



EFBC/Feline Conservation Center

<http://www.wildcatzoo.org>

DEDICATED TO THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED FELINES FALL 2004

CATS UPDATE:

Amur leopards Aijka and Gigant became parents for the 4th time on May 5th. We named the male cub Sevastian. Aijka is doing a great job as usual raising her cub, and they love to play together. He is getting very adventurous and will approach the keepers, which upsets Mom! He loves to play in a child's wading pool of water. They are located in an off-exhibit area of the compound. We will leave them together as long as Mom puts up with him jumping on her. We also received Aijka and Gigant's granddaughter, Sakhar, on 22 June from the Philadelphia Zoo. She is only 1.5 years old and she is in the exhibit area next to our male Amur leopard Yoqui. Her name means "sugar" in Russian. We had another birth here on July 1st; fishing cats Tamara and Tamil gave birth to a male we named Nemo. He is being hand-raised as Tamara ignores her kittens. Her older son Bullet is now 1 year old and doing well.

SPECIAL EVENTS:

Our 15th annual Fabulous Feline Follies was held on August 21. We had great weather, and the 150+ guests all enjoyed the evening. We were entertained by Dave and Anita of "Zoo to You," who were also our Felitarians this year. "Zoo to You" is located in Paso Robles and was formed as a non-profit organization to educate students of all ages about wildlife and the environment. They maintain a select group of animal ambassadors that travel with them, which enables the audience to meet them first hand. They brought many animals with them which thrilled the guests. Also Cheryl Rendes brought her young Canadian lynx Sasquatch, and our ocelot Rico went for a walk as well. We netted over \$20,000!! We would like to

especially thank our sponsors, which make this event possible. Plan ahead to attend next year!

PLATINUM - Donations of \$1,000.00

George & Joan Paulikas, CA

Scott & Nicole Pearson, CA

Nancy Vandermeij, CA

Steven M. Crutchfield, VA

Susan Lozier & Ian MacLeod, NE

GOLD - Donations of \$500.00

Larry Purcell, Sav-On Fence, Lancaster, CA.

AAZK-EFBC Chapter

SILVER- Donations of \$250.00

In Memory of Steven J. Rendes, Former Director

BRONZE- Donations of \$150.00

In Memory of our dad, Dr. Rudolfs Mauce, D.V.M.

Rudolfs Mauce, D.V.M.

Our final special event of the year will be the last Twilight Tour, held September 18th. In our next newsletter we will have the dates of next year's special events.

Another special event was a first ever for the compound. The Antelope Valley Harley Riders - Ladies of Harley held a charity poker run on

August 14th with the proceeds of \$1681 going to us. Organizer Starr Bayard was surprised by the great turnout and promises to do it again next year! Two volunteers rode their bikes on the run, which included a stop at the compound.

The first weekend in August Joe Maynard gave a presentation to the Feline Conservation Federation at their annual convention in Las Vegas. The FCF is a group for private owners of exotic felines dedicated to maintaining high standards of education and animal care in the private sector. They also help sponsor a reserve in Ecuador where ocelots and other wild felines are protected. In our next newsletter there will be a story about a trip to the Ecuador reserve.

50/50 Raffle cash prize was \$1430 and the winner was Sue Meyer from Azusa, CA.

Follies Raffle winners were;

\$1,000 1st prize went to Deanna Sanchez, Lancaster, CA.- 2nd prize, Gerald & Shirley Sayles - 3rd prize, Ken Bloesch - 4th prize, Kim Graehl. Congratulations to all.

DONATIONS:

Anthropomorphic Arts and Education, Inc., Milpitas, CA. held their annual convention earlier this year and raised \$5000 for us. Thanks to all conference goers.

INTERN:

Below is Viviane Raymundo, our latest intern. She is from Ribeirao Preto, Brazil and a graduate veterinary student at Centro Universitario Barao de Maua. Vivian is here from August through November and is invaluable in assisting our full-time keepers and vets in their work. She has also spent time with our vet Dr. Scott Weldy in Lake Forest. Her favorite cats are the margay and Roby the black leopard.

Amur Leopard Conservation Update

August 2004

By Michiel Hotte (mhotte@inter.nl.net)

For more information: www.tigrisfoundation.nl

During the 2003/2004 winter season the Wildlife Conservation Society and the Institute for Sustainable Use of Natural Resources carried out a second camera-trapping survey in the Amur leopard range in Southwest Primorye in the Russian Far East. Although the area covered this time was smaller than during the previous survey, the results were very encouraging; a total of 13 different individual leopards appeared on the photographs, whereas only 10 different individuals were identified in the same area the previous year. Eight of the leopards photographed last year were "recaptured" this year. Among them was "Leo"; a male leopard who was radio-collared in 1995 and is estimated to be at least 12 years old now! The 2003 camera-trapping resulted in a population estimate of 30 leopards for the entire range in SW Primorye. This year's results indicate that leopard numbers may have increased within the study area, but it is also possible that the difference is simply associated with sampling variability (e.g. it may be related to a change in travel patterns associated with snow depth). The previous two snow track counts resulted in population estimates of 22-28 leopards (in 2000) and 28-30 (in 2003). These results also indicate that numbers may be rising, but again additional data are needed before we can draw firm conclusions. Perhaps the most important result is evidence that recruitment and "turnover" is occurring within the population, whereas previously it was feared that reproduction may have been extremely rare.

Poaching of leopards continues to be a very serious problem. In 2002 and 2003 a total of six Amur leopard skins were confiscated by various law enforcement agencies in this part of Russia. In January 2004 two dead leopards were found in the forests; one in the wildlife refuge Barsovy and one in a hunting lease. In the first case damaged bones found during autopsy indicated that the leopard had probably died from bullet wounds. In the second case there was no doubt that the immature female leopard had been shot. Two Inspection Tiger inspectors found it after they had received a tip from a hunter that a leopard was wounded by a gunshot in a hunting lease. Tracks near the dead leopard showed it had not died quickly. The poachers of the two leopards were not caught in spite of a reward Tigris Foundation offered for information leading

to their arrest. In the 1970s Russia erected a fence along the Chinese border in SW Primorye. The fence is over 200 km long and was not built on the border itself, but at varying distances (in places up to 12 km) from the border inside Russian territory. Officially only border guards may enter the border zone where no hunting is allowed. However, in practice the officers in charge invite friends and influential people to hunt illegally in the zone. In the night of 23 May 2004 a group of at least 3 poachers went out on a hunting trip. Investigations by the Inspection Tiger team led by Andrei Yurchenko suggest that the group hunted at night from a tractor using torches. Animals caught in the light of the torch are blinded and stop moving, allowing the poacher a relatively easy shot. The poacher can usually only see the animal's eye reflection and often doesn't know what animal he is aiming at. In this case a hunter happened to shoot at a full-grown, male tiger. The wounded tiger charged and inflicted mortal injuries to one of the hunters before his companions managed to kill it. The wounded poacher was brought to a nearby hospital and later transported to Vladivostok where he succumbed to his 38 wounds. Andrei Yurchenko and his anti-poaching staff wanted to investigate the case behind the border fence after receiving an anonymous tip. However, the commander refused access. Fortunately, Andrei found tracks of a tractor leading from the border fence to a spot outside the border zone where the tiger was buried. The case shows that corruption is still a considerable problem in this part of Russia.

On March 20th 2004 the Inspection Tiger anti-poaching team purchased a German shepherd dog. Nadezjda ("Hope"), aged three, is the first dog to assist in anti-poaching efforts in the Amur tiger and leopard range. Nadezjda has worked with the police force. She was initially trained to track down people, but later made a "career change" and searched for narcotics. Nadezjda's new master has trained dogs and worked for years as a border guard. His experience will be a tremendous asset in our fight against Chinese and Russian poachers in and around the border zone. We expected it would take 6 months to prepare Nadezjda for anti-poaching work, but she turned out to be a very smart dog. Within a month she was ready and joined the anti-poaching team on their patrols in the forest. On April 28th she "caught" her first

two poachers! The arrest of the poachers was an example of excellent anti-poaching skills and teamwork. One inspector was patrolling in the wildlife reserve Barsovy when he heard a shot. He contacted two other inspectors of whom one was with Nadezjda in the leopard reserve Kedrovaja Pad. When they arrived at the location, they started to search the area. After ten minutes Nadezjda caught a scent and she directed the inspectors to the fresh remains of a roe deer that had been killed and skinned by a poacher. Near the remains Nadezjda picked up a scent trail that she and the inspectors started to follow. After 2 kilometres they caught up with what turned out to be a group of 5 poachers.... The poachers fired into the air and ran off. One of the inspectors fired a warning shot and two of the five poachers decided to break off their escape attempt. They confronted the inspectors, who managed to disarm them after a short struggle. The two poachers have paid a fine of \$300 for killing a roe deer in a protected area.

Pallas's Cat Research

Our feature cat at this year's Follies was the Pallas's Cat. Some first time ever in-situ research is being performed in Mongolia, started by American veterinarian Meredith Brown and Mongolian wildlife biologist Bariushaa Munkhtsog in 2000. They have VHF-radio collared 8 Pallas' cats and are supporting a team of Mongolian herdsman and field biology students to describe home ranges and behavior patterns. Preliminary telemetry and behavior research includes determining the general home ranges of the collared cats and observing mating, inter and intraspecies relations, and hunting/ feeding behaviors. Approximate home ranges of 2000 sq km have been determined, with males traveling large distances (up to 20 km) in one day. The females spend up to 3 months in the spring/ summer in one location in underground holes as they raise their kittens. While Pallas' cats are often found close by gers (the traditional Mongolian nomadic house), they often will move several kilometers away when a new ger is erected. Herdsman have found five dead Pallas' cats without explanation of cause of death. Rodenticide application and/or disease are suspected to be related.