

BIG CAT CHRONICLES

SUMMER 2026

Tanya

Female Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)

Born September 18, 2016

Rescued October 6, 2016

Learn about me on page 4.



Turpentine Creek
FOUNDATION, INC.

Letter from the President



Dear Friends,

This summer marks an important milestone for Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge—the 10-year anniversary of what we now call the Colorado Project. As I reflect on that moment in our history, I'm reminded of how profoundly it shaped the work we do today.

In 2016, we were approached to help with a situation involving more than 100 animals at a struggling roadside facility in Colorado. What followed was one of the most complex undertakings we had ever faced. Over six months, 115 animals were safely placed—34 at the Refuge—while our team helped transport the remaining animals to trusted sanctuary partners nationwide.

What we uncovered there also revealed something much larger. The facility had direct ties to key players in the big cat trade, including Joe Exotic, Jeff Lowe, and Doc Antle. Many of the animals had been bred or traded through this network to supply cub petting and entertainment operations. In total, 24 of the animals came from Joe Exotic, and several others from Doc Antle—offering a rare behind-the-scenes look at how deeply connected and far-reaching this industry had become.

At the time, we did not yet have the formal network or systems we rely on today. But that rescue pushed us to build them. Through the Colorado Project, we helped formalize the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance and strengthened relationships with other true sanctuaries, enabling us to work together—ensuring that animals would always have a safe place to go, even when we could not take them all ourselves.

That model has since become essential. As scrutiny and enforcement actions intensified in the years that followed—ultimately leading to the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act—we were better prepared to respond. When called upon for recent government-led rescues, including the seizure of lions in Canada and the international relocation from Honduras, those partnerships enabled us to act quickly, responsibly, and at a scale not previously possible.

The Colorado Project reinforced what we continue to see: large-scale rescues do not happen overnight. They require coordination, trust, and the ability to make decisions not just for one animal but for many—all at once and often under challenging circumstances.

Today, 124 animals rely on us for specialized care, and calls for help continue. Each rescue builds on the last, and each is made possible by the foundation we've built together.

I am deeply grateful to all of you who have supported us over the years—especially our monthly donors, whose steady commitment enables us to respond when these moments arise. Because of you, we can say yes when it matters most.

Thank you for being part of this journey with us.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Tanya Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tanya Smith, Founder and President
Turpentine Creek Foundation & Wildlife Refuge

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

A Curator's Reflection: The Triplets' Fight to Survive

Emily McCormack



After Tanya, Scott, and I walked through the dilapidated roadside establishment that would become known as the Colorado Project, it became undeniable—we had to help these 115 animals.

One image became deeply ingrained in my heart.

Blackfire, a four-month-old white tiger with bright blue eyes, dragged his limp, broken legs over to us, crying in pain. In that moment, we knew we could not walk away from this deplorable situation of exploitation. The animals had to be saved.

By the time we returned, Blackfire was not alone. His siblings, Rocklyn and Peyton, had joined him—now also crippled from fractures caused by severe metabolic bone disease (MBD). This disease affected more cubs than any of us can imagine due to the exploitation of cub petting. It was all about money for the breeders—not about life or survival.

The question was, could we save them? Could they be survivors and have a quality of life?

They were among the first cubs transported back to the Refuge, along with cougar cubs Marissa and Louisa. Thankfully, our on-site veterinary hospital had just opened. Blackfire, Rocklyn, and Peyton were placed in recovery for close monitoring and multiple exams. Radiographs revealed fractures throughout all their limbs. They were in pain, did not want to eat, and could not stand to urinate or defecate. We had to physically stimulate them—difficult and dangerous at their size—but it had to be done. Their fate rested in our hands.

The emotional toll was heavy. Compassion fatigue became obvious as we worked diligently to save them, knowing quality of life was on the table. I remember the difficult conversation with Tanya and Scott, tears pouring down my face.

Then, the next morning, everything changed.

As I approached the recovery area, I looked through the window—and there was Blackfire, standing. Those baby blue eyes stared back at me. Within days, all three were walking and beginning to play. These three miracle cubs were on their way.

Ten years later, Blackfire, Rocklyn, and Peyton are still enjoying their lives at the Refuge. And when Blackfire looks at you, it feels like he remembers—and it's because of the support that allows us to fight for them, even when the outcome is uncertain, that stories like theirs are possible.



Blackfire, Rocklyn & Peyton

We found Blackfire, with his siblings Rocklyn and Peyton, crippled by fractures caused by severe Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD)



Blackfire

Ten years later, Blackfire is thriving—and it's because of you.

Born into one of the most complex rescues in our history, Tanya's story reveals what lifelong sanctuary care truly requires.



Tanya: What a Lifetime of Care Makes Possible

Tanya's story begins in the middle of one of the most complex rescues in our history, the Colorado Project of 2016–2017, and it reflects what lifelong sanctuary care truly requires.

Tanya and her sister Kizmin were born just before our animal care team arrived at an overcrowded roadside facility in Colorado. Weeks earlier, President Tanya Smith and Vice President Scott Smith had traveled to the facility to assess conditions and begin planning the complex rescue operation for the animals suffering there. Because of that timing, these sisters never experienced the cub-petting trade that had already exploited so many other animals there. Their mother, Shakira II, had been repeatedly forced to produce litters, only to have her cubs taken shortly after birth. By the time Tanya and Kizmin were born, their mother was emotionally and physically depleted and unable to care for them.

With our veterinary hospital newly completed, our team immediately began hands-on care for the cubs. A specialized feeding program was developed to ensure proper nutrition and growth, including the critical calcium-to-phosphorus balance essential for bone and organ development. From their very first days, Tanya and Kizmin received something most cubs in the cub petting industry never do—expert care, safety, and stability.

The Colorado facility housed more than 100 animals in deteriorating conditions, with rotting plywood doors, basic padlocks for containment, compacted dirt, and little relief from the harsh eastern Colorado sun. Over six months on-site, our team worked alongside accredited Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) partners to relocate animals and provide lifelong refuge.



Tanya

From the very beginning, Tanya was given what most cubs in the captive animal trade never receive—expert care, safety, and the chance to grow.



Tanya

This rescue helped lay the groundwork for the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA), bringing sanctuaries together to strengthen future rescue efforts and expand public education about the captive wild cat crisis. The Colorado Project also showed the USDA and Department of Justice that major players in the big cat trade could be successfully dismantled, helping pave the way for the later prosecutions of Joe Exotic and Jeff and Lauren Lowe. In its wake, several additional roadside facilities closed voluntarily. The impact of the rescue continued to ripple outward, influencing the major rescues carried out in California and Nevada in 2025.

Today, Tanya is thriving. She is vocal and expressive, often greeting caregivers with a chuff and watching the world from her favorite platform, living as tigers naturally do—solitary and on their own terms.

As a white tiger, Tanya will always carry the genetic challenges associated with inbreeding in captivity. Yet her life is a powerful example of what's possible when rescue is paired with lifelong, expert care. When we say yes to a cub, we're making a commitment that can span more than two decades—and it's that lifetime of care that makes stories like Tanya's possible.



Today, Tanya is thriving—vocal, watchful, and living life on her own terms. Her story reflects what's possible with lifelong, expert care.

Tanya

Meet Lakota, Aurora, Joey, and Khaleesi: Four Lives Changed by the Colorado Project



Joey, Khaleesi & Lakota

Lakota, Aurora, Khaleesi, and Joey—four lives shaped by the same beginning.

You may have seen these four when you visited the Refuge—Lakota in full goofball mode, Aurora splashing in her pool, Khaleesi stretched across her favorite platform, and Joey simply being Joey. What you might not know is how closely their stories are connected.

All four were rescued at around one year of age from the same Colorado cub petting and breeding facility. Like so many animals in that system, they were born into an industry that prioritized appearance and profit over well-being. They arrived together and, for a time, lived side by side—initially sharing space while their permanent habitats were being completed. As young cats, they were energetic, playful, and constantly engaged with one another and their enrichment. As they matured, their individual personalities emerged—especially for Joey and Khaleesi, who ultimately needed their own space, as tigers naturally do.

Each carries a different imprint of that past.

Rescued together at just over a year old from a Colorado breeding facility, they grew up side by side—until, as they matured, Joey and Khaleesi required space of their own.



Khaleesi, Joey, Lakota & Aurora



Lakota



Khaleesi



Joey



Aurora

Lakota is a ti-liger—the rare offspring of a male tiger and a female liger—and one of the most unusual animals at the Refuge. He continues to share space with Aurora, a white tiger whose confident personality balances his playful energy. Together, they can often be found swimming, exploring, or turning enrichment into a full-contact sport—a pairing that continues to work because of their compatible temperaments.

Khaleesi, a Golden Tabby tiger, represents another facet of the cub-petting industry’s demand for novelty. There are fewer than 30–40 Golden Tabby tigers in the world, nearly all in captivity. Her coloring, like Aurora’s, results from selective inbreeding—traits that would not persist in the wild but are deliberately bred in captivity.

Joey, an orange tiger, may look the most typical, but her personality stands out. She is deeply curious—watching people as they pass by and keeping a close eye on her neighboring cats. That awareness, combined with her strong sense of independence, is part of what led her to need her own space.

Today, their lives look very different.

They have space to roam, pools to cool off in, enrichment that challenges them, and the freedom to live according to their instincts.

These four are among the 34 animals we committed to from the Colorado rescue, many of whom still require specialized care years later. Their future—and the lifelong care it requires—is made possible by those who choose to support them not only at rescue but also for the long term.

Donate today to support Lakota, Aurora, Joey, Khaleesi, and all the animals who call Turpentine Creek home.



Letter from the Veterinarian

Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, DVM



We commonly rescue animals that are in poor health at the time of rescue. Colorado was no different in this regard, with numerous animals in need of immediate medical attention, resulting in very high up-front veterinary costs.

One example of this is Daniel, the male lion. At rescue in 2016, he was 12 years old, and his right eye had ruptured in 2012, an injury that had never been treated. He also had a large mass at the base of his tail. Upon arrival at the Refuge, Daniel was among the first animals to undergo surgery in our new on-site veterinary hospital. Both his right eye and the tumor were removed. The tumor was found to be cancerous, so its removal was key to preventing its spread. However, this was only the beginning of Daniel's care costs, as rescue care quickly became long-term, lifelong medical care. Both he and his habitat mate, Chloe the lioness, had been previously declawed. As they aged, we knew we would be managing the lasting effects of severe osteoarthritis and chronic pain caused by declawing in big cats.



Daniel & Chloe

Daniel and Chloe at arrival in 2016, both beginning urgent, life-changing medical care after years of untreated injuries and disease.



Chloe

Chloe in later years at the Sanctuary—living with chronic effects of declawing, long after Daniel's passing, as her lifelong care continued.

Over their many years at the sanctuary, these lions faced various medical concerns, leading to a few sedated exams with specialized diagnostics and treatments for each of them. In 2022, six years after his rescue at age 17, Daniel developed another type of cancer in his lungs, which resulted in his euthanasia. Chloe survived for nine years after her rescue before her osteoarthritis and pain levels severely impacted her quality of life despite treatments, which ultimately led to euthanasia at age 20. She was the last surviving lion from that historic Colorado rescue.

These two are typical examples of the ever-encompassing cost of veterinary care, from initial rescue costs to care spanning a decade or more. At TCWR, we pride ourselves on providing lifelong care and on extending not only the length of their lives but also the quality of their lives. For every animal here, care begins at rescue but doesn't end there, with hopefully many more years of enjoyable life ahead. It is through donors' continued support that we can not only rescue these animals and help them feel good again, like Daniel and Chloe, but also maintain that level of care throughout the animals' lifetimes here at the sanctuary.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kellyn Sweeley, Veterinarian,
Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge

A Lasting Legacy: How You Can Honor a Life Through Sanctuary

If you've taken the habitat loop tour, you may have noticed a smaller habitat dedicated to Solomon—a space thoughtfully designed for cats who need flat ground and easier access. Today, it is home to white tiger Donner, a survivor of the Colorado Project.

That habitat exists because of a life that left a lasting mark.

"Solomon was my cousin," says Board Member Virginia Rankin. "He was a musician, a cross-country champion, and a nursing student at the University of Arkansas. He never met a stranger. His embraces were legendary, and his love was unconditional. We considered him a shining light and a true role model."

In April 2013, Solomon attended Cats at the Castle, where, according to Virginia, he "moved effortlessly among everyone there, demonstrating a maturity far beyond his 19 years." Just two weeks later, he lost his life in an accident. "We were, and still remain, devastated."

Yet his impact continues.

"His life mattered. His legacy of love endures," Virginia says. "It's fitting that the habitat dedicated to his memory was designed for cats with special needs. He was a champion of the underdog and a lover of life."

"Without helping people, my life would feel empty and have little purpose," Solomon once said.

Through this habitat, that purpose endures—offering comfort, safety, and dignity to animals in need.

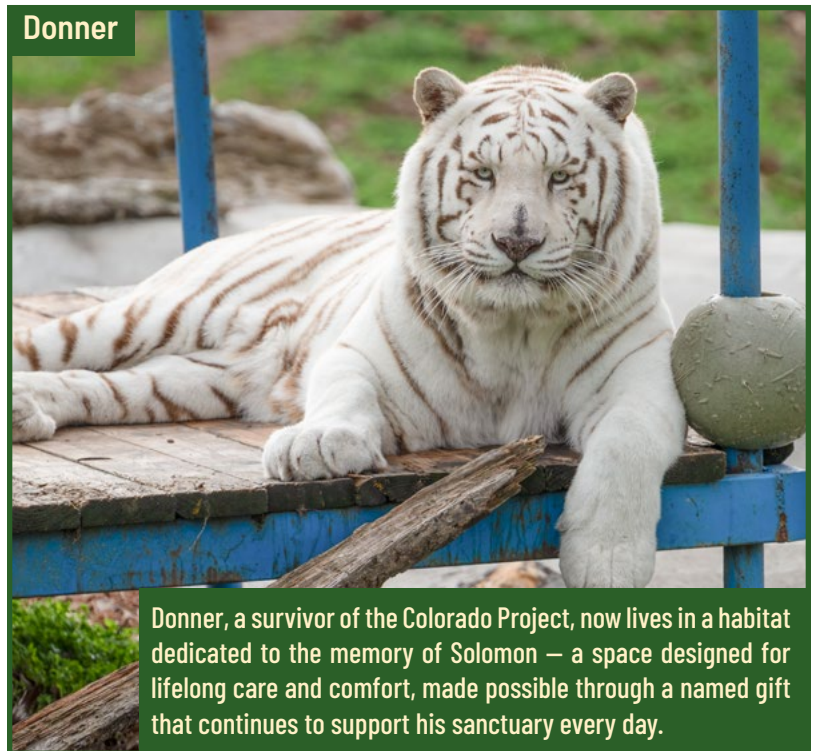
Naming a habitat is a powerful way to honor a loved one, ensuring their story becomes part of the Refuge's mission and continues to make a difference every day.



TCWR Board Member Virginia Rankin and her cousin Solomon, a life forever remembered at the Refuge.



Donner



Donner

Donner, a survivor of the Colorado Project, now lives in a habitat dedicated to the memory of Solomon — a space designed for lifelong care and comfort, made possible through a named gift that continues to support his sanctuary every day.

From Exploitation to Sanctuary: Shakira II & Fergy

Among the animals connected to our 2016–2017 Colorado Project were several with ties to the cub petting and entertainment industries—including individuals from operations linked to Joe Exotic. Two of those cats, Shakira II and Fergy, arrived with histories shaped by years of exploitation—and the long road to recovery that followed.

Before Colorado, both Shakira II, a white tiger, and Fergy, a liger, were used in performances by magician Dirk Arthur, where loud crowds, bright lights, and forced behaviors were part of daily life. When they were no longer useful on stage, their roles shifted—but the exploitation did not end.

Shakira II was subjected to intensive breeding, producing four litters in just two years to supply cub-petting operations. Fergy, bred for her hybrid appearance, was transferred between facilities and later housed with a male lion in hopes of producing a li-liger. These experiences leave lasting impacts that cannot be undone overnight.



Shakira II

Among the animals rescued during the 2016–2017 Colorado Project were cats tied to cub petting and entertainment operations, including those linked to Joe Exotic. Shakira II and Fergy both arrived with histories of exploitation—and began a long journey toward recovery.



Fergy



Shakira II

From fear at arrival during the Colorado Project to quiet confidence today, Shakira II's transformation reflects what lifelong care makes possible—supported by donors who invest in her future.

When animals like Shakira II arrive at the Refuge, the work begins with patience. She initially met her care team with fear, charging the fence and unable to trust the humans around her. With consistent routines, quiet approaches, and individualized care, she slowly began to change. Today, she is often found resting comfortably in her habitat, greeting familiar caregivers with soft chuffs and even engaging in playful hose enrichment on warm days—powerful signs of progress.

Fergy's transformation has taken a different shape. Free from the pressures of performance and breeding, she has fully emerged in her energetic personality. She runs, plays, and engages with enrichment on her own terms—often involving her caregivers and neighboring animals in her signature stalk-and-pounce games.

These changes—physical, behavioral, and emotional—require sustained, expert care over time. For animals like Shakira II and Fergy, healing isn't immediate. It's built day by day through consistency, trust, and the resources needed to meet their complex needs.

When donors invest in Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge for the long term—even by making legacy plans that include the Refuge—they ensure that animals like Shakira II and Fergy will always have safety, stability, and uninterrupted care for the rest of their lives. Rescue is only the beginning. What follows is a lifelong commitment—and it's one made possible by those who choose to stand with them for the years ahead.

Turning Back the Clock: Why H.R. 7159 Puts Big Cats at Risk



Fred

Fred was one of the first tigers confiscated after the passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act in 2022.



Fred

Fred was privately owned and lived in an abusive situation. Thanks to law enforcement, Fred grew up healthy and living life on his own terms at the Refuge.

H.R. 7159, the “Protecting Local Zoos Act,” threatens to undo the progress made to protect big cats from exploitation. By creating dangerous loopholes, the bill could allow the breeding, buying, and selling of big cats to resume—fueling the same cycle of suffering that once filled roadside zoos and the cub-petting industry. The Big Cat Public Safety Act was enacted in 2022 to end that cruelty, giving animals a second chance of living free from abuse.

The Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance (BCSA), founded in 2016 during the Colorado Rescue, was built on the same mission: to stand together as true sanctuaries and provide lifelong care for rescued wild cats. United, accredited sanctuaries form a powerful movement—one that rescues animals from neglect, ends exploitation, and ensures that no wild cat is treated as a commodity again.

This work cannot be done alone. It takes a coalition to respond to large-scale rescues, advocate for stronger laws, and protect the future of these animals. That is why BCSA and Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge have joined forces to oppose H.R. 7159—submitting formal comments and standing united to defend the Big Cat Public Safety Act.

Now we need you. Scan the QR code to **ACT NOW** and contact your local representatives to help protect big cats from a return to exploitation.



Many employers offer matching gift programs—an opportunity to turn your compassion into even greater impact. Through Double the Donation, your gift can be matched to help provide nutritious diets, safe habitats, and life-long, specialized care for rescued big cats.

In 2026 alone, this program has already generated more than \$40,000 thanks to the dedication of our supporters and their employers. That level of support can help provide a full year of care for approximately 2–4 animals, depending on their size and species—real, tangible change for animals who now call the Refuge home.

This is the power of a compassionate community coming together.

If you’ve already participated, or your employer supports matching gifts, thank you. You are making a lasting difference. If not, we encourage you to explore your eligibility—and even advocate for your workplace to join.

Visit our Double the Donation page to learn more and help us continue growing this life-saving program. Together, we can double the care—and the future—for animals in need.



Double the Donation





Whenever a government agency needs to place a confiscated animal, we get the call. And whenever we have the space, we say yes—because captive wild animals have nowhere else to go.

Savanna

Every Time, We Say Yes

Whenever a government agency needs to place a confiscated animal, we get the call. And whenever we have the space, we say yes—because captive wild animals have nowhere else to go.

But what most people don't see is what happens after the rescue.

Animals don't arrive healthy. They come to us with metabolic bone disease from years of improper nutrition, severe vitamin deficiencies, untreated dental damage, and muscle atrophy caused by enclosures too small to move in. Some arrive unable to stand. Others have never taken more than a few steps in any direction. They aren't starting from baseline—they're starting at a deficit that requires immediate, intensive veterinary care.

We saw this firsthand in the Colorado Project, where we committed to the lifelong care of 34 animals. Many are still dealing with the effects of that past, nearly a decade later—chronic conditions that require ongoing treatment, specialized diets, and daily monitoring.

This is the reality of sanctuary: rescue is only the beginning.

A single animal can require tens of thousands of dollars in care in the first year alone, followed by years—often decades—of ongoing medical support, habitat maintenance, and expert staffing. These aren't unexpected costs. They are the direct result of saying yes—and sustaining that yes over time.

When donors choose to support Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) long term, they make that sustained commitment possible. They ensure that animals who have already endured years of neglect will receive consistent, uninterrupted care for the rest of their lives.

The true measure of rescue isn't the moment an animal is saved—it's everything that comes after.

Donate Online



Marissa & Louisa, Ten Years Later

There is a quiet strength in a cougar. It's not always loud or obvious—but it's evident in the way they observe, the way they move, and the way they choose when to engage with the world around them. For Marissa and Louisa, that strength has only grown over time.

When Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) responded to the Colorado Project, the two sisters arrived at just three months old. Before their rescue, they had already been used in cub petting—an industry that exploits young animals as photo props for paying customers, capitalizing on their innocence while ignoring the lifelong consequences. At that age, Marissa and Louisa should have been growing alongside their mother, not handled by the public.



When Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) responded to the Colorado Project, the two sisters, Marissa & Louisa, were three months old and had been exploited through the cub petting industry.

Marissa & Louisa



Marissa

Today, Marissa shares a spacious habitat with her sister Louisa, where she lives in safety and confidence—moving freely, exploring, and enjoying the stability of lifelong care after a start in cub petting.

Upon arrival, their care became an immediate priority. At just a few months old, they were placed on a carefully managed boneless diet appropriate for their developmental stage while undergoing thorough veterinary evaluations at the Jackson Memorial Veterinary Hospital. Many animals from the Colorado facility showed signs of malnutrition, making early monitoring and proper nutrition critical for these young cubs.

Even at that young age, despite everything they had already experienced, their personalities were unmistakable.

Today, the sisters share a habitat where they can run the length of their space—something they do often. Marissa, the more active and vocal of the two, is known for stalking along the bear tunnel, watching keepers and guests with focused curiosity. In the quieter morning hours, her soft purrs and mews can be heard as she explores her surroundings.



Louisa

Louisa enjoys her rest, frequently napping on their multi-level platform, but still finds joy in tearing through cardboard boxes—her favorite enrichment activity.

Louisa brings a different kind of presence. Slightly lighter in color, she is often easier to spot and tends to be less vocal than her sister. She enjoys her rest, frequently napping on their multi-level platform, but still finds joy in tearing through cardboard boxes—her favorite enrichment activity.

Together, they reflect the animals' resilience and individuality, rescued during the Colorado Project. What began as exploitation and uncertainty has transformed into a life defined by space, care, and choice.

Ten years later, Marissa and Louisa are not just survivors—they are exactly who they were meant to be.

FREEWILL

Planning for the future is one of the most meaningful ways we can care for our loved ones and the causes we believe in. Yet today, only about half of adults have a living will or advance directive in place—leaving important decisions to chance instead of choice.

Through our partnership with FreeWill, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge makes it simple to take that step—at no cost to you. This secure, online tool allows you to create your will in minutes, giving you peace of mind while ensuring your wishes are honored.

You can also create a lasting legacy. By including Turpentine Creek in your plans, you help provide lifelong care and safety for rescued animals.



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/

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 I.D. number
- 15% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 10% off of lodging
- 10% off on specialty tours for cardholder and up to 4 guests
- Recognition on the TCWR website and in our Annual Report

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

- Bam Bam Benefactor's membership I.D. number
- 15% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 20% off of lodging
- 20% off on specialty tours for cardholder and up to 4 guests
- Recognition on the TCWR website and in our Annual Report

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

- Kenny Fellowship membership I.D. number
- 20% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 30% off of lodging
- Private Tours with Senior Staff
- A Senior Staff Liaison
- Recognition on the TCWR website and in our Annual Report

The Hilda Jackson Society \$10,000+*

- Hilda Jackson Society membership I.D. number
- 20% off of Gift Shop purchases
- 50% off of lodging
- Private Tours with Senior Staff
- Senior Staff Liaison
- Recognition on the TCWR website and in our Annual Report

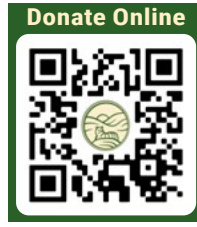
You can join at any membership level with a one-time gift, or your cumulative donations throughout the year will automatically qualify you for the corresponding level and benefits.

*To be part of a membership level you must either sign up for that level, or 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 want to give!

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: _____@_____

\$25 X _____ quantity + \$5 shipping. Pre-order 2027 TCWR Calendars! Featuring Refuge residents, makes a great gift!

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!

\$100 Wild Within PAWS Membership Visit (tcwr.org/wild-within) to learn about all the extra benefits this special kids & teens membership offers for a limited time only!

\$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

Total: \$ _____

\$3,000+ Kenny Fellowship

\$10,000+ Hilda Jackson Society

Opt Out of Membership Signup Gifts

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

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

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: _____

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



Jasmine Skye

For Jasmine Skye, her declawing means a lifetime of pain management and proper habitat space to keep her comfortable.

Every Step Tells a Story

Jasmine Skye's strength is undeniable—felt in her quiet chuff, her curiosity, and the way she moves through her habitat each day. Yet beneath that resilience lies a reality she carries with every step.

Declawing is often misunderstood as a routine procedure. In truth, it is the surgical removal of the last bone of each toe. For big cats, whose bodies rely on their claws for balance, traction, and natural movement, the procedure changes everything. Over time, that alteration can lead to chronic pain, joint strain, and lasting mobility challenges.

For Jasmine Skye, those effects are part of her daily life. The way she walks, how she distributes her weight, and even how her body absorbs impact—all have been permanently shaped by a decision never made for her well-being.

Ten years ago, during the Colorado Project, we began telling a deeper truth about captivity—that what happens behind the scenes often follows these animals for life. While every rescue is different, the outcome is often the same: animals arrive with the physical consequences of human choices.

At Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR), your support ensures those stories don't end there. Jasmine Skye now has the natural space to move and explore, the care to keep her comfortable, and the dignity she was always meant to have.

Because of you, even if we cannot undo the past, we can change what comes next.

The Final Five: Completing the Colorado Rescue



Holly



Koda G

The Final Five: Left Waiting—But Never Left Behind. Koda G and Holly were among the last bears with nowhere left to go.

As we look back on the Colorado Rescue, we cannot complete its story without recognizing the final five—the bears who remained when no other options existed. Koda G, Xena, Huggy, Holly, and Lolli were the last waiting, who, unlike many others, had nowhere left to go.

As accredited sanctuaries across the country worked to place dozens of animals, options for bears quickly ran out. With limited space nationwide, these five remained—waiting. But leaving them behind was never an option. If a place didn't exist, we would create one.

In 2018, that promise became reality. Behind Rescue Ridge, two expansive, natural bear habitats were completed—designed to reflect the Ozark landscape and allow these bears to live as bears again. Spanning acres of wooded terrain, these spaces support climbing, foraging, nesting, and exploration—behaviors essential to their well-being.

Upon arrival, all five bears were in poor condition, suffering from hair loss due to **dermatophytosis** (mange), along with other medical concerns from inadequate veterinary care. Through dedicated treatment and consistent, long-term care, their health—and quality of life—began to transform.

Huggy, a Russian brown bear, brings constant personality to his habitat—tossing cardboard boxes or balancing them on his head. In warmer months, he lounges in his pool or enjoys a hose-down from caregivers.

Holly quickly reminded us what it means to be wild at heart. One of the first to climb high into the trees, she now spends her days swimming, scent-marking, and exploring her wooded home.



Lolli

All five bears arrived in poor condition, but with consistent care, their health began to transform.

Lolli thrives in the details—carefully foraging, building dens from branches, and engaging with enrichment placed throughout her habitat.

Koda G embraces the rhythms of the seasons, from climbing and foraging to entering torpor in winter—behaviors seen in native black bears.

Xena’s recovery reflects the transformation of all five. Once affected by severe hair loss, she now has a healthy, glossy coat and spends her days climbing, exploring, and thriving.

A decade later, their story stands as a testament to what sanctuary truly means—not just rescue, but restoration. Because of your support, these five bears are no longer waiting for a future.

They are living it.



Huggy & Holly

A decade later, their story stands as a testament to what sanctuary truly means—not just rescue, but restoration.



Huggy



Xena

Diablo: A Survivor of the Hybrid Trade

Diablo, a first-generation (F1) Savannah Cat, represents the complex reality of hybrid breeding. Created by crossing an African serval with a domestic cat, Savannahs are often sold as exotic pets, yet their wild instincts make them difficult to manage in homes. Diablo was surrendered after his owners could no longer manage his natural behaviors and eventually was rehomed at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) in 2023, along with 32 other wild cats from a prior accredited facility.

Savannah cats like Diablo typically do not live as long as domestic cats and often face greater health challenges due to hybridization and inbreeding. Despite this, Diablo has proven remarkably resilient. At 21 years old, his recent exam showed moderate to severe arthritis in his knees and elbows, yet he still maintains strong mobility. His blood pressure and chemistry values were excellent for his age, though early-stage chronic kidney disease was identified and is now carefully managed.

Known for his cautious yet defiant personality, Diablo continues to engage with his environment on his own terms—marking his territory, vocalizing to neighbors, and even resisting medications when he can. Weighing 14.5 pounds and still full of attitude, Diablo is a testament to the power of lifelong care, showing that even animals born into exploitation can thrive when given the chance.



Diablo

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Diablo



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5TH ANNUAL MOPAR CLASSIC - JUNE 19-20, 2026

Rev your engines for a weekend that makes a difference. The Turpentine Creek Mopar Classic brings together car enthusiasts, families, and supporters for a celebration of community and compassion.

From the MOPARADE through downtown Eureka Springs to the main car show at the Refuge, there's something for everyone—classic and modern Mopars, food, awards, and a shared passion for incredible vehicles.

At its heart, this event supports something greater. Every registration and donation helps provide lifelong care for rescued big cats at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

What began as a small gathering has grown into a meaningful tradition—powered by people who care deeply about animals and each other.

Whether you're showcasing a vehicle or coming to enjoy the day, your presence makes an impact.

Join us and learn more at tcwr.org/mopar-classic



Louise's Check-Up Shows Encouraging Progress

During her recent wellness exam, Louise the tiger gave our veterinary team a closer look at how far she's come since her rescue. When she first arrived, she showed significant muscle loss and poor body condition—clear signs of long-term inadequate nutrition and care. This year's exam told a much more encouraging story.

"Overall, I was pleased with how she looked," said Dr. Kellyn Sweeley. "She's filled out, and the muscle loss along her spine is not nearly as severe as it was at intake." Louise has improved from a severely low muscle condition score to a more stable level, reflecting the impact of consistent nutrition and daily care.

Radiographs and physical exam findings showed only mild arthritis in her shoulders and elbows, along with minor changes in her spine. Given that progress, the veterinary team has transitioned her off her previous pain medications and onto targeted supplements to help slow the progression of arthritis.

As part of her exam, Louise also received chiropractic care from Dr. Betsy Blair-Flynn, who generously donated her time and expertise. Dr. Blair-Flynn performed adjustments to Louise's hips, spine, and paws to support mobility and comfort. Although arthritis is confirmed by imaging, Louise showed subtle signs of stiffness consistent with joint wear. After treatment, she moved with noticeably greater ease and confidence—more fluid in her stride and relaxed in her posture.

Additional care included grooming, a nail trim, microchipping, and baseline muscle measurements to track her ongoing progress.

For animals like Louise, this specialized, ongoing care is essential—and it's only possible thanks to sustained support. Her progress is not the result of a single intervention but of consistent, expert care since her rescue.



Louise

During her recent wellness exam, Louise the tiger gave our veterinary team a closer look at how far she's come since her rescue.



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Connecting Compassion to Care: Volunteers at Work

Building connections through education and hands-on experiences is central to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge's mission. Recently, we partnered with the University of Missouri's Tigers for Tigers club and a dedicated Walmart volunteer team to create a meaningful impact for the animals in our care.

Our Animal Curator first connected with Tigers for Tigers through a virtual presentation, sharing insights into our mission, daily animal care, and recent rescue efforts. Inspired by what they learned, the group later visited the Refuge to volunteer, helping create magnets and keychains for the gift shop—items that directly support our residents.

A Walmart volunteer team also spent a day at the Refuge, beginning with a tour of Freedom Field to better understand the animals' stories. They also then assisted with the same important project, sanding and trimming pieces of destroyed enrichment toys that are repurposed key chains

Together, volunteers completed an impressive number of items representing animals like Karma, Salvador, Nirvana, Reggie, Archie, Butch, Chaz, and Bagheera. Each piece helps fund the lifelong care these animals deserve.



Walmart volunteers helped transform retired enrichment into keepsake keychains—see how you can get involved.





Sip for Sanctuary

Join us Thursday, October 15 from 6-8pm at the Sassafra Winery in Springdale for an unforgettable evening in support of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

Set in a peaceful valley just minutes from Fayetteville, Sassafra Springs Vineyard & Winery provides the perfect backdrop for an elegant night of award-winning wine, curated charcuterie, and one-of-a-kind artwork created by the rescued big cats in our care.

Be among the first to experience the unveiling of four proprietary wines crafted to benefit the Refuge—supporting critical rescues and the lifelong care that follows.

More details and ticket sales coming soon.

Fall at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge offers a one-of-a-kind experience—where cooler temperatures bring renewed energy to the animals in our care. As the air turns crisp, many of the cats become more active, exploring their habitats, playing with enrichment, and offering guests a glimpse of their natural behaviors.

Surrounded by the beauty of the Ozark Mountains, your stay becomes even more memorable. From vibrant fall colors to the quiet stillness that carries into winter, the landscape provides a peaceful backdrop unlike anywhere else. Our lodging options—from treehouse to safari suites—place you close to the animals while offering comfort and connection to nature.

Now, there's even more to look forward to. We've installed a brand-new grill station for our overnight guests, along with an exciting grill package designed to elevate your stay. Pair it with classic s'mores by the fire for the perfect evening after a day at the Refuge.

Plan your fall escape and experience the wild in a whole new season.



In Memorium



Amber was rescued from a Colorado roadside zoo where she was used for breeding in a cub-petting program and showed signs of stress from confinement. At Turpentine Creek, she gained the space to live independently, allowing her natural behaviors and personality to emerge. With ongoing veterinary care and enrichment, she lived out her days relaxed, playful, and thriving.



Bosco was rescued from a Colorado roadside zoo where he was used for repeated breeding, contributing to high stress and unstable behaviors. He lived with Shakira II and likely sired at least seven cubs across four litters before being rescued. He was given time, proper care, and a stable environment to rebuild trust. In his later years, Bosco was managed for chronic spinal disease and esophageal issues, and was humanely euthanized as his mobility declined and his condition progressed.

In Memorium



Chloe was a strong, dominant lioness who always seemed to get the last word among the pride. Rescued during the Colorado Project, she formed a deep bond with her companion, Daniel, and remained loyal to him until his passing. When Daniel passed, she found comfort in her bonding with her neighbors. Even in her later years, she enjoyed lounging in the sun and engaging with enrichment like scented burlap and pumpkins.

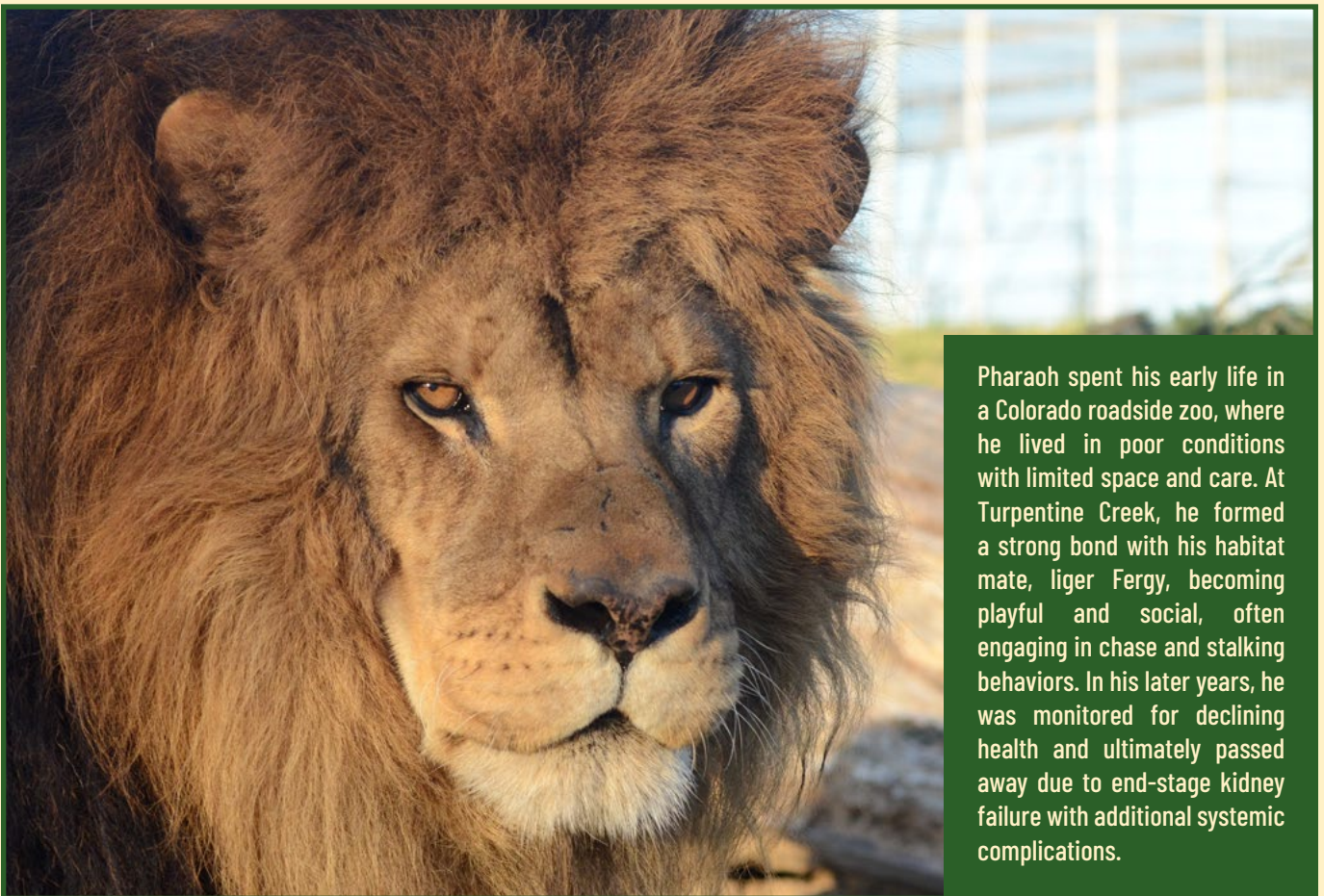


Daniel lived alongside his habitat mate, Chloe, with whom he formed a close, consistent bond, often choosing to stay near her while observing his surroundings. Throughout his life at Turpentine Creek, he received ongoing veterinary care, including a vasectomy and surgery to remove a tail mass. In his later years, he was closely monitored for serious medical conditions, including heart failure and metastatic cancer, and was humanely euthanized to prevent further suffering.

In Memorium



Montana spent his early life in a Colorado cub-petting and breeding facility without proper care or space to express natural behaviors. At Turpentine Creek, he became highly active and vocal, known for his destructive play, stalking behaviors, and strong engagement with enrichment and his care team. In his later years, he developed a malignant sarcoma that spread to his lungs.



Pharaoh spent his early life in a Colorado roadside zoo, where he lived in poor conditions with limited space and care. At Turpentine Creek, he formed a strong bond with his habitat mate, liger Fergy, becoming playful and social, often engaging in chase and stalking behaviors. In his later years, he was monitored for declining health and ultimately passed away due to end-stage kidney failure with additional systemic complications.

In Memorium



Savannah was a gentle, “demure diva” lioness who loved sunbathing and soaking up attention from her fans. Rescued during the Colorado Project, she shared her habitat with companions and held her own, often caroling alongside the boys while calmly observing their playful antics. As she aged, mobility challenges from arthritis became more severe despite ongoing care. When her condition declined significantly, she was compassionately euthanized due to loss of mobility and quality of life.



Shakira was a playful, curious liger who loved to stalk passersby and interact with her neighbors. Rescued during the Colorado Project, she adapted well to sanctuary life and formed strong bonds nearby. Despite her spirited nature, she faced a sudden medical emergency and passed away during surgery from complications of a severe infection. She is remembered for her bold, playful presence.

In Memoriam



Snowball was born into inbreeding, resulting in severe crossed eyes, a common issue in white tigers bred for appearance. At Turpentine Creek, he developed a playful but highly destructive personality, requiring specially selected enrichment to match his strength and energy. Known for his frequent chuffing, stalking, and pouncing, Snowball remained an active and engaging tiger who thrived with tailored care and stimulation.



Thurston was a white tiger bred through inbreeding for his coloration, causing physical impairments, and was exploited for use in the entertainment industry. He was declawed and had his canines filed down. He received consistent veterinary care and mobility support, developing a calmer demeanor at the Refuge. Later, he developed malignant melanoma that spread throughout his body and was humanely euthanized as his condition declined.



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Kizmin's Story

Born into the cub petting and breeding industry, Kizmin arrived in the world alongside her sister Tanya, just as our team reached Colorado. Their mother, Shakira II, had been forced to produce litter after litter—her cubs often taken too soon—and one sibling did not survive. What we found there was heartbreaking: barren enclosures filled with splintered pallet boards scattered with nails, rusted pipes, rotting wooden dens, and filth—no space, no safety, no dignity.

Today, Kizmin's story is one of transformation. At Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, she lives in a spacious, grassy habitat where she can run, play, and swim in a pool of her own. With proper care, enrichment, and the security she was once denied, Kizmin now thrives. This is why we exist—to rescue, to heal, and to give animals like Kizmin the life they deserve.



[TCWR.org/Adoptions](https://www.tcwr.org/Adoptions)

Kizmin

