

New faces at refuge

By **Jessica Brodtkin Webb**



Lions, Tigers and Bears, San Diego county's only accredited big cat and bear rescue had three new big cats— two servals and a white tiger— transferred into their care on April 27 to live out the remainder of their years at the educational facility and animal sanctuary.

The rescue, which sits on 93 acres just east of Alpine, is a non-profit animal sanctuary for rescued big cats, bears and other exotic animals.

Rescue founder and director Bobbi Brink said the three newest big cats came from a rescue and entertainment venue called Rancho Las Lomas where they were utilized for parties and other events.

Brink said the keeper called her and asked if Lily, Eli and Savannah could possibly come live at the rescue as they were the last three animals left at the old site.

Their new abode is different from their previous location but so far the big cats haven't endured any culture shock.

Rescue founder and director Bobbi Brink said the transition itself was the easiest one they've ever had; usually animals have to travel back and forth across the country but this was a relatively short drive and the cats arrived unstressed.

All three cats are mature and will require ongoing veterinary care but “they’ll work into our rotation and just get to live out their lives here,” Brink said.

For now, she said, they are being quarantined.

“They’re doing well but they’ll be in quarantine for 30 to 45 days to get samples, a good physical, and it helps them get used to their keepers,” Brink said.

The average tiger, Brink said, lives to be about 20 and Lily, the white tiger who is part of this new addition, is 18. One of the servals is 23 and also needs daily medical care, Brink said.

Eventually, “there will be different groups of people coming through to see them,” Brink said, not unlike what they are used to living but “instead of entertainment, they will be used for education” with school tours and other groups learning about conservation and rescue efforts.

Every animal at the facility is a rescue, she said, not just the lions, tigers and bears but also domesticated livestock, miniature horses, llamas and other animals that are now used for education and will never be in need of another home.

The facility, Brink said, is currently open at about 50% capacity, “but we’re working on getting everything back to normal” as the pandemic draws to an end.

May 7-8 will be their first in-person fundraiser of the year: a film screening of The Conservation Game documentary shown in Mission Valley as well as on site in Alpine.

The film, which recently won the Social Justice award at the Santa Barbara film festival focuses on how celebrity conservationists may be secretly connected to the big cat trade, includes a tiger named Nola who now lives at Lions, Tigers and Bears.

The fundraiser will go directly toward supporting the facility, which is now open Wednesdays through Saturdays and houses over 60 rescued animals.

Visit www.lionstigersandbears.org to learn more about all the animals who live at the facility.