

# FELID TAG TIMES

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

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Follow John, Cincinnati Zoo's new king of the jungle, on Twitter @CincyZooLion  
Photo: Connie Lemperle

## August 2013

ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS

### Calendar

AZA Annual Conference, Kansas City Zoo, September 7-12, 2013

- Cheetah SSP meeting, September 8, 1:00 - 2:00pm
- Felid TAG Meeting, September 9, 10:00am -12:00pm
- Jaguar SSP meeting, September 9, 2:00 - 3:00pm
- Tiger SSP meeting, September 9, 3:00 - 4:00pm
- Saving Tigers from Extinction: How We Can Help Double the Wild Tiger Population by 2022, September 10, 10:30am - 12:00pm
- Successful Reproductive Management through Cooperation Among AZA Programs; AZA Lion SSP Efforts to Assess the Reversibility of Contraceptives, September 12, 11:15am - 12:45pm

### Felid TAG News

#### Felid TAG Conference Wrap-up

A record number of 173 people came together last month for the annual Felid TAG Conference to share and learn about linking zoos to *in situ* felid conservation. More than \$3,000 was raised from the silent auction.

Jacksonville Zoo did a fabulous job hosting the conference. Zoo Day was a big hit and the post-conference tour at White Oak Conservation Center was well worth sticking around for.



In lieu of conference gift bags this year, funds will be donated in the amounts of \$1,000, \$750 and \$500 to three selected conservation projects. Which amount goes to which project will be determined by attendee votes. The projects supported are the Ruaha Carnivore Project, the Clouded Leopard Project and the Amur Leopard and Tiger Alliance.

Next year, the Felid and Canid TAGs will be coming together to host a joint meeting at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Virginia.

#### Population Viability Analysis

Population viability analysis has been completed for most of the managed felid species and can be found on the AZA website.

#### Snow Leopard Breeding and Transfer Plan

The Snow Leopard SSP met during the Felid TAG Conference in Jacksonville and the breeding and transfer plan has been distributed to the IR for the SSP. Please send your comments to Snow Leopard SSP Coordinator, Jay Tetzloff at [jtetzloff@cityblm.org](mailto:jtetzloff@cityblm.org).

# Felid TAG Managed Species Program Updates

## Amur leopard

Yellow SSP/GSMP

41.53 (94) in AZA institutions

RCP Target: 100 with hopes to increase to 125

Critically endangered with only 30-40 left in the wild

Became a global program in May 2013 with first meeting held in Moscow in May

8 new zoos on board since last year

13 pairs are currently together for breeding

3 imports have been completed or near completion which are critical for genetic diversity

Challenges are due to low population size, older population, lack of spaces and no possibility of additional founders



Photo: Colin Hines

## Black-footed cat

29.35.2 (66) at 21 institutions

RCP target: 65

New program leader as of May 2013, Barb Palmer

GSMP candidate

Need new imported founders

Need more institutions

## Bobcat

55.70.7 (132) in 71 NA institutions

45.61.7 (113) in 63 AZA institutions

RCP target: N/A, no breeding

First studbook published in 2012

Developing relationships with rehab facilities

Cats are available

Visited the National Bobcat Rescue & Research Foundation

## Canada lynx

Yellow SSP

30.34.0 (64) at 34 institutions

RCP Target: 80

12 births at 4 institutions (3 US and 1 Canada)

2.0 animals were imported from Canada over the past year

Seneca Park joined into the program this year

More institutions are needed

Looking for new program manager

## Caracal

17.29 (46) at 19 AZA institutions

RCP Target: 56 (based on recent PVA)

2013 PVA indicates the population status without changes is critical

PMC planning is scheduled for the week of 12/9/13

Need new imports as current population is aging

Need more institutions

## Cheetah

Master Plan finalized in June 2013

Breeding centers have been established and developing plans with C2S2

Working on the ACM

A cheetah veterinary meeting is scheduled for July 2013

Working on blanket import permit for long-term sustainability

Updating *in situ* database

## Clouded leopard

Yellow SSP and International Studbook

146.178.1 (325) in the International population

32.46.0 (78) in 23 AZA institutions

RCP Target: 100

Goals are to increase numbers by increasing infant survival and importation of unrelated pairs

Research efforts are focused on pairing options and AI assisted reproduction

Populations challenges include low genetic diversity, limited pairing options and low numbers

## Fishing cat

Upgraded to a yellow SSP in 2013

25.32.01 at 14 institutions

RCP Target: 80

Challenges with this species include low number of pairs and breeding success, low genetic diversity and high incidence of bladder cancer

All cats should now be on the TAG-recommended fish diet

## Jaguar

No update provided

Contact Stacey Johnson with questions or concerns

## Jaguarundi

0.0.2 born to private individual

Significant improvements have been made with breeding success in Europe

Brazilian institutions considering implants to reduce breeding

Scheduled fall 2013 trip to Brazil to establish contacts

Institutions are interested in participating

## Lion

Green SSP

101.123 (224) pedigreed lions in 71 institutions

139.185 (324) generic lions in 99 institutions

RCP Target: 320

Challenges include slow reproduction and contraception reversal concerns

Conservation projects are supported

The Lion SSP website: [www.houstonzoo.org/LionSSP](http://www.houstonzoo.org/LionSSP)

The Lion SSP has a Facebook page:

[www.facebook/LionSSP](http://www.facebook/LionSSP)

## Felid TAG Managed Species Program Updates (continued)

### Ocelot

Yellow SSP

57.50.2 (109) in total population

39.39 (68) in generic population

18.11.2 (31) in Brazilian population

Current research efforts focused on AI assisted reproduction

Brazilian Ocelot Consortium import is pending

2012 – 2013 included 23 breeding recommendations and 8 transfers

Challenges include aging population and low numbers

An increase in founders, particularly Brazilian, is needed

### Pallas' cat

Red program

Contact Kimberly Davidson with questions or concerns.

### Puma

Yellow SSP

56.71 (127) at 61 institutions

RCP Target: 130

Deaths = 4.3 (7)

Births = 0

Orphans placed in the past year = 4.5 (9)

To maintain current size and balance natural deaths, 10 imports are needed annually

Please pass along Program Leader contact information to local game agents for orphan placement.

### Sand cat

Red program

12.15 (27) in 15 institutions (include both AZA and private)

RCP Target: 50

3 new institutions have joined the program in the past year

The population is aging

Institutions willing to support imports of breeding age animals are needed

Need support to increase institutional involvement

### Serval

Yellow SSP

53.46 in 46 institutions

RCP Target: 75

Challenges include a poor founder base with known pedigree

100% pedigree servals are available

Founders are available for import

If servals are needed as program animals, please contact the SSP first



Photo: Eric Kilby

### Snow leopard

Yellow SSP

65.63.6 (134) in 63 institutions

RCP Target: 150

Challenges include reproductive success and non-AZA membership

Working on ACM

### Amur tiger

Green SSP/GSMP

58.90.2 (150) in 49 institutions

Using 44.2% of tiger holding spaces

RCP Target: 150

Gene diversity = 96.3%

Need institutional involvement and support

### Malayan tiger

Yellow SSP

36.20 (56) in 27 institutions

Using 16.5% of tiger holding spaces

RCP Target: 150

Gene diversity = 91.7%

Need institutional involvement and support

Need new founders

### Sumatran tiger

Yellow SSP/GSMP

41.31 (72) in 26 institutions

Using 21.2% of tiger holding spaces

RCP Target: 150

Gene diversity = 89.7%

This year has included 3 litters with 2 more pregnancies

Need institutional involvement and support

### Generic tiger

24.39 (63) in 27 institutions

Using 18.5% of tiger holding spaces

WCMC ruling requires full participation with no breeding or acquisition of generic tigers, and no transfers without approval from Tiger SSP

Need to convert generic tiger spaces to Amur, Sumatran or Malayan



Photo: Hans Hillewaert

## Felid TAG News (cont.)

### Global Tiger Day

Don't forget to celebrate Global Tiger Day on July 29<sup>th</sup>! The Tiger SSP's Tiger Conservation Campaign will have a special Facebook post ([www.facebook.com/tigercampaign](http://www.facebook.com/tigercampaign)) that day, so please ask your Marketing/Social Media staff to share it. The Tiger Conservation Campaign ([www.mnzoo.org/tigercampaign](http://www.mnzoo.org/tigercampaign)) is working with North American zoos to raise awareness about wild tigers and funding for their conservation. You can raise awareness and funds at your zoo by planning special events such as scheduling tiger keeper talks with the public, requesting donations, setting up an information display about big cat projects that you support, and holding tiger-themed contests or fundraisers. 100% of contributions to the Tiger Conservation Campaign go directly to field projects! Please join us in helping to secure a future for wild tigers. Questions? Contact, Dr. Tara Harris, Director of Conservation Minnesota Zoo and Tiger SSP Coordinator ([tara.harris@state.mn.us](mailto:tara.harris@state.mn.us)).



### Felid TAG Website Survey

The Felid TAG is designing a new website. With your input, we can create a useful tool for internal communication and resource-sharing between Felid TAG institutions and members. Please consider what you would like to see on the website and complete a brief survey at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FelidTAGWebsite>

### Recruiting More Educators

We are hoping to recruit some more Education Advisors for managed felid programs. Education Advisors play a critical role in advising, designing, and executing conservation education, community outreach, and public awareness decisions and activities. Go to [www.aza.org/education-advisors](http://www.aza.org/education-advisors) for more details. If you or someone you know is interested in becoming an Education Advisor or have more questions about it, please contact Karen Povey at [Karen.Povey@pdza.org](mailto:Karen.Povey@pdza.org).

The Felid TAG would also like to get more people involved in a less formal way with Felid TAG education efforts. There are a number of projects needing attention from developing website content to creating educational resources (like poop posters). Feel free to contact Karen (see above) or Shasta Bray at [Shasta.Bray@cincinnatizoo.org](mailto:Shasta.Bray@cincinnatizoo.org) to get started.

### Felid TAG Facebook Contributions

If you haven't already liked the Felid TAG Facebook page, what are you waiting for? We have over 700 likes so far. We'd love to feature news, photos and videos from your institution in our newsfeed, especially related to enrichment and training. Please send them to Amanda Ista ([amandaista@hotmail.com](mailto:amandaista@hotmail.com)) or Karen Povey ([karenp@pdza.org](mailto:karenp@pdza.org)) for posting.



### We Milked a Tiger!

Medical training with a Sumatran tiger at the San Francisco Zoo, which was originally used to confirm and monitor pregnancy, enabled us to collect voluntary milk samples. Proper positioning of our tiger, Leanne, on the ultrasound bench gave us visual and physical access to her mammary glands.

Four sessions were successful with the positioning of the cat on the bench for approximately 5 to 10 minutes. Ultimately, manual expression of milk from two active mammary glands occurred twice out of the four attempts. The stage of lactation for this sample was approximately three months. A blood sample was collected from the cub one week prior to milk sampling. Both samples were stored in the cryo-bank for future taurine analysis.

The importance of taurine in a tiger cub's diet cannot be overstated. Other species synthesize essential taurine from cysteine and mother-reared cubs receive it when nursing. Blood levels from this tiger cub reflect a taurine source from a milk diet. It is expected that the blood levels will be in the high range of normal. Other blood taurine values from healthy 8-week-old mother-reared ocelot kittens born at the San Francisco Zoo along with domestic cat normal blood taurine will be used as models. Milk taurine values have not been reported in *Panthera tigris sp.* In theory, the taurine milk results will reflect the percent of taurine supplemented in the commercial diet fed to this lactating female during her pregnancy and lactation. The taurine findings from this milk sample will be helpful in knowing that hand-reared tiger cubs require supplementation of this amino acid to prevent cardiac complications and retinopathy<sup>1</sup>. Literature suggests that 250mg of taurine a day is adequate supplementation, and this can be discontinued when the animal is weaned onto a properly supplemented meat-based diet<sup>1</sup>.

1. Hedberg G. Exotic Felids. In Hand-Rearing Wild and Domestic Mammals. Gage L, ed. Iowa State University Press: Ames, IA, 2002: 207-218. 1st edition.



Photo: San Francisco Zoo

## Felid TAG News (cont.)



### Two More Clouded Leopards Born at Nashville Zoo

Nashville Zoo is pleased to announce the births of two litters of clouded leopard cubs. On March 26, Jing Jai gave birth to one cub, and Baylie gave birth to two cubs. All three are doing well and are being hand-raised by the Zoo's animal care staff.

"Nashville Zoo is a leader in clouded leopard conservation, with 18 clouded leopards born at our off-exhibit breeding facility since 2009," said Karen Rice, carnivore supervisor at Nashville Zoo. "These cubs will remain a part of the Association of Zoo's and Aquariums (AZA) clouded leopard population as breeding cats, education or exhibit animals. Whatever role they play, they will contribute to the ongoing conservation effort."

Clouded leopards are considered endangered because of deforestation, poaching and the pet trade. Nashville Zoo is a member of the Thailand Clouded Leopard Consortium, an ongoing collaboration with the National Zoo, Point Defiance Zoo, Clouded Leopard Species Survival Program and Zoological Park Organization of Thailand (ZPO) to develop a multi-faceted clouded leopard conservation program that includes a viable self-sustaining captive population.

At just seven years old, this is Jing Jai's sixth litter. Both she and her mate Arun came from the Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Chonburi, Thailand in 2008 as part of the Consortium's effort to save the species from extinction. This is the second birth for 4-year old Baylie and her mate Chet. Baylie was born at the National Zoo's Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute in Front Royal, Virginia, and was Chet was one of three cubs born to Jing Jai and Arun at Nashville Zoo in 2009.



Photos: Aimee Stubbs

### Eurasian Lynx Cub at Nashville Zoo

A female Eurasian lynx cub was born to the Nashville Zoo's exhibit pair, Ilvy and Udo, on Saturday, May 4. Unfortunately, the cub passed away. A photo of her did, however, make international rounds. It was featured in People, The British Mail, The Huffington Post and by Jeff Corwin, to name a few.



Photos: Aimee Stubbs

### Fishing Cat Born at National Zoo

A male fishing cat was born at Smithsonian's National Zoo to mom "Electra" and dad "Lek" on May 17, 2013. The kitten is the third surviving kitten after 1.1 "Namfon" and "Cutter" born on May 18, 2012. This kitten has officially been named "Wasabi" by his keepers for his "spicy" personality.



Photo: National Zoo

# The Creation of a Mixed-Gender, Post-Reproductive Cheetah Population

Rebecca Mitchell and Michelle Gruneisen, Wildlife Safari, Winston, Oregon

## Introduction

Wildlife Safari is one of seven facilities accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums that participates in the Species Survival Plan breeding program for cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*). The goal of this program is to maintain a genetically healthy population of captive cheetahs in the United States. Breeding facilities must be able to hold multiple males and females to ensure female choice and healthy bloodlines, as well as any offspring produced. This means that a facility must dedicate numerous enclosures and ample space to breeding purposes.

Additionally, although each breeding facility recreates the breeding behavior of cheetahs in the wild differently, Wildlife Safari attempts to mimic their patterns by moving a female out of the enclosure she has occupied for one to three days and then moving a male into that enclosure. The male will begin marking the area, during which time he will catch the scent of the previous occupant. If he detects the hormones in urine or feces emitted by a female in estrus he will vocalize to the female. The reaction of the male and how the female responds to his vocalizations determines if an introduction will be made. This process requires three enclosures – one for the female, one for the male and one for the female while the male is investigating her enclosure.

Limited space creates challenge for facilities to maximize their occupancy while still maintaining unoccupied areas for breeding. To mitigate this problem, Wildlife Safari successfully introduced four (1.3) post-reproductive cheetahs to allot more enclosures for breeding cats.

## Methods

Introductions were made based on the dispositions of the cheetahs and under strict supervision by staff members. First, cheetahs that were to be introduced were kept in neighboring enclosures and monitored. If it was determined that two cheetahs were sufficiently compatible on a shared fence line (e.g. - not fighting with one another or showing aggressive behavior), they were moved into a single two acre enclosure at the same time and monitored. If no conflicts, signs of stress or anxiety occurred during a prolonged observation period, the pair would be left unsupervised for increasing durations of time. Length of observation time and time left unsupervised varied depending of the attitudes of the cats during the introduction and initial observation period. Cats with calm or mild reactions to one another were watched less than those that showed aggression or uneasiness.

The cheetahs were housed in enclosures with multiple den boxes and water sources throughout the enclosure. As the number of cheetahs in the group increased, larger enclosures were used to allow each individual enough space to lessen the potential stress of living in a shared enclosure. Enclosures ranged from half an acre for a pair up to two acres for a group of three or more.

To limit food aggression, paired or grouped cats were fed at the same time, in separate areas of the enclosure and given similar diets. Their behavior and physical condition were closely monitored for several days to ensure that the cohabitation did not have any negative effects, such as injury, anxiety, aggression, loose feces or a general decline in health.

## Results

The first cheetahs to be introduced were Mopane (0.1, then 11 years old) and Missy (0.1, then 11 years old). This pairing was chosen because Mopane is generally relaxed and rarely exhibits aggression toward cheetahs in neighboring enclosures, and Missy is typically aloof and wary of other cheetahs. At their initial meeting there was no visible reaction from either cheetah. During observations, both cheetahs were calm and did not display any signs of stress or aggression. However, after being housed in the same enclosure for two days, keepers found that Mopane had sustained two small lacerations on her shoulders that required stitches. Mopane was separated from Missy until she had fully healed and then was reintroduced. No other injuries or signs of aggression were observed.

One complication that arose from housing the two females together was that Mopane began to take meat from Missy. To maintain the weight of both females, Missy would be fed first while Mopane was slowly given a portion of her diet in chunks given through the fence to allow Missy time to finish her diet.

Although these two females lived together for a month without further incident, they were separated to reenter Missy into the breeding population. The females were not affected by this separation.

The second pairing was between Mopane (then 13 years old) and Liz (0.1, then 13 years old). Liz was chosen as a possible candidate because she had previously been housed with an unrelated female. Using the same method as the introduction with Mopane and Missy, the females were determined to be compatible and moved into the same enclosure without incident.

After a successful introduction and a month of amenable cohabitation, Mopane and Liz were separated to reenter Liz into the breeding population.

A third pairing was attempted between Liz (then 13 years old) and Missy (then 13 years old) after they had retired from the breeding program. For this introduction, Missy was introduced into the enclosure that Liz had been occupying. At their initial introduction, Liz slapped Missy once and chased her into a tree her for a few minutes. Liz soon left the immediate area and no injuries were sustained from the altercation. Two days later three minor cuts were discovered on Liz's legs, however they did not require a medical procedure and healed without complication. The observation period was extended, but no other injuries or incidents

## The Creation of a Mixed-Gender, Post-Reproductive Cheetah Population (cont.)

were observed. It was therefore determined that the two females would be able to live together indefinitely.

Because Liz and Missy had both lived with Mopane for extended periods of time, Mopane was introduced to the pair. The three females were brought into the same enclosure without incident. Although Mopane had taken food from Missy when they had previously occupied the same enclosure, the rate at which Mopane consumed food had slowed with age and she no longer ate quickly enough to steal food. After five months the three females continued to live together without complications.

The final introduction to be made entered Hermano (1.0, then 17 years old) into the group. Hermano was chosen to be introduced because he appeared to get along with any cat on shared fence lines, including our most aggressive breeding males. Additionally, because of his advanced age, and the advanced age of the females in the group, breeding within the group was highly unlikely.

For this introduction, Liz was moved into an adjacent enclosure and introduced to Hermano over time. After completing an observation period, Liz and Hermano were moved into an enclosure with Missy and Mopane. For the first two days Hermano shied away from the females and would only accept food on the opposite side of the enclosure. However, over the next few days he settled into the group and began to approach the females during the day and became comfortable receiving and consuming his diet near them.

### Discussion

Through several pairings, it has been determined that unrelated adult cheetahs can be successfully introduced and housed together in the same enclosure, given certain parameters. Only cheetahs of advanced age with relaxed temperaments were introduced to one another. The enclosure used to house the group is approximately two acres in size with several den boxes and water sources throughout the enclosure. To lessen potential food aggression between the cheetahs, all four cats were fed at the same time with plenty of space between them.

Keepers have not observed any altercations after initial introductions were completed or breeding within the mixed-gender population. The male, Hermano, seems to keep to himself, but the females are often observed resting and sleeping within yards of each other. The four cheetahs continue to live together without difficulty.

Introducing these four post-reproductive, solitary cheetahs has directly addressed the issue of limited space availability and yielded three enclosures that can now be used for breeding purposes. Therefore, through careful selection of individuals and close observation it may be possible for a breeding facility to partially alleviate the problem of limited space by introducing retired, solitary individuals, even when working with mixed gender populations.

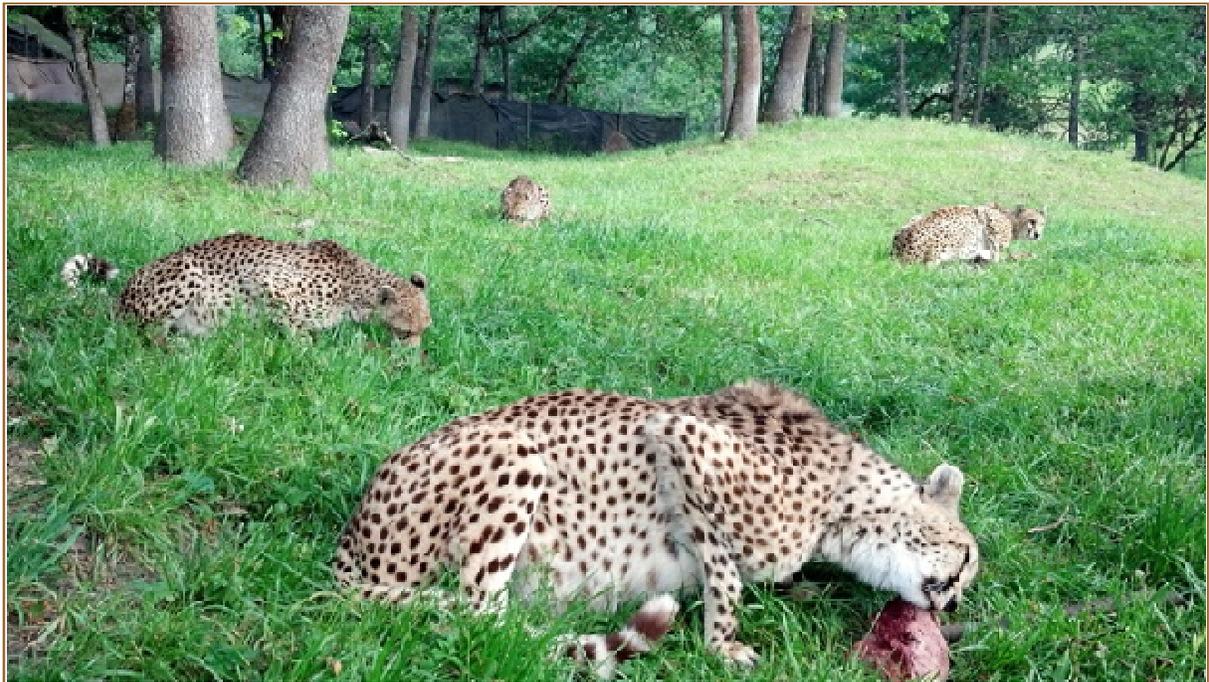


Figure 1. The four cheetahs are able to eat their diets within ten feet of each other without any altercations. Clockwise from the front of the picture: Liz 0.1, Mopane 0.1, Missy 0.1, and Hermano 1.0. The three females were thirteen-years-old and the male was seventeen-years-old. Photo: Sarah Roy, the Carnivore Department Supervisor



**Got Poop? Take a picture!**

Do you know what a healthy pile of felid feces should look like? When is it too runny or too hard? These are the urgent questions we'd like to help the keepers at our institutions answer.

Last year, we brought you a felid body condition guidelines poster. This year, we hope to do the same with poop. So I'm starting a poop reference collection. We need pictures of the good, the bad and the ugly. Before you hose that dump down the drain, snap a picture and email it to [Shasta.Bray@CincinnatiZoo.org](mailto:Shasta.Bray@CincinnatiZoo.org). Be sure to label it by species.

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Keep your cats cool with icy treats this summer!  
Photo: Tambako the Jaguar

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- Amur leopard Yellow SSP
- Black-footed cat Yellow SSP
- Bobcat Yellow SSP
- Canada lynx Yellow SSP
- Caracal Yellow SSP
- Cheetah Yellow SSP
- Clouded leopard Yellow SSP
- Fishing cat Yellow SSP
- Jaguar Yellow SSP
- Jaguarundi Phase-in
- Lion Green SSP
- Ocelot Yellow SSP
- Pallas' cat Red Program
- Puma Yellow SSP
- Sand cat Red Program
- Serval Yellow SSP
- Snow leopard Yellow SSP
- Tiger Green SSP

**Submissions**

Felid TAG Times is edited by Shasta Bray, Felid TAG Education Advisor. Please send comments, suggestions, and submissions to [Shasta.bray@cincinnatiZoo.org](mailto:Shasta.bray@cincinnatiZoo.org). Submission deadline for the November issue is October 1.