

# FELID TAG TIMES

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

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Dave Jenike

Happy Mother's Day!

May 2012

ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS

## Calendar

July 17

- Snow Leopard SSP Meeting & Master Planning, Utah's Hogle Zoo, Salt Lake City, Utah

July 19 - 21, 2012

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

## Felid TAG News

### 2012 Felid TAG Mid-year Meeting and Husbandry Course

Felid TAG Husbandry Course: July 15-18

Hosted by Utah's Hogle Zoo, Salt Lake City, UT

Students completing this course will cover all aspects of felid husbandry, including safety, nutrition, behavior, reproduction, veterinary issues, and felid introductions. They will be provided a variety of resources (both electronic and people) and personalized assistance with problem solving tasks, as well as the opportunity to discuss challenges and goals in their own institution's program. For course information and registration, please visit [www.felidtag.org](http://www.felidtag.org).



Felid TAG meeting: July 19-21

This mid-year meeting will be hosted by Utah's Hogle Zoo, Salt Lake City, UT and will focus on global felid management. This is a working meeting; in addition to lectures and presentations, attendees are expected to participate in working groups to assist in advancing the goals of the Felid TAG. Meetings will be held at the Red Lion Hotel - Salt Lake Downtown, 161 West 600

South, Salt Lake City, Utah. Reservations: 1-800-733-5466, use group name "Association of Zoo & Aquariums". SSP Meetings will be held prior to the TAG meeting on July 17 & 18. For meeting information and registration, please visit [www.felidtag.org](http://www.felidtag.org).

### Silent Auction Items Needed

In just a few months, we will be happily enjoying the Felid TAG meetings and Utah's Hogle Zoo and .... BIDDING on auction items!! The annual Felid TAG auction helps raise money and awareness for conservation efforts of the Felid TAG. Be creative, be generous, be involved - bring or send an item or items to be included in the auction. Contact Kimberly Davidson at [kdavidson@hoglezoo.org](mailto:kdavidson@hoglezoo.org) or 801-584-1703 with questions or comments.



### Felid TAG Conservation Database

The Felid Tag In Situ/Ex Situ Conservation database has a new link. It can now be accessed at <http://felidtag.columbuszoo.org>.

### Ocelots Born at North Carolina Zoo

A pair of ocelots was born on April 11, 2011. It was the third litter for parents, Inca and Diego. The kittens were named Maya and Oz.



Mother and baby



Just a few weeks old



10 months old

### Nashville Zoo Welcomes Clouded Leopard Cubs

On February 13, 2012, the Nashville Zoo's clouded leopard pair, Lom Choy (dam) and Luk (sire), gave birth to a litter of 1.1. Luk is the offspring of the pair imported from Thailand in 2008 and Lom Choy was imported from Thailand in 2010. This is their second litter.

Then on March 11, 2012, another pair, Jing Jai (dam) and Arun (sire), had its fourth litter of 1.1. Jing Jai and Arun were imported from Thailand in 2008.

Both pairs of parents are housed off-exhibit and the cubs are being hand-reared. Both litters are doing very well. All of the cubs have distinct personalities and great appetites!



Nashville Zoo

### Leap Day Cheetah Cubs at Wildlife Safari

On February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012, Wildlife Safari welcomed the birth of two Leap Day cheetah cubs, Khayam and Mchumba. On their second day of life, their mother Marlindi would no longer take care of them and Safari keepers were forced to pull the cubs. Although hand-raising is not preferred at the park, both cubs are doing great and growing quickly. To date, Wildlife Safari has had 168 cheetah cubs born at the park since its inception in 1972. To see more pictures and videos as the cubs grow, check out Wildlife Safari's Facebook page.



Wildlife Safari

### A Cougar Named Shasta at Houston Zoo

In December of 2011, an orphaned male cougar cub arrived at the Houston Zoo. Our cub and his brothers were with their mother when she was shot by a hunter in Washington state. A tracking dog led officials to the den but only two of the cubs were found. A state biologist went to the den and imitated the chirping sound that a mother cougar makes to her cubs. Our little cub chirped back and after almost a week on his own, he was rescued.

This cub gave us the opportunity for a unique collaboration with the University of Houston (UH). The official mascot of UH is the cougar. Cougars have historically resided on the UH campus but UH officials now agree that a university campus is not the best place for exotic cats. The cougars here at the Houston Zoo will serve as ambassadors, making virtual appearances on the big screen at UH games via web cams sponsored by the UH Alumni Association. In honor of this partnership, our new cub has been named "Shasta", the traditional name of the UH cougar mascot.



Shasta's first day out at Houston Zoo (Photo: Beth Schaefer)

### Tiger Conservation Campaign on Facebook

The Tiger SSP's Tiger Conservation Campaign has a new Facebook page! Check it out at [www.facebook.com/tigercampaign](http://www.facebook.com/tigercampaign), then "like it" and share it with others. You can also view the Campaign's updated website at [www.mnzoo.org/tigerssp/campaign](http://www.mnzoo.org/tigerssp/campaign).

The Tiger SSP thanks the following zoos and organizations that have already generated financial support for the Tiger Conservation Campaign: Minnesota Zoo, Point Defiance Zoo and Aquarium, Toledo Zoo, San Francisco Zoo, Potawatomi Zoo, Phoenix Zoo, and Detroit AAZK.



### Study to determine the presence of BRCA gene mutations and cancers of the reproductive tract and mammary glands in jaguars

The research team of Dalen Agnew, Sharon Deem (Jaguar SSP veterinary advisor), Anneke Moresco, Linda Penfold, and Karen Terio (Felid TAG pathologist) is requesting samples for a study of BRCA genes in jaguars.

A high prevalence of cancer associated with the mammary gland and reproductive tract has been noted in jaguars (*Panthera onca*) (Munson, 1994; Harrenstien et al., 1996; Hope and Deem, 2006; Munson and Moresco, 2007). There is evidence that the high cancer rate in jaguars is associated with the use of the potent synthetic progestin contraceptive, melengestrol acetate (Munson, 1994; Hope and Deem, 2006; Munson et al., 2005; Munson and Moresco, 2007). However, the higher prevalence in jaguars as compared to other non-domestic felid species suggests that other factors may be involved in this species and may include genetic factors and/or husbandry and veterinary practices.

Because the higher risk for mammary cancer and the high prevalence of ovarian papillary cystadenocarcinomas seen in jaguars is a profile similar to women with BRCA1 mutations (Munson and Moresco, 2007), we hypothesize that jaguars may have a BRCA gene and that mutations of this gene may be responsible for the higher prevalence of reproductive cancers. To investigate this hypothesis we are initiating a study of captive and free-living jaguars to determine if the BRCA gene (type 1 or 2) is present in this species. If we detect the gene, we will further characterize it and determine whether it is present in both free-living and captive jaguars and if the expression of reproductive tract



related cancer is related to gene sequence and/or mutations. Ultimately, we hope to gain a better understanding of why jaguars develop these tumors so we can prevent their development as well as improve diagnostics and treatment.

To achieve our goals we are requesting that EDTA whole blood samples (2 ml) be stored in RNAlater vials (which we will supply to all Jaguar SSP holding institutions). Additionally tissues (e.g., mammary glands, and uterine tracts) collected from dead jaguars or from surgical interventions from captive and free-living jaguars should be collected in formalin. All samples should be submitted to Dr. Dalen Agnew at Michigan State University. Protocols for the proper collection of these tissues, vials with RNAlater, and submission details will be sent to all Jaguar SSP holding institutions during 2012.

Harrenstien, L. M., Munson, L., Seal, U. S. & The American Zoo and Aquarium Association Mammary Cancer Study Group. 1996. Mammary cancer in captive wild felids and risk factors for its development: a retrospective study of the clinical behavior of 31 cases. *Journal of Zoo and Wildlife Medicine* 27: 468–476.

Hope, K. & Deem, S. L. 2006. Retrospective study of morbidity and mortality of captive jaguars (*Panthera onca*) in North America: 1982–2002. *Zoo Biology* 25: 501–512.

Munson, L. 1994. A high prevalence of ovarian papillary cystadenocarcinoma in jaguars. *Vet. Pathol.* 31: 123.

Munson, L., Gardner, I. A., Mason, R. J., Chassy, L. M. & Seal, U. S. 2002. Endometrial hyperplasia and mineralization in zoo felids treated with melengestrol acetate contraceptives. *Veterinary Pathology* 39: 419–427.

Munson, L., Moresco, A. & Calle, P. P. 2005. Adverse effects of contraceptives. In *Wildlife contraception: issues, methods, and application*: 66–82. Asa, C. S. & Porton, I. J. (Eds). Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

Munson, L., & Moresco, A. 2007. Comparative pathology of mammary gland cancers in domestic and wild animals. *Breast Disease* 28: 7-21.

## Busch Gardens' Cheetah Run Aims to Make Big Impact in Cheetah Conservation

Dedicated to celebrating the cheetah, in May 2011 Busch Gardens Tampa opened the parks' newest guest interactive habitat, Cheetah Run. Cheetah Run engages guests with several dynamic presentations daily such as demonstrating their special adaptations for speed during lure runs. Cheetah Run aims to inspire and connect guests to cheetahs and the natural world with conservation messaging.



South African cheetah 'Tiree' (0.1) runs the lure course at Cheetah Run (Photo: John Easterly)

Committed to conservation, the SeaWorld Busch Gardens Conservation Fund (a 501 (c)(3) non-profit private foundation) grants projects all around the world helping to conserve wild animals and wild places. Busch Gardens has established conservation partnerships with White Oak Conservation Center, Cheetah Conservation Fund, and Cheetah Outreach. Involved in the Cheetah SSP, Busch Gardens is home to four social groups totaling 13 (4.9) African cheetahs.

The cheetah team works in a free contact program with eight (1.7) cheetahs trained as animal ambassadors for educational outreach within the park, locally, and nationally. Cheetah Run's youngest ambassador, Kasi, was a singleton cub brought to be hand-reared at Busch Gardens' at three weeks old. At seven weeks old, he was introduced to a rescued lab-mix puppy similar in age, Mtani, for socialization, companionship and development. Kasi and Mtani have made a big impact, melting hearts of thousands of guests' daily while drawing national media attention to the cheetah conservation cause. In February 2012, Cheetah Run celebrated Kasi and Mtani's 1st birthdays and first year of companionship with the guests, some of which frequently visit the park to follow their story.

Submitted by: Ashleigh Lutz-Nelson, Senior Animal Care Specialist-Cheetahs, Busch Gardens Tampa



Kasi (cheetah) and Mtani (dog) at Cheetah Run, photographed at nearly one year old. (Photo: John Easterly)

## Sad Loss of Beloved Snow Leopard for Tautphaus Park Zoo

The Tautphaus Park Zoo lost their beloved Panja, a seven-year-old male snow leopard to a nasty fibrosarcoma on his right hip. Staff initially saw him limping last October and when they took radiographs, found bilateral arthritis in his hips. They consulted with a veterinary orthopedist and decided to do right hip replacement surgery. The hip implant was donated and the clinic in Sun Valley, Idaho also donated a lot of their time and talent. They transported Panja to the Sun Valley Animal Center in December of last year and when they got into do the surgery, they found a tumor attached to his right femur that was about the size of a racquetball. About 90% of the tumor was removed while the hip was replaced. See a video of the surgery at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JO3kLwux76w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JO3kLwux76w).

While they knew that the tumor would most likely grow back, they had no idea just how fast it would happen. Panja recovered well from his hip replacement and showed remarkable improvement in his gait. He was moving well and didn't seem to have much pain. However, in late January, they saw a lump growing at his surgical site. The zoo's regular veterinarian performed a second surgery and removed more of the tumor, but again, they just couldn't get all of it. Forty days later, they knew it was time to say good-

bye. Upon necropsy, they saw that the tumor had grown significantly to right around 1.3 kilograms and the vet said she had never seen a tumor grow so aggressively and quickly.

"The teamwork involved to keep Panja's quality of life as high as possible was first rate. From the fantastic keepers and vet tech, to multiple zoo veterinarians and staff from other zoos and hospitals, we managed his comfort and pain. Panja was owned by Henry Doorly Zoo and we want to thank them for their support of our management of Panja. Hopefully, Panja's legacy will live on. His genetic material was collected at necropsy and sent to Henry Doorly Zoo for preservation.

Every cat is special, but Panja held a unique place in all our hearts. He was easygoing, cooperative, and beautiful. He will be dearly missed." - Beth Rich, Zoo Superintendent, Tautphaus Park Zoo



## The Cats Run the Show

If you haven't seen the April issue of AZA's Connect magazine yet, be sure to check it out. It features an article on the Cheetah Encounter at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden. Here's a preview:

"At the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden, the cheetahs in the Cat Ambassador Program not only get the opportunity to exercise their natural behavior, but also share the experience with the zoo visitor.

Though other facilities run their cheetahs for select guests, the Cheetah Encounter was the first public cheetah running show in any AZA facility. In its first year of encounters, the cheetahs ran for approximately 50,000 visitors. Last year, with the increased seated capacity and longer show season, an estimated 100,000 visitors were able to experience a cheetah run."

- Written by Cat Ambassador Program Coordinator/Lead Trainer, Linda Castañeda



Photo: Dave Jenike

## **Felid TAG Steering Committee Members**

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Stay cool this summer!

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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-zoo.org](mailto:Shasta.bray@cincinnati-zoo.org). Submission deadline for the August 2012 issue is July 1.