

ALPINE

2 Big Cats Seized From Tiger King Park Housed at San Diego County Sanctuary

The Alpine sanctuary is housing two female tigers as the U.S. Department of Justice seeks civil forfeiture of the animals from Jeff and Lauren Lowe, featured on the popular Netflix series "Tiger King"

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Jeff Lowe and Lauren Dropla with Jax the lion at the Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park on September 28, 2016 in Wynnewood, Oklahoma.

A San Diego County animal sanctuary is caring for two of nearly 70 big cats seized by federal authorities this week from [animal park owners featured in the Netflix series "Tiger King"](#) amid an ongoing investigation into animal rights violations, a representative for the sanctuary said Monday.

The Lions, Tigers and Bears animal sanctuary in East County's Alpine community was one of several sanctuaries chosen by the federal government to house the animals seized from Tiger King Park in Thackerville, Oklahoma, as part of an investigation into Endangered Species Act violations by owners Jeffrey and Lauren Lowe, who were featured in the popular 2020 documentary series.

The Alpine sanctuary is housing two female tigers as the U.S. Department of Justice seeks civil forfeiture of the animals. Due to COVID-19 protocols for animals, the tigers will be under quarantine for at least 30 days, under the care of the sanctuary's veterinary team.

A representative for Lions, Tigers and Bears said three of their animal rescue handlers were sent to Oklahoma to assist the federal government with the transport of several big cats. The animals were then transported to accredited sanctuaries, including their own. In all, the DOJ seized 68 lions, tigers and lion-tiger hybrids, plus one jaguar, from the Thackerville animal park.

"With several accredited sanctuary teams working together with the federal officials, it was an efficient and seamless operation," said Lions, Tigers and Bears owner Bobbi Brink, who has been outspoken against the animal park featured on "Tiger King" since the show gained popularity in 2020. "Our priority was relocating these big cats to accredited sanctuaries where they will receive proper veterinary care, diet, shelter and habitats while the court decides what's next."

The seizure came as part of the U.S. Department of Justice's case against the Lowes, who, in 2016, took over the Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park, which was formerly owned by zookeeper Joe Exotic, until it shuttered in August 2020. The couple then moved their operations to [Tiger King Park in Thackerville, which the federal government said was unlicensed and illegal](#).

In November, the [federal government filed a civil lawsuit against the Lowes for their recurring inhumane treatment](#) and improper handling of animals protected under the Endangered Species Act.

"The Lowes' animals have suffered from and continue to suffer from easily preventable or treatable conditions, which in some cases has caused the untimely death of animals," the complaint read, alleging the Lowes "have then burned or otherwise disposed of the carcasses, including tigers, in makeshift pyres."

The couple has received numerous citations for failing to properly care for the animals following three inspections of the Tiger King Park since December 2020.

According to their attorney Daniel Card, the Lowes said they were willing to forfeit their animals as a way to resolve the civil complaint against them.

Joe Exotic, whose real name is Joseph Maldonado-Passage, was [sentenced in 2020 to 22 years in federal prison for a murder-for-hire plot](#) and violating federal wildlife laws, according to the DOJ.