

March/April 2009



VALLEY OF THE KINGS SANCTUARY & RETREAT

The Dug Mark

Sanctuary News

This has been the worst winter on record in American history. Record snowfall, wind chills of 35 below zero, ice storms, rain and flooding have caused a lot of problems in all of our lives. This newsletter has been extremely difficult to write as we have been on an unbelievable roller coaster since Christmas Eve with the loss of our beloved house cat "Coco Muffy" and "Misty" the cougar on December 26th.

On January 9th, one of our tigers, Electra, was found deceased in her winter house. We immediately took her to Dr Rudawski's in Fox Lake, Illinois to be posted and have tissue samples sent out to analyze. That same evening as I walked through tiger row in the upper compound, I discovered coughing tigers that had been fine that afternoon. Immediately we started a regimen of strong antibiotics, locked tiger row down in quarantine with yellow tape to make a barrier for no one to pass. We specially marked rakes, shovels and pans for enclosures and put disinfectant everywhere, then started saying prayers. Electra had only been ill two days, if that. She had been out Wednesday January 7th with her

buddies and all was well. Less than 48 hours later she was gone!

The day after Electra died, Timmy would not come out of his house and would not eat. We started him on injectable antibiotics and he hung on for six days and then sadly died.

By now all of tiger row, which consisted of eleven tigers, were infected with the virus except for two. Socks and Chelsea appeared to be unaffected but were given antibiotics with everyone else,

just in case.

Antibiotics are not helpful against any virus, as a virus has to run its course. They hopefully prevent the virus from going into secondary pneumonia which is what kills them.

The same day we lost Timmy January 16th, Katia the lioness

died of old age issues and had slowly been failing since fall. It also was 35 degrees below zero which pushed her and Timmy over the edge. A very sick animal cannot survive in extreme cold temperatures even in a protected environment. If the body is using up all its energy fighting off a virus or depleted condition and trying to stay warm at the same time it is a death sentence.

A day after Timmy became ill we found Patti Abra in the same

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state. She also was given injectable antibiotics and watched very closely. By now the remainder of the tigers were eating and everything seemed to quiet down. They were back acting completely normal once more. We continued with injectable antibiotics for Patti and she seemed to rally. We really thought she was going to be our silver lining and make it through all our despair but it wasn't meant to be. Our beloved precious Patti died January 21st.

The heaviness of losing these beloved cats weighed on all our hearts for weeks and tears fell like pouring rain. It still cuts to the bone and the frustration of not being able to save them brings a ton of unbelievable grief and sadness. Had it not been for the extreme cold they all could have possibly survived. We sent out tissue samples from the cats and it came back Pneumonia which was the secondary cause, we knew we were dealing with a virus. Patti Abra's samples were sent to a special lab in California. We watched over the rest of the cats while we waited on pins and needles for the results. The findings were a feline virus yet all the cats had been vaccinated June of 2008.

There has never been a study done on large cats to see if they receive the same immunity that their smaller cousins do. Which is why some never showed any illness and the three tigers died at different stages once it went into secondary pneumonia. The veterinarians thought at first we were dealing with the newer Calici virus, but it did not come back as such. It may have very well been a mutation of some-

thing not picked up by the labs. We went through and revaccinated everyone with the newer Calici strain and we urge everyone reading this who have house cats to do the same as it is a matter of time before it hits the Chicago, Milwaukee area. We believe the virus was brought in by a feral neighboring cat as the outbreak was in the high compound. It did not spread any further and we praise the volunteers for following our exact directions, disinfection and protocol to keep it contained.

We were devastated at losing Electra, Timmy and Patti but grateful for not losing more. A Sanctuary in California lost 24 cats in a period of ten days to a canine virus a few years ago. Another facility lost a number of big cats in Texas from the new strain of Calici Virus. The big cats are very fragile and the average person would think otherwise. You always hear about other facilities losing animals due to a virus but never thinking one day it may be you.

Our heart aches for Assam with the loss of the love of his life and we will be putting Tia in with him when the weather breaks. Czar and Chelsea are still confused and look for Timmy and Electra. Whenever the water buckets were scrubbed, Timmy would peer through the fence to watch and would chuff and chuff. He was always the first cat on Tiger row to greet you. It is very difficult to walk among the tigers and not be greeted by these three beloved individuals. It is one of the hardest times we've have experienced throughout the years.

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Are you looking for a way to help the sanctuary financially, but don't know how? VOTK now accepts PayPal!

PayPal is a **secure** internet-based way to send and receive money. All you need is an email address and a credit card. Anyone can use PayPal to buy gift shop items, buy or renew memberships, or donate money to the sanctuary.

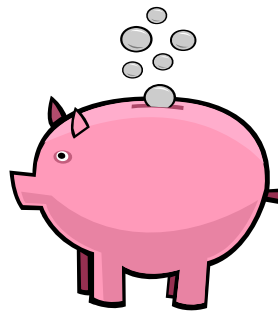
To use PayPal, simply log onto **www.paypal.com**. You will have to set up your own personal PayPal account (it's free), then click on "send money". Enter our email address **info@votk.org** for general contributions to VOTK or to donate to our **special moving and construction fund**. Enter the amount you wish to send. You can pay either with a credit card or checking account.

The sanctuary will then get an email, informing them of your donation. It's a quick and easy way to make a difference to the sanctuary, even if you can't make it up to see us every weekend!!



If you write us a check for a donation, please note on the check whether it is for our moving fund or for general fund.

HELP US TO GIVE THE ANIMALS ALL THEY DESERVE AND MORE BY CREATING A SAFE HAVEN AND TRUE SANCTUARY FOR ALL ETERNITY.



The Sanctuary can now accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover. We take major credit cards at the gift shop, over the phone for donations or membership, and at all fund raisers. We are thrilled this service is now available to our members and prospective members.

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Donate your used vehicles

We are looking for two and four wheel drive trucks, dump trucks, trailers (Gooseneck or pull behind), cars, boats, campers, RV's, all-terrain vehicles, farm and lawn tractors any size to be donated to the Sanctuary to use or raise funds to help the animals.



If we receive enough vehicles, we will have an auction day. All vehicles donated are tax deductible to the fullest extent. We ask that they be in good shape and road worthy. Any make, model or year. We have volunteers that can pick

them up. Please ask your friends, family and relatives; this fundraising idea has a huge potential.

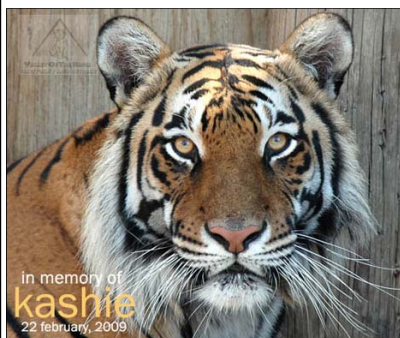
Contact Mary Bashford at 773-631-3142 or the Sanctuary at 262-736-9386.

In Memory ...

In memory of beloved Kashie

February 22, 1999 - February 22, 2009

Kashie lost her battle to cancer on her tenth birthday. We humanely put her to sleep and she was surrounded by many who loved her. She took a sudden turn for the worse and it was time to let her go. The week before, she was in great spirits, eating, drinking and sunning herself. Everyone's hopes were high she would be with us to enjoy the spring weather after this brutal winter but it wasn't meant to be. Our hearts ached and tears flowed but we all knew it was the right thing to do, a final act of kindness for a little precious tiger that didn't have a mean bone in her body.



Kashie came from a small Sanctuary in Minnesota, which we found out later was not a Sanctuary but a scam place that is now closed. All their animals have been placed elsewhere and the owners are serving time in prison. Their cats were thin, uncared for and they had a young girl get mauled by an escaped white tiger, that was later killed by authorities. The explanation they gave to everyone was, all the animals had just come in a

starved condition. At least Kashie had a great life with us in her short ten years of life. She never missed a meal and had such a sweet personality. Kashie made it easy for you to love her and she will never be forgotten. We will miss her presence for a long time to come. She truly was a little angel. She was sponsored by Tracy Haymaker.

In Memory of Skyhawk

Skyhawk our beloved blind appaloosa horse, was humanely put to sleep March 16th. Skyhawk came from a local riding stable for retirement because his vision was failing and no longer safe on trails. He lived with RC, our other blind horse, in the front area of the Sanctuary. He knew every inch of his pasture and stall. Never did he miss a beat going in and out of the stall on his own and would come running for carrots and apples. It was amazing to see how gentle he was when someone hand fed him treats. A year ago January we had one of his eyes removed at the Elkhorn Veterinary Clinic because it had turned into a painful condition. His teeth started falling out on their own and veterinarians were out many occasions for him the last six months of his life. He had but only a few teeth left and his other eye would have had to be removed this Spring. Skyhawk also had Cushing's disease and was on special medication. He was in excellent body condition for his age and loved to eat his special rice bran and alfalfa meal. On the 15th of March he went down and but was sitting up. He

had episodes like this before and always the following day he would be normal. On this occasion he did not recover and the following morning he didn't have the strength to rise. Something had gone wrong in his brain, possibly a stroke, so we let our beloved Skyhawk humanely go. His old owners told us of a time on a trail ride, Skyhawk had a young girl on his back who did not know how to ride well. Bees attacked them and Skyhawk, believe it or not stood his ground. He didn't buck, run or rear; he stayed calm the entire time. When they arrived back at the stable as Skyhawk was being untacked, bees were found under the saddle pad still stinging him. What an incredible story and tribute to this beloved horse. We buried him at the Sanctuary with others who have passed through the years. He is sadly missed. He was between 36 and 39 years old, which is extremely old for a horse.

In Memory of Costner

March 24th we discovered Costner, one of our wolf hybrids, deceased in his enclosure. We immediately took him to Dr Ru-



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in memory of our winter losses...



(clockwise from upper left: misty, kashie, timmy, coco muffy, electra, katia, patti abra, katree)

Fake Sanctuary!

In Palm Beach Florida the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission along with the Palm Beach Sheriff's office uncovered the rescue called "**Big Cat Organization**". It appears this organization existed entirely in cyberspace! The commission did aerial surveys and found the Big Cat Refuge did not exist. When confronted by officials, Heather Southworth admitted to making it all up. She ran a web site with photos of big cats and solicited charitable contributions! She was raising donations for drugs!



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A Special Thank You to Dr Rudawski for all he did to help us through these difficult days with donating vaccines, antibiotics, disinfectant, posting all the cats, sending out samples and going above and beyond in so many extraordinary ways for the animals and us in a time of tremendous personal grief. Dr Rudawski is one of the biggest blessings in our, and the animals' lives, and there will never be another like him. **Special Thank you to Dr Chris, Nicole and Diane** for helping in 34 below zero weather to vaccinate cats and help us with the sick ones. We were all put to an extreme test and everyone pulled together to become one in our struggle to prevent the virus from spreading further.

(Continued from page 4)

dawski's to find out the cause of death. He had a very large mass in his chest cavity just below his heart and it was determined to be a fast growing cancer. It had ruptured causing sudden death. Costner never showed any signs of illness and loved to bark and bark and bark. He was a great watch wolf and let us know if anything was amiss in the high compound. We miss him dearly. Costner came from Washington County Humane Society. He was found curled up on the side of the road in a torrential downpour with a chain collar embedded into his neck and attached to a tow chain. They surgically removed the chain from his neck and his recovery was uneventful. Costner had a great life with us and was paired with Tessa. We will be putting a couple of our other hybrids with her soon. We thank the Washington County Humane Society for sending Costner to us. He was a delight for the time we had him.



In Loving Memory of our precious little **Oliver**. Even though he touched our lives for such a very short time, he will be forever in our hearts. We love and miss you, Oliver!

Pat Benson (& Mom)

Delavan, Wisconsin

In Loving Memory of beautiful **Ieshia**

Dan Perry and Family

Oshkosh, Wisconsin

In Memory of my beloved father "**Prasad**" who was an ardent animal lover.

Mridula Bansal

Glenview, Illinois

In Memory of our beloved cat **Zoey**. She was the last of our 5 (2 dogs/3 cats) cherished animals we had while raising our children. She tried hard to continue on but needed to join her waiting family over the Rainbow Bridge. Passage of time and releasing so many memories.

Mary Kay Miekina and Family

Deerfield, Illinois

In Memory of my Beautiful "**Angus**". He was a treasure and my hero. I learned a lot from him in how to triumph through hardship and not to allow adversity to change your spirit.

Miss and love you so very much.

Sabrina Bryant

Brookfield, Wisconsin

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Did You Know ... ?

Did you know - white tigers are three times more susceptible to disease than the orange ones?

Did you know - feeding ducks to exotic felines may kill them? The oily feathers can impact them.

Did you know - an adult Lion is as strong as ten men?

Did you know - there is no cure for canine distemper in felines?

Did you know - a solution of hot pepper and water sprayed on trees, bushes and flowers will keep deer from eating them?

Did you know - many States require a permit just to pass through them transporting exotic animals?

Did you know - the odds of being killed by a US captive large cat is 1 in 276,635,363? The vast majority of those killed by exotic's are the trainers, handlers and owners.

Motor vehicle accidents cause 45,343 deaths per year.

Murder and non-negligent manslaughter cause 16,692 deaths per year.

Captive large exotic cats cause 1.1 deaths per year!

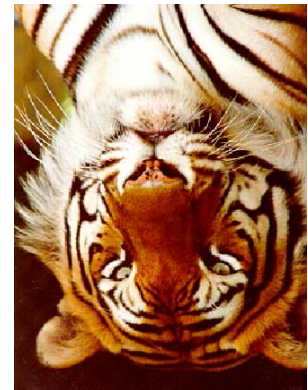
**Sanctuary Visiting Hours:
Saturdays and Sundays 1:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

Tours only at 2:00 and 4:00 Saturdays and Sundays. Workdays are every Saturday from 10:30 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. If you want to help make a difference in the lives of the animals, please consider joining our Construction Crew. For information regarding construction projects or general volunteering opportunities, please contact the Sanctuary at 262-736-9386

**Sanctuary is closed on holidays. We are not open to the public.
Members must have valid membership card.
(Sorry, we cannot accept new memberships at the gate.)**

*Please note: There is a charge of \$10 per person each time you visit with more than one guest.
Additional single visit passes may be obtained by mail order only!*

***We're on the web!*
www.votk.org**



***Dedicated to the rescue and refuge of abused,
abandoned, injured and retired exotic animals.***

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