



The Wildcat Sanctuary

UPROAR!

JANUARY 2024 | ISSUE 36

Sushi, fishing cat

The Wildcat Sanctuary UPROAR!

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Erin, cheetah

Tammy Thies

Founder & Executive Director

Julie Hanan

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Kemp, staff, interns and volunteers.



THE WILDCAT SANCTUARY

Mission: Provide natural sanctuary to wild cats in need and inspire change to end the captive wildlife crisis.

Vision: Help create a world where wild animal sanctuaries are no longer needed.

The Wildcat Sanctuary is a tax-exempt charity under the IRS code section 501c3, our federal tax ID number is 22-3857401.



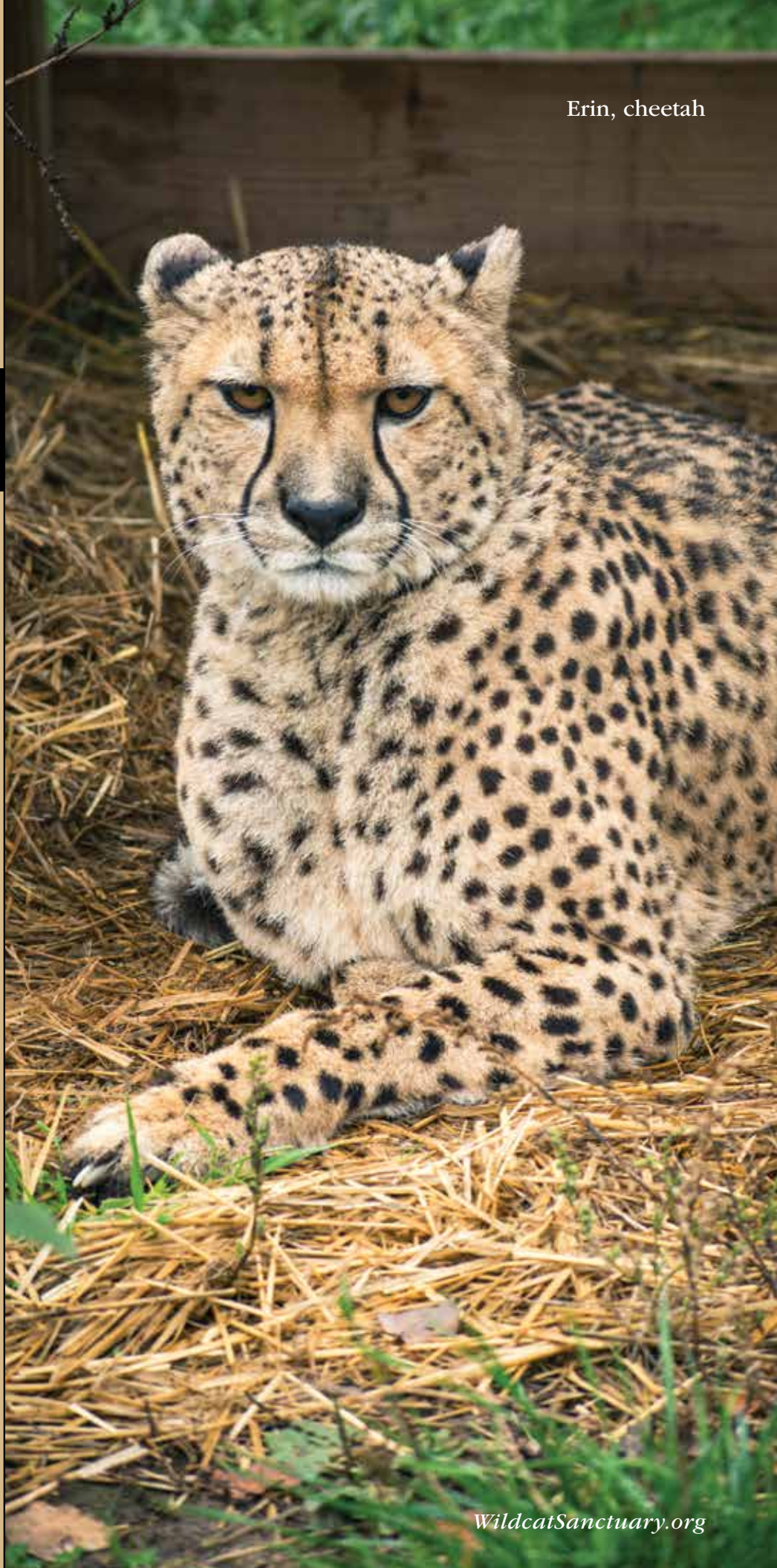
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WildcatSanctuary.org

From the Founder



A Rescuer's Truth

You are aware of all the amazing work you help us do! From rescue to vet care, to customized habitats for each cat. Giving to the max for the cats each day is a sanctuary truth. But there's also a sanctuary truth that most don't share or talk about. I'm not sure why.

Maybe sharing makes us feel vulnerable or less than, maybe we think supporters don't want to see the times we're breaking behind the scenes. But I think it's important to share just how hard sanctuary work is.

Yes, sanctuary work is physically hard, but it's the emotional aspect that can make the work we do unbearable.

There are so many layers to our work.

Rescuer's Routine

The animal aspect and seeing so much abuse and neglect. To the frustrations of waiting for the legislative process to intervene while animals are sold, traded, neglected, and die. The work and rework as we build, move cats around and adjust staffing levels for rescues that might never happen.

When they do, we're given a moment's notice to load our equipment, assign staff to be away, assign additional staff to cover back at the sanctuary, and get to the rescue site. Once we remove the animals from filthy pens to bring back to the sanctuary, you'd think we'd have some fulfillment of success.

Sadly, in most cases, we're too busy to take note. We're ensuring the new rescues aren't too stressed or have health issues. We set up blinds or move them to new areas when they're afraid of their neighbors because they're in a new place with new species.

At the same time, staff are medicating, caring, and providing enrichment to our existing residents. And often, we miss the opportunity to see our residents play with enrichment and enjoy a new platform or new habitat they've moved to.

The phone is ringing from an owner of a wild cat upset that we don't have time to listen to their story about why they need us to take their wild cat who isn't working out. They interview us on how the cat will be cared for, how often they can visit, and how much time we'll spend with their "pet" who just bit them.

The caretaker's shift is over, but they're helping put away items from the rescue trailer. They chose to stay extra hours because their day was so busy caring for the cats. They didn't even get a chance to stop, to enjoy the cats they were caring for, and now they want some quiet time with a few of their favorites.





Emails begin coming in from others in the animal field questioning why the cats came to our sanctuary and not theirs or another. They have no idea how long we worked on this case and why it had to be confidential. Breeders and dealers start posting horrible things about us on social media trying to discredit us and the sanctuary community.

The public starts posting that they want to see the new rescues and we aren't transparent. Then, when we post rescues, people start posting set them free, why aren't there more trees, why are they so skinny?

A staff member approaches and wants to know why they didn't get to go on the rescue or care for the new cats in quarantine. The staff member is deflated, they just spent the last 48 hours building everything the new rescues would need in record time to make sure they were safe.

Volunteers are onsite giving of their time while the staff scurries around them to get a cat who's at the end of life to the hospital. Others are unloading the confidential new rescues trying not to let the

volunteers know of the federal case. The volunteer who loves us and the cats leaves that day feeling something is off and they were left out.

A top donor is onsite for their first visit in many years. The tour guide is excited to share the sanctuary with them. A private radio call she receives is emotionally dismissed for a later time. The supporters need her time right now, even though they would understand. The call was about a longtime resident who was being seen at our onsite vet hospital. Bloodwork showed renal failure and they won't be waking the cat up, a goodbye this staff member misses.

A horn at the front gate can be heard across the property. Is it the 40,000 lbs. of chicken or maybe the propane vendor? No, it's the USDA for their surprise inspection and now our focus has to be with them for the next several hours.

After two years, a member of the leadership team is on a much-deserved vacation. But now the staff feels shorthanded. They want to be happy



for the person, but they're not feeling supported during the absence.

A facilities staff member sends an email that the transmission is out in the truck and wants to know how to proceed since a beef run is scheduled. Is there room in the budget to repair or purchase a new one? Do we need a board vote or approval?

The news reports that a tiger was found loose in a home during a raid and calls start coming in if we've seen the story. We want to ensure the tiger goes to a reputable place, so we need to make calls back to authorities and other sanctuaries. When we do, other facilities who thought the tiger was coming to them feel undermined and start sending texts.

The public has started posting news articles about the tiger and where it should go. Each sanctuary and facility is tagged, a number of times, requesting a response.

Near the end of their shift, each staff member and intern finally get a chance to say good-bye to the cat who passed away earlier. He's covered

with a blanket on the vet table. Many didn't get the chance to be present, no matter how much they wanted to be. Some staff are stoic, others sobbing, each emotionally exhausted.

Always a rescuer

One by one they go home, except for those who have the overnight shift or those who are going to pet sit for the nightshift caretakers. Others go home to their families. But what isn't fair to the families is this is the first time in their day that sanctuary staff get to finally process all that happened today.

Emotions are raw or emotions are buried. We try to adjust to a sense of normalcy. That is, until the late-night call comes in...it may be a snowstorm, an electrical issue or a volunteer who helps with fundraising projects after work.

We are always sanctuary staff, no matter the time of day, on holidays, every day of every year.

I want to acknowledge all the compassionate and selfless people in the sanctuary community. What you do is hard, really hard. Thank you for giving to the max, even when you have little left to give.

You are important. You are seen. And you are appreciated!

Our goal at The Wildcat Sanctuary is not only to give the cats what they need to thrive but also our staff. When you support us, we can make sure our staff is compensated appropriately, receives much-deserved time off to regenerate, receives special services for self-care and compassion fatigue and more.

Our animals can only be cared for as well as our people are cared for. Thank you for supporting us so we can support them!

With love,

Tammy Thies

Founder & Executive Director



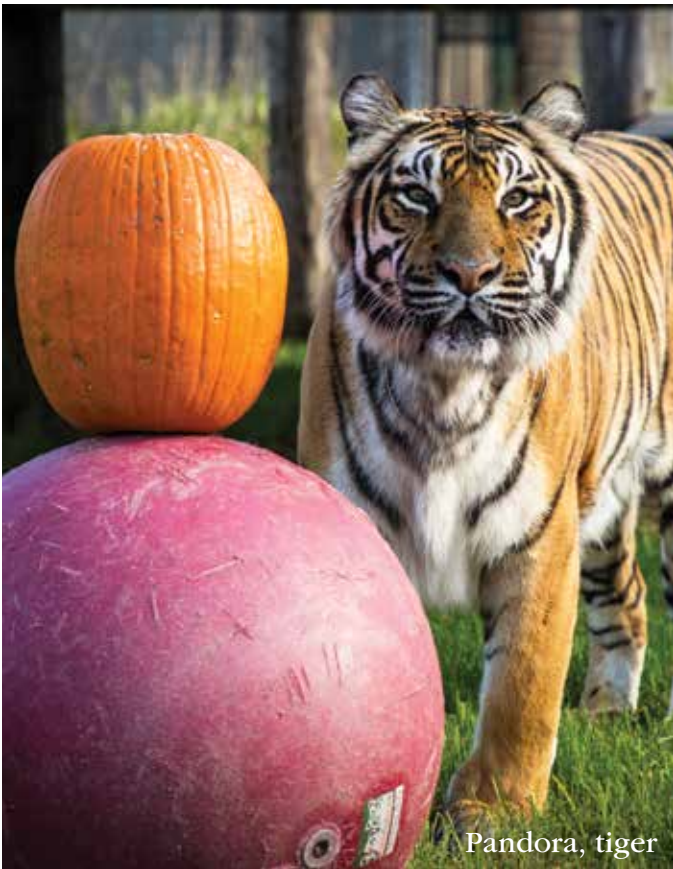
Alana, lion



Sofia, lion



Taras, lion



Pandora, tiger



Shadow, leopard



Griffen, tiger



Taras, Lesya Stefania, lions



Simon, tiger

Recognition For Our Work



Dash, tiger

Carole Noon Award

The Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries Carole Noon Award is given annually to an individual who embodies and puts into practice the GFAS philosophy of vision, dedication, and excellence in animal care at sanctuaries.

The Wildcat Sanctuary's Founder and Executive Director, Tammy Thies was this year's 2023 award recipient.

As Tammy put it, "It is an honor to receive this recognition. However, it takes a team. I could not do the work I do without the amazing staff, board and volunteers that give 110% each day to rescue cats out of deplorable conditions and put an end to the captive wildlife crisis."



4-Star Charity Rating

Something that's very important to us is that you know we're being good stewards of your donations.

Our sanctuary has been evaluated by Charity Navigator, the world's largest and most trusted nonprofit evaluator, and earned a Four-Star Rating again!

We've also been awarded the Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency on GuideStar!

24 Small Cats Rescued

Meet our 8 new Asian Leopard Cats



Aiden



Apollo



Eve



Mindy

Dozens of exotic cats were found in a Texas home living in cramped and filthy conditions. The breeder of the cats, who'd been cited for several animal welfare violations, had recently passed away.

The United States Department of Agriculture and the Houston SPCA reached out to us to help with the rescue of the 24 Asian leopard cats, including 5 kittens and one with a leg amputation.

Asian Leopard cats are small wild cats native to Asia. Leopard cats are agile climbers and like to spend a lot of time in trees. They are elusive cats who tend to come out most during the night hours.

Their stunning beauty has caused their overbreeding for the pet market, often sold for \$5,000 - \$20,000.

Our staff flew to the Houston SPCA immediately to care for these Asian leopard cats. TWS' Executive Director then organized the transfer of all the wildcats to reputable sanctuaries, ranging across the country from Oregon to North Carolina.

Our sanctuary chose to accept eight of the leopard cats who lived alone or had health issues

since they would be the hardest to place. But, after one of the bonded pair scheduled to go to another sanctuary became critically ill and passed away, we accepted the one remaining, too. Out of the 10, 2 sadly have passed away due to their advanced renal disease.



Minerva



Penelope



Rue



Sam

Catio Town— the first ever of its kind!



Exotic hybrid cats are all the rage on social media, made especially popular by influencers and A-List celebrities. Their stunning beauty has caused overbreeding and impulse purchases. But too often, they end up cast aside due to their unwanted behaviors.



The Wildcat Sanctuary is one of only a few sanctuaries to specialize in rescuing the smaller wildcats—including hybrids. We're currently home to 50+ hybrids and small cat species and the requests just keep coming in.



Coco, savannah cat



Safiya, Egyptian Mau



We need your help to do something BIG in 2024 for the little cats! Catio Town is the answer!

- This new building will provide **dynamic space year-round**—complete with 10 indoor suites, 10 outdoor catios, and a **central playroom** to conduct playdates that will provide even more socialization.
- It will increase more **one-on-one attention and affection** for those cats that want it, as well as more time for the enrichment they love.
- This will **increase our capacity** to help more small cats and hybrids.
- Our current areas are deteriorating and beyond repair.
- The new design will decrease the hours of mowing and shoveling maintenance.
- Outdoor catios will have **waterfalls, grass beds** and other natural features.

**You can be a part of Catio Town—
the first of its kind for hybrids and small cats!**

- **Hybrid Hero** levels range from \$2,500 - \$7,499.
- **Founding Members** who give \$7,500 or more will be invited to the Move-In Ceremony and group tour.
- **Naming opportunities** begin at \$10,000.

We will have many more opportunities to give at any level when we break ground in 2024. So stay tuned!

**If you'd like to be a Hybrid Hero or
Founding member,
please contact Tammy Thies at
cat@wildcatsanctuary.org or call
320-245-6871.**



Bungalow in need of repairs



Cinders, bengal



Riku, bengal



Monica, savannah



Maximillion,
savannah cat



Leo, savannah and Eddy, bengal



Merlin, bengal

Exotic Breeders Shut Down

With the recent passage of the Big Cat Public Safety Act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be relying on sanctuaries to transport and provide permanent placement of big cats seized under the law.

In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture has been closing facilities that are in violation of the Animal Welfare Act. This is causing an influx of small cats needing sanctuary. Based on our expertise with small wildcats, The Wildcat Sanctuary has been called on to lead many of these rescue cases.

Life Before



Even Keel Exotics Closed After Violations

Even Keel Exotics was an exotic animal dealer who bought, sold, and exploited animals through paid animal encounters. Sadly, they even offered encounters with young animals who had been taken from their mothers at just days and weeks old.

Since 2014, USDA inspection reports cite an astonishing 74 violations of the Animal Welfare Act, including animals being deprived of water and denied veterinary care. Inspectors found animals living in cramped, filthy cages that didn't even provide adequate shelter from inclement weather.

Thankfully, this facility was permanently closed by authorities, and we were contacted to rescue two caracals, a fishing cat, and a young serval from the property.

Our staff members were the first onsite and safely removed the cats housed there, bringing them back to the sanctuary. All four have received intake exams and have been spayed or neutered.

Caracals Mohave and Amira have moved into their free-roaming habitat in Small Cat Track. Serval Thane will eventually live near other servals. Our plan is to build Sushi, the Fishing Cat, a habitat customized for her needs once funds are raised.

You can help by donating at WildcatSanctuary.org or calling us at 320-245-6871.

Meet our new caracals, serval and fishing cat



Amira, caracal



Mojave, caracal



Thane, serval

Life at the Sanctuary



Sushi, fishing cat



Sushi, fishing cat

Illegal Breeder Cited for having 80 animals

Months ago, we received a call from Humane Society investigators regarding a large Minnesota case. A breeder possessed no permits, was not compliant with county or state laws, and had 80 breeding animals in rows of small filthy cages including bobcats, lynx, fox and wolves.

The first pictures we saw were heart-wrenching. Tiny, filthy cages. Only plastic dogloos for shelter. Piles of meat, carcasses, and feces. And very skinny cats. And yet sadly, none of this met the criteria for a cruelty case by state statute. So, authorities moved forward with this as a contraband case.

On the day of the seizure, our team assisted the Humane Society, Department of Natural Resources and county officials in removing the remaining animals from the property.

Our staff were able to safely coax the two Canada lynx and three bobcats into transport crates without sedation. Because they were thin, they were extremely motivated for food.

Once in the transport trailer, they calmed down quickly. Finally, in a warm and clean place for the first time in their lives, they went right to sleep.

We remained on site to provide immobilization services for the wolf dogs that were going to another facility. We wanted to support authorities, ensuring no animals remained at the end of the day.

This rescue was months in the making and almost didn't happen at all. We were prepared for their arrival when the case began early in the summer.

After it was postponed two times, we'd already opened our available areas up to four Michigan cats and 10 Asian leopard cats in need of rescue.

But we couldn't leave these five cats behind. Our staff was able to quickly build temporary areas for these Minnesota cats. They have heated dens, platforms and more, ensuring these cats enjoy the comfort they'd never had before.

At this point, we've incurred the cost of intake exams, spays, neuters, and much-needed proper nutrition. All the residents will need habitats built for them next year with indoor heated areas.



Life Before

Meet our new Canada lynx and bobcats

Life at the Sanctuary



Bonnie, bobcat



Clyde, bobcat



Kaya, bobcat



Meeko, Canada lynx



Ripley, Canada lynx



Meeko's intake exam

2023 In Review

- Welcomed **29 new residents** and said goodbye to 9 beloved cats. Assisted the Department of Justice, the United States Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Natural Resources on several seizure cases.
- **Repaired several habitats** that had been damaged from the winter's ice storm.
- Purchased **2 additional UTVs** for daily feeding, rounds and more.
- Invested in **emergency and crisis response equipment** for our safety plan and ability to deploy to help other facilities during disasters.
- New **customized rescue trailer** was purchased.
- Purchased a new **X-ray machine** customized for large animals.
- New **platform system** built for Eurasian Lynx, Beauty.
- Added increased **heated room space** and customized **outdoor dens** for the three cheetahs.
- Excavation of tigers **Terek and Polina's yard** for better drainage.
- Many room-to-room guillotines were installed inside animal buildings to give the cats more and **larger options for indoor quarters**.
- Construction of several **temporary catios and enclosures** for the increased rescues.
- New **electric upgrade** for the property was installed.
- New **security system** through the sanctuary was completed.
- **Specialty surgeries** were performed on serval Scarlet and domestic cat Josie.
- **U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar visited** the sanctuary to learn about our work and what support is needed for the Big Cat Public Safety Act.



What's Ahead for 2024



- **Build Catio Town** to accommodate small and hybrid cats. This includes temporarily moving cats to other areas of the sanctuary and demolishing several current bungalows to construct a 60' x 90' new building with catios.
- Add two **Cats' Meow Pavilions** with garden landscaping for staff, volunteers and donors as reflection and recharge areas.
- Upgrade the remaining hybrid yards with **new buildings**.
- Share our **Strategic Plan** with our supporters and key stakeholders.
- Fundraise and construct **new habitats and heated areas** for Sushi the Fishing Cat and recent bobcats/lynx rescues.
- Upgrade **outdoor Wi-Fi** throughout the sanctuary to provide better service for observation cameras, enrichment TVs and social media.
- Continue **Board of Directors recruitment** and succession planning for leadership team.
- **Lead by example** to continue professionalizing the industry through adequate staffing levels, increased compensation, and benefits.
- **2 additional caretaker positions** will be added to ensure the same amazing care for the new rescues.
- Continue to elevate TWS Animal Care with new approaches to **medical needs and animals' psychological well-being**.
- Implement a **vet technician intern program** to train future sanctuary workers.
- **Remove the bunkhouse trailer** to create more space around Rescue Bay.
- Continue to upgrade sanctuary and township **roads and parking areas**.

*Gifts of \$50+ received
7/20-11/26/2023*

In Honor & In Memory

In Honor

In honor of Teresa K. who cared so deeply and helped so many for so many years
Topper "the human"

In honor of Teresa K. Thank you for your years of commitment and dedication to TWS and the cats
Bernadette Meier

In honor of Adele Burrows. Merry Christmas!
Jacqueline Francis

In honor of Barbara Thies
Melissa Thomas

In honor of Paul Lashin's 60th birthday
The Lachant family

In honor of Cecilia Wynia's birthday
Terese Wynia

In honor of Connie Rakoski's birthday
Frances Town

In honor of my mom's birthday
Chris Simon

In honor of Heather McLeod
Pamela Hisey

In honor of my dad's birthday
Deborah Cerny

In honor of all creatures great and small
Kenneth and LouAnna Fulton

In honor of all the cats who have shared their lives with me
Mary Boulton

In honor of Elizabeth Eide's birthday
Kande Larson

In honor of Kismet
Christine Cox

In honor of my 66th birthday. Always and forever for the cats!
Phyllis Hunt

In honor of my 67th birthday and the sanctuary cats I've come to love (especially the tigers)!
Julie and Gary Hockin

In honor of my beloved mother, Elsie Comstock, who loves big cats!
Laura Arleth

In honor of my brave kitty, Kiely
Michelle Bayerle

In honor of my favorite cat, Daisy
Diane McKay

In honor of Taras, Lesya, Stefania, & Prada
Erika Thorne

In honor of the Asian leopard cat rescue effort
Cynthia Barstad

In honor of Linda Hall and Tracy Lynn's birthday
Faith Susan Warner

In honor of Jane Speller
Jennifer Martinuzzi

In honor of Jill Housel who requested donations to your sanctuary instead of gifts for her 9th birthday. Happy Birthday Jill!
Anelise Santiago

In honor of Judy Tull's birthday
Denise Holcom

In honor of Edward Brown for Christmas
Mike Tharp

In honor of Michael L. Lockhart
James Lockhart

In honor of my amazing wife Leslie on her birthday! All My Love Forever
Gregory Griffin

In honor of my father, Michael
Cary Begole

In honor of Sally Thornton
Edward and Deanna Kramer

In honor of Terri Register
Mandy Sheldrake

In honor of Theo
Debra Ehret Miller

In honor of my dad and my cat, Katmandu
Chris Johnston

In honor of Violeta, Lucy, Indy and for all cats in crisis
Diana Price

In honor of our daughter-in-law Pilar Seacord for her birthday
John and Cynthia Seacord

In Memory

In memory of Arleen J. Deech
From her friends and family

In memory of sweet Gracie
Kerri and Sam Maxwell

In Memory of Bob Barker
Deep appreciation from The Wildcat Sanctuary

In memory of Bob Barker
Wells Fargo Community Support Program

In memory of Cathy J Matthews, in honor of her love for TWS
Jan Paul Matthews

In memory of Chantel
Eric Bertagnoli, Sue Bloyer, Cecilia Claudio, Yvette Davis, Dale and Lauren Kramer, Dr. Kimberly Lannon, Christine and Dorothy Metcalf, Bonnie Reiland, Ruth Vork

In memory of Copper, River, Panda, Suzie and Daisy
Nancy Bolin

In memory of Clara and Splash
Joe Butkus

In memory of Dan Larson who loved all cats
Jan Johnston

In memory of Debra Brown
Steve Brown, Jan Ekroos, Mark Rasmussen, Ann Fischer, Danny Tolle

In memory of F J Avaloz
Karen Avaloz

In memory of Hanie
Kristina Kjellberg

In memory of Dale Frones, a joy to have known him
Julie and David Patton, Ruth Olson

In memory of my 18-year-old Bengal Boy, Calvin
Belinda Kenyon

In memory of all the sanctuary cats we have lost
Linda Meyer

In memory of Beaner Gronseth, a small golden tabby known as the "Mountain Lion" by her vets
Nancy Gronseth

In memory of Chupino

Ron and Lois Dixon

In memory of Clara and Splash

Joe Butkus

In memory of Finnegan, my longtime companion, age 16, who crossed over the Rainbow Bridge

Kate and Joan Hibben

In memory of Lucy and in celebration of Marley

Pete and Jodi Roth

In memory of Mary VanDerlip

Roger VanDerlip

In memory of Miss Kitty

George and Elizabeth Naylor

In memory of my beloved dogs Allison, Yukon, Max and Duke

Ruth Conley

In memory of my beloved Goose

Jan Johnston

In memory of my brother James P. Grimes

Jonathan Grimes, Philadelphia, Tabatha, and Clara

In memory of my dear friend Shanti Thayil

Devi Book

In memory of my dear wife Kim who was an enthusiastic supporter of The Wildcat Sanctuary on what would have been our 45th wedding anniversary

Joel Meline

In memory of my mom, Betty, who loved all the cats, big and small

Sara Stueve

In memory of my niece Megan's dog Buster Brown who was her best friend for 14 years

Julie and Gary Hockin

In memory of my sweet daughter Holly. She was a big fan of The Wildcat Sanctuary

Penny Maki

In memory of my sweet Otis

Cindy Kosen

In memory of our Shadow

George and Elizabeth Naylor

In memory of Puma and ChiChi, who received sliced chicken breast every day with their hard food. XO

Nancy Gronseth

In memory of Sasha, Kathy's cat

Lynn Krapf

In memory of Tonka, my first sponsor cat

Janet and Dan Davis

In memory of Tuna, much loved and gone way too soon

Kande Larson

In memory of William Sanchez, Peg Houle's father

Eileen Rathbun

In memory of Jeff Meredith, my IDEXX colleague who truly enjoyed supporting the Wildcat Sanctuary

Lori Harms

In memory of Jennifer Whitesell

Katherine Erredge

In memory of Ken Czupta and Sandy Holevas

Donna Czupta Grabowski

In memory of Leaf-Off-a-Tree

Sally Rector

In memory of Mark Maxon

Barbara Kausch

In memory of Minka

Matt Gust

In memory of Misha, my feline soul mate

Diane Palmersheim

In memory of my beautiful husband Kent

Elitza Brown

In memory of my beautiful sister, Colleen

Sheri and Chris Vitullo

In memory of my beloved kitty, Ollie

Kari Davidson

In memory of my cat, Kat Mando

Chris Johnston

In memory of my house panther, Nigel

Mary Rownd

In memory of my mom and dad, Evelynne and Adrian Helgeson

Randi Helgeson

In memory of my mom

Kathleen Stein

In memory of my precious boy, Lucky

Nancy Bailey

In memory of my sister, Yvonne Kelly

Marie Wilkinson

In memory of Nancy Morgan

Carrah Abele

In memory of Oscar Mayer & Kitty

Donna Kennedy

In memory of our sweet boy Jake

Kurt and Jennifer Indermaur

In memory of Pat Baker

Sue Lynott

In memory of Roary, my precious cat

Norma Buchanan

In memory of Steve Peters

Pete and Jodi Roth

In memory of my dearest friend, Trayone Young

MJ Byrnes

In memory of Tweets and Goldie

Sheila Roberts

In memory of Ty

Sharon Bovie, Karen Eckert, Bonnie Reiland, Amy Schwabe, George Wetzel and Lorrie Money

In memory of Wanda Paul

Heather Macleod

In memory of Wayne and Joan Dvorak

Lisa and David Mason

In memory of Ziva

Anne McKinney



Eve, Asian leopard cat

Eve, we are glad you had a chance to know love and compassion.



Ty, chausie

Ty, may there be more cats you can comfort on the other side.



Bosco, African serval

Bosco, we were blessed with so many years to love and care for you.



Ziva, Asian Leopard cat

Ziva, we are thankful you were able to feel the grass on your feet and sun on your face.



THE WILDCAT SANCTUARY



PO Box 314 • Sandstone, MN • 55072

NONPROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
TWIN CITIES MN
PERMIT 30308

Mark your calendars!



Aurora and Alana, lions

MIRACLE MATCH

March 1 – April 30, 2024

When your GIFT IS DOUBLED,
just think about how many wildcats
you can help!

That opportunity is coming up this
spring, so you won't want to miss it.

If you've wanted your gift to go
twice as far, **MIRACLE MATCH**
magically makes that happen. Your
\$20 instantly becomes \$40. Your \$50
becomes \$100, and so on.

Did you know caring for just one
big cat can cost as much as \$10,000
every single year, and we have over
140 wild cats to support!

That's why we hope you'll share
this giving opportunity with friends
and family, too. Thank you!

Details at
WildcatSanctuary.org