

Big Cat Chronicles

Spring 2024



Kimba

Male Tiger
(*Panthera tigris*)

Born 2017

Rescued 9/29/23



Letter from the President

Founder Tanya Smith



Since Turpentine Creek began over 31 years ago, your support and belief in our team have made incredible things happen for Big Cats Nationwide. This past year has been a milestone for TCWR. Working alongside the contractors, our team completed the necessary new habitats in Freedom Field to welcome all 33 new Florida cats in under a year. I am blown away that we finished on time. I knew we could do it, but when you look at what we have accomplished together in 2023, despite all the obstacles, WOW.

We could not have pulled off this incredible achievement without your generosity! Your support is more valuable than ever in 2024.

I know you will welcome these new cats into your hearts and help us give them the fantastic lifelong care that all TCWR animals enjoy. They are available to sponsor and adopt: TCWR.org/support/adoptions-sponsorships/



We still have a long way to go to finish Freedom Field. There are still more habitats to get sponsored and funded, plus construction and all the finishing touches for our new cats' outdoor areas. Since the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act in December 2022, USFWS officials have said that thousands of big cats will need sanctuary. We aim to complete this massive habitat expansion during the first quarter of 2024. We can only do this with your help! You can become a part of our new area for wild cats in need in many ways, and we'll tell you more about them inside this newsletter.

Throughout 2024, we must work together to expand TCWR Public Education. USFWS officials will need the help of an informed public to enforce the new national legislation and apprehend animal abusers. Our Education Center and Museum will increase our educational outreach by approximately 300% while tripling our visitor attendance. That revenue will help us uphold our promise to care for all the animals we rescue for the rest of their lives, with the best care possible in captivity. Thanks to everyone who has donated directly to our Capital Campaign. For more information, contact me at tanya@tcwr.org.

Since Turpentine Creek began, we have made incredible strides for Big Cats due to your support and belief in our team. I am filled with hope for all we can accomplish together in 2024! Until next time...

Sincerely,

Tanya Smith, President & Founder



Check out our education resources: Education.Turpentinecreek.org

Cyrus Finds Freedom at His Forever Home



 ADOPT ME

It has been almost two decades since a caracal has called TCWR “home,” from the time Carrie passed in 2005. Caracals are native to Africa and Asia, distinct for their reddish-brown coat, long tufted ears, and black face markings. As our race to complete Freedom Field and rehome 33 cats ended in late December 2023, the Refuge welcomed a fourteen-year-old male caracal named Cyrus.

Cyrus was born in 2010 at a breeding facility in Okeechobee, Florida that posed as a wildlife rehabilitator in the community. However, it was soon discovered that this facility was responsible for selling many servals and other small exotic cats. Cyrus was sold to another breeder in Ohio, where it was illegal to breed exotic cats. The Ohio Department of Agriculture learned about the operation and seized the animals, including Cyrus. He was provided sanctuary at an accredited Florida sanctuary this year until he arrived at TCWR.

Upon arrival at Freedom Field, Cyrus was more shy and nervous than his female companion. He was nervous about unloading but, with some time, settled into his new habitat. As he settled in, he began to enjoy exploring their spacious habitat. On cold days and nights, Cyrus loves retreating to their heated indoor building, complete with benches, enrichment toys, and a litter box.

Caracals are uniquely solitary animals that patrol and defend their territory. As agile hunters, they have perfected hunting small mammals, rodents, monkeys, and domestic livestock. In certain regions, the caracal is known as a nuisance, leading to the rapid decline of this cat in recent years, emphasizing the need to find innovative ways for these cats and humans to coexist.

Cyrus has a comical and playful personality. He trills and chats with his neighbors and care team, expressing more sociable behaviors than most cats. He loves toys and is especially fond of meat treats. When animal care staff give him pumpkins, he is known for putting his whole head inside! Please consider adopting or sponsoring a caracal today!



 SPONSOR US



Our Newest Tigers Are Thriving!

When Florida tigers Max, Kimba, and Simba arrived at the Refuge last October, our team was aware of the deep trauma these cats had suffered at the hands of Guatemalan circus workers in their former lives. Even though the three had received excellent care at the accredited Tampa sanctuary that rescued them in 2017, these tigers continued to exhibit signs of their past trauma. Max still carried a deep fear and mistrust of humans. His former keepers had told us that the handsome tiger remained in his den most days.

The TCWR Animal Care Team has had decades of experience dealing with traumatized big cats. Our Curator, Emily McCormack, visited Max and the other new cats multiple times each day throughout the autumn, quietly observing and communicating with them. Her calming presence and the lure of their new expansive habitats have helped erase their fears over the past months!

By winter, the TCWR Animal Care Team saw all three tigers outside daily, exploring their habitats, taking in the majestic views of the Ozarks, and interacting with their neighbors and keepers. Even Max will run to the fence when he spots his care team, chuffing a hello in anticipation of possible meat treats! Max, Jasmine, Aria, and Dutchess received Christmas Tree enrichment in December, and Max was all in on the fun! Afterward, we saw a very relaxed and played-out Max lying panting in his habitat, calmly taking in all the activity and enjoying the views of his new kingdom!



Letter from the Curator

Emily McCormack



"If we build it, they can run!" Sitting in my truck in Freedom Field to write this article felt appropriate; it is still filled with measuring wheels, tape measures, string, flags, and marking paint from the past year of laying out this amazing 14.2-acre expansion. I have been part of the TCWR team for 25 years. The dream was always to build even more spacious habitats for our rescued residents to run, play, and explore. For animals in captivity, this is as close to freedom as it gets.

Once called the "Witness Tree" field, this clearing brought joy to many of us who reside on the property; from hiking, bonfires, 4-wheeling, photoshoots, Victor Smith as a kid camping with his friends, and all my dogs running free. From the beginning of my career at TCWR, I dreamed that one day, tigers would run around this beautiful piece of land with amazing views of the Ozarks.

Since I was young, I had a creative imagination and loved to build things. Art was almost the route I took in college. Fortunately, after obtaining my Zoology degree, I landed my dream job. Not only working with tigers but rescuing them and building their future. As we began constructing around the habitat loop, Tanya and Scott let me lay out the habitats. I drew my plans, learning from what was previously established at TCWR and ideas I gained from visiting other animal facilities. TCWR started getting more rescue calls, so expansion was inevitable to continue our mission. I am beyond honored to see my visions become reality.



At 14.2 acres, this is our biggest project yet. I would grab my dogs and go to the field almost every night after work, walking the edges and up and down the slopes. Using Google Earth photos, I drew my ideas. I sent my drawings to Tanya and Scott for input and returned to implement them. I'll never forget driving around the middle of this grass field with Scott on what is now the actual road we are using for private tours and accessing the animals who now call this home. There were challenges along the way and so many drawings I lost count. I am proud to have been able to design and flag out every line and turn of fencing, roads, and night houses.

I want to acknowledge and celebrate the achievement of building Freedom Field in one year with our amazing TCWR team. When a group of individuals, like the TCWR team, share a common goal and support each other, our impact on the animals is magnified! Many new residents call Freedom Field home, but we also have spaces ready for the next rescue call. Multiple habitats still need to be sponsored as we recoup the massive expenses that went into this project. Together, with your support, we can pave the way for the future freedom of animals in need. We appreciate all of you who compassionately invest in the future and well-being of these rescued majestic creatures.

Together, we are making an impact!



You Can Make a Difference in Many Ways!



Supporters built benches for Freedom Field in their hometown, involving friends and family.



Max the bobcat loves to get off the ground and onto his bench in Freedom Field.

TCWR supporters went above and beyond to build benches for habitats in Freedom Field and to raise money during the popcorn fundraiser. We plan to continue and expand upon such initiatives this year. Building benches can be done right in your hometown, involving the family, community, or local organizations and clubs. This helps the Refuge spread our mission to those who may not have heard of us while directly providing habitat structures for the animals. For more information on how you can build benches in your community, please reach out to carlyt@tcwr.org

Last winter, we launched our first Holiday Popcorn Fundraiser. These crowdfunding initiatives are a phenomenal way to engage in meaningful conversation about the Refuge. We will host more easy opportunities for supporters to fundraise and spread our mission. Supporters will have a fun, engaging, and zero-cost method of making a difference. Follow our social media for announcements on future crowdfunding opportunities or contact david@tcwr.org.

Both efforts highlight the multifaceted nature of supporting TCWR while expanding the reach of our mission. These initiatives showcase the power of creativity, collaboration, and community engagement. Whether building benches or helping to sell tasty treats, every effort counts in creating a safer and more sustainable haven for exotic animals.

Letter from the Veterinarian

Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, DVM

B.B. King was born at TCWR in May 2008 after his mother was rescued pregnant. Due to their mom not producing any milk, B.B. and his brother Mack were hand-raised by the Animal Care Staff. Early in life, B.B. had some musculoskeletal ailments that set him up for future arthritis development. However, his close relationship with staff and his laid-back, sweet personality made him an easier feline to care for and treat than most. He became part of the voluntary behavioral training program, and the trust between him and the staff blossomed further.



It is due to this relationship that when B.B. King was diagnosed with a rare form of aggressive cancer on his tongue in 2020, we were able to treat the senior tiger with intravenous chemotherapy, a very rare treatment form able to be performed on a tiger due to their usual aggressive nature and the need for repeated anesthetic treatment events. But he did wonderfully, voluntarily moving to the onsite hospital for each session. Unfortunately, around a year after ending chemotherapy, the cancer began growing back. However, due to the chemo, the cancer shrunk considerably in size, making aggressive surgery possible. The cancer was completely cut out, and we all breathed a sigh of relief! Over the next year, his muscle condition and mobility did begin to decline significantly, though he continued to be a happy cat and always took his pain meds. In June of 2023, two pin-point-sized masses appeared on his tongue. They were removed and did turn out to be further cancer, but all margins were again achieved.



Dr. Kellyn examined B. B. King in the Jackson Memorial Hospital, where our team treated him for his cancer.

Sadly, beginning in August, he began experiencing intermittent gastrointestinal upsets. Then, at the end of October, he stopped wanting to eat. Ever the dutiful tiger, he would eat via assisted feeding by the staff, but despite GI supportive care, his condition worsened. On top of this, his severe arthritis had also begun affecting his quality of life. Unfortunately, it was determined that it was time to let him find peaceful relief. It was one of the hardest decisions we have ever made as a team, but we knew keeping him around was selfish and not in his best interest. Therefore, with his human family around him, we performed humane euthanasia. After all of this, it was comforting to find that we had been able to contain his cancer from ever spreading beyond his tongue. He was an amazing tiger, one of the best, in my opinion, and he will be so deeply missed.

Bobcat Beginnings: The First Florida Eight Arrive

The first eight bobcats arrived at Freedom Field from Florida on November 29, 2023. The TCWR Animal Care Team welcomed these cats with high expectations that they would soon find comfort in their newly built habitats, just as the previous six tigers had. Like all animals that TCWR rescues, most carry mental and physical scars from past traumas.



Ariel had been taken directly from the wild and raised as a pet. Her 'owners' likely found that housing a wild animal wasn't quite what they bargained for and contacted the Florida sanctuary. She has claimed the top of her den as her favorite place to nap and enjoys viewing her neighbors and the surrounding Ozarks.

Max was privately owned and purchased from a backyard breeder. After a lengthy legal battle with his previous owner, Max was placed at the Florida sanctuary to live out his life. Since arriving at TCWR, Max has embraced his new home and caretakers.



Reclusive Val (see her story on page 23) - has found comfort in spending time in her den and exploring her habitat at dusk when everyone has left for the evening.



Dryden and Kewlona were rescued together from a pseudo-sanctuary in 2016, whose USDA license was revoked due to neglectful conditions. These two naturally elusive cats enjoy nestling together in their den or lounging on their comfy mesh habitat bench.



Officials seized MaryAnn from a private facility in Kansas, facing animal cruelty charges. MaryAnn is still transitioning to her new life with grass, outside boulders, and fun enrichment while enjoying her heated den.

Sioux and Lakota's previous owner was arrested and charged with 28 counts of animal cruelty and neglect at a rundown Alabama facility. They were severely underweight at rescue, but sanctuary life restored their health. The pair enjoy their igloo den, and Lakota now comes to the fence to greet their care team.



You can continue to support these amazing animals by symbolically adopting or sponsoring them. TCWR also offers you the unique opportunity to fund a new habitat in Freedom Field - a great way to make your legacy a part of the Refuge.



Our Inside View: The Realization of Freedom Field

Habitat expansion has been part of TCWR's strategic plan long before we began our capital campaign in 2021. For years, our team discussed where and when we could build more habitats to be ready for large-scale rescues. The sizeable clearing on Refuge property that had been a hayfield in the past century was our most logical choice. With the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) in late 2022 and the request in January of 2023 from a closing Florida sanctuary to take in roughly three dozen cats, our 14-acre Freedom Field Expansion became a critical priority.



We still must fund twelve habitats and the public rest area! Your naming rights support will offer freedom to generations of wild cats and provide your family a legacy at the Refuge.

Freedom Field is close to twice the combined area of Rescue Ridge and our Natural Bear Habitats. Since our team began working alongside contractors last March, our goal was to finish the necessary habitats in time to welcome the new 33 Florida cats by year's end. Despite problems from rainy weather to TCWR Team Leaders injured while working in the field, we completed the necessary habitats to welcome the last of these cats by late December 2023!



Max



Kimba

Continued on next page...



Diablo (Savannah Cat), Smalls (Bobcat), and servals Ginger and Hutch, now call Freedom Field their forever homes. Learn more about them in our summer issue.

Tigers Max, Kimba, and Simba arrived on September 29, followed by Aria, Dutchess, and Jasmine on October 20. On November 29, we welcomed bobcats Max, Mary Ann, Kewlona, Dryden, Sioux, Lakota, Val, and Ariel. The remaining ten bobcats, two caracals, five servals, and two Savannah cats arrived in December, but we'll wait to introduce you to them in our summer issue!

The 44 Freedom Field habitats are the largest we have built, averaging ½ acre (just under 23,000 SF!) for big cats, 3,480 SF for medium, and 2,500 SF for small cats. While our goal was to give rescued cats more space to run and play, we also considered that USFWS officials have predicted thousands of big cats will need rescue over the coming years. Each new habitat was designed with double-night houses to help us accommodate large-scale rescues. We also plan to construct a pavilion in the center with public restrooms, catering, and seating areas for programs to make your visits more enjoyable and educational.



An aerial shot of TCWR's expansion, including our Habitat Loop, Freedom Field and part of Rescue Ridge in the bottom right corner.

What we've accomplished together is nothing short of miraculous, but we still must construct and recoup the expenses for the remaining habitats so we're prepared to take on more animals in need when the rescue calls come.

This spring, we will begin installing benches and rock nooks, planting reed grass for more privacy, and erecting shade cloths while the fast-growing oaks we planted mature. Over time, we plan to install the inground pools. We aim to complete the remaining habitats by our ribbon-cutting on April 27.

We dearly need naming plaque sponsors, with twelve habitats still requiring funding and the pavilion! Your naming rights generosity will offer lives of freedom to generations of wild cats while offering your family a legacy at the Refuge.



 [LEARN MORE](#)

Are you a Member of Turpentine Creek?

Imagine being able to bring your friends and family to the Refuge to introduce them to your favorite animal. Is it Joey? Is it Shakira II? You can help your close circle learn about the cats' individual stories and connect with them too. With all the memberships on this page, you get free entry to TCWR for you and four guests all year long. These memberships also include discounts for lodging, the gift shop, specialty tours, and more. Become a Wild About Wildlife member today and be the voice of the animals, bringing your friends and family into our world together.

TCWR.org/support/memberships/



Wild About Wildlife Membership Program

Help the animals that call Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge home and make it easy to visit them often with friends and family by signing up for one of our membership options. Members may bring up to four guests each time they visit, and receive valuable discounts on lodging, specialty tours and our gift shop inventory!

All Members Receive:

Free year-round entry for cardholder & 4 guests, TCWR yearly calendar, an annual subscription to the Big Cat Chronicles, recognition in our annual report and website, and exclusive member e-mails & events.



Friends of India \$300- \$1,249*

- Friends of India membership card & decal
- 15% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 10% off lodging
- 10% off on specialty tours for cardholder and up to 4 guests
- Framed 5x7 photograph of India

Bam Bam Benefactors \$1,250 - \$2,999*

- Bam Bam Benefactor's membership card & decal
- 15% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 20% off of lodging
- 20% off on specialty tours for cardholder and up to 4 guests
- Framed 5x7 photograph of Bam Bam
- Bam Bam Travel Mug

The Kenny Fellowship \$3,000 - \$9,999*

- Kenny Fellowship membership card & decal
- 20% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 30% off of lodging
- Private Tours with Senior Staff
- A Senior Staff Liaison
- Framed 8x10 photograph of Kenny
- The Kenny Fellowship Shirt
- Kenny Travel Mug

The Hilda Jackson Society \$10,000+*

- Hilda Jackson Society membership card & decal
- 20% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 50% off of lodging
- Private Tours with Senior Staff
- Senior Staff Liaison
- Framed 8x10 photo of favorite animal
- The Hilda Jackson Society Shirt
- The Hilda Jackson Society Travel Mug

*To be part of a membership level you must sign up for that level, donate the amount required to be part of that specific level and are encouraged to pledge to make a similar donation the following year.

**Limitations on lodging dates may apply.

Yes, I will help the animals!
Enclosed is my tax deductible contribution of:

100% of my donation goes to help the animals!

Your Contribution: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$35 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 Other \$ _____

I would like to make my loving donation recurring:

..... → ☐ Repeat Monthly



☐ **Go Paperless:** You can opt to receive this newsletter by email. Enter your address here: _____@_____

Choose Your Membership

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!

☐ **\$45 The P.A.W. Club, Kid's Membership (Ages 6-13)** Name of child: _____

See TCWR.org/kidsclub for more info. Email address: _____

☐ **\$150 Pride Membership - You and 3 guests get a full year of visits to the Refuge. *BEST ADMISSION VALUE!***

☐ **\$300+ Friends of India**

☐ **\$1,250+ Bam Bam Benefactors**

☐ **\$3,000+ Kenny Fellowship**

☐ **\$10,000+ Hilda Jackson Society**

Shirt Size (circle one) S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL

Shirt Size (circle one) S, M, L, XL, 2XL, 3XL

Total:
\$ _____

☐ Opt Out of Membership Signup Gifts

Adopt or Sponsor an Animal Today!

Printed Animal Adoption:

- ☐ \$150/yr - Small Cat
- ☐ \$150/yr - Cougar/Leopard/Jaguar
- ☐ \$150/yr - Lion/Tiger/Bear/Hyena

Animal Sponsor:

TCWR no longer limits the number of sponsors per animal because sponsorships help all rescues.

- ☐ \$1,000/yr - Small Cat
- ☐ \$2,200/yr - Cougar/Leopard/Jaguar
- ☐ \$2,500/yr - Lion/Tiger/Bear/Hyena

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

☐ Membership Opt Out

Monthly payments available for sponsorships, See website: TCWR.org

Adopted/Sponsored Animal's Name(s): _____

Total Contribution Today: \$ _____

Donor Name: _____ Phone #: _____

Recipient Name (if different): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Input Credit Card below or make checks payable to TCWR.

Credit Card #: _____

Exp. Date: ____/____/____ CVC Code: _____

Preparing for the Future Brings New Regulations



In designing Freedom Field, the future and what it may hold were at the forefront of our minds. In anticipation, the TCWR team had to ensure not only the adequacy of available space and resources for potential new rescues but also validate that our licensing to house any new rescues remained current and up-to-date.

TCWR is one of the nine big cat sanctuaries accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS); however, we must uphold licensing standards and regulations through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA helps regulate and ensure the humane treatment of animals - through routine inspections - under the Animal Welfare Act passed in 1966. From the beginning, TCWR has fostered a strong relationship with the USDA by working closely through rescue operations and showcasing TCWR as an example of excellent animal care and safety.

Recently, TCWR increased its licensing to allow us to home up to 200 animals. With the completion of the 44 Freedom Field habitats, TCWR will have 102 natural habitats. With the recent passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act, it is evident that thousands of animals will need to be placed within the next few years. This extra step in preparation guarantees that TCWR can assist and rehome any new rescues immediately, increasing the number of animals cared for annually.

A VACATION OF FREEDOM

Come join us at TCWR for a trip to remember this spring!

You can expect the animals to explore and stretch their legs in the sunshine after the cold winter months. Visit Freedom Field on a Caravan Tour with the rehomed cats from Florida and 44 new habitats we plan to finish this spring! Fall asleep to lions roaring or enjoy a coffee, taking in an Ozark Mountain sunrise from your porch. We have various lodging options including our Tree House, Safari Lodges, Family Suites, and RV sites. Check out our lodging website for special packages to make your stay one to remember!



Education is Vital To Help Wild Cats

Since beginning of our Capital Campaign in 2021, we have had three goals: Pass the Big Cat Safety Act (BCPSA) into law, construct our new education center & museum, and expand our habitat capacity. With your advocacy, the BCPSA became law in December 2022. Together, we will complete our Freedom Field expansion this spring. We must achieve the construction of our education center & museum in 2025.

In this new 8,166 SF building, we will conduct classes, host field trips, and lead professional development workshops in animal welfare. It will boast an indoor exhibit atrium, divisible classroom space, an expanded educational gift shop, and a small café.

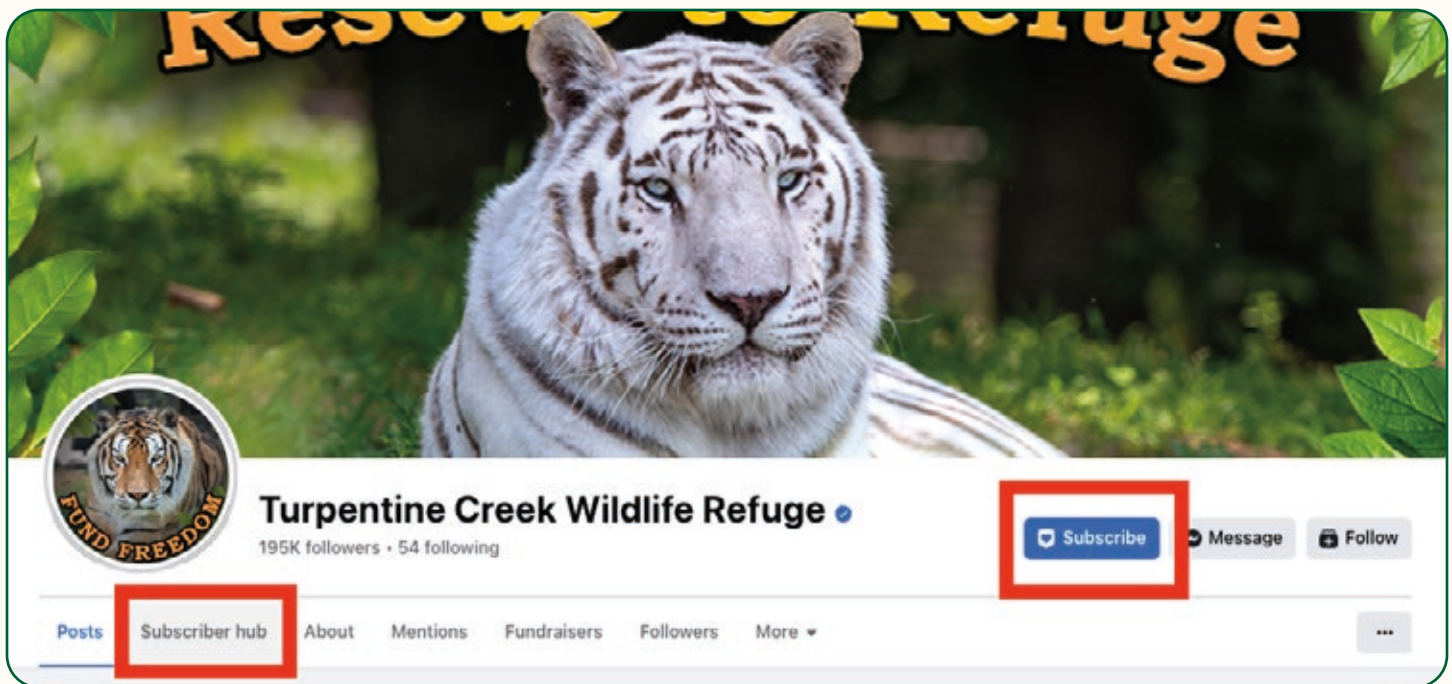
TCWR offers the only non-formal STEM-focused curriculum that teaches how to preserve apex predators and their ecosystems, the alarming details of the US “big cat crisis,” and how children and adults can help. Our new interactive exhibits will engage all of the senses and help families build knowledge of how apex predators benefit our ecosystems while they learn sustainable actions they can practice in daily life. Sustainable actions can help reduce our carbon footprint and the amount of toxins we release. Society and wildlife will benefit from improved air quality, water quality and decreasing landfills. Our classes and educational tours will create a new generation of wildlife advocates.



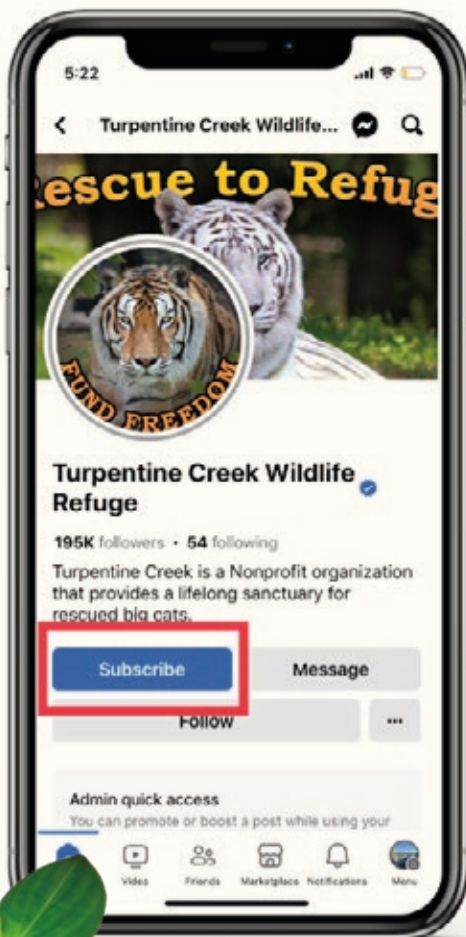
TCWR's education center & museum will reduce the mistreatment of big cats by raising awareness of the common forms, signs, and symptoms of big cat abuse while increasing our number of visitors from 50,000 to 150,000 annually. Our classes and exhibits will empower the public to take action to help big cats and other animals by providing information on how to identify and report wildlife abuse and neglect and encourage visitors to get involved in advocacy efforts. As a result, 95% of visitors will no longer visit places that exploit animals, and 98% will know more about big cats.



Exclusive TCWR Content Now Available Worldwide Subscribe Now!



Log onto Facebook and become part of our Facebook Subscriber program today!



Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is creating new ways to engage with our supporters through digital channels. We have recently launched our Facebook Subscriber and Live Cam programs. These programs provide value back to our supporters while helping to provide reliable and sustainable income for the Refuge. Counting on a steady monthly revenue is necessary to plan for unsuspected emergencies and challenges.

TCWR is nestled in the heart of the Ozark Mountains, and it can be challenging to bridge the geographical gap to supporters with our location so far away from big cities. Monthly donations through our digital subscriptions offer supporters a unique and interactive way to contribute to the cause they are passionate about. Subscribers become part of an exclusive community that receives behind-the-scenes content, live updates, and personalized interactions with the animals.

These new digital programs empower supporters to become ambassadors for the cause. As you share our exclusive content and updates with friends and family, the Refuge's message reaches a larger audience, exponentially spreading awareness. Keep your eyes on our social media for new program launches, and don't forget about our ROAR Box subscription, where you can get TCWR swag delivered to your doorstep each month!

TCWR Interns Help us Understand the Animals We Rescue

Jordan "Jo" Brown interns at TCWR. She exemplifies the empathy and devotion our program instills in Animal Sciences graduates for captive wild animals. Jo realizes that no matter how much she learned in college, the animals of TCWR are eager to teach her much more.

While our team does not anthropomorphize the animals, Jo says their personalities are complex in ways humans cannot imagine until working with them daily. "Take Roman, a severely cross-eyed white tiger. He morphs from jovially chuffing to snarling and roaring as I refill his water dish, then back to chuffing as soon as I stop!" She's learned that this is just how tigers communicate. "Roman's roars are not hateful; he simply makes his point." Once he's made it, he returns to his usual friendly chuffs.

Jo also marvels at how the media portrays bears as bumbling and lazy. "While that is true at times, they have an intelligence many, including myself, would find shocking!" She noted that all the TCWR bears have figured out how to open doors (once they are unlocked by animal care), and each black bear at Rescue Ridge has their own method of peeling their oranges. Meanwhile, Grizzly Bear BamBam has developed his own "language" to ask for peanut butter. He makes a unique suckling sound like he's trying to suck some liquid through a straw, but the drink is gone - not a sound associated with bears! "It makes me wonder how he figured out that sound could convey he wants peanut butter. He's a fascinating bear!" she concludes.

These animals possess a high level of social intelligence. Our interns work daily to understand them, improving their ability to care for them and countless other animals throughout their careers. You can help support Internships by emailing sandy@tcwr.org.



Jordan "Jo" Brown currently interns at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.



Bam Bam

Winter Hardships



As of the third week in January 2024, the Refuge was forced to close for several days due to extreme weather conditions, losing valuable visitor income. Contributing to our monthly donations helps us have a reliable source of financial support in these circumstances. During these extreme weather events, we must work hard to shovel animal enclosures, maintain diets, prevent water dishes from freezing, and keep the animals healthy. Through your monthly support, we are better prepared for these unexpected events and create more stability for our animals.

Become a recurring donor today by visiting our donation page:

TCWR.org/support-us/donate

Thank You 2023, and Get Ready 2024

The year 2023 has been a journey of growth, compassion, and achievement for TCWR. We would like to express our immense gratitude for the incredible year we have experienced together. Your unwavering support has been instrumental in making this year a resounding success. In less than ten months, we completed the construction of 22 small cat habitats and 6 large cat habitats on Freedom Field. And before the New Year's ball dropped, TCWR welcomed the last 13 of the 33 Florida cats to their forever home.

We had record-breaking attendance for our Fireside Chats and our Giving Tuesday event, where over 360 supporters helped us to raise our goal of \$100,000! We hope to bring this energy into the new year and replicate this success together for NWA Gives on April 4, 2024. You can expect a range of exciting giveaways and another Fireside Chat with our leadership team! If you are interested in directly contributing to our success on this crucial fundraising day through a matching donation, please contact sandy@tcwr.org.

With our lodging and admission covering our overhead expenses, your donations go directly to the animals. These funds are invaluable in supporting the daily animal care operations of the Refuge, ensuring that our animals receive the care and attention they deserve.



Mauri



 ADOPT ME



Meet Our Wild New Residents at TCWR

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is a sanctuary dedicated to providing forever homes for exotic cats, most of which came from the exotic pet trade. Some of the bobcats we acquired in late 2023 from a closing accredited Florida sanctuary had been rescued from the wild rather than from private owners or roadside zoos. There was a large need for the rescue and rehabilitation of bobcats in Florida due to human-wildlife conflict, and the sanctuary was a licensed rehabilitator. After they gave the cats the necessary medical treatment, they would try to release them back into the wild. However, some of those bobcats were deemed unreleasable and needed lifelong sanctuary. They have now become residents of Turpentine Creek.



Mrs. Claws was healed from past injuries but could not be released back into the wild because she had developed a lack of fear of humans. She will live out her life well cared for in Freedom Field.

In Arkansas, the Refuge rarely receives calls for injured bobcats; if we do, we direct them to licensed wildlife rehabilitators. There are many reasons why a wild animal may not be able to be released back into the wild. Most of the time, it is due to an injury that would prevent them from hunting, or they could not learn important skills from their mothers to survive. When kittens are young, they need to learn about life through their mother, such as what is dangerous, how to find food and water, and how to defend themselves. If we cannot teach them these skills in captivity, or if they become too reliant on people, then wild animals cannot be released. Moses, Bailey, Flint, Mrs. Claws, Summer, and Val were all rescued from the wild and deemed non-releasable. Together, we can give them the freedom to live as wild animals in a safe and cared-for environment at Freedom Field.

A Survivor's Journey to Sanctuary: Val the Bobcat

Val is a courageous bobcat with an incredible rescue story of true resilience that now calls Freedom Field “home.” Val was brought to an accredited sanctuary in Florida on February 22, 2022. A farmer had caught her killing chickens and had shot her in the shoulder. During her initial examination, a veterinarian discovered that Val had survived several near-death experiences due to human-wildlife conflict. Val had previous injuries to her left front leg and left eye from a suspected car strike. The bobcat also had healed fractures on her right rear ankle and spine at the base of her tail from another incident. Finally, she had broken canines.



After taking inventory of Val's traumatic injuries, a veterinarian determined that he could not repair her leg. Their decision to proceed with amputation disqualified Val from being released back into the wild. She was nourished and rehabbed back to good health. During another exam, the vet extracted her broken teeth. An ophthalmologist determined she was blind in her left eye.

This resilient bobcat has healed well and adapted to her limitations in the safety and care of sanctuary life. She maintains her wild instincts and temperament but enjoys enrichment and exploring throughout her habitat. You can continue supporting lifelong care for Val and all the animals at TCWR through monthly donations.

Fireside Chat



 SIGN UP

Join us online!

Tuesday, March 5, 7PM CST

Solar Eclipse at The Refuge!

APRIL 8, 2024

On April 8, 2024, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge will be in the path of the solar eclipse, with a totality of 95% forecast at 1:50 PM CST. We will be hosting travelers near and far to witness the event in our Event Field, where we will have a food truck, eclipse glasses, and plenty of room to enjoy viewing. We will also be hosting educational talks and hourly tours at the Refuge. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to observe how the animals will react to this cosmic phenomenon!

Animals tend to exhibit unusual behaviors during a solar eclipse. The change in light levels and temperature disrupts the animals' circadian rhythm. Most cats are nocturnal or crepuscular (active at dawn/dusk), so we will likely see them most active during this time. Walking around our Discovery Area, you'll be able to see the reactions of all the animals for yourself. And don't forget to book your tour reservation online now, as seats will be limited and sell out quickly!



 GET TICKETS

Kite Fest

AT THE REFUGE



SATURDAY, MARCH 23

Join Our Chance to be Part of the TCWR Community!

TCWR hosts events like Kite Fest to bring our communities together. By opening our Festival Lawn to the public each March, we celebrate Spring with our neighbors and make people aware of what Refuge is all about. It's a great way for families to enjoy fun, quality time and experience one of our educational tours, where you'll meet the wild animals we rescue and learn how you can help them!

Sponsors are needed for all events!

Contact Cheryl@tcwr.org for more information.



Shakira II





Thurston: Rescue to Refuge

In 2016, we rescued Thurston from a horrific breeding facility that churned out big cats to supply the cub petting and entertainment industries. When the TCWR Team arrived, the dilapidated Colorado roadside zoo housed 115 big cats and bears on its 12 acres. They lived in misery on top of rotting pallets and sharp nails, without protection from the harsh mountain sun or freezing winter cold. The owner viewed them as replaceable commodities and didn't bother investing in veterinary care for their numerous injuries and ailments. Due to a cancer diagnosis, the man could no longer be responsible for the many animals; after a period of negotiations TCWR took over. (See our 'about' tab for the complete story). Our team brought 34 animals to the Refuge and worked for six months to place the rest at reputable sanctuaries nationwide, helping to establish the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance. Thurston was one of those 34 animals.

We learned that Thurston had a dark past; the majestic tiger's striking white coat condemned him to exploitation. At a young age, a famous magician known to abuse animals forced him to entertain Vegas crowds. Dirk Arthur ruthlessly filed down Thurston's canines and declawed his four paws to make him safer to exploit. Over the years, Thurston's joints became arthritic because the declaw forced him to walk flat-footed.

There are many more big cats living in misery, awaiting rescue. As officials enforce the new legislation, these cats will depend on us for a better life.



At the Colorado facility, cats lived on rotting pallets littered with nails in cramped, rickety enclosures. Big cats still exist in similar conditions, awaiting rescue across the US.

Upon his arrival, our team immediately gave Thurston preventative vaccinations and additional supplements like glucosamine and cod liver oil to aid mobility and placed him on pain management medications. Like all our wild cats, Thurston enjoyed a raw meat diet containing essential amino acids like taurine and minerals like calcium and phosphorous.



In his later years, we moved the regal white cat to the flat ground of Rescue Ridge, where he enjoyed spending time in the sun watching his senior neighbors or relaxing on his shaded wooden bench. In winter, he often retired to his cozy, heated den.

Thurston had a quiet personality and came to trust his caretakers, finally putting his years of suffering and abuse behind him. He experienced many years of carefree freedom because of your generosity. Now, we work to extend that same precious gift to many other cats with our Freedom Field expansion.

Talk to your friends to help prevent exotic animal breeding and exploitation.



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