Fur Ball Gets $100,000 Major Radio Support!

The 5th Annual Fur Ball dinner/auction Sept. 17 is going to get promoted in a way that is a huge first for BCR. Six stations in the Cox Radio family, Magic 94.9, 97X, and The Eagle 107.3 have not just agreed to help, but leaped in with both feet! They have committed over 700 radio spots, some prerecorded and some live by the DJs, valued at over $100,000, to promote the Fur Ball. With this major media support we are expecting to more than triple attendance to 1000! And with the wild Safari Costume Formal attire, wine being generously donated by Woodbridge and Papio, dance floor and live music this year by The Urban Gypsies, great food again from A La Carte and Jana Broder returning with her fantastic drum circle activity, this will be our best ever night to remember! Cough it up, it’s fur a good cause!

Last Chance to get your tickets to the 5th annual Fur Ball!

Join us for a roaring good time at this year’s Fur Ball. The event will be held at the A La Carte Pavilion on Friday evening the 17th of September. Enjoy great food, live entertainment and live & silent auctions.

DRESS
Safari Costume Formal - Anything from pure costume safari, cat prints, or in any other way jungle related to pure formal, or any mix, cat accessorizing or combination in between. Be creative and have fun with it! Prizes will be awarded!

TICKETS
VIP Tickets $75.00 each
Be automatically entered to win the Grand Raffle Prize
Enjoy a special VIP tour of Big Cat Rescue.
General Admission $55.00 each
Receive a special tour pass to visit Big Cat Rescue.
Table Sponsorship $600.00
Corporations or individuals who purchase a table for 10 receive:(1) Ten VIP tickets at a discount (save $150!)
(2) Prominent name recognition on table
(3) Listing as Table Sponsor in beautiful keepsake Fur Ball Program
(4) Listing at our web site which receives over 800,000 page requests monthly(5) Listing in Cat Tales newsletter mailed to over 30,000 nationwide

SAFARI ITINERARY
7:30 PM - 8 PM    Doors open, registration and cocktails
7:30 - 11 PM          Live music by Urban Gypsies
7:30 PM - 9 PM    Silent Auction and Dinner (buffet style)
8:30 - 8:45 PM Welcome from Founder and brief awards
8:45 - 9 PM Last 15 minutes to get your silent auction bids in
9:15 - 9:30 Live Auction
9:30 - 10 PM Desserts and Comedian Happy Cole
10 PM Silent Auction check out open, Grand Prize Winner Announcement
10 PM - 10:30 Prince Rupert Amazes us with a fire eating act and conga and limbo dancing
10:30 - 11:30 More dancing with the Urban Gypsies
All Night Join in Tribal Drumming with Jana Broder from The Comfort Shoppe
Great Door Prize Giveaways!

FOR RESERVATIONS
Contact Barbara Stairs Phone: 813 493-4565 Fax: 813 961-1315 Email: MaryStairs@verizon.net

Win a 5-day Cruise!
See Page 14
Drawing will be at the Fur Ball September 17th
Big Cats = Big Opportunities for a Select Few

Big Cat Rescue is pleased to announce that it is in its first official year of a formally structured intern program. This is an on-going intern program where we have 4-6 interns at any given time overlapping each other throughout the year. Curator, Cathy Mayeski, plays an integral role in the intern program and serves as the coordinator for many of its elements. The response has been overwhelming to this program. She has received over 100 intern applications. Her duties include sorting through the applications, responding to each one, pre-interviewing the candidates and coordinating travel arrangements. Cathy tells us, “I am very excited about what the interns have to bring to Big Cat Rescue. Not only are they a huge help with the day-to-day tasks, but they bring their experiences and fresh point of view to the sanctuary, allowing us to make improvements. We have applicants from all over the US and the world (Wales, Scotland, Canada, Australia, Japan) and they have been eager to learn and to help provide our animals with great care.” Cathy is so efficient with the coordinating of the program that she has housing and travel arrangements scheduled into 2005. This is a one of a kind program, not to be missed.

Big Cat Rescue’s big cat training courses are world class. Get the experience of a lifetime to help you qualify for better colleges and better jobs in animal care.

Each quarter we will introduce you to one of our outstanding interns. We hope that their stories will be meaningful and inspirational to you.

Lianne Gibson:
“My name is Lianne Gibson and I’m 31. I’m English, but I live in Scotland. I work full time as a secretary for St. Andrews University in the School of Biology Department. I am currently doing an animal studies course which is flexible learning. I have a major passion for tigers in particular, but I love all big cats. I am at a point in my life where I want to work with animals. Big Cat Rescue has given me a great opportunity to get up close to these cats, and I hope to learn lots during my 3 month stay here. I hope to finish my animal studies course by Christmas and hopefully go on to do zoology at night school. I know at some point in the future I will be working with big cats, and Big Cat Rescue will have played a major role in this and I thank every in advance for the experience. Save the Tiger!”

Seeing Green

Getting here just got easier! Howard Baskin, our Advisory Board Chairman was successful in purr-suading the county to erect 5 green directional signs directing visitors to Big Cat Rescue.

Thanks to Dennis Mitchell, Big Cat Rescue finally has a sign at the entrance on Citrus Park Drive! Seeing the need, Senior Partner, Denny took it upon himself to negotiate with TECO and Smokey Bones to allow us to post a sign on their property.

Now tour guests can find us more easily and we will have the benefit of all the exposure to drive by traffic from the mall.

The Power of One

Matt is a long-time volunteer at BCR who recently made a huge contribution with a little time and curiosity. You’ll never believe how he has helped get our sanctuary on the international map. What connections or avenues come to mind for ways you can help? Read on to hear his inspiring story.

“I was sitting at the computer one night surfing the web. I typed “Big Cat Rescue” into Google to see if anything interesting came up. The first two results were from our website. The one directly below those piqued my curiosity. The Google result showed a little quote from a site in which someone was asking about the night tours at Big Cat Rescue.

When I clicked on the link to the site, the link brought me to a website created for people who live in the UK to discuss all things Disney. The post that pulled me into the site was under the heading “Beyond the Parks” which talks about non-Disney and Universal things to do while in Florida.

Fortunately, the girl that had posted had done so recently, so I was able to give her a response. In answering her question, I wrote that I was a volunteer at the sanctuary and if anyone else had questions to feel free to ask. There was a huge response by people that love animals. Several said that they were going to change their plans so they could stop by BCR and said it was a “must see”. Many of the readers went to our website, which really got them excited. One lady said: “I’ve just seen the web-site for the very first time!! I’m a big cat lover & will change my itinerary to make sure we visit in August!!”

All I did is answer some questions for people and mention our sanctuary, and I received a tremendous response. I am looking forward to meeting those from the forum who plan on visiting the sanctuary. Hopefully, they will have a great time and will tell all the others on the board when they return home.

This could snowball and really get the word out.

Hercules the Snow Leopard

Seeing Green

Hercules the Snow Leopard
White Tiger and Lion update:

As mentioned in the June issue of Cat-Tales, we have been fortunate to be able to rescue a male lion and a female white tiger who are mates for life. They have been in quarantine for four months and are now ready for their new Cat-a-tat.

The new 3 acre cat-a-tat is complete, but the funds to pay for it are not. The funding that was promised to care for these cats and provide their new home has not been forthcoming, but Big Cat Rescue has dipped into reserves to get these magnificent cats out of quarantine into their new 3 acre Cat-A-Tat with dual dens and pool.

The next step was a vasectomy for Cameron so that he and Zabu can finally be reunited without the risk of little white ligers being produced.

Cameron's Surgery

When is neutering a cat a multi-cultural event that illustrates the dawning of the golden age of enlightenment? When the patient is a lion, saved from a terrible fate in a road side zoo, by Big Cat Rescue and the doctors and assistants span several continents.

Cameron the lion was born in a roadside zoo and circus and paired up with a white tigress cub. They were purposefully raised together by the proprietor with the intent of bonding them so that they would mate as adults and produce white Liger cubs that they could charge people a lot of money to see and buy. Cameron and Zabu grew up together. They loved each other. They didn't have the choice of being with their own kind or growing up wild and free.

Something the zoo wasn't counting on was that people are getting smarter. Information is more readily available about the horrors of breeding white tigers and all of the deformities that go along with this practice that relies heavily on inbreeding. People are starting to ask where last year's babies that drew in all of the crowds are this year. People are seeing animals as sentient creatures and wondering what ever gave us the right to lock them in cages and gawk at them.

Enough people are waking up, that this little zoo and circus sideshow couldn't support the owner anymore. The animals were given away and many still cannot find homes because the zoos don't want them, the real sanctuaries (those that don't breed animals) are full and those that do breed are finding less and less of a market for their unfortunate cubs. Cameron and Zabu were two of the lucky ones that found their way to Big Cat Rescue.

The dilemma was how to house them. Cameron has been pining after Zabu. They sleep nose to nose at the fence, but a fence separates them at Big Cat Rescue to prevent “accidental” births.

All of the cats rescued from that zoo were starting and in very poor condition. Cameron was too thin and too weak to survive a vasectomy when he arrived. It would take time to build up his strength. So they waited, and they waited...

On August the 18th the long awaited day arrived. Along with it arrived Big Cat Rescue's veterinarian, Dr. Stacie Wadsworth, DVM of Carrollwood Cats. Assisting her was volunteer vet Dr. Liz Wynn DVM and vet student interns named Diana from Brazil and Trevor who is studying to be a vet in Gainesville.

Anesthetizing a full grown lion is no simple matter and in the summer Florida heat it is particularly dangerous. The plan was for operations manager Scott Lope and VP Daniel Capiro to coax him into a small lock down area where he could get an injection. Then, once asleep, he would be lifted into a rolling transport cage and a golf cart would be used as a towing vehicle. The golf cart and circus wagon convoy would cross the sanctuary grounds to the onsite cat hospital donated by Dr. John and Sherrod West and Richard and Debbie Boensch.

Once inside the cat hospital Dr. Stacie Wadsworth began the vasectomy. A simple neuter would not be appropriate because it would cause Cameron to lose his handsome mane. Dr. Wynn used the opportunity to clean Cameron’s teeth, run blood and urine tests and give him an overall exam that is hard to do when he isn’t sleeping so soundly. Diana got the opportunity to monitor Cameron’s heart and breathing. Trevor took medical notes throughout the procedure.

When Cameron began to growl it was time to finish up and the vets got out of the transport cage that had become the surgery table. Antibiotics and IV fluids were given as the lion was wheeled all the way in to the hospital and the doors closed to keep him cool. He was monitored for the next 24 hours and then released into his new 3 acre cat-a-tat. After a standard waiting period of 30 days, Zabu will be transferred to this new enclosure where they can live happily ever after. The dawn of the Golden Age is upon us. Are you awake yet?
The lack of agreement among experts about precisely what makes up ideal habitat creates confusion and conflict among developers, their consultants, environmental groups and the agencies involved in panther protection. The permitting guidelines say the agencies are to use the best available science to evaluate direct and indirect impacts and minimize impacts where possible. Environmental groups argue that 13,000 acres of habitat have been destroyed by development in South Florida. But the wildlife service says not all of the permitted development destroys habitat. The habitat may be disturbed and then later used again by panthers.

What is the Species?
Felinae Puma concolor coryii. The Florida Panther is a subspecies of cougar that has adapted to the subtropical environment of Florida.

What are the Threats?
Humans: We are. This also means that we can directly affect the panther’s future. It’s sad to say that Florida panthers are killed by cars and trucks, particularly on State Road 29 and Alligator Alley (I-75), and - although it is against the law - hunters also still shoot panthers occasionally.

Health: The biggest threats to the remaining panthers, however, are their health and continuing loss of habitat. Florida panthers have an unusually large number of health problems. Most are related to poor habitat conditions and genetic defects. Around the Everglades, panthers have been contaminated with mercury (at least 1 has died from mercury poisoning) by eating raccoons high in mercury, which passes through the aquatic food chain. The mercury’s origin is being debated and is uncertain.

Additional Research:
In 1989, data collected from 29 radio-collared panthers indicated that the population was losing genetic diversity at a rate of three to seven percent yearly. Researchers believed that the gene pool would continue to erode even if the population stabilized, leading to extinction within 40 years. Three years later, with the health of the population continuing to decline, biologists made a controversial decision. In an effort to increase genetic diversity, wildlife managers introduced several female Texas cougars — the closest remaining cougar population that had historically shared Florida panther range — into the Florida panther population in 1995. Several hybrid litters have since been produced, and the introduction seems to have corrected some of the problems experts generally attribute to inbreeding. Experts are still debating the role of the Texas cougars in panther recovery.

Despite the success of this effort, panthers are still at great risk of extinction. Conserving the panther will require aggressive protections for remaining wild lands in south Florida as well as conservation efforts on private lands.

Another major conservation challenge for the panther is reestablishing the species in other portions of its historic range. Field studies have indicated an adequate prey base and appropriate habitat in some areas of northern Florida. While there is widespread popular support for panther reintroduction in Florida, some people are still concerned about introducing the cat to new areas, fearing the panther will bring with it restrictions on private property uses, potential damage to livestock and pets, and a possible threat to human safety. Such concerns often surround recovery efforts for large carnivores, but with proper assurances to address depredation claims and any potential “problem” animals, reintroduction projects could prove a positive step towards recovering the Florida panther.

Protect the Florida Panther or Lose Her Forever

Federally listed as endangered since 1967, the Florida panther is down to 30 to 50 individuals. These few animals are threatened by further habitat loss, collisions with cars, the ill effects of inbreeding, and high levels of mercury in their prey.

Many of the remaining panthers live in or near Big Cypress National Preserve and Everglades National Park. The National Park Service is cooperating with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, the Florida Department of Natural Resources, and other organizations to try to bring about recovery of the Florida panther. Efforts are centered on research, captive breeding, and public education. Radio-collaring of several panthers has shown what areas and habitat types they use. Other studies have identified the principal prey — white-tailed deer. Publicity has made the public more aware of the panther’s plight and alerted people to watch out for them on the highway. But with the numbers so low and suitable habitat in south Florida so restricted, captive breeding and reestablishment in other areas will be crucial for turning the population decline around.
**SPECIE SPOTLIGHT**

CATRINA
THE FLORIDA PANTHER

**Appearance:** Cougars range from grizzled gray to dark brown with intermittent shades of buff, tawny, and cinnamon in color with black ears. A male can measure 7-8 feet from the nose to tail tip and weight 100-160 lbs. Females are about 6 feet in length and weight between 60-100 lbs.

**Habitat:** Florida Panthers are usually found in pinelands, hardwood hammocks, and mixed swamp forests. Adult males may range over an area of 200 square miles, while females range over a 70 to 80 square mile area.

**Distribution:** Mainly Western United States stretching into Canada and Central & South America, with a few small scattered populations like that of the Florida Panther.

**Social System:** The Panther is a solitary animal and will rarely fight over territory.

**Hunting & Diet:** Deer and wild hogs are their preferred food, but, when these are not available, panthers will eat raccoons, armadillos and even alligators. Across North America, deer make up 60 to 80 percent of the Panther’s diet. Interestingly, panthers eating a diet of small animals are not as healthy as those with plenty of deer to hunt. While they are good sprinters, panthers rarely chase prey for long distances. Instead, prey is singled out, stalked and ambushed.

**Reproduction and Offspring:** Though conception can take place anytime during the year, the breeding season generally falls between October through March, and kittens are often born in the spring. The gestation period is 92-96 days. Panthers usually produce 1 litter every 2 years with an average litter size of 1-3 kittens. Kittens are born blind, their coat is spotted and eyes are blue. Eyes open within 2-3 weeks at which time they begin to walk. The kittens are able to sustain their energy and body temperature for 2 days, which is an amazing feat for an infant. She can leave the kittens for up to 36 hours and travel up to 5 miles to find food. They are weaned and introduced to meat at 6-8 weeks, which the mother will bring back to the denning area. The first 6 months of the kittens’ life tends to be the most dangerous. Panther kittens have a better chance of survival in a fertile area with thick vegetation for cover & large prey close to home. At 4-6 months of age the markings begin to fade the coat become a buff color and the eyes turn from brown to pale gold. At 18 months they are capable hunters and will shortly leave their home. At 4-6 months of age the markings begin to fade the coat become a buff color and the eyes turn from brown to pale gold.

**Panther Facts:** Panthers are most active at dusk and dawn, they can travel 15-20 miles a day, often moving in a zig-zag pattern, though they tend to rest during the daytime, travel & hunt during the cooler hours of the night. Panthers can swim and will cross wide bodies of water. They can run up to 35 mph but only for a few hundred yards, their preferred method of hunting is to creep up as close to their prey as possible and launch a short spring attack. Panthers do become used to man-made noises and frequently cross roads. When humans approach an area they will either be still, disappear, or attempt to circle behind. Panthers can live up to between 12-15 years in the wild. Panthers are the largest cat that can purr, however they can not roar like the other Big Cats. The Panther has many other names including: Mountain Lion, Painter, Cougar, and Puma to name a few. These are all the same cat, the names just vary regionally. Melanistic Panthers, or “Black Panthers” as they are often called, have often been reported. Although Panthers are terrestrial, they can swim and climb trees when they need to. In the United States today, Pumas are one of the few large predators that people can legally chase with dogs and hunt for sport, with the exception of the FL Pantheres. Puma hunting is big business, and in 1990 the sporting kill in 11 western states was 1,875 cats.
**Big Cat Rescue Membership Program**

Join Big Cat Rescue’s Membership Program today and start enjoying your exclusive Membership benefits. Invites to all Big Cat Rescue events, 10% off on your Trading Post purchases, Tour Passes, Photos, Donor Recognition in a future issue of Cat-Tales, and more are all part of the package that you will receive when you become a “Member of the Big Cat Family”.

**Senior/Student Animal Lover - $30**
- 1 Tour Pass, 8x10 Photograph

**Forest Friend - $50.00**
- 2 Tour Passes, 8x10 Photograph, 30 Personalized Mail Labels

**WildLife Protector - $150.00**
- 6 Tour Passes, Choice 8x10 Photograph, 60 Personalized Mail Labels, WildLife T-shirt

**Habitat Defender - $500.00**
- 10 Tour Passes, Choice 8x10 Photograph, 150 Personalized Mail Labels, WildLife T-shirt, your name on a Habitat Defender Plaque (with 5 other Habitat Defenders’ names) attached to the cat-a-tat that your donation helps build, Night Tour for 2 people

For a list of benefits received with the following Membership Levels, please request information on page 15 of this newsletter.

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**New Big Cat Rescue Video Unleashed!**

This video entitled “The Big Cat Picture”, is a culmination of over 5 years of extensive work, including filming, documenting and editing. We are very proud to release it to you and the public at this time. You won’t want to miss the most insightful take on the reality of the joys and hardships associated with the cat’s lives and their plight. You’ll learn of the state of numerous species of cats in the wild, as well as individual cat’s stories that we have rescued. We’ll introduce you to our dual role of rescuing the ones we can, and the broader goal of educating the world on how we can better coexist with the cats so they don’t find themselves abandoned, abused, misunderstood and/or running out of habitat. You’ll be informed on the many ways we offer you to get to know our cats and help them as well. It is on sale in our gift shop now for $19.95. Pick up your copy today!

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**Adopt a Wild Child**

All of Big Cat Rescue’s animals are available for sponsorship. The Sponsorship fee is a donation, so it is tax-deductible.

Sponsorship fees go directly to the care of all the animals to provide them with food, toys, enrichment, a large natural cat-a-tat, medical and preventative care, and overall a higher standard of living.

The Sponsorship Kit includes an 8x10 glossy photograph of your chosen specie, a 4-page color newsletter filled with interesting facts about the habitat, social system, hunting and diet, and colorful photos of your chosen specie, a financial breakdown of just how your donation is used, and a list of all the animals we have that are the specie you chose, with a black and white photo and personal history of each one so that you can choose which one you would like to sponsor and have appear on your personalized Certificate.

**SPONSORSHIP KIT $25 DONATION**

Choose Your Specie!
- Lion, Tiger, Cougar, Black Leopard, Bobcat, Golden Leopard, Ocelot, Jaguar, Snow Leopard, Canadian Lynx, Siberian Lynx, Serval, White Serval, Caracal, Sand Cat, Fishing Cat, Jungle Cat, Leopard Cat, Geoffroy Cat

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**Can You Help Us Hurdle This Fence-Wall?**

In the previous issue of Cat-Tales we asked for your help to build a new perimeter fence. Due to the increasing exposure the sanctuary is subjected to by encroaching development, the staff and the founder of Big Cat Rescue decided that the new perimeter “fence” should be a perimeter “wall.” However, this has turned our $37,500 fundraising challenge into a $560,000 challenge. This translates into 7,000 linear feet of wall at $80 per linear foot. Project Cater-Wall, will be completed in phases. Phase I of this project is a portion of our perimeter in the most need of replacing. Phase I is 1,980 linear feet.

This is where you can help. How many feet could you, your friends, or your company sponsor? For each $80 sponsorship you will receive the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped plus: A special edition screensaver (available only through this fundraiser), 2 Two-for-One Tour Passes, and Name recognition on a prominent display at the entrance to the sanctuary.

Fill out the order form on page 15 and specify that you would like to sponsor Project Cater-Wall. Don’t worry if you already sponsored a section of fence, your sponsorship will be transferred to the Cater-Wall Project.
HEROS - DONORS, NEW MEMBERS, NEW PARENTS, & SUPPORTERS

Partnership Donations - These individuals have partnered with Big Cat Rescue to save a Big Cat's life.
Cox Radio & Jay O'Connor $1,500 & thousands in advertising
Gasparilla Charity Horse Show $3,200

Matching Gifts
Diane Roger, Rosie Emdey, Mary Loher & Verizon $3,300
Liz Skaflak & The Knight Foundation $900
Debra Ruhlman & All-state Giving Campaign $86.25
Susan Homner & The May Foundation $50

Donations $500
Bill McBride & Alex Sink
Sharon Ross
Lance Donont

Habitat Defenders $500
Jo Ann Frogue
Edward Roeder

Donations $300
Anderson Transportation
Joe Reinhart & Access Media
Creative Mailbox & Sign Designs

Bench Donations $250
Renee Beidler
Candice Szabo

Donations $150-$200
Dr. Simon Braun $200
Dean & Candi Szabo $200
Cordoba Development $200
Judith Ramirez $180
Lorraine Kawar $180
Doug Rothschild $160
Dawn Taylor $150
Diane & John Blackmon $150

WildLife Protectors $150
Janelle Baldwin
Larry Fimbel
Barbara Norcross
Adelaide Woodward
Marina O’Hara
Larry King
Loretta Pickford

Donations $100
Kevin & Debra Arruda
Diane Cavender
Karen Kerr
Allen Petersen
Jessica Hillenbrand
Bethany Troyer
Susan Rice
Debra Schwarzer
Joseph Beresheim Jr.
Lynn Mahony
CGM Services Inc.
William Todd
Donald & Evelyn Bartram

Donations $50 and up
Barbara Alber $60
Steve & Gina Rey $60
Clark & Tricia Ricke
Dianne Tate
Ann & Jim VanThron
Marib & Mar. B. McCaslin
Andrea & Ken Javaranuckas
Steve & Anne Harrison
Ruth Blakley
Linda Dawe
Monica Morrison
Rich & Carolyn Osborne
Wayne & Vickie Brown
Robert & Karen Sectors

Forest Friend Members $50
Susan Crager
C. Knight
Kathy Mittler
Martin Street
Gabrielle Alan
Karen Ziegler
Linda Osoin
Victoria Steeves
Gloria Machesky
Edith Yelland

Donations $35 & up
Michael Callahan $45
Catherine Redden $40
Elizabeth McNew $40
Gary & Eleanor Willner $35

Animal Lovers $30
Joan Rutherford
Tabitha Kirschenmann
Kristine Sedey
Melanie Knows
Jayne Kim
Terry Nordblum

Donations $25 and up
Deirdre Reynolds $25
Janet Rosenfold
Fred & Marilyn Bridge
Mary Strand
Kenny & Yvonne Smith
Dorothy Moeller
Florence Rothnol
Dara Haines
Een Brooke
Terry Shafiabady
Loretta Gibb

Special Donations
Project Cater-wall $160
Joan H. Lynch, DDS, PA
Alan & Valerie Sabshin
Ashley Lynn $75
Dale Kleine $50
Catherine Kutter & John Walker $50

New "Parents" $50 and up
Nikki Pyster $100
Donald & Lynn Bush $85
Susan Crager $75
Dale Kleine $50
Catherine Kutter & John Walker $50

Robert Faust
Angela Bunker
Auto Parts Distributors
Sarah Hsieh
Cordoba Development
Dean & Candi Szabo

Loraine Kawar $180
Judith Ramirez $180
$200

Doug Rothschild $160
Dawn Taylor $150
Diane & John Black-
**Claws & Effect - Hurricane Horrors**

What happens when 120 mph winds and a 12 foot storm surge pass through the world’s largest big cat refuge? The newscasters say we will know in six hours. It will be dark by then.

Today, Friday the 13th, Hurricane Charley is headed straight for Tampa. A mandatory evacuation has already sent homeowners in four counties scrambling for higher ground. The gas stations were sold out before noon. The home supply stores were sold out of emergency necessities. The grocery stores were sold out and boarded up. The power company is shutting down power to low lying areas because of the impending tidal surge. The emergency response networks are on the air waves saying that if you have not left the evacuation areas already, it is too late. They will take your call, but they won’t send anyone to help.

The city looks like a ghost town as windows have been boarded up and everything that might get caught in the storm has been brought inside. The only sounds are the wails of the sirens. At noon the skies are dark, but as still as death.

The eeriness is spread over this normally bustling town like a hot, humid blanket. The winds began to pick up and the first bands of rain have come pouring down. Storm waters began rising up from the manholes in the streets, flooding the roads. The crickets that had been raucous in their warnings are now silenced. The cats know. They knew the day before. Appetites increased as they sensed the change in barometric pressure. This storm was going to be a bad one and nature had hardwired them to prepare in their own native way. Fill your bellies now and find a dry place to hole up until this blows through.

The cats of Big Cat Rescue had been watching their keepers prepare for this night. The perimeter fences had been shored up and secured in weak areas. Everything in the park had been put up or tied down. The cat’s dens had all been elevated so that even with the horrific rains that were expected and all of the flooding from poorly planned development around us, the cats would have a high and dry spot to ride out the storm. Almost all of the cats had concrete dens now. Even if trees came crashing down around them from the tornadoes that would spin out of the womb of this massive and powerful hurricane the cats had safe places to escape the storm’s fury.

Years of planning and preparedness would pay off. All of the dead trees had been cut down and ditches had been recently dug to be deeper and more efficient. The storm drains had been cleared and soft spots in the sanctuary roads had been filled and reinforced. The tranquilization drugs were in good supply and the staff had been practicing their marksmanship in the event of an escape. The perimeter walls were patrolled regularly every day, so the status of their effectiveness was already well known. The volunteers had been trained and drilled for this day. The cats had been trained with operant conditioning to respond in an emergency situation. The cages had been designed in sections that could be shut down if there were a breach in one portion. The lockouts, where the cats are fed, could be detached and the cats loaded into trucks if that became necessary.

Dual systems abound in case of first line failure. The keepers carry both walkie-talkies and cell phones. There are two freezers, two coolers, generator back ups and the gate operates on power, or manually. There is a pump to keep the lake from overflowing and drainage canals if the machinery should falter. There are safe, high and dry areas for the cats and a way to move them if those fail. There is barbed wire and hot wire, which is supported by solar powered battery back up boxes that are marketed to last five days in the dark. Everything that we could think of had been implemented and practiced for this sort of a crisis. We thought we were prepared. But were we?

Are you ever prepared for what it feels like to tell those you love that we are going to walk around in 120 mph winds, dodging projectiles, to be sure the cats are safely in their dens? How do you tell your family and your friends that to recapture a leopard or tiger means we are all put in harm’s way so that the cat does not escape and become a menace to the neighbors? When you have raised so many of these cats from cubs, or have seen them through miraculous recoveries from the abuse that brought them here, how do you instruct your staff and convince yourself that if the cat is going over the perimeter fence it must be killed?

Nothing prepares you for a day like today.

Thankfully Big Cat Rescue was spared from the storm’s wrath as Hurricane Charley took an unexpected drastic turn to the west. Unfortunately this new path would take the terrential rains and unforgiving winds directly over another animals sanctuary in Zolfo Springs called Peace River Refuge and Ranch.

Once the situation became known by Big Cat Rescue, BCR Founder Carole Lewis, coordinated a mass recovery effort to help these friends in need. The press was alerted, funds were collected, supplies were gathered and over the course of three days nearly 20 Big Cat Rescue volunteers visited the sanctuary and assisted with the recovery of it’s perimeter fence. None of the animals at Peace River were harmed in the storm, the perimeter fence of the 90 acre preserve sustained the most damage. After hours and hours of hard work, BCR volunteers were able to completely clear this fence of all of the fallen limbs and trees. Peace River Refuge and Ranch was impacted with thousands in damages. To see photos and to read more about the recovery efforts, visit our website and click on the tornado graphic.
Maya The Lioness

For several weeks in July and August, Maya had been in intensive care in the Big Cat Rescue Cat Hospital due to complications with her seizures. During that time she had several bad days that made us just about decide that euthanasia was the only humane thing to do, but about the time we would finally decide that she had been through enough, Maya would decide it wasn’t time to go yet and would make another miraculous rebound. It has always been our policy to continue to provide whatever heroic efforts were called for as long as the cat seemed to be choosing life over death. Maya seemed to really have a strong will to live.

By August 16th her cage had been outfitted with an air conditioned den and as she was doing better, Maya was moved from the confines of the hospital back out to be in her own familiar grassy cage, next to her buddy Nikita. She was the picture of contentment and although she would occasionally step in her den to cool off she preferred to lounge in the shade. Her favorite pose was up against the cage wall with all four feet in the air.

On August 19 and August 22 most of the regular Big Cat Rescue staff were in Zolfo Springs helping the Peace River Refuge and Ranch recover from Hurricane Charley so only a skeletal staff was left behind. Maya seemed fine and was no longer on round-the-clock observance. On Sunday the 22nd, Howard Baskin was giving a VIP tour when he discovered Maya breathing hard. He alerted the staff of her condition by cell phone. Within 5 minutes Carole arrived and began hosing Maya down to cool her off. Soon after, Scott Lope, Cathy Mayeski, Kathryn Quaas, Becky Gagliardo and Dr. Liz Wynn raced onto the scene. Maya was carried back into the cat hospital where it was discovered that her temperature had spiked to 109 as the result of a severe seizure that must have ended shortly before Howard’s tour arrived. Maya was given fluids and Dr. Stacie Wadsworth and Dr. Rose Borkowski were called for advice. This time Maya was not responding. Scott tried to call Carole to ask if Maya should be euthanized because this seizure had left her with no chance of ever enjoying a quality life. Before the call could be answered, Maya made the decision herself and breathed her last.

We are thankful that she got to spend her last couple of hours with the people that she loved most. We are grateful for the time she spent with all of us in teaching the lessons about accepting and making the most of the hand we are dealt. Maya touched so many hearts and inspired so many people. She will always be remembered as a brave little lion with heart of gold and an indomitable spirit. A special thank you to all of the generous supporters that have donated towards Maya’s Medical Fund over the years. In her honor, Maya’s Medical Fund will remain set up for other animals in need that find refuge at Big Cat Rescue.

Casper the Cougar

Casper, a male western cougar, found refuge at Big Cat Rescue in 1996. He had been seized in a drug raid by the Florida Fish & Wildlife Commission and taken to Lion Country Safari, who in turn went on a search to place the cougar as it did not fit into the African theme of the park. Big Cat Rescue agreed to take Casper in and give him a permanent home.

Casper had been robbed of his right to live free, to roam the great wide open spaces of the West, to find a mate to continue his blood lines, to hunt his own food. All this had been taken from him and he was forced to protect a drug dealer’s house. Chained inside never to feel the warm sunshine on his face or the soft breeze through his coat. He was mistreated and both physically and emotionally abused.

It was as if Casper knew exactly what he had been deprived of his whole life and he understood that he was not treated properly. In his first few months at Big Cat Rescue, he was terrified of and aggressive towards any volunteer that would approach him. He nervously watched as volunteers would clean his cage each day perched on top of his den box with his ears back, growling. He was very possessive over his food like each meal could be his last.

With so many cats at Big Cat Rescue, Casper could have easily blended into the back ground to be left alone as one of the “abused cats that do not like people”.

After completing his tasks for the day as a new volunteer at Big Cat Resuce, Daniel Capiro would visit Casper. Sitting by the cage door after day, hour after hour, Daniel would gradually move closer and closer. Eventually Casper grew ever more trusting and comfortable around his new friend. Daniel continued with the visits and began feeding Casper his dinner each night. Over the years Casper made a complete recovery. He loved people and would happily pounce up to greet any one that happened by. He had the loudest purr amongst the Cougars living at the sanctuary. He loved to play in the hose when it was hot outside. For the first time in his life, Casper knew happiness.

On a soggy day following a summer thunder storm, Casper was curled up in his den and when he did not come out to see his best friend, Daniel, the staff grew concerned. In an unbelievable moment as he slept, Casper had been struck by lightning. He had not awakened and while he never knew what happened, this heartbreaking tragedy will not soon be forgotten by the many volunteers, supporters and the one person that made his life in captivity bearable, Daniel Capiro. Working with animals there will always be those few that are sick and cannot be helped, but to lose a perfectly healthy and happy one is hard to accept. In honor of Casper, a fund is now set up for donations that will specifically be used for cage improvements.
BIG CAT TRADING POST

Your Gift Shop Purchases Help
Big Cat Rescue To Care For More
Than 150 Big Cats.
Thank You For Your Support.

Haunting Eyes Tees
Black w/ Bengal Tiger, Cougar, Siberian Tiger, Bobcat
Leopard, Jaguar, Snow Leopard BCR logo on sleeve
Adult S, M, L, XL $24.40 Shipping Included

Big Cat Rescue Embroidered Logo Hats
Baseball Cap - Khaki & Green, Khaki & Black, Black
$13.70 Shipping Included
Snow Cap Beanie - Gray with Black Stripe
$22.26 Shipping Included
Safari Hat - Khaki Green or Tan
$22.26 Shipping Included

Jack Hanna Video
30 min. VHS featuring Big Cat Rescue
$24.40 Shipping Included
BCR Documentary
30 min. VHS filmed by students of USF
$13.70 Shipping Included

NOT SHOWN
Big Cat Rescue Safari Guide
Photo and personal history of each cat living on Easy Street.
B&W w/ some color
$24.40 each Shipping Included

Embroidered Field Bag
Smoky Gray
$29.75 each Shipping Included

Snow Globe
Shere Khan the Tiger
$11.56 S&H Included

Photo Magnets and Key Rings
Choose from any wild cat specie living at Big Cat Rescue
$3.14 Magnet
$4.21 Key Ring
Shipping Included

Tiger Ears Hairband
$6.28 S&H Included

Big Cat Rescue Video
60 min. DVD or VHS
featuring 19 Species of Easy Street’s resident felines.
$24.40 Shipping Included

Screensaver featuring Big Cat Rescue felines.
12 stunning color slides.
$11.56 S&H Included

Tiger Computer Chamois
Tame your monitor dust
$13.70 Shipping Included

Tiger Computer Chamois
Tame your monitor dust
$13.70 Shipping Included

Big Cat Trading Post
Your Gift Shop Purchases Help
Big Cat Rescue To Care For More
Than 150 Big Cats.
Thank You For Your Support.
Wild Cats Coloring Book
Kids Book, 42 species of cats
$6.35 Shipping Included

Tigers Photo Book
features Khan, China, & Aurora
$23.40 Shipping Included

Our World - Lions
Kids Book
$11.56 Shipping Included

Endangered Babies
3” tall plastic Tiger Toy
$3.14 each Shipping Included

Timmie the Tiger Puppet
$11.56 each Shipping Included

Plush Tiger Photo Album
$13.70 each Shipping Included

Smuggle Leopard Baby Blanket
$13.70 each
Shipping Included

Tiger Baby Rattle $7.35
Shipping Included

Plush Tiger Purse
zipper closure on back, hand grips, & shoulder strap
$13.70 each
Shipping Included

Lear the Leopard
Kids Backpack
$19.05
Shipping Included

Greeting Card Tins
16 beautiful art cards, 4 of each design, matching envelopes included, cards blank on inside
$19.05 each
Shipping Included

National Geographic
Educational Door Hanger
Tiger or Jaguar
$5.28 each
Shipping Included

Enter to win an Expedition Easy Street and Cabin Stay for 2 adults. Tickets $1 each or 6 for $5. Enter as often as you like. Winner will be announced in the December issue of Cat-Tales.

The Winner of the September B&B drawing is L. King.
Update: Faith the Bobcat

Faith is a Florida Bobcat that was taken in by Big Cat Rescue last December. She was an orphan and only a few weeks old.

The starving and sick little kitten had a long road to travel before the real rehab work would begin. Several weeks of intensive care finally paid off for the Big Cat Rescue staff and the fuzzy hiss and spit was appropriately named Faith.

Her whole life, Faith was fed a whole prey (killed) diet so that she would grow accustomed to eating things that she may find in the wild. Faith readily accepted this form of sustenance and graduated to live whole prey. Once healthy and active, the real training began.

Faith resides in a long chain link run that is approximately 265 square feet in size. This enclosure has been stocked with brush and branches for her to hide in. There are also several branches suspended from the ceiling of the enclosure to provide a secure point of observation for the cub. Three months ago nearly half of this run was transformed into her new hunting grounds. Walls, four feet in height, were erected on the inside of the perimeter of her enclosure. These walls are made of a slick material that the live prey, such as rats, can not climb, yet they are short enough that Faith can easily jump over (with the help of a few strategically placed tree stumps). This new area was also stocked with brush and branches, these things added a new element to the hunt by offering several hiding spots for a small rat. Many new skills would need to be developed in order for Faith to successfully catch her dinner each night.

Update

Once again, Faith has proved herself as a formidable hunter. She has caught on quickly to the game of cat and mouse, so once again the stakes must be raised. One wall of her hunting yard has been removed, so now Faith must find and catch her dinner before it escapes forever. For the first few weeks, staff quietly monitored her from a distance to ensure that she was indeed able to meet this new challenge. Not only has she met this challenge, but she has crushed it. Day by day Faith grows faster, smarter, & even more patient. Unfortunately she is not growing bigger fast enough. After much thought it was decided that the release of Faith back into the wild will be posponed until next spring. This will give her time to put on some weight as well as height. With her expanding skills in mind, another rehab enclosure is being designed. This mega rehab facility is generously being sponsored by The Gasparilla Charity Horse Show. This new space will provide a more realistic “wild”. By the next issue of Cat-Tales in December, Faith will be moved to this new space and we will have more stories to share with you on her move and her progress.

As mentioned in previous articles featuring Faith, each pivotal moment of Faith’s story has been captured on film through the use of a surveillance camera. This camera, a standard camcorder on a tripod, has given Big Cat Rescue a glimpse of the natural behaviors specific to these elusive cats and has also provided Big Cat Rescue staff with critical information throughout the rehabilitation process. Working with the footage, the staff has been able to evaluate Faith’s progress and health, while maintaining distance from the wildcat.

A two minute video featuring highlights of Faith’s rescue and rehabilitation is now available as an extra feature on Big Cat Rescue’s Big Cat Picture, a 60 minute film. To order this VHS or DVD for $23 fill out the order form.

16 Local Artists Paint BCR Cats and Donate Original Works to Fur Ball Art Contest

Big Cat Rescue has partnered with the non profit Outdoor Arts Foundation to organize a group of Tampa Bay Area artists to create original works of art inspired by the cats at our sanctuary. The art will be auctioned at the Fur Ball to benefit both Big Cat Rescue and the Outdoor Arts Foundation. Fifteen local artists, most of whom visited the sanctuary to photograph and choose their subjects, will be donating paintings or works in other media.

The winning piece will be produced as a poster that will be sold by Big Cat Rescue in the gift shop and on line. All of the pieces will be auctioned at the Fur Ball, adding a wonderful element to the event. Jaguar of Tampa, our major “King of Beasts” sponsor for the ball, has generously offered to display the pieces at their showroom at 320 E. Fletcher Avenue for the two weeks prior to the ball.

The participating artists include Colleen Dolkas, Sally Evans, Peggy Matthes, Kari McCullough, Brandee Monarch, Lenne Nicklaus-Ball, PSynner, Terry Pepitone, Evannder Preston, Brian Slater, Joanna Switzer, Dawn Vetsch, Lisa Vogt, Anita Wexler, Sandra Williams and Daniel Capiro.

We are enormously grateful to Jay Goulde of Outdoor Arts Foundation for organizing this activity and to these wonderful artists for donating their time and talent to supporting the cats.
Road Trip for the Lemurs

We recently made arrangements for our 12 lemurs to be transferred to a wonderful primate refuge in Texas. Although we will miss them terribly, we believe that they will be much happier in their larger enclosures and living in family groups.

The Lemurs have gone to Texas!

A lot of our volunteers, staff and supporters were sad to see the lemurs leave. Although we will miss the Lemurs, there were just too many new laws and regulations that are coming into the picture that would hinder our ability to properly keep them.

USDA guidelines already call for substantially more attention to primates because most of the primates they regulate are in laboratories and horrible road side zoos. New federal laws are in the works to prevent the pet ownership of primates. Because the exotic pet industry is considered a business, lawmakers are unable to take away a person’s right to make a living, so the only way to discourage the breeding and selling of these primates is to impose OSHA like standards to their care that make owning them difficult and expensive.

The lemurs were transferred to Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation in Kendalia, TX. Lynn Cuny is the founder and was the founding mother of The Association of Sanctuaries. Her facility is primarily devoted to native wildlife and primate rescue. WRR is home to more species of primate than you can name and her paid staff of six, including a full time staff veterinarian, and her 13 interns are all as devoted to primates as we are to cats. Most of her primate enclosures are more than 1 acre in size and many are several acres of open space, high grasses and trees. Each huge yard has an attached concrete house that is heated in the winter and the yards have pools similar to our tiger pools (but square) for bathing. It was so wonderful to tour her facility and see the monkeys leaping from tree to tree, picking and eating flowers, and living in a way that is far more natural and conducive to their needs than what we have been able to provide.

Because Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation is not open to the public, it is not governed by USDA and thus all of the regulations that were designed to assist laboratory animals, that would mean a miserable life for our lemurs, do not apply. WRR is on more than 180 acres and is accredited by The Association of Sanctuaries. They have been in existence for 27 years and have funding three times our own. This was a good choice for the lemurs and we donated the funds to have their big new enclosure built.

Notable Vists

Big Cat Rescue was pleased to have visits this past quarter by prominent individuals from the banking, legal and political communities.

At right Bill McBride and wife Alex Sink gain the interest of one of our most recent rescues, Cameron the male lion. Bill, who was the Democratic candidate for Governor in the last election, is a partner at the law firm Barnett, Bolt, Kirkwood, Long & McBride. Alex is former President of Bank of America for Florida. Bill commented that “This is a wonderful place doing important work. We deem it a great honor to support Big Cat Rescue.”

At left Bronson Thayer, Chairman of Bay Cities Bank meets 15 month old bobcat Bailey. Bronson visited with his wife Stella, owner of Tampa Bay Downs. After the visit, Bronson kindly emailed “We were very impressed with the care shown for all of the animals at BCR and were equally impressed with the mission. It is encouraging to see such knowledgeable and dedicated people involved in a project such as this.”

At right, international lawyer and former mayoral candidate Frank Sanchez and friends pose as Auroara the tigress surveys them with interest. Frank noted that “BCR is Tampa’s secret of nature. More folks should know about the important work of Big Cat Rescue!”

Most recently we were excited to have a visit from the area senior management of Regions Bank. Left to right are Group President Dale Dignum with fellow officers Paul Danner, Nancy Yost, and David Farrar. Dale commented that “Our visit to BCR was very impressive, as was the care and attention that these abandoned cats receive. Regions Bank is proud to be associated with Big Cat Rescue”. Regions Bank donated $2000 to become a Cougar Level Sponsor of the Fur Ball, for which we thank them very much!
KIDS TOUR
For the first time in the history of the sanctuary, Big Cat Rescue is proud to offer regularly scheduled, guided, kids tours. This is a complete guided tour where children of all ages, and their parents can get up-close and learn about exotic cats and other animals.
- Tour Time is 9:00 a.m. Saturday
- Geared toward children under 10 years old.
- Privately guided small tour groups.
- $10.00 per person. (price subject to change)
- Tour is one hour long.
For more information call Educational Director, Kathryn Quaas cell (813) 323-3265 office (813) 920-4130 fax 920-5924 e-mail squaas@verizon.net

DAY TOURS
Monday - Friday 9AM & at 3PM, Saturday 9:30, 11:30, & 1:30
Tours are guided and take 1 1/2 - 2 hrs. Admission is $20 per person (price subject to change). Reservations are not required.
No kids under 10 years of age. Casual attire is recommended.

EXPEDITION EASY STREET
A BIG CAT ADVENTURE
This is the most exclusive and up close program that we offer. Your all day adventure includes, the Morning Tour of the refuge, special Interaction Sessions with our friendly Lynx, Bobcats, Caracals, or Servals, Big Cat training, Enrichment (making natural toys and food puzzles for the cats), Feeding (hand feed several of the Great Cats including Tigers), & Bed & Breakfast where you will be lulled to sleep by the gentle roar of Lions and Tigers! Age Restrictions apply, Call for more info

WILD EYES AT NIGHT TOURS.
Night Tours are the only way to see the animals come alive at night! As you journey through the 40 acre sanctuary you will be stalked and pounced at from the shadows! No worries though, all the animals will be safely in their enclosures. This is an adventure that’s sure to please!

PHOTO SAFARIS
Photo Safaris are one of the most up close and personal tours that we offer. A qualified guide will help you get great pictures of our animals without any fence or wire in the way. You can tour the entire sanctuary and get great pics along the way, or you can spend the entire time photographing your favorite feline. Call for prices and reservations.

Win a Caribbean Cruise For 2 Valued at $1500!
Enter today to win a 5-Day Western Caribbean from Tampa. Only 1200 tickets will be sold!
Tickets are just $20 each or 3 for $50.
The cruise is valued at $1500.
Drawing will be held at The Fur Ball on September 17th
Enter as often as you like! The money is helping the Cats!
Talk about perfect timing. With its unique 4-5 day itineraries to the Western Caribbean, the “Fun Ship” Sensation offers greater vacation flexibility. These new cruises fit perfectly into the typical week-long vacation.
Cruise Itinerary
DAY PORT
Mon Tampa, Florida Departs at 4:00 pm
Tue “Fun Day” At Sea
Wed Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands 7:00 am - 2:00 pm
Thurs Cozumel, Mexico 9:30 am - 10:00 pm
Fri “Fun Day” At Sea
Sat Tampa, Florida Arrives at 8:00 am
- Information above subject to change, please confirm details at time of booking.
  To enter fill out the order form on page 15.
This is a gift, please make card to: _________________________ from: ________________________

Brief message to say: ________________________________________________________________

Special Comment, Request or Question: ________________________________________________

Shopping really does make a difference.

Last year Big Cat Rescue raised more than one third of the entire income of the sanctuary through Gift Shop, Membership, and Sponsorship sales, onsite and through Cat-Tales.

So keep up the good work and shop away! All the proceeds from the programs and unique items Big Cat Rescue offers, go directly to the care of the animals.

Florida law requires that all charities soliciting donations disclose their registration number and the percentage of your donation that actually goes to the cause and the amount that goes to the solicitor.

Our registration number is SC-11409 and 100% of you donation will go directly to the care of the animals.
Legislation that You Can Impact

Be sure to read this month’s latest in critical legislation. Your voice is very important and we like to keep you informed. This month, we bring you news of a proposal that would prevent people & zoos from dumping unwanted exotic animals in canned hunts. Also, take note of several other pressing issues that may affect your community.

Thank you for taking time to be informed.

http://www.bigcatrescue.org/support_legislation.htm

Your Opinion

We want to know what you think about exotic cats as pets. Cast your vote in our new online poll and instantly compare your opinion to that of others. You may be surprised at just how many feel just like you do. Join forces and let your voice be heard.

We’re listening.

http://www.bigcatrescue.org/poll.htm

What’s New At BigCatRescue.org?

Big Cat Rescue is playing games with you!

Wordsearch, Hangman, Tic Tac Toe, Memory Match, Dragger & Jigsaw Puzzles, using photos of our big cat residents are fun for kids of all ages. There are just too many to list here so check them out by going to www.BigCatRescue.org and in the left navigation bar choose: Free Stuff>Games. These games were made possible by LaWanna Jones and Loraine Wauer.

New E-Cards Roar On To The Scene

E-cards have been out there for a while, we understand. But, not like ours! Can you imagine your friends and family receiving a big cat greeting pouncing into their e-mail box from you?

We have made 20 of our cat’s photos and a dozen backgrounds of their fur patterns available so that you can make and send cards that are fully customized to your liking. Try it out today.

http://www.bigcatrescue.org/ecards.htm

Cat-Tales                              All Of Us At Big Cat Rescue Are Counting On You                       September 2004

12802 Easy Street - Tampa, FL 33625
Phone: (813) 920-4130
Fax: (831) 920-5924
SaveTheCats@aol.com
www.BigCatRescue.org

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