

# Big Cat Chronicles

— Summer 2024 —



## Fred

Male Tiger

(*Panthera tigris*)

Born 11/28/2022

Rescued 4/28/23

Read more about Fred on page 4.





# Letter from the President

Founder Tanya Smith



As we welcome the summer of 2024, I am grateful for all we have accomplished for big cats. In March 2023, we began the most significant habitat expansion in TCWR history and completed that construction in less than one year with your support! Today, Freedom Field's 44 spacious habitats are filled with animals enjoying lives of freedom and proper care. As officials enforce the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) and turn to us for rescue and lifelong care, we will have 102 habitats that can accommodate up to 200 animals. Please consider creating a legacy in Freedom Field! By sponsoring a habitat naming right, you will help us offer lifelong sanctuary to generations of animals awaiting a better life.

Meanwhile, we can finally reveal young Fred's rescue story (see page 4). As the first tiger confiscated in enforcing the BCPSA, his journey to freedom unveils the far-reaching black market for big cats. Officials will need the help of an informed public to implement the new legislation. Sadly, it isn't just big cats that will need our help over the coming years. This spring, we received four rescue calls for small wild cats and took in a serval named Tigger and a caracal named Emma. Unfortunately, Tigger's story ended tragically due to the consequences of private ownership. As wildlife dealers and roadside operators turn to small cats for profits, these species will suffer the same malnutrition and abuse that their larger relatives have endured.

While the protections we've won for big cats are a huge victory, we must work to shut down the private breeding and ownership of all wild cats. Through 32 years of rescue and advocacy, we have learned that the only way to change the mindset of a nation is through Public Education and grassroots advocacy. The construction of our Education Center & Museum in 2026 has become critical to ending the suffering this greed-driven industry causes.

Throughout 2024, we must prepare financially to achieve the final step necessary to take TCWR Public Education to a national and international level. Our classes and museum-quality exhibits will help us create a new generation of wildlife advocates while making our mission sustainable. To learn how you can help end the suffering of all captive wild cats and bears, please contact [sandy@tcwr.org](mailto:sandy@tcwr.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tanya Smith".

Tanya Smith, President & Founder



Check out our educational resources:  
[Education.Tarpentinecreek.org](http://Education.Tarpentinecreek.org)

# Meet Emma: Your Sneak-Peak at this New Feline



Emma has been enjoying her time in quarantine, getting to know the other patients and her care team.



On May 1st, Emma was released into her expansive habitat to enjoy sunshine for the first time in two years!

After back-to-back rescues, the team arrived at TCWR on March 12 with a middle-aged caracal named Emma. Emma, purchased from a breeder, had gone through two previous owners who used her for breeding. She had been living in her current owners' basement for two years; they were looking for a more suitable home for Emma.

In the US, the average cost of a caracal ranges from \$1,500 - \$20,000. Owning a caracal is legal in 18 states, with the proper permits and licensing. The TCWR team rescued Emma from Illinois, one of six states with no explicit caracal ownership laws. Before bringing Emma to Arkansas, the team had to stop at her veterinary clinic to receive her previous medical history and have them sign off on her health conditions.

Upon arrival, Dr. Kellyn performed a visual exam on Emma when she arrived and discovered a large cutaneous mass on her back, likely a hair follicle-type tumor in which removal is usually curative.

A week later, Dr. Kellyn performed a thorough physical exam on Emma, including bloodwork and x-rays; she was relieved to find her in good health aside from the significant growth and a complicated crown fracture of her upper right canine that will likely need removal.

She also cleaned Emma's teeth, which had minimal tartar. X-rays indicated that she came to us with two microchips. Thankfully, she has all her claws, and they are well-kept. She has a great range of motion in her limbs and a clean, healthy coat.

The mass was easy to remove, but its large size necessitated external sutures and a few surgical staples. Hence, Dr. Kellyn placed an e-collar on her until she could remove them in about 14 days and administered her booster vaccines. At the time of this article we are still awaiting lab results on her tumor, but all characteristics Dr. Kellyn saw point to it being benign.

Emma's serology testing revealed she has had previous exposure to the feline coronavirus (GI virus not to be confused with COVID) and *Toxoplasma gondii*, a type of parasite. This is something we will consider before introducing her to other cats or if she has future health issues. She was negative for FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus) and FeLV (feline leukemia virus).

Emma was released into her new expansive Freedom Field habitat on May 1st after she healed from her surgery. She clearly enjoyed the sunshine after at least two years of living indoors. Small exotic cats like Emma will continue to need our help until they, too, receive national protection from exploitation.

**You can sponsor or adopt Emma here:**





# Featured Animal: Fred

In April of 2023, Turpentine Creek received a call from Arkansas Game and Fish regarding a male tiger cub needing immediate placement. The cub, named Fred by one of our longtime supporters, was one of the first big cats confiscated for violations of the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA), which passed in December of 2022. The previous owner was under investigation as part of a more significant criminal case that would later be known as Operation Early Harvest. Because of this, Fred entered our Witness Protection Program, limiting the information we could provide you until the case was closed.

We were debriefed on his previous situation when Fred arrived on April 4, 2023. The owners allegedly were highly abusive, using punishments such as hitting and slapping to force the cub to behave. The owners reportedly wrestled with Fred and fed him a diet of rats, which did not provide sufficient calcium for a growing tiger. When he arrived, Fred wore a tightly strapped dog harness with little room to move.

At the Jackson Memorial Hospital, Fred began to experience many transformational moments. After we removed his constricting dog harness, Fred ran around the holding cage, played with the hay on the floor, and spotted a log. Hesitating, as if he had been reprimanded for marking in the past, Fred started clawing at the log. This time, the humans around him cheered. In response, Fred jumped into the air in celebration until he discovered his toys and water dish. He began joyfully splashing as if he had never seen so much water in one spot.

Dr. Kellyn performed a complete exam in the following days. Thankfully, while his muscles were slightly underdeveloped, no Metabolic Bone Disease was present. Dr. Kellyn treated Fred for a parasite and put him on a nutritious diet.



We released Fred into his habitat a month later. Walking out onto the grass, he surveyed his vast new home before running down the hill to investigate areas for him to hide and play. He greeted his neighbors, played with his toys, and was surprised to find a massive pool of water to learn new ways of having fun.

In March of 2024, Operation Early Harvest ended, resulting in 56 arrests, including 41 felony charges and 51 misdemeanors. From a life allegedly filled with abuse, neglect, and forceful interactions, Fred is now free to live on his terms. Weighing over 100 pounds, he relishes interacting with his neighbors and keepers while playing his favorite game of stalk and attack. Without enforcement of the BCPSA, Fred could have been condemned to a life of neglect and abuse. Instead, he will spend the rest of his life free to behave and play how he chooses, with the best nutrition and veterinary care possible due to your support.





# Tigger Serval Rescue



**Dr. Kellyn Sweeley during the two-hour surgery to repair Tigger's diaphragmatic hernia.**

**The USDA confiscated Tigger because the owner had not provided veterinary care for this injured and severely underweight animal, despite being aware of the urgent need.**

**Click this button to read the USDA's report on Tigger.**



**After his arrival, our team gave Tigger a few days to acclimate to his new surroundings before attempting his surgery.**

Diaphragmatic hernias are usually caused by trauma. Tigger's was located on the same side as six rib fractures, so it seems likely that the trauma that caused these fractures also created the hole in his diaphragm. Since his injuries appeared at least six weeks old, prolonged organ damage reduced his chances of surviving surgery. However, not fixing the hernia would surely lead to continued suffering and an early death.

Later that week, Dr. Kellyn brought in veterinary doctors Dr. Ron Eby and Dr. Laura Hurst to assist surgery to repair Tigger's diaphragm. During the two-hour procedure, they found that Tigger's entire small intestinal tract, half of his large intestinal tract, and his entire pancreas had been moved into his chest cavity causing his left lung and half of his right lung to collapse. The displaced organs were also restricting his heart from beating correctly. Though the team was initially optimistic because Tigger's organ damage appeared minimal, emergency measures were needed repeatedly to prevent the serval from crashing due to the compression of his heart and lungs.

During the critical post-op period, Tigger breathed independently but could not maintain a sufficient oxygen level, so the team continued to breathe for him periodically. Despite extremely close monitoring and treatment, Tigger eventually succumbed to further respiratory complications two hours after surgery and passed away during CPR efforts.

While we knew going into the surgery his chances for survival were low, we very much wanted to save him. Tigger was a fighter to the last second. We want to thank our fantastic veterinarian, Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, along with Dr. Ron Eby and Dr. Laura Hurst, for their time and effort, and Animal Curator Emily McCormack, for keeping Tigger alive by breathing for him throughout the entire surgical period and into recovery.

Sadly, Tigger endured needless suffering due to irresponsible breeding and a lack of proper nutrition. Tigger's story will be repeated if we do not educate people on why wild animals should never be privately owned or exploited for human entertainment or profit.



# Building Bridges:

## The Power Behind Public Education and Conservation

Education has been at the forefront of TCWR's mission since its beginning in 1992. Currently, TCWR provides the only non-formal STEM-focused (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) curriculum that teaches all ages about preserving apex predators and their ecosystems, the ongoing threats behind the "wild-cat crisis" in the US, and how children and adults can help. Research shows that environmental education remains one of the most influential factors in strengthening the connection between individuals and raising awareness regarding conservation and our ecological footprint.

Environmental education also relies heavily on changing people's behavior and attitudes toward nature, most commonly accomplished through educational tours, programs, campaigns, or exhibits. Instead of merely entertaining visitors, accredited sanctuaries and AZA zoos have prioritized fostering animal welfare, conservation efforts, and the impact of public education. TCWR Public Education programming continues to promote a deeper understanding of wildlife and the critical role each individual can play in preserving global biodiversity.



**The Turpentine Creek Education Center & Museum will provide an in-depth understanding of the exotic animal trade with state-of-the-art museum-quality exhibits, classes, and workshops.**

Building on TCWR's thirty-two years of educational outreach, the Turpentine Creek Education Center & Museum (set to break ground in 2026) will provide an in-depth understanding of the exotic animal trade with state-of-the-art museum-quality exhibits, classes, and workshops. Together, through informed understanding and committed action, we can secure a brighter future for all wild cats and the ecosystems they inhabit.

For more info, visit [education.turpentinecreek.org](https://education.turpentinecreek.org)



Become a Member, Adopter, Sponsor, or Roar Box subscriber to access our fireside Chat experience today.



# Letter from the Curator

Emily McCormack



There is a crisis surrounding the breeding and selling of small exotic cats in the United States. Small cat rescue calls significantly increased after the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) was passed. These animals face many consequences, and we continue to advocate that no wild animal should be a pet.

Of course, people think because they are small, they can handle them, not recognizing the complex needs these animals possess. Species like servals, caracals, bobcats, and even savannah cats require extensive care, specialized diets, and spacious environments to thrive. Unfortunately, private owners do not comprehend their needs, leading to neglect, stress, health issues, and, as in Tigger Serval's story, resulting in the animal's death.

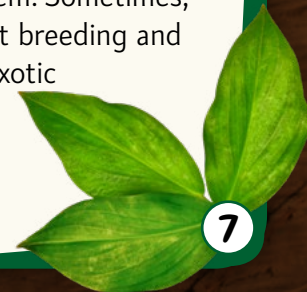
Owners unable to meet the proper needs of these animals find themselves relinquishing their "pets" to sanctuaries or ignorantly releasing them into the wild. Some calls TCWR has received were African Servals who escaped their confinement. All these rescue calls put quite a strain on sanctuaries, but escaped cats also threaten the ecosystem as these non-native species can and will endanger native wildlife. Even with a small cat, escapes can result in attacks that severely threaten public safety. Big cat escapes were a massive factor in facilitating the passing of the BCPSA.



Like the big cats, small cat breeding facilities prioritize profit over the welfare of the animals. Unethical breeding practices can result in genetic health problems and decreased lifespans. We must advocate for stricter regulations to end the trade that allows these breeders to fill their pockets with profit. True sanctuaries have the extensive cost of saving these small cats and providing them lifetime care.

TCWR is very proud of the expansion of Freedom Field. We allocated some space for small cats within the design due to the increased rescue calls. With "extra" enclosures built, sadly, it did not take long to fill those vacancies. Whether the rescue call is for a big or small cat, we will do our best and work tirelessly to save them. Sometimes, like Tigger Serval, his traumatic short lifespan could have easily been prevented if laws against breeding and selling existed. Let's stand together against this crisis, alleviating the suffering of countless exotic small cats. As always, we appreciate your support.

**Together, we are making an impact!**





# Our Guests Can Improve Animals Lives!

In December 2023, supporters Carol Clifford and her niece Kristen Ericson brought a special guest, Dr. Janet Van Dyke, to TCWR to visit with Veterinarian Dr. Kellyn Sweeley. Dr. Van Dyke is board certified in veterinary sports medicine and rehabilitation. In 2002, she founded Canine Rehabilitation Institute, Inc. to train and certify veterinarians, physical therapists, and veterinary technicians in canine rehabilitation. After speaking with Dr. Kellyn, Dr. Van Dyke became convinced that some of the equipment and therapies they use in canines could help our rescued animals. She reached out to her contacts, resulting in the donations of two new pieces of equipment for our hospital from Respond Systems (a division of Paw Prosper).

We received a portable therapeutic laser and PEMF (pulsed electromagnetic field) mat worth over \$6800.00 in early March. These devices offer alternative therapies, requiring no oral ingestion or injection of medications/nutraceuticals. They treat several conditions using light therapy (photobiomodulation) and pulsing electromagnetic field therapy to reduce pain, decrease inflammation, and promote healing at the cellular level.

On March 10, Dr. Kara Amstutz, CEO of the Canine Rehabilitation Institute, visited Dr. Kellyn to offer instructions on the laser unit and PEMF mattress. They also brainstormed ideas on delivering the PEMF therapy via the underside of a roll cage to quickly and safely transfer a big cat or bear onto one for treatment. Respond Systems even has their engineers working on a way to potentially rig four of these large coils together into one control box to deliver a 'tiger-sized' dose of PEMF therapy at once, and again, they plan on donating these four PEMF devices.

Dr. Kara's main reason for visiting was to consult on several cases and see what other advanced treatments she could offer, such as shockwave therapy and joint injections. She is tentatively scheduled for a weekend visit this summer to perform joint injections on the knees of both Hutch Serval and Shiloh Bobcat during their biannual wellness exams. She will again be donating her time and skills. We hope to develop a long working relationship with Dr. Kara as she will benefit our animal residents significantly.

At the time of this writing, Dr. Chris Zink, another expert in veterinary sports medicine, planned to visit us from May 12-18 to help with ideas on how to train the animals so we can safely perform laser treatments on them. We will update you in our fall issue!



We received a PEMF (Pulsed Electromagnetic Field) mat and portable therapeutic laser worth over \$6,800 in early March.



Serval Whistler receives pulsing electromagnetic field therapy by placing his carrier on the PEMF mat.



Dr. Kellyn administers light therapy with our new portable therapeutic laser to reduce Whistler's pain, decrease inflammation, and promote healing at the cellular level.



# Letter from the Veterinarian

Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, DVM

In the zoological field, one becomes an expert on scientific facts and research about the species they work with. For example, it is well known that tiger cubs live with their mother until the age of two in the wild. The mother then chases off the young before maturity to maintain genetic variation. Female tigers reach full growth and maturity at three to four years. Male tigers reach full growth and maturity at four to five years. Even still, these facts were reference-checked by our staff when, for the first time in TCWR history, a rescued pregnant tiger was able to raise her litter. Commonly, newly rescued females are too stressed to care for their young. Priscilla was rescued from the Tiger King Park in 2021. Shortly after her arrival, she gave birth to three cubs. For the first time, we were able to hang back and watch as she proved to be a wonderful mother despite the cubs facing many congenital health issues that required extensive treatment.

One of these conditions involved the two male cubs having undescended testicles until they were one and a half years old, causing us to delay their neuters, typically performed at around one year. Once descended, their surgeries were added to the schedule, but due to an overwhelming number of emergencies that took precedence on the days when I was working at TCWR, they were neutered when they were two years old. We then had a big Uh-Oh surprise when Priscilla was found with two newborn cubs a few months later. What at first seemed impossible, when backtracking the gestation period, the conceptual mating had to have occurred just days before the males were neutered. Priscilla also never showed signs of pregnancy. The juveniles were transferred next door, and Priscilla was allowed to raise her young again.

Looking back, when the males weighed 385 lbs and a whopping 465 lbs, well above average for two-year-olds, the thought occurred, "Something is not normal." What came to mind later was that the species facts discussed earlier reference wild and/or responsibly bred tigers. These hugely irresponsible speed breeders, in it for their egos and cub-petting profits only, have unnaturally selected individuals for sped-up growth and maturity in their haste for more money.

Unlike the previous litter, we are fortunate that these cubs were born healthy. We have received support from GFAS and other sanctuaries. We take it as a learning experience to share with others. The good that came with it was Priscilla got to enjoy raising her young again, up until her unfortunate passing from a severe infection that resulted in acute kidney failure. We will miss her dearly but continue to give her offspring the best care possible. And so, we would like to introduce you to Butch and Chaz, our accidental babies who have already taught us so much about life.



Chaz



Butch



Butch & Chaz



# The Remaining Florida Cats

In December 2023, we welcomed the remaining cats from Florida and released them into their forever home at Freedom Field. The TCWR team has enjoyed seeing all the Florida animals embrace and find comfort in their new home.



Bailey



Beacher

Bailey was brought to her previous Florida sanctuary as a six-week-old kitten, and they developed a comprehensive rehabilitation plan to release her back into the wild. However, due to significant human contact as a kitten, they determined it was in Bailey's best interest to remain in captivity. Bailey enjoys lounging on the firehose bench inside her heated nighthouse and prefers to venture out into her habitat during dusk.

Beacher's former owner had him declawed to make his playful demeanor less destructive. However, his ability to sneak out of the house led to his surrender. Beacher has warmed up to his new caretakers and has grown accustomed to hanging out in the large enrichment boxes his care team provides.



Chaos



Cyrus

Chaos and Cyrus were rescued from the same facility, declawed young, and lived in conditions with limited light and outside access. It has taken time for them to adapt to their spacious habitat at TCWR, but Cyrus has begun to show off his comical and playful personality. He often trills and chats with his neighbors and care team, whereas Chaos prefers to watch everything from a distance inside her nighthouse.





Diablo is a first-generation Savannah Cat, a hybrid cross between an African Serval and a domestic housecat. Purchased from a breeder and privately owned as a kitten, his character and instinctual behaviors were the main reason for his surrender. Due to his elusive personality, he enjoys it when the Refuge is quiet and will venture out to chirp and mew with his neighbors at dusk.



Found as a 13-week-old bobcat kitten, Flint sustained significant injuries from an attack by hunting dogs. These injuries included multiple fractures, inflammation of his C7 vertebrae, and a collapsed pelvic canal, ultimately prohibiting him from being released back to the wild. Flint has become more comfortable in his new home and enjoys sunbathing and napping.



Ginger is a 15-year-old African Serval rescued from a private owner in Kansas. Her previous owner kept the bottle-raised kitten in a 9' x 12' cage, which did not allow room for adequate exercise. Ginger's personality has blossomed since arriving at TCWR, and she is always eager to receive any 'snack' that her caretakers may have.



Hutch was rescued from a pseudo-sanctuary that underwent new management. They allegedly had purchased him from a backyard breeder. He enjoys observing his caretakers during cleaning hours and is always happy to inspect the work afterward.



Before her rescue, Illithia was privately owned. Despite having the proper license to house this small African Serval, her previous owners opted out of renewing their permit due to the complaints and concerns within the community as Illithia grew. Illithia has a quiet personality and can be spotted hiding under a tree in her habitat.

*Continued on next page...*





Lovey was rescued from a privately owned facility in Kansas whose owner faced ten misdemeanor charges related to the neglect and cruelty of the animals. As a naturally shy animal, Lovey has slowly adapted to her new home and routine at TCWR. She finds solace underneath the artificial rock structure in her habitat.



The Florida sanctuary took Mrs. Claws in, after the kitten sustained injuries from an unknown source, to help with her rehabilitation in hopes of placing her back into the wild. After nine months of unsuccessful attempts, Mrs. Claws became a permanent sanctuary resident. Her favorite place is inside her igloo house, where she enjoys watching her neighbors.



Nala was privately owned and rehomed to the Florida sanctuary when her owner's health began to fail. Even though she was purchased as a young kitten, Nala enjoys keeping to herself and explores her habitat at dusk when everything has quieted and settled down for the evening.



Moses came to the Florida sanctuary as a kitten near death from disease and malnutrition. Over the years he developed a mischievous personality and his love of chewing sticks took a toll on his molars, necessitating a boneless diet. Sadly, shortly after Moses arrived at TCWR the 23-year-old bobcat deteriorated rapidly from late-stage kidney disease and despite our attempts to treat him, on January 24 we had to humanely euthanize Moses.



Initially privately owned and relinquished to a pseudo-sanctuary, Philmo was rescued by the Florida facility in 2019. Initially shy, Philmo has become more confident in his new home. He enjoys his daily meds and is quick to prance and climb up on his logs and rocks after receiving them.





**Shiloh**



**Nabisco**



**Smalls**

Shiloh, Nabisco, and Smalls arrived at the Florida facility in October 2016 from the same pseudo-sanctuary whose license the USDA revoked during a routine inspection. Due to the neglectful conditions, the USDA ordered the removal of all its' animals.

Shiloh is a sixteen-year-old bobcat who enjoys lounging on all the bench platforms in his habitat and is happy to appear if treats are involved. Nabisco quickly settled into his new home and enjoys chasing bugs and butterflies in his habitat. Smalls enjoys rolling and lounging in the grass, especially when any team member walks by.



**Summer**



**Zucari**

The Florida sanctuary rescued Summer as a weak and ill two-week-old kitten who quickly improved with appropriate medical intervention. After a year of rehab and handling, they concluded that sanctuary life was best for her remaining years. Summer is a petite bobcat with a large personality and enjoys running through the tall grass and jumping on her platform benches.

Zucari was rescued in 2017 from an illegal breeding facility and found living in a basement with other small exotic cats. Much of Zucari's story is unknown; however, he enjoys spending the days inside his heated nighthouse, curled up on his firehose bench.



# Our Legacy Funds Freedom

With the help of your grassroots advocacy, the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) became law in December 2022. United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) Officials predict that thousands of big cats will need sanctuary as they enforce the new regulations. Meanwhile, rescue calls for small wild cats are increasing as wildlife traffickers and breeders capitalize on exploiting these cat species left unprotected by the BCPSA. In the first quarter of 2024, TCWR received four small cat rescue calls and took in two animals.

In April 2024, we officially cut the ribbon on our 14.2-acre Freedom Field Expansion of 44 new habitats. As we put the finishing touches on these habitats, including planting native grasses, erecting shade cloths to supplement the fast-growing oaks we planted, and eventually constructing in-ground pools, we need your help to finish our plan and achieve all our goals.

You can leave a legacy at Freedom Field through several naming rights options! Your naming rights support will fund the upkeep of these massive habitats and help us give all the animals we rescue the lifelong care they deserve. Remember, more habitats mean more animals who depend on us for proper diet, regular wellness and diagnostic exams, and weekly enrichment.

## **We have the following Naming Rights Opportunities still available:**

- 12 Big Cat habitats at \$100K each, or \$50K for ½ and \$25K for ¼ naming right.
- 1 Medium Cat habitat at \$75K, or \$37,500 for ½ and \$18,750 for ¼ naming right.
- 8 Small African Cat habitats w/heated buildings at \$75K, or \$37,500 for ½ and \$18,750 for ¼ naming right.
- 18 Regular Small Cat habitats at \$50K, or \$25K for ½ and \$12,500 for ¼ naming right.





**Your Naming  
Plaque Here!**

We want to thank each of our supporters who have sponsored habitat naming rights - you are helping us to sustain our mission and offer lives of freedom to generations of wild cats!

**Your Habitat Naming Right support can be spread over a 3-year pledge!**

Contact **sandy@tcwr.org** to receive a pledge card and discuss how you can help make our mission sustainable.



# TCWR Receives Global Visit from CITES

Many agencies oversee big cats, ranging from state government organizations such as the Arkansas Game and Fish to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). CITES is an international agreement between governments that work together to conserve and protect our planet's plants and animals.

At their last meeting in November of 2022, CITES decided to assess tiger breeding operations worldwide to ensure that any captive breeding was working towards conservation - not supplying the black market trade for pets or their parts. CITES representatives spent the following years traveling around the world to understand the captive breeding of tigers. In their journey to better understand the issue, they chose two sanctuaries to visit within the US, and TCWR was one of them.



CITES visited the Refuge in the Spring of 2024 to better understand the issues in the US and the role of accredited sanctuaries. They left commenting on TCWR's *productive and impressive operations dedicated to **lifelong care, public education, and partnerships with government agencies.***

For over 32 years, TCWR has focused on these three core pillars. These meaningful remarks testify to our history of rescuing big cats and our dedication to our mission. Together, we are now being recognized for this on a global platform, which is also why the next phase of our Capital Campaign, the Big Cat Education Center and Museum, is so important. To learn more, visit [TurpentineCreek.org/capital-campaign/](https://TurpentineCreek.org/capital-campaign/)



## GIVE THROUGH OUR WISH LIST

There are many different ways to support our mission, which you can explore on our website's Support the Animals page, [tcwr.org/support](https://tcwr.org/support). Our Amazon Wish List is a dedicated support channel where you can directly provide items that our team needs daily and seasonally to care for the animals at the Refuge. This includes medicines, supplements, equipment, and tools necessary to provide optimal welfare and a second chance at life for rescued animals. Visit our Amazon Wish List today (and throughout the year) to see the items we need most in real-time.





# Your Free Online Tool to Ensure Their Future

Turpentine Creek has had a successful Legacy Giving Program for some time now. The idea behind this program is that our generous supporters are investing in the present to ensure the continued success of rescuing animals and providing them with a lifelong home in the future. This is accomplished by naming Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge as a beneficiary in their trusts, wills, and life insurance policies. The future return on this investment is creating the financial strength and certainty in our organization's ability to continue in its success of achieving our mission.

As discussed in the Spring 2024 Big Cat Chronicles, the Refuge is always looking for innovative ways to improve our value to our supporters through new technology. We have been focusing on areas where TCWR can bring more value to our supporters in exchange for their generosity. This year, we are proud to announce the launch of our partnership with FreeWill.

FreeWill is an online tool that helps the general public create their estate plan for free. The easy-to-use online platform will help you go through the step-by-step estate planning process in detail, from start to finish. This is a way to plan without the standard legal and filing fees that creating an estate plan typically requires. We encourage our supporters to take advantage of this free tool and consider the long-term investment by including Turpentine Creek Foundation, Inc.



SUPPORT **THE REFUGE** WITH KROGER COMMUNITY REWARDS



**LINK YOUR SHOPPER'S CARD TO  
TURPENTINE CREEK TO START EARNING  
AT NO COST TO YOU!**



# Your Pool Sponsorships are Making a Big Splash!



In Spring 2021, we began an enrichment project to replace the stock tanks we once filled for our water-loving animals with in-ground pools. The pools are constructed of waterproof cement that will last decades and are designed for easy filling and draining to keep their pools sparkling. Our Maintenance Coordinator, Victor Smith, designs each pool to fit the topography of the habitat, using boulders to provide natural 'scratching posts' while allowing animals easy access with graduated depth.



Rocklyn steals a quiet moment to savor the cool, therapeutic waters of the pool she shares with siblings Peyton and Blackfire. The easy-in-and-out access has greatly increased how often animals like these three, who suffer from arthritis due to Metabolic Bone Disease complications, use their pools over the stock tanks they had previously.

By the spring of 2023, our team had completed ten pools, offering our animals a chance to cool off as they might in the wild. Though this project had to be paused to complete our Freedom Field habitats, it resumed this spring, in the following habitats!

We thank Marilyn and Henry L. of Utah for sponsoring the pool in H9. Chuff and Athena will love this new way to cool down and enjoy summer!



We are especially grateful to Shelby R. and Jerry G. for sponsoring the pool in H10. Young Fred wasted no time making a splash! Fred is having an absolute blast charging in and out of his pool while pausing to 'drown' an unsuspecting toy.

We thank Gene, Terry, Shelby, and Gracy K. for bringing extra summer joy to Priscilla's triplets. DOJ, Jinx, and Rosie can have pool parties all summer long to burn off their youthful energy!



Our special thanks to the Dazi Family, who sponsored the pool in L1 in honor of their daughter Meg Tieman's internship at the Refuge. Meg helped improve countless animals' lives during her tenure with us, and now their pool will enrich the life of generations of water-loving big cats.

We are incredibly grateful to longtime supporters Fred and Sherry S., who generously sponsored the pools in both C7, which we built in 2022 for liger Fergy (who has been enjoying since each summer), and in L2, which we completed this spring for Karma liger.

Lastly, thank you to board member and longtime supporter Virginia R. for sponsoring the pool in L3, which will stimulate natural behaviors in tigers, allowing them to live as close to wild as possible.

Recently, two of our newest supporters from Florida have sent funds to sponsor two pools in the Freedom Field habitats in honor of Puff & Sunshine W. We are very grateful to them for helping us achieve our goal of installing this special summertime enrichment for ALL our water-loving animals!





# You Can Make a Difference for Captive Wildlife

Wildlife traffickers are turning to other species for profits, and our native black bears are among those targeted for exploitation. While our mission still focuses on big cats, we see the increasing need for small wild cat and bear rescues. TCWR Assistant Curator Laure Vanderwal works with the Bear Care Group to share knowledge and improve the care of captive bears.



Lolli



Koda G



Xena

These wooded habitats have encouraged natural bear behaviors in Koda G and Xena (L. & R.), and they now enjoy climbing trees!

Xena has even built a nest in the fall for wintertime torpor, leaving her sister in their heated den.





Holly



Lolli

Holly (L) and Lolli (R), love cooling off in their expansive in-ground pools during the summer. You can visit them on our specialty tours!

In 2018, five black bears and a Russian Brown Bear moved into two enclosures spanning over three acres of wooded terrain. These habitats were built to Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) standards, surrounded by 20' electrified fencing with cement-filled trenches to keep these expert climbers and diggers safely housed. Inside are many plants, berries, and insects to supplant the twice-daily feedings our team provides.

As the black bears adapted to their new freedom, they began to act more like wild bears. In summer, they spend their days foraging or cooling off in their in-ground pools. Koda G and Xena have begun climbing trees, and Xena has even built a nest in the fall for wintertime torpor, leaving her sister in their heated den. The natural Ozark terrain has enriched the lives of these bears by giving them so many choices. Part of our five-year plan is to construct new wooded habitats at the back of Freedom Field for the two bears in our Discovery Area, allowing us to offer sanctuary to other bears in need. Your monthly support helps us plan ahead to ensure a bright future for captive wildlife!

## Don't Miss the 3rd Annual MOPAR Classic!



*The biggest Mopar-only show in Northwest Arkansas!*

**June 21, 7 to 10 PM**

**"Friday Night Lights"** at the **Eureka Springs Community Center**, hosted by Fasty's Garage. Some of the wildest, craziest lighting setups — underglow, underhood, interior, trunk — an all-ages event that's sure to please the eyes!

**June 22, 9AM to 3PM**

The main event unfolds at **Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge**. Join our passionate MOPAR community and explore the stunning array of classics. Plenty of food, vendors, and sponsors. Award presentations closing out the day! We'll also have charity raffles and a 50/50 pot!

**Registration open until June 1.**





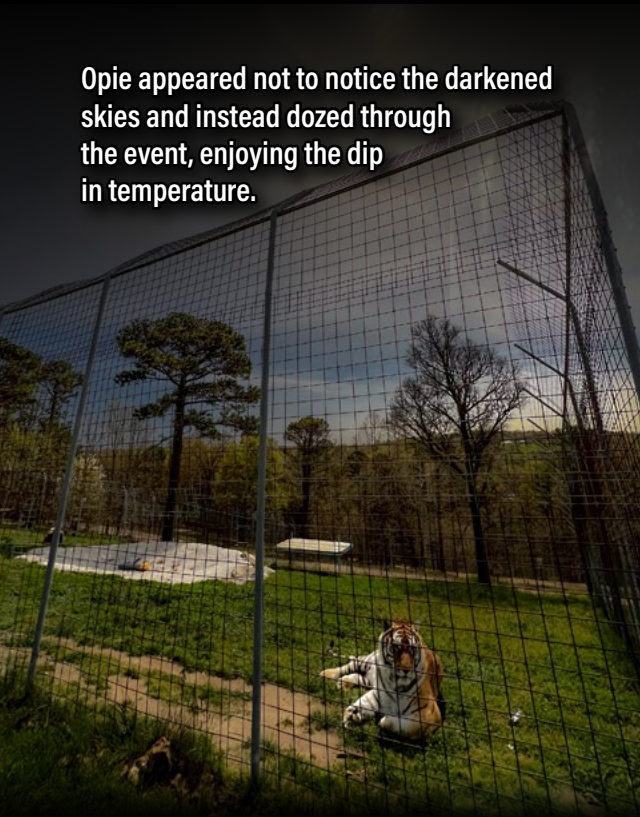
# Solar Eclipse Recap

On April 8, the solar eclipse was visible at Turpentine Creek with 98.5% totality. This presented a unique opportunity to observe animals' reactions at the Refuge to this global phenomenon. An eclipse occurs when the moon passes between the sun and the earth. As the moon blocks the sun, the skies darken, and temperatures drop.

Without technology like a cell phone, clock, or weather person, humans and animals rely on their circadian rhythms to function. These physical, mental, and behavioral changes occur biologically over 24 hours and are significantly influenced by daylight. Because of this, we can observe wild animals expressing strange behaviors during the eclipse, as they confuse the event for approaching nightfall.



Opie appeared not to notice the darkened skies and instead dozed through the event, enjoying the dip in temperature.



Shakira II came out to investigate the early dusk during the eclipse.



Most of the animals at the Refuge are crepuscular (active at dawn/dusk) or nocturnal (active at night). So, we would expect them to replicate the same confused and strange behaviors as their wild counterparts. However, we observed something much different. While some of the cats did look up at the sky or briefly come out of their dens to investigate the change in daylight and temperature, most did not seem to notice. Thunder, a male black bear, showed the more stereotypical behaviors of a wild animal during an eclipse, and Bam Bam the Grizzly Bear slept through the entire event.

As reported, most zoo animals replicate behaviors closer to their wild counterparts. So, what is the difference? Zoo animals are bred from their wild counterparts with limited human interaction. All of the animals at TCWR were rescued from situations of abandonment, abuse, and neglect resulting from the exotic pet trade. These experiences have left them much more unpredictable compared to their wild counterparts. So, while the 2024 eclipse could have been more eventful at TCWR, it was a reminder of how important it is to keep wild animals wild and of the impact of our mission.



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): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Input Credit Card below or make checks payable to TCWR.

Credit Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ CVC Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill out this donation form, detach, fold as needed, and mail with included envelope.  
Thank You!



# 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/](https://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.



# YOU MADE OUR 2024 RIBBON-CUTTING A DAY TO REMEMBER!

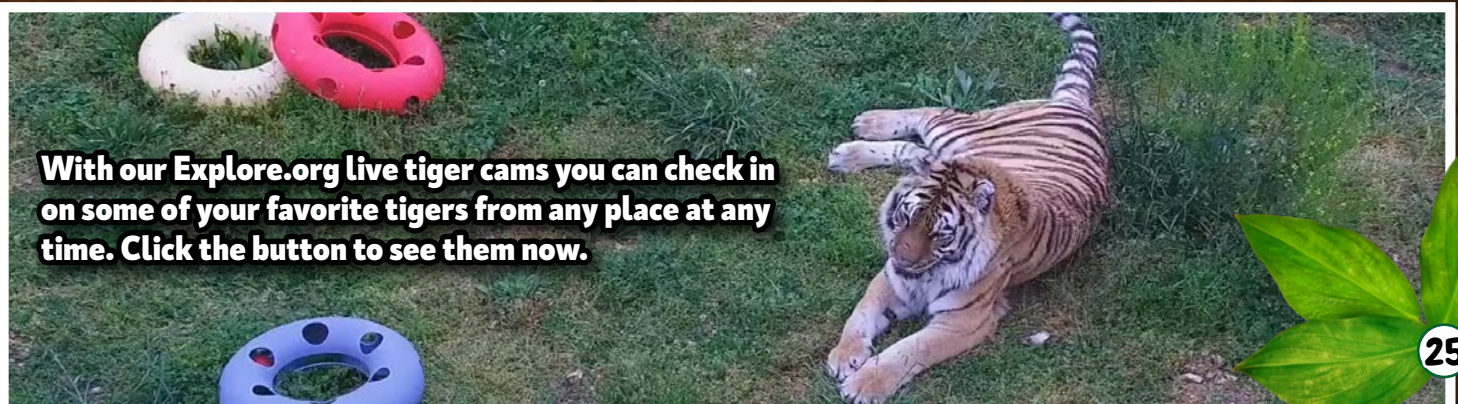


With dedication and commitment — just like the weather does not stop our team from providing daily care for the animals, it did not stop our supporters from showing up to this special day. We want to thank all of you who joined us on April 27, along with national, state, and local dignitaries, to celebrate the ribbon cutting of our 44 Habitat Freedom Field expansion and 32 years of nationwide rescue! Our President and Founder, Tanya Smith, presided over the ceremony with our Curator, Emily McCormack, who designed each natural habitat to accommodate different species for generations. We especially want to thank Congressman Steve Womack, Director of the Division of Arkansas Heritage & War Memorial Stadium Commissioner Marty Ryall, and Eureka Springs Council Member Terry McClung for joining us. Representative Womack had co-sponsored the Big Cat Public Safety Act, helping it pass into law.

Whether you attended this special event or generously donated your ticket value, you helped make this milestone event a success. A special thanks to all of you who contributed to our live and silent auctions that day – your generosity will help sustain our mission! Our attendees enjoyed a delicious mid-day Feast with the Beasts, provided by TCWR Maintenance Coordinator and professional caterer Victor Smith while enjoying the folk acoustic of James Mills.

That afternoon, guests were treated to a special tram tour conducted by TCWR Education Coordinator Shayleen Richert to visit with some of the TCWR animal residents. The celebration was a fantastic chance for long-time and new supporters to meet and socialize alongside TCWR team members. Feast with the Beasts is our biggest event of the year, and tickets sell out quickly, so watch your inbox next January for your 2025 invitation!

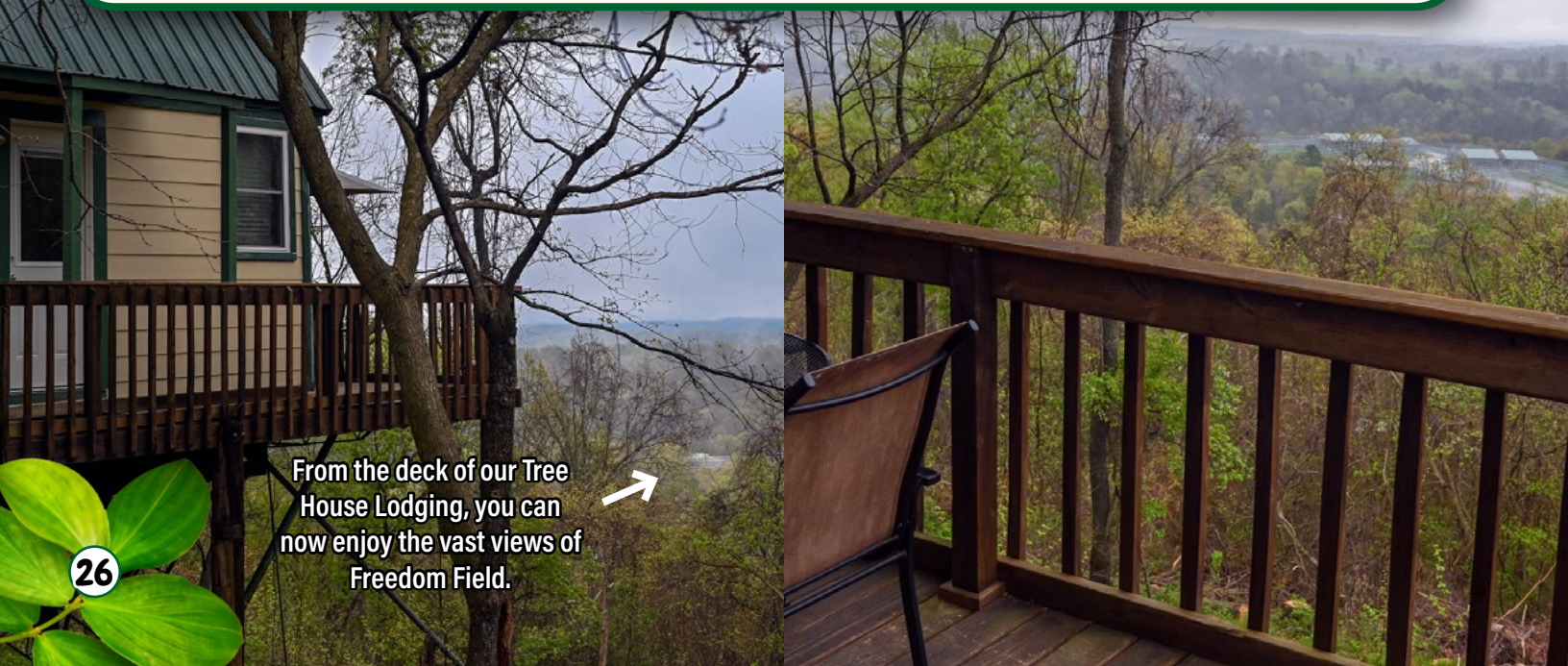
**With our Explore.org live tiger cams you can check in on some of your favorite tigers from any place at any time. Click the button to see them now.**







Plan your summer getaway at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, where every stay supports the mission of rescue. This summer, you will have the opportunity to see Freedom Field - a brand new area of the Refuge with 44 new habitats. Nestled in the Ozark Mountains, the Refuge is the perfect place to stay and get back in touch with nature, with activities for the whole family. Your stay comes with free admission to the Refuge, where you can visit the animals to see the sights and sounds of an accredited animal sanctuary. Choose your ideal accommodation, whether it be our RV sites, glamping tents, safari tents, treehouses, or family suites. Located just south of Eureka Springs and near Beaver Lake, there are plenty of fun and outdoor activities for families just a short car ride away.



From the deck of our Tree House Lodging, you can now enjoy the vast views of Freedom Field.

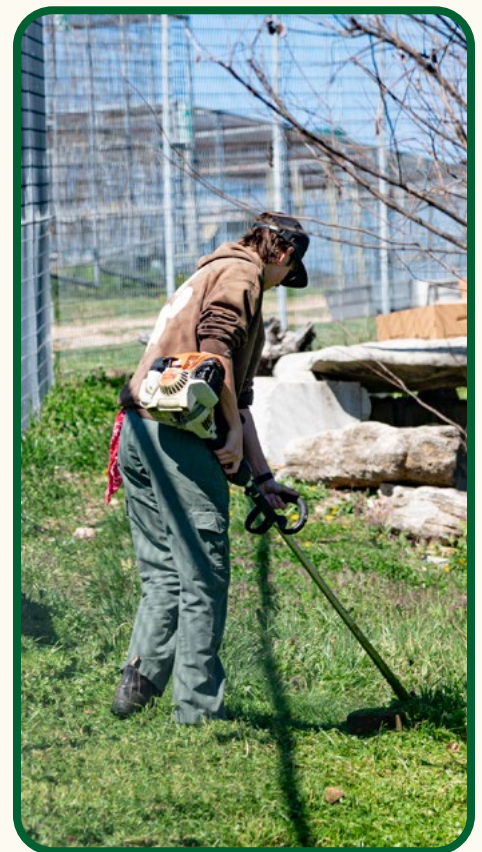


# Shedding Light on Hidden Challenges at TCWR

Our Freedom Field expansion challenges the Refuge with significantly increased operations. Some may be obvious (more animals to feed, more enclosures to clean, etc.), while others are more subtle but just as important to providing a lifelong home.

In the summer, warmer temperatures bring out other critters that can harm the animals. While big cats can survive a bite from a venomous snake, the diseases carried by ticks can be life-threatening. Bobcat Fever (*Cytauxzoonosis*) is a common parasite found in native bobcat populations that can transfer to tigers through a tick bite.

Snakes and ticks do not thrive in areas with short vegetation, so the team is rigorous about habitat lawn care, which includes a tick deterrent. With 44 new habitats, our cost to do this has significantly increased. Weedeaters also require more gas and string to get the job done - especially when trimming the vegetation growing against habitat fencing where the string breaks off against the metal.



**Our team works to minimize the dangers of tick-borne diseases by keeping habitats sprayed and cut all summer so animals like Detroit can enjoy lying on the soft grass.**

Meanwhile, warmer weather brings more flies, which can result in flystrike. This painful and sometimes fatal condition is caused by flies laying eggs on animals; the larvae eat the animal's flesh. Kyro, for example, has physically deformed ears from the flystrike that occurred during his time at Tiger King Park. With more animals, we must purchase massive amounts of fly bait on Amazon to hang around the nighthouses and repel flies.

You can directly help us tackle our hidden challenges by purchasing through our **Amazon Wishlist** or by increasing your monthly donation by \$2 to offset the cost of our expanded operations.

**Donate today to be a positive change for big cats!**





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479-253-5841

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