



A 501(c)3 Organization

CAT TALES

The Exotic Feline Rescue Center

A National Leader in Exotic Cat Rescue and Care

November 2008

Deplorable Conditions Lead to Rescue of Five Cats in Greene County, Indiana

All of our stories start the same - we got a phone call. Only in this case, those calls started coming in about a year ago with a familiar ring: big cats are in distress. When complaints about a facility in Greene County, Indiana, kept coming in we referred callers to the USDA who responded they had been there and the situation "wasn't that bad". Then we finally got a call saying the owner in question was ready to give up the cats, could we come take them? Having limited available habitat space we agreed to take one leopard.

Upon our arrival to pick up the leopard what was described as "not so bad" was in reality the worse situation that we had encountered in over 40 years of working with big cats. The ground outside and inside the cages was littered with rotting and decomposing carcasses, bones and feces. The area was thick with flies and the smell would linger on our bodies for days. The cages were structurally unsound and the facility was lacking in a perimeter fence. The animals were all on the verge of starvation with no food and water - emaciated, dehydrated and their bodies covered with sores.

There was no question of what we had to do. We loaded the starving leopard, Majae, and returned to the EFRC. It was Monday. Tuesday was spent preparing transport cages, renting a truck and assembling our rescue crew. Wednesday we returned. Everyone was in agreement—this was the worst situation we had



Majae has responded well to a proper diet, water, antibiotics and more comfortable surroundings.

ever seen.

The tigers were quickly loaded, responding to the promise of water. The cougar was also anxious to leave. The lioness, Kiera, was the most difficult. Hostile and aggressive she would need to be sedated. She went down quickly with the first dart. Then members of our team had to crawl through a small hole cut in the side of the cage which passed as a door. Dragging her out through rotting deer carcasses we were off for our next stop, the veterinarians.

Arriving there Kiera was still sedated enough to draw blood and allow for a superficial examination. Cody, the cougar, appeared the worst with large open draining tracts underneath his jaw indicating multiple dental infections. He was started on a large dose of antibiotics that would continue for the next two weeks as we attempted to stabilize his condition enough for surgery. We moved all of the cats into holding cages in our new building allowing us to feed them multiple times a day and monitor their progress. After two weeks all of the cats had gained substantial amounts of weight, been treated for intestinal parasites and vaccinated.

At this point Cody's condition had improved enough for us to attempt to extract his rotted teeth. The jaw bone had been so weakened by the long-standing infection that it fractured in the process of removing the first canine tooth. The other rotted teeth would have to wait for the jaw bone to heal before they could be



Majae a male leopard, was dehydrated, malnourished and suffering from a variety of external cuts and scabs when we rescued him in Greene County.

Story continued on page 2...

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removed, which we successfully did six weeks later.

As the cats gained weight and recovered their health they grew anxious to leave the confines of the holding cages. Majae, a black leopard, was the first to be moved. An old cougar cage that we were going to tear down was instead rebuilt including an addition that more than tripled its size. Next was Kiera, the lioness. With minimum amount of remodeling we were able to move Kiera into Ula's old cage, a large grassy area with trees and a climbing tower. Well fed and with room to run Kiera, supposedly 14 years old, appears to be a kitten. Ula was reunited with Lester and Jabberscatt.

As we write this the tigers, Tony III and Oti, are the only ones not yet moved into a permanent enclosure. Their new home should be ready in the very near future.

This was a facility licensed by the USDA to breed these animals commercially which leaves us not really surprised if Oti turns out pregnant, as we have reason to believe she is.

We would like to reiterate that this is the worst situation the EFRC has ever encountered. It is inexcusable that a federally licensed and regulated facility should be allowed to maintain these poor conditions especially in light of all of the complaints received over an extended period of time.

10 new cats have arrived since our last edition of Cat Tales. We have a tremendous need to build new habitat space for our newest arrivals!

Thank you for thinking of us this holiday season!



This is how these cats were living in Greene County (above)

Cody, a male puma, on the day of the rescue (below)

Kiera, a female lion, is enjoying her new home at the EFRC (below)



Tony Stewart Foundation Makes a Difference for the EFRC

A conversation began over the summer between the EFRC and the Tony Stewart Foundation, which ultimately led to a proposal being submitted to the Foundation. The end result of those talks and that proposal was the Tony Stewart Foundation supporting the EFRC and our new habitat construction in 2008 with a generous grant commitment. This is in addition to a grant made earlier in the year to support the ongoing care of two tigers, Tony and Tony II.

With these new funds the EFRC has been able to construct a new habitat for Herman's group, which consists of Herman, Sumara I, Joey and Anna (in photo on right).

What the Stewart Foundation has made possible at the EFRC is greatly appreciated and the importance of their commitments

in 2008 to the EFRC cannot be understated. Through their generosity we have been able to substantially improve the quality of life for Herman's Group through their new, enriched habitat and renovate their former habitat for future use by rescued cats.

The EFRC would like to thank Tony, his parents Nelson and Pam, his sister Natalie and Joni Thompson, Executive Director of the Tony Stewart Foundation, for their commitment to the EFRC and our mission of rescuing and caring for exotic cats.

To learn more about the high-quality charitable work being done by the Tony Stewart Foundation, please visit their website, www.tonystewartfoundation.org.



Thank you Tony!



EFRC Director Joe Taft with Natalie (Tony's sister) and Pam (Tony's mother) on top of the climbing tower seen below



Thanks to the Tony Stewart Foundation Herman's Group now has a new home.



Sampson and Conan Come to the EFRC

In the wake of the August 3rd mauling that resulted in the amputation of a volunteer's leg Wesa-A-Geh-Ya Animal Park in Warrenton, Missouri, closed its doors leaving 49 animals without a home. Its operators, Elder and Sandra Smith, were charged with evidence tampering and lying to investigators when they tried to cover up the incident blaming a pit bull instead of the tiger.

Wesa-A-Geh-Ya had a long and troubling history. They closed after alleged violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act, fines, probation and surrendering their USDA license.

We agreed to take Conan and Sampson (both tigers) who were the last two remaining animals. While the cats were well fed and the small cages clean there were numerous safety issues.

This was not our first encounter with Sampson. After an illness his previous owner, Jim Hall, called us asking about placement but placed him at Wesa-A-Geh-Ya because it was closer to where he lived.

According to an article in the Chicago Tribune Hall purchased Sampson in the parking lot of a Steak-n-Shake for \$300.

Mark Niednagel, A Big Heart for the EFRC

Every year the EFRC is fortunate in that it has many friends who are always willing to go above and beyond in their support of its exotic cats. These friends come in all ages and sizes and, in this case, one's age and physical size is in no way indicative of what can be accomplished. All you need to do is meet Mark Niednagel, age 12, and you too will believe he has a passion.

If you attended last year's first annual Saving the Big Cats Charity Auction you might remember meeting Mark, as he was introduced on stage. At an age where most kids are wanting toys on their birthday, Mark asked his family and friends for gifts of cash. He then took all of his birthday money and gave half of it to the EFRC. He felt this was how he could best help the big cats he first saw when he visited the EFRC with his grandparents to do a school report. This act of generosity from such a young man was very inspiring.

Like many families, Mark and his mom, Ann, go to their local farmer's market on Saturday morning. This one in Indianapolis, The Abundant Life Farmer's Market, once again got Mark thinking about the

EFRC and fundraising.

Mark approached the market's coordinator and asked permission if he could setup a table to talk to people about the EFRC and to solicit gifts to benefit its big cats. They agreed and he came that next week with an umbrella to fend off the hot sun, determined to once again do something extraordinary for the big cats he loves so much.

Mark, with the help of his family, setup his table display and talked to the people who came to the market on that day. For four hours he talked about big cats and the EFRC to anyone who would come to his table. At the end of his day, Mark had raised just over \$75 to help support the EFRC.

Like many charitable organizations, the EFRC relies on the generosity of others to fulfill its mission. Gifts are pro-



Mark at the farmer's market on a hot day

cured in all different manners; some are big and some are small. What truly makes what Mark has done special, is that his contribution represents such hard work and such awareness at his age as to what is possible if you try, that he inspires others to do their best simply by doing what he thinks is right.

From the EFRC, its staff and Board of Directors, thank you to Mark Niednagel for helping to show that anything is possible if you are passionate and determined. Your good work on behalf of the 190 big cats of the EFRC is greatly appreciated!

Updates Since Our Last Newsletter

Medical Procedures

Veterinary care is always a priority and with 191 cats, many of them aging, someone always needs attention. Since our last newsletter we have done several procedures and surgeries that have required anesthesia and time in the clinic.

Rake: (lion): severe viral infection and had to be in the clinic for 2 weeks.

Tish (lioness): two surgeries resulting from complications of pancreatic cancer.

Cody, puma, from Greene County: Extraction of two abscessed lower canine teeth and one molar. The bone in the lower jaw was so weakened by the infection that it was fractured during the first extraction and the second extraction had to wait six weeks for the bone to heal. The second lower canine has been extracted along with another tooth.

Angle (one of the California leopards featured in winter 2003 Cat Tales): bilateral total mastectomy.

Nona (tiger): Ingrown claws (a crippling condition)

Baby (aging lioness): lower canine tooth extraction

New Arrivals

3 bobcats from Idaho

4 tigers – 2 from Greene County (Tony III and Oti) and 2 from Missouri (Sampson II and Conan)

1 black leopard from Green County (Majae)

1 lioness from Green County (Kiera)

1 puma from Green County (Cody)

1 serval (male, born October 23)

New Construction

FRONT GATE AREA:

We have built two bobcat enclosures which house three of our newer bobcats.

FIELD AREA STARTED IN 2005:

We have added 1,000 feet of perimeter fence, added a new enclosure for Herman's group thanks to the grant money provided by the Tony Stewart Foundation, and built two temporary enclosures for the Missouri tigers, Sampson and Conan. We have constructed an enclosure for Majae, the new black leopard from Greene County, including multiple climbing areas. We have graded and started setting poles in this area for two additional enclosures – one for the eight tigers on the regular tour which will include climbing towers and a concrete pool and one for another group.

Sumara and Sumira Find a New Home at White Oaks Conservation Center

In late 2007 the EFRC was called upon to rescue two male tigers from an unsafe private ownership situation in Beaver Dam, Kentucky. Our immediate intervention saved the lives of Sumara and Sumira, as they had escaped several times from their poorly constructed enclosure within the span of a week and the owner was desperate to get rid of these tigers.

Driving through an ice storm, the EFRC rescue team made its way to Kentucky and successfully rescued these tiger brothers, as chronicled in our winter 2008 edition of Cat Tales.

With their wellbeing secured for the moment, they were housed in temporary areas at the EFRC where they were vaccinated, wormed and neutered.

By happy circumstances White Oaks Conservation Center, just north of Jacksonville, Florida had an empty 21,000 square foot wooded habitat with pond and

waterfall. While they were seeking Species Survival Program breeding tigers they were willing to accept tigers from a rescue situation. To prepare for the move we had extensive medical testing done then drove them to Florida.

White Oaks is a large, well-established wildlife center that spans over 600 acres and is surrounded by 6,800 acres of forest and wetlands. Founded in 1982, White Oaks maintains a genetically diverse population of threatened species from all around the world. Sumara and Sumira will enjoy great lives at their new home. While it is uncommon for the EFRC to place felines it has accepted, this was a "win, win" for all, but most importantly, for these beautiful tigers.

Please visit our website to download the archived edition of Cat Tales, winter 2008, for the complete Sumara and Sumira rescue story.

Upcoming Special Events

December 20 and 27:

Winter Wonderland

January 3, 2009

Educational presentation at
Cool Creek Park & Nature Center
2000 E. 151st Street, Carmel, IN

1:00 pm

January 17, 2009

Saving the Big Cats Charity Auction
The Robert Irsay Pavilion

Carmel, IN

3:00 pm – 6:00 pm



Sumara and Sumira in their old home in Kentucky



Sumara and Sumira in their new habitat at White Oaks

Saving the Big Cats Charity Auction

Please join with other friends of the EFRC on Saturday, January 17, 2009 at the Robert Irsay Pavilion in Carmel, Indiana, for our second annual Saving the Big Cats Charity Auction. Last year over 300 big cat enthusiasts came out for a great day that raised nearly \$25,000 for the EFRC. We hope to aim higher this year, with a goal of \$30,000.

This year's event will feature another "feline ambassador", as last year Max (tiger) came out for the inaugural event. We will

have music from Steve Newby and Conversation Pieces and offer complimentary food and drinks as a part of the day's festivities. Featuring several rounds of silent auctions, culminating with a live auction of premium items, you won't want to miss this fun, educational and philanthropic day!

Tickets are \$25 at the door (if available) and \$20 in advance on our website. Please contact Velda Boenitz, event chair, with any questions, savingthebigcats@earthlink.net or (317) 846-5628.

We look forward to seeing you on January 17, 2009!

A Special Season at the EFRC

Like many charities and people around the United States, the EFRC is not immune to this cycle of economic contraction that is currently impacting all of us. It is imperative for the EFRC to continue offering its high-level of service to cats in need and that would not be possible without your continued philanthropic support.

The EFRC has benefitted from the generosity of so many of its friends through the years. With the holiday season quickly approaching, it is our single wish that you think of making the best possible gift before the end of December. Our cats have holiday stockings too, and it would be great to fill them with hope and prosperity from our friends who make so much of what we do a

reality. Whether it's providing meat, fuel for our vehicles, staff wages or habitat improvements, our daily activity and the lives of our cats are impacted by your charitable decisions.

The easiest way to support the EFRC in this hectic holiday season is to visit our website and click "Make a Gift". You can also use the enclosed envelope at your convenience. All gifts made to the EFRC are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Also, as a part of the recently passed economic bailout legislation, individuals with IRAs in 2008 and 2009 can make direct distribution gifts to the EFRC. These distributions are not taxed as income

and count toward satisfying your required minimum distribution. If you are interested in this idea and have any questions, please contact EFRC Board of Directors member Jason Petrovich (jpetrovich@depauw.edu).

As you consider your philanthropic choices this holiday season, our bet is you are making some tough decisions this year. We hope you consider the EFRC to be good stewards of your resources and worthy of your continued support. Remember, our cats depend on our staff to take care of them and we depend on you to make all of what we do possible. One doesn't work without the other.

Here's to a great 2009!

www.exoticfeline rescuecenter.org/gift



Stay the night at the EFRC! Take advantage of this unique opportunity to spend the evening among lions, tigers and seven other exotic cat species!

The room includes touring the center both days of your stay and accompanying the keepers to restricted areas not open to the general public. The room has a private entrance, bathroom with shower and tub, queen size bed, microwave, refrigerator, satellite television and a coffee pot with coffee and tea provided.

The cost of this special adventure is \$150 per evening and advance reservations are required. Please check our website in January and February for special "winter rates".

Our overnight experience also makes a wonderful holiday gift for the big-cat lover in your family!



In October the Future Farmers of America annual conference came to Indianapolis. This is the largest annual conference hosted by the city every year. Thanks to the FFA, several large tour groups of FFA members ventured to the EFRC for special tours. We enjoyed hosting this fun and energetic group and look forward to seeing them in future years!

Visit our online gift shop
to get in the
Holiday spirit!

Annual Membership Levels

Pride Membership - \$10,000

Name Bearing Plaque, 2 unlimited passes
T-shirt or hat

Lion Membership - \$5,000

2 unlimited passes, 1 overnight, T-shirt or hat

White Tiger Membership - \$2,500

12 passes, T-shirt or hat

Tiger Membership - \$1,000

10 passes, T-shirt or hat

Leopard Membership - \$500

8 passes, T-shirt or hat

Cougar Membership - \$250

6 passes, T-shirt or Hat

Lynx Membership - \$150

4 passes, T-shirt or Hat

Serval Membership - \$50

2 passes

Bobcat Membership - \$25

1 pass

EFRC 2008-09 Gift and Merchandise Form

Thank you for your support of the Exotic Feline Rescue Center. Your commitment to the ongoing care of our cats will help to provide them with the best possible life.

The EFRC is a 501c(3) organization and all gifts are tax deductible to the full extent of the law and annual limitations. Please consult with your tax advisor.

If you are supporting the EFRC with a membership please specify the level:

_____ Membership.

If you are adopting or sponsoring a cat please note the species or the specific name of the cat you prefer: cat name: _____ ; species: _____.

My gift to the EFRC is: \$ _____

Adopt a Cat - \$1,500

8 x 10 color photo of your cat,
certificate of adoption, 10 passes,
newsletter

Sponsor a Cat - \$50

5 x 7 photo of your cat, certificate
of sponsorship, 1 pass, newsletter

**WE ACCEPT VISA AND MASTERCARD FOR ONLINE
ORDERS AND ANNUAL GIFTS!
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Available Merchandise

SHORT SLEEVE T-SHIRT **SIZE** _____ (from child's small to XXXL) _____ **@ \$22.00** _____

Cougar _____ (gray _____ cobblestone____) Tiger Eyes (forest green) _____

Lion _____ (brown _____ black____) Spotted Leopard (black) _____ White Tiger (lt. blue) _____

LONG SLEEVE T-SHIRT \$27.00 SWEATSHIRTS \$33.00—Phone or email to check on availability of long sleeve T's and sweatshirts

Please check our website for a complete list of merchandise, including magnets and key chains featuring our cats!

HATS _____ **@ \$17.00** _____

Lion (green) _____ Cougar (black) _____ Tiger (tan & black) _____

2009 CALENDAR _____ **@ \$17.00** _____

Car Magnets: _____ Orange tail with tiger _____ Paw print _____ Ribbon with several cats _____ **@ \$6.00** _____

IRON ON CIRCLE PATCH (lion) _____ **@ \$4.00** _____

BOOK MARK _____ **@ \$3.00** _____

BOOK "Saving the Big Cats" The Exotic Feline Rescue Center _____ **@ \$43.00** _____

Total gift and merchandise enclosed: \$ _____

Name: _____ email: _____

Address and Phone: _____

_____ phone: _____

The Exotic Feline Rescue Center
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