

## Tiger Tales from Tiger Creek

What's black and white and orange all over and lives in East Texas? Tigers. Tigers you say? Yes, tigers. No "lion." It's tigers. And there are 31 of them, to be exact.

These, the world's largest cats, are residents of the Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge in the Red Springs Community just north of Tyler. Just 10 years ago, the refuge was nothing but pineywoods and a dream. These days, it's a 25-acre development dedicated to the rescue of large cats. In addition to the 31 tigers, Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge also houses two leopards, two cougars,

these cats all have in common is they were captive animals unsuitable for being released into the wild, and therefore were at risk of euthanasia.

As Terri Werner tells it, she had always loved big cats, especially tigers. After an internship working with them, she knew that was what she wanted to do with the rest of her life. In the meantime, she read about Brian's work with the Tiger Missing Link Foundation, which he launched in 1995 to document and register all captive tigers in the United States. The mission includes cataloging each

to the conservation and survival of tigers, which is the most endangered species of big cats. Originally there were eight subspecies of tigers, all native to the Asian continent. By as late as 1980, three of the subspecies, the Javan, Caspian and Bali tigers, had become extinct. And although experts give varying estimates of populations in the wild, ranging from 4,870 to 7,300, they all agree that the tiger population, due to deforestation, human encroachment and illegal poaching, is rapidly declining.

It's been reported by countless conservation groups that there are now more tigers living in captivity than in their native habitats.

The Werners' motivation to create the sanctuary was to do something, conservationwise, for these endangered and captive animals.

"We rescue because there is a great need in the United States," Terri Werner said. She added that there is no challenge in finding animals in a market that is unregulated and allows indiscriminate breeding and selling of exotic animals. She also indicated the bigger challenge is in raising funds to build appropriate habitats and provide care for the animals they have taken responsibility for.

It's expensive to care for and feed a big cat. These magnificent creatures eat food amounting to 2 to 3 percent of their body weight a day. For a tiger averaging around 400 pounds, that equates to 8 to 12 pounds of meat. Then there are the vitamins and supplements, veterinary care, enclosures, keepers' salaries and specialized equipment for handling and transporting the animals.

Because Tiger Creek is a nonprofit organization, the rescue and care of the big cats is dependent upon donations, plus revenue from visitors to the facility. There have been many benefactors, but one unconventional example of generosity is the gift of what would have been an expensive surgery by



All of the cats at Tiger Creek seem to know park director Terry Werner, and bask in any attention from her. April is no exception, as she chuffs and snuffles with pleasure as Terri talks to her.

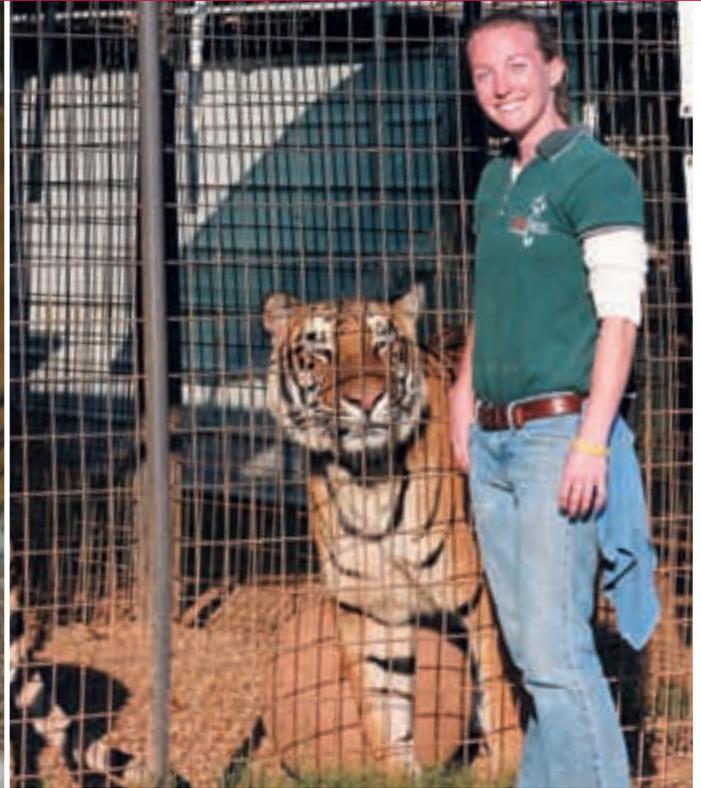
two bobcats and four lions. It was built from the shared passion, vision and sweat equity of husband-and-wife team, Brian and Terri Werner.

Their initial mission, "to provide rescue and rehabilitation of big cats that have been abused, neglected or displaced," is the same one they follow today. The animals they house have come from myriad places such as circuses, safari parks and even from personal collections, and have been abandoned or retired. The one thing

tiger's DNA to denote various genetic markers for the purpose of breeding them responsibly.

Science gives these preservationists ways to note genetic inferiorities and the propensity to suffer ailments, which helps to ensure, when selectively bred, that these tigers will have genetically healthy offspring. The ultimate goal is to lead to better survivability of the species.

The Werners believe that this responsible management is essential



**LEFT: Thai and Sammy enjoy a lazy fall afternoon in the East Texas sun as they relax in the refuge. RIGHT: Jenny Reddington, the director of animal care at Tiger Creek, stands with Sakima, one of the animals that stole her heart and convinced her to choose a career that includes a daily fix of big cats.**

Dr. Tom DeHaven, an ophthalmologist.

DeHaven used his talents and time to perform cataract surgery on Simon, a 13-year-old tiger. Another example of kindness came from a motorcycle club that helped build enclosures so the Werners could house more rescued cats.

“We are not just a rescue facility, and we are not a zoo,” Terri Werner explained. “It’s important to educate the public, and all visitors get a guided tour.”

The facility provides a more close-up experience with the big cats than one would get at a zoo, but no guest is allowed to come in contact with the animals. These animals do have limited training but only to aide the keepers in caring for them. The cats are what is called target trained, which entails using a clicker associated with food to motivate the cats. With this training, keepers can command the cats to do things such as lie down, open their mouths and show their paws. The purpose, Terri says, is to help the keeper help the animal while reducing stress to the animal as well as reducing dangerous exposure to the handler during routine medical exams.

The most recent additions, three 5-month-old tiger cubs, arrived at the facility in November. They will require intense care for months. And these are the types of jobs that Terri and the other dedicated professionals and interns love the most.

Jenny Reddington is a prime example of the zeal that all of the workers at the refuge possess. Always having a passion for big cats, she came to work at the refuge as an intern and had the joy of watching a cub grow up. She says she fell in love with Scrunches that first day on the job and decided working with the big cats was the career for her.

Reddington, after several promotions, is now the director of animal care and is quick to declare, “It’s my dream job!”

It takes a special kind of person to dedicate their lives to this type of work, and in addition to the Werners and Reddington, these gorgeous cats have quite a few advocates willing to work to protect them. In recent years, interns have come from countries all over the world such as Ireland, Spain and England, as well as from across the United States, to work at the

refuge. But, the work is not for the faint of heart or the squeamish, especially at feeding time.

The refuge is located at 17544 FM 14 in Tyler and is open Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. for visitors. For a guided tour, adults are charged \$10, and the fee for children aged 4-12 is \$8. Senior citizens get a discount, as do preorganized groups.

Tiger Creek Refuge is a member of Wood County Electric Cooperative. You can learn more about the refuge by visiting [tigercreek.org](http://tigercreek.org) or calling (903) 858-1008.

## TIGER TRIVIA

Tiger paw prints are called pug marks.

Although tigers are mostly solitary creatures, when there is a group such as mom and cubs, it’s called a streak.

The five remaining subspecies of tigers, the Siberian, Bengal, Indochinese, Malayan and Sumatran, are all listed as critically endangered.

Humans are tigers’ only predators.

# YOUTH TOUR 2008: VISIT WASHINGTON, D.C., ON US!

**W**ood County Electric Cooperative (WCEC) is calling all eligible teens between the ages of 15 and 19 to apply for the 43rd annual Government-in-Action Youth Tour, which will take place in 2008. Would you like an all-expense-paid trip to our nation's capital? If so, here's your chance to compete to participate in a once-in-a-lifetime event. WCEC is looking for one outstanding student to experience a guided tour of Washington, D.C., from June 12-20. The trip will include airfare, transportation while in Washington, hotel rooms, food costs, and tours of many exciting, educational and inspiring sites.

It's simple to enter. Candidates must submit a 450 to 500 word essay, which will be judged by an independent panel. This year's topic is timely and important, and is devoted to conservation. Essayists should write about everyday electrical consumption,

describing three things consumers can use to reduce their electric bills, while also lessening impacts on our environment. The essays will be judged on composition, neatness, originality and knowledge of the subject.

The winner will travel with other students from across Texas to Washington. This group, upon arriving in Washington, will join approximately 1,500 Youth Tour participants from across the country. This tremendous learning opportunity will include tours of national treasures such as Mount Vernon, the National Zoo, the Smithsonian Institution museums and other various historical sites and memorials. Additionally, one day will be dedicated to touring the Supreme Court, the Library of Congress and the House and Senate chambers.

Of the Youth Tour, Debbie Robinson, CEO and general manager of WCEC, said, "I'd encourage every eligi-

ble student to submit an essay for a chance to be a part of this tremendous opportunity. This trip is an enriching experience that will offer unsurpassed learning and leadership opportunities that can be applied daily and used for a lifetime. Every student that I have spoken to who has been on this trip cannot say enough good things about it."

Those looking for more information about the tour should visit <http://youthtour.coop/> to see pictures and videos from past tours.

## **2007 Government-In-Action Youth Tour Rules**

Submit an essay, not to exceed 500 words, outlining three practical energy-saving tips.

Essay entries should be mailed to: Wood County Electric Cooperative, Inc., Attention: Youth Tour 2008, P.O. Box 1827, Quitman, TX 75783

Entries must be postmarked on or before March 1, 2008. Entries received after that date will be disqualified.

## **Eligibility and Rules**

- High school students between the ages of 15 and 19.
- Dependant of a Wood County Electric Cooperative member with permanent resident status in WCEC service area.
- No name should appear on the essay. On a separate cover sheet, the contestant should include: Student essayist name, name and address of parent/guardian who is a member of WCEC, contact telephone number and WCEC account number.
- Reference materials from various sources, including libraries and the internet should be used, but the essay should be in the student's own words.

**Wood County Electric's 2006 Youth Tour delegate, Savannah Boyd, a Hawkins High School student, thoroughly enjoyed her trip and sent in this picture of herself taken at the U.S. Capitol.**



## MAKE ELECTRICAL SAFETY YOUR GOAL

**W**hat's your perennial New Year's resolution: Dieting? Saving more money? Getting lots of exercise?

Here are a few that will be easier to keep—and can do you, your family and your home a world of good. Do these every January:

- Remove covers from overhead lights and wash them in warm, soapy water. Clean light covers let more light

shine through, which will make your room look brighter and save you from turning on a second lamp.

- Pull your refrigerator away from the wall and vacuum or dust its condenser and coils. Clean coils prevent your fridge's working parts from heating up.

- Spring for an annual inspection of your heating system. A tune-up can save you as much as 5 percent on your heating bill.

- Hire a licensed electrician to inspect your home's electrical wiring system—not every year, but at least once a decade. When's the last time you did that?

## DON'T TOSS THOSE OLD ELECTRONICS

**D**id the holidays bring a new computer or television set into your home? Before you toss out the old, you might think twice. Electronic junk contains hazardous substances, including lead and mercury. In landfills, these poisons can leach into groundwater.

Electronic refuse thrown in the trash is sometimes incinerated, sending dioxins from the burned plastic into the atmosphere and leaving behind toxic ash.

Did you know that an old-style computer or TV monitor contains at least four pounds of lead, and flat-panels have mercury bulbs? According to the advocacy group Texas Campaign for the Environment, Texans alone will discard about 50 million TVs and personal computers by 2009, amounting to more than 200 million pounds of lead.

It is now against the law for business or institutional computer owners to discard their old machines in the trash. But consumers have no such restrictions, and that waste stream quickly becomes deep.

There are alternatives to dumping a computer when it becomes outdated. It's relatively easy to upgrade your aging device with new components, plus it's often cheaper to upgrade than to buy a whole new box. Or, if there is

still some life left in it, you can donate it to a school or other group that might be able to use it.

If your computer is not upgradeable, it can be recycled. In the last legislative session, HB 2714 was passed, mandating that by September 1, 2008, computer makers must have a program in place to collect and recycle or reuse all computer equipment, including monitors, they sell in the state. This does not, however, include television sets.

Some people worry about recycling their computers because data on them could be accessible. But simply pitching that computer in the trash is no protection for your information.

A few companies specializing in recycling electronic waste will guarantee that your personal information will be erased in a way that is unrecoverable. Some will even travel to your location to pick it up, if you have enough scrap to make it worth the trip.

Willing community groups or individuals can organize an electronic waste recycling drive in their areas.

To find a company in your area, contact the Environmental Protection Agency regional office at 1-800-887-6063 or visit the agency's e-cycling website at [www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/ecycling](http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/recycle/ecycling).



## WE RESOLVE TO ...

**Provide you with the most reliable electric service possible.**

**Keep our rates as low as possible.**

**Provide friendly and efficient customer service at all times.**

**Never forget that you are a member-owner of this cooperative.**

## HAPPY NEW YEAR

FROM

**the Directors and Employees of Wood County Electric Cooperative**