Big Cat Rescue’s

Meet JoJo

A Caracal Lynx &
African Serval Hybrid Cat
JoJo Needed A New Home

“Photo of JoJo in his previous home.”

– BigCatRescue.org
I first met JoJo, the Caracal / Serval hybrid, at the South Florida Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in 2005 after a hurricane had taken down the perimeter fencing and dumped piles of deadfall on the cages.

The owner, Dirk Neugebohm, had ended up in the hospital with a heart attack from trying to clean the mess up by himself.
He wrote from what he thought was his deathbed back then to anyone and everyone he could think of asking for help; and asking for help was not something that came easily to this hardworking German.

What we found, when Howard and I visited, was a man who was way in over his head. Donations were almost non existent, the cages were old, dilapidated, small and concrete floored. The tiger back then was Sinbad, who lived in what is commonly used for housing parrots, a corn crib oval cage with a metal roof. Sinbad died recently after a snake bite, leaving Krishna,
pictured, as the only remaining tiger.

Dirk managed to keep his sanctuary afloat, if just barely, for the next 8 years, but a couple days ago one of his volunteers, Vickie Saez, who we had been helping for the past couple of years with infrastructure and social networking, contacted us to say that Dirk was dying of brain cancer in the hospital and that she had convinced him to let the animals go to other homes.

She said the Florida Wildlife Commission had arranged for most of the homes, but that Dirk was very happy that we could take JoJo. Our sweet Caracal, Rose, had died July 31st and her cage was empty.

We had a donor and a sanctuary that were willing to take Krishna, but we were told that the Florida Wildlife Commission had found someone less than 6 miles away to take him.

We were told that all of the other cats had new homes waiting, except for Nola the cougar, but she was very ill. We offered to pay a vet to do blood work on her to make sure that she was not contagious. We were concerned because she had a history of some very contagious diseases, which had left her severely debilitated. What concerned us was that her caretaker said she looked bloated.
A vet had arrived to help with the transfer of two leopards and he sedated Nola to see what was wrong. We are told that he palpitated three melon sized tumors in her abdomen and that with every touch of her belly she exuded foamy blood from her nose and anus. He was sure that there was no hope for her and humanely euthanized her.

While we were sad that we would not be able to give Nola a new home here at Big Cat Rescue we are glad that she is not suffering any more.
The afore mentioned facility JoJo came to us from was a sanctuary, in that they did not buy, sell or breed. They also did not allow public contact with the animals nor drag the animals off site. They simply did not have the funding to care for the animals in the way they would have liked to.
JoJo At Big Cat Rescue

“This is a photo of JoJo in his new home.”
– BigCatRescue.org
As was stated in the first chapter, I first met JoJo the Caracal / Serval hybrid at the South Florida Wildlife Rehabilitation Center in 2005 after a hurricane had taken down the perimeter fencing and dumped piles of deadfall on the cages.

JoJo has arrived at Big Cat Rescue and settled in nicely. It is quite possibly his first time to walk on the soft earth.

His cage has been a small (maybe 60 square feet) of concrete and chain link for at least 8 years and probably longer. He is thought to be about 10 years old. Sometimes breeders hybridize exotic cats because there are no laws on the books that regulate them, but in Florida, the inspectors say, “If it looks like a duck and walks like a duck; it’s a duck.”
JoJo now has 1,200 square feet of earth, bushes, trees and grass.
He really likes the grass. Are you hearing the Beetles lyric, “JoJo left his home in Homestead-Miami looking for some Florida grass?”

Prior to his arrival at Big Cat Rescue his diet has only been chicken necks for as far back as anyone can remember. I think he is really going to like the menu at Big Cat Rescue.

Both of JoJo’s top canine teeth are broken so he has a dentist visit coming up in his future.
Quotes From JoJo’s Previous Caregivers

Here are some quotes from JoJo’s previous keepers.

QUOTE # 1:

“Jojo, I'm sure you'll have a great time at Big Cat Rescue, try to refrain from catching *all* their native birds, will ya? We'll miss you buddy.”

QUOTE # 2:

“Back when JoJo was at the SFWRC, he had a very feisty personality. Hissed at everything that moved (except for the birds that he would stalk- he actually caught quite a few). This is mostly because of his serval/caracal background- they tend to be a little feistier.”

Before Jojo went to the SFWRC, he was owned by an illegal breeder that either accidentally or purposefully cross bred his genetics. Horribly irresponsible and
selfish, seeing as it completely messed up his intestinal tracks which required over $4,000 worth of operations.

The government required him to be surrendered to SFWRC, where he lived until he was brought to Big Cat Rescue in August 2013.

Maybe he'll chill out at Big Cat Rescue now that he'll have a lot more space to play in, a high quality diet and a lot more things to do to keep him busy.

He is already really enjoying the soft ground, the real grass and natural stimulation. He has been very busy smelling and marking his entire 1200 sq. ft. enclosure. He has been checking out his neighbors and discovering all kinds of interesting sights and sounds.

From where is is he can see Cameron and Zabu, the lion and tiger odd couple, and Rusty and Sassy, two caracals. He can see Rambo, the jungle cat and Nico, the Geoffory cat. He can see some bobcats and a bearcat, too.

He is discovering the food cart comes around at the end of every day, which he really likes. He is learning the daily routine and is settling in nicely. He's gonna love it here at
Big Cat Rescue!

Check our Facebook page for regular updates and daily photos of all the cats.

http://www.facebook.com/bigcatrescue

Please “Like” our page. If you want daily photos and updates of the cats automatically sent to your Facebook feed you will need to choose that option from Facebook’s menu when you “Like” our page.

If you would like to learn about Jojo and the other cats that live at Big Cat Rescue use this link: http://bigcatrescue.org/catbio/
Caracal Lynx are fascinating wild cats.
Common Name: Caracal

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata
(Vertebrata)

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Felidae

Genus: Felinae (Caracal)

Species: caracal

Misc: The name Caracal is derived from a Turkish word “karakulak” meaning “black ear.” The Caracal was once tamed and trained for bird hunting in Iran and India. They were put into arenas containing a flock of pigeons, and wagers were made as to how many the cat would take down. This is the origination of the expression “to put a cat amongst the pigeons.” The Caracal
is capable of leaping into the air and knocking down 10-12 birds at one time!

**Size and Appearance:**
Often referred to as the desert lynx, the Caracal does not actually possess the same physical attributes of members of the lynx family, such as the characteristic ruff of hair around the face. Instead, it has a short, dense coat, usually a uniform tawny-brown to brick-red, and black (melanistic) individuals have been recorded. As the name implies, the backs of the ears are black and topped with long black tufts about 1.75 inches long. This tuft is the characteristic that Caracals do share with the members of the lynx family. It is the largest member of Africa’s small cats, and its most formidable. Males can weigh as much as 40 pounds, and females as much as 35. They stand between 16-20 inches at the shoulder, and are 35-39 inches long.
**Distribution:** Distribution: Central Africa, South Africa, west Africa, southwest Asia, Middle East.

**Habitat:** Caracals live in the drier savannah and woodland regions of sub-Saharan Africa, and prefer the more scrubby, arid habitats. They will also inhabit evergreen and montane forests, but are not found in tropical rain forests.

**Reproduction and Offspring:** After a gestation of approximately 78-81 days, females produce a litter of 1-4 kittens, with 2 being the average. They begin to open their eyes on their first day of life, but it takes 6-10 days for them to completely open. They are weaned at 10 weeks, and will
remain with their mothers for up to a year. They attain sexual maturity between 12-16 months. In captivity, Caracals have lived up to 19 years.

**Hunting and Diet:** Caracals prey on a variety of mammals, with the most common being rodents, hares, hyraxes, and small antelope. Unlike the other small African cats, Caracals will not hesitate to kill prey larger than themselves, such as adult springbok or young Kudu. Caracals have also been reported on occasion (although this is an exception rather than a rule) to store their kills in trees, as do the leopards. These cats are mostly nocturnal, but have been spotted in daylight in protected areas.

**Principal Threats:** Caracals are mostly killed for livestock predation, although this only occurs in a few of its ranges it still adds up to large numbers of deaths (2219 animals in one area alone). In other areas of its range, it fights hunting for its skin and for its meat, which some bush tribes consider to be a luxury.
**Status:** CITES: Appendix II. IUCN: Not listed.

**Felid TAG 2003 recommendation:** Caracals (Caracal caracal).

Caracals are managed with the assistance of an international studbook. Most recent importations are from Namibia. Ultimately, a pure subspecies can be maintained in North America. Although the TAG originally targeted the Asian race from Turkmenistan for the RCP, it became apparent that only highly inbred hybrids were present in North America. More likely, no aspect of this race is in this region, or likely to become available. The population target for the PMP is 80 individuals.

**How rare is this cat?** The International Species Information Service lists 169 in zoos worldwide, with 52 being in the U.S.

Information reprinted With Permission from the IUCN Wild Cats Book
What Is A Serval?

Misc: The name Serval is derived from a Portuguese word meaning “wolf-deer.”

This African Serval lives at Big Cat Rescue in Tampa, Florida. African Servals should not be pets.
Common Name: Serval

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata (Vertebrata)

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Felidae

Genus: Felinae (Leptailurus)

Species: Serval (L.s. constantina)

Barbary Serval thought to now be Extinct

Size and Appearance: Often referred to as the cat of spare parts, this unusual, but beautiful cat is among the feline family’s most successful. It has a small, delicate head and extremely large ears set on an elongated neck, long slim legs (hind legs longer than front), long slender body and a short tail. The ears are black on the back with a distinctive white spot, and the tail has 6 or 7 black rings and a black tip. The coat color is pale yellow with black markings, either of large spots that tend to merge into longitudinal stripes on the neck and back, or of
numerous small spots, which give a speckled appearance. These “speckled” Serval – called servalines – used to be considered a separate species Felis brachyura, until it was demonstrated that the speckled pattern was just a variation or “morph”.

**Distribution:** sub-Saharan Africa, with small populations in south-west Africa, and a reported relict population in North Africa (no recent sightings confirmed).

**Habitat:** Serval are found in well-watered savannah long-grass environments, and are associated with reed beds and other riparian vegetation types. They occupy a variety of habitats all associated with water sources, they range up into alpine grasslands and can penetrate deep dense forests along waterways and through grassy patches, but are absent from rain forests. They will make use of arid areas in extreme instances, and have occasionally done so in parts of south-western Africa.

**Reproduction and Offspring:** After a gestation of approximately 73 days, females produce a litter of 1-5 kittens, with 2 being the average. They weigh in at around 8.5-9 ounces
at birth, and it will take 9-12 days until their eyes open. They begin to take solid foods around the age of 3 weeks, and are independent between 6-8 months, but may remain in their natal ranges. They attain sexual maturity between 18-24 months, and it is at this time that they will be forced out of their mother’s territory.

In captivity, Serval

Social System and Communication: Serval

Hunting and Diet: Much like the big bad wolf in “Little Red Riding Hood” the Serval’s big ears are “the better to hear you with!” The serval’s sensitive hearing allows it to locate small mammals moving through the grass or underground, and to hunt its prey sometimes without seeing it until the final pounce.
It also has the ability to leap vertically and catch prey such as birds, right out of the air. They do this by “clapping” with their front paws together and striking with a downward blow. Primary prey items for the Serval includes rodents, birds, reptiles, fish, frogs and insects. Serval have a hunting success rate of 50%.

**Principal Threats:** the main threats to Serval are leopards, dogs, and of course, man. Because of their beautiful pelage, they are a prime target for poachers. Their skins are sold as young leopards or cheetahs, which are much scarcer. The pelt trade for they are sold is mostly for domestic ceremonial, medicinal purposes or the tourist trade rather than for commercial export. There is also the issue of preserving the land that makes up their homeland, which is destroyed by human encroachment or from annual burning of grasslands. Some tribes hunt and kill the Serval for their flesh, which is considered a delicacy.
Status: CITES: Appendix II. IUCN: Not listed.

Felid TAG recommendation: Serval (Leptailurus serval). Common in nature and captivity, this species is important for institutions with zoogeographic themes, as well as for educational uses. Most specimens probably can be traced to a subspecies. Currently, there are more servals in zoos than recommended by the RCP. The PMP target population is 80 individuals. 91% of the population is of unknown origin and not suitable for breeding. The first stud book ever was published for this species in 2003.

How rare is this cat? The International Species Information Service lists 292 in zoos worldwide, with 130 being in the U.S.
Information reprinted With Permission from the IUCN Wild Cats Book. Meet the African Serval at Big Cat Rescue:

http://www.bigcatrescue.com/catbio/
About Big Cat Rescue

Join us on Facebook at:
www.Facebook.com/BigCatRescue

Big Cat Rescue is the largest accredited sanctuary in the world dedicated entirely to abused and abandoned big cats. We are home to over 100 lions, tigers, bobcats, cougars and other species most of whom have been abandoned, abused, orphaned, saved from being turned into fur coats, or retired from performing acts.
The sanctuary began rescuing exotic cats in Nov. 4, 1992. The non profit 501c3 sanctuary is home to more than 100 exotic big cats.

The cats at Big Cat Rescue are here for a variety of reasons, including:

**Abandoned by owners who wrongly thought they would make good pets**

**Abused by owners in order to force them to perform**

**Retired from performing acts**

**Saved from being slaughtered to make fur coats**

**Rescued as babies after hunters killed their mothers**

Big Cat Rescue has 14 species of cats, many of whom are threatened, endangered or extinct now in the wild, including:

**Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Cougars, Bobcats, Siberian Lynx, Canadian Lynx, Servals, Ocelots, Caracals, Jungle Cats, Leopard Cats and a Geoffroy Cat**
Big Cat Rescue’s dual mission is to provide the best home we can for the cats in our care and educate the public about the plight of these majestic animals, both in captivity and in the wild, and how you can help end abuse and prevent extinction.

The sanctuary is situated on 55 acres in the Citrus Park area of north Tampa.

The non-profit organization is:

**Accredited by the Global Federation of Sanctuaries**

**Certified by Independent Charities of America as a “Best in America Charity”**

**Member of the World Society for Protection of Animals**

**Rated 4 Stars by Charity Navigator (their highest rating) and has one of the highest scores of any animal based charity**

Florida law requires that all charities soliciting donations disclose their registration number and the percentage of your
donation that goes to the cause and the amount that goes to the solicitor. Our registration number is CH-11409 and non-program expenses are funded from tour income, so 100% of your donations go directly to save the cats. We are a 501 c 3 charity as determined by the IRS Federal ID#59-3330495. Our 990s are available online at GuideStar.org with a complete breakdown of how your donations are spent.

Big Cat Rescue is a 4 Star Charity Big Cat Rescue is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, FEID 59-3330495. We do not utilize professional solicitors, so 0% of your donation goes to a professional solicitor, 100% goes to Big Cat Rescue. Non-program expenses are funded from tour income, so 100% of your donations go to supporting the cats and stopping the abuse.

Please Donate Now at: http://www.bigcatrescue.org/donate/

You can even shop for things you normally shop for and part of the proceeds go towards supporting the big cats.

Big Cat Rescue’s main online gift shop:

http://www.bigcatrescue.biz/servlet/StoreFront
Who Is Big Cat Rescue?

Big Cat Rescue, a non profit educational sanctuary, is devoted to rescuing and providing a permanent home for exotic (i.e. wild, not domestic) cats who have been abused, abandoned, bred to be pets, retired from performing acts, or saved from being slaughtered for fur coats, and to educating the public about these animals and the issues facing them in captivity and in the wild. The sanctuary is home to the most diverse population of exotic cats in the world, with more than a dozen
of the 35 species of wild cat represented among more than 100 residents. These include tigers, lions, leopards, cougars, bobcats, lynx, ocelots, servals, caracals and others, many of whom are threatened, endangered, or now extinct in the wild.

The sanctuary began in 1992 when the Founder, Carole Baskin, and her then husband Don, mistakenly believing that bobcats made good pets, went looking to buy some kittens. They inadvertently ended up at a “fur farm” and bought all 56 kittens to keep them from being turned into fur coats. See the “How We Started” section.

In the early years, influenced by breeders and pet owners, they believed that the cats made suitable pets and that breeding and placing the cats in homes was a way to “preserve the species.” Gradually they saw increasing evidence that not only was this not the case, but that it was leading to a consistent pattern of suffering and abuse. See the “History and Evolution” section.

Today the sanctuary is devoted to its Vision of a world where animals are treated with respect, and its Mission of providing the best possible home for the animals in our care and trying to stop the flow of animals needing sanctuary by educating the
public about the plight of the animals and supporting stronger laws to protect them.

The sanctuary is a 501(c)(3) not profit charity. It receives no government support and relies on its educational activities, such as tours of the facility, and the generosity of donors for support of the cats. Donations are tax deductible. Because non program expenses (i.e. administration and fundraising) are funded from tour income, 100% of donations go directly to support the cats.

We hope you visit to our web site. http://www.BigCatRescue.org  We believe it is the most complete resource for information on big cats in the world.
How We Started

I never set out to start a sanctuary. It happened partly by accident, then largely through a process of evolution.

In 1992 my late husband and I were at an exotic animal auction buying llamas when a man walked in with a terrified six month old bobcat on a leash. He said she had been his wife’s pet and that she didn’t want her any more. We brought her home and called her Windsong. I adored her and she generally responded in the ways we expect a pet to do. But one of the traits that makes exotic cats bad pets is the tendency to bond to one person and be jealous of and/or aggressive toward others. She wouldn’t tolerate my husband, so he decided to buy and hand raise one or more bobcat kittens of his own.

In 1993 he located a place in Minnesota that sold bobcat and lynx kittens and we drove there with my 12 year old daughter and a friend to look at them. What we found was a “fur farm”.

While they sold a few cubs each year as pets, their main business was raising them for a year and then slaughtering them to make coats.

The cats were in cages that were several inches deep with layers of fur and feces. The flies were so thick in the metal shed that we had to put hankies over our faces just to breathe without inhaling them. On the floor was a stack of partially skinned bobcats, Canada lynx and Siberian lynx. Their bellies had been cut off as this soft, spotted fur is the only portion used in making fur coats. I was so stunned by the sight, that I was numbed and in denial of what I had just seen. There were 56 kittens and we asked if there was that big of a market for them as pets. We were told that whatever did not sell for pets would be slaughtered the following year for fur.

In horror and disbelief I looked at my husband. I couldn’t speak. I had never heard anything so heartless and now the pile of dead cats in the corner hit me with the reality of a freight train.

This was at a time when protesters were spray painting people wearing fur coats,
wearing fur was becoming “politically incorrect,” business was not good and probably looked to the breeder like it might stay that way. I believe this is why, after we first offered to buy all 56 kittens and later agreed to buy all of his cats if the breeder would agree to discontinue making cats into coats (he still had mink, fox and others,) he agreed.

We bought every carrier, basket, tool box or bucket that you could put a cat in and bales of hay for nesting for the ride from Minnesota to Florida. As my husband drove, the rest of us tended to babies that had to be fed every two hours for the next two months. It was many months later before any of us slept through the night because we didn’t know what we were doing and there was no one to turn to for advice. We dealt with every imaginable sickness and the increasing demands on our time from these carnivores that rely so heavily on their mothers for the first one to three years of life.

Initially we brought the cats to our home. Then we started building cages on the current site of the sanctuary, a 40 acre site (now 55) nearby which we had obtained some years before in a foreclosure. That began years of long hours, hard work, learning, heartbreak over what we found many animals
enduring, and evolving, often by trial and error, to the sanctuary as it exists today and continues to evolve.
History and Evolution

Big Cat Rescue did not start out as what it has become today. My beliefs, and the sanctuary that reflects them, evolved over time. It involved lessons that came from what I view today as horrible mistakes, and sometimes I feel terrible about how long some realizations took. But I take great pride in what we have become and are accomplishing, and feel great excitement about what I believe we will accomplish in the future.
As detailed in How We Started, the sanctuary began when the search to purchase a pet bobcat kitten brought us unwittingly to a “fur farm” that sold a few cats as pets, but primarily raised them to turn into fur coats. We bought all 56 kittens to save them from being slaughtered.

To learn how to take care of the cats we naturally turned to those who would know, the breeders and owners of exotic cats. Under this influence, initially we believed what you will still hear from the breeders and owners today, i.e. that these cats should be owned privately to “preserve the species,” that they make good pets if properly raised and trained, and that they are safe if you know how to handle them. Our own experience until then with Windsong, my original pet bobcat, had not conflicted with these notions despite the much greater effort she required than a domestic cat. But she had not reached maturity at that point.

Believing as we did that the cats were suitable pets, our plan was to sell and give away as many of the fur farm kittens as we could to what we expected to be good homes. There was no “profit” to be had, but the proceeds of sales helped offset some of the thousands we had spent purchasing and now caring for the cats.
The next four years were a time of enormous work caring for the cats, learning about their needs, learning about the world of exotic pet dealing and ownership, learning about the issues the cats face in the wild, and a gradual but dramatic evolutionary change in my thinking and beliefs. The change occurred as our experience grew. These years also became a time of personal challenge as my husband Don showed signs of mental deterioration, possibly related to brain damage suffered in a small plane crash years before.

As we attended animal auctions, we observed that many of the bidders were taxidermists. They would bid on the animals that went for low prices. Typically these were the ones in the worst condition. Then they would take them into the parking lot and club them to death before taking them home to mount. So we started outbidding them to save the cats we could from that
fate. Usually the cats were in poor condition. We would nurse them back to health, then offer them to buyers who we hoped would give them good homes.

Other cats were purchased to get them out of bad conditions or save them from certain death. For instance, we first saw Sarabi the lioness as a five week old cub at an auction where the owners were obviously feeding her curdled milk that she was struggling to spit out. We could not stand to watch and bought her.

Then, during these years we increasingly found that cats we had thought we placed in good homes were not “working out.” People called asking if we would take them back. With rare exceptions we did, because we could not bear the thought of the alternatives. Then, at an auction, I saw a lynx I was sure I recognized as a kitten that I had nurtured and kept alive until we had sold him as a pet. He was thin, scared, and clearly recognized me.

As these experiences multiplied during these years, it became increasingly obvious that many of the cats at the auctions were really abandoned pets. People would get them as young kittens, they would be reasonably manageable for a couple of
years, then become problematic as they matured. Or people would buy them not realizing how much work they were and discard them before they matured.

I began reading and hearing about “high mortality rates” for exotic pets, particularly in their first year. This was consistent with the many calls I got from people with kittens that were dying. Much of this happens very early in their lives. In order to get a cat to “bond” with a person, the kittens are typically taken from the mothers shortly after birth. The person becomes the mother, but without the instincts and equipment to be. When we receive orphaned kittens from the wild today, like Faith, a Florida bobcat, and Aries, Artemis and Orion, the cougar cubs from Idaho whose mother was shot by a hunter, the scariest and riskiest time is those early weeks, even for those of us who have extensive experience with the kittens. And these orphaned cats from the wild at least had the advantage of a few weeks of the mother’s milk and care. One frequent cause of death is the owners’ lack of knowledge about how to properly bottle feed them. This leads to milk in their
lungs. The cats can die of aspiration (drowning) from the fluid, or with smaller amounts last long enough to contract fatal pneumonia.

As I learned first hand how difficult and expensive it was to give these cats what I viewed as a good home, and I saw how many ended up in bad circumstances or were abandoned, I came to feel that people should be discouraged from getting them as pets. In 1994 I wrote a 100 page book, and 1995 made a home video, about caring for the cats and what it was like to have them as pets. I felt people who wanted the cats as pets were not likely to read or view something that tried to convince them not to do so. But if they saw how much work it was, it would discourage the people who were most likely to abandon them from getting them at all, and at least give those exotic cats who were purchased as pets a chance to be treated in a way that would allow them to survive. We keep the chapters of the book on our website for the same reason today.

In addition to buying cats, we had started breeding some cats under the misguided notion that this was a way to “preserve the species.” A few of our cats were purchased with this in mind, although
invariably we were also giving them a home far better than what they were destined for if we did not purchase them. I had not then figured out what seems so obvious to me today, that breeding for life in a cage an animal that was meant to roam free was inherently cruel, and that most of the “homes” these animals would end up in were places where they would live in unsuitable conditions. We believe these cats should not be pets.

About 25% of the cats we house today were born at the sanctuary in those early years. Some were placed with pet owners, then returned or abandoned. A few never left. We have at times referred to all of them as from the “pet trade” or “former pets” because we were, at that time, part of that pet trade. Whether they were born here or not, the point of their story is the same. They do not make good pets, and should not be bred to be pets.

Meantime, word quickly spread that we were providing a home to exotic cats, and we started getting calls asking us to take cats people did not want, which we did. Cats came because the owners said they could not manage them (cougars Shadow and Sugar), or the owners became ill (China Doll the tigress), or the owners got divorced (cougars Cody and Missouri), or they
had been used for performing acts and no longer wanted (Shaquille the black leopard), or the cat was interfering with their social life (Squeaker the cougar), or they were moving (Banshee the bobcat), or the cat attacked their child (Ty the serval), or the owners went to jail (Nikita the lioness), or because they said they just did not want them any more (Lola the black leopard). And we knew if we did not take them, they would likely end up destroyed or sold into the auctions or to exhibitors.

As I reached the conclusion that exotic cats should not be pets nor bred for a life in captivity, I was also having to deal the fact that my husband’s mental condition was deteriorating. This affected the sanctuary because he loved the presence of kittens. While I had come to feel strongly that the breeding was wrong, I was also devoted to my husband. I knew he would not yield on this and I was unwilling to ruin our marriage over it. I neutered and spayed the cats as I could, but I was unable to convince him to completely discontinue breeding.

I had never heard of Alzheimer’s Disease, but one of the volunteers who had dealt with it in his family told me that Don was exhibiting behavior indicative of that. I made an appointment for him to be seen by a specialist. But, one week
before the appointment, he left home one morning and never returned. This began a period of time I can only believe I survived because of my faith in God. I was in agony wondering if the man I loved had intentionally left me, was wandering aimlessly due to his mental condition, or had been the victim of foul play, not really knowing which would be more painful. While I hired detectives to search for him, the police conducted their investigation, including looking for any evidence that I might have had a hand in his disappearance. There was none, but the press had a field day speculating and implying that that I had killed him. The bizarre disappearance of the man who kept tigers even got the attention of People Magazine (http://bigcatrescue.org/about/media/).

I doubt if anyone who has not lived through it themselves can imagine the pain of being accused in the press of killing someone you love. While I grieved, people in supermarkets would ask me “did you feed him to the tigers?” This is personal history, not sanctuary history. But some of the opponents of our efforts to pass stronger laws to protect the cats still
distribute or publish these old articles or materials containing this implication as part of their attacks.

For the sanctuary, Don’s disappearance meant that I was able to stop all intentional breeding in 1997. But the sanctuary was under tremendous financial stress because our assets were placed under the supervision of the court and my ability to operate the real estate business that provided funding for the sanctuary or use assets to support the cats was severely constrained. Still, as fast as we could we neutered, spayed, and built cages to separate cats who could breed. While there was no intentional breeding from that time forward, four cats and three binturongs were born unintentionally, mostly to animals we did not believe were capable of breeding but did. The binturongs were thought to be far too old to breed and had lived together for years without breeding when we discovered she had a litter and conceived again before we managed to separate them. Two leopard cats were born to parents we thought were too old to breed, a bobcat hybrid was sired by a hybrid who was supposed to be sterile, and one serval was born to parents we just did not get separated in time because we focused first on the big cats.
We also stopped purchasing cats as a way to rescue them. Aside from the financial constraints, I had come to realize that however well intentioned we had been, by purchasing the cats we were supporting the brokers and breeders that were creating so much suffering. The only exception to this policy involved our fishing cats in 1998. I was called by a broker because he had two fishing cats he said were dying and asked if I wanted them. When I got there, I found Pisces gasping and close to death. When I said I would take them, he said I had to buy them. I could not walk away and let them die, so despite our desperate finances I paid for them. That was the last time I fell into that trap, and the last cat we purchased to save it.

Since then the cats we have taken in have all been either found, orphaned, or relinquished by owners who either could or would not continue to care for them or, in the case of our circus tigers, were sent by the one circus responsible enough to provide a retirement home for their cats at the end of their careers. For instance, Faith, the Florida bobcat cub, was found at five weeks...
old in a parking lot north of Tampa. She would not have been alone if the mother had not been killed. Cameron and Zabu, our male lion and white tigress, came from a roadside zoo when the husband of the couple operating it died and the wife could not keep it going. Cougar cubs Aries, Artemis and Orion, at four weeks old, came from Idaho after a hunter shot their mother. Idaho does not allow carnivores to be rehabilitated and released and because they are not native to any other state they could never go free.

Since those early years the sanctuary has pursued its vision of ending the abuse and abandonment of captive exotic animals and promoting preservation of the species in the wild. We do this by being an “educational sanctuary” with the dual mission of (a) giving our cats the best care we can while (b) educating the public on the plight of these animals so that some day there will be no need for a sanctuary to exist.

Increasingly the plight of these wonderful animals is resonating with the general public. As a result, recently our efforts, and those of others like us, to encourage laws forbidding breeding and exotic pet ownership have met with escalating success. State after state has passed laws banning ownership of big cats. They vary in effectiveness largely due to what
“exemptions” from the law are allowed. But, the trend in state law and public opinion is clear. In 2012, working with a coalition of other animal protection organizations, a federal bill banning possession and breeding except in very limited circumstances was passed.

As we have become a leading and very visible voice not only in support of such legislation, but being asked by legislators to help draft the bills, the breeders, exotic pet owners and exhibitors have attacked me. Lacking substantive arguments in support of their beliefs and activities, which I believe are based on selfish enjoyment of having the animals and/or financial gain, they have spent considerable energy attacking me personally and our sanctuary.

They claim we hide the activities from our early years that you have read about here, which obviously we do not and we never have. While I am not proud that it took me years of seeing increasing amounts of abuse to reverse the beliefs that I accepted as a novice, I believe the experience from those years has been heavily responsible for the success we have been having. I understand the thinking of the pet trade
because I was part of it. I believe we are more credible as a source of objective information specifically because we came from the place in which our opponents remain entrenched.

I genuinely hope that over time their thinking will change the way mine has done. In the meantime, I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart all of the many wonderful volunteers and thousands of generous financial supporters and “Advocats” without whose hard work we would not be seeing the recent successes.
Big Cat Rescue Website Links

Here are some links for pages on Big Cat Rescue’s website.

**Celebrities who like Big Cat Rescue:

http://bigcatrescue.org/celebrities/

**Big Cat Rescue’s Credentials:

http://bigcatrescue.org/about/credentials/

**Read about some of the rescues

http://bigcatrescue.org/about/rescues/

**Media Coverage of Big Cat Rescue

http://bigcatrescue.org/media-2013/

**Big Cat Rescue’s History and Evolution

http://bigcatrescue.org/about/our-evolution/

**Various types of tours offered at Big Cat Rescue:

http://bigcatrescue.org/visit-the-big-cats/
**Ways YOU can get involved:**

http://bigcatrescue.org/get-involved/

**Big Cat Abuse Issues:**

http://bigcatrescue.org/abuse-issues/

**Big Cat Photos and Facts:**

http://bigcatrescue.org/photos-and-facts/

**Meet the big cats at Big Cat Rescue and read their stories:**

http://bigcatrescue.org/catbio/

**Big Cat News:**

http://bigcatrescue.org/pressroom/

**Big Cat Attacks:**

http://bigcatrescue.org/big-cat-attacks/

**Shopping To Help Big Cats**

**Big Cat Rescue’s Main Online Gift Shop**

http://www.bigcatrescue.biz
**Big Cat Rescue’s Cafe Press Store**

http://www.cafepress.com/12802

**Big Cat Rescue’s Zazzle Store**

http://www.zazzle.com/bcrcats

**Big Cat Rescue’s eBay Store**

http://stores.ebay.com/Big-Cat-Rescue

**Big Cat Cards:**

We make it easier and cheaper than ever before for you to send a real printed card with our two new card programs.

Enthusem – Upload your own photos, or choose from ours, and send a card for less than what it would cost you to buy a card and postage in the store. Send a real cat card!

SendOutCards – Upload your own photos, or choose from ours, and send a card at prices lower than what you would pay for cards and postage from the store. The difference is that when people get your cards and see how purrsonalized they are, they will probably want to do it too. If they do, you get paid. Find out more https://www.sendoutcards.com/77032/
**Amazon:**

Enter through our portal. Prices are the same, but part of purchase is donated. [http://astore.amazon.com/bicare-20](http://astore.amazon.com/bicare-20)
What About Hybrids?

Allowing the private possession of wild cat/domestic cat hybrids is like strapping a nuclear war head to the feral cat problem.

I get e-mails every day, asking what I think of hybrids as pets. The hybrids in questions are usually Bengal Cats (leopard cat and domestic cross), Chausie or Stone Cougars (jungle cat and domestic cat cross) and Savannah (Serval and domestic cat cross) and Safari Cats (Geoffroy Cat and domestic cat cross). In the case of Stone Cougars the polydactyl feet and dwarf body style which are typical of severe inbreeding are encouraged to make the cat look less cat-like. Some people ask about Pixie Bobs, but I don’t know of any compelling evidence that suggests they really have any bobcat blood. Sometimes, when people are talking about hybrids, they are talking about lion/tiger crosses or
serval/caracal crosses and much of what is true about the domestic crosses is more so of the wildcat hybrids.

**In a nutshell, it is an irresponsible thing to do and there is no redeeming reason to cross breed these cats nor to support those who do by buying one.** It almost never works out for the individual cat and in the rare case that it does, the number of animals that had to suffer in order for this one rare cat to exist is staggering.

While the rest of this article refers to Bengal Cats, the same is true of all of the hybrid cats. Some people have beautiful, fifth generation Bengal Cats that are reported to eat cat food, live quietly with domestic and use the litterbox fastidiously. This may well be the case, but the breeders tend to keep breeding back to the wild Leopard Cats in order to get the exotic markings. The idea was to glean the best of both worlds: a fabulously spotted or striped cat with all the gentleness of thousands of years of domestic history. Unfortunately, what more often happens is that you get the ordinary cat coat and a wild personality.
Even after 4 or 5 generations, that wild personality is a dominant trait and while it is marketed as being just like having a tiny tiger in your home, most people don’t know what that really means. As someone who is not trying to sell you a $2000.00 kitten that you will one day take to the dog pound out of frustration, let me tell you what it is like to live with a hybrid.

We have had a bunch of them that were former pets. We have had to turn away many, many more because most of them cannot run free outside and have to have the same cages as bobcats and cougars. They all spray. Male or female, neutered or not, first generation or fifth generation; I have never met one that didn’t spray urine all over everything in their path.

They bite. Even in play, even if they love you, they bite and I have scars all over my hands to prove that their love nips will leave you bleeding. They want to eat your other pets and they don’t care if it’s a German shepherd, they are going to be constantly looking for a way to take the dog down. That is why many of them can’t run free on Easy Street. They pick fights with 500 pound tigers. I have even received reports from Florida’s Game and Fish Commission of them stalking little old ladies and I have been
called in to trap and remove them. This discarded pet now lives on Easy Street, but most are not this lucky.

The creation of a non protected species, by hybridizing the endangered leopard cats with the non endangered domestic cats has also created a huge market for the fur of these hybrids. Check out any of the big fur dealers, like Saks Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus and they will try to sell you the idea that their furs are from killing Lippi Cats (sometimes called Lipi Cats) in China. Of course that is absurd. There is no such thing as a Lippi Cat. The fur patterns on these coats can only be from truly endangered cats or from the Bengal Cat hybrids. In either case it is sad (and sick) but hybridizing cats has made this a lucrative market. So much, in fact, that the Bengal Cat is commonly called, the Money Cat.

I get hate mail from hybrid breeders every time I say anything about the fact that many times domestic cats are killed by the wild cats in the mating process, or that the conditions the breeding cats are often kept in is deplorable, or the physical ailments that many of these neurotic offspring suffer from, or the fact that millions of animals are being killed in shelters every
year while people are still supporting the breeders. So many breeders claim that they only breed 4th and 5th generations, but don’t seem to get the fact that you can’t get a 4th generation without a lot of suffering in the first three. By the time a person breeds enough cats to get to the fourth generation they have created approximately 50 cats who will end up being slaughtered for coats or killed because of their behavior problems. I stand amazed at the number of people who just don’t get this and how they manage to pretend that they are not the cause of the suffering if they purchase a fourth generation cat. The cats can’t speak for themselves though, so the daily hate mail is just the price of speaking the truth for them. Please consider all of the suffering that you can eliminate by not succumbing to the urge to own something wild. Your sacrifice can make the world a better place.

We get hundreds of letters each year from people who bought a cute little Bengal Cat kitten and who can’t wait to get rid of them when they reach adulthood. We do not take in Bengal Cats and don’t know anyone reliable who does. The Bengal Cat Rescue Network is the only place we have found online who offers to take in unwanted Bengal Cats and we cannot speak for their integrity or policies, but have listed a link to them here
to help you try to find a home for the cat you have discovered is now spraying everything in sight and who is attacking your pets, children and spouse. The Bengal Cat Rescue Network.
As I read this, I thought that so much of this sentiment applies to what we witness in our rescuing of wildcats. “DON’T BREED OR BUY WHILE SANCTUARIES FILL UP” – just changing a few words…it’s what we try to educate, too. (Having put in time volunteering at a shelter’s euthanasia department, crying my way home every day, believe me, this all rings very true and deserves sharing far and wide). These are some of the very same issues our staff deal with every day, too.

“I think our society needs a huge “Wake-up” call.

As a shelter manager, I am going to share a little insight with you all…a view from the inside if you will.

First off, all of you breeders/sellers should be made to work in the “back” of an animal shelter for just one day.

Maybe if you saw the life drain from a few sad, lost, confused eyes, you would change your mind about breeding and selling to people you don’t even know. That puppy or kitten you just
sold will most likely end up in my shelter when it’s not cute anymore.

So, how would you feel if you knew that there’s about a 90% chance that pet will never walk out of the shelter it is going to be dumped at? Purebred or not! About 50% of all of the pets that are “owner surrenders” or “strays,” that come into my shelter are purebred.

**The most common excuses I hear are;**

**“We are moving and we can’t take our dog (or cat).”** Really? Where are you moving to that doesn’t allow pets?**Or they say “The dog got bigger than we thought it would.”** How big did you think a German Shepherd would get?

**“We don’t have time for her.”** Really? I work a 10-12 hour day and still have time for my 6 dogs!

**“She’s tearing up our yard.”** How about making her a part of your family?

**They always tell me: “We just don’t want to have to stress about finding a place for her. We know she’ll get adopted, she’s a good pet.”** Odds are your pet won’t get adopted & how stressful do you think being in a shelter is?
Well, let me tell you, your pet has 72 hours to find a new family from the moment you drop it off. Sometimes a little longer if the shelter isn’t full and your dog manages to stay completely healthy. If it sniffs, it dies.

Your pet will be confined to a small run/kennel in a room with about 25 other barking or crying animals. It will have to relieve itself where it eats and sleeps. It will be depressed and it will cry constantly for the family that abandoned it.

If your pet is lucky, I will have enough volunteers in that day to take him/her for a walk or give them a loving pat. If not, your pet won’t get any attention besides having a bowl of food slid under the kennel door and the waste sprayed out of its pen with a high-powered hose.

If your pet is an adult, black, part exotic, or any of the “Bully” breeds (pit bull, rottie, mastiff, etc) it was pretty much dead when you walked it through the front door. Those pets just don’t get adopted.

It doesn’t matter how ‘sweet’ or ‘well behaved’ they are. If your pet doesn’t get adopted within its 72 hours and the shelter is full, it will be destroyed.
If the shelter isn’t full and your pet is good enough, and of a desirable enough breed it may get a stay of execution, but not for long.

Most dogs get very kennel protective after about a week and are destroyed for showing aggression. Even the sweetest dogs will turn in this environment.

If your pet makes it over all of those hurdles, chances are it will get kennel cough or an upper respiratory infection and will be destroyed because shelters just don’t have the funds to pay for even a $100 treatment.

Here’s a little euthanasia 101 for those of you that have never witnessed a perfectly healthy, scared animal being “put-down:”

First, your pet will be taken from its kennel on a leash. They always look like they think they are going for a walk – happy, wagging their tails. Until they get to “The Room,” every one of them freaks out and puts on the brakes when we get to the door. It must smell like death or they can feel the sad souls that are left in there, it’s strange, but it happens with every one of them.
Your dog or cat will be restrained, held down by 1 or 2 vet techs depending on the size and how freaked out they are. Then a euthanasia tech or a vet will start the process. They will find a vein in the front leg and inject a lethal dose of the “pink stuff.” Hopefully, your pet doesn’t panic from being restrained and jerk. I’ve seen the needles tear out of a leg and been covered with the resulting blood and been deafened by the yelps and screams.

They all don’t just “go to sleep,” sometimes they spasm for a while, gasp for air and defecate on themselves. When it all ends, your pets corpse will be stacked like firewood in a large freezer in the back with all of the other animals that were killed waiting to be picked up like garbage.

What happens next? Cremated? Taken to the dump? Rendered into pet food? You’ll never know and it probably won’t even cross your mind. It was just an animal and you can always buy another one, right? I hope that those of you that have read this are bawling your eyes out and can’t get the pictures out of your head I deal with everyday on the way home from work.

I hate my job, I hate that it exists & I hate that it will always be there unless you people make some changes and realize that
the lives you are affecting go much further than the pets you dump at a shelter.

Between 9 and 11 MILLION animals die every year in shelters and only you can stop it. I do my best to save every life I can but rescues are always full, and there are more animals coming in everyday than there are homes.

My point to all of this DON’T BREED OR BUY WHILE SHELTER PETS DIE!

Hate me if you want to. The truth hurts and reality is what it is. I just hope I maybe changed one person’s mind about breeding their pet, taking their loving pet to a shelter, or buying a pet. I hope that someone will walk into my shelter and say “I saw this and it made me want to adopt.”

Diablo the Savannah Cat at Big Cat Rescue

THAT WOULD MAKE IT WORTH IT!!!!”

-Angonymous
Savannah Banned In Australia

Savannah cat breed banned in Australia

August 03, 2008

An exotic breed of cat has been banned, with environment minister Peter Garrett calling it an extreme risk to native wildlife. So-called “Savannah” cats are a cross between domestic cats and an African wildcat known as the serval.

They tend to be spotted with slightly larger ears than other cats and have become popular with some cat-lovers.

But environmentalists fear they retain the strong hunting instincts of their African ancestors and could interbreed with millions of feral cats already in Australia, which have wrought havoc on the country’s indigenous wildlife.

“The risks associated with allowing this cross-bred cat into the country, when we already have up to 12 million feral cats wreaking havoc on native fauna, are simply too great,” Mr Garrett said.
“That is why I have banned the import of these cats immediately.”

He said the Savannah cat posed “an extreme threat to Australia’s native wildlife”.

Letters From Hybrid Cat Owners

Read some real letters that we receive from people who own a Bengal Cats and Savannah Cats and know what it is really like.

Bengal Cat May Be Killed for Biting Neighbors
Just a pet to owner, a threat to others: Officials think a cat that attacked two people is part wild and want to test it for rabies.

Problem is, they’d have to put it to sleep first.

By SHADI RAHIMI

Published June 1, 2006

ST. PETERSBURG — Melissa Russell was taking her usual Saturday morning walk when a striped cat named Czar yowled and lunged at her. Then he then bit her in the calf. “I was shocked,” said Russell, 78, of Snell Isle.

An hour later, 6-year-old Cole Fisher stopped to pet Czar. The cat bit him in the thigh, said his mother, Lana. Now the county wants to seize Czar to test it for rabies. Officials think Czar is part wild, an exotic Bengal. No rabies vaccines are approved for hybrids or wild animals, so a rabies test requires killing the cat first.

But Czar’s owner, Jo Ellen Janas, 53, won’t give him up. She insists Czar is a domestic cat, not a Bengal.
This week, the county filed a petition for an injunction to force Janas to hand over Czar. “It’s a tough deal,” said Dr. Welch Agnew, the county’s assistant director for animal services. “We never want to take somebody’s pet, but we’ve got victims out there.”

Both families said Janas was apologetic after learning of the attacks, which occurred May 20. Janas assured them Czar had been vaccinated for rabies and mailed copies of his veterinary record. That’s where Russell saw that Czar was classified as a Bengal, an exotic hybrid created by breeding a domestic cat with an Asian leopard.

She alerted animal services.

On May 24, a county animal services officer went to Janas’ home on Brightwaters Boulevard to take Czar and get him tested for rabies. The test requires putting the cat to sleep and removing his brain to check the stem for antibodies.

If Czar does not have rabies, Russell and Fisher can discontinue their rounds of rabies shots, Agnew said. The total series is one dose of immune globulin and five doses of rabies vaccine over 28 days. But Janas won’t turn over her beloved pet. Her attorney, Russell Cheatham, said Thursday that the cat was
misidentified as a Bengal on its medical records. It is a domestic cat, he said. “If there was a less drastic means than killing her pet, it would be a different situation,” he said. “But it’s a problem because it may not be necessary.” Cheatham said his client is searching for a lab that will run a DNA test on Czar to prove he is not part wild. Janas is keeping the animal confined to her home, he said.

Meanwhile, Russell received her second round of rabies shots Thursday, and Fisher received his first round. “I’ve been extremely worried,” Lana Fisher said. “It’s just devastating that we have to put him through this.” Both families said that though the incident has been difficult, they don’t want to pursue legal action against their neighbor. “We are Christians,” Russell said. “I have no bitterness.”

The county is not so forgiving.

“We have a suspected rabid animal that is allegedly running loose and attacking people,” said Michelle Wallace, an assistant county attorney. “It could be out running loose again, and who knows? We could have a rabies outbreak.” A court hearing is scheduled June 7. More than half the 2,700 reports of bites or scratches in the county every year involve dogs. Usually,
domestic dogs, cats and ferrets suspected of rabies are issued a 10-day home quarantine, Agnew said. If they have rabies, they typically die within that period.

“But that’s not true for wild animals,” he said. “The only test that’s 100 percent accurate is a postmortem test.” Raccoons are the primary source of rabies in Florida. A rabies outbreak spread by raccoons a decade ago prompted animal services to begin taking preventive action. In March, it dropped fish-meal-coated rabies vaccine from helicopters.

http://www.sptimes.com/2006/06/01/Southpinellas/Just_a_pet_to_owner__.shtml

My Cat Has Projectile Diarrhea

I could not agree more with your philosophy re hybrid Bengals. I had a Siamese and a Tonkinese together. Both reached the age of 20+. The Tonk was fantastic, the Siamese so stupid she could not have had more than 3 brain cells … but sweet and devoted. After they passed, I swore no more pets. Then, I saw a neighbor’s Bengal and immediately fell in love with it. I still resisted. That lasted 2 weeks. I ended up purchasing 2 F4 standards, beautifully marked and full of glitter. They were
gorgeous and from a famous line. One was so sweet, wouldn’t stay away from me at the kittery, I had to buy her. The 2nd was purchased to keep the 1st one company. Big mistake, the 2nd one was wild as could be and was returned within 3 days. I subsequently found out my returned one went to a breeder who ultimately returned her because she was uncontrollable … truly WILD!

Lets just say that my Bengal has been a monumental pain regardless of how cute and precocious she may be. She wakes up at 2:30 a.m. so I haven’t had a decent night’s rest in a year. If I don’t play with her she starts her ungodly whining, yodel, squeaking, whatever cat calls that could wake the dead. Without question, this is the smartest creature I’ve ever encountered. The easy problems were breaking her of the habit of jumping into the shower with me every morning, trying to swim in the commode, etc. … she’s obsessed by water; and, pulling door stops out of the wall to use them as fishing rods(?) in her water bowl. I kid you not, have photos. Around 5 a.m., if I don’t play with her, she bites my ankles until I do. Love bites but still annoying. That’s the funny side. She’s got me trained well!

The sad side is she has Irritable Bowel Disorder (IBD) which the “breeder” said she didn’t, then said she cured (I returned her
after 2 weeks) and then took her back, then put me onto a raw chicken diet which I ultimately decided was too dangerous. Plus, it didn’t work. After much $$$$$ was spent at Vets, she was finally placed on 5 mg prednisolone qd and a high fiber diet. The diet gives her gas which is so foul I nearly gag. Fortunately, her stools firmed up. Don’t ask about her litter box … at least it’s always within 2” of it if she misses. But, I’m much concerned because there is strong evidence of intestinal bleeding. After passing her stool, there is a fair quantity of mucous which is obviously blood tinged. I will not submit her to experimental surgery. I also have huge issues with putting an animal down unless its in pain. I suspected the breeder would have and my taking her back was probably because I couldn’t see her put down. So, I have her, I love her, I could kill her at times if you know what I mean. But, you are so right, this should not be a breed.

I say the above so you’ll know I have some limited experience with this breed.

You raise a valid issue. Had I known what I know now I would never had done anything to promote the continuation of this breed. Having done some literature searches, IBD seems
common with Bengals; and, its not really curable. I can’t even handle the issue of coats its so barbaric.

However, I see another problem that arises from the breeders. Done so purely to increase their incomes. The breeders deny IBD is a problem, they swear their lines are free of it, its just finding the “right” diet. For me that’s pure PR. They also use the words active, intelligent, etc., to cover up that they are often wild and can “flip” on the owner in a second. Mine is sweet, definitely F4, great, really great line but if I pick her up the wrong way or startle her … my blood flows and they’re not minor scratches!!!

I wish there was some better way to alert potential owners prior to their purchase. I hate the thought of such gorgeous creatures burdened by IBD their entire lives. As well, emotionally, they don’t know who they are from one minute to the next … domestic or wild.

Some thoughts.

My best,
Frank

My Savannah Cat Eats the Furniture
Hi! I’m a volunteer with pet rescue here in Orlando. Recently I was contacted by a woman who asked me to help her find a home for her two year old F1 male savannah. She says that kitty is very affectionate and loving and great with her clients, but he’s nearly destroyed her home/office. He eats the furniture, tears large chunks out of the towels and sheets, and chews through anything made of plastic, rubber, or vinyl (he also knows how to open doors—not a good thing). She’s covered everything in cayenne pepper powder but that still doesn’t help. I’m sure you’re familiar with this problem (which is one of the reasons you don’t advocate the breeding of hybrids) and I wondered if you have any suggestions. I’m sure that if I offered this cat up for adoption many would step forward to give him a new home, but finding a qualified home could be a real challenge. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you!
Breeders Often Don’t Tell Truth

Bengal Breeders Often Don’t Tell Buyers The Truth

Reading about hybrid cats on your website inspired me to e-mail my experiences. I purchased a snow Bengal kitten nine months ago. My main concern is that the breeder/seller does not inform the buyer of what they’re getting into when owning a hybrid cat. They’re part wild, and will need extra supervision. They will be destructive in your home. I had to get rid of fragile items, plants, certain decorations on the walls. Before I buy anything for my home, I have to consider what my hybrid will do to it. Basically, I don’t buy anything for my home anymore. It is really important that people understand how destructive they can be before they buy one. I personally feel not understanding their capabilities is what leads to giving the pet up to shelter, or resale of the cat. It saddens me to hear that people give these cats up because they bond with the person that purchases them. More so than regular cats. I’m always pulling my hybrid off my other two cats. She can be a bit of a bully. I had long
deep scratches covering my legs the first 6 months. Biting and scratching is hard to break, but can be done. She no longer scratches, but she loves to bite.

The most common in Bengalis (it is more common to have it than not) is irritable bowel disease, which means a life of projectile diarrhea. Our cat was having non-stop diarrhea, sometimes with mucus in it. The smell was terrible. It would reek through out the entire house daily. I guess this is the main reason I’m e-mailing. I hope this information will help others. The reason these cats have diarrhea is that their metabolisms is high, so they need different food than a normal house cat. I started feeding ours one boiled boneless skinless chicken thigh every morning, and one can of high quality cat food “Pet Promise” that I would dish out through out the afternoon and evening. It’s important to feed them the canned cat food also. They need the vitamins that the chicken will not offer. Due to their faster metabolisms, they eat more than a normal house cat. Ours eats twice the amount of regular house cats. Tina
More Hybrid Issues

Urinating outside litter box

I have a 3 1/2 year old male Bengal who started urinating outside of the litter box in the house when he was just past 2 years old. We started him on daily doses of prozac for this behavior problem. Over the course of a year we increased the dosage 2 times and he was almost at the maximum dose and we got an email from the breeder who suggested we try the Depo-Provera injections. We got King to the vet for the first injection and started slowly decreasing the other medication until it was gone. We were not supposed to take King back for another injection until 1 month later but before that time was up he was back to urinating in the house. We took King back to the vet for the second shot and it seems like the urinating is worse. We are faced with the choice of finding him a new home with someone who can deal with this behavior or putting him to sleep. I am so disappointed that the breeders of these cats don’t tell people that this is very common. Please email me with any suggestions or thoughts...Thanks, Wanda
Bengal Cat Biting Child

Just wondering if you know of a rescue organization for Bengal Cats. I know yours is for big cats, but just thought I would try. Friends of mine have a Bengal Cat that is about 3 or 4 years old, their daughter is mentally handicapped. I think she bothers the cat and the cat has been biting her. They are beside themselves and don’t know what to do. We have looked everywhere for a home, but so far to no avail. Just thought I would check to see if you have any ideas. They live in the Orlando area. Thanks, Sally

Bengal Cat Doesn’t Get Along

Do you know anywhere I can take my Bengal cat to find a good home? I need to find her one, she is the cutest thing but doesn’t get long with my other cat- I figure she’ll be easier to find a home for since she is exotic. Sandy

Tritrichomonas Foetus May Cause Bloody Diarrhea
I got Tess (a Bengal Cat) last November and since then she has had 5 bouts of bloody diarrhea. I knew when I got her that the breed has “digestive problems” and didn’t mind taking care of her at all in spite of this. My breeder suggested Panacur and it seemed to help during the first 4 bouts but this 5th time it didn’t help much. I had heard about Tritrichomonas Foetus and did some research on the internet and found two persons who found out their cat(s) had this TF … obviously this is just recently recognized in cats and detection of the micro-organism is very difficult and a culture needs to be done. I contacted one of Tess’s vets with the information and she ran a test and called me 10 days later and said, “Yes, Tess is positive!” There is a treatment which has only been available since January of this year and she is now on this. I had to order it special from a company on the internet. She has to take 2 capsules every day for 14 days! Needless to say, I am really happy that I found this out and am glad that I didn’t settle for the diagnosis and wasn’t willing to just “watch her” Janice in PA

**Bloody diarrhea of Bengal Cats**

Carole’s note: I posted this because it may help some cats, but I have had many reports that it did not help.
“I recently was made the most beautiful gift of a female bengal kitten, she is extremely sweet and playful – and yes a little wild.

When I discovered that she had diarrhea which was on occasion blood tinged, it reminded me of my patients wheat or gluten allergies (I am an Acupuncturist). Gluten is a protein found in cereal that is highly allergenic. It can cause irritation of the intestine in varying degrees and can lead over time to malabsorption problems, and because it is a protein, Kidney problems. It is most of the time misdiagnosed by MDs, and the patients go through a lot of suffering until they learn how to adjust their diets.

I then decided to feed my cat gluten free cat food. This was a major project, I studied the ingredient labels of most cat foods and discovered that in most cat food there is gluten: wheat gluten, corn gluten, barley gluten etc.

Finally I found a brand “Wellness” that is grain free, and I started feeding this product along with the dryfood of this brand. The diarrhea stopped. My cat doesn’t like it quite as well as the junk cat food, but she is only just like us: we like potato chips, which are not good for us. Please post this on your website. Maybe
that helps.
Greetings, Beatrice Moncrief”
Another Letter From Unhappy Owner

It isn’t the cat’s fault

Savannah Cat Kills Fox in Belle Meade Island, Miami, FL

Hi, After checking out your website regarding Asian leopard/Bengal cat hybrids (which was very enlightening and informative), my mom had a long phone conversation with
Honey at Big Cat Rescue today. She was very helpful. Thanks! She encouraged us to email your organization explaining our current situation.

I purchased a 4 month old F1 ALC/SBT hybrid from a breeder in April of this year. I am a vet tech and met the breeder through my work. I thought that her kittens were beautiful and she informed me that she had 1 kitten left from a littler and that he was the most beautiful kitten that she’s ever had. The breeder also said that he was very sweet and loving. I met the kitten and thought that he was the most amazing looking kitten and took him home on the spot. The first week away from his mother was HELL (lots of yelling and screaming) but we got through it. I neutered him and had a 4 paw de-claw done right away. I did not want him spraying in my apartment.

He was fine for the first few months. He and my 2 year old Siamese got along fairly well. The Bengal mostly annoyed the other cat with his kitten behavior. His only problem was that he would steal my socks and chew them up.

As time went on he started doing more annoying things, stealing silverware from the sink, taking my pens and pencils and chewing plants. He then started knocking things off of
shelves on purpose. I’m not sure if he likes to watch them fall or if he likes the sound that they make when they crash. He also started chewing and shredding the rest of my clothing and towels. I have had to hide everything in closets.

In mid August we moved to a new apartment and got a puppy. He HATES the dog. She doesn’t bother him at all, but he goes out of his way to growl, hiss and spit at her. He even tries to hunt and attack her while she is sleeping in her crate.

He also started attacking my other cat after we moved into our new place. He starts out playing nicely with the Siamese and then goes way too far. My other cat lets him know that he’s done playing, but he won’t stop. I have to split up cat fights at least 3 times during the night. I have been loosing a lot of sleep over this. My other cat is now afraid of the Bengal and begs to be locked in a closet where the Bengal can not get at him.

In the past couple weeks the Bengal has become very food aggressive. The cats share the same kind of food but have separate dishes. The Bengal will not let the Siamese come within a 2 foot radius of the dishes if there is food in them. I now have to feed them separately.
I have lived in my new place for 2 months now and have not unpacked a single box because I am afraid that the cat will ruin the rest of my things. I have tried to hide my clothes in closets, but every time I come home from work I find out that he has learned how to open the closets and has chewed up more clothing. I now have to barricade the closets with heavy objects.

About 2 weeks after I moved into my new place I noticed a funny smell in the corner of my living room. It turned out that my Bengal had been using one of my boxes full of my stuff as his new littler box. There is nothing wrong with his litter box and there is no medical reason for him to not be using his box, but he won’t use it anyway. He has been peeing in about 5 different spots throughout my place and has decided to poop 1 foot from the entrance to his box, not in the box. I’ve tried to use behavioral modification meds on him but they were not successful. I can’t catch him to rub it on his ears, he won’t eat the flavored treat meds and I can’t hide it in raw meat.

I have talked to the breeder about his litter box issues, attacking the other cat and the destroying of my things and clothing. She told me that they aren’t ‘knick-knack’ cats. She didn’t tell me that on day 1 when I got him. She then told me that I have a few
options. I can try meds (I did.), I could ‘re-train’ him or I could find him a new home.

I don’t know of anyone that would want a destructive cat that can not be handled and I do not think that ‘re-training’ him will help him stop destroying my things or attacking my dog.

I am at the end of my rope and feel that my last option is euthanasia. I realize that he is not a domesticated cat and cannot live as a pet in someone’s home. It is hard for me to have this as my last option. I had made tentative plans to put him down this weekend until I found out about your web site. It’s not his fault that he is this way. Do you know any other options for him?

Thank you for your time and consideration. Name withheld by request

Carole’s Note: The owner found a Bengal Cat Rescue group willing to try and place the cat so he will not be euthanized. If you do the math above you will see that he had become this problematic by the time he was only 10 months old. Usually it is a year and half before they become intolerable in the house. 99.9% of the mail we get indicates this is typical of the hybrids regardless of what the mix is. We get hate mail from the
breeders, who don’t want this information available to you, and occasionally a letter from a pet owner who has a cat that is four or more generations removed from the wild who just isn’t bright enough to figure out that the only way to get a watered down Bengal is by creating many unfortunate cats like this one along the way. We love cats and don’t want any of them to suffer just so a few people can make a buck or stroke their own ego.
I thought that my story might give others reason to pause and reconsider the purchase of a hybrid cat breed. While we were very fortunate in personality and behavior, we have a cat with very questionable health that, I believe, was unloaded on us with full knowledge and complete non-disclosure of his health problems.

We adopted a four year old retired breeding stud bengal three years ago. He’s at least an F5. He’s exceedingly well mannered – uses the scratching post and the litter box, is good with other pets and children, sleeps on the bed with me, no biting, attacking, or scratching people. As a retired stud, I was very concerned about spraying, but we’ve never had a single issue. He is not a healthy guy, though. After two close brushes with death in the first year we had him, we figured out that he has a food allergy. To chicken. Yes, chicken. Thousands of dollars
were spent on hospitalization and testing and medicines and ultrasounds because we thought he had severe IBD and a potential blockage or significant internal defect. Considering that he was four years old when we bought him, you would think that the breeder might have mentioned this. After I let her know that he was sick, (but we did not want to return him) she stopped communicating with us. I had spoken (on the phone) with this lady repeatedly and at great length about this cat to make sure he was going to work in our household. I was assured that he was “naturally lean” but didn’t have any health problems. Apparently, “naturally lean” is code for an inability to gain weight because of all the diarrhea and vomiting. At least the specialty food, to which he is now restricted, has resolved the bulk of his health issues. This cat was a breeding stud for several years at that cattery, and one of his daughters is still a breeding queen there.

Buyer beware. Thank you, Heather

Midnight Rescue

March 22, 2006 11:21 pm: I had just gotten in from a three hour meeting of the Animal Advisory Committee where we had wrestled with the long range goals of Animal Services and how
we would be able to stop the flood of animals in the front doors to be euthanized because people didn’t want them any more. How could we fund education and aggressive spay/neuter programs in a county government fraught with cut backs? How could we stop the killing of 34,000 healthy dogs and cats each year in an environment of thought that could only do more of what wasn’t working by building more places for people to bring their pets to die? It was a topic worthy of the energy we had all put into it tonight, but at the end of the night all we had managed to do was suggest that an outside consultant be paid to tell us how to do it and we would leave funding the implementation to another day’s discussion.

Being away from my computer for 3 hours means a pile of emails will have collected and standing at my desk I began to sort through them. I really wanted to go to bed, so not sitting down seemed to me, as if it say, I was not committed to answering all of this mail, but would see if there was anything that just couldn’t wait until morning. Then the phone rang.
The voice on the other end was shaky, female and began, “I got your number from the answering machine, and I’m sorry to call so late, but I have called everyone I can think of and Fish and Game said they would send someone yesterday, but they never did, and the trapper said he will just euthanize the cat, and the cat is scared, and I am afraid he is going to die, and if I let him loose someone is going to shoot him. It’s a big cat. I think it might be a Florida Panther. It weighs 90 pounds, is three feet long, had VERY big teeth and his paws are as big as my hands. I caught him in my garage. He has been tearing up cats in the neighborhood and some are missing. I think he ate them. I caught him in the trap with some cat food. He just fills up the entire trap…”

I don’t know how long she went through her description before I spoke. There was no hurry to speak as she was just flowing with information. I jotted down the details as I silently pondered her authenticity. I have been outspoken against people breeding and selling exotic cats and have committed much of my time to trying to stop the trade. I had become the target of a segment of our society that is comprised largely of drug dealers, criminals and those just too ignorant or uncaring to see that their participation in the industry causes such suffering for the
animals. In their chat rooms they had suggested more than once that the only way to stop me was a bullet. Was this call in the middle of the night a set up for just such an opportunity?

Was this woman’s voice shaking because she was lying and involved in something that could send her to prison? The notion of a 90 lb. Florida Panther, in a dog trap, in a garage, in a waterfront community like Apollo Beach, was pretty far fetched. Is that why Fish and Game had not responded, or did she just say she called them first so that I wouldn’t? I queried her more, asking the same questions in different ways. If she was lying she would get tripped in her own tale and if she wasn’t she would surely think that I was an idiot who just couldn’t get the picture.

After a while I decided that no one could have made up a story like hers and told her I would be sending our Operations Manager Scott and our own licensed trapper to see if she changed her mind about wanting someone to come right away. Her only concern was if our trapper was of the same conviction as the one she had called earlier and I assured her
that we would not kill the cat. She gave her contact info and it all matched up with the public records. She was in a high rent district that was not consistent with where most of our opponents live. I called Jamie to wake her up.

Groggy she answered the phone. She had been too exhausted to sleep, but had finally managed to drift off when she heard my voice saying, “Get up. We have to pick up a Florida Panther in Apollo Beach.” She said to wait out front and she would be ready in three minutes and she was.

As she climbed into the truck she asked me to repeat what it was we were doing again and why. If this was a 90 lb cat we would have to pick up the van from the sanctuary and have an enclosure ready upon our return. The woman was afraid for the cat because she couldn’t open the trap to give him water and he had been in it for a couple days. We needed a place we could release the cat so that he could stand up (which she also said he couldn’t do in the tiny trap he was wedged into) and get a drink.

As we switched out gear to the van Jamie called Scott to alert him that we needed a cage ready. He prepared our rehab cage
because it is far removed from the tour route and the other cats in case this was truly a wild cat and as a quarantine measure.

On the one hour trip to Apollo Beach Jamie and I placed bets as to what was in the trap. Would it be a dog? A raccoon? A neighbor’s oversized tom cat? A bobcat? Partly this was due to the barrage of such sightings that turn out to be such animals and partly in our nervous aversion to what the real implications of this trip could mean to our lives. Jamie was armed with a Mag Light and has become something of an Amazon in strength due to her daily life of outside work at the rescue. I have a history of deflecting harm thanks to an overly protective Guardian Angel and hardly ever even consider my own safety but I worried for Jamie. She is the permit holder to pick up a native animal and had to be there. She knows the element of enemy we are up against. A master of disguise and undercover surveillance she has been face to face with those who use and abuse these animals. If anyone knew the dark void of greed, ego and selfishness that these exotic animal breeders and dealers shared it was Jamie. We were ready for whatever the night might bring.

I was somewhat relieved to find at the end of our route the homes were in the million dollar range. At least gun fire would
probably cause an investigation. The caller met us at the door and holding back her dogs waived us to enter the garage. I quickly scanned the room to try and determine if there was anyone lurking and to get a feel for what kind of person we were dealing with. I wasn’t too thrilled with the notion of being thrust into the garage; was that so we wouldn’t make a bloody mess on the carpet?

Opening the garage door I saw the trap that was virtually bursting at the seams with brown fur. Glancing around the garage I didn’t see anyone or anyplace anyone likely could be hiding. I know Jamie’s observation skills were far more adept and that she could also go on for hours describing exactly everything in the room to its most minute detail after a five minute visit. The woman rejoined us and shut the door behind her. She was no match for us and I began to un tense every muscle that had been as tight as piano wire for a battle.

She described the cat again; as if we couldn’t see him and detailed discovering the cat a week before and all that she had done to try and find help. Finding no one who cared, she
borrowed a trap and set out to catch the cat herself for fear that someone would shoot him. Finally she turned to Jamie and asked, “So, what is it?”

Jamie responded that it was a Jungle Cat and I interjected that it was the biggest Jungle Cat I had ever seen. We gathered a written statement from the woman, interviewed her mother who owned the home, took photos and settled the 26 lb. Jungle Cat into the back of the van for the hour ride home.

2:13 am we arrived back at the sanctuary and the only way to get the cat to the rehab cage is to carry him across 2 acres of underbrush on a foot wide path lit by only a flashlight. I carried the flashlight and Jamie hauled the 36 pounds of cat and trap. Jamie turned him loose in his new enclosure and unlike most trapped cats he just moseyed out of the trap and strolled around the Cat-a-tat checking out the brush bama, the cave and the swinging platforms. She gave him water and secured the cage.

The next day we called Fish and Game, now known as the FWCC, to report the incident. We checked the lost and found while Dr. Wynn checked the cat over to try and tell, without sedating him, if he was a male, neutered or not and what was
up with those huge paws? We had filmed an interview for a documentary into the small cat and hybrid cat business and the producer called saying she needed a few more break away shots. I told her about the rescue and offered to let her document what happens when these animals escape.

The minute she saw the cat she said it was a Stone Cougar and that there was a hybrid dealer a couple hours away who was trying to make himself famous by breeding a Chaussie (Jungle Cat / Domestic Cat cross) that looks like a cougar. Purposely inbreeding causes traits such as the polydactyl feet to make the paws bigger and the stunted, dwarf like legs to make the cats’ body style more closely resemble a cougar. The Jungle Cat is used for its brown coloring and hybrids are typically larger than either parent, so this would give the desired size for the pet owner who wants something big enough to beat up the neighbor’s Rottweiler.

This cat’s escape, or release, sums up the hybrid issue. The first generations are large, mentally confused, and often exhibit the worst of both species rather than the best. Hybrids are marketed as being miniature wildcats with all of their beauty and mystique while being easy to keep; eating cat food and
using a litter box. What is most often created is a rather ordinary looking cat with no house manners who will fight you to the death for the defrosting meat in the sink. Children and pets are particularly in danger and there isn’t a house that can contain them, or in which anyone who can smell will want to live. They are often relegated to lonely lives in back yard cages or are turned loose to fend for themselves on whatever neighbor’s pets they can catch.

This cat probably sold for $2500.00 and was just a way to make some money to his breeder. This cat once was a new buyer’s prized possession. This cat knew what it meant to live in fear on the street with no one who cared if he lived or died, except for a woman who was determined that he would not be shot for mauling the neighbor’s cats. This cat may now spend 20 years in a cage because he is too big and too dangerous to be kept as a pet anymore. On April 27 Sparticus, the Jungle Cat hybrid was re-united with his family. According to his owner, they had been vacationing and their home broken into. All of their pets had been set free and they had been unable to find Sparticus. Someone saw his story on our site and alerted the owner who was able to identify the cat by his microchip number.
This cat is the one with a story to tell and you can help him tell it: Exotic cats were not meant for life in cages. Please don’t support the exotic pet trade; including the hybrid pet trade.

Nervous and Temperamental

Hi, A few years ago I was living in Miami. It happened to be a cold October evening around 8 PM. In the parking lot I spotted a small orange kitten. Well, about 2 hours later I was able to catch him and bring him into my apartment. Since I had 2 other cats and a small dog. I put him in my spare bathroom with food, water, litter box and a box with lots of towels for a bed. The next day I asked around to see if any one knew where he came from. Of course you know the answer to that. I took him to my vet. My vet pronounced him to be in good health. So he had his shots, etc and came home. The vet did say he had pretty big ears and big feet. My boy grew and grew. As he grew he became more nervous and temperamental. Luckily he did get along with my other pets. After ripping my vet apart, we decided he would have to be sedated before any more visits. He developed irritable bowel syndrome and occasionally would spray. I was the only one that could handle him and at times I
had problems with him. (biting and scratching). Mario grew to be 30# of solid muscle. I had him for 7 years before he developed osteosarcoma. Every vet, I had a few, said they thought he was a hybrid. I have told my story over and over. Wild or hybrid these cats do not make good pets. Mario was my boy. I stuck by him. Even held him during hurricane Andrew. He howled and shook for four hours. However if I had children, I never could have kept him. Please pass my story along.

Thanks. Jan Kelley

Super Feral

6 June 2007

Wild-domestic fashion pets sneaking past quarantine leaves native animals at risk Serval-cat “supercat” shouldn’t be let in without scrutiny A loophole in Australia’s biosecurity system means hybrid African Serval-domestic cat crosses can be imported into the country with no assessment of their potential to decimate native wildlife.

Chief Executive of the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, Professor Tony Peacock, pointed out the loophole to the Quarantine and Biosecurity Review in Canberra today.
“Hybrids of wild animals and domestic animals are a stupid American trend to breed more and more exotic pets” says Professor Peacock. “No one anticipated such animals when our quarantine laws were formulated, so we apply a definition that a fifth generation wild-domestic cross is legally a “domestic” animal and so escapes proper scrutiny”.

“Fourteen of these wild-cross cats are currently in quarantine on their way to Australia and have apparently passed all Federal requirements. We hope the Queensland Government will classify them Class 1 Pest Animals under State Legislation and ban them, but this sort of thing should be a Federal responsibility. An Adelaide breeder is advertising animals available in 2009”.

“This loophole will effectively lead to fitting a nuclear warhead to our already devastating feral cat population. So-called “Savannah cats” are more than double the size of domestic cats and can jump two metres from a standing start. Haven’t our native animals got enough to contend with?”

The practice of hybridising wild and domestic animals deserves much more scrutiny itself. An American breeder describes the issue on her own website:
...it can be extremely difficult to accomplish the Serval to domestic cat breeding. Whether it be the Serval male to the domestic female (which is most often the case), or to attempt a female Serval to a domestic male ... because the Serval body type is so much longer and taller, this makes the pairing physically quite challenging. Add to that the differences in behavior between a wild cat and a domestic cat, and in some cases, too much aggression on the part of an intact adult Serval ...

“I think anyone that forced a mating of an African Serval and a domestic cat in Australia would find themselves in serious discussion with animal welfare authorities” said Professor Peacock. “It is certainly a practice we shouldn’t condone by allowing people to import this new style of fashion animal. We need to update our quarantine rules to keep up with this exotic pet trend”.

The same loophole would allow a variety of hybrid cats and potentially wolf-dog hybrids if they pass disease regulations.

“The Quarantine and Biosecurity Review provides a great opportunity to point out anomalies that need attention. This
issue has arisen from the practice of breeding new animals that did not exist when laws and regulations were framed.”

“Our native animals are at risk because of a fashionable desire to own an exotic pet. The impact on these vulnerable species will remain long after the fashion dies out” said Professor Peacock.

**Fashion breeds of cat bred through mating wild cats:**

“Bengal Cat” hybrid with Leopard Cat Prionailurus bengalensis (SE Asia, 6.8 kg) (already in Australia)

“Savannah Cat” hybrid with Serval Leptailurus serval (Africa, 20 kg)

“Safari Cat” hybrid with Geoffroy’s cat Leopardus geoffroyi (S. America, 4 kg)

“Chausie” hybrid with Jungle Cat Felis chaus (Asia, 16 kg)

“Serengeti cat” Bengal cat/ Asian Short-haired cat hybrid

See Big Cat Rescue’s concerns: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiLAcEp5Vng](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiLAcEp5Vng)
MORE INFORMATION:

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But What About An F4 Bengal Cat?

I’ve had my F4 Bengal, Lelu, for nine years, since she was about 15 weeks old. She was a rescue from a terrible breeder, who is thankfully no longer in business. After nearly a decade, I have some warnings for people looking to buy a hybrid cat:

1. **HYBRID CATS ARE DESTRUCTIVE.** No matter how well trained, no matter how sweet, they destroy things. I have to keep fragile knick knacks in locked china cases. Anything that is out has to be able to take the fall and not break, because she will knock it off whatever it is sitting on. She chews holes in mini blinds just to get a better view. If it is shaped like a pen or pencil, she will take it; this includes pulling straws out of drinks while you are holding them. If it has fur, leather, suede or feathers on it, she will attack it, drag it to her “den,” chew it to shreds, and usually pee on it for good measure. She steals shiny things, such as rings or bracelets, tears up vent covers, and drops the jewelry inside. I’ve done more to Lelu-proof my house than I ever had to do when my daughter was a baby.
2. HYBRID CATS WILL HAVE NIGH UNBREAKABLE HABITS. It took two years to break Lelu of the habit of nursing – sucking on my shirt, frequently in the middle of the night so I’d wake up with a giant cat drool spot. She yowls, constantly, louder than a Siamese, and nothing can make her stop. I had to learn to tune it out just so I could sleep or watch TV. She bites. She plays with water in the toilet – and will lift the lid if you close it so she can keep playing. I did manage to get her to use a scratching post (Lelu is NOT declawed), but it took years and a constant application of cat nip. Now, I cannot replace it – she will not accept a substitution. She guards the food – and maintains her place as alpha cat in the house violently if necessary. Fortunately, my other cat is perfectly comfortable letting her run the show.

3. HYBRID CATS WILL ATTACH TO ONE PERSON. While this may sound like a good thing, it can be a very bad one. Lelu is attached to me, which means that no matter where I am in the house or what I’m doing, she is there. If I am seated, she is in my lap, including at the dinner table. Pushing her down does no good – she never takes the hint. She will keep jumping into my lap, or she will dig her claws in to prevent being pushed off of me. She follows me into the bathroom,
even gets in the shower with me. If I close a door to keep her out, she will actually rip chunks out of the door. When I leave the house, she yowls until a return. When I go on vacation, she won’t eat. If someone sits next to me on the couch, she will wiggle her way between us in order to establish her possession of me. She has attacked people who try to remove her from my lap. I would expect that if I ever gave her to another home, she would completely lose the thin veneer of domesticity she has.

4. **HYBRID CATS RARELY GET ALONG WITH OTHER PETS.** I have, through a great deal of patience and extremely slow integration over a period of months, managed to get Lelu to accept three additional pets, two other cats and a ferret. In each case, I had to have the new pet locked in one room for over a month, only bringing them together under supervision. Even still, Lelu is extremely territorial and possessive – she tolerates the other animals, but there is no real bond. She gets along best with my ferret, but I think that’s because my ferret is the only pet I have that can outrun her. It is also my understanding that the two of them getting along is highly unusual.
5. **HYBRID CATS ARE NEUROTIC.** Every Bengal I’ve ever seen or heard of has some sort of anxiety issues. Lelu, for example, stress grooms. The insides or her front legs are completely devoid of fur. If she’s under extreme stress, she will actually lick skin off until she bleeds.

6. **HYBRID CATS ARE KILLERS.** I have a dirt crawl space in my house, so I get mice, insects, even the occasional snake. Lelu kills them. She doesn’t play with them, she pounces, kills, and walks away. This is great for keeping my house pest free without chemicals, but not such a good habit when you bring a new baby pet home. She tried to kill a kitten I rescued from outside. I was helping to rehab a deformed chick hatchling from a class project, and she actually tore the latching cage top off the cage to get to the chick (fortunately I heard the noise and caught her in time). I watch very carefully when babies are around, too.

7. **HYBRID CATS ARE SMART.** Lelu can open any door she can get leverage or a grip on. Everything must lock or latch, or she will open it. She understands how to use mirrors to see around corners, and recognizes her own reflection vs. another cat’s. She actually uses the full length mirror in my bedroom to attack my other cats. She can and will open pill
bottles that don’t have safety caps. She fishes cigarettes out of packs and eats them. She flushes toilets to watch the water run. She turns the stereo on and off to watch the lights flicker. Nothing is safe.

8. **HYBRID CATS HAVE STRANGE HEALTH ISSUES.** Lelu has a chronic cough; nothing gets rid of it or alleviates it. I’ve heard of bowel issues in Bengals, as well as neurological problems such as seizures or nervous tics. They also have strange reactions to normal veterinary medicines; you cannot take your hybrid to a regular veterinarian, you must take them to an exotic vet. Fortunately, I live near one of the best exotic pet clinics in the country. Lelu is allergic to flea bites. The one time she got fleas each bite turned into a huge weeping sore. When I got her spayed, she ripped the stitches out three times, two times by bending around the funnel collar, until there wasn’t enough flesh left to re-stitch. We had to pack the raged open wound with Neosporin to get it to heal. The scar is horrific.

In conclusion, I would say that it takes a very unusual person to keep a hybrid cat, and keep them well and happy. It’s similar to having a baby, except imagine the baby is deaf and will stay in their terrible twos for 15-20 years. I love my cat, and have not
regretted any sacrifice I have made to give her a happy home. I will continue to own rescued hybrids – I know how to raise and care for them now, they fit with my personality and lifestyle, and so many need good homes that I could provide, I feel obligated to do what I can to help. But if you value your knick knacks, want a low maintenance pet, or just “like the look” of a hybrid, you need to NOT own one. They are, and will continue to be throughout their lives, wild animals. If what you want is a spotted cat, check out the oicat breed – they are not hybrids.

Christine Stark majackmail@yahoo.com
Thank You For Meeting JoJo

JoJo is one of the lucky ones. He has found a life long home at Big Cat Rescue in Tampa, Florida.

Many many other hybrids are not so lucky.

YOU can help make a difference on several issues facing wild cats. Go to CatLaws.com frequently to stay up to date on issues that YOU can help with.
Check your knowledge with a fun little quiz.
Question 1 of 10
The name Caracal is derived from a _________ word “karakulak” meaning “black ear.”

- A. Spanish
- B. Swedish
- C. Turkish

The correct answer is C. Turkish.
Question 1 of 10
The name Serval is derived from a Portuguese word meaning what?

A. “wolf-deer”
B. beautiful cat
C. cat with big ears
Thank you for reading JoJo’s book.

Please share it with your friends.

The End
African Serval

The name Serval is derived from a Portuguese word meaning “wolf-deer.”

Servals are found in well-watered savannah long-grass environments, associated with reed beds and other riparian vegetation types. They occupy a variety of habitats all associated with water sources, they range up into grasslands and can penetrate deep dense forests along waterways and grassy patches, but are absent from rain forests. They will make use of arid areas in extreme instances, and have occasionally done so in parts of south-western Africa.

Distribution: sub-Saharan Africa, with small populations in south-west Africa, and a reported relict population in North Africa (no recent sightings confirmed).

Related Glossary Terms

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Big Cat Rescue

Big Cat Rescue is the largest accredited sanctuary in the world dedicated entirely to abused and abandoned big cats. We are home to over 100 lions, tigers, bobcats, cougars and other species most of whom have been abandoned, abused, orphaned, saved from being turned into fur coats, or retired from performing acts.

Big Cat Rescue

12802 Easy Street

Tampa, Florida 33625

www.BigCatRescue.org

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Caracal Lynx

The name Caracal is derived from a Turkish word “karakulak” meaning black ear.” The Caracal is capable of leaping into the air and knocking down 10-12 birds at one time!

Often referred to as the desert lynx, the Caracal does not actually possess the same physical attributes of members of the lynx family, such as the characteristic ruff of hair around the face. Instead, it has a short, dense coat, usually a uniform tawny-brown to brick-red, and black (melanistic) individuals have been recorded.

Caracals live in the drier savannah and woodland regions of sub-Saharan Africa and prefer the more scrubby, arid habitats. They will also inhabit evergreen and montane forests, but are not found in tropical rain forests.

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In a nutshell, it is an irresponsible thing to do and there is no redeeming reason to cross breed these cats nor to support those who do by buying one. It almost never works out for the individual cat and in the rare case it does, the number of animals that had to suffer in order for this one rare cat to exist is staggering.

HYBRID CATS ARE DESTRUCTIVE. HAVE NIGH UNBREAKABLE HABITS, ATTACH TO ONE PERSON, RARELY GET ALONG WITH OTHER PETS, ARE NEUROTIC, and HAVE STRANGE HEALTH ISSUES.

Related Glossary Terms
African Serval, Caracal Lynx