Letter from the President
Co-Founder Tonya Smith

As you know, providing lifelong, compassionate care for the animal ambassadors on our Refuge is the primary focus at TCWR. And I, as well as most of our staff, can share story upon story of successful rescues, emergency treatments, ‘round-the-clock’ monitoring and, other selfless endeavors necessary to properly and humanely care for these beautiful creatures. Because of past experience, many years ago we fostered a dream of making things easier on ourselves, but more importantly, on our aging exotic population. And, through the help of acute planning, exceptional fortitude, and generous philanthropy, it is with unbelievable excitement and gratitude that I am able to say we are on the cusp of realizing that long sought dream. The excavating is complete; the concrete foundation is being formed and poured; and the electric and plumbing utilities are right on schedule for our very own onsite animal hospital!!

I call it a hospital, but it stands for so much more than a “name” or “building.” It stands for security that protects those of us who work hand in hand paw with our animals. It stands for education that teaches students, veterinarians, and visitors about our mission and the importance we place on compassionate care. But most of all, it stands for freedom that allows us to offer an even better quality of life to the animals that call our Refuge “home.”

Unfortunately, the need for TCWR and other legitimate sanctuaries is real and present. That is why the long lasting, positive effects of this new resource are so important to our Refuge and community. Although the exotic pet trade is currently – and sordidly – alive and well, we will use this resource to make more opportunities to educate young students; teach future veterinarians, biologists and zoologists; and influence visionary lawmakers on the importance of dismantling the practice of owning, breeding and trading exotic pets.

Though our dream of having an onsite animal hospital is quickly becoming a reality, we still need your help. As you can imagine, it’s one thing to improve the health of a 5-pound domestic house cat...it’s quite another to rehabilitate a 300+ pound neglected and abused victim of the exotic pet trade. So, we are currently focused on outfitting our hospital with the medical supplies, tools and machines necessary to care for large, exotic animals. After many months of careful consideration, we’ve determined the benchmark goal for those resources to be $151,788. Fortunately, through generous contributions, we have already raised $21,137, and we are extremely thankful to those who have shown their generosity in supporting our mission. But, we’ve got a long road to walk – and $130,651 more to raise – in order to meet our goal.

Your donations allow TCWR to offer refuge and compassionate care to hundreds of neglected and abused animals. Your contributions let us continue our mission and make significant strides on behalf of those that call our Refuge “home.” Your generosity and awareness are the most powerful allies these beautiful creatures have, and each year your commitment helps reduce their suffering. We are able to accomplish so much because of you – our dedicated supporters – and we are truly grateful! You are the reason these animals know love, and your assistance, in whatever form, helps us continue to be a voice for those that have been – and continue to be – forgotten.

Thank you for contributing, and for caring to make a difference.

Featured Animal: Betsy

Species: American Black Bear
(Ursus americanus)

Sex: Female

Born: October 2, 1995

Arrived at TCWR: July 3, 2012

We have worked with our vet at his state-of-the-art facility 30 miles from the refuge for over 20 years. As the animals age visits to the vet are more frequent and a better solution is needed. You have donated enough money to build the building, now we have to purchase all the equipment. Can you help?

Our featured animal is Betsy, one of our six black bears that live at TCWR. Betsy was rescued in late June of 2012 from a private owner in Omaha, Arkansas. The owner had passed away, leaving Betsy in the hands of his daughter. Once the gentleman’s estate was settled, the daughter called us to rescue her father’s bear. Betsy had resided in their backyard for most of her life. The father had taken her in when she was about nine-months-old and kept her in an enclosure that was 8-feet-wide by 100-feet-long. Betsy was brought to us and has settled in nicely since her arrival.

Betsy is located in one of black bear habitats, where she rotates days with Koda, Thunder, and Harley. She was released into that habitat in the summer of 2013. She was very shy at first, not leaving the small area outside her nighthouse door. With time, she has learned how great her habitat is! You can often see her exploring every inch of the grass during her days out. She likes to take dips in her pool; and just the other day she was sprinting around her habitat, playing with her barrel. You can visit with Betsy down our bear walkway, located on our self guided tour area.

Staff Biologist Katie Anderson

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New Educational Signage

Turpentine Creek’s staff members are currently working to enrich the experience and enhance your next encounter at the refuge through consistent signage. We know every visitor to the refuge needs to be educated on the plight of big cats held captive in America, the general facts of each species, and the individual stories of how Turpentine Creek touched their lives. Enjoy the new informative educational signage throughout the refuge during your fall visit.

The 2016 TCWR Calendar!

Since 1998 Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge has been producing and selling a calendar. Each year the funds generated by calendar sales are used to help build habitats for our deserving big cats and bears. The calendars cost just $10 so make sure to purchase some for gifts as well. You can order your 2016 Calendar online at www.turpentinecreek.org or by filling out the enclosed envelope and inserting a check and dropping it in the mail. Thanks for your continued support of our habitat fund.

Spotlight on Natalie Mannering

I just turned 67 and I am in my second year now working part-time for a national non-profit called Experience Works, a job training program that enables low income seniors to find jobs with local non-profits.

I have always been a nature and animal lover, so I was thrilled when I saw that TCWR was looking for help. I quickly jumped at the chance to help the cause. Cats are among my favorite animals, and I am very concerned about our endangered species and the need to protect them. Whether in the wild or in captivity, the need for more people to become aware of what treasures are about to be lost is very important to me.

Working for TCWR has been busy but fun. I help the refuge by working at the downtown store as well as assisting at the refuge gift shop. I don’t have any direct interaction with the animals except for Cecil, the Blue & Gold Macaw, and I am striking up a friendship with him as best I can.

I am excited about the future plans of building a visitor center, which will include a new and improved gift shop, a café, and a large education area. TCWR deserves its good reputation; the need is great, and the cause is so very worthwhile.

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Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is primarily a big cat rescue but we do have a small population of other animals like Flip, our coatimundi, or coati, for a short. Flip was rescued in 2009, along with eight other animals, from a facility located in Branson, MO. Flip lived in an inside enclosure at the facility in Branson; and then once she arrived at Turpentine Creek, she settled in nicely into one of our enclosures right outside our gift shop.

Recently, we safely moved Flip to her newly built home using a large dog kennel. When we opened her habitat door for the first time, she ran out into the grass and was constantly moving and exploring for the next couple of hours. This was the first time in her whole life that Flip experienced running through the grass and she wasted no time exploring her new digs. She even had fun benches and platforms to climb on top of! Once feeding time rolled by, Flip was sprawled, with all four legs stretched out, across a rock formation, taking an early evening snooze. Now, during every tour that walks by her habitat, she is most commonly seen walking through the grass, trying to sniff out some good worms, while “squeaking” at everyone who passes by.

Seeing Flip out in the habitat was exciting for all of us here and it is exhilarating to see her running in the grass and chasing the bugs. It’s days like those that make all of us at Turpentine Creek take a step back from our hectic daily schedules to realize that we have made a difference in these animals’ lives - that we get the chance to share in that amazing moment of them touching grass for the first time, and seeing them run full speed through their habitats.

It’s those moments, which we strive for in our daily routines, to witness these animals’ happiness and excitement. We can’t do it all by ourselves; it takes help from you and all our supporters. Because of our supporters, we are able to make dreams come true for all of our animals, for their little slice of heaven, and we are forever grateful for all of your support and dedication. If we build it, they will run.

Working at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge has been a priceless experience for me. I arrived at the refuge two years ago. Little did I know the impact this place would have on me. I arrived at Turpentine Creek during one of our largest rescues, the Mountainburg Rescue; a rescue that was overwhelming in itself but very rewarding in the end.

When I started, I did not have much knowledge on the issues and laws regarding private ownership of exotic animals. We rescue animals from all situations, some that are in desperate need of critical attention and others that are facing euthanasia due to a careless act. However, despite the situation they come from, it is more about the freedom that we grant and give these animals once we bring them home. We give them a life to live and happiness to indulge in.

I know that Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is the place I want to continue to grow as an individual. Over the last two years at Turpentine, the staff has molded me into a competitive individual to create change. It has inspired me to never stop following my dreams. Teaching the public to admire the animals and their importance in their respective ecosystems, instead of fearing and eradicating them is one of the important things we do here. The exotic animals rescued at Turpentine Creek experience only one type of freedom and that is here at the refuge. We only have one chance in making a difference and that time is now. These animals have become my home; my own type of sanctuary. Turpentine Creek has taught me that my voice matters and my work and dedication is shown when I see the happiness of the animals I have made an impact on.
We rescued Zeus, a very well known white tiger at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, from Branson, Missouri, in 2010. When we rescued him we put him in what we call our compound area, awaiting a large natural enclosure. He is a very large, impressive cat who likes to put on a show for the guests and always gave visitors a great experience. During feeding times, he would roar and jump up for his food, or roar at people telling them to move away from his food, which made quite an impression on visitors.

Last year, we were able to release him into a large natural habitat, which he was afraid to explore at first. Some cats do not adjust well to changes or new environments. At the time, he had an entire tour waiting to see him experience freedom and he would not leave his nighthouse. So, we let Ava, the female tiger who shares Zeus’ habitat, explore the space for the day. The next day, with no one around, he was given a second chance to explore his new habitat. He finally went out, very tentatively, and explored his new home.

He now loves his habitat and this year, for the first time, he used a pool. We tried to give him a pool in the compound, but he was scared of it. The habitat’s much larger space allowed him to explore the pool on his own, which made all the difference. He splashes and puts his toys in the pool, and we have to persuade him into lock up for his food; he weighs his options and at the last second chooses the food.

Zeus’ story of transformation is a great example of how important the habitats are for all the animals. He transformed from an aggressive, nervous tiger, to a tiger that feels comfortable in his new environment and loves his new habitat. He is still very aggressive, that will not change (he is a tiger after all), but you can tell he feels more at ease where he is now.

The habitats are so crucial for the animals overall well being, which is why, after the RTS recuse, we made a pact to halt rescuing animals until we emptied the compound. We began the Crash the Compound campaign and thanks to the generosity of our supporters we are almost there!
Styx, a tiger rescued from a disbanded facility in Kansas back in 2006, came to the refuge extremely emaciated, you could count every rib and vertebrae just by sight. He has a condition where his body does not produce enzymes. American Animal Nutrition, a Division of National Enzyme Company, donates enough digestive enzymes for Styx’s needs each year. Without these enzymes Styx has difficulty digesting his food. So send a huge “thank you” out to American Animal Nutrition, a Division of National Enzyme Company, for their dedication to helping not only Styx, but animals everywhere.

Does the company you own or are employed for create a product from which the refuge can benefit? Maybe a donation is possible?

The Turpentine Creek Staff uses everything donated to elevate the animals care. This small GMC truck was donated 9 years ago and has been a valuable asset ever since. The small 4x4 truck has delivered materials to habitat building sites, brought veggies to the bears and meat to the cats, but it is on its last leg. Our mechanic just cannot keep it going much longer. The little GMC has given its life to the cats and now needs to be sent out to pasture. Do you have a little 4x4 truck to donate for the animals care? Contact scott@turpentinecreek.org if you can help.
For years, it has been TCWR’s goal to utilize the property for large natural habitats, where all the rescued animals will live out their lives being fulfilled with extraordinary care and a piece of freedom. You, our supporters, have helped us obtain that goal.

The “compound area” - the first place developed at the refuge- has saved many animals’ lives. Due to the enormous need for sanctuaries, it stayed fully occupied, continuously, over the years. Each time we constructed a new habitat, a call came in for another animal in desperate need. The “compound area” became a place of transition enclosures, while the newly rescued animals awaited their freedom.

This summer has been filled with renovations, rebuilding, and new found freedoms. The completion of the “Compound Crash” is right around the corner. Two tigers and two servals are weeks away from their habitats being completed. During the printing of this newsletter, a tiger habitat was completed and opened on August 29th, and Duke, a male tiger rescued from Arkansas, was released into his new enclosure.

Izzy and Shasta, two female tigers rescued from Oklahoma, will be moving to their renovated habitat next, where they will be alternating days enjoying the grass beneath their paws. Bowden and Pickles, the two remaining servals, enclosure is also currently under construction. A habitat opening is scheduled for the servals Saturday, September 19th at 9AM. This will completely empty the “compound area” and the final destruction will begin.

Duke came to the refuge with 27 other big cats from Mountainberg, AR. His living conditions were appalling and he desperately needed a safe, secure home. On August 29th Duke was let into his new habitat. Thanks to Tigers in America and all of you who donated to the habitat fund.

Duke

Izzy and Shasta came to the refuge from a property just north of Tulsa, OK. Their former owner became too ill to care for the tigers and called the refuge asking for help. TCWR staff moved the tigers to the refuge and now, they too, will be transferred into a habitat very soon.

Izzy and Shasta

Bowden and Pickles both came to the refuge as former “pets”. Bowden was living in Davenport, IA in an apartment. After fighting with the owners roommate and spraying all the curtains, his owner was fed up. Pickles loved her owner, but he suddenly passed away and nobody could fill his shoes. The previous owner’s wife had to find him a new home. Now, both Pickles and Bowden get a huge new habitat! Thanks for supporting the habitat fund. Together, we change lives.

Bowden
Pickles

Letter from the Curator
Curator Emily McCormack

Sadly, rescuing these big cats and bears is still an enormous necessity in this country. Even though some state laws have changed, these creatures are still found in deplorable conditions. We can save animals will with your help. TCWR has an advantage, with plenty of land available for growth. The future development, of new habitats and saving many more animals, will always be our mission. Your continued support makes a difference. Come visit us and see the changes towards the future development of the sanctuary.

Izzy
Shasta

Bowden
Pickles
Coffee with the Curator
Curator Emily McCormack

Get a behind the scenes tour of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge during “Coffee with the Curator” tour. This is a small group tour, it is only offered the first and third Saturday of every month. For $150.00 per person, five people will get to drink coffee, eat muffins, and talk about the history of Turpentine Creek and the animals that live here with our very own Curator or Assistant Curator. The tour starts at 9 a.m. and lasts approximately one hour. There is only one tour available on the first and third Saturdays and only five people can sign up for each tour date. To sign up please visit our website at www.turpentinecreek.org under the opportunities tab there is more information about Coffee with the Curator. You must sign up at least three days in advance.

Intern Alumni Checkup
Communications Director Lisa Brinker

We are very proud of not only our internship program, but how successful our interns are after they leave us. Approximately 90 percent of our interns are successful in finding jobs in their chosen field soon after leaving our program. Our past interns are now located all over the country, from the Oakland Zoo in California to the Bronx Zoo in New York and everywhere in between.

“We hate to see them go. A few of our interns had jobs before they even left here. The most success for interns has been in the zoo field. They know us, they know our interns have worked hard, know safety protocols, our reputation is good with the zoos,” Emily McCormack, TCWR Curator, said.

The internship program is a vital part of the day to day routine here at Turpentine Creek. Without the help of these eager individuals we would not be where we are today.

Safari Lodges
Communications Director Lisa Brinker

The Safari Lodges offer a unique experience to visiting guests at our sanctuary. Feel like you have taken a trip to an exotic land when you visit Turpentine Creek and stay over night at our Refuge. Having the opportunity to not only go to sleep listening to the caroling of our lions, but also to wake up to the amazing animal calls is a great way to start the day. You can drink a cup of coffee on a private or communal deck of the Safari Lodge, while listening to the cats caroling. The Safari Lodges are located far enough away from our animals that their nocturnal sounds will not keep you awake, but close enough that if you open a window or sit outside of your room you will be able to hear the lions calling out to each other. Each Safari Lodge is decorated differently, with hand painted pictures and custom color pallets to make each visit a different experience. The Safari Lodge is great for a single person, a couple who want a special night or weekend away, or a group of friends. With five available lodges they are ideal for an adult group get away.

The Safari Lodges are only for individuals 18-years-old and older. Occupancy is limited to 2 people. Group discounts are available when renting all five of our Safari Lodges at one time. For more information or to reserve a lodge please visit our website at www.turpentinecreek.org.

Bequest Your Best

Turpentine Creek is always planning for the future. It is very important to all of the staff at TCWR that our mission continues to thrive without us, the people who care about the amazing animals residing here. The mission is designed to be long-lived, continuing to educate the public and support the animals here at TCWR for many generations to come. For this to happen we need your help. As you are planning for your own future and preparing for your estate, consider helping the animals here at TCWR. What you can’t take with you can help the Big Cats now and in the future.

Our visitors’ experience is crucial to the animals future. We want you to have the best experience possible. Mike and Mel, long time volunteers, are photographed here providing shade for you.
Betsy is our featured animal! see page 3