

# Big Cat Chronicles

Summer 2020

**EMERGENCY**  
**\$572,946 LOSSES**  
PLEASE DONATE  
TODAY!

Read more about  
Naula and Kiara's  
rescue on page 11.

## Naula

Species: Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)

Sex: Female

DOB: February 21, 2014

Arrival Date: Feb. 21, 2020

Tourism  
**Ethical**  
Destination



**TURPENTINE  
CREEK**  
WILDLIFE REFUGE

Rescuing Exotic Cats Nationwide

**COVID-19 is threatening your rescued animals! Please give what you can.**



# Letter from the President

Co-Founder Tanya Smith

As we welcome the summer of 2020, I want to thank you for your much-needed support throughout this uncertain winter and spring. May 1st marked our 28th anniversary and I am filled with gratitude that we are still here carrying out our mission, thanks to such an amazing family of supporters.

For the first time in our history, Turpentine Creek closed to the public on March 17th to protect visitors, our animal care team, and our animals. All non-essential employees were required to work from home or were laid off, and our animal care staff quarantined while we closed off the site. I want to extend a special thanks to our Spring 2020 interns, who all elected to quarantine with us to continue caring for the animals instead of returning to their families. While it's been terrifying to lose over \$572,946 in income from Spring Break admissions, lodging, gift sales, classes, and in-person events, our top priority is making sure the daily care of our 89 animals goes on uninterrupted.

Many of you watched the controversial Netflix series on roadside zoos and cub-petting/breeding operations while in isolation, and we appreciate your messages of support recognizing Turpentine Creek as a true sanctuary.

Meanwhile, along with caring for our animal residents, we have been working to improve our facility for our visitors. You can read more about what has been going on behind our closed gates on pg 4!

While we've been closed, our social media, education, and animal care teams have been providing extra videos and live feeds via Facebook, Skype and Zoom to keep you in touch with our animals and provide at-home educational opportunities for teachers and students. Your response has been inspiring!

I want to extend a special thanks to everyone who donated on our two giving days April 2nd for NWA Gives and May 5th for our 28th anniversary/#GivingTuesdayNow, you came together to help us reach our goals and support the animals! While we face over \$140,000 a month in expenses to remain operational, I have faith that our incredible supporters will continue to rally. I am so grateful for your belief in our mission and our team, and that you continue to think of the TCWR animals' welfare during this crisis. We look forward to seeing you all again soon; when it is safe we will have a joyful Grand Re-opening, so stay tuned to our website and Facebook pages!

In the meantime, please stay home and stay healthy! **With YOUR FOCUS** on sharing our social media, telling others the truth of our mission, and donating what and when you can, we will come out of this stronger than ever. Together, we will achieve **our 2020 Vision...Your Focus, Their Future**

Until next time,

Tanya Smith, President & Co-Founder





# Passing Cubs, Passing Diseases



**An amazing supporter donated hand-made masks to help keep our animals and team safe during COVID-19.**



**Team members took extra precautions during the shut down to protect our most vulnerable animal care residents, like Goober who is an older diabetic Rhesus Macaque Monkey.**

Joey, Aurora, Khaleesi, and Lakota are familiar faces at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge. Their large habitat is one of the first guests encounter, in the Discovery Area. Joey is a vibrant orange tiger while Aurora has a white coat and freely dishes out “chuffs.” Khaleesi is a Golden Tabby Tiger, and Lakota, the only boy of the bunch, is a ti-liger who loves nothing more than stalking anything and everything. These four stand out, not only in appearance but as survivors of cub petting.

Aurora, Khaleesi, and Lakota’s unique appearances are considered huge assets in the cub petting industry. They were rescued from a breeding/pay-to-play facility in Colorado. Though beautiful, none of these animals could ever thrive in the wild; in fact, ti-ligers would never occur naturally.

Cub petting harms the animals forced to participate and has the potential to do the same to humans who “pay to play.” COVID-19 is considered a zoonotic disease, meaning it can be spread between animals and people. It is one of the most well-known zoonotic diseases, but not the first.

If a cub that can earn anywhere from \$5,000-\$10,000 a day from humans who wish to hold it falls ill, a pay-to-play business is unlikely to inform the public and will still allow it to be handled. These cubs already suffer from weakened immune systems due to their ages and the fact that they are taken from their mothers long before they should be, foregoing them the chance to receive proper nutrients and necessary antibodies. They can easily pick up a zoonotic disease from one patron and pass it along to another.

Those who handled Joey, Aurora, Lakota, and Khaleesi before their rescue were at-risk of contracting everything from a simple case of ringworm to nastier infections such as giardia. As of April 23, 2020, a total of five tigers and three lions at the Bronx Zoo have tested positive for COVID-19. The first tiger was believed to have contracted it from an asymptomatic keeper. Despite being a hands-off facility, other animals were infected. When Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge learned of the COVID-19-positive tiger, we began taking even more precautions to protect our animals and team.

There are currently no laws restricting the handling of sick cubs at pay-to-play schemes, allowing them to put both the animals and the public in danger. Federal legislation like The Big Cat Public Safety Act will protect humans and animals by eliminating the needless handling of animals, thus preventing the spread of zoonotic diseases, like COVID-19. Please visit [TCWR.org/advocacy](https://www.tigerworld.com/advocacy) to learn more about the Big Cat Public Safety Act today.



**Poncho and the other big cats enjoyed relaxing in the warm spring air while we were closed to the public. Despite the major drop in funding, they all still received the same quality care they are used to getting because you continue to support us.**



# A New Look Inside Your Favorite Refuge

While we have been closed to the public, our onsite staff has been working daily to make the Refuge even better, while keeping you in touch with our animal residents remotely. Our Social Media, Education, and Animal Care Teams have been presenting multiple live feeds daily M-F to bring your time in isolation some engagement and fun, with live tours and classes. At the same time, we are making sure our animals receive plenty of enrichment to keep them occupied during these quiet days while continuing the level of care they deserve. We have used this period to work on our grounds and structures, as well. We have torn down walls in our oldest bobcat habitats to create a more spacious habitat with plenty of new enrichment features. We have also given the front of our gift shop a much-needed facelift, making it more efficient to heat and cool.

Along with these projects, we have been busy in the Discovery Area - it will look completely different when we reopen! Our team has laid a beautiful cement walkway throughout this space to make it easier to navigate for everyone. In addition, we have constructed a new shade pavilion for your enjoyment and comfort. This structure was partially funded by supporter Maggie Whitt.

This 20'x40' sturdy wood-beamed structure with 8' moveable benches will serve as a warm-weather area for our Education Department to conduct classes, a place for you to picnic near the animals, and offer cover during rain showers. The wood will match the timber to be used in our new Visitor Education Center and eventually it will serve as a warm-weather extension for Center programming that focuses on creating awareness and inspiring advocacy to achieve our **2020 Vision: Your Focus. Their Future.** With your help we can create a brighter future for these amazing animals. Please help us continue our mission by donating today to help us, help them.



While we were closed, we worked to rebuild our bobcat habitat in the discovery area. This project had been in planning all winter.



Shortly before we had to temporarily close due to COVID-19 we poured concrete in our discovery area, making it easier for everyone to navigate.



We also had begun construction of a new Pavilion to provide shade, a gathering area, and an outdoor educational area near the big cats.



# Letter from the Curator

Emily McCormack

A lot can change in a short amount of time, as we all know. This is very true in the rescue industry. In the past we've had some major life-altering rescues spring up and in only a matter of hours we've had to completely change our plans.

Only weeks before we had to temporarily close our doors due to the Coronavirus, Margaret Whittaker, part-time Behavioral Management Coordinator at Oakland Zoo and President of Creative Animal Behavior Solutions, came to the Refuge to do a 4-day workshop and consultation with our team. Margaret has worked in nearly all venues housing captive animals. She's spent the past 24 years consulting with zoos and sanctuaries in North, Central and South America, Europe, Asia, SE Asia and India, assisting individual facilities in the development of behavioral management for all species.

While Margaret was here, she spent time with each team member individually developing objectives and goals for each animal they train. The team learned and is working on applying small steps and desensitization to develop new behaviors, along with using different tools to shape, train and cue behaviors. We can't thank Margaret enough for visiting, and look forward to her return, sharing more information and tools we can apply each day to make every animal residents' life enriched.

This isn't the first time we've had advisors come to do behavioral management training for our team. In 2015, we hosted a behavioral management training workshop with animal advisors from five zoological facilities accredited through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Behavioral Management Training is used in AZA accredited zoos and aquariums across the country in order to positively manage the health and well-being of the animals in their care. The workshop introduced and began the operant conditioning and animal behavior management training to animal care staff. Not only is the program beneficial for routine health exams, vaccinations, etc.; behavioral management contributes to the rehabilitation and recovery of animals mentally adjusting to sanctuary life. Many animals have arrived at TCWR fearful and mistrustful of people or are in poor physical condition.

When Margaret came this year, we did not expect to close to the public only a few short days later. However, this gave us an amazing opportunity to practice our newly taught skills. We are lucky to have such a dedicated team at Turpentine Creek. When we had to shut down the on-site team was faced with an enormous decision to make. Gratefully, everyone chose to go into complete quarantine. No one entered or departed the gates of the sanctuary. As we watched the world change, nothing changed for the animals in our care. We are always striving to advance any aspect of their care. Without the dedication of our team, we couldn't have continued to provide the outstanding care that these survivors of the exotic animal trade deserve. Thanks to them and your support we are able to protect our team and animals from the Coronavirus and reopen to the public once it is safe to do so. We need your help being closed to the public has put a strain on our budget, please donate so that we can continue to provide the best care possible for the animals that call the Refuge home.





# Featured Animal - Blackfire

Species: Tiger (*Panthera tigris*)

Sex: Male

DOB: May 10, 2016

Arrival Date: September 30, 2016

**B**lackfire and his siblings, Rocklyn and Peyton, were born at a breeding and cub petting facility in Colorado. This rescue, known as the Colorado Project, was one of the largest big cat rescues in US history. One hundred and fifteen animals were rehomed in 15 accredited facilities across the nation.

When Turpentine Creek took over the Colorado property, Blackfire and his siblings could not walk. The bones in their legs were brittle and broken. They cried out as they crawled towards humans begging for food and for us to relieve their pain. This is all they ever had known; human interaction was vital to survival for them.

The Trio has what is known as Metabolic Bone Disease (MBD). MBD is not genetic. It is caused due to lack of proper calcium and nutrition during vital growth periods for young animals. Blackfire's bones were nearly see-through on his x-rays when he arrived in Arkansas. Multiple fractures littered his tiny limbs, and we were unsure if he would be able to walk, even with proper nutrition and treatment.

For a long while it was very touch-and-go with Blackfire and his siblings; many times we discussed his health, unsure if he would survive the night or if it was more humane to let him pass peacefully. But one thing we know about Blackfire is that he is a fighter. This big boy surprised us all and the day he first stood up on his own solidified our drive to help him and his siblings survive.

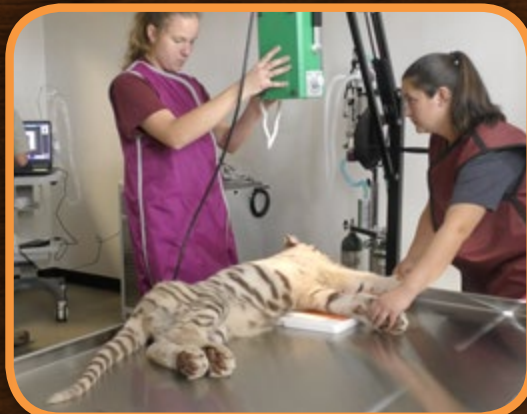
Our passion and belief in Blackfire's strength is being returned tenfold. This handsome tiger trusts us implacably. He is a sweet boy that loves to give happy chuffs to the team, runs and plays every day, and constantly shows us his love of life.

Blackfire's survival story doesn't end with his MBD. On November 6, 2018, Blackfire had emergency life-saving surgery to fix a hiatal hernia, where his stomach had gone up into his chest cavity through a hole in his diaphragm. Our supporters rallied around Blackfire and quickly donated the money to fix the issue.

Blackfire pulled through the surgery and recovered well. He went back to his playful self quickly and can be seen running around his habitat and playing as if he does not have a care in the world.

Although Blackfire and his siblings have grown up, they still have many issues related to their Metabolic Bone Disease. Each of them have noticeable limps and will be on special diets and pain medications for the rest of their lives. These sweet tigers suffered and nearly died just so someone could play with a cute cub. Please give your voice to put an end to cub petting around the US.

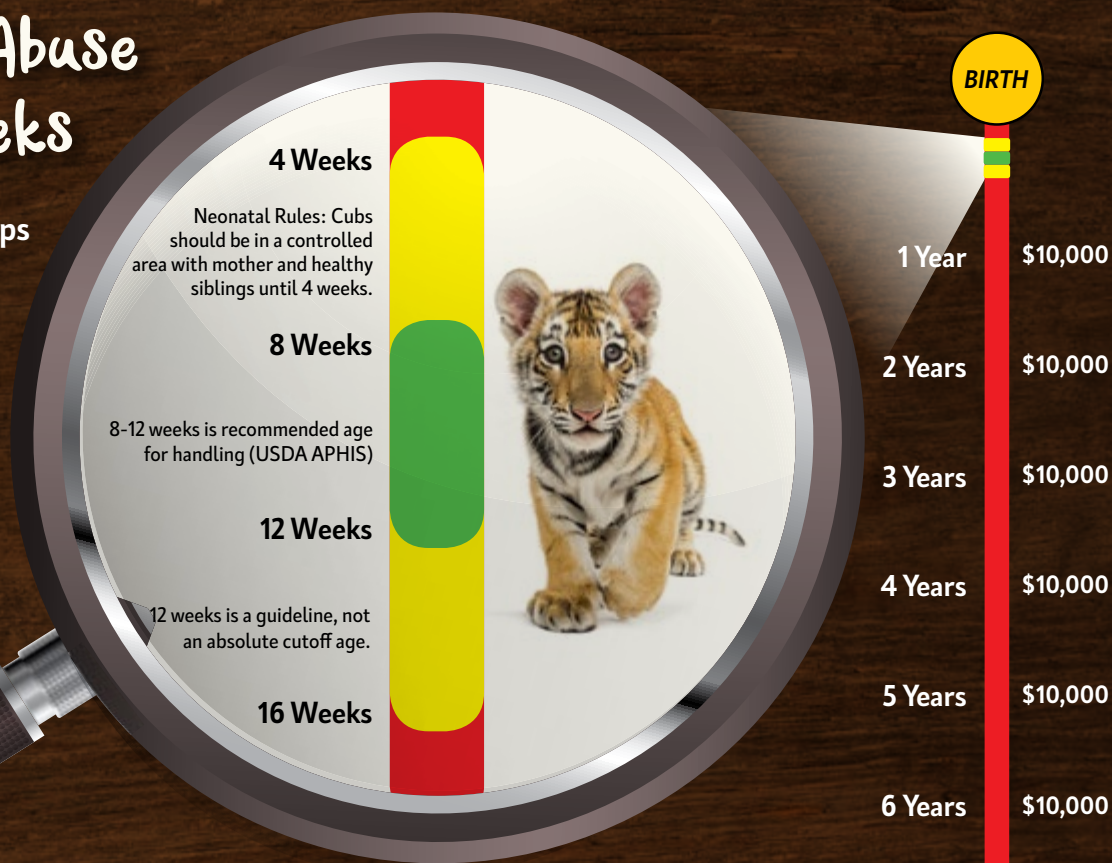
Support the Big Cat Public Safety Act at [TCWR.org/advocacy](https://www.tigers.org/advocacy).





# A Lifetime of Abuse in Only 12 Weeks

Cubs are used for photo props (10 minutes per session) or pay-to-play (30-60+ mins per session) for 8-12 hours per day.



Cubs at road-side zoos, backyard breeders, and cub petting schemes are intentionally taken at too young an age from their mother, putting a huge amount of stress on her. Once the cubs are taken, she is forced to breed again; this cycle continues until she is used up. This excessive breeding is unnatural. These young cubs are still in the early developmental stages of functioning immune and skeletal systems, requiring extra key nutrients and 18 to 22 hours of sleep a day to grow into healthy adults.

Six to 12 weeks old is the most vital time of a cub's life, and they are put into high-risk, stressful, and unsanitary situations. They are passed around for hours to strangers, all at the expense of the cub's health. At this young age they can easily acquire infections from their surroundings due to weak immune systems. Many of these cubs are already doomed to have compromised systems caused by poor genetics due to inbreeding and/or hybrid breeding. The cub's body is not able to fight off the infection, making them very sick. Many will not survive even if veterinary intervention is available. Some diseases picked up include zoonotic infections - those that can pass between cubs and people, such as ringworm and giardiasis which are easily spread.

Once they are too old to be a part of the cub petting industry, many are tossed aside with unknown fates while others are forced into the breeding side of the industry. For their lifetime they will live with congenital abnormalities, painful bone deformities, and weakened immune systems until they likely succumb to these conditions.

Dr. Kellyn Sweeley  
TCWR Veterinarian

1. USDA APHIS - [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_welfare/downloads/AC\\_BlueBook\\_AWA\\_508\\_comp\\_version.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/AC_BlueBook_AWA_508_comp_version.pdf) - p. 109

2. USDA APHIS - [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_welfare/downloads/Animal-Care-Inspection-Guide.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/Animal-Care-Inspection-Guide.pdf) - p. 57-58

Cost of care can exceed  
**\$150,000 per tiger!**  
Estimate is for proper nutrition,  
veterinary care, and housing.



# Survivor: Cub Petting Edition

Are you ready for the ultimate survivor? Contestants battle it out, spending one month of their young lives struggling to survive in the harshest conditions, separated from their family, suffering from malnutrition, sleep deprivation, disease, and greed, all for the ultimate prize: the chance to live.

All reality-TV hype aside, the struggle is real for the cubs that are being used in cub petting schemes. Turpentine Creek is home to many survivors of the cub petting trade. After they are used and abused, they are sold to individuals that cannot care for them. That is when we come in to offer them a lifetime refuge with us. Sadly, these animals are just a small handful of the hundreds of victims that did not make it through the harsh reality of cub petting.

Frankie, Tommie, Robbie, Tigger, and Floyd are five cats that managed to survive this trying period in their lives. Sadly, a sixth tiger, Diesel, survived through the cub petting phase but succumbed to a blood-borne disease only days after his rescue by Turpentine Creek. Diesel was so ill there was nothing we could do to save him, but we are glad he could spend his last few days comfortable with us.

These six tigers were bred by two of the animal breeders featured on Netflix's 'reality' series "Tiger King". When their 'expiration date' came and they were no longer making a profit they were sold to James Garretson, who kept them in his backyard, allowing visitors to see them for a price, until his landlord evicted him. Garretson told us during the rescue that one breeder had threatened to put Tigger, Floyd, Diesel, and Tommie down so he offered to buy them to save their lives. Garretson bought Frankie and Robbie from the other breeder on a separate occasion.



Frankie, Tommie, Robbie, Tigger, and Floyd were five of the six tigers rescued from a facility in Oklahoma. These cats were originally bred by two of the breeders featured on the Netflix series "Tiger King." When their owner was evicted he contacted Turpentine Creek to give them a forever home.



Robbie lived in a dirt filled habitat with three other tigers when they were rescued. He was overweight and unhealthy. Thanks to specialized care from our veterinarian and animal care team he is doing much better in his new home.

This is a typical story for cub petting survivors. When they are no longer useful to the breeders, they dispose of them or sell them to individuals and other road-side-zoos that cannot properly care for them. These facilities feed poor-quality diets often either underfeeding or, in the case of the six from Oklahoma, over-feeding them. They will also often use road kill to feed their animals, which can make animals sick. Diesel died from a blood-borne disease that most likely came from eating road kill.

Since their rescue, Turpentine Creek has worked hard to improve their health. All the cats have lost weight and are now at a healthy BMI according to our staff Veterinarian Dr. Kellyn Sweeley. Floyd has been examined and has many medical issues, including deformed front paws and an undescended testicle, which can be attributed to inbreeding, poor nutrition, and lack of proper care at a young age.

All five survivors of the Oklahoma rescue are growing stronger, healthier, and happier at their new home.

They enjoy playing with enrichment, getting treats, and greeting guests. We are glad that we could offer a forever home for them, thanks to all of you. Your donations and support made this possible, even small donations of \$5 or \$25 help us provide the best care possible for our animal survivors.



In this time of quarantine, self-isolation, and difficult conditions we want to remind you that even the smallest decisions can have a big impact. With so many people home, online shopping has become an even more popular activity. Thinking about where you are purchasing from and evaluating the impact your purchases can make on the environment and on the business is very important. Proceeds from the sales of items from the Turpentine Creek online store go directly to the Refuge to look after our animal residents.

Your purchase from us can have a wider impact beyond helping the animals at TCWR. We also try to seek out companies and vendors that are making a positive impact on the world in a variety of ways including those:

- working to reduce their carbon footprint
- manufacturing their products here in the USA
- using recycled or sustainable products
- that are certified as fair trade
- helping to reduce plastic and other waste
- supporting artisans in the USA as well as in under-developed countries
- providing work and support for under-represented and under-privileged people

Try to think about wise consumer choices and make sure you are supporting companies that you believe in, like the Refuge.



### Rescue and Protect Tee

\$22 (\$24 for xx large)

One of these t-shirts will

- Save at least 6 (20oz) plastic bottles from the landfill (it is made from recycled plastic).
- Save 1.05 kilowatt hours of electricity, enough to run a 10 watt LED light for about 4 full 24 hour days.
- Save about 1.94 gallons of water compared to a conventional poly-cotton dyed t-shirt and uses only certified, recycled PET and low-impact dyes, helping to eliminate restricted heavy metals, phthalates, BPA, and more.

### Brush Stroke Tiger Sport Bottle

\$22

Using this to stay hydrated instead of purchasing wasteful bottled water or styrofoam coffee cups.



### 1 Tree Mission Jewelry

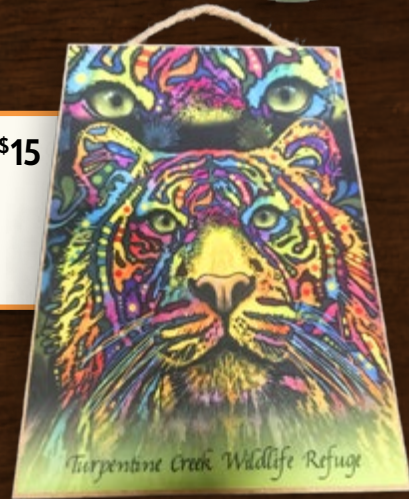
\$20

1 Tree Mission®, through its worldwide partners, will plant one tree for each bracelet purchased. The organization has committed to planting at least 125,000 trees in year one, which will help remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and ensure future homes for wildlife.

### Colorful Wood Wall Hangings

\$15

Proudly manufactured in the USA for over 30 years.



### Gift Cards

You can also purchase online gift cards to brighten someone's day or save for later use. You'll help the animals at the same time!

Go to:

<https://shop.turpentinecreek.org/collections/gift-cards>

Lodging Gift Cards:

[TCWR.org/stay-with-us/lodging-gift-certificates](https://www.turpentinecreek.org/stay-with-us/lodging-gift-certificates)

Visit the TCWR Online Gift Shop to see these and other amazing creations available for purchase and shipped right to your door...

<https://shop.turpentinecreek.org/collections>

Remember, free shipping on orders over \$150!





# Donate Today To Help Us Recover From Covid Closure!

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

**Donations:**  \$25  \$35  \$50  \$100 Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**I would like to make my loving donation recurring:**  Repeat monthly.

**2020 Calendars:** \$6.50 each X \_\_\_\_\_ calendars + \$5 S/H = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Choose your Wild About Wildlife Membership Tier

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: \_\_\_\_\_

**\$100 Pride Membership** You and 3 guests get a full year of visits to the Refuge.

**\$300+ Friends of India**

**\$1,250+ Bam Bam Benefactors**

Total:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**\$3,000+ Kenny Fellowship**

**\$10,000+ Hilda Jackson Society**

Opt Out of Membership Signup Gifts

Opt Out of Membership Card

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:

\$150/yr - Small Mammal/Bird

\$150/yr - Small Cat/Monkey

\$150/yr - Cougar/Leopard

\$150/yr - Lion/Tiger/Bear

### Animal Sponsor: One sponsor per animal. New Sponsors, please check to see if desired animal is available for sponsorship.

\$700/yr - Small Mammal/Bird

\$1,000/yr - Small Cat/Monkey

\$2,200/yr - Cougar/Leopard

\$2,500/yr - Lion/Tiger/Bear

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

Membership Opt Out

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

Adopted/Sponsored Animal's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Contribution Today:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Donor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Recipient Name (if different): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

Input Credit Card below or make checks payable to TCWR.

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

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

Federal Tax/EIN: 71-0721742

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



# Their Final Home: Welcoming Naula & Kiara



**Naula**



**Kiara**

We have already welcomed several new faces to the Turpentine Creek family this year, with the most recent being tigers Naula and Kiara from Oklahoma. The girls, who are ages six and nine respectively, were rescued from a zoo that was forced to close due to the owner's illness. A few days before Valentine's Day 2020, TCWR was contacted by the Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance, an organization of which Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is a founding member. The BCSA is composed of multiple true sanctuaries who are working together to better the future of big cats; the group has created a network of trusted collaborators for rescues, professional development, and advocacy initiatives. The case of Naula and Kiara is a prime example of one of the organization's functions. The BCSA became aware of two tigers in need of rescue and TCWR was the true sanctuary in the closest vicinity to accommodate.

Several TCWR team members were already nearby in Oklahoma for an event the night before the rescue. On the morning of February 21, additional helping hands made their way to the zoo to assist. **ifaw** also helped cover transportation costs for this rescue.

Kiara was a bit unsure about loading into the transport cage, but with coaxing from her previous owner and some delectable chicken, she eventually slipped inside. Naula, who was a bit more well-versed when it came to "stranger-danger," refused to accept any reassurances or treats. When Assistant Curator, Laurie Vanderwal, who has over 20 years of "tiger whispering experience" could not encourage her, she had to be sedated.

Naula and Kiara were greeted with special "welcome home" enrichment placed throughout their habitat and were even treated to snow shortly after arriving. Like most of our new residents, they took a few days to adjust to their new environment and trust their new caregivers, but since then, they have truly found themselves at home.

Both tigers are healthy and were in wonderful condition when they were rescued. Naula weighed 240 pounds and Kiara was close to 400, which was appropriate for their frames. Naula is easy to distinguish because she is missing part of her tail from a self-inflicted injury that occurred when she was two years old. The previous owner got them both from a different place in Oklahoma that he described as "not a good place to grow up."

For a tiger, there are more places in the U.S. that do not offer ideal conditions for young tigers to grow up than places that do. In 2020, we want to bring more attention to the tiger exploitation epidemic in the United States. You can be part of our 2020 Vision: Your Focus, Their Future movement by taking our

"2020 Pledge" at [TCWR.org/the-2020-pledge](https://TCWR.org/the-2020-pledge). When it comes to big cats, your focus is their future.

To further secure Naula and Kiara's future, please consider becoming a monthly recurring donor. Even \$5 a month can provide sustainable support that carries our animal residents through hard times—from medical emergencies to natural disasters to global pandemics. Visit [TCWR.org/donate](https://TCWR.org/donate) and make sure to click the recurring button.



# Striving to Survive the COVID Crisis

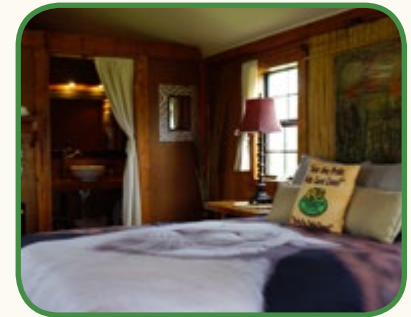
**T**urpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is always trying to be prepared for the unexpected. Usually this involves local storms, national rescues, and state emergencies, but in 2020, the unexpected happened around the world: a global pandemic.

On March 17, Turpentine Creek closed to the public for the first time in our 28-year history. We went into emergency mode, closed our doors, quarantined our on-site team, reduced unnecessary expenses, had workers who were not essential work remote, and laid off the few employees who could not do their job remotely. Our top priority is protecting the big cats that call our Refuge home, since they can get COVID from humans. During this time, we lost over half our income, but it was the best choice to protect the animals in our care and our team.

Spring break has always been one of our busiest tour times. This year from January 1 to May 1, we had 6,399 less visitors than last year, not to mention less school groups and lodging guests. As of May 1, we are sitting at a deficit of **\$572,946**, compared to 2019, due to our closure.. This number includes a loss of \$78,594 in admissions and \$45,598 in lodging income.

We luckily are prepared for emergencies and do have a little set back for certain situations, but running the property at a deficit for such an extended period of time has greatly reduced that emergency fund.

Please consider setting up a recurring donation of \$10, \$50, or \$100 to help us recover from our COVID closure. Help us protect our animals and team. You can set up a recurring donation with the enclosed form or on our website at [TCWR.org/donate](https://TCWR.org/donate).



## You're Ending the Cycle of Big Cats in Cages



Many privately owned and entertainment big cats are declawed. Declawing is especially detrimental for big cats; claw regrowth, pain, and early onset arthritis are just some of the challenges these declawed cats face.

Many big cats in the USA spend their entire lives in small cages. USDA rules regulate that they must have a minimum of 400 sq ft, be able to stand up, turn around, and lay down naturally.



Styx, Turpentine Creek's oldest big cat resident, has an enzyme deficiency that without proper treatment and care would have killed him. With your donations we can make sure Styx and all our other animals get the proper nutrition and veterinary care that they need to live long happy lives.

**B**ig cats don't belong in cages. Sadly, until federal laws are passed to end the Big Cat Trade, rampant, exploitative breeding will continue filling cages in roadside attractions, backyards, and, for a lucky few, at true sanctuaries.

When these animals are bred without a Species Survival Plan in place they cannot be released into the wild because they are a mix of subspecies, holding no conservational value. Factor in health conditions from inbreeding and the frequent removal of teeth and claws, and there is no way these animals can survive in the wild. When breeders and roadside attractions are shut down, and private owners realize how difficult it is to care for large carnivorous felines, these big cats are ideally moved to a true sanctuary.

23-year-old tiger, Styx, for example, was rescued in 2006. Not only is he a mix of tiger subspecies, he was diagnosed with an enzyme deficiency requiring intervention by our animal care team to survive. With nowhere else to go, and a health problem that would be fatal without treatment, his best option was life in captivity at an ethical organization where he would not be bred, sold, traded, or otherwise exploited for profit.

The only way to end the cycle of big cats in cages is to advocate for laws that will end exploitative breeding. You can be a voice for animals in need by going to [TCWR.org/advocacy](https://TCWR.org/advocacy) to support The Big Cat Public Safety Act. This federal legislation would end the harmful practice of cub petting, one of the most lucrative financial incentives behind the Big Cat Trade. Remember: **Your focus is their future!**



# Pawsitives



"Watching live videos while working from home." - Lisa



"I love being here with my Turpentine Creek family and being able to spend more time with all of these amazing animals" - Carly



"Getting to spend extra time with all the animals. It's been awesome seeing them play and sleep all day in the grass" - Jason



"Witnessing all the acts of kindness at TCWR and in general." - Katelyn



**Donate Today!**  
Help us recover from our COVID closure.



"Everyday I get to work my dream job with some of my best friends" - Meg T.



"We've had great opportunities to create paw paintings to auction out, the cats have been so cute with them!" - Morgan





# Your Favorite Cats During Corona Quiet-time

On March 17th, we closed to the public due to the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). During that time we made sure to provide our animals with plenty of enrichment, including special seasonal enrichment.

Usually, many of our cats enjoy stretching their instinctual predatory muscles by stalking our visitors – safely through two sets of fences. While we were closed, our animal care team continued to offer items that would stimulate their senses and encourage them to get out and enjoy their habitats.

During the warmer months we scatter fresh herbs that we grow onsite, such as cat nip, all the mint family including chocolate mint, basil, oregano, cilantro, rosemary, and lavender throughout the habitats as a change from the dried herbs and perfumes they receive during the winter months.

On warm days our animal care team offers hose showers and ‘spray play’ for the cats and bears that want it – something almost all our tigers adore! On cooler days the team members take time to offer the Big Cats a game of ‘stalk and chase’ through the fence line. Once they’re played out and cooled down, the tigers go back to peaceful napping in the soft grass, the most popular daytime pastime for all our felines.

The big cats spent most of their time during the closing taking naps, sunning their bellies, and enjoying their meals – and treats – the team provides them with daily. We hope to use what we learned about our animals behaviors while we were closed to continue to provide amazing enrichment for them.

We also encourage our supporters to check out our new enrichment program – Big Cat Callouts – where you can request special enrichment to celebrate your own special occasions and help the animals at Turpentine Creek. You can register for a Big Cat Callout on our website at [TCWR.org/big-cat-callouts](http://TCWR.org/big-cat-callouts).

Tanya



Lana



While we were temporarily closed, our cats enjoyed relaxing in the warm spring sunshine, playing with enrichment, and when it was warm enough playing in pools! Because we were closed to the public our donations and income are down. Please consider donating to help us recover, so that we can continue to provide life time care for our animals.

## Making Good Choices During Your Next Vacation

Turpentine Creek is one of America’s Ethical Tourism Destinations. Ethical Tourism is the idea of being considerate of the actions that you take as a tourist and the effect that they will have on the environment, the economy, and the welfare of wildlife. When booking your next vacation, here are some things to consider ensuring you’re being an ethical tourist:

- True sanctuaries or accredited zoos will NEVER allow the public to touch their large, dangerous animals
- Never buy souvenirs made from exotic or endangered animal parts
- Leave wild animals in the wild
- Look after the environment
- Seek ethical animal encounters - AVOID facilities that offer shows, interactions, or photo ops
- Most importantly, ask questions and do your research about an attraction before going!



Aurora



# The Purpose of True Sanctuaries

A sanctuary is a “place of refuge or safety”. This term is not regulated by a governing body. It is legal for any facility with exotic animals to call itself a sanctuary, rescue, refuge, or zoo. Pseudo facilities, menageries, and roadside zoos hide under this terminology to seem legitimate, tricking patrons into thinking they are helping animals and manipulating the public’s love of wildlife for financial gain. There are major differences between true sanctuaries and pseudo facilities; knowing the difference can stop the cycle of abuse.

TCWR is accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries alongside other true big cat sanctuaries throughout the U.S. This accrediting body sets high animal welfare standards, ensuring a true sanctuary does not buy, sell, breed, or trade, does not take animals off property for entertainment, and does not have any physical contact with dangerous wildlife. TCWR takes full responsibility for providing all animals lifetime care by a professionally trained staff.

As members of The Big Cat Sanctuary Alliance, TCWR and other affiliated sanctuaries work together to share information and advocate for exotic animals, creating a strong unified voice to expose inhumane practices, and educate the public about challenges big cats face. BCSA members are identified as quality sanctuaries committed to big cat care and well-being.

The purpose of a sanctuary is to provide a second chance for animals fallen victim to greed and neglect within the exotic animal trade. The animals rescued by TCWR did not choose to be born into this cruel industry. Our number one priority is to ensure they will live the best possible life in captivity and prevent suffering for future big cats.

With continual overbreeding and exploitation of big cats by private owners, true sanctuaries are vital to ensure that rescued animals will have freedom from exploitation and mistreatment. Sanctuaries are not dumping grounds for big cats that are no longer profitable to their exploiters. The goal of a true sanctuary is to END the abuse. Being financially dependent on donations as a non-profit, TCWR ensures that every animal saved has a forever home with your continued support.

The problems with exotic animal ownership need to be addressed at the source of corruption. Big cats should never be exploited for entertainment, extorted for financial gain, or bred and sold as pets. Continuing to allow commercialization, exploitation, and private ownership of wild animals is dangerous, mismanaged, irresponsible, and leaves the big cats in a vicious cycle of cruelty.

The solution to prevent mistreatment of wildlife is to ban private ownership and cub petting of dangerous exotic animals by implementing strict federal laws. Federal regulation will decrease the need for animals to be rescued from terrible conditions. Public education and outreach will create the momentum U.S. federal legislation needs to ban private ownership of dangerous exotic wildlife through the Big Cat Public Safety Act. With your focus on advocating for big cats in captivity, we can ensure that their future will be as bright as they deserve. Become an advocate for big cats today by visiting [TCWR.org/advocacy!](https://www.tcwr.org/advocacy)



**True sanctuaries, like Turpentine Creek, have achieved outside accreditations, holding themselves to higher standards than the basic USDA regulations for big cat care.**



**Joey was used for cub petting. When she got too big to be handled she was put in a small cage with three other big cats. She now enjoys a large enrichment filled habitat with plenty of space to run and hide if she wants to.**



**Shakira II was used for breeding, living in a small cage filled with ground up wood pallets and a single shade platform. After being rescued by TCWR she now lives in a large grass and tree filled habitat, where she spends her days sleeping and relaxing.**



# Turpentine Creek's Response to the "Tiger King" Docu-series

As professionals in the field of captive big cat care and a true sanctuary for 28 years, Turpentine Creek continues to witness firsthand the abuse and neglect big cats endure due to the exotic animal trade and entertainment industry. As the "Tiger King" docuseries premiered, our team was excited and anxious that it would finally provide the spotlight these animals deserve and share their stories with the public. **We were hopeful that the exposure of animal abusers and exploiters would be brought to light and provide important insight into the truth of the abuse big cats endure.**

To our utter disappointment, it was soon apparent that this drama-filled series did not focus on what is most important: the exotic animals in desperate need of a voice. Instead, **it has glorified animal abusers, allowing the exploiters to gain spotlight and media attention.** This popular reality television show was not a documentary. Rather, it produced a misguided picture of the characters featured within the show. It also created a slew of memes and misinformation spiraling around the internet. **Clearly, this was a major opportunity missed to educate millions of viewers about the importance of ending the exotic animal trade.**



**The mistreatment and mishandling of young cubs that are bred for cub petting schemes should have been the focus of Netflix's "Tiger King." Instead, it focused on the drama of humans.**



**After cubs are too old to be handled they are sold to private owners and road side zoos. Tigger and Floyd were sold as soon as they were too old to play with by one of the featured "Tiger King" breeders. They were kept at a small facility until the owner was evicted; then they were rescued by Turpentine Creek.**

What was never emphasized in the "Tiger King" was that true sanctuaries are extremely different from roadside attractions. What we saw were animals exploited for entertainment and financial gain being used for status symbols and props for profit. **These animals are ridden with stress, and malnourished. Cubs are torn from their mothers and stuffed in suitcases. Animals are sold and trucked all over the country. All because they are a "popular attraction".** We also saw Big Cat Rescue, another true GFAS sanctuary, being ridiculed with rumors dug up to cause character drama, rather than focusing on the mission of their sanctuary, which is rescuing big cats from the bad guys.

What TCWR was hoping to see was the true exposure of Joe Exotic and the hundreds of roadside zoos, menageries, and private owners that are using big cats for financial gain. **Teaching the public that participating in cub petting, interacting with dangerous wildlife, and loose implementation of laws are what is truly hurting captive wildlife.** Big cats do not deserve to be treated as property or props because of how much money they bring in. **True sanctuaries are non-profit facilities, dependent on public donations to continually care for big cats that are rescued from abuse and continue to fight to end private ownership.**

Before supporting a facility with big cats and dangerous wildlife, there are many questions that are important to ask. A true sanctuary will never **buy, sell, breed, trade, or allow hands-on interaction with dangerous predators.** Animals will always be provided adequate space, nutrition, water, veterinary care, shelter, and enrichment, ensuring the highest quality of life in captivity by professionals in the field. As our supporters, the most important way to share information about true sanctuaries is how the wild animals should be treated. **The focus must shift onto animal welfare rather than an entertaining show.** With your help, we can change the dialogue to a positive way of how we can continue to help big cats, by supporting true sanctuaries and putting a stop to animal abuse.



# Update on Luna and Remington



Remington and Luna were rescued in January. Since their arrival they have been enjoying their new grassy habitat. Remington was neutered by our staff Veterinarian Dr. Kellyn Sweeley. We are hopeful that we will be able to introduce the duo in the future.



Remington and Luna both suffered during their first months of life in a 'pay-to-swim with baby tigers' scheme. Since their arrival in January, the young white tigers have been taking turns exploring and playing in their large grassy habitat and reliving the cub-hood they missed. As part of our plan to introduce the two, Remington was taken to our on-site veterinary hospital for a checkup and neutering in early March. The procedure went well, and he passed his health inspection.

Animal Curator Emily McCormack said that we do not have a date set for introducing the pair, as we are trying to not do any moves or introductions until after the Coronavirus has passed. However, they seem very affectionate with each other through the fence! We are very hopeful that when we eventually do introduce them it will go well. It is only with your help and donations that we can continue to rescue animals in need. Thank you for your support!



# Changing Attitudes While Changing Lives

Each rescued animal at TCWR has a unique personality. However, when first meeting them it doesn't always show. Depending on the rescue situation, animals might act scared, aggressive, or just curious about their new surroundings. After arriving at TCWR, they eventually adjust to a life of compassion and safety.

One tiger that has truly undergone a positive transformation since his arrival is Bosco. He was rescued during the Colorado Project of 2016, from a roadside zoo that was exploiting exotic animals for cub petting. Because Bosco had only known abuse and neglect, he was extremely aggressive towards team members when he first arrived at TCWR.

It took Bosco a little time to realize he was safe in his new home with us. He began to relax his guard when keepers were nearby and grew comfortable enough to explore his large grass habitat. He has found his favorite spot to sleep, laying belly up on his habitat bench and has a favorite toy, his blue barrel.

Bosco is still a big cat, and like all wild predators, he has keen natural instincts. But, he is no longer the scared and aggressive tiger he was when we first met him. TCWR strives to make sure the animals can relax and show off their individuality.

Sadly, there are big cats and other exotic animals that face abuse and neglect every day, just as Bosco did before being rescued. To ensure the safety of the animals, and your own, it is important to research a facility before visiting. By doing so you are being the voice for these animals. You can be a part of the movement to change animals' lives, donate today and help us continue to save these amazing animals.

**Bosco has completely changed since coming to Turpentine Creek. When he was rescued in Colorado he was aggressive and unsure about the people around him. Now he spends his days sleeping and relaxing with his habitat mate Shakira II.**



**Bosco tended to growl and hiss at anyone who came near his cage. It took time and a lot of work to get Bosco to trust the team.**



# How You Can Help Support the Animals from Home!

Creating a better world for big cats is not just achievable at the Refuge; there are many ways our supporters can help from home! Here are just a few ways to interact, engage, and support Turpentine Creek from the comfort of your own home:

- Adopt or Sponsor an Animal Resident
- Donations:
  - Monetary
  - Meat or Produce
  - Enrichment Items
- Take A Virtual Tour
- Shop our Online Gift Shop
- Buy Gift Cards
- Plan your Overnight Stay at TCWR in our Safari Lodging
- Book Private Tours for Future Dates:
  - Coffee with a Curator
  - Carnivore Caravan
- Become a Member!
  - Pride Membership
  - The Friends of India
  - Bam Bam Benefactors
  - The Kenny Fellowship
  - The Hilda Jackson Society
- Sign your Child up for P.A.W. Club
- Request a Big Cat Callout!
- Choose TCWR as your Amazon Smile Nonprofit!
- Join our Social Media Channels ~ Share and interact with Posts
- Create a Fundraiser for TCWR on Facebook
- Become a Wildlife Advocate and Support True Sanctuaries at [TCWR.org/advocacy](https://TCWR.org/advocacy)

Learn more about these options on our website at [TCWR.org](https://TCWR.org)

## Your Legacy for The Animals

Supporters of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge can continue their legacy by leaving a portion of their estates to the Refuge, and thereby ensuring that all of the present and future animals rescued will be well cared for and live out their lives in peace. Please speak with your attorney today and consider setting up your legacy by providing the information below.

Turpentine Creek Foundation, Inc. DBA Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge EIN #: 71-0721742

Address: 239 Turpentine Creek Lane, Eureka Springs, AR 72632

Phone #: 479-253-5841 Website: [TCWR.org](https://TCWR.org)

Officers: Tanya Smith, President. Scott Smith, Vice President. Amanda Smith, Secretary/Treasurer.

**Please help us, help them, in the years to come.**

Learn more at [TCWR.org/legacy-giving](https://TCWR.org/legacy-giving)





Turpentine Creek Foundation, Inc.  
239 Turpentine Creek Lane  
Eureka Springs, AR 72632

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Learn more about Blackfire on page 6.

[#PredatorsNotProps](#)



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