Spyke, "I am not a pet, I am not a prop."
A Letter from the President

Tanya Smith, President & Co-Founder

Spring Greetings to all of our friends! What a relief it is to see warmer weather coming our way after such a cold snap. We had our work cut out for us this winter as we fought to keep all of the residents of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge nice and warm. Some days were harder than others, but we did it!

This past winter I reflected on my experience as the director of a sanctuary. In this role I witness many aspects of a rescued animal’s life – I see them before being rescued, during the rescue process, and after, and I mourn as their lives come to an end. Because big cats live as long as house cats and often longer, we are so touched to be with them as they cross the Rainbow Bridge. The hardest job we have is letting go, because the bond we form is so strong. I am both humbled and grateful to see how compassionate the TCWR team is in caring for these beautiful animals, and am excited about initiatives taking place.

Lately we see more organizations working to close breeders, sellers, roadside zoos, and performing-animal circuses. While rescues differ in the work they do, at their cores they all exist because of problems human errors create. People try to make a lion a pet or a movie star, but of course, a lion is not a pet and it is not a movie star, it is a wild animal; an apex predator. It is reassuring to see so many organizations fighting for these animals. Our goal is to do everything we can to support these efforts by taking in every animal we can without stretching our resources to the point that we too, need to be rescued. It can be a delicate balance; when we do say yes to a new rescue, we must be able to provide for all their needs for the rest of their lives.

TCWR will be 26-years-old on May 1, 2018. Many of you have been supporting our mission since the early days, and your dedication is truly appreciated. When I think about how far we have come since the beginning it amazes me. Even as I am frustrated and that the Exotic Pet Trade is still an issue, those in the field, our supporters, and all of you who are fighting to put an end to this problem encourage me. The fact is - Change is on the horizon.

Please support H.R. 1818, The Big Cat Public Safety Act. Let’s stop the illegal and unethical trade of these magnificent creatures!

Thank you for your continued support. Until next time...

Save the date!

April 21, at 6:30pm

Our 7th annual Cats at the Castle is only a month away! Join us on April 21, at 6:30pm for a night of glitz, glamor, and fundraising. Spend the evening at the beautiful Castle Rouge’s Manor in Beaver, Arkansas, with TCWR team members and like-minded big cat loving TCWR supporters. Tickets will be available to the public soon. We will see you there!

In Memory of Thor

2001-2018

The hardest thing we have to do at the Refuge is bid farewell to the animals we love. Each of them is an individual who has carved a permanent place in our hearts; having to say a final goodbye brings an incredible sense of grief. What brings us solace is the knowledge that we and our supporters have worked tirelessly to ensure that their remaining years were full of joy, good food, play, and an abundance of love. With this thought we look back on how our lion Thor, despite having a very difficult start to life, came to live his remaining years to the very fullest at TCWR- bringing joy and a sense of belonging to those around him.

Purchased from a small zoo in New Hampshire when he was only three weeks old, according to his former owner, Thor spent most of his life on movie and television sets. He had spent years in a 7x12 traveling trailer with a cougar and two bears, and was taken all over the country for “entertainment.” By the time his owner changed career direction and no longer needed these animals, Thor was reduced to a final appearance at a gun show, emaciated and in dire need of medical attention. Luckily, it was then that Turpentine Creek was asked to step in. Thor was transported from that gun show to the Refuge, where he received de-worming treatments and a nutrient rich diet to address his severe malnourishment. Sadly, confinement for most of his early life in a small cage had resulted in muscle atrophy in his legs. While the care he received here rid him of parasites and restored his health, even with therapy the mobility gained in his legs would never allow him to move as easily as other lions.

Regardless, this lion came to have a full and happy life with us at TCWR. Thor spent his remaining days enjoying the company of other lions at the Refuge, chatting with lion Lucci on Rescue Ridge, and basking in the limelight he was meant to be in - the sun. Thank you all who adopted Thor, and a special thank you to Mark and Nancy Hanneman, who sponsored him; your support has meant so much to us and to him – you made it possible for him to live his best life here at TCWR, and for that we will always be grateful.

This past winter I reflected on my experience as the director of a sanctuary. In this role I witness many aspects of a rescued animal’s life – I see them before being rescued, during the rescue process, and after, and I mourn as their lives come to an end. Because big cats live as long as house cats and often longer, we are so touched to be with them as they cross the Rainbow Bridge. The hardest job we have is letting go, because the bond we form is so strong. I am both humbled and grateful to see how compassionate the TCWR team is in caring for these beautiful animals, and am excited about initiatives taking place.

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There is no doubt in the mind of anyone who has been to the Refuge that these animals have the capacity to love one another and form the deepest of bonds - especially the lions. Lions, are truly the only big cats who live in communities. These prides can amount to up to 40 different members, generally consisting of 3 males, 12 females, and their young. When lions, Lucci and his brother, Wyoming, came to us from a defunct breeding facility with 19 other big cats in 2002, it was clear that the brothers had a close relationship.

Lucci, blind and pigeon-toed from inbreeding, relied on his brother as a kind of seeing-eye-lion. You can imagine then, that the passing of Wyoming in 2016, was devastating to us all, but most especially to Lucci. He remained in the same spot for several days. It was decided that moving him down to the peace and quiet of Rescue Ridge would be in his best interest.

Rescue Ridge is a secondary part of the Refuge that, with the exception of private tours, is closed to the general public. It was built as a result of the Mountainburg Rescue, in which the TCWR team helped orchestrate the removal of 34 big cats. Today, it is a space for older cats who need a calmer and less active area to relax.

We were unsure of how Lucci would transition into this new life. His habitat is flatter, which makes it easier for the blind lion to get around, but we were concerned that without his brother, he may not want to get around. Our fears were alleviated, however, when we noticed a bond forming between Lucci and another lion, Thor, who had been previously moved down to Rescue Ridge. Suddenly, Lucci began to become more active - it was as if chatty Thor was encouraging his friend to start participating once more in the TCWR Pride. Today, Lucci is often found caroling around with the other lions of the Refuge and sunbathing on his habitat bench. A good way to help our animals transition into new habitats, or living situations is to help provide them with new enrichment: boxes, bowling balls, spices, and perfume are all ways to get them up and exploring - check out our website to find out other ways to donate as well!

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Messi the "Pet" Puma

The video of a cougar cub named Messi has recently gone viral on social media. His owner justifies keeping Messi as a pet because he is 30% smaller than other male cougars, but we at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge want to clarify that no health issue or size difference would make a private home better than a sanctuary for a cougar cub. In fact, his argument is groundless; almost all the animals that come to TCWR have medical issues that must be addressed - issues that are often the result of being kept as a pet lacking proper diet or suitable living environment coupled with problems from being inbred. If we could not take in sick animals, we wouldn’t have any animals! Keeping Messi as a pet is a grave mistake.

Messi’s story is much like Kitty’s, one of TCWR’s cougars. She is roughly 50% smaller than the average female cougar. Regardless of her small size, Kitty, like Messi, is wild, and a dangerous apex predator. After an attack that lead to severe facial wounds to her owner’s young son, Kitty was rescued and brought to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge to live out the rest of her life, but not after a close call with the Department of Health in Kansas: They wanted to remove her but not after agreeing to the expensive and painful process of rabies shots, sparing Kitty a premature death.

If it seems too good to be true, it probably is! Do your research by checking out the BigCatAlliance.org and our website, then share our link in your replies to these kinds of posts. Please, join us in our efforts to help them by supporting our work, and become an animal advocate!

The goal of our team at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge has always been to provide the highest standards of animal husbandry and care. This level of care and treatment start from the moment we rescue each animal to their first pawssteps into their new home, and continue the rest of their life here at the Refuge. Our large natural habitats are designed to not only provide proper living standards but also give the animals a sense of freedom. Each day team members and interns work endless hours cleaning enclosures, providing enrichment activities, delivering substrate for bedding, and preparing and administering medications along with nutritious diets for the animals. These are only some of the things we do daily to give these animals the best quality of life; there are always new challenges, along with innovative ideas on how to improve and continue our advocacy for them.

Due to our hard work, high animal care standards, and dedication, on December 26, 2017, the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) awarded us their Accredited status. While there are other accrediting organizations for sanctuaries in the United States and abroad, GFAS is the only globally recognized organization providing standards for identifying legitimate animal sanctuaries. To be awarded Accreditation status, an organization must fulfill GFAS’s rigorous and peer-reviewed animal care standards and adhere to a demanding set of ethical and operational principles. Being recognized by GFAS as an Accredited facility means that Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge meets its exacting criteria for a true sanctuary, and that we are providing the utmost humane and responsible care for our animals.

Recognition as one of the premier big cat and bear facilities in the U.S. is more than just a pat on the back, it motivates us to continually become better at what we do by validating all the hard work necessary for these animals. However, none of this is possible without contributions. And a GFAS Accreditation is a trusted tool that new supporters can use to gauge the quality of our organization. Each animal habitat, the construction of our magnificent veterinary hospital, even our boomer ball enrichment toys are possible because of the generous contributions provided by donors like yourself. Some of our donors come back to stay in our lodging, or contribute through Amazon donation packages; every donation helps us care for these animals in some way, and helps us continue to better our efforts. Please know that without your help we could not do what we do.

I would like to congratulate each of you and thank you for your continued support - it is because of your support that we have come as far as we have. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of these magnificent animals.

Sincerely,

Emily McCormack
In February, Turpentine Creek welcomed our newest furry family member, Payson. This beautiful 13-year-old female, white tiger, came to us from Omaha’s Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium. The zoo, which has been Payson’s home for more than 11 years, had decided to rehome this sweet girl. They made this difficult choice due to a recommendation from the Felid Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) so that they can focus on their current species survival program to help strengthen the population and genetic diversity of the Amur tiger subspecies.

After much debate and searching, they reached out to Turpentine Creek, knowing that our refuge would be able to give her the same level of care, medical attention, and love that they had been giving her for years. Their animal care team brought Payson here where she was immediately moved into her own habitat on our guided-tour path. Our team had been preparing for her arrival for weeks, making sure her den was filled with warm bedding, enrichment, and plenty of toys to play with.

Payson, who will turn 14 on November 6, has begun to settle into Turpentine Creek. It might take her some time to get used to the routine at the refuge, but we are confident that with a bit of time she will be happily chuffing at the team and destroying enrichment in her habitat.

Our team is very excited to welcome Payson to the family and cannot wait to see how she settles into the daily life at Turpentine Creek. Come out to visit Payson and all the other animals that call Turpentine Creek home this summer and get the chance to meet this beautiful girl.
Choose Your Giving Level Today!

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is thrilled to announce our new Wild About Wildlife Membership Tier Program! The program consists of four levels: the Friends of India, the Bam Bam Benefactors, the Kenny Fellowship, and the president’s club - the Hilda Jackson Society. Each tier is its own exclusive community that allows for donors to engage with one another, take home fantastic sign-up gifts, and support the Refuge in the most effective way possible. This new program will allow for TCWR to respond more quickly to the needs of the survivors of the exotic pet trade, and enable us to budget for larger projects, and projects that will have the greatest impact in the years to come. By using a tier model, the program will not only allow for donors of all levels to become involved, but also, the membership donations themselves are funneled directly into our General Fund – allowing us to have the greatest impact in the years to come.

A membership with TCWR is the perfect opportunity to help support the amazing work that the Refuge does every single day and also gives the opportunity to visit multiple times a year!

Wild About Wildlife Membership Tier

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Bam Bam Benefactor

annual donation of $1,250+*

Members of the Bam Bam Benefactors will receive:
• Bam Bam Benefactor Membership Card
• Entrance into the Refuge
• Trolley Tickets
• 15% off in Gift Shop
• Big Cat Chronicles
• A Framed Photo of Penny
• Recognition on our Website
• Exclusive Member E-mails
• Member Only Events
• 50% off Lodging**
• Calendar
• Decals
• TCWR Species Fact Sheet
• Entrance into the Refuge

The Friends of India

annual donation of $300 - $1,249*+

Members of the Friends of India will receive the following sign-up gifts:
• Friends of India Membership Card
• Entrance into the Refuge
• Trolley Tickets
• 15% off in Gift Shop
• Big Cat Chronicles
• A Photograph of India
• Recognition on our Website
• Exclusive Member E-mails
• Member Only Events
• 10% off Lodging**
• Calendar
• Decals
• TCWR Species Fact Sheet

The Kenny Fellowship

annual donation of $3,000 - $9,999*

Members of the Kenny Fellowship will receive:
• The Kenny Fellowship Membership Card
• Entrance into the Refuge
• Trolley Tickets
• 20% off in Gift Shop
• Big Cat Chronicles
• A Framed Photo of Kenny
• Recognition on our Website
• Exclusive Member E-mails
• Member Only Events
• 50% off Lodging**
• Calendar
• Decals
• TCWR Species Fact Sheet
• Travel Mug
• Private Tours with Senior Staff
• The Kenny Fellowship Shirt
• Recognition in and access to the Annual Report

The Hilda Jackson Society

annual donation of $10,000+*

Society Members will receive:
• The Hilda Jackson Society Membership Card
• Entrance into the Refuge
• Trolley Tickets
• 20% off in Gift Shop
• Big Cat Chronicles
• A Framed Photo of a Favorite Cat
• Recognition on our Website
• Exclusive Member E-mails
• Member Only Events
• 50% off Lodging**
• Calendar
• Decals
• TCWR Species Fact Sheet
• Travel Mug
• Private Tours with Senior Staff
• The Hilda Jackson Society Shirt
• Recognition in and access to the Annual Report
• A Staff Liaison

Adoptions and Sponsorships

Animal Adoption: 
• $100/yr - Small Mammal/Bird
• $350/yr - Small Cat/Monkey
• $700/yr - Small Mammal/Bird

Animal Sponsor: 
• $100/yr - Small Cat/Monkey
• $250/yr - Lion/Tiger/Bear

Adoption / Sponsorship includes membership. Opt out to make donation 100% tax deductible. 

Adopted/Sponsored Animal’s Name(s): 

Total Contribution: $_____

*To be part of a membership tier you must donate the amount required to be part of that specific tier level.

**Limitations may apply.
Kenny was born at a white-tiger breeding facility in Bentonville, AR. As you can see above, Kenny spent the first 17 months of his life in an 8’x12’ breeder lockdown. After being rescued, Kenny became the poster child for inbred white tigers. Go ahead, google “white tiger” and you will see our beloved Kenny.

Most of you know Kenny, who lived at Turpentine Creek for all but 18 months of his life. Kenny, along with his brother Willy, his mom, Loretta, and his dad, Conway, were prisoners at a filthy breeding facility in Bentonville, AR. Below are a few statements from the breeder on the day Kenny and his brother Willy were rescued:

1. “Usually, I snap the necks of the funny looking ones”.
2. “Kenny’s bull dog face was so cute, my son (who was 8) just had to keep him”.
3. “I sold white tigers for $40,000 and now I cannot get $5,000. I’m done!”

The breeders and facilities selectively breeding white tigers and hybrid big cats must be stopped! These animals most certainly will suffer from problems associated with breeding for recessive traits. Some of the deformities frequently encountered are cleft palates, vision problems, immune deficiencies, mental impairments, spinal problems, and cancer, just to name a few.

Selective breeding to produce white tigers and lions along with ligers, tigons, ti-ligers, and li-ligers, is solely driven for monetary gain. Help us put an end to this devastating practice by becoming an advocate for H.R. 1818 – the big cat public safety act. Go to turpentinecreek.org or see page 4 for more information.

Huggy’s Caption Contest

What do you think Huggy is thinking? Caption this photo and be entered for a chance to win a prize! We will be posting the first place winning caption on our social media sites!

1st Place – Framed photo of your favorite animal
2nd Place – 5x7 photo of your favorite animal
3rd Place – Magnet of your favorite animal

Please fill out

[ ] Social Media  [ ] Newsletter  [ ] Visiting  [ ] Email

My favorite animal is ________________________________
The first time I heard about the Refuge was from ____________
The last time I visited the Refuge was _________________
Next time I visit the Refuge I would like to _______________________
If I win, contact me at: __________________________________________
I get my info about the Refuge through:

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One of the goals at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is to educate visitors about the negative impacts inflicted on big cats and bears due to the Exotic Pet Trade. Through our guided tours and keeper talks, visitors discover the truth behind things such as cub petting, breeding, and declawing. However, there is more that can be learned that will add to the educational aspect of our tours, which is what brings me to TCWR. My name is Beckie Moore, and I am excited to get started on creating the new educational program as the Refuge’s Wildlife Interpreter. I graduated from the University of Arkansas with my Bachelor’s of Science in Education where I focused on wildlife and natural resource interpretation. After school, I began working for the Arkansas State Parks as a Park Interpreter for almost 6 years before returning home to pursue my Masters in Biology. My goal with the new education department is to help visitors discover the important role they play in helping to protect these wonderful creatures. Through hands-on learning activities, visitors of all ages will discover more about these majestic animals and the problems that they face.

The new Education Department is devoted to creating more programming and learning activities for all ages; thus enriching your next visitor experience! Through this department we will offer programming throughout the day as you visit the Refuge. We will discover more about each species of animal that call TCWR home, biodiversity, conservation efforts, adaptations, and much more. Included in our new program we will be offering summer day camps for various ages and other special events that will add to our visitor’s experience. In addition, we will also be adding new programs for the many school groups that come out to the Refuge and the schools we visit - enabling more learning opportunities.

Education is such an important tool that we all need, and it is through education that we can help protect the future of all animals impacted by the Exotic Pet Trade. Once you’ve had a chance to experience this new program, share what you’ve learned online and with friends and family! The more people learn, the more we can protect the animals!

Beckie Moore is our first certified educator and wildlife interpreter. Her efforts will enrich your experience during future visits to the Refuge. Plans for our Education Department include daily age specific programs and summer day camps! Watch our website for upcoming educational opportunities.

Saving Your Green by Going Green

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is making some exciting changes to help the environment! We have recently implemented what we hope will be the first steps to making our Refuge a “green” non-profit. Some changes our visitors might be able to observe, but others will be happening behind the scenes. On your next visit, keep an eye out for these new initiatives taking place within TCWR.

Our gift shop has taken the first step by removing plastic gift bags and replacing them with bags made of 100% recycled materials. Purchase more than $30 in merchandise and you will receive the reusable bag for free, or pay $2 to cover its cost; remember, all proceeds from our shop go to the care and housing of our animals!

In addition, we will install a greenhouse to grow our own plants for use throughout the property. This will enable us to not only make the Refuge more beautiful but also to grow plants that will help local bugs, like butterflies and bees, to thrive, creating a more diverse ecosystem here for our animals and guests.

Lastly, we are working behind the scenes on a compost pile to help reduce our trash and waste. With 100 animals we generate a large amount of organic waste, which up to now we buried or disposed of as trash. Our compost pile will not only drastically reduce the amount of waste we produce, but provide a rich soil conditioner, which will be used to help our new plant life grow.

We are very excited to be making these first small steps to becoming an environmentally sustainable facility. Instead of a linear system producing waste we are striving to adopt a circular system, as in nature. This is only the beginning; we hope to continue to make changes to improve our environmental impact and improve the world around us. We must protect not only big cats but also our planet; all life is interdependent. We get only one planet Earth, and there is no “reset” button for us to push.

Each day we are making strides in setting the standard on how all rescue facilities should be run. Please join us in our efforts by making a donation today — with your help, we can continue to grow and improve.

Enjoy free high flying fun for the whole family. Bring a kite, make one, or buy one! It’s a bird, it’s a plane, it’s a Kite Festival!
Shakira II

Shakira II, nicknamed Mama, started life at a pseudo sanctuary and was bread repetitively for 20 months, having four litters in that short time. It is typical for money hungry operators for cub petting/pay for play schemes to breed the "golden goose" without concern of her health. Help TCWR Stop This Abuse. Put an end to this injustice! Spring brings thoughts of beautiful flowers, mild and sunny weather, and of course - babies! When we think about spring, we think about a time of renewal, and our instinct when we see a baby animal tells us how good they make us feel; they are so young and sweet, and have a full life ahead of them. However, it's time for all of us to start using some sound analytic thinking, specifically when we talk about cubs.

All cubs are adorable, and Refuge tigers Tanya and Kizmin were no exception when they were small. What isn't cute, or humane in any sense, is the inbreeding used to produce them and so many others, resulting in lifelong disabilities and suffering. Their mother, Shakira II, was rescued from a pseudo sanctuary in Colorado where she had already had four litters of cubs despite being just over three years old. Female tigers do not reach sexual maturity until the age of four to five, and mothers normally stay with their cubs until they themselves reach that age. Sadly, Shakira II was forced to have so many litters of cubs in that short time for the sake of human greed. The pseudo-sanctuary took her cubs away soon after birth to use in cub-petting and pay-for-play schemes, ending proper food, love and care; only a heart of stone could withstand their cries for each other, as they make in the wild when separated. Shakira II was put through this at least four times in her short life at the breeding facility, so that she could again be impregnated. Inbreeding, repetitive impregnation, cub-petting, drugged cubs, malnutrition, stress, and premature death are all realities of captive breeding within pseudo-sanctuaries and roadside zoos. Luckily for this family, Shakira II was brought to TCWR with Tanya and Kizmin to live out their lives in safety, feel grass on their paws, and receive proper nutrition and medical care.

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge prohibits breeding of any kind at the Sanctuary, and is actively working to change the laws which allow pay-to-play cub petting schemes while continuing to rescue victims of these breeding facilities. You can help us continue this fight by becoming a member today - please, help us, help them.
Creating New Ways to Improve The Lives Of Our Cougars

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge has been working diligently since 2015, to update and improve our existing habitats. This has been an ongoing project since we've had a few delays, including - rescues, rehomes, and of course building the bear habitats. We are down to our final few habitat updates, which include a complete rebuild of our oldest cougar habitat that was built in 2002.

Rick and Cindy Roop, a couple who loves Turpentine Creek and our mission, donated the funds to rebuild this habitat in 2016, shortly before we took on the Colorado Project. They were more than understanding that their habitat rebuild project needed to be put on hold for a while, but we are glad to finally let them, and you, know that we have demolished the old cougar habitat and have begun the rebuild.

“Cindy and I really admire and respect what you guys do at Turpentine. We wanted to help however we could. ”

Our senior cougars have been relocated to Rescue Ridge since we had to completely tear down their old habitat to build a new one. We will be removing the old night houses, expanding the habitat space, making it wider and slightly longer, and finding a way to integrate more vertical areas for the cougars to enjoy.

Social Media - Your Daily Big Cat Fix

Turpentine Creek has spent the last few years cultivating an online following through social media sites, such as Facebook. We work diligently to make sure that we are utilizing these digital communication pathways to get information to our supporters in a timely manner. Sadly, over the past few years, Facebook has made it more and more difficult to reach our supporters.

In 2015, Facebook began limiting the reach of Facebook posts to only 5% of our audience. Recently, they announced that they would yet again be reducing the reach for businesses, including non-profits. The predicted new reach would be less than 1% of our current Facebook audience. This means that 99% of our followers will not get updates about what is happening at the Refuge.

There are a few actions you can take to make sure you are still getting TCWR updates:

1. Change your Facebook Following option from “Default” to “See First.”
2. Make a point to go to Turpentine Creek’s Facebook page frequently.
3. Sign up for our weekly e-newsletter to get vital information like rescues and event information.

You can also follow us on Twitter, Google+, and YouTube. At this point, these social media sites have not announced a change to their post reach.

We will continue to send information about the Refuge out to our supporters online through weekly e-newsletter emails, our website blogs, online quarterly newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and many other upcoming digital means. We will be making some significant changes at TCWR over the next few years, and the fastest way to find out about exciting new news is online. We will see you there!

The Mystery Behind the Black Panther

Education Intern Hannah Wherry

What is a black panther? Where do they live? North America, South America, Africa, or Asia? What does the cat look like? While many people use this name for a variety of big cats and call TCWR’s lovely black leopard Spyke a “black panther,” this species of cat, simply does not exist.

While the “black panther” is not a species of cat, it is an umbrella term for a group of cats that produce a melanistic, or black pigmentation of the fur. Melanism coloration is associated with a specific allele (genetic mutation) that favors a black coat. Melanin is the same pigment that gives a human their dark skin, eyes, and hair.

This gene is most common in leopards (Panthera pardus) found in Africa and Asia, as well as jaguars (Panthera onca) found in South America. They do not lose their spots or rosettes, as the melanistic trait exists only at the end of their fur. For example, when the sun shines over Spyke’s coat, it is easy to see his beautiful leopard spots.

A mountain lion (Puma concolor) is also commonly called a panther, and is well distributed throughout North and South America. Although they have been thousands of sightings of “black panthers” in the U.S., there have been no confirmed scientific reports of the existence of melanistic mountain lions, and only a single reporting of a jaguar in Arizona in recent times.

Many other species of cat such as servals, bobcats, and jungle cats also have melanistic tendencies – so, next time someone says a “black panther” is their favorite animal, be sure to ask which kind!