

# BIG CAT CHRONICLES

SUMMER 2025



**Aria**

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

**Born 1/1/2005**

**Rescued 10/20/2023**

*Learn about me on page 5.*



**Turpentine Creek**  
FOUNDATION, INC.



# Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

As summer 2025 begins, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is stepping into a new ERA—one defined by bold strides in Education, Rescue, and Action. With your unwavering support, we're expanding our impact, elevating our mission, and responding swiftly to the growing needs of animals in crisis across the country and beyond.

When Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) cases surged in the U.S., TCWR didn't wait to react—we prepared. Our team proactively adjusted our protocols in collaboration with veterinarians, scientists, and leading animal care experts. One of many behind-the-scenes measures includes a simple but powerful one: ensuring disinfectants stay on our animal water dishes for a full three minutes to kill dangerous pathogens. It's just one example of how seriously we take our responsibility to protect every life in our care.

Our commitment to animal safety also means working with law enforcement and government agencies on Witness Protection rescues, where discretion is critical. We're so grateful to those of you who understand the importance of keeping these animals' identities and histories confidential, especially on social media. Thank you for trusting our judgment and for supporting our Witness Protection Fund. Because of you, these animals can begin a new chapter filled with safety, health, and dignity.

Recently, we shared a powerful new educational documentary, *Falling Through the Cracks*, during NWA Gives. We're incredibly thankful to Zuri's family for their courage in testifying for the film, which highlights the growing small exotic cat crisis and dispels the myth that small wild cats make suitable pets. The documentary will soon be submitted to film festivals nationwide as part of our effort to raise awareness and elevate TCWR's national and international profile.

Every initiative we undertake—from proactive health measures to advocacy through media—is only possible because of your continued generosity. We're also investing in new tools that conserve time and money while improving the daily lives of our animal residents, ensuring that your support is spent wisely and with lasting impact.

We invite you to visit the Refuge this summer to see the difference you're making firsthand. Whether you book a specialty tour, stay overnight in our lodging, or become a member of our Wild About Wildlife program, every visit helps spread awareness and deepens the connection between people and rescued wildlife.

Together, we are leading the way into a New ERA for animal protection. Thank you for standing with us on this journey.

**With gratitude,**

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Tanya Smith". The script is fluid and cursive.

Tanya Smith, Founder and President  
Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge

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

# Expanding Our Mission:

## The Evolution of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge

The passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA) was a major victory for animal welfare. Since then, while big cat rescues have leveled off, we've seen a sharp rise in calls to help smaller wild cat species. In response, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) is evolving to meet the changing needs of the captive wildlife trade. With the full support of our board of trustees and senior leadership, we've expanded our mission: **To rescue and provide lifetime sanctuary for captive wild animals.** This important shift deepens our commitment to rescue, protect, and provide lifelong sanctuary for a broader range of species in desperate need of safe, appropriate care.

Long before officially expanding our mission, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge prioritized helping other species encountered during big cat rescues—whenever space and resources allowed. No animal in urgent need was left behind. A powerful example of this commitment is the rescue of three remarkable bears—Huggy, Lolli, and Holly—during the Colorado Project in 2016–2017.

That mission involved the acquisition of a 13.7-acre roadside zoo that allocated just over seven acres to house their animals and big cat breeding facility that was shutting down due to the owner's declining health. The property held 115 animals living in deplorable conditions, with inadequate enclosures and little to no veterinary care. TCWR found homes for most of the animals at other reputable sanctuaries nationwide and brought 34 animals to the Refuge—including Huggy, Lolli, and Holly, who continue to thrive.

Huggy, Lolli, and Holly now live in TCWR's state-of-the-art natural black bear habitats, which comprise three acres of Ozark woodland. Huggy enjoys playing with cardboard boxes and relaxing in his pool. Lolli forages, climbs trees, and builds dens out of branches, while Holly loves interacting with perfume-scented enrichment, climbing trees, and swimming. These bears, once victims of neglect, now thrive in environments where they can express natural behaviors.



Lolli



Holly



Huggy

Lolli, Holly and Huggy now live in TCWR's state-of-the-art natural black bear habitats, which comprise three acres of Ozark woodland. These bears, once victims of neglect, now thrive in environments where they can express natural behaviors.



The evolution of TCWR's mission is about more than just broadening our species focus—it is about shaping the future of sanctuaries to meet the growing needs of captive wildlife. The new TCWR logo reflects this growth and our commitment to creating a sustainable future where all captive animals have a safe, lifelong sanctuary. As we move forward, TCWR will continue to lead the charge for a future where every animal is treated with dignity and respect.

# Letter from the Curator

Emily McCormack



At Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, we're no strangers to complex rescues. Still, few can compare to the level of planning, coordination, and trust required when participating in a witness protection case for animals. This spring, we were again called to action—asked to provide a safe landing for several big cats seized by law enforcement in response to illegal activity and animal welfare concerns. Because of the sensitive nature of these cases, we can't share specifics just yet. We can share how these rescues take shape and why our involvement matters so deeply.

Witness protection rescues are intricate. The animals are often removed from volatile situations, and the first 5–10 days after seizure are critical as legal custody is determined. The risk of interference from previous owners or affiliates is real, so transport and placement decisions are made strategically. Though there were facilities closer to the seizure site, we were specifically chosen because our distance offered an added layer of protection, helping to safeguard the animals from being reclaimed before custody was finalized. Fortunately, thanks to our recent habitat expansion at Freedom Field—an effort we prioritized following the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act—we were prepared and able to accommodate all of the big cats in need.

Turpentine Creek is proud to be part of a robust, collaborative safety net that includes fellow GFAS-accredited sanctuaries, the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA), and oversight from agencies like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Our GFAS accreditation is more than a badge—it ensures we meet the highest standards in animal care, safety, and ethics. This credibility allows agencies to trust us with high-stake rescues and ensures we're eligible for partnerships, grants, and emergency response collaborations.

We're also grateful to be one of the three accredited sanctuaries that are part of the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN). The WCN reached out to the BCSA to decide on the optimal sanctuary for our newest witness protection rescue, and we are honored to have been selected. This network works with accredited sanctuaries to ensure that animals who have suffered neglect and abuse will get the care and dignity they deserve. Our shared mission to protect wildlife aligns perfectly with the goals of these witness protection rescues: remove animals from harm, prevent future exploitation, and give them the lifelong care they deserve.

There are pros and cons to being involved in cases like this. The urgency can strain staff and resources. Transport is long and expensive. Secrecy makes storytelling and fundraising a challenge. But the advantages are undeniable: animals who've endured cruelty get a second chance in a sanctuary that will never fail them.

Thank you for trusting us to do this work with compassion and care. Every rescue reminds us why sanctuaries like TCWR are essential—and why your support is, too.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Emily McCormack". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Emily McCormack, Animal Curator  
Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge

**Your Witness Protection Support Funds Freedom**

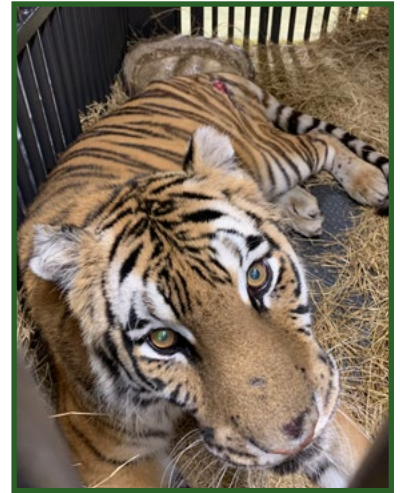


# Exploited to Embraced: Aria's Redemption Story

In early 2023, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) welcomed 33 wild cats from a GFAS-accredited sanctuary in Tampa, Florida. Among them is Aria, now thriving at Freedom Field. Her journey to TCWR was anything but simple—marked by resilience, survival, and the promise of a second chance.

It is believed that, at a young age, Aria was discarded from a cub petting scheme and later ended up in the hands of a private owner, lacking federal oversight. Confined to a small, urine-soaked space, she developed painful open sores from the concrete and unsanitary conditions. For years, her previous owner neglected to comply with state regulations, denying Aria the proper veterinary care she desperately needed, leaving her to endure in silence.

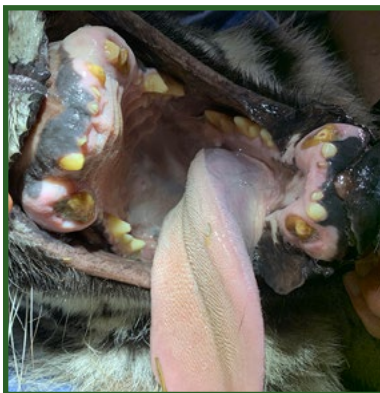
After four years of suffering from gaping sores and multiple warnings, the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) finally seized Aria in 2019. Facing the possibility of euthanasia, the ODA contacted the Florida facility and placed Aria in Witness Protection while her case played out in litigation. During her time in Witness Protection, a thorough veterinary examination revealed a horrific story of neglect and abuse.



Confined to a small, urine-soaked space, Aria developed painful open sores from the concrete and unsanitary conditions.



Aria had become antibiotic-resistant due to years of prolonged neglect, and her sores were so severe that her hip and femur bones were nearly visible through the muscle tissue.



Along with her sores, all four of Aria's canines were broken. To ease her pain and prevent infection, she underwent four root canals.

By this time, Aria had become antibiotic-resistant due to years of prolonged neglect, and her sores were so severe that her hip and femur bones were nearly visible through the muscle tissue. Multiple surgical attempts were made to treat her open sores, but they proved unsuccessful because of their location. As a result, an antibiotic spray and daily injections were administered in hopes that the sores would heal independently. In addition to her sores, all four of Aria's canines were broken, adding to her suffering. To help alleviate this unimaginable pain, she underwent four root canals to prevent future infection.

Days turned into months, months into years, as this resilient tiger's physical and mental wounds began to heal within sanctuary life. While her scars are a testament to her painful past, they no longer define her future. At age twenty, Aria continues to thrive at TCWR, displaying her playful nature in every chuff and greeting. Watching her engage with her neighboring tigers and run freely through her grassy habitat showcases the power of healing and second chances.

Please consider sponsoring or adopting Aria to ensure she and all the TCWR animals will get the lifelong care they deserve. You can watch this high-spirited tigress through our Explore.org cameras at Freedom Field.



Aria

After four years of suffering and multiple warnings, the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) seized Aria in 2019 and placed her in Witness Protection at the Florida facility while her case played out in litigation.



# Your TCWR Team Rescues Seven Tigers from Nevada in April, 2025

Mustafa



Mustafa exploring his spacious new Freedom Field habitat.



TCWR President & Founder Tanya Smith and Animal Curator Emily McCormack en route from Pahrump, NV.



Descending a mountain pass en route from Pahrump, NV.

In early April, Nye County officials called upon Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) to assist in the rescue and relocation of seven tigers from a private facility in Pahrump, Nevada. The animals have been safely transported to our Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries-accredited facility in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, where they will receive specialized care while the legal case plays out.

Upon arrival in Nevada, TCWR's team conducted brief medical checks before carefully transporting the tigers back to the Refuge. Now, in our Witness Protection and Rescue Program, the tigers are receiving comprehensive veterinary care, proper nutrition, and spacious natural habitats. Our staff veterinarian and animal care team closely monitor their health, tailoring individualized care plans for each animal.





Louise

TCWR has over 30 years of experience assisting in large-scale rescues, working with law enforcement, government agencies, and animal welfare organizations to ensure the well-being and protection of exotic animals in need. As a founding member of the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance, we remain committed to providing the highest level of care for animals that require emergency intervention.

While TCWR cannot comment on the ongoing legal case, we remain focused on giving these tigers the best care possible during this critical time.

If you would like to support the ongoing care of these rescued tigers, please consider making a donation.



Livia



Livia



# The Risks We Take The Lives *You* Help Save

At Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, rescuing animals is the pinnacle of our mission—but it's also the most dangerous part of our work.

Each rescue brings us face-to-face with exotic animals we've never met, often in highly unpredictable and unstable conditions. Unlike the animals who live at the Refuge—whose behaviors we understand deeply—rescued animals are strangers. We don't know how they'll react to people, to transport, or to being tranquilized. Add in unfamiliar enclosures, often not built with safety in mind, and each rescue becomes a high-risk operation.

Over the past 33 years, we've developed and refined protocols to protect our team and the animals. But even the best planning can't remove every danger—especially when you factor in the human element.

Regardless of the conditions the animals were living in, we're taking them away from someone who sees them as property. Emotions can run high. In the safest cases, we're supported by local authorities. In others, we've had to rely on police escorts, remove license plates from trailers, wear plain clothes, and keep our identity hidden to protect our team during and after transport.

These behind-the-scenes efforts are necessary to ensure that every rescue ends in safety—for the animals and for the people fighting to give them a second chance.



Unfamiliar animal enclosures, often not built with safety in mind, make a rescue a high-risk operation.



Each rescue brings us face-to-face with animals we've never met in highly unpredictable and unstable conditions.

***Tell your friends about this!*** You can support the Turpentine Creek mission of rescue by staying in one of the unique lodging accommodations spread throughout the sanctuary. See Freedom Field - brand new habitats for the wild recipients of your generosity. Overlooking the rugged Ozark Mountains, the Refuge is the perfect place to get back in touch with nature and experience new adventures. Each stay comes with free admission, so you can say hello to the great predators whose mighty sounds invigorate your spirit. Located just south of Eureka Springs and near Beaver Lake.



The Tree House



Zulu Safari Lodges



## Create a Lasting Impact of Compassion

Your will, trust, or life insurance policy, can help ensure that animals in need receive lifelong care. We've partnered with FreeWill to guide you through estate planning and eliminate standard legal and filing fees, allowing you to plan your future easily.

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: [TurpentineCreek.org/Legacy](https://TurpentineCreek.org/Legacy).



# Fred's Story: From Black Market to Bright Future

Fred arrived at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge in spring 2023, just a cub—and just in time. He was one of the first tigers rescued under the newly passed Big Cat Public Safety Act (BCPSA), and his story reveals both the power of law enforcement and the resilience of animals given a second chance.

Authorities were tipped off about a tiger cub in Conway, AR. Within weeks, a man named Keidrick was arrested, and evidence at his home led investigators to believe Fred had been part of an illegal sale, likely tied to broader wildlife trafficking out of Texas. Fred was quickly confiscated and brought to the Refuge, where he would remain in Witness Protection while the case unfolded.

When Fred arrived, our team removed a makeshift dog harness, conducted a health exam, gave vaccines, and introduced him to his new habitat. It didn't take long for his personality to shine through. Fred loves to stalk his neighbors, chase toys, and splash around in his pool. He's bold, curious, and full of life—a reminder of what's possible when wild animals are given the care they deserve.

While Fred was settling in, Keidrick pled guilty to violating the BCPSA. But after months of failing drug tests and missing court-ordered programs, a grand jury indicted him in March 2025. He was arrested during *Operation Early Harvest*, a major push to remove dangerous repeat offenders across Arkansas, with Fred's case added to the priority list.



Fred

Fred arrived at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge in spring 2023, just a cub—and just in time.



Fred

## Timeline of Key Events:

**APRIL 7, 2023**

**Tip about tiger cub spotted in Conway, AR.**

**APRIL 17, 2023**

**Anonymous tip about tiger cub for sale.**

**APRIL 19, 2023**

**Keidrick was arrested during a traffic stop and linked to the tiger cub.**





Fred

**Fred is bold, curious, and full of life—a reminder of what’s possible when wild animals are given the care they deserve.**

Fred’s journey—from black market victim to thriving tiger—is a story of transformation. It’s also a sign that the BCPA is working. With strong partnerships and growing public awareness, we’re helping put an end to big cat exploitation—one rescue at a time.

**APRIL 28, 2023**

**Tiger cub (Fred) found,  
taken to Turpentine  
Creek Wildlife Refuge.**

**OCTOBER 22, 2024**

**Keidrick was placed on  
pre-trial release after  
pleading guilty.**

**MARCH 5, 2025**

**Grand jury indictment;  
arrest warrant issued.**



# Letter from the Veterinarian

Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, DVM



As a leader in our field, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge has been called upon numerous times by government and law enforcement officials to help with animal seizures in suspected animal abuse cases. These are ongoing criminal investigations in which my expertise as the attending veterinarian and the experienced TCWR animal care staff play critical roles in collecting the evidence needed to determine if abuse is occurring. By doing so, we help the investigating authorities make their case against the abuser(s) in a court of law where justice can be served.

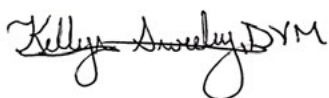
Photographic evidence plays a key role in the investigative process. All aspects of the animal's enclosure are documented, with special attention to key welfare features—such as access to appropriate food and clean water, shelter and safe living areas, adequate space to walk, run, and play, the presence of enrichment, and a lack of overcrowding. Facilities should be well-managed, clean, and suitable for the specific needs of the species.

From there, every facet of the animal itself is documented both photographically and on my medical examination record through examination findings. Key features of these exams include assessing body condition, muscle tone, hydration status, coat and skin health, checking for wounds and/or parasites, the presence of claws and canines, any dental concerns, and signs of behavioral stress, among other indicators. Further veterinary forensic testing is sometimes deemed necessary, including sending collected samples off for histopathology, serology, microbiology, toxicology, and performing radiographs (x-rays).

The last large part that I play in this investigative process is to write up a full unbiased report of all of my examination and diagnostic findings with the photographic and other forensic evidence supplemented to the report to further reinforce my overall evaluation of the condition of the animals and whether abuse was occurring based on the specific state laws of the seizure location.

Every step of our rescue process is carefully crafted to protect the well-being of these animals—from the moment they are removed from harm to the day they are fully settled into their new home. While we must protect their privacy and can't share specific medical details, your support fills a critical gap. Donations to our **Rescue to Refuge** fund ensure that each animal receives the veterinary attention and ongoing care they deserve to heal, thrive, and live with dignity.

Sincerely,



Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, Veterinarian  
Turpentine Creek Wildlife 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: \_\_\_\_\_



**Emma**

Emma, who was once kept in a basement, now spends her days running through the grass, stalking her caretakers, and enjoying the presence of local wildlife.



**Cyrus**



**Chaos**

Chaos and Cyrus were rescued from a breeding facility, where they had been companions, but increased aggression led to their separation.

## Understanding the Caracal

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) is committed to providing a safe and long-term home for all wild cats, including caracals. Our resident caracals, Emma, Chaos, and Cyrus, have each overcome significant challenges, serving as a powerful reminder of the ongoing efforts to protect these species in captivity and the wild.

Native to the vast savannas of central and southern Africa, these wildcats thrive in warm climates, with behaviors that help them adapt to environmental extremes. One key adaptation is their crepuscular lifestyle, which enables them to hunt during the cooler hours of dawn and dusk while conserving energy during the heat of the day. These small wild cats play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance by controlling populations of rodents, birds, and other small animals—supporting both biodiversity and the stability of their ecosystems.

Emma, who was once kept in a private owner's basement with no opportunity to experience the outdoors, now spends her days running through the grass, stalking her caretakers, and enjoying the presence of local wildlife, such as insects, birds, and more.

Chaos and Cyrus were rescued from a breeding facility, where they had been companions, but increased aggression led to their separation. Caracals are naturally solitary animals, and providing them with the space and independence they need is important for their well-being.

At TCWR, our efforts to provide sanctuary for these small wild cat victims also serve a greater purpose: educating the public on the critical importance of protecting these species—not only in captivity, but in their natural habitats as well.



## Kewlona's Wellness Exam: A Picture of Health Thanks to Your Support

Recently, Dr. Kellyn performed a wellness exam on Kewlona, a stunning bobcat with a beautiful, orange-tinted coat. She shares a spacious habitat in Freedom Field with her companion, Dryden. Both were originally rescued from a neglectful facility in North Dakota. While Dryden stayed hidden in his den, we were able to gather Kewlona for a full check-up.

During her exam, Kewlona became the first to benefit from our new stationary X-ray—donated by Big Cat Rescue—which allows quicker imaging, fewer staff for small cats, no heavy lifting, and shorter anesthesia times for large cats requiring multiple images.



During her exam, Kewlona became the first to benefit from our new stationary X-ray!





Kewlona



Kewlona



Kewlona

Dryden

Kewlona shares a spacious habitat in Freedom Field with her companion, Dryden.

The X-rays revealed no signs of arthritis—a testament to the benefits of her keeping her claws—and a healthy skeletal structure. She also received a full dental exam with X-rays below the gumline, confirming her teeth were in excellent condition with only mild tartar and no signs of gingivitis.

At nine years old, Kewlona is considered a senior cat but is thriving. Her excellent health is a testament to her resilience and care. With regular wellness exams now part of her life, we can catch and prevent potential issues early, giving her a longer, healthier life.

Your support of our **Rescue to Refuge Fund** makes these exams possible. By donating, you help us provide **essential, ongoing care** for animals like Kewlona—ensuring they can continue to enjoy their lives of **freedom and compassionate care**. Please consider donating today to support their lifelong well-being.



## A New ERA of Rescue to Refuge: Expanding Our Mission to Save More Lives



For over 30 years, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) has been a haven for big cats in need. But many other species suffer in roadside zoos, private ownership, and exploitative situations. With our expanded mission statement, we are stepping into a new **ERA of Rescue to Refuge**, poised to help all captive wildlife that face neglect, abuse, and exploitation.

Even in the past, when our mission was strictly focused on big cats, there were moments when we couldn't turn away an animal in desperate need. One such case was Flip the coatimundi, who came to us in 2009 from the now-closed Interactive Zoo and Aquarium in Branson West, Missouri, known as 'Predator World.' Facing stricter enclosure regulations, the owner of the facility asked TCWR to take in nine animals—seven big cats, a bear, and Flip. While big cats were our primary focus, we had the space, expertise, and heart to say 'yes' to them all.

Flip arrived at TCWR with hair loss due to fleas, but with the right treatment, she soon grew back a thick, healthy coat. In 2015, our team moved Flip into a large natural habitat, designed with elevated walkways, climbing structures, and enrichment activities to keep her stimulated. Flip loved squeaking at staff, rooting for insects, and playing with her favorite toy—a bowling pin!

For 12 incredible years, Flip thrived in her forever home at TCWR, charming staff and visitors and proving that every life is worth saving. Now, as we embrace our new mission, we're ready to rescue and provide refuge for even more animals in need. With your support, we can change lives—one rescue at a time.

Join us in this **new ERA by supporting our Rescue to Refuge fund!**

## Bringing TCWR's Mission to the Global Stage: Emily McCormack Joins Wild Welfare as an Ad Hoc Advisor



In spring 2025, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) Animal Curator Emily McCormack was invited to serve as an ad hoc advisor for Wild Welfare in the U.S., a nonprofit dedicated to improving captive wild animal welfare worldwide. This role aligns with TCWR's commitment to providing exceptional care for rescued wildlife while advocating for higher welfare standards across the industry.

Founded in 2012, Wild Welfare is the first organization focused on elevating captive wild animal welfare by uniting nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), zoos, aquariums, and sanctuaries. With an estimated 10,000 captive wildlife facilities worldwide, many lack appropriate welfare regulations, leading to overcrowding, inadequate healthcare, and poor living conditions. Rather than simply condemning substandard facilities, Wild Welfare works to create practical, science-based solutions to improve care and end animal suffering.

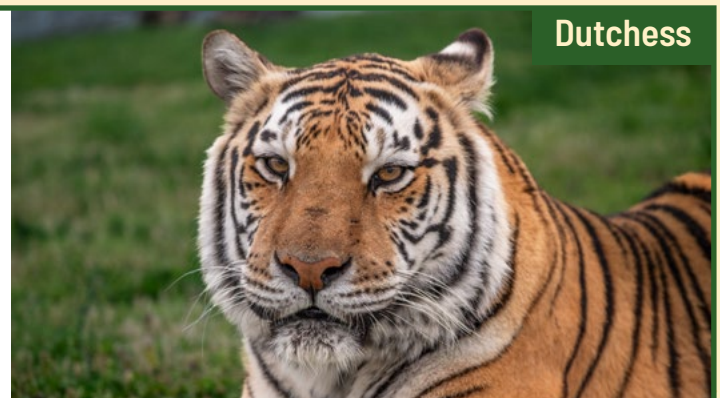
By contributing her expertise, Emily helps bridge the gap between sanctuary care and global welfare reform, bringing TCWR's mission to a broader audience. Her involvement showcases how sanctuaries play a vital role in shaping ethical standards for captive wildlife worldwide.

Supporters of TCWR can take pride in knowing that their impact extends beyond the Refuge, helping to create a world where all captive wildlife receives the respect and care they deserve.

**explore**

Watch me in my new habitat  
from the comfort of your habitat!

Thanks to Explore.com live cams.





## Lakota and Sioux: The Roadside Zoo That Failed Them—And the Law That Didn't

In early 2017, the USDA revoked the license of a roadside zoo in Alabama after years of documented neglect. Among the survivors were two drastically underweight bobcats: Sioux and Lakota.



Sioux



Lakota



Sioux

Sioux, the more vocal of the two, is known for her bold spirit and cooing conversations with her caretakers.



Lakota



In early 2017, the USDA revoked the license of a roadside zoo in Alabama after years of documented neglect. This facility—once home to more than 75 animals, including lions, tigers, bears, monkeys, and birds—was cited for numerous violations of the Animal Welfare Act. Enclosures were filled with feces, overrun with pests, and stocked with rotten food. Dens were unstable, and veterinary care was virtually nonexistent. When officials returned in March of 2017, the zoo’s owner was arrested and charged with 28 counts of animal cruelty.

Among the survivors were two drastically underweight bobcats: Sioux and Lakota. At the time of their rescue, each weighed barely half of what a healthy adult bobcat should. Thankfully, an accredited sanctuary in Florida stepped in, providing the nutrition and medical care they so desperately needed.

In 2023, Sioux and Lakota—along with 31 other cats—made their way to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, where their new lives began. Today, both bobcats are thriving. Sioux, the more vocal of the two, is known for her bold spirit and cooing conversations with her caretakers. Now that they have the natural space of Freedom Field, their personalities truly shine.

Their journey is a powerful reminder of why laws protecting exotic animals are so vital. The Animal Welfare Act (AWA), enforced by the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), sets the minimum standards for the care, housing, and treatment of animals in captivity. Backed by decades of scientific research, the AWA sets minimum standards for housing, diet, veterinary care, and more. These regulations exist to ensure that no animal is left behind to suffer and that those who neglect or abuse them are held accountable.

At Turpentine Creek, we see the results of these protections every day. Sioux and Lakota are thriving because someone spoke up—and because the law was enforced.

We ask our supporters to stay informed, speak out, and stand with us as we fight for the animals still waiting for rescue. Compassion saves lives. So does action.



Sioux and Lakota are thriving because someone spoke up  
— and because the law was enforced.



# Putting Your Money to Work Wisely & Improving Lives

*Because every dollar counts, we prioritize tools and technology that protect our animals and conserve resources.*

At Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR), every dollar saved on maintenance means more resources for rescued animals. That's why we've invested in two cutting-edge lawn care machines to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and create a quieter, more peaceful environment for our residents.

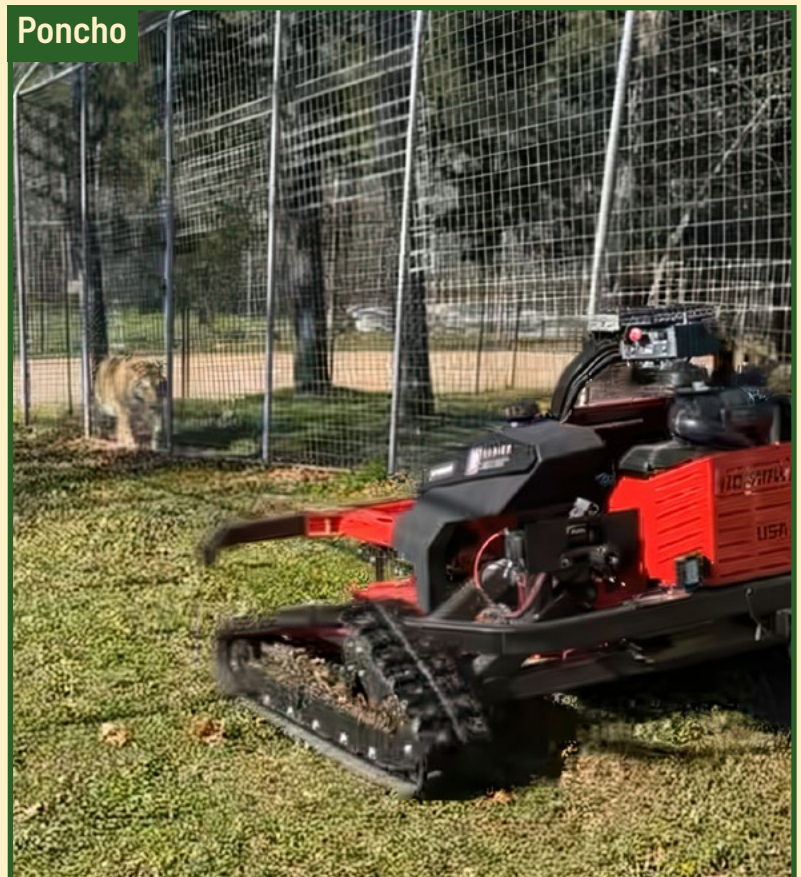
The RC Mower, a remote-operated machine with a five-foot mowing path and the ability to tackle 50% inclines, is a game-changer. Equipped with a mounted camera, it allows staff to operate it safely from outside habitat areas. While its price tag was significant, the annual savings means it will pay for itself within a year!

We've also added a new weed sprayer, which uses an organic, animal-safe weed killer, drastically reducing the need for manual trimming.

According to Maintenance Coordinator Victor Smith, these upgrades will cut lawn care costs by 50% and reduce weed-eating labor by up to 80%. The RC Mower's quieter operation means less stress for the animals, and it frees up our team to focus on animal care.

When Victor first tested the RC Mower in Freedom Field, tiger Simba immediately took notice, curiously trotting alongside the machine. What once took a crew of eight several days to complete, Victor finished in just four hours!

By **embracing innovation**, we're ensuring that more of our **budget and time** go directly to **rescuing and caring for animals in need**.



What once took a crew of eight several days to complete, Victor finished in just four hours! Poncho took great interest in this new machine.





*Thank You  
Monthly Supporters!*

## Be Their Lifeline—Every Single Month

While one-time gifts make a difference, *monthly giving sustains life*. Your recurring donation powers daily care, emergency medical treatment, habitat maintenance, and future rescues—ensuring every animal we save receives the lifetime refuge they deserve.

With rescue calls on the rise, your steady support means we're always ready to answer the call. No matter the amount, your monthly gift is more than a donation—it's a promise. A promise of safety, healing, and freedom.

Help us give every rescued animal the second chance they've been waiting for.

**Become a monthly donor today.**





## Volunteers Ready New Homes for Your Witness Protection Animals

Each year, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) welcomes helping hands from volunteer groups during Spring Break. This year, two groups of volunteers from Texas A&M and the University of Kansas made a big difference for the animals.

"We always make clear to our volunteers that they will not be interacting with the animals. Only trained and experienced Animal Care Staff do this. It also helps to set the tone right away - we are not a roadside zoo. But, everything that volunteers do directly benefits the animals at the Refuge and is meaningful work," explained Animal Care Staff and Volunteer Coordinator, Mia White.







As a thank-you, the groups created box enrichment, decorated with their university pride, for the cats to enjoy!

Both groups helped repaint the fencing of our large bear habitats at Rescue Ridge, which span three acres. Controlling rust is a challenge, so repainting metal fencing is a key part of our routine maintenance to ensure safety for both animals and staff. The volunteers also cleared leftover construction rocks from empty habitats at Freedom Field.

Regular habitat lawn care helps keep ticks, snakes, and other native pests under control. Clearing large rocks protects equipment and keeps operations running smoothly. The University of Kansas also helped us prepare for summer, rolling out shade clothes on empty habitats at Rescue Ridge.

Their work at Rescue Ridge and Freedom Field had a lasting impact—just weeks later, those habitats became the new homes of our Witness Protection animals. As a thank-you, the groups created box enrichment, decorated with their university pride, for the cats to enjoy!



## Make Your Message *Wild* with Big Cat Callouts!

You can create an unforgettable experience while supporting rescued animals and providing them extra enrichment. We craft a custom set of boxes featuring your special words and your favorite refuge residents get vital enrichment to improve their welfare.

With boxes and scents, we can mimic experiences of the wild where animals come in contact with novel items. Perfect for birthdays, anniversaries, or just because, this one-of-a-kind experience makes your message truly roar. 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.





# Cheers to 33 Years: Celebrating a New Era at TCWR

On April 26, we were honored to welcome long-time and new supporters to our **Sanctuary Soiree at the Park**, commemorating **33 years of nationwide rescue** and unveiling an exciting new era for Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

Held at the historic Basin Park Hotel in Eureka Springs—thanks to the incredible generosity of Elise Roenigk and Jack Moyer—this milestone event served as the perfect backdrop for President and Founder Tanya Smith to introduce our expanded mission statement and refreshed logo, representing our evolving role in the world of wild animal rescue and advocacy.

Whether you attended in person or donated the value of your ticket, your support made this evening truly meaningful. Guests enjoyed a delicious dinner, appetizers handcrafted by Maintenance Director Victor Smith, dessert baked by TCWR Animal Care Team member Mary Schlieve, and live music from Tim Hillwood while bidding in exciting silent and live auctions that directly supported our mission.

The evening also featured a powerful new video created by our content team and offered a special opportunity for guests to connect with TCWR staff and fellow advocates. Together, we stepped forward into a new era of compassion, collaboration, and commitment to wildlife.



L to R TCWR Board Member & Hilda Jackson Society Member Julie Howard, TCWR Curator Emily McCormack and Kenny Fellowship member Marcia Davenport.



The historic Basin Park Hotel in Eureka Springs served as the perfect backdrop for President and Founder Tanya Smith to introduce our expanded mission statement and refreshed logo.



L to R Supporters Mathew Barr and Danielle LeGros, Social Media Influencer Danielle Suater and her photographer Arielle Lewis, and TCWR Donor Relations Assistant Hannnah Litke.



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