain silent? If animal owners do not stand up to be heard, animal rights activists have a very good chance of enacting their agenda. Every day, they are thinking up new ways to encroach upon our rights piece by piece, whether it's agricultural restrictions on caged animal products, restricting the movement of animals between states, or outright bans.

If your local county commissioner or congressman doesn't hear your side of the story – a story that may include the very resonant and persuasive issues of property rights, government takings, and the curtailment of interstate commerce – then they will decide that there are not any views to counter those of the animal rights activists.

Don't let the other side win the battle by default. Show up and be heard!

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Communicating with Animals: Operant Conditioning Training

Some people talk to animals. Not many listen though. That's the problem. - A.A. Milne "Winnie the Pooh"

Summary of a Presentation at the FCF Conference by Erin Carey, Director of Wildlife for Tiger World Endangered Wildlife Preserve

You need to know your species. Through observation, research, and understanding, you can learn the precursors of aggression or learning. Remember that every animal is an individual. What may work for one may not work for another individual. Training plans are a great stepping stone for progress, however, it is okay to listen and change approaches.

To begin successful training, you want to change an animal's mindset from, "Here they come, run!" to "Here they come, hello!" The three factors of training are:

1. Have patience. Do not impose yourself on an animal!
2. Build trust. The animal needs to be comfortable and confident in your relationship.
3. Understand motivation. What is highly desired in order to complete a behavior?

Operant conditioning training has four parts:

1. Positive reinforcement.
2. Positive punishment.
3. Negative reinforcement.
4. Negative punishment.

Combine these four rewards/punishments to create a successful training program.



Building trust between keeper and animal enables the training process to proceed.



Erin Carey joined us at the Hilton bright and early Friday morning to give a talk in preparation for our tour of Tiger World that afternoon.

Remember, positive means add. This kind of reinforcement means you want to see behavior repeated. Negative means subtract. Punishment means you want to see the behavior stop.

Positive reinforcement is an extremely successful tool during operant conditioning. Think about what the motivation is that you are going to add to your training in order to see the behavior repeated. For example, I give the leopard a piece of meat when the leopard is walking next to me instead of running in front of me.

Here's an example of negative reinforcement. The lions are learning to tolerate a nail trim. I remove the tool (trimmer or dremel) if the lion allows contact to the toenail with the tool.

For positive punishment, I add apple cider vinegar spray to the mouth of the leopard when he tries to bite on my shoelaces, which causes the behavior to stop.

For negative punishment, I take away the lion's toy when they show signs of possession.

For successful operant conditioning, the bridge must be taught first. "Good" lets the animal know that the behavior was done correctly. We also use a "please" and "thank you" here at Tiger World, which allow the animals to hand-feed respectfully without hurting a trainer while receiving a reward.

In conclusion, consistency is the key. Make a plan. Ensure everyone is on the same page. Listen to the animal during every training session. Have fun!



With operant conditioning, keepers at Tiger World can enter tiger habitats and safely draw blood from the tail.

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FCF Conference, Classes, and More

By LaVon Fabian

This year's FCF Conference was something I had looked forward to since last year's in Sarasota, Florida. I did not take any of the classes last year, but still felt I gained a lot from conversations with other attendees, getting to know other FCF members, and one of my favorite things, getting to play with the exotic kittens.

This year, I used my time much more wisely. I elected to take the Basic Wild/Exotic Feline Husbandry class. The class, led by FCF President Mindy Stinner, not only taught extensively about the natural history of the animals which are so fascinating to me, but also some things about the history of the FCF.

Some information I was vaguely aware of, but this course went much more in-depth, regarding HOW to find out the criteria for legally possessing a wild cat. Understanding how to properly care for and house an exotic cat, as well as the importance of providing enrichment for these cats, if you choose to own one, or even if you work as an employee or volunteer for a facility where these cats are housed.

Always a big concern is making sure that the cats are housed (and handled) in such a way as to maximize public safety and the safety and well-being of the cat. This was well covered in the section covering enclosures, fencing and housing, but also in the contingency section regarding things to be prepared for in emergency situations.

There was a lot of focus on teaching the students the importance of meeting USDA requirements for the care of the cats and safety of the public. Both while housing the cats and in situations where transporting the cats is necessary. After this class, I feel I could use my textbook to design an appropriate enclosure for an exotic cat, which would have been out of my field of expertise before.

The portion of the class on nutrition would also be a great help for anyone who is unfamiliar with proper nutritional needs if you are working or volunteering at a facility or have one of these amazing cats in your home.

I think this class would be a huge advantage for anyone working or volunteering in a facility, or in preparing your

residence to house a wild cat, if your state, county, and township allow them to be privately owned.

The second day of the conference, I took the Wild Feline Conservation Educators Course taught by Michelle McKay. This course would be very advantageous for anyone who plans to have the public on their property for exhibitions or even to take their animals to other facilities for exhibition and education purposes. It gives in-depth information on all of the licenses you would need. It emphasizes who should educate and why we should educate. They stress the importance of having accurate and up-to-date information, and being professional, in both the way you dress and the way you act. Very few things hurt the exotic ownership community as much as bad press. The course also covers a lot of information on the care of the animals you plan to use in your animal handling and/or shows. This includes training your animal and anyone who works with that animal, the cues, target training, and being consistent with each animal. Always keep the number one rule of safety first!

Also on the second day, I attended the Contingency Planning course taught by Julia Wagner. This class covered making sure that your home or your facility has a contingency plan for any incident that might take place while caring for a wild



Lea Jaunakais, Tiger World founder, welcomed FCF Conference attendees to the zoo.



FCF members gather in the hospitality suite to chat and gain hands-on experience with kittens.

cat. This could be anything from a sick animal to an escape, and how to deal with the press in that situation. And it taught that there should be a contingency plan in writing, as far as who is in charge, what is expected of other people who may be on the property, and the specific duties for each person who might be involved, in case the person who knows what to do in an emergency happens to not be there on the day something happens.

After a day in the classroom, I was ready for Thursday evening's food and drinks, with lots of time to get to know some of the speakers and socialize with other members. And best of all for me, we got to play with the baby exotic cats, this year's being Eurasian lynx and servals!

Friday, we all got on the bus to Tiger World. It was a great outing, and Tiger World also provided lunch and more training for people who were interested. There was time to wander the park to see the many animals in their care. It's much more than just tigers; there are plenty of lions, leopards, and jaguars, too. We were given some target training demonstrations with leopards, and the advanced registered handlers were given training and then allowed to pair up with experienced handlers and give training cues to young lion cubs.

Saturday, there were excellent speak-



The Tiger World keepers demonstrate how operant conditioning can enable them to draw blood from the tail of a leopard.

ers on “How to Choose a Veterinarian and Maintain a Lasting Relationship,” “The Flourishing Future of Feline Genomics: To Save Species and Defeat Disease,” “Secondhand Servals,” “AnimalCare Software,” “Moving the Whole Kat & Kaboodle,” “Social Media: Reaching Younger Audiences & Covering Your Bases,” and “So You Want to Make Babies...”

As a pet person who just loves felines of all sizes, I feel that every speaker provided information that would be a huge help to people already handling exotic cats, and most certainly anyone who is

considering getting an exotic cat.

The yearly silent auction ended just as a delicious banquet was served and the free bar opened. Following dinner, a not-so-silent live auction, consisting of a few of the really special donations, was hotly contested as auctioneer Abe Basmajian and his assistant Michelle McKay got everyone competitively bidding and laugh-

ing.

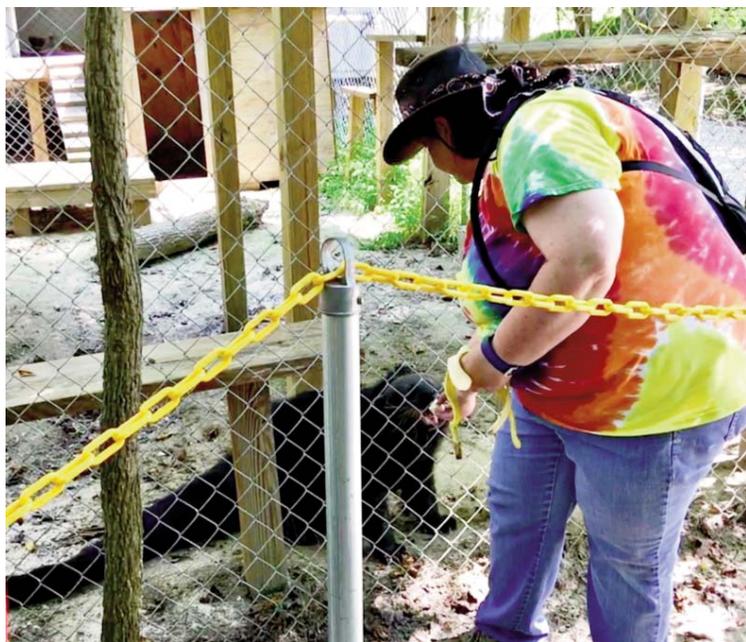
On the last day, several of us made the two-hour drive to a second facility and got to see the Conservator's Center with a really personal tour of the facility led by Kim Barker. We not only saw the many felines in residence, such as tigers, lions, bobcats, leopards, and servals, but also foxes, wolves, and binturongs. We even met the “Secondhand Servals” from Saturday's presentation, and also gained access to some of the behind the scenes areas like their food prep building.

Overall, by taking as many of the available classes as possible, I really got more than



Alan Smith, ZAA state legislation representative and FCF conference speaker, pictured with sloth and Tiger World educator.

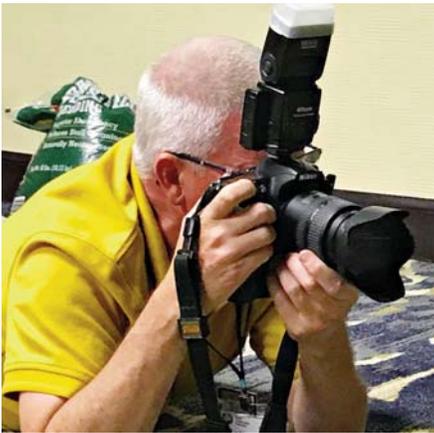
my money's worth in education, and fun. I plan to try to attend the FCF conferences yearly and continue to learn from some of the people I've met and come to know. I consider some of them as the best in the business of caring for these very special felines.



Kim Barker feeds banana treats to one of the Conservators Center's binturongs.



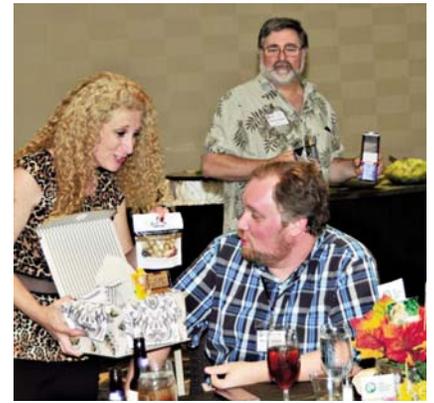
Young bobcat Muraco greets Doug Evans, Conservators Center co-founder.



Banquet photos by Keith Gault.



Dressed in their finest feline fashion are Mindy Stinner, Michelle McKay, Julia Wagner, and David Kleven.



Lovely Michelle McKay entices Brian Davis to up his bid on the coffee mugs and hot drinks box while FCF registration attendant Andy Foshee looks on.



Auctioneer Abe Basmajian kicks off the live auction bidding.



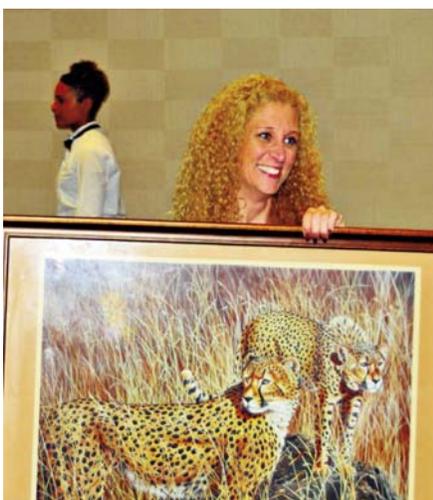
Hope Bennett is happy to be the winning bidder on Jeffers Pet gift certificates. Back L to R: Sheri DeFlorio, Jim Sublett, Melissa Burns, Hope Bennett, Michelle McKay, Leila Wassom, and Laura Walker.



Rachael Garner finds the auction antics hilarious.



Looks like Michelle McKay and Dawn Strasser don't need any more alcohol.



Sheri DeFlorio gives husband Jim "that look" when he opens the bid for Ellen Chester's cheetah print at \$300.



LaVon Fabian holds Sonar, a tiny serval kitten.



Billie Lambert with Binx the Eurasian lynx. Photo by Keith Gault.

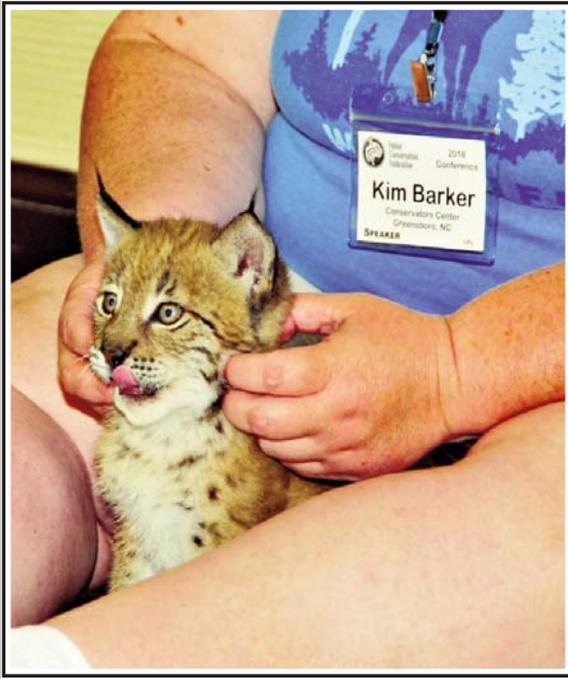
Your Best Conference Shots



Kylie Reynolds holds Sonar. Photo by Brian Braitsch.



Sandra Michael takes her turn with Binx. Photo by Lynn Culver.



Kim Barker gets her turn to cuddle the lynx. Photo by Keith Gault.

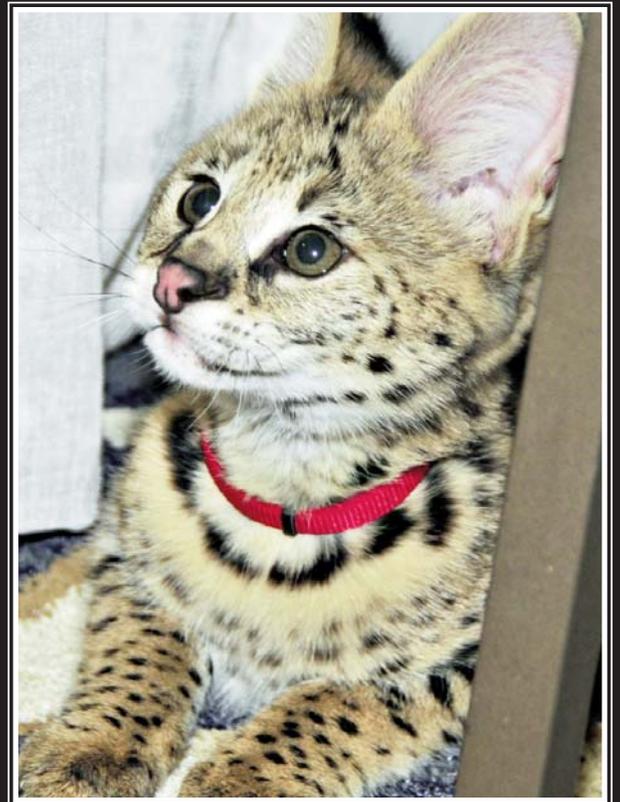


Gina Tkach gets a kiss from Binx. Photo by Keith Gault.

*All photos taken at
2018 FCF Conference in
Charlotte, North Carolina*



Linda Hamstead gets a lynx kiss on the nose. Photo by Keith Gault.



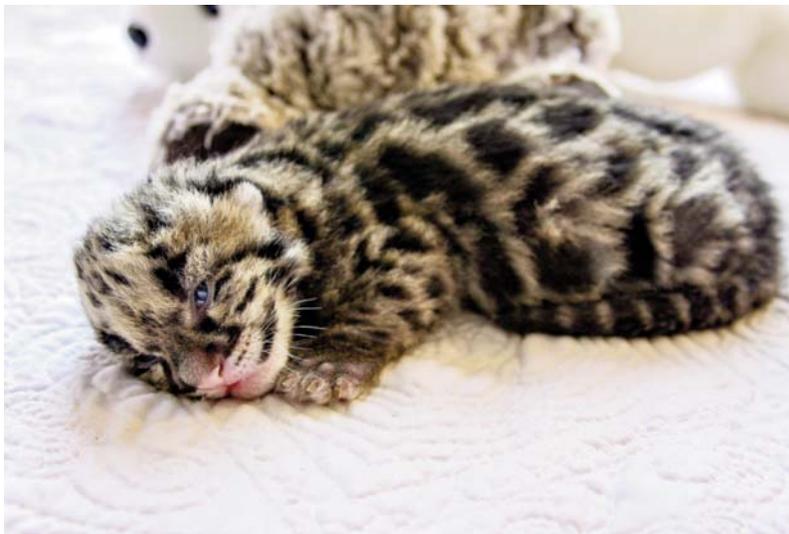
Radar looks up at his mom Sheri DeFlorio. Photo by Keith Gault.

Panther Ridge Breeding Success of Three Clouded Leopard Cubs

By Sadie Ryan

The conservation of an endangered species, the clouded leopard, is being upheld at Panther Ridge Conservation Center through their breeding success. *Neofelis nebulosa* in their natural habitat are found in Southeast Asia and the islands of Borneo and Sumatra. Unfortunately, habitat loss is a huge issue for this species, particularly due to the palm oil industry. The dense forestry which the clouded leopards live in is being cut down at an alarming rate to put up palm oil plantations in its place.

With such devastation occurring in their natural habitat, spreading awareness about their conservation is now more important



Little Lura, female clouded leopard, was born March 5, 2018, at Panther Ridge Conservation Center.

than ever. One of the amazing conservation efforts put forth at Panther Ridge Conservation Center in Wellington, Florida, is the breeding of this species!

In June of 2017, Panther Ridge Conservation Center obtained three adult clouded leopards from the Nashville Zoo, better known as the "Trio." These three, Dru, Tula, and Nuri, were brought to Panther Ridge in hopes of a successful breeding opportunity. Dru, the male of the trio, has stunning

markings and treats his ladies very well, grooming them daily. He is a sweet boy that is always excited for a treat, whether it be chunk meat, fish, or even cantaloupe! Tula, one of the two females, is a bit timid and nervous, but has quite the personality. She prefers to nap in her igloo for most of the day, snuggling with her man. Last, but certainly not least, there is Nuri. Nuri is the definition of a sweetheart, constantly wanting love and affection. There is nothing better than daily chin scratches for this lady.

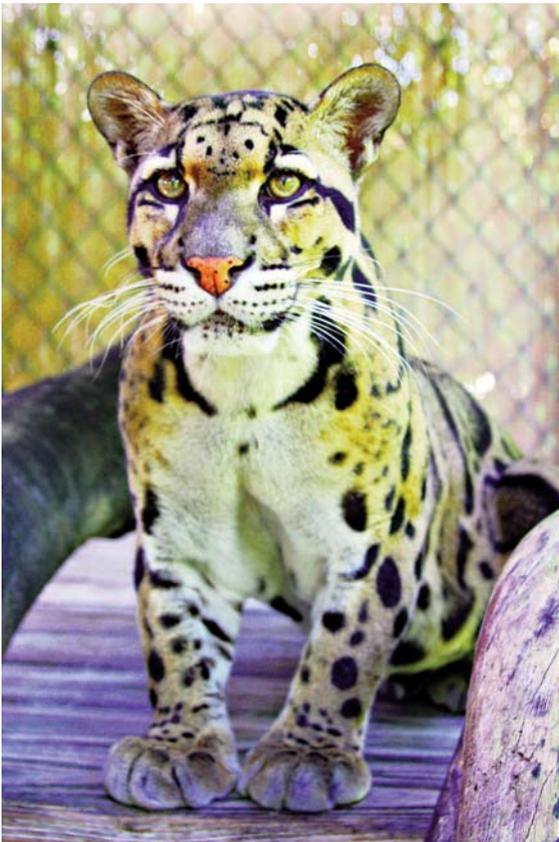
Panther Ridge Conservation Center had high hopes for the Trio, and right on cue, signs of breeding were recognized between the male, Dru, and the female, Tula, in the start of 2018. Both Nuri and Tula were trained for ultrasounds, so Tula did quite well when it came time for this, and after many long days and nights of 24/7 monitoring of Tula, a tiny clouded leopard cub was born on March 5, 2018, weighing in at only half a pound! Later to be named Lura, after one of Panther Ridge's long-term donors, the cub became a full-time job for staff members, with frequent feedings and round-the-clock care. For the first week



Malee was born a couple months later on May 30th. Both females are now being raised with an unrelated male from another zoo.



Baby clouded leopard cub is tiny next to polar bear stuffed animal.



after birth, clouded leopard cubs must be bottle-fed every two hours.

Once reaching three months old, Lura was introduced to a new playmate, Taj. Taj was born at another facility three weeks after Lura, and was brought to Panther Ridge Conservation Center to be partnered with her. Clouded leopards must be paired at a young age to avoid conflict when full-grown. Lura and Taj have been getting along perfectly, with Lura showing Taj how to play with enrichment and climb trees. Lura is much more adventurous than Taj and is small, yet fearless. Taj, although a bit more timid, is a sweetheart and enjoys cuddling up next to Lura and trying to climb up to the very top of his enclosure.

Fast-forward to the end of May, where signs of yet another cloud-

ed leopard birth were taking place at Panther Ridge; this time with the other female from the trio, Nuri. Nuri's cub, Malee, was born on May 30, 2018, and was half the size of Lura. And so the cycle of bottle-feeding began again with great success. Now, as of July, the three cubs are doing fantastic and growing up fast! Malee certainly has a set of lungs on her, chirping away daily, and her teeth are now just starting to poke through. Lura now weighs in over 11 pounds, while Taj is quickly catching up at nine pounds. Malee will have a way to go before reaching the same size as Lura and Taj, but the hope is that Panther Ridge Conservation Center will be able to have all three cubs living together, thereby forming the next generation Trio.

To learn more about the clouded leopards and the other seven species residing at Panther Ridge Conservation Center, schedule a tour of their facility. Tours can be scheduled by calling 561-795-8914.

Drupata, the father of both girl cubs, has passed down his genes into the next generation of clouded leopards.

Following the Lives of the Emblems of Wild Africa – the Big Cats

By Chad Cocking

As a child – and even as a young adult – I would constantly fantasize about spending my days driving around the African Bushveld of South Africa's Greater Kruger Park. These fantasies usually included what I thought were very unrealistic scenarios of me finding lions and leopards around every corner and getting to watch them do what they do best, being Africa's apex predators.

It was largely as a result of my love for big cats (and the desire to photograph them) that I decided, in 2007, to take a year break from my studies and turn my childhood dreams into a reality. I took the necessary steps to become a field guide in the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve, an unfenced private concession adjoining the Kruger National Park. Fast forward 11 years, and I am still plying my trade as a guide and wildlife photographer in this special part of Africa, effectively turning my "gap year" into a career that has been unbelievably fulfilling, and exceptionally rewarding. As the years have ticked on

by, my focus may have shifted from being photographically-motivated in my search for the big cats of Africa, to one of simply enjoying their presence, and following the lives of the resident lions and leopards that I have been privileged enough to follow over the course of more than a decade.

Sitting now and looking back at my time as a guide, I have pondered about just how many sightings I have had of these big cats, as well as how many individuals I may have seen. A rough count indicates that I have seen in the region of 70 different leopards in the past 11 years, but when it comes to lions, it would be much more of a thumb-suck, but a rough count indicates that it is at least 170-plus different lions, to the point where I can no longer remem-



Spotted leopard cub peeks out at photographer Chad Cocking.

ber and recall the different prides, their ages and lineages. For someone that came to work in the bush in the hope of spending time with big cats, I would say that the Timbavati has certainly allowed me to achieve that goal!

As one could imagine, with so many memories, and countless hours spent in their presence, I have been gifted some incredible moments in their company; and yet, still crave more, and I am still able to witness new and unique behaviours not seen before – and it is mostly because of the chance of seeing something new and exciting that I keep on spending as much time with them as I can.

A question may come up as to whether I prefer lions or leopards more, and it is a difficult one to answer. When I started my career as a guide, the lions were definitely my favourites. As a uniquely social cat, they are able to show a different side to their behaviour that is often missing in leopards. The interactions between pride members, their cooperation when it comes to hunting or defending kills, and the inseparable connections that are so clearly visible between pride members – even when sleeping – makes lions a joy to watch, and this is seldom more in evidence than when there are young cubs



Touching moment between mother lion and cub, photographed by Chad Cocking.

within the prides. And then there is their size! Very little compares to seeing a fully grown male lion confidently striding through the wilderness on a territorial patrol, and then to hear (and feel) the reverberating power of his almighty roar is something that no one will ever forget.

I have also been exceptionally lucky to have been able to see some of the lions that made the Timbavati world-famous in the late 1970s.

It was always a dream to see a wild white lion in the Timbavati, and eventually, in 2009, I had my opportunity when

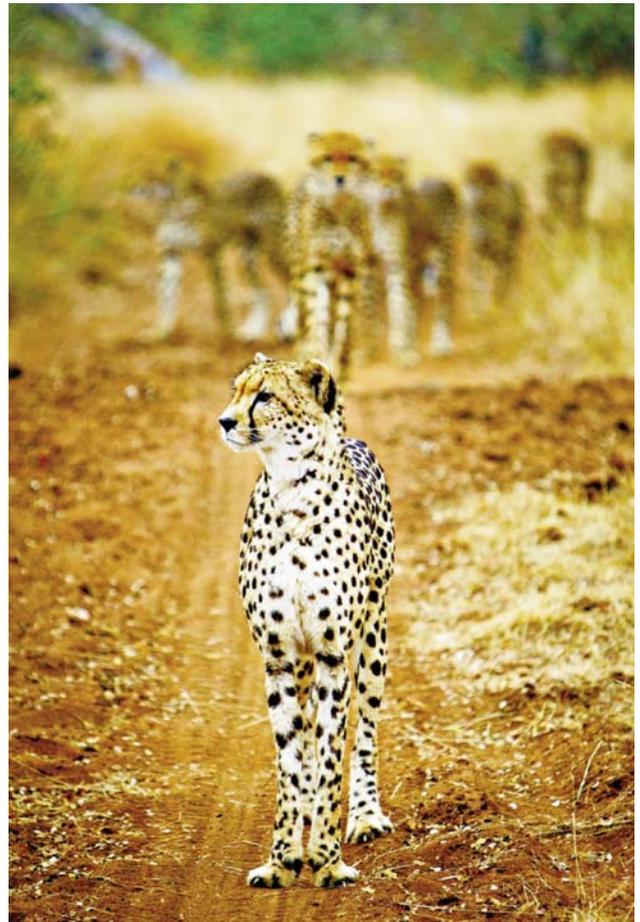


This tiny leopard follows in its mother's footsteps as it begins to explore the African wilderness.

one of the resident prides gave birth to two white cubs. It took me several months to get my first look at them, but it was well worth the wait! Over the course of the next couple of years, we watched these white sisters define the odds placed against them by virtue of their genetically different coats and grow towards independence before they moved into a wilderness area of the Kruger National Park. White lions are not albinos, and still have melanin in their eyes, but this pigment is absent from their coats, giving them what would appear to be a distinctly disadvantageous coat colour in the African bush. Yet, despite this, the pride managed to hunt and survive successfully. In fact, as the same time as those two white lionesses were growing up, another resident pride in the south of the Timbavati also had two white lionesses survive to adulthood. I was fortunate enough to see one of these lionesses when one of them gave birth to three white cubs of her own – the first recorded wild white lioness to give birth

to white cubs! In total, I have seen eight wild white lions in the Timbavati, but today, there are sadly no living white lions in the reserve. The good news though is that the white lion genes are clearly wide spread amongst the lionesses of the area (as seen by the fact that at least five different prides have had white lions in the last 12 years), and if a gene-carrying male comes into the area, there is every chance of more white lions returning to the Timbavati.

What leopards lack in social interactions, they certainly make up for in beauty and business! Quite contrary to popular belief, in areas where leopards are not persecuted by man, they



Cheetah are rarely seen in this part of Africa, due to the environment being dominated by more woodlands than grasslands, so when one is sighted, capturing it on film is all the more special.



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The beautiful rosette patterns of a close-up leopard study by Chad Cocking.

become quite diurnal in their activities, and it is for this reason that I grew to love leopards. Whilst by late in the morning most lion prides have settled down for the day, leopards will usually still be out and about on the prowl and watching them as they go about searching for a meal, up and down trees, is something to behold. I guess that it is largely due to their usually solitary nature that makes seeing any leopard interactions that much more special; because if you think that there is very little more beautiful to behold than a leopard, then try setting your eyes on a family of leopards! Mother leopards are very diligent and patient guardians, and will gamely put up with all the mock-attacks that their youngsters throw at them. Yet, even when leopards are not doing a great deal, the perfection in their form and camouflaged coats will always draw admiration from those that set eyes on them, and one can almost feel the latent potential energy stored in them as they patiently wait for the opportune moment to launch an attack on an unsuspecting target.

A discussion of the big cats would not be complete without the fastest of them all, the cheetah. Sadly for me, the Timbavati is not outwardly suited to a resident cheetah population, as the reserve is dominated more by woodlands than grasslands. This does, however, make any visit from cheetahs even more special. My most incredible sighting was unexpectedly stumbling upon a family of six cheetahs one morning! It was a successful mother that had arrived in the area with five almost-adult offspring – what a treat it

was to see them.

In a similar vein, although the smaller cats might not cover the adrenalin-rush that watching a pride of lions on the hunt offers, their rarity means that any sighting of African wild cats, servals or caracals – no matter how brief – are to be treasured merely on the basis of their rarity. In 11 years, I have seen caracal on only three occasions, and serval maybe a dozen-or-so more times. Yet, because the wilds of the Greater Kruger Park are an unscripted show that plays out a different scenario every day, one just never knows what is waiting around the corner for you.

Although it is great to be able to write about the big and small cats of the Greater Kruger, where it is clearly evident that their populations are doing well, this is

sadly not the case across the whole continent. One of the biggest threats facing big cats (and most wild life these days) is a loss of habitat; not only for the space needed for them to survive in, but also for the space it provides their prey to roam freely in. As the human population of the areas surrounding the Greater Kruger Park continues to grow, more and more pressure is going to be put on the land and the inhabitants of the protected areas. Poverty in these adjacent villages is also rife, and many people turn to poaching not only for bush meat, but also for the valued products that animals like rhinos, elephants and lions carry on them. Being involved in the ecotourism industry, I have been fortunate enough to see how tourism is able to assist not only with allowing such natural areas to be conserved by giving them tangible economic benefits, but how through employment, the surrounding communities are able to see these benefits shared amongst themselves. It is for this reason that I will continue to work in this field, not only for the aforementioned benefits, but also for the fact that by sharing in the magic of this special part of Africa with tourists from across the world, it provides an opportunity to educate potentially influential people who may in turn spread the word about conservation, and encourage more people to come and share in these wonders. In so doing, not only do they enjoy a truly life-changing experience, but also are able to contribute to the continued sustainable management of these areas.



Covered in blood from a recent feast, two young lions spar for dominance.

So You Want to Make Babies?

Summary of a Presentation at the FCF Conference by Dawn Strasser, Hand-Rearing Resource Advisor and Head Keeper of Neonatal Care & Quarantine, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens

Dawn's vast experience rearing a wide variety of felines and other zoological species gives her a unique ability to advise the FCF conference attendees on this topic.

Her topics of discussion at the FCF Convention included: breeding, birth preparation, labor, postpartum divided into three possibilities - dam is doing well, dam is ignoring, dam is aggressive, hand-rearing divided into - feeding, equipment



Determining pregnancy starts with a careful examination of the feline body. This lioness has the characteristic bulge of a litter of cubs.

and housing, cleaning and cleanliness; and, finally, mental welfare and neonatal behavior. Her presentation covered everything one could want to know and more. For this *Journal* summary, I have copied some of her presentation and assembled it here for those who missed the convention.

The starting point is breeding. The big question is diagnosing behavior; what is flirting versus aggression. In the cat world, we often see both in courtship, so it is up to the keepers to decide if it is an acceptable level or one that is spiraling out of control. Dawn shared images of both to help us understand signs of estrus. One important note is to have an escape route should things go wrong.

Next is birth preparation, with the big question - Is she pregnant? She said it can be as easy as setting up a calendar. Record all the breeding you see. Calcula-

late how many days out it will be to give birth. Then go two weeks beyond just to be sure she is not pregnant. Have your list ready of what you need to do in preparation. While you are waiting, there are ways to evaluate the likelihood of pregnancy. Appearance and behavior should be carefully monitored. An end to observed estrus behaviors and courting or breeding is a strong indicator, but it does not rule out false pregnancy. Taking weights of the dam is also a good indicator; a female's weight will increase by 18% during pregnancy, but so will that of dams that are falsely pregnant. Voluntary ultrasounds are a useful tool in making the final determination. The training for an ultrasound can be as simple as standing up against a fence or lying across a platform. If there is a viable fetus, the heartbeats can be detected 30 days after conceiving; skeletal structure comes into view at 45 days.

Dawn offered a comprehensive checklist two weeks prior to birth:

- Den area ready.
- Male moved.
- Cameras ready.
- Who is watching the cameras or the dam?
- Birth plan ready for hand-rearing.
- Behavioral list ready.

A birthing den can be as simple as a log wedged in underneath an indoor shelf for a large cat species, or a wooden box for smaller felines. Secure her area so it feels like a den. For cameras and monitors, Dawn shared information on several with which she has experience. There is the AXIS Q8414-LVS Network Camera, corner mount in stainless steel, anti-grip. Also the anti-grip EX36N Corner-mount No-grip Camera, and the AXIS P3225-LVE Mk II Network Camera. Finally, there is the streamlined outdoor-ready HDTV 1080p fixed dome for any light conditions.

Dawn provided a simple chart that zoo docents are asked to use to record behaviors. Record the date and time of each observation. Start your observations about two weeks out so you understand what is normal and



When removing felines from their natural mother, care must be given to providing round the clock nurturing. These cheetah cubs are benefitting from the presence and oversight of this male domestic dog.

abnormal. And if you see any complication prior to the birth date, you have data to review. Once your dam has given birth, you need to observe neonate behavior. Design a chart that provides simple check-off behaviors, such as restlessness, licking, lying down, pacing, urination, and sleeping. Once you have babies, time the duration of each action, like number of cubs nursing, vocalization, activeness, sleeping, rooting, and lying off in a corner. Do not stop watching cubs once they are born. The dam dries up or does not produce enough milk at various times. So monitoring the neonates' behavior is a good indicator. Cubs like routines; any deviation from their routine has the possibility of illustrating a problem.

Dawn covered different situations. For instance, in the case of if the dam is ignoring the cubs, but she is not aggressive. Can you do supplemental feedings? Are cubs showing distress? If the dam is



Felines need a secure place to deliver. In this case, a large log was placed in front of a loading shelf to block the cubs from leaving and give the mother an area to nurse.

A First Conference Impression

By Sheila Reid-Mirto
Harleysville, Pennsylvania

This was my first convention. Being someone who just loves cats, big and small, this was no small endeavor for me to take a trip to Charlotte, North Carolina. Many attendees had traveled farther than I had, but this was the first time I flew since the early 1990s. As we all

know, much has changed since then in that respect. Once I secured a caretaker for our six cats (my husband volunteered), my trip was set. As luck would have it, my journey was without incident.

My main focus was to learn more about exotic feline care. I signed up initially for the Feline Husbandry course, but ended up signing onto other course and workshop as well. I am a Pennsylvania certified veterinary technician. I have worked at a feline-only vet clinic and currently volunteer at Elmwood Park Zoo and Aark Wildlife Rehabilitation going on three years. Studying feline behavior is my favorite subject. I am sure that is one reason why many of us joined the FCF. Perhaps one day, I would like to be able to run my own small exotic feline sanctuary.

The Wild Feline Husbandry course was



Protecting ambassador kittens from germs, each convention-goer removed shoes and washed hands. Debi Willoughby spritzes Novasan onto hands.

taught in an eight hour installment. Anyone who has a casual interest in or even an inkling of owning an exotic feline, or who works at a facility that cares for such wonderful creatures, I highly recommend taking this course. I thought I had a good overall working knowledge feline care and behavior, but after listening to the instructor, Mindy Stinner (co-founder of Conservators Center), I gained a greater insight

on the subject, and we discussed factors that I really have not thought of prior to this convention. The course covers every aspect of caring for small and large felids, such as genetic history, legal matters regarding permits/regulatory agencies, enclosure design and materials, behavior/training, enrichment, nutrition/neonate care, basic veterinary care, and contingency/emergency planning. We even had a lunch break with a very tasty meal that was served onsite. This course can easily be applied to any carnivore care situation.

The other courses offered were available on Thursday at a last minute addition to the FCF Conference schedule. The Wild Feline Conservation Education course was



No FCF conference is complete without some baby time. Little Binx kept everyone happy.

very informative. This offering was great for an individual starting their own education program or bringing new ideas to a seasoned educator. Also, the Contingency Planning Workshop gave new insight and structure on how to deal with the modern world in an animal care setting. This course offered new ideas on creating emergency plans for that what-if scenario,



Welcome sign at the entry of Tiger World Wildlife Preserve, where the FCF had the zoo to ourselves that day and experienced not only the park's animals, but a variety of educational presentations.

Donations

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

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

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including suggestions on how to protect yourself, your organization, and animals from unwanted activity from animal rights groups, and also tips on public relations if there is an incident.

The conference had reserved a banquet room for food, drink, and the auction, and a hospitality suite where kittens were available for interaction. That room was open Thursday afternoon and each evening and was always popular. We sat down and waited our turn for some lynx



Tiger World keepers pose with a leopard after running it through a series of operant-conditioned behaviors for the FCF members.

loving, socializing with the other attendees and sharing stories and experiences. The lynx, named Binx, seemed to like everyone. The little girl serval, named Sonar, was a ball of energy and playfulness. There was also another serval named Radar, who was several weeks older than Sonar. He was more aware of all the strangers and spent most of his time near his people, but when the room thinned out, he too began playing with toys.

In addition to the courses offered, there were also many guest speaker presentations covering various subjects, each with their own area of expertise. Information from fresh new scientific endeavors, current government legislature, to plain old experience and life lessons were shared.

On Friday, we traveled by bus to Tiger World Endangered Wildlife Preserve for additional developmental classes, quarantine protocols, and demonstrations in operant conditioning, and then we were set free to walk around and take in all the beautiful resident animals. It was really fascinating to observe how different animal sanctuaries



Sheila Reed Mitro sits with Binx's new owner, Bret Haughwout, at the banquet Saturday night.

operate.

On Saturday, a banquet was held with delicious food and drink. Live and silent auctions added to the evening fun. Socializing with other attendees allowed for making new contacts and friends. Everyone had one common interest. Overall, this event was highly educational and fun. Whether you work at a zoo, animal sanctuary, are a private cat owner, or just love exotic cats, this convention is for you.



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What's the Latest from Washington, D.C.?

And Why Is Lobbying On Animal Issues So Different From Other Issues?

Summary of a Presentation at the FCF Conference by Bill Hanka, Founder, Hanka Advisor

Bill Hanka spent 31 years working in Washington, D.C., with ten of those years in the U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, and the White House. He has been lobbying 21 years, and, since 2014, he's been the head of his own firm, Hanka Advisor (www.hankaadvisor.com). For the past 11 years, he has been retained by UAPPEAL (United a Politically Proactive Exotic Animal League) to represent the interests of this exotic animal community.

Lobbying on animal issues is a challenge. The "other side" is very vocal and often presents its views as the only legitimate/reasonable position. Members of Congress and their staffers generally have very little knowledge of animals and willingly defer to issue leaders. For example, Hanka shared his experience lobbying on the Captive Primate Safety Act, 2007-2008. Senate staff told us they had no interest in amendments or even granting us a hearing. We then went to the House and presented our case as an attack on private property rights/unlawful taking. We worked hard with the House Committee to get a hearing held on March 11, 2008, and

to amend the CPSA to include travel exceptions for bequests and for vet visits.

We then went back to the Senate and found two friendly senators to put "holds" on the Senate Bill, citing the reasonable amendments that had been agreed to by the House but were unacceptable to the Senate Committee, which had approved the legislation in October 2007. This bill has been reintroduced, but has still not passed into law.

Here is the latest on the Big Cat Public Safety Act (HR 1818, S2990), a bill that would prohibit the breeding of seven species of large cat, exempting only the AZA zoos. The House bill introduced on April 11, 2017, has 139 co-sponsors, with 17 more added since May 1, 2018. It has bipartisan support; 97 Democrats and 42 Republicans. House Sponsor Jeff Denham (R-CA) is rated as a "toss-up," but is a member of the House Natural Resources Committee where this bill will be addressed. The Senate version bill was just introduced on June 5, 2018, by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT). Blumenthal is not a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee. The five co-sponsors of his bill are four democrats and one independent.

Hanka offered FCF Conference attendees some tips on how to be an effective lobbyist. Do your homework; know the bill name, number, latest action, and list of co-sponsors. Have a strategy. Discourage

new co-sponsors. Demand a hearing. Target your resources. And always meet with your local representatives, even if they are opposed to your position.

Make sure that you meet with staff from the committees of jurisdiction, so that they know there is more than one viewpoint on the legislation. Then find the right message. Here are some talking points to consider: Is this a federal issue? Does this deprive people of their livelihood? Is this a taking of private property without due process?

This is an election year and here are the 2018 election trends. In the House, Democrats need a gain of 23 seats to take over the majority. Currently there are 37 GOP seats which are "toss-ups or worse," including ten that "lean Democratic." This is an increase from January 2018, when only 20 GOP seats were rated as toss-ups.

In the Senate, 35 seats are up this fall (26 Democrats and 9 Republicans). Currently, the Senate consists of 51 Republicans to 49 Democrats. Democrats need to pick up two seats to take over as the majority. Six seats are toss-ups: two Republicans (AZ and NV); four Republicans (FL, IN, MO, and ND).

Stay alert, informed, and stay involved. Communicate with others in your field of interest and definitely reach out to your elected representatives with your views and concerns.

Hey, Didn't That Happen Last Year? The Importance of Good Recordkeeping

Summary of a Presentation at the FCF Conference by David Kleven President, AnimalCare Software

As a wildlife educator for 28 years, my recordkeeping has evolved. Our very first records were handwritten or typed notes and file cabinets with saved paperwork required by the State of Texas, the USDA, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. The problem with this method was that finding vital information quickly was often a problem.

First let me share how my record keeping has changed over time, and where AnimalCare Software became the software I use today, and a second venture for

me.

In 1994, my father-in-law, an early adopter of technology, introduced me to Microsoft Access. Access is customizable database software. Together, we built a database for tracking our animal collection, basic health information, and all of our bookings for outreach programs. It is a powerful tool if you are tech savvy or know someone who is who can help you. As much as this made life easier, there were many downsides. Firstly, it is not secure. If someone starts messing with it,



they can destroy the database (which we later discovered). Secondly, every time they released software updates, there were hidden files that I had to find in order for the database to continue to function. Thirdly, when I looked into switching from PC to a Mac, I found out that you

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have to install a second operating system, Windows, onto the Mac just so Access would function.

In 2004, I was really put to the test. My wife was hired to be the director of the Frank Buck Zoo in Gainesville, Texas. They were still using paper records, so she asked if I could create a database for the zoo. She knew that daily recordkeeping was becoming increasingly important to the USDA. The database I created was functional, but not ideal in a multi-user environment. We discovered this when a staff person accidentally made changes to the coding in the background.

At conferences, many of us multitask, because we still have animals that are being cared for, and facilities to manage from a distance while we are gone. At several conferences, I would be entering records into Access, and have owners of other facilities ask me about the software I was using. Once I told them I created it, they excitedly asked if I could create something for them. I was quick to respond that there was no way I could do that; it would be too difficult to support from afar.

In 2014, while visiting my wife at the zoo, she showed me that the spouse of a staff member who works on databases had made some improvements to the database I had created, and the results were impressive. After being introduced to Michael at a Christmas party, I asked if we could do something for

other facilities. He gave the same answer I had given others, but added that the way to do it was in the cloud. This is where the idea for AnimalCare Software was born.

Regardless of what you choose to use at your facility, thorough recordkeeping is not only a part of best practices, but a requirement for most state and federal permits. Records should be maintained to doc-

ument:

- proof of ownership and proper acquisition
- daily care
- husbandry
- enrichment and training
- medical issues and care
- welfare documentation

If your records are maintained daily, you will find your staff communicating better, animal welfare improving, and it satisfies welfare documentation for inspectors.

When taking down records, it is important to consider some key tenants:

- Record the truth.
- Consult the primary source.
- Ensure record integrity.
- Verify all documentation.
- Assume the reader knows nothing.
- Write it down.
- Safeguard against damage or loss.

When we created AnimalCare Soft-



David Kleven, founder of AnimalCare Software, gave live demonstrations and answered questions from convention-goers on his cloud-based recordkeeping software.

ware, we wanted to address all of those tenants in an affordable, customizable, secure, and user-friendly solution. AnimalCare features:

- staff communication – daily reports
- demonstration of compliance
- animal inventory
- medical history
- quick access to information
- customizability
- secure cloud based
- tracking of medical reminders and tasks
- notifications
- reporting



If you or your staff is looking to learn all of the best practices in recordkeeping, the Zoological Registrars Association offers an online course for its members. You can learn more about it at www.zooregistrars.org. To learn more about AnimalCare Software, please visit www.AnimalCareSoftware.com or email me at dave@animalcaresoftware.com.

Secondhand Servals

"An animal's eyes have the power to speak a great language." - Martin Buber

Summary of a Presentation at the FCF Conference by Kim Barker
Serval Whisperer, Conservators Center

Out of fourteen total, the Conservators Center currently has ten "secondhand servals." They have come to us through various circumstances. We have built relationships to varying degrees with each one. Every relationship is on the serval's terms. Some have been easy, some have not. Some relationships are solid with mutual affection, and some we are still working on.

A secondhand serval is any adult (one year or older) serval that has lost its original home for any reason, such as a closed facility, a rehome from a private owner, a confiscation or rescue, a retirement from exhibition or breeding... those are just a few common examples.

To prepare for your first meeting, if feasible, find out as much as possible about



Conservators Center "Serval Whisperer," Kim Barker, has earned the trust of this serval.

the serval. Obtain as many records as are available. As with any new animal, approaching and evaluating a serval needing a new home should be done with caution and compassion. Crating the animal could take time. Do this in a quiet space with as few people as possible around the area. This is almost never going to be the same twice. In some cases, you will need the assistance of the owner, while in other cases, having the owner there could be problematic. If the serval is coming from a facility, netting practices may come into play. Once the animal is crated, cover the crate with a blanket or towel to create a

safe space, but make sure there is airflow. Transport should happen with as little noise and activity as possible.

Similar to moving other species to new spaces, have as few people as needed and make sure the serval will be able to adjust to the new space with limited visitors. Allow for places for the serval to hide and feel safe as they transition to a new environment.

Introducing people will be very dependent upon the individual serval's personality. If you have an aggressive or fear-aggressive serval, most serval-experienced people interact at first with protected contact; usually fencing is used as a barrier. This phase could last days, months, years, or even become permanent. Look to build bridges using food or toys and enrichment.

In the case of a fearful, but non-aggressive serval, serval-experienced handlers initially use protected contact, and it may last a few hours to days, or possibly months, years, or even become permanent. Again, look to build bridges. When entering the serval's space, allow for the serval to get away to a safe place. Be the least threatening possible.

When working with a serval that exhibits very little fear, which may even appear to be a "friendly" serval, experienced handlers once again look for bridge builders. Start the relationship with protected contact for at least a few hours. Watch for over-stimulation. Don't let your guard down.



Another serval named Masufa lives at Conservators Center.

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A very comfortable and totally relaxed Carson, napping on Kim.

Carson is a case study in a surrendered pet. When we met him, he was in good health and had been declawed and neutered. He was very shy, but exhibited some level of comfort with people. He



Little Sonar, a tiny serval kitten at the conference, gets plenty of attention from Kim.

arrived at the Center late one January evening. He was friendly with one of our staff, but otherwise very cautious about his new surroundings.

The next day, we saw an extremely fearful, though not aggressive, serval. I was tasked with seeing if Carson would be willing to make new friends. I started with a few hours of protected contact outside the enclosure before sharing space inside the enclosure. He had ample space, and I was not crowding him. This was in January, so while he was in a nice warm den box, I was often dealing with cold, and sometimes wet, conditions. I began my bridge building using blankets and food treats. I spent many hours a week in an enclosure with Carson, listening to him tell me what his boundaries were. He didn't mind me being there, but everything was on his terms. On many days, it was cold. Some days it rained. This went on for three months.

Then, a change... What did Carson need? He needed time, trust, bridge building, and someone to invest in him. One afternoon after many hours, he approached me, and lifted his tail to solicit a scratch near his tail. I obliged and he lifted his tail in approval and chirped at me.

The big payoff came in June of 2013. I discovered a bump on Carson's abdomen. After some discouraging changes in the bump, he was taken to the vet and diagnosed with a

hernia. Surgery was needed.

Carson had surgery to repair the hernia and came back to the Center for recovery. He allowed us to sit with him and monitor his sutures. Throughout the entire process, Carson only had to be put under anesthesia once, to repair the hernia. He allowed a couple of us to check the bump, crate him for his vet visit, and monitor his recovery without any further anesthesia. We had built a strong bridge and he trusted us to take care of him.



Carson is a changed feline, the result of many hours invested in gaining his trust.

Today, Carson is one of our beginner servals, usually the first one with which our handler trainees meet and socialize.

We have used this method to varying degrees of success, and in many cases, we're continually working with our servals regardless of how much, or how little, they trust us in order to provide them the best care, both physical and mental.

Some final thoughts... Be patient. Get to know the individual serval. Look for the bridge building opportunities. Remember, it's about giving them the best possible life.

From Big Cat Country



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Feline Conservation Federation

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

Front Cover: Wildlife photographer Chad Cocking is also a guide at the Timbavati Private Nature Reserve bordering the Kruger National Park. He writes about the cats of the Greater Kruger in an article in this *Journal*. Although the serval might not invoke the adrenalin-rush that watching a pride of lions on the hunt offers, their rarity means they are to be treasured merely on the basis of such rarity.

Back Cover: Lions are definitely Chad Cocking's favorite feline. As a uniquely social cat, the interaction between pride members makes lions a joy to watch, and this is seldom more in evidence than when there are young cubs within the prides. Read more starting on page 21.

