

FELID TAG TIMES

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

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November 2010
Felids of Africa

ASSOCIATION
OF ZOOS &
AQUARIUMS

Calendar

May 5-7, 2011

- Felid TAG Annual Conference, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, Nebraska

Felid TAG News

Conference Proceedings

The 2010 Felid TAG Annual Report (Conference Proceedings) is complete and can be accessed through the Felid TAG web site in the TAG Member Resources section.

Save the Date—2011 Annual Conference

The 2011 Felid TAG Conference will be hosted by Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo from Thursday, May 5th to Saturday, May 7th, 2011. Please note that the TAG Conference will adjourn by noon on Saturday, May 7th. Mother's Day is on Sunday, May 8th and the Felid TAG wanted to ensure that all of our mothers (and fathers) had the opportunity to attend the TAG Conference but still make it back home to spend that special day with their families.



Felid SSP/PMP meetings and the Felid Husbandry Course will be held on the days preceding the start of the TAG Conference. SSP/PMP coordinators should contact the TAG Secretary, Bonnie Breitbeil, as soon as possible to schedule their meetings.

The 2011 TAG Conference will commemorate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Felid TAG and the primary focus this year will be on Felid Research. More information about the Conference, SSP/PMP meetings, and husbandry course will be distributed soon on the Felid TAG list serv and posted on the Felid TAG website (www.felidtag.org).

Five Lion Cubs at Abilene Zoo

Abilene Zoo is proud to announce the birth of five lion cubs to first time mom, Saba, and father, Botswana. The 3.2 cubs were born early Saturday morning, May 29, 2010. The mother is taking excellent care of the cubs in an off-exhibit holding area. The cubs will make their exhibit debut in October.



Submitted by Liz Kellerman, Abilene Zoo

Felid TAG News (cont.)

New Serval PMP Coordinator

Liz Harmon, General Curator at the Kansas City Zoo, has been selected by the Felid TAG to serve as the new Serval PMP coordinator. For all your serval questions and needs, Liz may be contacted either by phone (816-513-4605) or email (LizHarmon@fotzkc.org).

Three More Cheetah Cubs at Fossil Rim

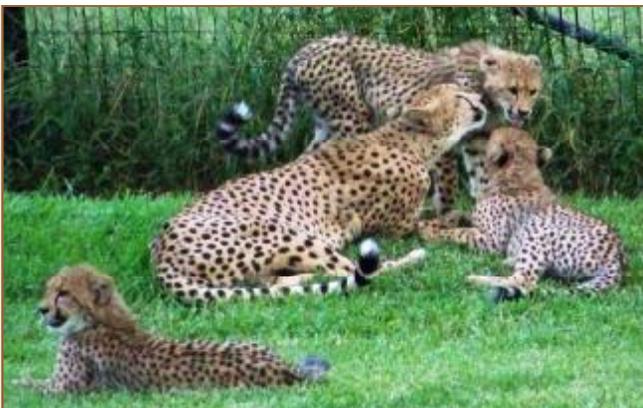
Another litter of cheetah cubs was born at Fossil Rim on August 29, 2010. The litter was born to Jules, a female from Hoedspruit Research Centre that belongs to the Henry Doorly Zoo, and Otavi, a male from Namibia that belongs to White Oak Conservation Center. There were originally 1.3 cubs, but one very undersized female died on day 2. This female had her first litter in April but it disappeared on the second day after birth. She was bred back to the same male and is proving to be a relaxed and confident mother. The babies are 5 weeks old and are venturing out of the den box and playing in the grass. The birth of this litter brings the total of Fossil Rim cheetah births to 124.



Submitted by Mary Jo Stearns, Fossil Rim

Cheetah Cubs at Caldwell Zoo

On April 23rd, Caldwell Zoo welcomed its first cheetah cubs in 15 years. The dam is a five-year old female owned by White Oak Conservation Center. The sire is a nine-year old male from Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. The first-time mom raised her three (2.1) cubs in an off-exhibit enclosure. At five months old, they were recently moved to exhibit and are doing great.



Submitted by Brianna Watson, Caldwell Zoo

Cincinnati Zoo Renovating Cat House

Originally built in 1950, the Carnivora House was renovated and transformed into the award-winning Cat House in 1985. The time has come once again to revitalize this exhibit building, which is showing signs of wear and tear. In addition to a new roof and an upgraded ventilation system, the entire public viewing area will be redone. The carpet's coming out, the walls will be repaired and repainted, and the whole visitor experience will be transformed. It will reopen next spring as an exciting new Night Hunters experience. Imagine...

It's dark. A chorus of cicadas sings. You pass under a tree and get a prickly feeling on the back of your neck. What's that sound? Your senses are heightened. Did that bush just move? You feel a rush of wind and, out of the corner of your eye, you catch a glimpse of an owl flying by. Vampire bats feed. An ocelot patrols its territory. A python slithers. You wonder if something is watching you, stalking you, hunting you. Adrenaline courses through your veins, preparing your body to fight or take flight in the face of danger. You make out the silhouette of a clouded leopard. Its shining yellow eyes follow you as you sneak by. It's an eat-or-be-eaten world and in the new Night Hunters experience, you are the prey.



Other Felid News

Border Patrol Agents Learn About Ocelots

In conjunction with the annual Ocelot Festival held last February in Texas, approximately 40 Border Patrol agents plus support personnel attended a muster to learn about the ocelot's habitat needs and the role everyone can play in conserving the species. The Cincinnati Zoo brought in an ocelot so the agents could get an up close look at a live animal.

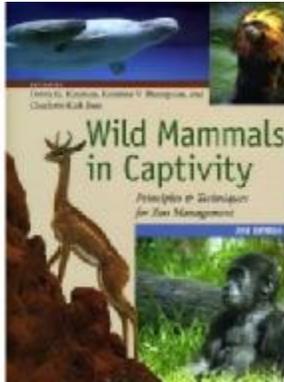
The Rio Grande Valley Sector and Fish and Wildlife Service have co-produced a poster that details the differences between an ocelot and a bobcat. The poster will be hung in all of the Sector's stations to continue the ongoing education and environmental stewardship process.

Draft Ocelot Recovery Plan Available for Review

U.S. Fish and Wildlife published a Draft Ocelot Recovery Plan, First Revision, on August 26, 2010. That date began a 60-day public comment period. The document can be viewed and commented on at www.fws.gov/southwest/es/Library/. The Ocelot Recovery Team will reconvene following the comment period to address any relevant issues that need to be incorporated into a final plan. The goal is to have the final plan completed by September 2011.

Escaped Jaguar Kills a Man in Belize

Max, a jaguar owned by the National Geographic filmmaker Richard Foster, escaped from its enclosure when it was damaged by a tree uprooted by Hurricane Richard on October 25. Max was captured, but not before he mauled and killed Foster's neighbor, a U.S. citizen named Bruce Colleton. Jaguar attacks on humans are rare and usually involve a captive animal. How will this incident affect the public perception of jaguars and conservation efforts?



Wild Mammals in Captivity: Second Edition

Check out the updated second edition of *Wild Mammals in Captivity* published in September 2010 (University Of Chicago Press). The editors (Devra G. Kleiman, Katerina V. Thompson, and Charlotte Kirk Baer) have gathered the most current information from studies of animal behavior; advances in captive breeding; research in physiology, genetics, and nutrition; and new thinking in animal management and welfare. In this edition, more than three-quarters of the text is new, and information from more than seventy-five contributors is thoroughly updated.



Bringing the Tiger Back from the Brink— The Six Percent Solution

In the September 2010 issue of the journal *PLoS Biology*, a team of tiger experts argue that efforts to save tigers have been ambitious, but too broad. While the ultimate goal is to conserve tigers in a network of large landscapes, the immediate objective should be to focus on 42 smaller sites where the core population of tigers lives. These sites cover only 6% of tiger habitat, but are home to 70% of the tigers remaining.

Meet a Member: Hollie Colahan

As the Curator of Primates and Carnivores at the Houston Zoo, Hollie manages a diverse collection of carnivores, which includes eight species of felids and a Cheetah Ambassador Program. She got involved in the Felid TAG after attending a couple of mid-year meetings when Danny Morris "encouraged" (or maybe arm twisted) her to lead the development of the Felid TAG Husbandry Course. Hollie took over as the Lion SSP Coordinator in 2008 and was elected to the Steering Committee in 2009. She is also a member of the Jaguar SSP Management Group and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ocelot Recovery Team.



Genetic Restoration of the Florida Panther

"The rediscovery of remnant Florida panthers (*Puma concolor coryi*) in southern Florida swamplands prompted a program to protect and stabilize the population. In 1995, conservation managers translocated eight female pumas (*P. c. stanleyana*) from Texas to increase depleted genetic diversity, improve population numbers, and reverse indications of inbreeding depression. We have assessed the demographic, population-genetic, and biomedical consequences of this restoration experiment and show that panther numbers increased threefold, genetic heterozygosity doubled, survival and fitness measures improved, and inbreeding correlates declined significantly. Although these results are encouraging, continued habitat loss, persistent inbreeding, infectious agents, and possible habitat saturation pose new dilemmas. This intensive management program illustrates the challenges of maintaining populations of large predators worldwide." *Science*. 2010. Vol. 329. no. 5999, pp. 1641 - 1645.

African Cats, a New Film from Disney Nature

Following the success of "Earth" and "Oceans", Disney Nature will release its new film, "African Cats", on Earth Day, April 22, 2011. The film captures the real-life love, humor, and determination of these majestic kings of the savanna, including Mara, the daughter of an injured, but determined lioness; Sita, a brave cheetah and single mother of five newborn cubs trying to make a home in the wildest place on Earth; and Kali, a lion once banished from his pride returns with his sons to reclaim his home. To see a preview, go to: www.disney.go.com/disneynature/

Conservation Program Updates

Black-footed Cat SSP

The black-footed cat SSP is celebrating another great year! We have updated the regional studbook, finished our breeding and transfer plan, and are busy working in South Africa on in-situ conservation and research.

The North American population has grown to 47 cats at 17 AZA institutions. For the first time since the inception of the SSP, we do not have any new institutions coming on board. For the first time in over a decade, we will be sending 8 cats to 4 zoos in Europe to add to their collections.

There are currently 8 zoos that have bred black-footed cats in the recent past, an increase of 7 zoos since 1999! Thirteen pairs have been recommended to breed. In addition, 8 cats (some of these are also in a breeding situation) are actively involved in assisted reproduction research.

Congratulations to John Davis and the Riverbanks Zoo on being awarded the AZA Bean Award for their Black-footed Cat program!

An exciting event happened this year, the Cleveland Zoo bred black-footed cats for the first time...and with a pair of cats imported from South Africa. This represents 2 new founders and adds much needed genetic material to our population. Congratulations Cleveland! Two additional potential founders live in Omaha and Cincinnati and will be paired up soon.

The Black-footed Cat Working Group remains active in South Africa and is looking for partners for funding. There are several great opportunities to help with the research into this little-known cat. If you are interested, see <http://black-footed-cat.wild-cat.org/> or contact Steve Wing for more information.

As always, we are seeking partners in South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana to assist with in-situ conservation of black-footed cats. If you have any leads, please forward them on to Steve Wing or Liz Harmon!

Submitted by Steve Wing, Black-footed Cat SSP Coordinator



Picture courtesy of Jim Schulz, Chicago Zoological Society

Lion SSP

The Lion SSP published a final masterplan in July 2010. For the first time, there is a small surplus of cats available for placement, which is a major accomplishment for this SSP, which had a shortage of animals for many years. We are continuing to work on the Animal Care Manual and members of our working group will be contacting institutions soon requesting photos and other information. We are also tracking the use and reversibility of the contraceptive deslorelin. Sally Boutelle of the Contraception Center and I are happy to report the first successful reversal in an SSP lion has occurred, resulting in the birth of five healthy cubs!

Submitted by Hollie Colahan, Lion SSP Coordinator



Photo by Shasta Bray

Snow Leopard SSP Meeting Report

The Snow Leopard SSP meeting was held in conjunction with the Tiger SSP meeting at the Toronto Zoo in July 2010.

The current population is 148 specimens at 59 institutions. AZA as well as CAZA facilities (WCMC approved non-member participants) are included in the SSP.

Current gene diversity for the managed population is 95% and is equivalent to the genetic diversity of a population descended from approximately 11 founders ($f_{ge} = 10.87$). Under the current population parameters, gene diversity can be maintained at or above 90% gene diversity for 43 years.

Demography

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Current size of population (N) - Total (M, F) | 148 (69.79) |
| # animals excluded from management | 24 |
| Population size following exclusions | 124 |
| Target population size | 150 |
| Mean generation time (yrs) | 7.38 |
| Historic/Projected pop growth rate (λ) | 1.036/1.03 |

Animal Care Manual is being compiled and edited by David Hodge from the Louisville Zoo. The document is in draft form and has been distributed to the SSP Steering Committee for comment.

Dr. Dee McAloose from the Bronx Zoo produced a necropsy protocol that will be distributed to the Steering Committee for adoption.

Western University received IMLS funding to conduct a planning meeting for a Snow Leopard Genomic Research Workshop. This workshop was held in San Diego, CA and brought together experts from the genetic research and zoo fields.

Submitted by Jay Tetzloff, Snow Leopard SSP Coordinator

Meet Our Cats: Momma Cat

Momma Cat was captive born in 2005 in South Africa. Her parents are wild caught. She arrived to Tautphaus Park Zoo in 2006 and has produced several litters of kittens since. While she is not friendly to her keepers, she is a very patient and tolerant mother. She will lay in the sun with her kittens and just watch the zoo visitors go by. Her offspring have been placed in zoos all across the country, contributing to the genetic diversity of the North American serval population. Tautphaus Park Zoo is proud to be able to pass on some F1 genes!

Submitted by Beth Rich, Superintendent, Tautphaus Park Zoo



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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 February 2011 issue, highlighting Felids of Tropical Asia, is January 5.