

TWAS-Texas in the New Year



Director's Message

I sincerely hope this newsletter finds you and yours safe and in good health. With February here and Valentine's Day just around the corner, it is fitting that we get to share with you the labors of love we have completed here at the Sanctuary.

With the completion of our newest habitat we had the arrival of our newest resident, Dahlila. Dahlila is a 7-year old Cheetah retired from the Species Survival Program. You will get to meet her later in this newsletter. Her new home encompasses nearly 1.5 acres. She will have a lot of room to stretch her legs and explore this expansive habitat. This habitat was a huge undertaking requiring the dedication of a significant amount of man hours and resources. A special thanks to all that were involved in the completion of this beautiful habitat.

We have started modernizing and repairing empty habitats around the facility. We have completed the first on our list this month with the second one to be completed right on its heels by late February. This kind of work can only be completed with the continued help from our dedicated supporters. These repairs are costly and are much needed. Without you we cannot hope to continue to offer a sanctuary to the animals that are in much need of a new home while still providing the best care for the animals currently here.

A wood chipper was added to our stable of equipment. With this we are able to reuse the many limbs and branches that fall all over the Sanctuary throughout the year. We now turn this under-used resource into a mulch that can be useful for so many projects from pathways to enrichment all the while decreasing our need for unsightly brush piles prone to attracting snakes and mice. Thank you to the donors that made this possible.

It takes a lot to care for our residents. Every day I am reminded of the love our donors have for the precious lives we care for. Anyone can say they care or that they love animals. It is humbling to see that our dedicated Active Supporters not only say they love our animals but they give; in resources, time and monetary funds. I do not have the words to describe the deep thanks I have for you. Without your generosity we would not be able to continue with our mission to provide for these wonderful creatures.

Thank you,
David Sygrove



The Love of Friendship is in the Air

If you have had the pleasure of visiting the Sanctuary, you know we have many habitats that have more than one resident. While some of our animals have decided they want a space to call their own, we have found that a great number of them enjoy companionship and having someone to spend their time with. Continue reading to get a highlight of some of these dynamic duos and goofy groups!



Teddy and Twinkle

Teddy and Twinkle were both found wandering alone in opposite ends of Alaska at a very young age. They were both brought to the Alaska Zoo before making their way to their permanent home at TWAS-Texas. These two have grown up together, and although not siblings by blood, they sure act just like brother and sister! Teddy and Twinkle are often found cuddling in their cave together, especially in these colder months. As it gets warmer (and even sometimes when it's cold!) they can be found together playing in their pools or laying on one of their perches. Twinkle likes to prove that she is the boss of the habitat and will shove Teddy into the pool when he least expects it.

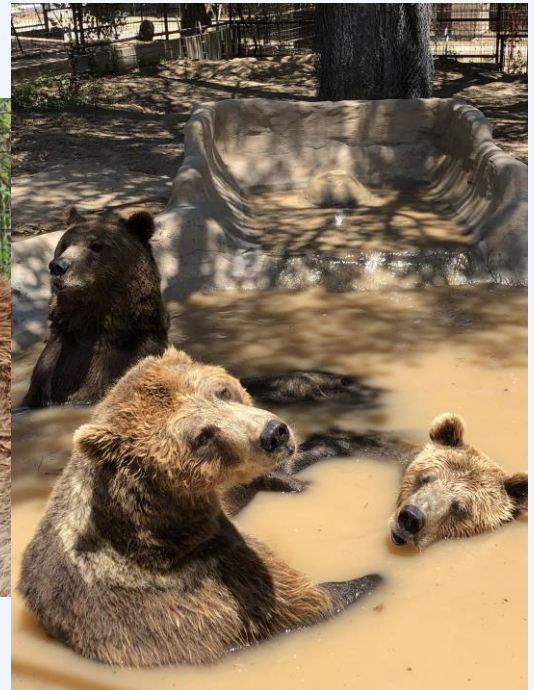


ShereKhan and KiKi

ShereKhan and his sister, KiKi, were brought to TWAS-Texas in 2015 after spending the first several months of their lives being used in photos-for-profit. They now enjoy a spacious habitat that includes a pool with a waterfall and plenty of space to run around and play. You will often find these two curled up together in the sun or frolicking after one another throughout their habitat. They also love sitting at the edge of their habitat watching their neighbors.

Grizzlies

Willie, Wendy, Papa Bear and George came to us from a facility that could not afford to build them a proper habitat. These siblings are practically inseparable! Endlessly curious, all four bears can often be found roaming their habitat discovering something new or digging new shallow dens to laze about in. They all absolutely love playing together in their pool, and one of their favorite playthings is the fountain at the top of it. Be careful if you are watching them play with it, though - keepers and interns frequently get sprayed by a stray stream of water when they do! In the winter when they are engaged in torpor it is not uncommon for all four of them to be huddled together in a single cave. That's one way to stay warm!



Will you be my Sanctuary Valentine?

Would you like to be friends with one of our animal residents? Our Adopt an Animal program gives you a chance to do just that! By adopting an animal you are ensuring the best food, care, and veterinary services for them, as well as a life of dignity and respect. What a wonderful thing for a friend to do! As part of our Adopt an Animal program, you will receive a framable photograph of your adopted friend, as well as a framable Adoption Certificate that includes your friend's story and photo. If you adopt one of our large animals (Lion, Tiger or Bear), you also get a Sanctuary Adoption T-shirt! More information about our Adopt an Animal program can be found here:

<https://www.wildanimalsanctuarytexas.org/animal-adoptions>.

The Role We Play as a Sanctuary

Since we became a non-profit organization in 1988 we have provided a permanent home to hundreds of different types of exotic animals that have been abused, abandoned, neglected, confiscated, or previously owned by people unwilling or unable to provide for them. Initially we only took in exotic felines, but currently we are home to 70 lions, tigers, bears, wolves, and other rescued animals. We as a sanctuary seek to rescue and provide life-long homes for mistreated exotic and endangered captive wild animals. Our Sanctuary also provides us the opportunity to educate the public about the causes and solutions to the world's captive wildlife crisis. As long as exotic animals are mishandled and exploited, sanctuaries like ours will be needed. Our goal is for an end to come to the captive wildlife crisis so that facilities such as ours are no longer needed.



The Story of Duchess, Prince, Princess

One of our beloved animals, Duchess, lays like a queen in her cave all day and prances like a kitten during the night. Before she came here, she was forced to stay in a tiny kennel for breeding purposes before she was rescued by the SPCA. Duchess, our cougar, along with Prince and Princess, two of our tigers, were forced into captivity for that purpose without the basic necessities for survival. Once law enforcement shut the operation down, they needed a new home with a proper enclosure, food, water, and tons of enrichment. This is why they were brought to us. Today, Duchess loves to watch people during the day while hanging out in her comfy cave. During the evening you can see her roaming around and climbing on her various perches. Prince and Princess spend their days playing in their pool, lounging on their perches and sleeping soundly on their firehose bed. We are lucky to have been a part of saving these majestic mammals. This is why we are here. TWAS-Texas helps animals who were put into unfortunate circumstances and lets them live their life with the utmost joy.

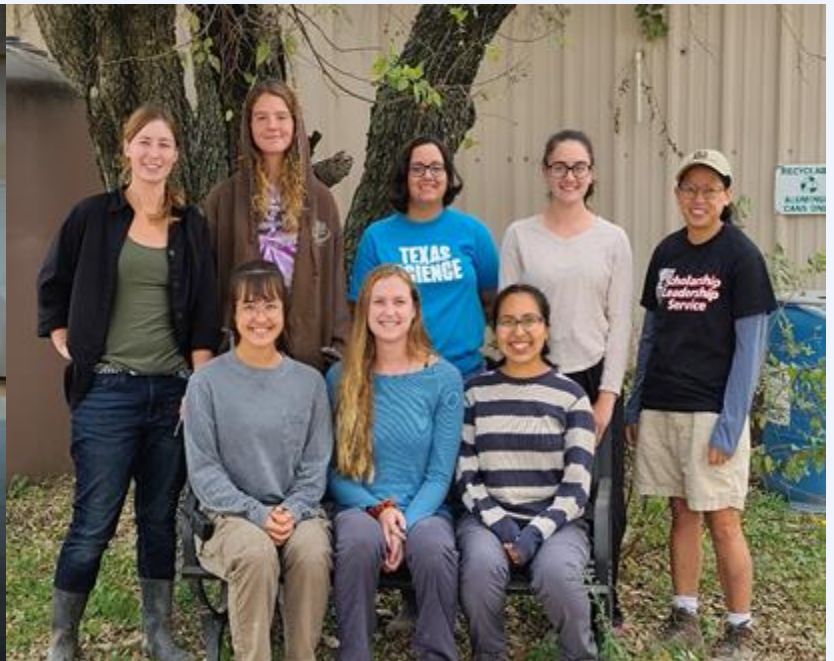


What is the TWAS-Texas Internship Program and Why Choose TWAS-Texas?

Here at TWAS-Texas we rely heavily on our Large Carnivore Animal Care interns to help us with everything from animal care to cleaning and maintenance. We have up to eight interns at any given time with sessions (Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer) that last from three to six months. Interns lucky enough to make it into this very competitive position learn how to prepare diets for all of the animals here at the Sanctuary, including the provision of supplements and medications, feeding the animals, cleaning habitats, following extensive safety procedures and protocols, keeping records, and providing enrichment. Why choose TWAS-Texas for an Animal Care internship? We have highly sought after accreditations! We were the first sanctuary of its kind to be certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

We are also members of the American Association of Zoo Keepers and are American Sanctuary Association accredited and a Great Nonprofits 2020 Top-Rated nonprofit. TWAS-Texas gives those who love and respect these magnificent animals an exciting chance to jumpstart their career.

If you know an animal lover in your life who would love to have a career caring for these endangered and magnificent animals, have them check out our Internship page at <https://www.wildanimalsanctuarytexas.org/intern> to learn more! We accept applications year-round. (Please note that this is a strict no-contact position.)



Enrichment



Enrichment is an important part of any animal's life in captivity. Enrichment keeps the animals mentally and physically stimulated. There are many forms in which we can enrich an animal's life. The different types are sensory, food-based, structural, and cognitive. An example of enrichment that we implement here at TWAS-Texas is by foraging the food for our bears so they can search and forage as they would in the wild. For our big cats we give them bones once a week and also give them toys, such as scratching posts or heavy-duty Boomer Balls, to keep them properly stimulated. Our interns are also involved in the enrichment program. Interns have the opportunity to create and implement an enrichment schedule for an animal that is based on the animal as an individual and that is species-specific. This allows the interns to learn more about the animal's behavior and in turn, stimulates the animal's mind and encourages the animal to engage in natural behaviors.



Torpor



Do bears hibernate? To answer that, we must take a look at what hibernation is, exactly. Many species have reduced seasonal activity to conserve energy while food is scarce, but very few enter a state of “true” hibernation. Many more species undergo what is known as “torpor.”

During hibernation, an animal's body functions slow down dramatically for a long period of time. Breathing, heart rate, metabolism (the rate at which energy is used), and body temperature are among the most important of these decreased functions. This differs from normal sleep and prevents the animal from being easily disturbed and woken up. Torpor is a similar state, but unlike hibernation (which can last up to 11 months), it is a far shorter period of dormancy in which an animal is more easily roused. It can, if poor weather and resource availability persist, lead into hibernation. The bears here at TWAS- Texas enter torpor because they are fed year-round and the warm Texas climate prevents them from needing to conserve energy. They *do* become more sluggish and eat far less than they would during the height of summer, but only when weather begins to freeze will they find themselves in search of a comfy, cozy den.

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

New animals are always a time for excitement at any sanctuary. As last year came to a close it was whispered that a new animal would soon be coming to TWAS-Texas. In October 2020 the interns, keepers, and maintenance crew had begun working on plans for the new enclosure. It began with clearing brush from fencing, planning out the size of the habitat, and removing any harmful plants like poison ivy. By



the time the new interns arrived in November things were heating up. Dens had to be built from the ground up, new fencing needed to be placed, trees needed to be removed from the new fence line, and countless other tasks fulfilled before the new animal's arrival. The interns, keepers, and even some maintenance staff had never done these tasks before, but they didn't let that slow them down. They all pitched-in together to learn what they could and teach each other whatever techniques they learned along the way. The pressure was on and a time crunch hit in January. For two weeks the staff at TWAS-Texas put in their all, even staying into the night, to get the enclosure done in time. Finally all their efforts were rewarded and just the day before TWAS-Texas's new animal was to arrive the habitat was finished! Without everyone, intern, keeper, and maintenance crew, it couldn't have been done, but by working together as a team they pulled through.





Dahlila



As of January 28, 2021, we had a new resident join our family at The Wild Animal Sanctuary-Texas! Dahlila (pronounced Dah-lee-lah) is a beautiful 7-year-old female cheetah who now resides in our new habitat that many have noticed driving down Hwy 114! She came to us through Fossil Rim from the Caldwell Zoo to relax in her own space at our quiet oasis.

Once a part of their Species Survival Program (SSP), she has been retired to enjoy her days here with us. SSP is an AZA program in which all AZA institutions take part in efforts that help manage populations of select species. In Dahlila's case, as a cheetah, she took part in breeding as an effort to increase the survivability of her species. Other efforts of the SSP include conservation research, management of wild animal welfare, and educational initiatives. Cheetahs are classified as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red-list due to habitat loss, dwindling prey populations, and conflicts with humans. After doing her part to save her species, she deserves to kick back and relax in our new habitat especially designed to meet her needs.

Mentioned earlier in this newsletter, our staff and interns worked tirelessly to make her habitat just right. This includes building several perches, a cozy secluded cave in which to sleep, and a vast open plain of almost one and a half acres for her to get up to her top speed.

Cheetahs are known as the world's fastest land animal as they are able to sprint at almost 65 mph in as little as three seconds! Native to sub-Saharan Africa, they are accustomed to roaming the open plains of the savannah. They are built for speed and therefore are the only species of big cat that has semi-retractable claws. These claws, which are similar to a dog's, are always out and allow for better traction for running. A cheetah's stride while running can be as long as 23 feet per bound which means that they spend most of their time in the air while sprinting! However, their ability to run at top speed lasts only for about 200 yards before they must slow down. This means that the one and a half acres of habitat will give Dahlila plenty of room to run to her heart's content!

Dahlila has a sweet and calm temperament, becoming comfortable in her new home almost immediately. She has said "hello" to her neighbors, Saber, Greta, Scooter, and Scamp, as well as Teddy and Twinkle, and it is as if she has been here for years. She spends most of her time exploring the narrow tree-line within her habitat and resting in the sun. Also a friendly soul, she will come up to see us during the day to see if she can offer us any help. Every day is a new adventure for our darling Dahlila and we all look forward to many more years with our new member of the Sanctu-Family!



Donations

We are extremely grateful to everyone that has supported us. We are lucky to have such an incredible group of volunteers and supporters who have donated not only their time to help us with cleaning, habitat maintenance, guided tours, and so much more, but also with sending us much needed items.

This has included monetary donations, pumpkins, fresh produce, vacuums for our dormitory and Nutritional Center, cleaning supplies, and enrichment items for the animals. We are also incredibly grateful for the donors who have and continue to support us. With your help we were able to get much needed equipment that allowed us to finish the new habitat for our new cheetah resident, Dahlila. This equipment will also be tremendously helpful as we upgrade our current habitats. We would not have been able to do it without everyone's support.



Ways to Help

There are many ways any person can help out our sanctuary! Becoming an [Active Supporter](#) provides recurring monetary donations that help secure funds to support our animals and our facility's mission. Funds are used to purchase things such as food, construction material, cleaning products, and other things that are needed around the sanctuary. Another way to help is to purchase items on our Amazon Wish list. Items on this list are things we specifically need that have been requested by keepers and staff: <https://a.co/ejMeHrN>

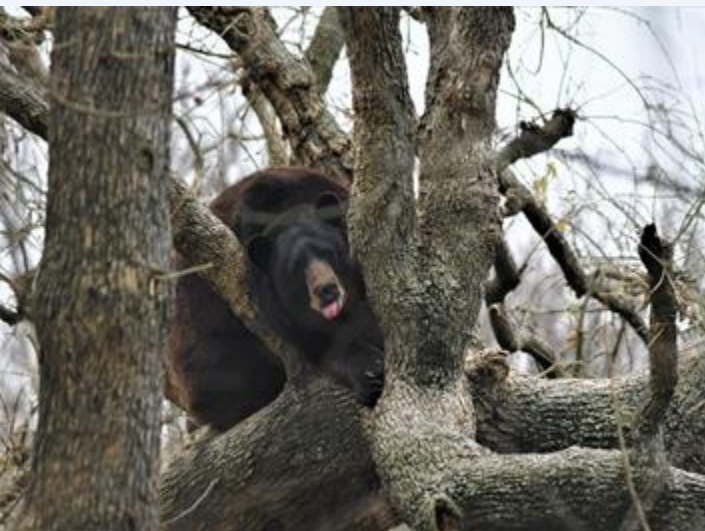
You can also help the Sanctuary by donating your time and [volunteering](#)! Volunteers make the work day run smoothly and provide extra manpower for projects and tasks. Whether you support us financially or with your own time and energy, we greatly appreciate it! It is only through such generosity that we can care for the animals at our facility. There is no help too small. Please visit our website to see the many ways that you can help the animals of TWAS-Texas and become a part of our Sanctuary Family.

More Ways to Help!

Third-Party Contributions

There are several ways that you can donate with no additional cost to you!

AmazonSmile is a great way to get involved all year round. Through their SMILES Program, Amazon now gives a donation to the Sanctuary any time you shop using the link below. When you choose your non-profit organization, we are listed under The International Exotic Feline Sanctuary. You can find that link here: [AmazonSmile: You shop. Amazon gives.](#)



Kroger will also donate a percentage of your purchase. You can go to Kroger Community Rewards sign in or create a new account, click "edit" under "Community Rewards," find us by searching "International Exotic Animal Sanctuary" or by ID number TT479, and "save" to complete your enrollment.



Tom Thumb will also donate a portion of your purchase to the Sanctuary.



You can enroll by going to Customer Service and asking them to add our organization to your Tom Thumb Reward Card. Our ID is 2074.

Recurring Donation

As a nonprofit, regular donations provide us with a stable revenue which helps us during the ups and downs that often occur in the nonprofit world. Any donation size is of great help. When coming from multiple people, as little as \$10 can greatly help us feed our animals! Just a small amount can make a huge difference:

<https://www.wildanimalsanctuarytexas.org/donate>

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