



PRESS RELEASE
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2020 VISION



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**Update: Eight Big Cats From
Notorious Tiger King Associate Safe In Arkansas**
*Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge Rescues Tigers and Lions Owned
by Tim Stark of Wildlife In Need, Inc.*

Eureka Springs, Ark., (September 22, 2020)- Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) rescued 8 big cats from Wildlife In Need, Inc. (WIN), owned by Tim Stark, a pseudo-sanctuary located in Charlestown, Indiana, that was featured in the popular Netflix docuseries *Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness*.

The rescue team returned to Arkansas Saturday morning at 2 AM with four lions and four tigers in tow. Later that morning, TCWR's new animal residents were released into their habitats. For many, it was their first time to feel grass beneath their paws.

All the animals have a certain amount of health concerns, but Chief and his mate, Mauri, are in the greatest need of medical care. The 15-year-old male lion and four-year-old lioness, respectively, are battling a parasitic infection. Chief also displays significant muscle atrophy in his back legs, as well as skin ulcerations. When the TCWR team arrived in Indiana, they were told Chief had not eaten in five days and had essentially "shut down" due to the hustle and bustle of animal relocations at WIN. TCWR Animal Curator, Emily McCormack, was able to administer fluids to the weak lion, which significantly boosted his demeanor. Since arriving back at the Refuge Saturday, Chief has been eating well. If his strength continues to improve, TCWR Staff Veterinarian, Dr. Kellyn, will be able to safely sedate him this Sunday for a full wellness exam.

The other animals rescued include: Savanna (six-year-old lioness), Ungowwa (eight-year-old lioness), Hurricane (14-year-old male tiger), Avalanche (14-year-old male tiger) and Glacier (10-year-old male white tiger).

Another female tiger, Miles, (formerly MeGyrl) has caught the attention of radio personality Johnny Dare, 98.9 THE ROCK in Kansas City. Dare donated \$10,000 to support TCWR during COVID and the rescue efforts and the intense medical care the big cats will need. Miles has been named to honor Dare's girlfriend's late beloved dog who shared the same name.

Rescue efforts were also made possible by C. Martin, who provided \$15,000 in matching funds for the 8 big cats, as well as IDEXX Laboratories Inc., who provided free feline COVID-19 screenings. The new animal residents received an outpouring of generosity from other TCWR supporters. Those who would still like to help the new animal residents acclimate to their forever home at TCWR can make a direct donation at: https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr?cmd=s-xclick&hosted_button_id=BUU6ARFS7KKB6&source=url.

TCWR had been preparing for this rescue for several months as court battles between Tim Stark (WIN owner/operator), the USDA, and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) ensued.

WIN profited from hands-on animal interaction activities for years only to lose their exhibitor license at the beginning of 2020. Owner and operator, Tim Stark, was sued by the USDA following 120 violations between 2012 and 2016. In 2017, PETA filed a lawsuit against Stark for, "...allowing big-cat cubs to interact with the public, separating mother cats and their infants, declawing, and possessing the tigers, lions, and tiger/lion hybrids (big cats) on Stark's premises who were unlawfully taken in violation of the ESA [Endangered Species Act]."

According to a press release on PETA's website:

*The court found that Stark's declawing procedures (about which he said he didn't "give a sh*t what [a veterinarian's] opinion" was) were "a gross failure to meet the accepted standards of medical care," that premature separation "deprives [cubs] of vital components that help develop a healthy immune system," and that cub petting "also subjects cubs to extreme stress." The court also held Stark, Lane, and WIN responsible for the maternal separation of cubs they had acquired from other traffickers, because cub-petting events "created a demand for young [cubs]."*

Shortly before the rescue, Stark was ordered by a judge to produce the \$165,000 worth of animals that were missing from the property. Because Stark failed to comply, a warrant was issued for his arrest and the former WIN owner/operator fled town. A small portion of those animals were found abandoned in an unventilated box truck without access to food or water. The rest are still missing.

Since Stark was a fugitive from the law, the TCWR team had to meet with the US Marshals, State Police, and SWAT team who swept the property to make sure there were no threats to the rescuers' safety. Officials then escorted the rescue crews to the property. Once the rescue was complete the State police escorted the TCWR team out of town.

Following a whirlwind of threats and hours on the road, the team, along with Chief, Mauri, Miles, Ungowwa, Savanna, Glacier, Hurricane and Avalanche are safe and sound at home. The big cats have been started on healthy diets with supplements and medications to suit their individual needs. They are also receiving a variety of enrichment items to explore.

The public can "meet" the new rescues by liking Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge on Facebook and by following them on Instagram and Twitter @turpentinecreek. The Refuge is also open to the general public, and they are following all state requirements and regulations in order to keep guests safe during the current pandemic.

About Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge

Founded in 1992, Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and rescue operation protecting survivors of the exotic animal trade. The 450-acre refuge, located 7 miles south of Eureka Springs, is also an ethical animal tourism destination and a "Top Ten" family friendly attraction in Northwest Arkansas. The organization does not buy, sell, trade, loan out or breed their animals, and they do not offer cub petting or harmful pay-for-play opportunities. They are accredited by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries, a member of the American Association of Zoo Keepers, and licensed by the USDA and Arkansas Game and Fish. Their mission is to provide lifetime refuge for abandoned, abused, and neglected "Big Cats" with emphasis on Tigers, Lions, Leopards, and Cougars.

Additional Information, Photo and Video Sources

[TCWR Website](#) / [TCWR on Facebook](#) / [TCWR on Instagram](#) / [TCWR on Twitter](#) / [TCWR on YouTube](#)