



EFBC/Feline Conservation Center

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

DEDICATED TO THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF ENDANGERED FELINES SUMMER 2003

New T-shirts, other products!

This beautiful original artwork, based on photos of 15 of our cats, was donated to us by artist Barbara Keith. We have T-shirts with this new design in many colors available in our gift shop. For our remote members, visit our website www.cathouse-fcc.org and go to our new link, CafePress.com shop - you can purchase clothes, lunch boxes, posters, stickers, cards, tiles, tote bags, and more! Of course, part of your purchase is donated back here. These make great gifts! Remember us when shopping online, we also are affiliated with Amazon.com and igit.com. You can find links to all of these sites from our homepage.

CAT UPDATE:

As many recent visitors have noticed, we are the temporary home of an impressive looking male lion named Paco. We are trading Paco to a zoo in Cambodia in exchange for 2 fishing cats. These fishing cats are F1, meaning they are first generation offspring of wild born cats. These will be important new bloodlines to add to the breeding population of fishing cats in the United States. We are also importing 3 more F1 fishing cats from Singapore, in exchange for a jaguar born to our female, Calamity, at the Henry Doorly Zoo in Nebraska. Some of these fishing cats will go to other zoos who have agreed to help us with some of the shipping costs.

On the morning of May 18th we were surprised to find Tanya, Amur leopard, with a cub. She had been with her mate Freddi for less than one day. They had fought more than bred so we separated them and thought no more about it. The cub, a female, is doing well. Below, 2 weeks old.

We are also home to 3 more Pallas's Cats (a.k.a. manul), as profiled in our last issue. These 3 arrived May 7 from the Rotterdam Zoo. Two are one year old siblings (brother and sister), while the third is an older female. We will be finding them suitable mates over the next year. Manuls only breed early in the year. Our first two cats Ginger and Boris did produce their first litter in late April but none of them survived. As many captive Pallas' cats test positive for toxoplasmosis, and this exposure is devastating to the kittens, we will be participating in studies in the coming years to control the effects of the parasite in this species.

From: Cornell Veterinary Medicine Feline Health Center website

Toxoplasmosis is an infection caused by a single-celled parasite named *Toxoplasma gondii*. It is found throughout the world. More than 60 million people in the United States probably carry the toxoplasma parasite, but very few have symptoms because the immune system usually keeps the parasite from causing illness. It is estimated 30-50% of people worldwide have been infected. Contact with oocyst-contaminated soil is probably the major means by which many different species - rodents, ground-feeding birds, sheep, goats, pigs, and cattle, as well as humans living in developing countries - are exposed to *Toxoplasma*. In the industrialized nations most transmission to humans is probably due to eating undercooked infected meat, particularly lamb and pork (in many areas of the world, approximately 10 percent of lamb and 25 percent of pork products contain *Toxoplasma* cysts). The organism may also on occasion be present in some unpasteurized dairy products.

Congenital infection is of greatest concern in humans. About one-third to one-half of human

infants born to mothers who have acquired Toxoplasma during that pregnancy are infected. The vast majority of women infected during pregnancy have no symptoms of the infection themselves. It has been estimated that Toxoplasma is responsible for over three thousand human congenital infections in the United States each year, most of which are symptomless. In immuno compromised persons - those undergoing immuno suppressive therapy (e.g., for cancer or organ transplantation) or those with an immuno suppressive disease such as AIDS - relapses of the disease are common, and the mortality rate is high.

If a woman is thinking of becoming pregnant, some precautions should be taken to minimize the chance of becoming infected:

- Exclude rare or undercooked meat from the diet.
- Wear rubber gloves if working with garden soil.
- Make a habit of thoroughly washing hands with soap and water after contact with soil, cats, or uncooked meat or vegetables.
- Protect cats from infection by keeping them indoors. If your cats are allowed to go outdoors, a pregnant woman should not handle them or touch their litter box.

Special Events

Our first Twilight Tour of the season was a huge success, raising over \$9400! Come and join us for the Summer or Fall event, or the Feline Follies in August. At the summer Twilight Tour June 21 we will draw the winner of our 50/50 raffle so get those tickets in soon to see if you win (need not be present to win). Adoptive parents (age 18 plus) are once again invited as our guests to the Summer tour. Call Sandy at 661.256.3793 to have your name added to the list. Remember, our Follies sold out last year so make plans now to attend this great event. The silent auction will have many beautiful items again this year!

In other news, a veterinary team from the National Zoo arrives the end of June to perform artificial insemination on our fishing cats. More on that next issue.

Cat News from Around the World

Current Biology, Vol. 13, March 4, 2003 - A study by Eduardo Eizirik, National Cancer Institute, based in part on genetic samples from our own jaguars, has discovered a startling fact about melanism in several wild cat species. It has long

been observed that melanism (very dark brown fur with black spots) in leopards is a recessive gene; two black parents will only have black cubs, but two spotted parents can have a black cub if they both carry the recessive gene. However, this new study has shown that in jaguars and jaguarondi, the darker coloration is the dominant gene. They also found that melanism evolved separately at least 4 different times in different cat species, as different genes are involved for each species. A photo of our jaguars Doc and Cisco made the cover of Current Biology, and the results were widely reported in other science venues such as Science News magazine.

Various sources, late April 2003

As many as 30 tigers and other big cats were found dead, along with 58 cubs in a freezer, at a home connected to the non-profit animal sanctuary Tiger Rescue of Riverside, CA.. John Weihart, who runs Tiger Rescue and had previously been accused of improperly caring for tigers, was arrested as were Weihart's wife and a veterinarian. State Department of Fish and Game investigators who raided the home also seized 13 tiger and leopard cubs, some 3 to 4 weeks old, and two alligators. Weihart had already been scheduled to stand trial in San Bernardino County on 10 misdemeanor charges stemming from what prosecutors say was improper care of tigers at Tiger Rescue. CA. Fish and Game removed 10 tiger cubs from Tiger Rescue in November, saying the sanctuary in Colton didn't have the proper permits for the cubs and the agency was concerned about their welfare. (According to Fish & Game, Weihart is not supposed to be breeding his tigers at all - he claims that he keeps getting in females that are already pregnant.)

SwissInfo.org, 9 May 2003

The Eurasian lynx, which was reintroduced to the Swiss Alps in the 1970s, is flourishing better in Switzerland than in any of its neighboring countries. Switzerland's lynx population now numbers over 100, while neighboring Austria has only a handful of the animals. Other alpine nations such as Italy and France have also made attempts to reintroduce the animal, but with less success. The decline of the lynx in western Europe occurred in the 19th century, when the habitat of its natural prey, roe deer, was destroyed by farmers clearing forest for

agriculture. The few remaining lynx were finally hunted to extinction, after they began killing livestock for food.

New Scientist, 2 May 2003

Tigers appear to rely on low-frequency sounds - much of it inaudible to humans - to drive rivals away from their territory and to attract mates. Tigers produce a wide variety of sounds, from deep roars and growls to the raspberry-like "chuffing" they use to greet each other. Low-frequency sound carries better than high frequencies, is less likely to be affected by climatic conditions such as humidity, and is also less affected by ground cover, which is important for forest-dwelling tigers. The long-term aim of the project is to discover whether the sounds made by individual tigers are distinctive enough to act as an "acoustic fingerprint". If so, conservationists would be able to carry out censuses of the animals by placing microphones in the forest.

Jefferson City (Mo.) News Tribune, 1 May 2003

A turkey hunter dressed in full camouflage was attacked by a bobcat. The man was sitting motionless on the ground with a turkey decoy nearby and using a turkey call when the bobcat jumped on his head. He suffered only minor scratches and bruises - the bobcat ran away when it realized it wasn't getting a turkey dinner.

National Geographic News, 7 March 2003

At one time, spotting a cougar in the eastern United States ranked alongside an encounter with Bigfoot or a UFO. But over the years, rise in cougar tales has sparked an interest in wildlife officials and cougar enthusiasts alike. Now, wilderness lovers have formed a new network to trace cougar presence from the prairie to the eastern seaboard. "There was a need for somebody to really document what the cougar status is in the East," said Ken Miller, one of the Eastern Cougar Network's (ECN) four founders. The founders spent a year compiling research and sightings from eastern states, talking to fish and wildlife officials and cougar biologists, and implementing a rigorous system for confirming cougar presence. One of the network's most striking accomplishments is a map of the cougar presence in the eastern United States. Sprinkled with dots that mark probable and confirmed cougar encounters, the map suggests that cougars may be crossing from legend into reality.

While this doesn't mean that the mountain lions are returning in force, it does suggest a comeback for these animals once thought extirpated from the eastern half of North America. The fourth-largest cat in the world, cougars in North America once ranged from coast to coast. With wild lands cleared for agriculture and game hunting on the rise, populations of cougars and other large predators took heavy hits. By the 1960s, cougars dwindled in the western states and were declared extinct in the East. One kink in the cougar story has been how to put the cats into a family tree. In the early 1950s, the cougar was broken into 15 different subspecies. Currently, two of these subspecies, the eastern cougar and the Florida Panther, are listed as endangered by the federal Endangered Species Act. In 1999, a study by Stephen O'Brien and colleagues suggested the cats may be closer relatives than previously thought. Many cougar biologists now think that the cats in North America species are so closely related they should be considered a single subspecies.

Donations

Deluxe Financial Services of Lancaster set up a donation booth and information display in their lobby and collected several boxes of supplies and \$1000 cash! Thanks, what a great idea! Liam and Marian O'Neill of Tehachapi donated a 1976 GMC pickup truck, thanks!

Lori Hands brought in a new cash register, very useful to have 2 during big events! Sophie Stuart, Linda Braun, Pam Rose, Chris & Ruth Gage, Ron Wildermuth, and Gayle Caruso donated items for auction/raffle prizes, another big thanks!

Barbara Sellers donated two computer monitors, thanks!

Emily Sanford left us some beautiful framed photos in her will- as always we appreciate remembering us in your wills.

The Newhall, CA. DMV office donated a typewriter, thanks!

Dr. Mark Kopit, D.V.M donated professional diagnostic services, thanks Mark!

Lions

African lions are probably the best-known species of all the wild cats in the world. They show the largest amount of sexual dimorphism (difference between males and females of the same species) of any of the cats. The males are known for their long, thick manes, while females are not only much smaller but also lack any mane at all. Males from colder climates grow larger, darker manes. Most male lions in captivity in the United States have large dark manes, because it's colder here than in sub-Saharan Africa. Research has shown females prefer males with darker manes. Some male lions in Kenya barely have any mane at all. These males also tend to control a group of females (known as a 'pride') by themselves. Generally male lions will form coalitions of 2-5 adult males to help them take control of several prides of females. The groups of males are sometimes related, but not always. Prides of females are almost always related – mothers, daughters, cousins, granddaughters. This is another unique feature of the lion lifestyle. The females stay together their entire lives, and even help each other raise their young. Lions aren't full grown until they're about 4 years old. There are still many lions living wild in Africa, although they are often killed by hunters and farmers in many areas. There are also a few hundred lions living in India. They all suffer from habitat destruction and pressure from surrounding human settlements. There are many lions in captivity worldwide as they are very popular exhibits at zoos.

Odd New Residents...

3 peacocks and a peahen now reside at the feline center. They were donated to us by a local breeder. So far they have avoided the long reach (and claws) of the resident (curious) cats.

Volunteer of the Quarter

Brittany Boyll is our Volunteer of the Quarter. The photo above shows her hard at work cleaning the den of our black leopards while Meesha watches. She has been volunteering here since January 2003 on Sundays and, when her schedule permits, Thursdays. She works as a veterinary technician at Akal Animal Hospital in Lancaster. She is currently in the application process for the Moorpark Exotic Animal Training program, a very well-regarded, competitive program that offers classroom and hands-on experience in all areas of animal training. Many graduates go on to work

with animals trained for the acting/movie industry; Brittany isn't sure if she wants to go that direction, or perhaps stay in the zoo world and develop educational/outreach programs popular at many zoos such as the San Diego Wild Animal Park.

WISH LIST

Wireless P.A. System

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

X-ray Processor

VHS/DVD Recorder combination

Construction equipment and supplies
(8x8x16 concrete block, rebar,
backhoe, dozer, loader)