

FELID TAG TIMES

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

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February 2012

ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS

Calendar

July 19 - 21, 2012

- Felid TAG Conference, Utah's Hogle Zoo, Salt Lake City, Utah

Felid TAG News

New Tiger SSP Vice Coordinators

The Tiger SSP Management Group has elected Karen Goodrowe Beck, General Curator at Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, to serve as the new Vice Coordinator for the Sumatran Tiger SSP, and Don Goff, Deputy Director at Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo, to serve as Vice Coordinator for the Generic Tiger SSP.

Tiger Conservation Campaign Educator's Guide

The Amur, Malayan, and Sumatran tigers in AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums represent subspecies with fewer than 500 individuals remaining in the wild. In November 2010, tiger range countries set a goal of doubling the number of wild tigers by 2022, the next Year of the Tiger. To help support this bold goal, the AZA Tiger Species Survival Plan (SSP) has launched a Tiger Conservation Campaign to raise awareness about wild tigers and support for their conservation.

Campaign materials and a guide for educators can be found at www.aza.org/conservation-commitments-and-impacts/

and on the Tiger SSP's website, www.mnzoo.org/tigerssp/campaign. If you are interested in manning education or awareness tables at your institution or teaching a tiger-specific lesson, the educator's guide has some fun ideas on how to do so.

The Education Advisor is compiling curricula and activities related to tigers for the SSP website, in conjunction with the Educator's Guide. If any of you have great activities and/or lesson plans about tigers and don't mind contributing them to the SSP (of course, you'll get credit) please feel free to send them to Ally Amavisca, AZA Tiger SSP Education Advisor, at aamavisca@thephxzoo.com.



Sumatran Tiger Cubs Born at Oklahoma City Zoo

Four rare Sumatran tiger cubs were born on July 9, 2011 to mom Suriya and dad Raguno. The litter consists of one male, Leonidas, and three females; Lee-loo, Lola, and Lucy. This is the first ever litter of this species born at the Oklahoma City Zoo.

New Amur Leopard SSP Coordinator

In early September, the Amur leopard SSP saw the appointment of Cindy Kreider, Zoo Director at the Erie Zoo, as its new program leader. Cindy has been involved with Amur leopards since 1996, when Erie imported a male from Berlin and paired him with a female from the Minnesota Zoo. Since then, the zoo has seen the birth of 12 cubs, with all being successfully raised and sent to zoos across the United States and Canada. Over the last few months, Cindy has been analyzing the population, gathering information from those zoos currently exhibiting Amur leopards, and updating the studbook. There is a breeding and transfer plan in the works. Cindy is excited about the program, even though it has many challenges. There are currently only 107 Amur leopards in the United States and Canada. Almost half are over the age of 15, have medical or behavioral issues, or are otherwise non-reproductive.



The Amur leopard is currently the most endangered cat in the world, with an estimated 30 animals left in the wild. They are native to Russia, Korea, Manchuria, and China, but populations are scattered. There have recently been sightings on camera traps in China. Cindy is hopeful that the captive population can be turned around, but it will take the cooperation of all the institutions involved. There are currently cats available for exhibit. These cats need to be placed so that recommended pairings can be implemented, which is desperately needed to grow the population to a healthy level. Imports are also being considered. The program is actively looking for additional institutions who are interested in exhibiting and/or breeding. These cats are truly beautiful felids and make wonderful exhibit animals. If you are interested in becoming involved with the Amur leopard SSP, please contact Cindy at ckreider@eriezoo.org, or call her at (814) 864-4091 Ext 226.

New Serval SSP Coordinator

Dan Dembiec, Mammal Supervisor at the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, is the new Serval SSP Coordinator. The serval is now a Yellow SSP and every institution should have an Institutional Representative (IR) designated for Serval SSP. If your institution has not designated an IR for Serval SSP, please encourage your Institutional Liaison to do so. Dan may be reached at dembiecd@jacksonvillezoo.org.

Milwaukee County Zoo Welcomes Lion Cubs

The Milwaukee County Zoo announced the arrival of three African lion cubs, two males and one female, born on July 24 and 25, 2011. These cubs are the first offspring for both eight-year-old parents, sire Themba born at Henry Vilas Zoo, and dam Sanura born at Indianapolis Zoo. Over 100 lion cubs have been born at Milwaukee County Zoo in its 129-year history, but this is the first litter at the Zoo since 1974.



The births are also significant as they mark a long awaited deslorelin implant reversal. Sanura received her last implant in November 2006, and now, over 4 ½ years later, she has given birth to three healthy cubs and is proving to be an excellent mother. Visitors were able to view the cubs on a television screen in the Zoo's Big Cat Country building until they made their first appearance on exhibit on September 28th. BMO Harris Bank sponsored an online naming contest for two of the cubs. The winning name for the female was Njeri, meaning "warrior's daughter", and one of the males was named Kiume, which means "strong". The second male cub is named Hubert after BMO Harris Bank's lion mascot.

Felid TAG Poster Made the Big Screen

Have you seen the movie "We Bought a Zoo" yet? If not, here's a reason you should. The Felid TAG poster is featured in the film!

Last year, Lloyd Woodward from Central Nebraska Packing was asked to send 20th Century Fox several items for possible use in the movie. One of the items he sent was the Felid TAG poster. If you look closely during the scene where they run out of tickets on opening day of the zoo and are searching for them in the ticket booth, you can see the poster on the wall in the background.



Artist Needed for Feline Body Condition Guidelines Poster

Although there's no guarantee it will appear in a Hollywood movie, there is a new Felid TAG poster in the works. This one will play a more functional role in improving the health of our cats and will feature illustrations of a range of body condition guidelines for various felids. We are in need of an artist who is willing to donate his/her talents as an illustrator. If you or someone you know is talented and willing, please contact Shasta Bray at Shasta.bray@cincinnatiatizoo.org.

Other Felid News

Jaguars in Arizona

Submitted by Tammy Sundquist

In November, two encouraging announcements were made regarding jaguars in Arizona. The first was a professional mountain lion hunter treeing a 200 lb male jaguar in a canyon southeast of Tucson on November 19. This was the first confirmed sighting of the species since Macho B back in 2009. Four of the last five confirmed sightings over the past 15 years have been reported by hunters, who have provided important information on the existence of jaguars in the area.

The hunter was amazed at the roar and powerfulness of the animal, and his group of hunting dogs sustained injuries during the encounter. The jaguar remained treed for approximately 15 minutes and then headed south. State biologists found claw marks in a tree and collected hair samples for possible DNA testing. They will also attempt to determine if this jaguar has been identified before, by using the distinct rosette markings of individuals, or if this is a new animal.

Interestingly, the pictures released of the cat revealed a striking resemblance to the jaguar that was wild born in northwest Mexico, and was briefly housed at the Phoenix Zoo a couple of years ago while undergoing dental treatments before returning to a zoo in Mexico.

The second announcement was about a study to learn more about the status and presence of jaguars along our national border with Mexico. Next year, University of Arizona researchers will be placing remote cameras at 120 locations in southern Arizona and New Mexico. The three year project, costing \$771,000, will be funded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. During the project they may also learn more about the region's wildlife corridors, biodiversity, and the impact of illegal immigration, including the border fence, on the species.

The researchers will be continuing a similar study conducted by the Borderlands Jaguar Detection Project, which ended in 2009 due to the Macho B controversy. The organization had been using remote cameras since the early 2000s. It has been clearly stated that this project will not place jaguar scat at camera sites to attract them as the other did, or to attempt any captures. However, if any of the cameras happen to capture a jaguar in the area, the researchers do plan on using dogs to look for jaguar scat, which will be analyzed to identify the species and possibly even the individual.



Bornean Bay Cat Found in Highlands

A rare photograph of a Bornean bay cat was taken by a camera trap in the Kelabit Highlands of the Malaysian state of Sarawak, indicating that it inhabits higher elevations than previously known.

"Although Borneo's lowland forests are without question a primary regional conservation concern, we are only beginning to learn the wealth of biodiversity that these highland regions harbor," said Anthony Giordano, the founder and director of S.P.E.C.I.E.S., a new carnivore conservation organization.

- Reprinted from Mongabay.com

Researchers Produced Stem-Like Cells of Snow Leopard

"A team of researchers from the Monash Institute of Medical Research, Australia, has produced embryonic stem-like cells from the tissue of snow leopard. It is the first time ever when induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells were produced from a member of the felid family.



Photo: Rob Brooks

In the study, published in the journal *Theriogenology*, the team shows how the induced pluripotency approach can be used to generate iPS cells from somatic cells of the endangered snow leopard species (*Panthera uncia*).

"The breakthrough was significant due to the difficulty of obtaining reproductive cells, or gametes, even from animals in captivity," said Rajneesh Verma, lead author on the paper. "There is a lot of interest in cryopreservation of tissue from endangered species, but for this to be useful for conservation, both sperm and an egg are required."

"The power of stem cells is that they can differentiate into all the cell types in the body. This means, they have the potential to become gametes. In fact, mouse iPS cells have given rise to entire offspring, so the possibilities are enormous," explained Mr. Verma.

To produce iPS cells of a snow leopard, the researchers used ear tissue samples taken from adult animals. All samples were donated by Mogo Zoo, Australia.

"By generating these stem cells, we've taken the first step in creating reproductive cells from adult tissues of an endangered animal. In the future, we aim to harness the potential of the iPS cells and create offspring. This would help save species from extinction," concluded Mr. Verma."

- Reprinted from Sci-news.com, 1/23/12

News from the Black-footed Cat Working Group

The Black-footed Cat Working Group (BFCWG) aims to conserve the rare black-footed cat in South Africa. Led by Dr. Alex Sliwa, the BFCWG conducts multidisciplinary research on the species' distribution, ecology, health, and reproduction through biological sampling, camera trapping, and radio-collaring. Here are a couple snapshots of two black-footed cats being studied.



Above: Adult female named Ilse has been collared since February 2009 on the Farm Nuwejaarsfontein in the Great Karoo. Only during this field trip did she get used to the placing of a camera trap near her daytime den, the location where black-footed cats are very wary due to predation danger. This picture was taken just after the sun dropped below the horizon. She came out of this den an hour before to sun herself on the bare spot in the entrance.

Below: Around sunset, Ilse appears in the entrance of her daytime den, stretching, yawning, and especially listening and watching for danger before she quietly slips away for her long night hunt.



Below: Adult female Paris has been radio-collared since July 2010 on Benfontein Nature reserve close to Kimberley. This is the first record of a litter of two kittens (about four weeks old, judging from their size), from her. Paris peers from between them out of their den, while kittens investigated the camera trap. Interestingly, Paris slept during the day in a den more than a mile away and came to visit the kittens only at night.



The BFCWG is currently intensifying field work. If you are interested in supporting the study with funds to purchase more equipment and cover running costs for a field vehicle, you can do so through the International Society for Endangered Cats (ISEC). Go to www.wildcatconservation.org and designate your donation to the "Black-footed Cat Research" fund. ISEC will directly transfer all funds received to the South African account of the research project.

Panthera Grant Proposals Due March 1

"A key component of Panthera's mission is fostering the next generation of felid conservationists. The Kaplan Graduate Awards provide research and project costs for post-graduate students; the Liz Claiborne Art Ortenberg Jaguar Research Grant Program supports conservation efforts on the jaguar throughout the jaguar corridor; The STF-Panthera Grant Program supports the most important activities required to save tigers in the wild; and the Small Cat Action Fund supports conservation projects on wild felids weighing less than 25 kilograms. Panthera's grant programs intend to support promising felid conservationists and cultivate a new generation of practitioners dedicated to wild cat conservation.

The Panthera Grants Committee meets twice a year to make funding decisions, with closing dates for proposals on March 1st and September 1st. Final decisions and awards are announced four months after the application deadline. Proposal intake opens on January 1st and July 1st of each year, and closes on the respective due dates."

For more information on how to apply, go to www.panthera.org/grants-and-prizes.

Meet our Cats: Garnet

Confiscated as an illegal pet in 1993, Garnet, a male puma, was taken in at the New York State Zoo at Thompson Park where he was hand-raised. As a young puma, he served as an outreach ambassador to local schools. Garnet was a favorite among zoo visitors and staff alike. He was euthanized on January 9, 2012 due to age-related illness and diabetes. At 18 years of age, Garnet outlived the current life expectancy of 8 to 12 years and was likely the oldest living puma in the country.



Felid TAG Steering Committee Members

Ann Konopik	akonopik@ci.salisbury.md.us
Bonnie Breitbeil	bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org
Cheryl Morris	cherylm@omahazoo.com
Craig Saffoe	saffoec@si.edu
Don Goff	dgoff@beardsleyzoo.org
Dusty Lombardi	dusty.lombardi@columbuszoo.org
Gary Noble	gary.noble@disney.com
Hollie Colahan	hcolahan@denverzoo.org
Karen Goodrowe	karen.goodrowe@pdza.org
Ken Kaemmerer	kkaemmerer@pittsburghzoo.org
Kim Davidson	Kdavidson@hoglezoo.org
Norah Fletchall	nfletchall@indyzoo.com
Steve Bircher	bircher@stlzoo.org
William Swanson	william.swanson@cincinnati.org

Conservation Program Coordinators

Ann M Konopik	akonopik@ci.salisbury.md.us
Barb Palmer	BarbaraP@sfzoo.org
Dan Dembiec	dembiecd@jacksonvillezoo.org
Jessica Kinzer	jkinzer@riverbanks.org
Cindy Kreider	ckreider@eriezoo.org
Don Goff	dgoff@beardsleyzoo.org
Hollie Colahan	hcolahan@denverzoo.org
Jack Grisham	grisham@stlzoo.org
Jay Tetzloff	jtetzloff@cityblm.org
Stacey Konwiser	sfeige@livingdesert.org
Ken Kaemmerer	kkaemmerer@pittsburghzoo.org
Kim Davidson	kdavidson@hoglezoo.org
Michelle Schireman	pumacoug@aol.com
Bonnie Breitbeil	bonnieb@centralfloridazoo.org
Rebecca Stites	stitesr@si.edu
Tara Harris	Tara.Harris@state.mn.us
Stacey Johnson	sjohnson@lvzoo.org
Steve Wing	steven.wing@louisvilleky.gov



Jaguarundi Phase-in
Caracal Yellow SSP
Serval Yellow SSP
Fishing cat Red Program
Amur leopard Yellow SSP
Canada lynx Yellow SSP
Lion Green SSP
Cheetah Yellow SSP
Snow leopard Yellow SSP
Sand cat Red Program
Ocelot Yellow SSP
Pallas' cat Red Program
Puma Yellow SSP
Clouded leopard Yellow SSP
Bobcat Yellow SSP
Tiger Green SSP
Jaguar Yellow SSP
Black-footed cat Yellow 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. Submission deadline for the May 2012 issue is April 1.