Sissy
Siberian Tiger
DOB: Nov 29, 2000
Arrival Date: Nov 29, 2007

tigers@turpentinecreek.org  |||  479.253.5841  |||  www.turpentinecreek.org
youtube.com/TurpentineCreek  |||  Find us on Facebook!
Letter from the President

Co-Founder Tonya Smith

Happy Holidays from Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge!

Our staff and interns always comment on how fast time flies when caring for our exotics. It’s true, these animals keep us on our toes morning, noon and night. But, aside from caring for our exotic population, do you know what we’d love to be able to do? We’d love to be able to close our doors and cease to exist. (Whaaaaat????) Yep, we’d love to not be necessary, because that would mean that no one is mistreating large or dangerous animals in captivity. Completely evolve and change.

Unfortunately until laws are passed and humans stop the insane breeding and selling of Big Cats and bears, sanctuaries like TCWR will always be necessary. But, you can help put an end to the exotic pet trade by supporting the Big Cat Public Safety Act H.R. 3546 (first introduced in 2013 as the Big Cats and Public Safety Protection Act H.R. 1998). Write your representatives and tell them you back this bill.

Until protective bills like H.R. 3546 are made into federal law, it’s our goal to spread awareness, and be the best rescue and rehabilitation option available to neglected or abused big cats and bears. We consistently train new animal care specialist, biologist and zoologist on how to provide competent and compassionate care to our exotic population. Over 400 students have graduated our Internship Program since 1997, and TCWR alumni are scattered all over the world. Some work at zoos and refuges, while others are patrol and wildlife officers in national parks. Some TCWR graduates provide services in veterinarian hospitals, and a few are even researchers and videographers! I am very proud of our organization’s contribution to these fields and we look forward to continuing our education efforts for years to come.

Although we came from humble beginnings, as we continue to mature as a sanctuary it is necessary to create a more focused roadmap for the future. And our team has had many dreams and ideas for improving the Refuge: to build a new parking area; construct a new gift shop/education center; provide on-site food services; build storm shelters on the property; improve the green spaces for our guests; and provide continued education opportunities, are just a few. With the old smaller cages and concrete slabs of the ‘compound’ area gone, plans varied for developing the available space. But, Mickey Finefield – our volunteer board member and architect – says it’s okay, and that the plans need to be right on paper before we start building. Mickey does a pretty good job of detailing our master plan on page 8.

We’re excited about the future of the Refuge, and it’s because of YOUR support that we’re able to help these animals. Keep us in your minds and visit every chance you get. Spread awareness of our mission to everyone you know. Purchase calendars, memberships, adoptions and sponsorships as gifts for your loved ones. Also, remember us in your estate planning, the gift that keeps on giving. Doing all of these things helps further our mission (all donations are tax deductible).

Happy Holidays, and thank you again for your continued support. Until next time....

Featured Animal: Elvis

Species: Bobcat (Lynx rufus)

Sex: Male

Born: August 29, 2001

Arrived at TCWR: August 29, 2002

Elvis came to Turpentine Creek on August 29, 2002 at the age of 1-year-old. He was rescued while TCWR was in the middle of another rescue near Quitman, Arkansas. During that rescue, TCWR was approached by workers from the Mike Huckabee Nature Center to take over the care of a young bobcat.

Elvis had been previously owned by an individual, but was ultimately given to the nature center to be used for promotional purposes. Elvis spent some time promoting the center but when the center realized that he did not enjoy being in the promotional field he was ‘retired’ and they wanted him to have a permanent home somewhere he would be able to relax and be a bobcat. Elvis was a handful, but when he moved into his natural habitat in 2012 he settled down and has become much more relaxed and aloof with the staff and interns. He has settled in very well at Turpentine Creek and is a staff and visitor favorite.

Samantha is shown here getting ready for a panel discussion on Careers With Animals at Salem State University. Her internship at the refuge provided one step in her progression towards being chosen for a University level panel discussion in Massachusetts.
Winter at Turpentine Creek

The fall and winter months are a great time to visit Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge. The weather cools, and the forestry surrounding our 450+ acre property begins to mimic a Pollock painting as Mother Nature blankets the Ozark Mountains in a cornucopia of vibrant color. And if you’re an early riser, it is surely a sight to see when the dueling temperaments of heaven and earth fill the mountain valleys with a mystic morning fog.

We are open to the general public year-round and the cooler – even snowy – weather brings out the best in our exotics. Most of our animals have grown thicker coats in preparation for the climate change, and are generally quite active during this time of year. So, consider visiting our facility and learning about our mission during the fall and winter months. It’s a very unique experience that you won’t soon forget!

While our mission and primary focus is on rescuing and caring for abused and neglected animals of the exotic pet trade, our secondary focus is on education and awareness, which includes sharing the knowledge and resources that govern our efforts.

Recently, Lilly Sage McCoy, an undergraduate honors student from the University of Arkansas, and Dr. Kate Chapman, a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychological Science at the University of Arkansas, were granted permission by the Refuge to conduct a research study using our tiger population. During this study, participating students will observe the behaviors of our tigers when different types of enrichment are introduced to their habitat. Consequently, this study is the basis for McCoy’s honors thesis project.

Says Dr. Chapman, “This project will use an observational study paradigm (using focal animal sampling and time sampling) to determine the behavioral effects of a variety of environmental enrichment objects. We will compare tigers’ behavioral responses to olfactory enrichment (e.g. scents, perfumes), olfactory and object enrichment (e.g. scented boxes), organic object enrichment (e.g. pumpkins), inorganic object enrichment (e.g. cardboard boxes), and food object enrichment (e.g. frozen bloodsicles). All of those enrichment types will also be compared to non-enriched enclosures as a baseline. Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is a wonderful site for noninvasive research studies, as the large number of tigers allows for a robust sample size. We feel very fortunate to be able to forge a research collaboration here.”

The students will be using the months of November and December – if not longer – to observe our tiger population which is currently at 61 individuals. The students hope to use their research to determine which type of enrichment has the greatest affect on increasing positive behaviors and decreasing negative stress induced behaviors. And they hope the results can be useful towards enriching the lives of other tigers in captivity.

The students are working closely with TCWR staff to ensure that they can safely gather the data they need while helping make the lives of tigers in captivity better through their research efforts. We appreciate what they are doing and hope that through their efforts we can also find ways to give our tigers an even better quality of life on the Refuge.

For research-related questions or more information about this study, please contact Emily McCormack by email: emily@turpentinecreek.org

Winter Lodging

Turpentine Creek is open to the public 364 days a year (we take a little ‘cat nap’ on Christmas day). And, although humans tend to be less active during colder months, our exotics love the climate change! Our cougars and leopards enjoy stalking in the fallen leaves, and with fuller coats and an affinity to water, tigers have no qualms about pouncing or playing in the snow.

Book lodging today, and if you’ll be staying with us between December 1 – February 29 (excluding February 12, 13 and 14), you’ll receive $50 off each night of your reservation! Enjoy a winter wonderland discount and come ‘chill’ with our exotics this winter. Promo Code: WW1516

email: emily@turpentinecreek.org
August and September were two very laborious and emotional months. It was a roller coaster of highs and lows as we approached the realization of fulfilling a decades-old promise of placing 100% of our population into natural habitats.

Bowden and Pickles (African servals), and Shasta and Izzy (tigers) were the last four exotics living on concrete within our 'compound' area. In September, while working on their habitats in tandem, we were able to complete Bowden and Pickles' space, as well as Shasta and Izzy's plot of freedom.

But, as elation soared in preparation for Bowden and Pickles' release, an unforeseen turn sent our coaster screaming toward the ground. Pickles – Bowden’s ‘Juliet’ – unexpectedly passed from liver cancer a few days before her release. And, although Bowden’s release on September 19 was a success, it was bittersweet in that Pickles was unable to enjoy the bigger space with her ‘Romeo’.

After a time, our emotions began to lift again with the anticipation of releasing our last two exotics – Shasta and Izzy – into their shared-habitat. After spending two weeks getting used to their new night house areas, their release dates were upon us. On September 26, celebration echoed throughout the valley as crowds came to watch Shasta take her first steps onto Ozark Mountain grass. A day later, Izzy enjoyed comparable fanfare.

In the past, we’ve laid many plans and conjured uncountable schemes towards making a decent ‘living’. But today, as we care for these amazing creatures and spread awareness of TCWR’s mission, we laugh with the comedian and enjoy a fulfilling ‘life’.}

Life is a comedian; it’s funny.

As intelligent, educated beings, we plan – and plan and plan – and vigorously work towards the American dream until we’re red, white and blue in the face. But, as Robert Burns penned in 1785, “The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men, gang aft agley.” (Translation: The best-laid plans of mice and men, often go awry.)

My wife, Kristina and I have made many plans together. At one point we b-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-cked the idea of becoming pygmy goat crofters near her hometown of Springfield, MO. At another time, we constructed the idea of building a place on a portion of my parent’s land in Utica, MO. Still, another of life’s roadmaps drove the idea of being full-time RVERS – traveling the world in our highway home – possibly even GoProing our experience into a reality show. (We even thought of a Beastie Boys inspired theme song, “You’ve got to fight, for your right, to Aaaarrrrrrr VeeeerrrrrrrEEEEE!”) But, as Burns imbued, plans have a way of not going exactly to ‘plan’.

Kristina knew of TCWR well before the Refuge was on my radar. And in 2012, we made a trip to visit the attraction together. With our spirits high and my camera in tow, we were ready for a fun time! We had no idea, though, that our visit to the Refuge would lead to three years of developing meaningful relationships with TCWR staff, ultimately leading to both of us becoming members of the TCWR family in August 2015.

I love getting to know them all and seeing their distinctive personalities. I wake up every single day wanting to be here, even on my days off. This job is like one big family. The animals are unbelievable; I love getting to know them all and seeing their distinctive personalities. I wake up every single day wanting to be here, even on my days off. This job is like one big family. The animals are unbelievable; I love getting to know them all and seeing their distinctive personalities.

Life is a comedian; it’s funny.
Our mission has always been to rescue, and provide compassionate, lifelong care to neglected and abused big cats and bears. To aid our efforts, at one point it was necessary to build an infrastructure of small cages on concrete slabs, known as the 'compound area'. While the compound served its purpose of saving countless exotic lives, it was never meant to be a permanent home for our animals.

In April 2013 I joined the TCWR team and we put pen to paper and began a journey. We developed a master plan to update, expand, and improve many areas and aspects of the Refuge. One ongoing effort and facet of the master plan was to build large, natural habitats for our animals, and put grass under the paws of every soul that we rescue; in other words, no more small cages. To some exotics, this would be a totally new experience, to others, a pleasant renewal of the past. Other facets of the master plan included pursuing the idea of building an on-site veterinary hospital, and increasing the functionality of our current gift shop building.

Today, we recognize the progress we’ve made. The last small cage on the compound has been demolished, the on-site veterinary hospital is currently under construction, existing habitats are being renovated, and new spacious habitats are being built. Including the construction of Rescue Ridge, we’ve accomplished a lot over the years. And, with so many elements of our master plan falling into place, it’s time to focus on the next phase; the people.

Without the support of those who pass through our gates – that give so generously and that come to enjoy the experience of seeing these majestic creatures – none of this would be possible. The future vision of TCWR is to be a destination where people come, not only to experience our exotics, but to gather for social and educational events. So, in order to provide that experience, we’ve turned our focus to the functionality of our gift shop building.

Anyone who has visited the Refuge has experienced the congested entryway of our current building (which doesn’t make for a good first impression). There has also been considerable interest and a growing need for a larger space where social and educational events can be held. Furthermore, supporters repeatedly ask if there are food service options available on the Refuge. Over the past two years, the board and TCWR staff have been diligently brainstorming to envision, discuss, plan and develop the needs of a new facility. Our efforts culminated with the idea of blueprinting a new entrance building – or rather, a new “face” – for Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge that incorporates all of these needs.

With over 6,400 square feet of available space, the building will essentially triple the size of our current gift shop. Within the building will be an expanded entryway and gift shop area; a multipurpose room large enough to entertain 200 visitors but capable of being divided into smaller venues; an area for interactive displays and education, as well as awards and accolades; and food service options incorporating indoor and outdoor dining.

We have a way to go before we can walk through these doors, but this endeavor will allow the Refuge to grow and prosper, and we’re excited for what the future holds. Your involvement, as always, is essential to the success and growth of our organization, and we are grateful for your past, present and future support of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge. This new education center will be subdivided into numerous donating opportunities for you. Would you like to sponsor the new media/multipurpose room, the new cafe, the new education center and kiosks? Would you like to memorialize a loved one? Our board is working diligently to make these opportunities available to you soon. Call any time for more info…
The compound at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge served an important purpose for 23 years. Over a hundred big cats escaped certain death because of its existence and now that it is gone every new rescue will move directly into a beautiful habitat. This could not have been achieved without you. Please continue to give and we will continue to perform miracles. Thank You.

It took generous support, callusing labor and focused dedication to fulfill a decades-old promise to our exotic population, but – true to our word – it finally happened. On September 16 we transferred our final two cats, Shasta and Izzy, from the ‘compound area’ to their large 5,000 square foot habitat. As exciting and emotional as that Wednesday was, without missing a beat we began demolishing the compound the very next day. At first, progress was slow as staff and interns tore down what they could by hand. But on October 5 we brought out the “big guns” and, with the help of that heavy machinery, the concrete and cages became a memory in just two days!

The old cages within the compound served their purpose; saving hundreds of cats from abuse, neglect and death. But now the cages are no longer needed because you donated to the habitat fund, which paved the way for all of our animals to move to large quarter-acre to half-acre habitats.

Tanya Smith, President of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, proudly shares, “We knew that if we rescued the animals, we could at least save their lives. That’s what those small cages meant to us; lives saved. But that is also why we worked so hard to get the animals out into big habitats, so that they could actually enjoy their lives. I am really proud to say that now, no cat will ever have to live in a small cage here again.”

Although the majority of the compound is gone, our mission continues. We still need to tear down the old vet clinic, which is currently being used by interns and staff as a meeting area, and prepare the old compound area for new habitat construction. It’s all very exciting and if you come to visit soon, please don’t mind the mess; we’re just keeping promises.

We constantly research ideas and implement ways of improving the lives of our exotics. Since these animals have to live in captivity, we provide them with enrichment of various forms. A habitat bench is a ‘functioning’ form of enrichment for our animals. Our exotics love their benches and use them as playgrounds, look-out posts, and for resting, shade, scratching and scenting. And, as you can imagine, when a 500 lb animal uses a thing it loves, that thing generally doesn’t last long.

In the past, we’ve built habitat benches from sectioned telephone poles and wooden slats. While this design can be constructed quickly and is fairly affordable, we have found it is not as durable as we would like. We’ve determined this style to be more costly in the long run, too, as we’ve had to replace multiple benches in the past. So, with the help of some creative minds focused on durability, we redesigned this enrichment item.

Our new design incorporates a tiered metal frame into which wooden slats can be slid. Sliding the boards into the metal frame creates three separate platforms of varying height. This design requires more upfront material/labor costs, however, the long term benefits of reduced maintenance far outweigh the upfront burden of installation.

We recently implemented this new design in Tsavo, Chuff, Abigail and Athena’s habitat, and they seem to be loving it! They’ve used it in all of the enriching ways mentioned above, and we anticipate having to only replace the wood every couple years. If you’d like to see how Chuff, Abigail and Athena enjoy their new bench, please visit our Facebook page and find “New Bench Fun” in our video archives.

Because of its success, we will be replacing all of our old habitat benches (as needed) with this new design. If you’d like to provide your favorite exotic(s) with a functioning enrichment item that they are sure to love year after year, please consider donating the funds for a new habitat bench. Each new life enriching bench needs a giving donor. $1,000 covers material cost and construction cost. Help us, help them!

Chuff (lower) and Abigail (upper) love their new bench. It sure gives you that “warm fuzzy feeling” each time you see Tsavo, Chuff, Abigail, or Athena playing on/with the new multi-level playground bench. Please help enrich the lives of the animals. Donate today.

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If only you could see the
look on Emily’s face...

The compound at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge served an important purpose for 23 years. Over a hundred big cats escaped certain death because of its existence and now that it is gone every new rescue will move directly into a beautiful habitat. This could not have been achieved without you. Please continue to give and we will continue to perform miracles. Thank You.
This winter, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge will be hosting a Behavioral Management Training Workshop. We’ve invited five animal advisors from qualified zoological facilities to teach operant conditioning and animal behavior management training to TCWR animal care staff. The workshop will provide animal care staff the specific education necessary to develop an internal Behavioral Management Program.

The internal program will be diverse depending on the animal’s needs and will use different operant conditioning techniques to obtain desired animal behaviors. For example, some rescued animals have arrived at TCWR afraid of a water dish or of shifting in/out of ‘night housing.’ By implementing a Behavioral Management Program, we can mold behaviors for each individual and make every day a more rewarding experience for all involved. Establishing routine behaviors encourages trust between animals and caregivers, reduces possible stress associated with daily care, husbandry and grooming (claw trimming, etc.), and eases anxiety when providing necessary veterinary care (including vaccinations and sedation). The Behavioral Management Program will work in tandem with our Enrichment Program, as each encourages mental and physical stimulation. Ultimately, the new program will be a continued learning foundation that consistently promotes optimal care and safety between TCWR animals and caregivers.

The Behavioral Management Program will also help promote our organization’s continued education initiatives while increasing the possibility of receiving educational grant income. In other words, implementing this new program may ultimately help reduce the cost of our Internship Program. And – while our Internship Program is already one of the most competitive and successful programs in the zoological field, with alumni statistics showing an approximate 90% placement rate – the Behavioral Management Program will increase employment opportunities for future interns.

With the help of this winter’s workshop, we’ll grow our network and strengthen our connections with some of the most respected sanctuaries in the U.S. And with the help of the Behavioral Management Program, we’ll be able to provide an even more memorable experience to visitors and supporters of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

Animal health issues affect all people and organizations that care for our four-legged brethren. But, wheeling Oscar Mayer Wever – or your own lackadaisical lap cat – to the corner vet is kitten’s play when compared to hauling a cunning, quarter-ton carnivore named Big Nasty in for a check-up. It’s a logistics nightmare that, if not well planned and perfectly executed, could prove fatal to anyone (or everyone) involved.

To reduce risk, and to ease the burden on our exotic population as well as on ourselves, we had long dreamed of building an on-site veterinary hospital. The hospital would allow us to treat our population with efficiency (urgency when necessary) and in much safer conditions than ever before. Because of your donations we were able to make that dream a reality, and in October we broke ground on our new veterinary hospital. The building material arrived in early November and we’re excited to see the hospital begin to take shape.

Your donations helped us achieve our dream of building the building. Now, we’re on a fundraising mission to stock the hospital with the equipment, supplies and medication necessary to care for our exotic population. We’ve been fortunate enough to have raised $52,212.45 of our goal, but we have about $100,000 left to raise before we can care for our first patient. With your support, we know we can reach that goal.

We will continue to keep our visitors and supporters updated on our fundraising progress, as well as the status of the veterinary hospital. We are very excited to see what the future holds for the Refuge, and we truly appreciate and thank you all for your past and continued support.
A local Girl Scout Troop came to Turpentine Creek on Nov. 7th to help us paint Spyke Leopard and Alex Cougar’s habitat. The girls ranged from fourth grade students to eleventh grade students. One of the girls was working to earn her silver badge, one of the highest honors a Girl Scout can receive.

The group of girls worked all afternoon to make sure that Spyke and Alex’s habitat was fully painted and ready to take on another Arkansas winter. They all loved the animals and were excited when the tigers were chasing and stalking them as they explored Turpentine Creek.

“They were all super enthusiastic. Everyone was climbing up on the leopard logs and pretending they were leopards. They were telling everyone who passed that they were the “Girl Scout Exhibit” and acting like leopards when people were walking by,” Suz Manning-Osborn, intern at TCWR, said.

We appreciate their help and dedication. Volunteer groups, like the local Girl Scout Troops, help to make Turpentine Creek a great place for the animals and visitors alike.

In our 2015 Fall newsletter, we asked supporters if they could help us fulfill a specific need on the Refuge. Our well-seasoned GMC Sonoma 4X4 labored 9 years towards the continued care of our exotic population. But this ‘little engine that could’ just couldn’t anymore. So, we asked for a vehicle donation.

Well, we’re fortunate to have some of the most caring and generous supporters a non-profit could hope to have, and you came through on our request in a big way! Instead of one steel-and-wheel workhorse, you donated three! So now, regardless of what ‘it’ is, we can haul it or tow it in our 1988 Jeep Comanche 4X4. We can transport it or store it in our 1990 Ford F-150 4X4. Or we can move it fast in our 1987 Mitsubishi Mighty Max 2X4!

We can’t thank our supporters enough for providing the tools we need to deliver optimal care to our exotic population. And, although we’ve got a long road ahead of us, with your help, we’ll keep truckin’ towards our goals!

Do you want to support a great cause AND reduce your tax burden at the end of the year? Then donate to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge. Old Man Winter does an admirable job of keeping people indoors throughout the colder months and, because we are funded by admissions, grants and donations, that ol’ wisenheimer makes it challenging for us to generate off-season revenue. So, your donation during this time makes our winters a little warmer. We appreciate your generosity in this time of great need!
Elvis is our featured animal! see page 3

Yes! I will help!
Enclosed is my Tax Deductible Contribution of:

2016 Calendars: $10 each X ___ calendars + $5 S/H = $________
Donations: ☐ $25 ☐ $35 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ Other $________
Membership:
☐ Single Annual Pass $50
☐ Family Annual Pass $90

URGENT NEEDS:
☐ Habitat Fund Donation $________
☐ Veterinary Hospital Fund $________
☐ Enrichment Bench ($1000) $________

__________ Veterinary Hospital Building & Equipment ____________
Thanks to our supporters we have been able to completely fund the on site hospital building. Now we need to fund the hospital equipment. Our team worked hard to get the best deals, up to date equipment will cost $153,000. Please continue to support the Veterinary Hospital Fund.

Adoptions and Sponsorships

Animal Adoption:
☐ Small Mammal/Bird $100/yr
☐ Small Cat/Monkey $100/yr
☐ Cougar/Leopard $125/yr
☐ Lion/Tiger/Bear $150/yr

Animal Sponsor:
☐ Small Mammal/Bird $700/yr
☐ Small Cat/Monkey $1,000/yr
☐ Cougar/Leopard $2,200/yr
☐ Lion/Tiger/Bear $2,500/yr

Adopted/Sponsored Animals Name: ____________________________

Monthly Payments Available For Sponsorships, See Website: www.turpentinecreek.org

Your Name: ____________________________________________
Address: ______________________________________________
City/State/Zip: _________________________________________

Credit Card #: _________________________________________
Exp. Date: ___/___/_____ CVC Code: ____________

Total Contribution: $__________

Input Credit Card below or make checks payable to TCWR.