

# BIG CAT CHRONICLES

SPRING 2025



**Jasmine III**

**Female Tiger** (*Panthera tigris*)

**Born 1/1/2011**

**Rescued 10/20/2023**

*Learn about me on page 3.*



**Turpentine Creek**  
FOUNDATION, INC.



# Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

As spring 2025 begins, I am inspired by how far we've come for big cats and captive wildlife, thanks to your steadfast support. Together, we've achieved incredible milestones, from the historic passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) in 2022 to completing 44 new habitats in Freedom Field in 2023.



This year, TCWR is proud to partner with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums through the Wildlife Confiscations Network to combat illegal wildlife trade. As part of this coalition of trusted animal care facilities, we will provide immediate medical attention and housing for trafficked wildlife seized at U.S. ports of entry. This partnership allows law enforcement to focus on investigating and prosecuting criminals while ensuring animals receive the care they deserve. With your support, we provide a lifelong sanctuary for up to 200 animals across 102 habitats. By contributing to our Witness Protection Fund, you help us give these animals the care they need as they await justice and begin new lives of freedom.

But the fight is far from over. The big cat industry is moving underground in the U.S. while international rescue calls have surged. Meanwhile, profit-driven dealers and roadside zoos increasingly target small wild cats. TCWR remains on the frontlines, addressing these challenges while proactively safeguarding our animals against emerging threats like avian flu.

To support our crucial work in rescue, advocacy, and education, we invite you to visit the Refuge with loved ones. Meeting our animals and hearing their powerful stories spreads awareness far beyond our gates. Consider staying in our on-site lodging, where you'll fall asleep to the sounds of big cats under a star-filled sky—a truly magical experience. Enhance your visit by booking a specialty tour, which includes all 102 habitats, Freedom Field, Rescue Ridge, and our state-of-the-art veterinary hospital. Tours accommodate up to 14 guests and fill up quickly, so reserve your spot early!

You can also join our *Wild About Wildlife* membership program, which offers free entry year-round, plus discounts on lodging, tours, and gift shop items. Memberships, tours, and lodging certificates make meaningful gifts for loved ones while supporting TCWR's mission.

Together, we can continue leading the charge for rescued wildlife. Thank you for being an essential part of our journey.

Until next time,



Tanya Smith, President & Founder



Our specialty tours conducted by Senior Animal Care Staff can accommodate up to 14 guests fill quickly!

**Check out our educational resources: [Education.TurpentineCreek.org](https://Education.TurpentineCreek.org)**

# Jasmine's Journey:

## A Testament to Progress in Big Cat Protection

Jasmine III's story is one of resilience, change, and the undeniable impact of our collective mission to protect big cats. Her journey from a life of neglect to true sanctuary underscores how far we've come since the tragic Zanesville Massacre and the eventual passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act.

Jasmine III, a female tiger, was one of several big cats rescued from a roadside zoo in Ohio in 2015. The facility had a long history of violations, including inadequate veterinary care, poor nutrition, and unsafe enclosures. Despite Ohio's 2012 ban on private big cat ownership—passed in response to the horrific events in Zanesville—the owner refused to comply, forcing the state to step in. Jasmine III, along with Sapphire the White Tigress, Dutchess Tigress, and Jinx the Black Leopard, was relocated to an accredited sanctuary in Florida where they could receive proper care.



Jasmine III's story is one of resilience, change, and the undeniable impact of our collective mission to protect big cats.



Jasmine III, was rescued from a roadside zoo that had a long history of violations, including inadequate veterinary care, poor nutrition, and unsafe enclosures.

However, their path to safety was not immediate. Legal battles kept them in limbo for nearly four years, during which they remained under witness protection—no public photos, videos, or updates could be shared. Their names were even changed for a fresh start. Finally, on May 1, 2019, the Florida sanctuary was granted permanent custody, ensuring Jasmine III would never face exploitation again.

Jasmine III thrived at the Florida sanctuary, receiving the proper veterinary care, nutrition, and animal husbandry that an accredited facility offers. In 2023, the Florida facility shut down its rescue operations, and Jasmine III, along with Dutchess and Aria, arrived at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

Jasmine III is living her best life in the expansive Freedom Field habitat, where her well-being is always our top priority. She delights us with her soft, distinctive vocalizations and loves playing with her neighbor, Max, as they run up and down the fence line together. Her playful personality shines when she explores spice-scented boxes and other enrichment, revealing her vibrant and spirited nature. Jasmine III's journey is a powerful reminder of how far we've come—and how much work remains—to ensure a future where all big cats can live wild and free or find refuge in ethical sanctuaries like ours.

Jasmine III's journey—from a facility plagued by neglect, through years of legal battles, to finally finding refuge in a true sanctuary—symbolizes the remarkable progress made in protecting big cats. Thanks to your unwavering support of our mission, we continue to take monumental strides toward ending private ownership and ensuring that no animal endures the suffering Jasmine III once faced.



Jasmine III is living her best life in the expansive Freedom Field habitat, where her well-being is always our top priority.



# Letter from the Curator

Emily McCormack



Understanding the unique behaviors of each TCWR resident allows us to provide individualized care that ensures their well-being and upholds the respect they deserve. While we have often discussed the customized care plans created for each animal after their rescue, this commitment continues throughout their lives, especially when behavioral changes are observed.

In recent years, we've had to adapt to the unique needs of mother-reared tigers. When we rescued Priscilla, we prioritized keeping her cubs with her, resulting in Jinx, Rosie, DOJ, Butch, and Chaz growing up under her care. This has made their daily husbandry and care more challenging, as mother-reared and hand-reared tigers exhibit distinct differences in socialization, behavior, and adaptability in captivity.

Hand-raised tigers, often bottle-fed and handled early, are typically more comfortable around humans, which can simplify husbandry tasks. However, excessive interaction often leads to dependency, with these tigers seeking attention or displaying frustration when left alone. Many also suffer from metabolic bone disease due to the unethical practices of the cub-petting industry—a practice we strongly oppose.

In contrast, mother-reared tigers learn vital life skills by observing and imitating their mothers and siblings, developing independence and natural behaviors like territoriality. While they show fewer attention-seeking behaviors, their independence can result in aggression or avoidance around humans, making management in captivity more challenging. These tigers often require desensitization to caretakers to facilitate daily care.

Enrichment and behavioral management training are essential for developing individualized care plans. For example, Fred, one of our hand-raised tigers, exhibits tail suckling—a behavior often seen in cats separated from their mothers too early. This self-soothing habit, sometimes observed as paw digit suckling, can persist for life. To address this, Fred receives extra enrichment and scatter feeding to help deter the behavior.







Mother-reared tigers, on the other hand, often require more creative strategies to ensure positive interactions. Rosie, DOJ, Jinx, Butch, and Chaz—our “wild” bunch—have joined the behavioral management program to help desensitize them to human interaction, reducing stress during daily husbandry tasks. This training transforms routine care into a positive, rewarding experience as they receive treats while becoming more comfortable with their caregivers.

By understanding each animal's unique needs, TCWR creates environments that nurture their natural instincts and enhance their quality of life. Every rescued animal's journey reflects their complexity and the dedication of its caregivers. At TCWR, we are committed to giving each animal the respect it deserves while ensuring the best quality of life possible.

**As you consider which special cat to adopt or sponsor this year, remember our spirited “wild” clan!**



# You are Giving Nala II a Bright Future

In November 2024, a Missouri couple traveling with their two privately owned African servals were involved in a tragic car accident. The male serval did not survive, and the female, Nala II, was taken in by the Animal Protective Association of Missouri (APA) while the owners faced alleged DWI charges. Recognizing Nala II's need for a permanent home, the APA contacted Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR), where she could receive specialized care and live in an environment more suited to her needs.

Upon her arrival, even though she had undergone a previous exam, TCWR conducted a comprehensive medical exam and identified signs of metabolic bone disease, initiating supplements to aid her recovery. Once stabilized, our team released Nala II into a spacious Freedom Field habitat. Like all TCWR African cat habitats, she now has access to a heated indoor living space with amenities like toys and benches and a natural outdoor area featuring grassy nooks, climbing structures, and a Coolaroo bed for relaxation.

Nala II's aggressive nature and distrust of humans illustrate her unsuitability as a pet. It was heartbreaking to learn that this wild animal was confined to an attic for much of her life. Now, Nala II lives as she deserves—on her terms, respected as a wild animal.



Nala II

TCWR was contacted by the Animal Protective Association of Missouri (APA) after Nala II was involved in a tragic car accident. Sadly, a 2nd male serval did not survive.



Nala II

Too aggressive to be a pet, Nala II was sadly confined to an attic for much of her life. Thanks to you she now enjoys the life she deserves — wild, respected, and free.

## The Small Cat Crisis

Nala II's rescue is symbolic of the ongoing small wild cat crisis. In 2024, TCWR didn't rescue a single big cat for the first time in its history, reflecting shifting trends following the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA). While the BCPSA marked progress, it also raised concerns about the exotic animal trade going underground, as reports suggest that unethical breeders and exhibitors are still operating. International big cat rescue requests are increasing, further highlighting the expansion of the wild cat crisis.

TCWR's experience supports these concerns. In 2024, we rescued five small exotic cats, including servals like Nala II, and in 2025, the refuge began receiving an average of one small wild cat rescue call per week. Even with the BCPSA enforcement, only 99 people registered their big cats nationwide, exposing the grim reality of unregulated ownership. For animals like Nala II, this often means life in dark attics or roadside zoos.

Nala II's story highlights the critical need for vigilance, public awareness, and stronger policy enforcement. As TCWR enters a new era of rescue, education, and advocacy, cases like hers serve as a powerful reminder that the fight to protect these animals is ongoing.



# TCWR Joins the Wildlife Confiscations Network to Combat Wildlife Trafficking

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) President & Founder Tanya Smith and Vice President Scott Smith traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, to represent the Refuge as a new partner in the Wildlife Confiscations Network (WCN) in September. This groundbreaking initiative, established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA), aims to eliminate wildlife trafficking by providing a coordinated response for the care and welfare of wildlife confiscated from illegal trade.

The WCN brings together trusted animal care facilities to deliver immediate medical attention and safe housing for animals seized at U.S. ports of entry. This collaboration enables wildlife law enforcement to focus on prosecuting traffickers while ensuring animals receive the highest standard of care.

"Wildlife trafficking is a serious crime that impacts imperiled species worldwide," said Martha Williams, USFWS Director. "Partnerships like this are essential to ensure trafficked animals are cared for responsibly."

As a WCN partner, TCWR will provide expert care for wild cats and bears confiscated from illegal trade. However, TCWR receives no government funding. Please support TCWR's efforts by donating to the Witness Protection Fund, which helps cover the cost of veterinary care, specialized diets, and daily needs for these rescued animals.

**Together, we can fight wildlife trafficking and protect vulnerable species.**



President & Founder Tanya Smith and Vice President Scott Smith traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, to represent TCWR as a new partner in the Wildlife Confiscations Network (WCN).

A hand holding a smartphone displaying a photo of a cougar. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees and foliage.

**Ready for insider access to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge?**  
Text **JOIN** to **833-561-7739** now for text message updates and announcements about our life-saving rescues and mission-driven activities. Don't miss out—stay connected, stay informed, and be a part of the action!

Message frequency varies. Message and data rates may apply.  
Reply STOP to opt out.



# The Growing Need for International Collaboration in Big Cat Rescues

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) has always been a beacon of hope for neglected and abused big cats in the United States. However, the challenges of captive wildlife exploitation are not confined to our borders. Increasingly, we are fielding calls for help from international organizations that need partners to help rescue and care for exotic animals. This growing demand highlights the importance of fostering relationships with credible, experienced organizations that share our values and standards of care.

Our recent experiences have shed light on the complexities and opportunities of international partnerships. One example was our consideration of supporting a big cat rescue in Guatemala. While the mission to save these cats was noble, the proposal raised several concerns: there was no infrastructure in place, no personnel on the ground to ensure proper care, and yet, significant financial contributions were being requested. These gaps underscored the importance of thoroughly vetting potential partners before committing resources to international rescues.



TCWR resident tiger, Max, has a special connection to ADI. Max was a part of the Guatemala rescue and several of his relatives remain under ADI's care.





During our travels to South Africa, TCWR met with organizations like Animal Defenders International (ADI) and Lionsrock.



Kimba

During our travels to South Africa, TCWR met with organizations like Animal Defenders International (ADI) and Lionsrock. These meetings revealed how transformative true collaboration can be. Witnessing ADI's work in South Africa provided valuable insight into their operational excellence and the shared commitment to rescuing, transporting, and providing lifetime care for big cats. This experience built a strong foundation of trust, allowing TCWR to envision future partnerships where we can leverage each other's strengths to expand our impact globally.

These partnerships inspire us to dream big: what if sanctuaries like TCWR and ADI worked hand-in-hand to address global crises facing captive wildlife?

Closer to home, our resident tigers Max, Kimba and Simba have a special connection to ADI. The three tigers were part of their Guatemala rescue and several of Max's relatives remain under ADI's care. Their dedication to ensuring these cats' safety and well-being strengthens our resolve to support organizations with proven track records. By combining TCWR's expertise in lifelong care with ADI's operational and international rescue network, we believe we can create a global safety net for animals in need.

As calls for international rescues continue to grow, it's clear that no single organization can tackle these challenges alone. True collaboration—rooted in shared values, transparency, and complementary strengths—is the key to making a lasting difference. Together, we can extend TCWR's legacy of compassion and care beyond our borders, offering hope to animals who have known only suffering.



By combining TCWR's expertise in lifelong care with ADI's operational and international rescue network, we believe we can create a global safety net for animals in need.



## End of an Era, Beginning of a New One: TCWR Leads the Way for Big Cats and Captive Wildlife

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) is proud to step into the next chapter of big cat and wildlife sanctuary work as Big Cat Rescue (BCR) closes its sanctuary doors. This transition reflects a shared vision: a world where sanctuaries are no longer needed, and big cats thrive in the wild.

The big cats we welcomed from BCR—like Jasmine III, Dutchess, and Aria—represent resilience and the power of transformation. After arriving from a sanctuary surrounded by urban traffic and noise, these cats now thrive in TCWR's spacious Freedom Field habitats. Here, surrounded by the tranquility of the Ozarks, they receive individualized veterinary care and have the freedom to explore, engage, and live with dignity.

Thanks to legislation like the Big Cat Public Safety Act, which TCWR helped pass, the need for captive wildlife rescue is steadily declining. This milestone allows TCWR to focus on a future where big cats and other captive wildlife no longer require sanctuaries but live freely in their natural habitats.

TCWR is honored to carry the torch forward with a renewed commitment to rescue, education, and advocacy. By building partnerships and expanding our capacity, we are working toward a future where sanctuary work is a thing of the past. Together, with the support of donors and advocates, we're creating a safer, more sustainable world for big and small wild cats alike.



After arriving from a sanctuary surrounded by urban traffic and noise, Aria now thrives in TCWR's spacious Freedom Field habitats.

# Anatomy Behind a Rescue - The Hidden Challenges of Rescue

Rescuing exotic animals is far more complex than simply loading them into a transport vehicle and relocating them to their new home. Each rescue involves an intricate series of steps that require time, patience, and meticulous attention to detail—not to mention extensive paperwork.

The process begins with our President gathering critical information about the animal, including species, sex, health conditions, and any available history. However, this information is often incomplete or inaccurate, making on-site assessments crucial. Once gathered, these details are reviewed by our Animal Curator and Veterinarian, who determine whether we have the space, resources, and capacity to provide the animal with lifelong care.

If the decision is made to move forward, our team mobilizes quickly. Behind the scenes, there's a long checklist of preparations to ensure every detail is accounted for:

## RESCUE PREPARATION CHECKLIST:

- ✓ Secure and check transport crates and cages
- ✓ Prepare vet hospital and habitat space
- ✓ Gather the Vet Travel Box
- ✓ Gather Drug Safety and Sedation Equipment
- ✓ Ensure the generator is operational
- ✓ Place visual barriers on cages for safe transport
- ✓ Obtain necessary licenses and permits
- ✓ Secure health certificates for importation
- ✓ Complete acquisition paperwork for USDA
- ✓ Finalize surrender agreements
- ✓ List of questions for the previous owner

Rescuing exotic animals is an intricate and challenging process, but every detail is vital in ensuring their safety and well-being. At Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, we are committed to giving these animals a second chance at life. For them, every step truly matters.



Each rescue involves an intricate series of steps that require time, patience, and meticulous attention to detail—not to mention extensive paperwork.





# Letter from the Veterinarian

Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, DVM



Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 is a contagious deadly strain of the avian influenza virus, primarily affecting birds but known to infect mammals, including humans. The virus spreads through direct or indirect contact with infected birds or contaminated environments and can lead to illness including death in animals and humans. Since its initial identification in China in 1996, H5N1 has spread globally, often carried by migrating wild birds, which may be asymptomatic or display only mild symptoms. In the United States, the current outbreak began in January 2022 and has since affected various species, most recently including large numbers of dairy cattle and domestic cats. New evolving viral genotypes in these most recently infected host species continue complicating overall virus containment efforts.

The first reported cases of HPAI affecting non-domestic felines were in tigers and leopards in Southeast Asia in 2004. During this current outbreak, even before the recent high numbers of infected domestic cats, HPAI was already proving deadly in nondomestic felids. We first became aware of the dangers of this outbreak of HPAI in 2022 when the virus caused the deaths of four non-domestic felines and a grizzly bear at a zoo in Nebraska. The infected animals had contracted the virus from being fed contaminated geese provided by local hunters. Since that time, TCWR has implemented policies and procedures to protect its animals, including careful monitoring of the disease's spread and evolving response strategies as new variants of the virus emerge.



We work to prevent contaminated environments for our animal residents by rigorously cleaning night houses and habitats; removing feces, urine, and food that can attract other animals.





Our full time staff veterinarian, Dr. Kellyn, continues to put animal health and welfare first, attending conferences and monitoring vet health practices to infuse policies and procedures into our organization so that we are prepared for bird flu.

Despite these efforts, it is impossible to guarantee 100% protection against the virus due to its widespread presence in bird populations and the environment. However, TCWR continues to perform risk assessments and develop mitigation strategies to safeguard our animals, both felines and bears. This includes an outbreak response plan to quickly contain the disease if it enters our animal population.

As the HPAI outbreak persists with no clear end in sight, TCWR is working closely with other wildlife and zoological facilities across the U.S. to monitor the situation and support each other in their efforts to protect animals.

We seek continued support from the public through donations and wish list items to further bolster our safety measures and ensure the health of our animals during this challenging time.



TCWR has implemented policies and procedures to protect animal residents, including careful monitoring of the disease's spread and evolving response strategies as new variants of the virus emerge.



# Make a Difference for Wildlife: Volunteer with TCWR

Did you know you can help Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) from anywhere? Whether onsite or from the comfort of your home, there are countless ways to make an impact!

Onsite volunteers assist with painting habitat fencing, building benches, and other vital tasks to improve the Refuge. Would you **prefer to help remotely**? Join our **Social Media Volunteer Team** to expand our mission's reach by growing audiences and sharing our message. Every "share" makes a difference!

**Want to help in person?** TCWR Marketing needs hands-on volunteers for **Kite Fest on Saturday, March 22**. In exchange for 4 hours of service, volunteers receive free Refuge admission. Duties include assisting with parking, selling raffle tickets, and general event support. Shifts are 9 AM–1 PM or 12 PM–4 PM.

Every effort, big or small, helps TCWR provide exceptional care for rescued wildlife. Ready to get involved? Email **Mia** (Animal Care) at [mia@tcwr.org](mailto:mia@tcwr.org), **Lawanna** (Social Media) at [lawanna@tcwr.org](mailto:lawanna@tcwr.org) or **Cheryl** (Marketing) at [cheryl@tcwr.org](mailto:cheryl@tcwr.org).

**Be a part of something extraordinary today!**



Want to help in person? TCWR Marketing needs hands-on volunteers for Kite Fest on Saturday, March 22. In exchange for 4 hours of service, volunteers receive free Refuge admission.



Onsite volunteers assist with painting habitat fencing, building benches, and other vital tasks to improve the Refuge.

# 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 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 help spread our mission by bringing friends and family to visit TCWR!

**All Members Receive:** Free year-round entry for cardholder & four 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.

**NEW Exclusive Insider Access!** All Wild About Wildlife members will have access to our live streaming quarterly Happy Hour with exclusive videos and Q&A with TCWR senior team members.

### Friends of India \$375- \$1,249\*

- Friends of India membership card & decal
- 15% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 10% off of 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: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ **\$175 Pride Membership** - You and 3 guests get a full year of visits to the Refuge. **BEST VALUE!**

☐ **\$375+ 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:

☐ \$175 annually (printed certificate)

☐ \$150 annually (digital certificate)

#### Animal Sponsor:

☐ \$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: \_\_\_\_\_

# NWA Gives

Athena

Join us on Thursday, April 3rd, for NWA Gives!

Short for Northwest Arkansas Gives, this is state's day of giving designed to unite people to support our local communities and charities. Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge has evolved into a sanctuary not only for animals but also as a destination for local schools, providing valuable educational experiences on wildlife. This year, we will focus on sharing with you exactly how we are preparing for the small cat crisis and all the changes that we are undertaking to be ready to rescue when needed.



# From Rescue to Refuge: Naula and Kiara's Journey to Healing

Restoring dignity and trust in the animals we rescue is at the heart of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge's (TCWR) mission. Few stories illustrate this better than the journey of tigresses Naula and Kiara, a powerful reminder of why our work matters.

In February 2020, TCWR was contacted by the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA) to provide a lifetime home for two female tigers in desperate need. Naula, six years old, and Kiara, nine years old, were being housed in a dilapidated Oklahoma petting zoo. Their owner kept them, along with a Vervet Monkey, a Patagonian Cavy, and several hoof stock, in cramped cages in his front yard—the tigers' enclosure measuring just 8x20 feet. Sadly, the owner admitted to acquiring Naula at only six weeks old and Kiara at 12 weeks old from Joe Exotic—likely to exploit them for cub-petting.

At the time of rescue, both tigers were a healthy weight—240 pounds for Naula and approximately 375–400 pounds for Kiara. However, the signs of their tragic past were undeniable. Both showed early signs of arthritis, a painful reminder of the metabolic bone disease (MBD) that often plagues cub-petting survivors. Naula required sedation during transport, allowing our team to collect blood samples. Our subsequent wellness exam x-rays of Naula revealed two fused metatarsal bones in her right hind foot, likely due to a past injury compounded by weakened bones from MBD. The injury causes an abnormal gait, making walking painful at times. Despite this, Naula's resilient spirit shines as she plays and pounces, though she's occasionally seen holding up her paw to relieve the pain.

Kiara, though more reserved, has also faced challenges. Her loping walk suggests arthritis caused by a nutritionally imbalanced diet during her formative years. A wellness exam is planned to assess her condition further when the weather permits.



In February 2020, the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA) contacted TCWR to provide a lifetime home for two female tigers in desperate need, languishing at a dilapidated petting zoo in Oklahoma.





Kiara, though more reserved, has also faced challenges. Her loping walk suggests arthritis caused by a nutritionally imbalanced diet during her formative years.



Our wellness exam x-rays of Naula revealed two fused metatarsal bones in her right hind foot, likely due to a past injury compounded by weakened bones from MBD.



Today, Naula and Kiara thrive in the spacious habitats of Rescue Ridge, where flat terrain aids their mobility. Naula loves engaging her keepers in a playful game of “cat and mouse,” while enrichment activities encourage both tigers to use their natural instincts and keep their minds stimulated.

Their story is a testament to resilience and the healing power of compassionate care. At TCWR, Naula and Kiara have found the respect, safety, and quality of life they deserve—finally free from the exploitation of their past.





Fergy

## Your Membership Ensures Their Future

**M**emberships are a powerful way to contribute to our mission while enjoying exclusive benefits. TCWR offers multiple membership levels, empowering everyone to become involved!

By becoming a Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) member, you'll directly support rescued animals by providing essential care such as veterinary treatment, proper nutrition, and a safe lifelong home. Whether you're local to Arkansas or support the Refuge from afar, your contribution makes a difference and helps educate others about the dangers behind the exotic pet trade.

As a member, you'll enjoy free year-round admission to the Refuge, exclusive member events and emails, and discounts on our Specialty Tours, lodging, and gift shop. Your support is vital to help us continue our mission of Rescue to Refuge while investing in TCWR's future. Together, we can expand habitats, enhance animal care, and broaden our educational outreach to inspire a deeper appreciation of wildlife.

Completing the sign-up process ensures your membership is processed and your contributions are accurately recorded. Memberships provide a reliable funding stream, allowing us to confidently plan for the future. With flexible options, you can choose monthly installments instead of a single payment, making it easier to contribute at a pace that works for you.

By becoming a member today, you're offering more than immediate support—you're helping ensure the Refuge remains a safe haven for generations of animals.





## Join Friends of India Today

Limited-Time Gift Offer Ends April 30!

This April only, join our **Friends of India** membership program and receive an exclusive **FREE tote bag** featuring a stunning painted image of India the tiger! Sturdy and stylish, this tote is perfect for shopping or beach trips—and a great way to spark conversations about our mission to rescue and care for exotic animals.

Don't wait—this special gift is only available for members who sign up during April 2025!

As a Friends of India member, you'll enjoy **year-round free entry** to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge for yourself and up to four guests per visit, discounts on lodging, specialty tours, gift shop items, and so much more! Your support provides a safe, lifelong home for the animals in our care while giving you exclusive perks and benefits.

Don't miss out—**sign up today** and make a difference!





# From Uncertain Beginnings to Sanctuary: The Journey of Four Rescued Bobcats

For over 32 years, your unwavering support has fueled our mission to rescue and provide lifelong care for animals in need. Thanks to public awareness, stronger laws, and increased enforcement of animal welfare regulations, the need to rescue big cats has decreased, while the demand to save smaller wild cats has risen. As roadside zoos and pseudo-sanctuaries face greater scrutiny, many are closing their doors—leaving their animals in urgent need of an ethical sanctuary.

One such facility was Spirit of the Hills Wildlife Sanctuary in Spearfish, South Dakota. In 2016, TCWR was leading the largest rescue in US history in Colorado. At the same time, Spirit of the Hills came under federal investigation after a tragic tiger attack injured a staff member. The USDA launched an inquiry into the facility's compliance with the Animal Welfare Act, resulting in over 20 large animals—tigers, bears, wolves, and more—being relocated to accredited sanctuaries. Among them were four bobcats: Dryden, Kewlona, Smalls, and Nabisco. These wild-born bobcats were initially sent to a Florida sanctuary, but when that facility closed in 2023, they found their forever home at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

Each of these bobcats has a unique story—one that underscores the importance of true, accredited sanctuaries in the fight to protect rescued wildlife. Whether through mismanagement or well-intentioned but improper care, their early lives were shaped by human interference, leaving them unable to survive in the wild.



Smalls was just a kitten when she was found struggling to survive, nearly drowning in a creek.





Dryden and Kewlona, brother and sister, were discovered as tiny kittens in a Wyoming barn.

Dryden and Kewlona, brother and sister, were discovered as tiny kittens in a Wyoming barn. Their mother and littermates were found dead nearby, leaving them orphaned and vulnerable. Smalls was also just a kitten when she was found struggling to survive, nearly drowning in a creek. Nabisco's rescue came during the devastating Crow Peak Fire of 2016 in North Dakota.


Though their exact origins remain uncertain, one fact is clear: all four bobcats had too much human interaction at a young age, making them unreleasable. This is one of many consequences of animals being kept in the care of roadside zoos, pseudo-sanctuaries, and inexperienced wildlife rehabilitators. While we cannot change the circumstances of their early rescues, we can ensure they have a safe, enriching, and well-cared-for life at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge—where their welfare always comes first.

Your support transforms lives and provides lifelong sanctuary! To adopt or sponsor Dryden, Kewlona, Smalls, and Nabisco, just fill out our enclosed form. Thank you for being an essential part of their journey to safety, care, and freedom.



Nabisco's rescue came during the devastating Crow Peak Fire of 2016 in North Dakota.



A photograph of a serval cat standing in a grassy field. The cat has a light brown coat with large, dark brown spots and stripes. It is looking towards the camera with a slight smile.

Zuri's family loved and cared for her deeply but came to realize that she needed a more suitable environment than they could provide.

## Exotic Pets and Internet Fame

In recent years, social media has become a powerful driver of this surge, with countless exotic animals entering homes and appearing in viral videos. These videos, often depicting the animals as “cute” or “cuddly,” distort the harsh realities of exotic pet ownership and idealize a trade rooted in suffering and exploitation.

Platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok amplify this issue by creating demand among viewers unaware of the cruelty behind the scenes. For example, Chloe the Serval, with 1.8 million followers, charms her audience through videos of her lounging on a couch, playing fetch, and vocalizing at dinnertime—promoting a false narrative that exotic animals are suitable as pets. This is happening every day, fueling a dangerous cycle of demand and exploitation.

Pumba the Caracal, another wild cat with a large social media following, has a biography that openly invites collaborations and advertisements. This highlights a troubling reality: social media not only glamorizes the ownership of wild cats but also exploits them for profit through monetized content.

These two examples are just a glimpse of how the internet often blurs the line between entertainment and exploitation. By raising awareness and critically evaluating the media we consume and share, we can help shift the narrative to prioritize the well-being of these animals over fleeting online fame and profit. Protecting these animals begins with each of us—by advocating for ethical practices and celebrating them where they truly belong: in the wild.

# Make Your Celebration Truly *Wild* with Big Cat Callouts!

Looking for a unique way to celebrate someone special? With Big Cat Callouts at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, you can create an unforgettable experience while supporting rescued animals and providing them extra enrichment. Share your message, and we'll craft a custom set of enrichment boxes featuring your special words.

Enrichment is vital to optimizing the welfare of animals in captivity. With boxes and scents, we can mimic their experience in the wild, where they would come in contact with novel items in their environment. Together, you can send a special message while simultaneously providing joyful enrichment for one of the animals at the Refuge.

Perfect for birthdays, anniversaries, or just because, this one-of-a-kind experience makes your message truly roar.

Don't settle for ordinary—let our wild residents help you celebrate in style. Book your Big Cat Callout today and give the gift of excitement and compassion!



Looking for a unique way to celebrate someone special? Big Cat Callouts can create an unforgettable experience while supporting rescued animals.

Share your message, and we'll craft a custom set of enrichment boxes featuring your special words.





As spring arrives and the animals become more active, our team is ramping up enrichment efforts to keep them engaged and stimulated. One of the best ways to help is by donating spices and perfumes. These scents are sprayed around their habitats, toys, and inside cardboard boxes to encourage natural behaviors and keep their minds sharp.

Cats constantly encounter new and exciting scents in the wild as they patrol their territories. Our scent enrichment allows them to experience the same kind of stimulation in captivity. Your donation directly impacts their well-being, helping them stay curious, active, and happy. Donate today and bring a little extra excitement to their spring-time routine!



## Create a Lasting Impact of Compassion

By naming Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge as a beneficiary in your will, trust, or life insurance policy, you ensure that animals in need receive lifelong care. Your legacy will not only safeguard their future but also fortify the mission that protects them for generations to come.

To simplify estate planning, we've partnered with FreeWill, a free, online tool that guides you through the step-by-step process of creating your estate plan. This user-friendly platform eliminates standard legal and filing fees, allowing you to plan your future easily.

Your support ensures that generations of big cats and other wildlife have a safe, ethical sanctuary. Join us in building a legacy of care and compassion. Visit our website today to start your estate plan and leave a lasting impact on the lives of animals who need you most.

Start your legacy today. Visit [TurpentineCreek.org/Legacy](https://TurpentineCreek.org/Legacy).

# A Keeper's Return: Carly Hepburn's Unforgettable Reunion with Turpentine Creek's Big Cats

Carly Hepburn began as an intern at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge in 2016, completing four internships before joining the Animal Care Team in 2018. Over the years, she participated in numerous rescues, witnessing animals' transformations from trauma to trust. In November 2023, she left the Refuge—but when she returned for a visit, the animals made it clear they hadn't forgotten her.



**Lakota**

Lakota, the Ti-Liger, was dozing atop his platform when Carly passed by. At the sound of Carly's voice, Lakota bolted to greet her with exuberant chuffs, running along the fence in excitement.



**Khaleesi**

Khaleesi, lounging at the bottom of her hill, spotted Carly and sprinted up to shower her with chuffs.

Lakota, the Ti-Liger, was dozing atop his platform when Carly passed by. At the sound of her voice, he cracked an eye open, then suddenly sprang up, bolting down to greet her with exuberant chuffs, running along the fence in excitement.

Even more shocking was Abigail. Known for her fierce independence, she had spent nine years keeping her distance. "She was never friendly—she'd roar if you lingered," Carly recalled. This time, Abigail chuffed and approached her calmly, an unprecedented display of recognition and trust.

Athena, Chuff, Karma, and Khaleesi also greeted Carly joyfully. Khaleesi, lounging at the bottom of her hill, spotted Carly and sprinted up to shower her with chuffs.

Seeing Freedom Field completed was another emotional moment, as Carly helped complete our habitat expansion. What was an open field where staff and interns exercised their dogs was now a sanctuary for wild cats who had once known only suffering. "To see them thriving in these vast, species-designed habitats, surrounded by Ozark vistas—it was overwhelming," Carly reflected. The animals remembered her, but more importantly, they had found the peace and safety they deserved at the Refuge.



# TCWR's Intern Program Spreads Excellence in Animal Care Worldwide

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge's (TCWR) immersive intern program is shaping the future of animal care by training the next generation of professionals. Interns gain hands-on experience in providing daily care, crafting enrichment activities, and maintaining habitats for TCWR's animals. This unique program instills a deep understanding of animal welfare and prepares participants to share TCWR's mission and standards globally.



Madelyn, Jo and Noah, left to right, exemplify the success of TCWR's Internship Program and how it prepares individuals for impactful careers in animal care.

Jo Brown, Noah Urbanek, and Madelyn Beehler exemplify the success of TCWR's internship program, showcasing how it prepares individuals for impactful careers in animal care. Jo, completing her fourth internship, has been hired as a Primate Caregiver at the Oklahoma Primate Sanctuary, a GFAS-verified facility committed to providing compassionate, lifelong care for rescued primates.

Noah, also completing his fourth internship, joins White Oak Conservation as a Conservation and Recovery Specialist, focusing on saving endangered species and educating future conservationists.

Madelyn Beehler, finishing her third internship, has been hired at Safe Haven Wildlife Sanctuary, a GFAS-accredited facility that shares our commitment to ethical animal care. Safe Haven is also a member of the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA), further aligning with TCWR's mission.

Through their training at TCWR, Jo, Noah, and Madelyn have cultivated exceptional standards in animal care, safety, and behavioral training—qualities that are widely recognized among accredited sanctuaries and AZA facilities. Their continued efforts will advance TCWR's mission and set a global benchmark for animal welfare.

The lessons learned during TCWR internships extend beyond the Refuge, spreading expertise and compassion to sanctuaries, zoos, and conservation efforts worldwide.

# Meet Your 2025 Spring Interns!



## ROW 1 - LEFT TO RIGHT

**Jo Brown** - Oklahoma State University  
**Trinity Wilson** - Texas Tech University  
**Sophie Benson** - Friends University  
**Grace Sutton** - Southeast Missouri State University  
**Madelyn Beehler** - Brigham Young University

**Neila King** - North Carolina State University  
**Natalie Daniel** - Southern Illinois University  
**Leah Sparks** - Washington State University  
**Alejandra May** - Purdue University

## ROW 2 - LEFT TO RIGHT

**Kaitlyn Stump** - Oklahoma State University  
**Emily Cossey** - Arizona State University  
**Kylee Mecate** - Brigham Young University  
**Haven Voorhees** - University of Arkansas  
**Noah Urbanek** - PennWest University





# Lodging at The Refuge

Spring is just around the corner, making it the perfect time to visit **Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge**! As the ground thaws and flowers bloom, the animals awaken with renewed energy, offering you the chance to witness one of their most active seasons. Watch as the cats bask in the mild sunshine, bears emerge from their winter dens, and the entire Refuge comes to life in the refreshing spring air.

Whether you prefer the comfort of our **Family Suites**, the adventure of **Safari Lodging**, the charm of a **Tree House**, the luxury of **Glamping**, or the freedom of an **RV site**, we have the perfect stay for you. **Book your spring trip today** and experience the wild like never before!



Holly



Fred



Safari Lodging





Safari Lodging



Tree House



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Emma

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