

News Release
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Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge Releases Servals into New Habitat
Local Wildlife Refuge Held Special Ceremony to Celebrate Habitat Completion

Eureka Springs, Ark. (June 12, 2019) – Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) released their serval residents into a new habitat this morning. Its creation was made possible by the Roop family.

A crowd gathered at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge a little before 10 AM just as there was a break in rain showers to commensurate the grand opening of the new enclosure, which is 200 feet long, 40 feet at it's widest, and 27 feet at its most narrow.

Animal Curator, Emily McCormack, greeted attendees with a speech recognizing the Roop family's generosity.

"Thank you guys so much for donating," McCormack said. "...Making a habitat forever helps animals- not just these ones today, but some in the future."

Gesturing to the Roop family, she continued, "For them, it's a legacy for their family- for their kids and grandkids, who are here. It takes people like that to keep the mission going here at the Refuge."

The family was also recognized with a special sign placed on the perimeter fence of the enclosure and had the honor of opening the doors to release the servals.

A group of three servals, consisting of males Bowden and Whistler, and female Giselle, were released during the ceremony. As rain began to trickle from the sky once more, Bowden was the only one brave enough to peek through the doors and slowly creep out to explore his new space. Next door neighbor, Chloe, a lioness, demonstrated interest in the potential new friend but was quickly dismissed with a "hiss" from Bowden.

"For smaller cats, a lot of times things are a little bit scary," McCormack warned earlier during her speech, telling the crowd she hoped the servals would emerge when they opened the doors.

Once the crowd dispersed, Whistler and Giselle finally made an appearance and spent time investigating their updated surroundings.

Servals, Sammy and Enzo, who were rescued as kittens last July, will be introduced to the other three once they all have time to get comfortable with their surroundings. They along with Tigger, a Savannah Cat rescued along with Sammy and Enzo, will get their chance in the habitat in the upcoming days.

Construction on the habitat began early in the winter; maintenance and animal care teams, as well as volunteers, worked through spring furnishing the space with a heated/cooled building, natural rock formations, wood features, firehouse hammocks and a pool. The team faced several obstacles, including unpredictable weather and material delays.

Now that the project is finally completed, guests can view it as part of the regular guided tour offered by TCWR. In the summer, walking tours depart every hour on the hour starting at 10 AM with the final one leaving at 4 PM. Guided trolley tours are also available every hour on the half hour beginning at 10:30 AM; the last one departs at 3:30 PM.

For more information about Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, please visit tcwr.org. For photos and videos that can be used in print or video with credit given to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge visit <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1R256hOo35yfucoSf9ApAYVqWqydbimiJ>

A live stream of the serval habitat release can be viewed on Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/TurpentineCreekWildlifeRefuge/>.

Original Story:

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) invites the public to the grand opening of their new serval habitat on Wednesday, June 12, at 9:45 AM. The refuge opens at 9 AM and guests are encouraged to arrive no later than 9:30 AM.

Work on the project began this winter, almost immediately after the grand opening of TCWR's updated bear habitats. The organization's animal care and maintenance teams battled unpredictable weather and material delays while juggling their other daily duties required for the sanctuary to operate efficiently. In the coming weeks, they will be making a few finishing touches and doing a pre-introduction between the six animals that will reside in the habitat.

The enclosure spans 6,500 square feet. Much like tigers, servals are a species of water-loving felines, so TCWR has provided them with a pool for the summer. Because servals are native to Africa, they disfavor cold weather, so the enclosure comes equipped with a spacious heated building. The refuge also incorporated natural rock and wood features to fabricate benches for resting and hollows for privacy.

The habitat was constructed to be versatile for other use in the future. According to TCWR president, Tanya Smith, the habitat could safely and comfortably house multiple small cats, such as leopards or cougars, or a single large animal, such as a lion or a tiger.

“As we continue fighting the Exotic Pet Trade epidemic, we know that the phone could ring at any second with a call about an animal or multiple animals whose lives are on the line,” Smith stated. “We keep this in mind as we build habitats. Many years from now, the servals may be living in our ‘retirement community’ at Rescue Ridge, and this space will be needed for another animal.”

The creation of the serval habitat was made possible by the Roop family.

For more information about Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, including admission rates and standard tour times, please visit their website: <https://www.turpentinecreek.org/>.

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About Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge

Founded in 1992, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization operating one of America’s largest big cat sanctuaries. The 450-acre refuge, located 7 miles south of Eureka Springs, is America’s premier big cat wildlife refuge. Turpentine Creek does not buy, sell, trade, or breed our animals. We are a hands-off facility and do not allow contact with the animals in our care. We are accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, a member of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, a member of Tigers in America, USDA Licensed and Arkansas Game and Fish Licensed. Our Mission is to provide lifetime refuge for abandoned, abused, and neglected "Big Cats" with emphasis on Tigers, Lions, Leopards, and Cougars.

Additional Information Sources & Photos

<http://www.TurpentineCreek.org>

https://www.facebook.com/TurpentineCreekWildlifeRefuge/photos_stream

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