



EFBC/Feline Conservation Center

<http://www.cathouse-fcc.org>

DEDICATED TO THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED FELINES SPRING 2003

CAT NEWS: We are home to a 15th species of cat! We now have 3 Pallas's cats, with more on the way. Pallas's cats are also known as manul, from their scientific name *Otocolobus manul*. They were first described in 1776 by German explorer and naturalist Peter Simon Pallas. The manul lives in central Asia in hilly areas and steppes with rocky outcrops, as well as semi desert areas. Manul is a Mongolian name; in Russia they are called rock wildcats and steppe cats, which is also their German name. Their preferred habitat has little rainfall, low humidity, and a wide temperature range; it can reach -50 degrees Celsius in the winter. Manuls spend the day in caves, crevices, or burrows, beginning to hunt in late afternoon. They are not fast runners, as they have short, stocky legs. Instead they creep up onto their prey, which consists of small mammals such as pikas, gerbils, and voles, as well as ground birds. Manuls are about the size of a domestic cat, weighing 6 to 11 pounds. They have small ears which are set low on the sides of their heads, which along with a flat forehead allows them to peek over rocks without exposing themselves. They have long, thick fur in a silvery-buff color. The tail is long, thick and bushy, with a black tip and several narrow black rings. Manuls use dens year-round to protect themselves from summer heat and winter cold. In the wild they are a solitary animal. The breeding season is especially short; the female is in heat only 1 to 2 days in February. Kittens are generally born in late April. Two to four kittens are common but up to 8 have been observed in a single litter. As with Canadian lynx, they are very dependent on the abundance of prey; the litter size varies with the availability of prey. The manul is considered threatened in the wild, as they are still hunted for their thick, beautiful fur. The average minimum trade in their skins is estimated

at 2000 annually. We are currently home to 3 manuls: Boris (left) and Ginger (below), who arrived from the San Diego Zoo, and Nikolai, who came from Rotterdam Zoo in Holland. Boris and Ginger have already been breeding (keeping our president up at night with their noise), while Nikolai's mate is on her way from Moscow. None are currently on exhibit during the day, but during Twilight Tours you will be able to try to get a look at these unique little cats.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Our first Twilight Tour of the year is fast approaching - April 26th is the date, a Saturday evening as usual. Doors will open at 5 PM for prepaid guests, or 5:30 if you are paying at the gate. The entrance fee is still \$15, 18 and older only allowed! You can prepay by sending a check to us at HCR 1 Box 84, Rosamond CA 93560, or you can call us at 661.256.3793 with your credit card information during our gift shop hours: 10 AM- 4 PM Thursday through Tuesday. If you've never been to one, Twilight Tours are the best time to visit the cats. They are more active in the evening, we give special enrichments like live goldfish for the fishing cats, there is a raffle, barbecue, and bake sale, and most importantly, you can go into the back areas not open during the day. As a membership incentive we will be offering guests a \$5 discount on any new membership purchased that evening, so bring your friends and family out!

50/50 RAFFLE

Included in this newsletter is a 50/50 raffle ticket. We will be selling these through the summer twilight tour on June 21, when we will draw the

winner. They will receive 50% of the ticket sales-up to \$2000 in previous years! If you would like more tickets for yourself or to sell just give us a call or email Joe at cathouse@qnet.com. Here's your chance to help out your favorite felines!

DONATIONS:

Many thanks to all who help keep our facility running, whether that's through memberships, gift shop purchases, or material donations.

Jeff Reichmann continues to donate his services as our safety consultant. Thanks Jeff!

Conrad Hubert of North Hollywood, CA. donated a 1985 GMC Safari Van. Thanks Conrad!

Larry Purcell of Sav-On Fence in Lancaster, CA. donated more cage materials. Thanks again Larry!

Excelline Foods Inc., Chatsworth, CA. sent \$100 towards our new P.R. Package. Thanks Excelline!

Dave and Judy Hunsinger of California City, CA. donated several computer systems! Thanks Dave & Judy!

We received \$3000 from the estate of Anna Maria Hammerli in memory of Dr. Fred Hammerli and Anna Maria Hammerli.

The Jewish Community Endowment Fund in San Francisco sent us \$100. Thank you!

Pam Rose, Terry Cook, and Nancy Vandermey brought more auction and raffle items, always appreciated!

Jay Geldmacher, president of Astec Power in Carlsbad, CA. presented us with an unrestricted \$5,000 donation - we are very grateful!

Mike McGough, Equipment Superintendent of Granite Construction in Palmdale, CA. donated a hose, reel, and nozzle assembly for our fuel truck. Thanks Mike and Granite Construction!

Jerry Burton, of Jaqua & Sons in Lancaster, CA. donated a large quantity of concrete sealer for project Tiger. Thanks Jerry and Jaqua!

Al at A.J Engraving, Camarillo, CA. continues to supply and engrave our species cage plaques. Thanks Al!

VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER

The Volunteer of the Quarter is Leslie Simmons. On most Sundays you can find Leslie out at the cathouse, chatting with visitors and assisting in the general chores. Leslie is one of a handful of volunteers who make the trek to the compound from the Los Angeles area. Since December 1990, Leslie has volunteered at the cathouse, taking only a brief hiatus from 1995-1997 to live in New York where she earned a bachelor's degree in Journalism. But when she came home for visits, she always made sure to spend at least one day working at the compound. Over the years, Leslie has watched the facility grow, in size and in the diverse cat population it now contains. She considers herself lucky to have had the opportunity to know what it's like to walk a baby tiger or bottle feed an Amur leopard cub. Though she has a love for all the cats who live in the compound, Leslie has a special affinity for the wilder cats, including Twilight the jaguar and Kim Lee the North Chinese leopard. Her favorite type of cats are fishing cats, because of their unique traits which include their partially webbed toes and coarse, double-layered fur. When she's not at the cathouse, Leslie works as a staff writer for the Los Angeles Daily Journal, where she covers the Los Angeles Superior Court. She also enjoys surfing and traveling.

CAT NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD:

19 Feb 03, Cherokee Tribune, GA.

A local hunter, George Koebel who lives in Lake Arrowhead, GA. and is president of Roy Tec Industries in Woodstock Georgia., was hailed as a hero for saving a man from an attacking leopard in Zimbabwe. But what the real story reveals is that Koebel was on a leopard hunting expedition and let his inexperienced wife shoot and only wound the leopard the night before. They left it to spend the night in pain before finding it the next day. The guide was attacked while he and Koebel were trying to find the cat the next morning. Why is this moron considered a hero?



Leslie Simmons with Teshi, Serval

Feb. 17, 2003, Houston Chronicle

Experts fear only 50 to 100 of the reclusive ocelot remain on a few ranches and refuges in deep South Texas. When the ocelot's young venture from home in an attempt to establish their own territory, they are frequently killed by older cats defending their turf. They have also been eaten by alligators or died in fights with rattlesnakes. But the biggest killer is man and his automobile, a growing threat to an endangered wildcat competing for space in a border area where 95 percent of the native habitat has been cleared for farms and cities. The cat is found in parts of its original range from Texas to South America. Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge is home to an estimated 30 to 35 ocelots, a significant portion of what remains of a once sizable population of predators that prowled from Arizona, across Texas, Louisiana and up into Arkansas. The Texas population is the last remaining in the United States. Because the few remaining ocelots are concentrated in one area, wildlife experts fear a catastrophic event — a raging brush fire, powerful hurricane or fast-moving feline disease — could effectively wipe them out. The ocelot's richly dappled fur coat is well adapted to concealment in dense thickets, where only shafts of sunlight can penetrate. Wildlife officials are attempting to expand the ocelot's range by

WISH LIST

Wireless P.A. System

Landscape Materials- trees and bushes for Project Tiger and other places

X-ray Processor

Golf Carts

VHS/DVD Recorder combination

Construction equipment and supplies (8x8x16 concrete block, re-bar - backhoe, dozer, loader)

constructing a safe corridor from the Laguna Atascosa refuge to newer refuges to the south and along the Rio Grande. It is part of an ambitious — and expensive — federal strategy to buy or lease land to create a wildlife corridor along the banks of the Rio Grande and link remaining pockets of native habitat. However, the wildcats must still cross a trio of increasingly busy coastal highways to reach these new areas. And restoration of native brush on many of the newly purchased tracks can be a long process.

Indian Express, 16 Feb:

When villagers of Kutiyana in Porbandar district of Gujarat found their cattle disappearing this January, they had no idea what had happened to them. That was until later someone chanced upon two young lions dragging away a cow. Although the lions did not attack any humans, the Forest Department is concerned over the issue. The two sub-adult males had strayed more than 150 km from their home, the Gir National Park and Sanctuary, the protected home of the last surviving Asiatic Lion. The migration of these two lions is not an isolated incident. Forest officials say in the last few years traffic has increased on the five state highways that crisscross through Gir, disturbing the lions as well as its prey. Only three of the five roads are closed for traffic from 7 p.m. to 6 a.m. so that lions are not disturbed while hunting at night. The other roads remain open. There are 60 temples in the park which are

visited by many people every year who litter the forest road with plastic bags, soft drink cans and sometimes broken glass. On last count, there was a population of nearly 6,000 people and 20,000 head of livestock living in Gir sanctuary. With prides moving away, satellite populations have grown on the periphery of Gir sanctuary. In fact, of the total lion population of 327, only 267 live in the sanctuary. The remaining 60 have found their home outside the sanctuary. The forest department is now seriously considering increasing the area of the sanctuary - a difficult proposition considering that peripheral land is under cultivation and is owned by prosperous farmers who won't give up land easily.

Arizona Daily Star, 15 February

At least one mountain lion still prowls the hills of the Saguaro National Park just west of downtown Tucson. However, the park is only large enough to support about 5 of the big cats, not a large enough population to sustain itself genetically. Without wildlife corridors established to connect to 3 nearby mountain ranges, scientists fear the cats will not survive there long. The Tucson Mountains are surrounded by highways, railroad tracks, subdivisions, and an aqueduct.

South Dakota, 14 Feb 03

South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks Department officials introduced a bill at the South Dakota Legislature that would make mountain lions big game to be hunted. A sighting occurred in the northeastern portion of the state. Currently the animals are listed as threatened species. G,F,& P research indicates the threat might actually come from the lions themselves. "Currently management plan research indicates we should be aggressively managing this species," G,F,&P Secretary John Cooper told members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee during the bill's hearing there. Mountain lions are indigenous to South Dakota but their population was in decline until the late 1970s. Studies conducted by South Dakota State University indicate lion numbers have been going strong since then. Cooper estimated there were 150 in South Dakota. Mark Hollenbeck, a lobbyist for South Dakota's stock growers encouraged the bill's passage. "All wildlife basically needs to be

managed since humans showed up here," he said. His family, who ranch in the western half of the state, lost colts to lions in the 70s. "I don't think we need to wait until we have a human death before we manage the lions," he said. "There is getting to be more and more contact with large cats." Opponents of the bill think hunting the lions could make the situation worse. Veterinarian Sharon Seneczko lives in prime mountain lion territory and participated in a mountain lion research project. She said hunting could kill off old males that currently keep the young male population under control. Older lions kill about two-thirds of young males. She said there are other ways to manage the population by relocating them to other areas. Increased tourist traffic in the Black Hills has increased sightings, but people may be seeing the same lion over and over, she said. "I think the killing of mountain lions should only occur as a last resort on a case-by-case basis," she said. A public opinion poll taken by SDSU indicated that 66 percent of people surveyed were "pro-lion." In the Black Hills that percentage was greater. "There are a lot of people that love these big cats," Don Morgan of Pringle said. He has worked with the G,F,& P studying lion behavior. He's treed and collared lions and says there are five in existence that still have the collars. A lion treed at Mt. Coolidge showed up at the Reptile Gardens. A lion near Pringle terrorized elk, but kept the population under control. A male lion's territory is normally 312 square miles. Territory for one female is usually 70 square miles, but that territory overlaps. Cooper estimated one group or another would sue the state if the bill passed. He said he's not sure how the mountain lion season would work. Some suggested a similar system to that used by Yellowstone National Park when buffalo wander outside its boundaries. Hunters put their names on a list and get a chance to hunt the animal. At least one lawmaker on the committee thought the big game designation was justified. "I do think we have a problem lurking here," Lintz said.

February 13, 2003 Internet

The sudden death of Fermin, the world's only male Iberian lynx in captivity, has dealt another blow to the survival prospects of the critically endangered cat. Fermin was one of only five

Iberian lynxes in captivity. His premature death was from Tuberculosis at age two at the El Acebuche captive breeding center in Doñana National Park in Spain. Fermin was moved to Doñana on January 21 from another facility in Cordoba to join Esperanza, the only captive female lynx in breeding condition. The other three captive females are either too old or too young to breed. With as few as 150 Iberian lynxes clinging to survival in the wild, urgent captive breeding efforts are required to help save the species from imminent extinction. Fermin was captured in Sierra Morena in July 2002 after a camera trap showed he was suffering from facial and leg injuries which did not appear to improve. After six months at the Los Villares wildlife center in Cordoba, he was transferred to El Acebuche on January 21. However, following veterinary checks which highlighted serious lung deficiencies and sight problems, he was kept separate from the other lynxes on his arrival at Doñana. It is not yet known whether Fermin was already suffering from Tuberculosis at the time of his capture. The breeding center was opened at El Acebuche in 1992, when the Iberian lynx population was thought to exceed 1,000 animals. Since then numbers have declined dramatically and no lynxes have been born in captivity.

NEW YORK (Feb. 6)

A remote camera clicked the first known photograph of a wild Siberian or Amur tiger in northern China last week, providing strong evidence that tigers are crossing from the Russian Far East to repopulate previous tiger strongholds. The tiger was photographed in Jilin Province's Hunchun Nature Reserve, established in 2001. Staff members at the reserve set up the camera-trap after a local farmer reported that a predator killed a mule. The next day, they retrieved the film and discovered the image of an adult tiger feeding on the carcass. The reserve, on the western side of the border between Russia and China, provides a corridor of habitat so tigers can disperse from Russia and repopulate areas of China where they once lived. Poaching of tigers for traditional Chinese medicine, along with over-hunting of their prey species, wiped out populations in China.

03 February 2003 NAIROBI:

An infertile lioness with a strong maternal instinct has tried to adopt a baby antelope, only to watch it die like six others she has snatched. The lioness grabbed the new-born impala calf from its mother in Kenya's Samburu national reserve yesterday, but instead of eating it, began licking its coat like one of her own. "We thought it was just a normal kill, but when it got hold of the impala we realized it wasn't going to eat it up, we realized it was an adoption again," said George Oluoch, manager of Larsen's Camp, a tourist site in the reserve. He said the baby impala was found dead today "apparently having died from a combination of stress, exhaustion and lack of its mother's milk." The lioness, named Kamuniak or "blessed one" by wardens, is a loner who appears to snatch antelopes because she cannot have young of her own. Each attempt has been short-lived, despite her efforts to nurture the calves, in some cases even allowing their natural mothers to feed them. One of Kamuniak's antelopes was eaten by a male lion, another died, while others have managed to escape back to their natural mothers or were taken away by game wardens.

26 Jan 2003 KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)

Wildlife officials in Malaysia seized five skeletons of endangered tigers and a pair of elephant tusks that smugglers allegedly planned to ship to mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan for use in making traditional medicine. A wildlife department team, acting on a tip, seized the contraband, worth an estimated \$26,000, during a raid on a house in Johor Bahru, a city 300 miles south of Kuala Lumpur. Two of the tigers were believed to have been killed in the Malaysian jungle, while the rest were from neighboring Indonesia. A 58-year-old man was arrested during the raid Saturday on suspicion of trying to illegally export the products. Wildlife official Misliah Mohamad Basir told local media that the tigers appeared to have been killed recently. Tigers are listed as a protected and endangered species in Malaysia, where there are an estimated 500 of the animals remaining in the wild, compared to about 3,000 a half-century ago.

Excerpt from Dec 02 Tigris Foundation report on Amur leopard status:

After a try-out period Wildlife Conservation Society and Russian scientists have recently started to monitor the Amur leopard population with the help of camera-traps. Tigris Foundation is the main sponsor of this monitoring work. The first 3 weeks of the project were very successful and resulted in 9 sets of leopard pictures (both sides of the animals are photographed). One of the leopards was still wearing a radio-collar that he received eight years ago. The scientists who put the radio-collar on this leopard estimated his age at that time at 3-5 years. This means that is leopard is at least 11 years old! That is as old as Methuselah for a leopard in the wild. It indicates that clever and experienced leopards are not killed easily by poachers and that the quality of the genetic material of the in-bred population may not be that bad after all. Approximately 5,100 snares have been removed from the recently established Hunchun reserve in the Jilin Province of China. The reserve is patrolled by 15 rangers who take their job very seriously. Dale Miquelle of WCS visited the reserve in early December and found two tracks of different leopards and a single tiger track. One leopard track was approximately 10 kilometers from the border and the other leopard track was located even further away from Russia. This indicates that Amur leopards not only cross the border occasionally, some leopards have probably settled down in China permanently!