



# FELID TAG TIMES

A quarterly publication of the Felid Taxon Advisory Group of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums

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February 2009  
Felids of Tropical Asia

**ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS**

### News

#### Felid TAG Annual Conference

The Felid TAG Annual Conference will take place April 27 to May 3, 2009. See page 2 for details.

#### Regional Collection Plan

A revised Regional Collection Plan (RCP) was submitted to the Wildlife Conservation Management Committee (WCMC) and will be reviewed at their next meeting in March.

#### Conservation Milestone for Ocelots

The Halloween birth of a single ocelot at Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo as a result of artificial insemination (AI) performed by scientists from the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's Center for Conservation and Research of Endangered Wildlife (CREW) is the third ever successful AI in ocelots, and the first conducted to support genetic management goals of the Ocelot SSP.



#### Cheetah Days Blog and YouTube Site

Follow the story of Tommy T, a young cheetah cub being hand-raised at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden in preparation for a career as an ambassador for his species with the Zoo's Cat Ambassador Program at [www.cheetahdays.com](http://www.cheetahdays.com) and <http://www.youtube.com/user/CheetahDays>.

#### A Step Towards Sustainable Palm Oil

Oil palm is one of the world's most rapidly expanding crops. Indonesia and Malaysia produce 85% of the world's palm oil. Since 1996, 9.4 million acres of Indonesian rainforest have been converted to palm oil plantations. Touted as a green alternative fuel, it seems that palm oil is doing more harm to the planet than good. A 2007 survey report by the Zoological Society of London found little evidence of wildlife on palm oil plantations, and clouded leopards and tigers, specifically, were never detected. The industry has also caused conflict with local communities and significantly contributes to climate change. The Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil ([www.rspo.org](http://www.rspo.org)) has initiated a certification program for sustainably produced palm oil, the first batch of which was sold in November. While certification does not solve the entire palm oil problem, it is a promising step toward sustainability and a glimmer of hope for the future of clouded leopards and tigers.



### Calendar

January 28-30, 2009

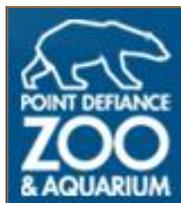
- Clouded Leopard and Small Felid Conservation Summit, Thailand

April 27-May 3, 2009

- Felid TAG Annual Conference, Tacoma



## Felid TAG Annual Conference



Hosted by the Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in Tacoma, WA, the 2009 Felid TAG Annual Conference will be held **May 1 through May 3, 2009** (with an Ice Breaker on Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>). This year's meeting will emphasize two important aspects of felid conservation, Veterinary Medicine and Education, and will include a variety of presentations and working groups on both subjects. Additional presentations will cover other aspects of felid conservation, including management, husbandry and scientific research. SSP meetings will be held prior to the TAG meeting on April 29 and 30. The Felid TAG Husbandry Courses will also be offered prior to the TAG meeting from April 27 (evening) through April 30, 2009.

### **Registration:**

\$85.00 if received by April 6, 2009; \$95.00 if received later than that date  
Download a registration form at [www.thezoosociety.org](http://www.thezoosociety.org). For further information, please contact Marla Waddell at [marla.waddell@pdza.org](mailto:marla.waddell@pdza.org), or go to [www.felidtag.org](http://www.felidtag.org)

### **Silent Auction:**

Please contribute to the silent auction! Funds raised keep registration fees low, contribute to travel expenses for invited speakers from felid range countries, and support *in situ* conservation efforts. Submit auction items at registration when you check in or send auction items beforehand to:

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, Karen Povey – Felid TAG Auction, 5400 N. Pearl St., Tacoma, WA 98407



### **Potential Speakers:**

Please contact Bill Swanson, Cincinnati Zoo, (513) 569-8227, [william.swanson@cincinnati.org](mailto:william.swanson@cincinnati.org) by March 1, 2009.

### **Husbandry Courses:**

Two consecutive Large and Small Cat Husbandry Courses precede the mid-year TAG meeting from **April 27 (evening) through April 30** at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. These 2 ½ day courses are designed to assist in the training of keepers, leads, and front-line supervisors involved in the daily care of felids. Enrollment is limited to 25 participants per course. The registration fee is \$70 for each course (\$80 after March 15<sup>th</sup>). For details on the Large Cat Course, please contact Craig Saffoe at [saffoc@si.edu](mailto:saffoc@si.edu) or 202-633-3217, for the Small Cat Course please contact Jillian Fazio at [fazioj@si.edu](mailto:fazioj@si.edu) or 202-633-4381.

### **Pfaff Memorial Large Felid Husbandry Course Scholarship**

In memory of Ashlee Pfaff, Denver Zoo Carnivore Keeper who died in a tragic accident at the zoo in 2007, the Denver Zoo offers the Pfaff Memorial Large Felid Husbandry Course Scholarship for a felid keeper to attend the 2009 Large Cat Husbandry Course. Please submit your resume (include experience with large cats) and a letter outlining how you will benefit from the course, how you feel about the animals you care for, the facility where you work, and felid conservation, and your career goals as they relate to felid management and conservation. Please limit your response to **no more than 500 words**. Letters (Microsoft Word or PDF) must be postmarked or received via email (preferred) no later than January 31, 2009, and sent to: Norah Fletchall, Felid TAG Co-Chair, Assistant Zoo Director, John Ball Zoological Garden, 1300 W. Fulton, Grand Rapids, MI 49504, [Norah.fletchall@kenctountymi.gov](mailto:Norah.fletchall@kenctountymi.gov). The scholarship recipient will be notified by February 10, 2009.

### **Hotel:**

The Inn at Gig Harbor, 3211 56<sup>th</sup> St. NW, Gig Harbor, WA 98335. Phone: 253-858-1111. Fax: 253-851-5402  
[www.innatgigharbor.com](http://www.innatgigharbor.com).

Rooms are limited so make reservations early. Guaranteed room rate will be held until April 6, 2009. Room rates: \$129.00 for single or double occupancy and \$10.00 for each additional person. Call 1-800-795-9980 or 253-858-1111 to reserve a room and request the special rate for the Felid TAG 2009 Program. If you are looking for a roommate, please post your information on the FTAG listserv at [felidtag@lists.aza.org](mailto:felidtag@lists.aza.org). If you do not have access to this listserv, you may email your roommate preference information to Bonnie Breitbeil at [bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org](mailto:bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org).

### **Airport transportation:**

For those flying into Seattle Tacoma International Airport (SEA), the Kitsap Airporter provides service directly into the Inn at Gig Harbor. 1.800.562.7948 or [www.kitsapairporter.com](http://www.kitsapairporter.com)

### **Social Events:**

The Icebreaker will be held on the evening of Thursday, April 30, with food and refreshments provided. Zoo Day will be held on the afternoon and evening of Saturday, May 2, and will include lunch, behind the scene tours, a cocktail hour, silent auction, and dinner.



## Conservation Program Updates

### Clouded Leopard SSP—Norah Fletchall



#### It's All About the People

As with any other SSP, the Clouded Leopard SSP is about the animal, but the people are the key to success. Below are some of the key players.

**Karen Povey** of the Point Defiance Zoo leads a group of dedicated, passionate educators to raise awareness about the clouded leopard both within the zoo world and with visitors and children who live in areas where clouded leopards are found. See below for an update on the Clouded Leopard Project.

**Drs. Jo Gayle Howard and Katey Pelican** lead a team of scientists that are developing a protocol that will one day hopefully achieve reproducible results in artificial insemination. In an effort to maintain and promote genetic diversity, well established breeding pairs were split up to avoid overrepresentation of some genetic lines. Creating new pairs has been a challenge due to severe

aggression between the animals. Assisted reproduction will allow us to capture valuable genetic material without putting females at risk during introductions.

**Rick Passaro** manages an ex-situ breeding program at the Khaow Kheow Zoo as part of the Thailand Clouded Leopard Consortium (National Zoo, Nashville Zoo, Thailand Zoological Parks Organization, Clouded Leopard SSP). This breeding program has produced numerous offspring, some of which have been imported into the United States. This new founder stock is critical for the long term success and maintenance of clouded leopards in AZA member zoos. Rick personifies dedication. He is on call 24/7 and has only taken a couple of very brief vacations in years (and no days off).

**Dr. Andreas Wilting** and his colleagues have identified a new species of clouded leopard through field research. Field conservationists have studied clouded leopards in the wild for decades, yet only recently have we begun to learn about its behavior through radio collaring and tracking.

#### Clouded Leopard Project Leaps Ahead

The Clouded Leopard Project (CLP) was founded in 2000 as an initiative of the Point Defiance Chapter of the American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK). The AAZK Chapter served as the CLP's fiscal sponsor, allowing the organization to reside under its non-profit umbrella. During this time, the CLP established its website, initiated merchandising and other fundraising efforts, provided support for clouded leopard field research, and partnered with Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium to develop educational materials for use in clouded leopard range countries.

These activities have allowed the CLP to make ever-increasing contributions to clouded leopard conservation. Ultimately, however, to move the organization forward, CLP Committee members decided to undertake incorporation and gain independent non-profit status. On March 27, 2008 the Clouded Leopard Project was conferred 501 (c) (3) status as an IRS tax-exempt organization.

The Clouded Leopard Project has several goals, including the advancement of awareness of this little known and endangered species. Awareness efforts are aimed at global audiences through special events, publications, and the CLP website and blog at [www.cloudedleopard.org](http://www.cloudedleopard.org). The website also serves as the official website for the Clouded Leopard SSP. CLP also undertakes numerous fundraising efforts, including online merchandise sales, to raise funds to support field research on behalf of clouded leopards and other sympatric felids.



The first major conservation effort of the CLP since incorporation is the coordination of a Clouded Leopard and Small Felid Conservation Summit in Bangkok with Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and Smithsonian's National Zoo from January 28 to 30, 2009. The three-day workshop brings together various stakeholders in Southeast Asia to identify key issues relating to research, trade, and community education, and create strategies for future collaborative efforts to benefit clouded leopard and small felid conservation. Members of the CLP Board of Directors are looking forward to applying outcomes of this meeting to directing the future of the organization's contribution to clouded leopard conservation.

## Clouded Leopard



## Fishing Cat SSP—Bill Swanson

### Caught on Film

Camera trapping has confirmed the presence of wild fishing cats in a second location in southern Thailand. In January 2009, Thai biologist and University of Minnesota graduate student Namfon Cutter obtained both infrared video footage and still photos (above) of at least four fishing cats in Sam Roi Yot National Park, located on the Gulf of Thailand about 200 km south of Bangkok. Working in collaboration with the National Park, Namfon will be attempting to capture several of these fishing cats in the next several weeks for placement of radiocollars and ecological monitoring. Funding for this project has been provided by the Fishing Cat SSP and several AZA institutions. Zoos interested in learning more about the study and possibly providing financial support should contact Bill Swanson.



### Bladder Cancer

Transitional cell carcinoma is a tumor commonly found in the bladder, and has been found in 15 fishing cats over the last 10 years. The most common clinical signs include blood in the urine and straining to urinate. Treatment usually consists of surgically removing as much of the tumor as possible and treatment with piroxicam, an anti-inflammatory medication shown to have anti-tumor properties. Recently, the Felid TAG formed a Bladder Cancer Working Group aimed at gaining a better understanding of the cause of the disease, how to prevent it, how to detect it early, and the best way to treat it. An Action Plan that addresses four main aspects of the disease—epidemiology/risk factors, diagnostics, veterinary therapy, and dietary issues—was distributed at the end of 2008. One of the primary objectives in 2009 will be to begin opportunistic collection and freezing of blood and urine samples from as many fishing cats as possible in the captive population. A detailed sampling protocol will be distributed to SSP institutions and other fishing cat facilities by February 2009. If you would like to receive an electronic copy of the Action Plan or have any other questions about bladder cancer in this species, you may contact Bill Swanson at [william.swanson@cincinnati-zoo.org](mailto:william.swanson@cincinnati-zoo.org) or Kristi Fisher, Fishing Cat SSP Vet Advisor, at [purrdoc@cox.net](mailto:purrdoc@cox.net).

**Meow, or maeo, is the Thai word for cat.**

### Need a Fishing Cat SSP Coordinator

Bill Swanson will be stepping down from his role as Program Coordinator for the Fishing Cat SSP to focus more attention on the Felid TAG and investigating health and reproductive issues in small felids. The Felid TAG would like to thank Bill for his seven years of service and dedication to the Fishing Cat SSP. Bill will remain in his role as Felid TAG Co-chair. Persons interested in filling the Fishing Cat SSP Coordinator position should submit their application to Dino Ferri at [ferrid@jacksonvillezoo.org](mailto:ferrid@jacksonvillezoo.org) by February 15, 2009.



**Meet Our Cats: Minnow**

Meet Minnow, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden's star fishing cat. Born in 2003 at the Exotic Feline Breeding Compound, Minnow moved to the Midwest to join the Zoo's Cat Ambassador Program later that year.

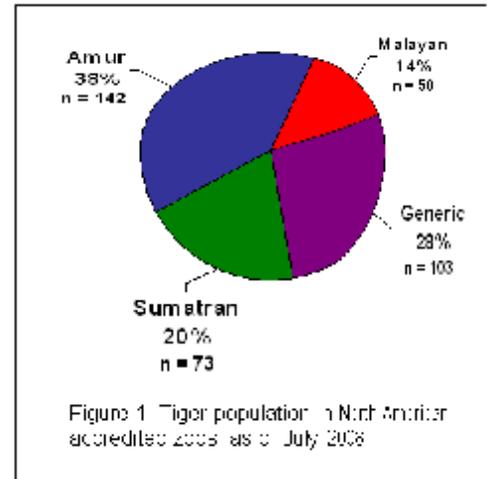
Minnow had her official debut in the Zoo's Cheetah Encounter show this past summer. She shows off her expert water skills as she dives into a pond to chase after fish. In her leisure time, Minnow enjoys long walks on the beach and a candlelit seafood supper.



## Tiger SSP Update—Ron Tilson

As of July 2008, there were 368 tigers in North American accredited zoos (Figure 1). The Tiger SSP manages three tiger subspecies (Amur: *Panthera tigris altaica*, Sumatran: *P. t. sumatrae*, and Malayan: *P. t. jacksoni*) but does not manage the substantial population of generic tigers. Breeding recommendations produced 13 Amur, 3 Sumatran, and 6 Malayan tiger cubs in the year leading up to the July meeting.

Each of the three managed subspecies populations are managed to maximize the retention of 90% gene diversity over a 100-year period. The 2008 Felid TAG's space survey suggests there are 396 spaces available for tigers currently and 357 in the future. However, each of the three managed subspecies has a target population of 150, necessitating a total of 450 tiger spaces. That translates to a deficit of 54 tiger spaces now and 93 in the future. In addition, generic tigers take up 103 spaces.



The space dilemma mandates that more space be created (an impossible scenario) or the Tiger SSP be reduced in size to fit the available space. Thus, the only option available may be to decide which of the two tropical subspecies to keep and which to phase out. A list of pros/cons for keeping Malayan vs. Sumatran tigers was compiled and discussed at the July meeting. In the end, the management committee decided to wait until new imports for either subspecies are certain before making a decision to phase out either of them.

### Amur Tiger Update

The Amur tiger population in North American zoos has remained stable over the past decade (current managed SSP population is 142 individuals) but the success of breeding recommendations has declined. This is in part due to breeding recommendations made late in the year that often result in a late or missed spring breeding introduction. This issue will be reconsidered by the management committee.

Twelve Amur tiger breeding recommendations were rolled over from the previous year and 13 new ones were approved. Eight transfer recommendations not associated with breeding were approved. One male tiger should be sent to Calgary Zoo (AZA accredited) for breeding.

### Sumatran Tiger Update

The Sumatran tiger population has shown relatively slow growth over the last 15 years and stands at 73 individuals. Four breeding recommendations from the previous year were rolled over and one new breeding recommendation was approved. Seven new transfers for non-breeding purposes were approved and the management committee agreed to pursue the export of three Sumatran tigers to Japan in response to a request from the Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums (JAZA) tiger program.

### Malayan Tiger Update

The Malayan tiger population has grown slightly from last year to 50 individuals. Three breeding recommendations from the previous year were rolled over and three new breeding recommendations were approved.



The Tiger SSP has proposed to the Malaysian Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP) that we develop a long-term relationship whereby certain pairs of wild or otherwise genetically unrepresented tigers kept at the Melaka Zoo be bred to produce young tigers for transfer to AZA zoos within the U.S. In exchange, each AZA-member zoo receiving a pair of tigers would provide the Malaysian DWNP with *in-situ* enhancement support for the department's wild tiger management programs such as anti-poaching support, radio-collaring and tracking efforts, livestock depredation re-imbusement, or other suitable programs. This cooperative exchange program would extend for five (5) years, with the potential for another five (5) years if desired by both the Malaysian DWNP and the Tiger SSP. A proposal was drafted and sent to DWNP Director General Rasid for study in September. We are waiting to hear back from him. (Photo: David Jenike)

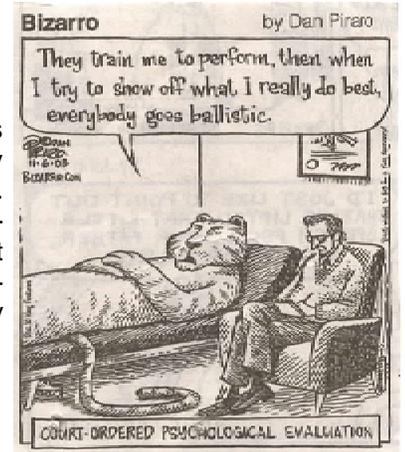


### New Requirements for Obtaining a Breeding Recommendation

A tentative list of requirements that zoos must meet in order to obtain a tiger breeding recommendation has been put forward. Briefly, these are that the zoo must: 1) be an AZA-accredited institution or have been approved for nonmember status; 2) have a minimum of four dedicated holding spaces for separating adult male and female tigers and male and female cubs; and preferably two separate outdoor exhibits for better rotation sequence; 3) have the ability to hold offspring for up to three years (younger cubs may be transferred); 4) install remote video monitoring of the female during and after pregnancy; 5) collect fecal samples from the female and perform hormonal analyses (protocol already developed); and 6) have a hand-rearing protocol (already developed) and milk replacement formula on hand. These recommendations will be drafted and submitted for approval by the SSP management committee, and installed as a requirement for next year's breeding recommendations. (Photo: David Jenike)

### Non-AZA Zoos Must Apply for Nonmember Participating Status

The Amur tiger breeding and transfer plan submitted to AZA by the Tiger SSP in 2008 was rejected at first because it contained non-AZA accredited institutions. These were largely CAZA-accredited zoos in Canada that had been participating for years in the Tiger SSP. These zoos were removed from the plan so that it could be approved and the recommended transfers and breeding recommendations could proceed. The AZA has made it clear that these non-AZA-accredited zoos must apply for and receive non-member participating status before being included in the SSP in the future. Thus far, Edmonton Valley Zoo (Alberta, Canada) submitted an application and the Tiger SSP sent a letter of support.



## **Opportunities & Requests**

### Steering Committee Elections

The Felid TAG will be holding elections for five Steering Committee (SC) positions that have expired. These SC positions will stand for a three-year term. If you are interested in running for election please notify the FTAG Secretary, Bonnie Breitbeil, at [bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org](mailto:bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org) by February 6, 2009. We also ask that each candidate submit a brief biography describing their professional background and experience in the zoo field. This can include your expertise with felids or involvement with the FTAG or any other AZA programs. Please limit your bio to 200 words or less. Ballots and bios will be sent out via email to FTAG Institutional Representatives (IR) for a February election. Notice only current FTAG IRs may stand for election and/or vote in the election.

### Felid Tag Annual Conference

Come to the conference! Take a husbandry course! Donate to the Silent Auction! See page 2 for details.

### Need a Fishing Cat SSP Coordinator

Bill Swanson will be stepping down from his role as Program Coordinator for the Fishing Cat SSP to focus more attention on the Felid TAG and investigating health and reproductive issues in small felids. Persons interested in filling the Fishing Cat SSP Coordinator position should submit their application to Dino Ferri at [ferri@jacksonvillezoo.org](mailto:ferri@jacksonvillezoo.org) by February 15, 2009.

## Meet Our Members—Norah Fletchall

Starting out as a keeper at the St. Louis Zoo, Norah Fletchall is now the Assistant Director of the John Ball Zoo in Michigan. Although she professes to be “an ungulate nut at heart”, Norah got hooked on felids, clouded leopards in particular, after attending a Felid TAG meeting in the early 1990s and has been working with the Felid TAG for more than 15 years. She is currently the Felid TAG Co-chair and the Clouded Leopard SSP Coordinator and International Studbook Keeper. Norah is interested in animal management issues and training the next generation of felid management experts.

“To me it’s figuring out what is best for the animal—not what we *think* is best for the animal.

Working in a zoo setting is a dream come true. Working with zoo people is what keeps me going.

I have always been so impressed by Felid TAG people’s abilities to have heated discussions, work horribly long hours well into the night at TAG meetings, and then get up and do it all again the next day. Oh, and we do a pretty good party along the way!

I encourage all of you to get involved in the Felid TAG (or whatever AZA TAG or program sparks your interest). Come to the Felid TAG mid-year meeting, take the husbandry course, and volunteer for a project (and follow through with your assignments). We may all be a bit quirky—but trust me we get stuff done and we welcome all to participate!!”



### Felid TAG Steering Committee Members

Alan Sironen	<a href="mailto:als@clevelandmetroparks.com">als@clevelandmetroparks.com</a>
Bonnie Breitbeil	<a href="mailto:bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org">bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org</a>
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### Conservation Program Coordinators

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Bonnie Breitbeil	<a href="mailto:bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org">bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org</a>	Serval PMP
Diana Weinhardt	<a href="mailto:diana.weinhardt@state.mn.us">diana.weinhardt@state.mn.us</a>	Amur leopard PMP
Don Goff	<a href="mailto:dgoff@beardsleyzoo.org">dgoff@beardsleyzoo.org</a>	Canada lynx PMP
Hollie Colahan	<a href="mailto:hcolahan@houstonzoo.org">hcolahan@houstonzoo.org</a>	Lion SSP
Jack Grisham	<a href="mailto:grisham@stlzoo.org">grisham@stlzoo.org</a>	Cheetah SSP
Jay Tetzloff	<a href="mailto:jtetzloff@gpzoo.org">jtetzloff@gpzoo.org</a>	Snow leopard SSP
Kara Akers	<a href="mailto:kakers@livingdesert.org">kakers@livingdesert.org</a>	Sand cat SSP
Ken Kaemmerer	<a href="mailto:Kenneth.Kaemmerer@dallascityhall.com">Kenneth.Kaemmerer@dallascityhall.com</a>	Ocelot SSP
Martha Caron	<a href="mailto:marthacaron@zmee.net">marthacaron@zmee.net</a>	Pallas' cat SSP
Michelle Schireman	<a href="mailto:pumacoug@aol.com">pumacoug@aol.com</a>	Puma PMP
Norah Fletchall	<a href="mailto:Norah.Fletchall@kentcountymi.gov">Norah.Fletchall@kentcountymi.gov</a>	Clouded leopard SSP
Ron Tilson	<a href="mailto:Rtilson@mail.mnzoo.state.mn.us">Rtilson@mail.mnzoo.state.mn.us</a>	Tiger SSP
Stacey Johnson	<a href="mailto:sjohnson@lvzoo.org">sjohnson@lvzoo.org</a>	Jaguar SSP
Steve Wing	<a href="mailto:steven.wing@louisvilleky.gov">steven.wing@louisvilleky.gov</a>	Black-footed cat SSP

### Submissions

Felid TAG Times is edited by Shasta Bray, Felid TAG Education Co-Liaison. Please send comments, suggestions, and submissions to [Shasta.bray@cincinnati.org](mailto:Shasta.bray@cincinnati.org). Submission deadline for the May 2009 newsletter, highlighting Felids of Temperate Asia, is April 1.