

"It's like herding cat people: Managing Confrontation with Diplomacy"

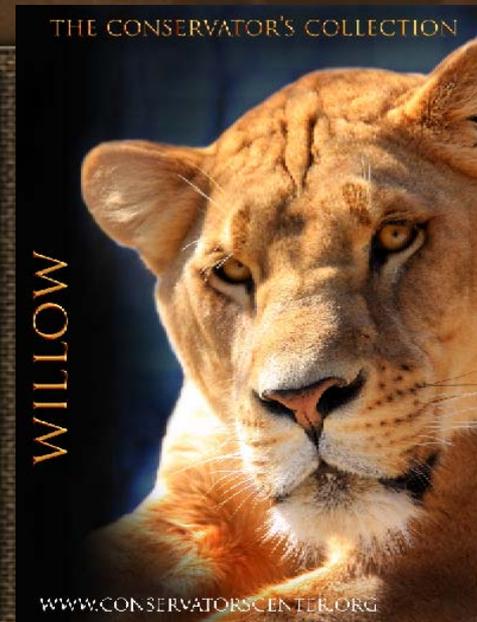
THE CONSERVATORS' CENTER INC.

Conservation, Education, Rescue



**It's like
herding
cat
people:**

**Managing
Confrontation
with
Diplomacy**



Issues and people cat owners face

SUNDAY

'Green' hotels make relaxing easy
on you and the environment. **D1**

ACCENT

Is there a lion on the prowl in
Alamance County? **C1**

REGION



Local breaking news
all day on
TheTimesNews.com

Times-News

Burlington, North Carolina

www.thetimesnews.com

121st year, No. 33

June 14, 2009

\$1.25

You know it's going to be a rough day when...



Life with exotics is a PR battle

Difficult

People

Difficult

Situations

Difficult People

- May or may not be intentionally disruptive
- May come from the community, across the nation, or within your own organization
- May be motivated by fear, politics, attention seeking...

Who creates conflict for you?

Difficult People may be from...

- Community and Schools
- Neighbors
- Animal rights activists
- Disgruntled ex-employees or volunteers
- Malicious people (ball throwers, pet the kitty/poison the kitty)
- Sponsors of your org
- People With Good Intentions
- City and county officials
- State level fish and wildlife/natural resources
- Permitting offices (from construction to zoning to animal transport)
- Health departments
- First responders

Difficult People

Each person has his own motivation.

Identify it, and you are a step ahead.

- May be confrontational or passive-aggressive
- May use the press or neighborhood groups against you
- May try to subvert you in local politics
- May mean well but suck away your time and energy (small projects, visitors, favors)
- May be easily offended
- **May be important allies or supporters**

Difficult People

For people in your own facility:

Set limits. Require people to respect them.

Limit the time you spend at each appointment.

- Have open hours
- Visiting policy
- Scheduling ahead of time
- Chain of command
- Keep key people informed
- Be reasonably transparent
- Make time to touch base individually with difficult people so they feel like they matter

DIFFUSE: TALK to People

- Treat neighbors' and officials' concerns as valid.
- Ask about their specific concerns.
- Then explain why the things they fear are unlikely to occur at your place.
- Anticipate people's concerns and questions, and address them before they ask
- Invite people to meet with you, and when feasible, invite them to see your setup.
- Invite Animal Control and First Responders to visit "behind the scenes"

CONFRONT when necessary

- Passive-aggressive behavior, rumor spreading and fear-mongering do not easily survive a direct discussion
- Current staff and volunteers
- Ex-staff and volunteers
- Community members
- People from other facilities—we can be our own worst enemy

Security considerations

Appearance vs Reality

- Use signs (“live wire...”)
- Use cameras and record
- Have a physical presence
- Management tools for animals can be useful when seen by people
- Have friends in law enforcement who will make a phone call for you (“You were seen...”)

Warning:

Tampering with this animal may be a federal offense under the animal enterprises protection act of 1992.

Penalties may include fines, damages, restitution and prison sentences from one year to life. --Ordinance No. 18
USC Section 43 Public Law 102-346

Take the time...

- Make a real relationship with some local officials and press. Do them favors NOW.



The image is a screenshot of the News 14 Carolina website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the text "News 14 | 24 Hour Local News | TOP STORIES | Unsold Christmas trees given to big ca". Below this is a blue banner with the text "Your news now. N.C.'s only statewide news channel". The website is divided into sections for "CHARLOTTE", "TRIANGLE", "TRIM", "COASTAL", and "SANDHILLS". The current time is "7:16 pm" and the temperature is "45° F". The date is "Saturday, January 3, 2009". The main content area features a "TOP STORIES" section with a red header and a yellow "UPDATED" tag showing "5:42 PM". The headline is "Unsold Christmas trees given to big cats" by "Stephanie Stowell". Below the headline is a large image of a tiger in a cage, with a play button overlay, indicating a video player. A sidebar on the left contains a list of navigation links: "TOP STORIES", "HEADLINES", "LOCAL NEWS", "WEATHER", "TRAFFIC", "SPORTS", "BUSINESS", "POLITICS", "STORY LINKS", "ABOUT US", "MY NEWS 14", "BLOGS", "MERRY GIVING", "COOKING", "ENTERTAINMENT", "EVENTS CALENDAR", "HEALTHY CAROLINA", "TRAIN FOR LIFE", "MAKING ENDS MEET", "ON THE TOWN", and "SCHOOL NEWS".

FEATURES

WHO'S AT CCI?

Sixteen species are represented at CCI. Here's the lowdown on some of the more unusual ones:



BINTURONG

also known as Asian bearcat

- *Arctictis binturong*
- **Habitat:** Southeast Asia
- **Fun CCI fact:** One of the few animals at CCI with a perpetually pleasant odor, they smell — no kidding — like Fritos.



CARACAL

- *Felis caracal*
- **Habitat:** Africa, parts of Asia
- **Fun CCI fact:** Aretha Franklin, known for her voice, wears the pants in the caracal cage. She refuses to let her roommate Taz eat before her.



PHOTOS BY LYNN HEY/News & Record

All products of a Midwestern breeding facility whose cats were seized by the government in 2004, CCI's cubs spend their days chasing each other around, alternately aggravating and lavishing affection on one another. This playful pair lives in a group of four tigers and four lions dubbed the "Gang of Eight."

Difficult Situations

- Old or rough looking animals on site
- An injury to human or animal in front of the public
- Escapes
- Evacuations
- Severe weather (ice, high wind)
- Animal rights “undercover”
- Rumors
- Internet pics or video that give the wrong impression
- An incident that occurred elsewhere
- Financial disaster
- Staff infighting
- Previous volunteers or staff being malicious

ANTICIPATE

Exciting + Animals = Bad

Photos of Tippi Hedren [Add Photos with IMDb Resume »](#)

[See All 45 Photos](#) 

[« Prev](#)

[Next »](#)

[View as Slideshow](#) 



Names: [Melanie Griffith](#), [Tippi Hedren](#)

Photo 20 of 45: Photo date: 1971 Tippi Hedren at home with her daughter Melanie Griffith and her pet lion
Photo by Gene Trindl - © 1978 Gene Trindl - Image courtesy mptvimages.com

Methods of Management

**PREVENTION:
PLAN AHEAD**

- Written plans
- Local contacts
- Establish yourself as the expert
- Use all available resources

PREVENTION: PLAN AHEAD

Keep written plans

- Escape
- Injury
- Evacuation
- Other crises you may encounter-think location, weather, people

FILE THOSE PLANS

where they will do you good: animal control, fire and rescue, sheriff's office...

PREVENTION: PLAN AHEAD

- Written plans should include people in roles, not by name. People may change roles depending on who is available.
- Written plans should be updated regularly and hand-walked to any new contact
- Written plans for your own records should include specifics on who will help you, where you may go, what materials and supplies need to go with you.

PREVENTION: PLAN AHEAD

- Introduce yourself to local officials and law enforcement
 - Speak to first responders so they know what to expect from you. This is a good time to bring them your plan.
 - Anticipate problems and prevent them (old or sick animals on site-signs!)
 - Become part of the community: attend functions and fundraisers, offer to assist with projects or presentations, and become someone the neighborhood trusts
- You don't have to like them, you just have to impress them

An Ounce of Prevention...

**OUR PUMA
HAS A FOOT
PROBLEM
THAT IS BEING
TREATED BY
OUR VET STAFF**

**No worries, mate—
all the wombats
are alive and well.**

**Though most of the time
wombats sleep on their side
or curled in a ball, you may
see a wombat sound asleep
while flat on its back.**

PREVENTION: PLAN AHEAD

Establish yourself as
the expert by

- Demonstrating knowledge of your animals
- Making good handling and containment decisions
- Acknowledging people's concerns and addressing them appropriately
- Making yourself available for training or demos

YOU Are the Expert

- **ACT LIKE ONE**

- Speak like a professional, with confidence
- Have an educational web site, or provide educational materials
- Submit articles to the FCF journal, area newspapers, etc.

- Contact local colleges and universities about ways you can be involved (animal care committee, internships, class trips)
- Contact local animal control and offer to hold a training session for their officers (handling and recapture, equipment use)
- Take classes and workshops

PREVENTION: PLAN AHEAD

Make yourself look like a trained, reliable resource

- Have management tools on site. Have staff identifiable. Display certificates and awards!

Some items visible (radios, nets, catch poles, transport crates)

Some only pull out to show appropriate people (drugs and guns...)



Would you call these people to help you deal with an escaped big cat?



PREVENTION: PLAN AHEAD

- Create a press kit
- Identify key players and their titles
- Identify ahead of time who may speak for the organization
- Perform taped mock interviews
- Make photos and video available that emphasize your best sides
- Have publications on hand that express your point of view clearly
- Keep a list of all your licenses, permits, coursework, accreditations, etc.

PREVENTION: PLAN AHEAD

Use *Available Resources*

- FCF library and on line resources
- On-line discussion groups
- Other groups appropriate to your mission (wildlife educators, ZAA, regional groups...)
- State Animal Response Team training
- Legislative calendars
- Federal register
- Workshops and conferences, classes
- Pet First Aid Classes
- REXANO, NCAZS
- Learn about activists' concerns by reading their material

What could possibly go wrong here?



Names: [Melanie Griffith](#), [Tippi Hedren](#)

Photo 21 of 45: Photo date: 1971 Tippi Hedren at home with her children and their pet lion (Melanie Griffith top left) Photo by Gene Trindl - © 1978 Gene Trindl - Image courtesy mptvimages.com

The Internet is Everywhere

If something happens **anywhere**, be prepared to comment on it **intelligently**.

Read about it, treat it **seriously**, and explain **why it won't happen with your facility**.

The Internet is Everywhere

US man uses chainsaw to fight off mountain lion attack

An American, Dustin Britton, used a chainsaw to fight off an attack by a mountain lion while he was camping with his family in Wyoming.

By Our Foreign Staff and Agencies in Billings
Published: 12:18PM BST 17 Jul 2009



Only eight cases of mountain lions acting aggressively toward humans have been documented in Wyoming over the last decade. Photo: GETTY

Mr Britton was on a camping trip with his wife and two toddlers in northwestern Wyoming.

The 32-year-old mechanic and ex-US marine from Windsor, Colorado, said he was alone cutting firewood about 100 feet from his campsite in the Shoshone National Forest when he saw a seven-stone lion staring at him from some bushes.

Mr Britton said he raised his chainsaw and met the lion head-on as it pounced - a collision he described as feeling like a grown man running directly into him.

Tiger that killed woman was 100 lbs. underweight

The big cat's attack was brutal; a Humane Society investigator said hunger triggers "survival of the fittest."

Kevin Giles, Star Tribune

Last update: April 11, 2006 – 12:15 AM



Cynthia Gamble, with a tiger in 1998, "loved those big cats," friend Al Wolter said.

Preliminary results from an examination of the tiger that attacked and killed Cynthia Gamble at her Pine County animal farm last week showed it was about 100 pounds under its normal weight, a Sheriff's Office investigator said Monday.

Gamble died Thursday afternoon when a 10-year-old male tiger named Tango attacked her in its cage about 16 miles east of Sandstone.

Local Wildlife Incidents

Rabid Bobcat Attacks Golfer

Skyline CC players beat animal to death at course

By Tony Davis - Arizona Daily Star

Tucson, Arizona | Published: 04.05.2006

Garland Blessing of Rural/Metro examines the bobcat that was killed and found to be rabid after attacking a Skyline Country Club golfer, who suffered puncture wounds and cuts. The golfer and a partner beat the animal to death with golf clubs.

How to battle bobcat attack

"If a bobcat attacks you, "do whatever you can do to defend yourself," whether that means throwing rocks or hitting it with a bat or club, said Hans Koenig, a State Game and Fish Department field supervisor. "They are extremely fast and agile."

Rabies caused a bobcat to attack a golfer Tuesday morning at the Skyline Country Club, a Rural/Metro spokesman said. The attack by the rabid female cat sent Jerry Crown, 69, to the hospital with puncture wounds and cuts to his legs.

Rabies "would have a real large play into what the bobcat did. Most of the time they will leave the area very quickly" if they encounter humans, said Battalion Chief Rick Flores, a spokesman for the Rural/Metro Fire Department, which responded to the incident. "If they are rabid, they are much more aggressive."



Current Investigations and Confiscations



Handled well, it makes us all look good

We've got the tigers by the tail, zoos say

By [Jonnelle Davis](#)
Staff Writer

TUESDAY, JAN. 1, 2008 3:00 AM

Credit: H. Scott Hoffmann/News & Record



The curator of the Animal Discovery Zoological Park at the Natural Science Center in Greensboro is comfortable with the center's safety procedures.

GREENSBORO — In the wake of the fatal Christmas Day tiger attack at the San Francisco Zoo, [Peggy Ferebee](#) has fielded calls and questions from the public about the security of the tiger area at the Natural

Science Center.

"We're really, really comfortable with our safety procedures because everything is checked and double-checked," said [Ferebee](#), the zoo curator. But she said the center would look closely at any recommendations the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and the U.S. Department of Agriculture might make for the San Francisco Zoo.

Rod Hackney, spokesman for the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro, said he expects zoo administrators to review their policies but does not anticipate any major changes, citing the zoo's "excellent record" for safety.

The Internet is Forever

**BEFORE YOU
RELEASE THE
PHOTO OR
ARTICLE...**

- How will the untrained public see it?
- What assumptions will be made about you because of it?

The Internet is Forever

Printed material and photos are permanently a definition of who you are. Make sure it is accurate and well edited. Ask to see it before it goes to press. I took the photographer around to take shots of many animals, including wide awake lions and playing bobcats. The snapshot she took of the tiger she thought was cute while napping is the one she chose to use. Except on the front page of the paper, from the angle the photo was taken, Jacob the Tiger looks absolutely dead. I was sure this tiger was alive and napping when we photographed him, but it sure didn't look that way on the front page of the local paper.

Caswell Messenger

Public can now visit CCI

By Lauren Eakin 
Dec 04, 2007 -
08:49:36 pm CST

Messenger Staff Writer

Tucked away on 45 acres in southern Caswell County is a special haven for some of the world's most beautiful and exotic animal species.

Conservators' Center, Inc., or "CCI," is home to more than 80 lions, tigers and other not so well-known creatures - like caracals, binturongs and kinkajous.

Founders Douglas Evans and Mindy Stinner, both of who have many years' experience working with wild, exotic and

unusual animals, established CCI, a 510(c)(3) nonprofit, in 1999. The organization's three-part mission is to allow captive breeding of threatened species, to provide educational programs for wild animal professionals and to maintain a peaceful rescue sanctuary for animals in need. 



Lauren Eakin/Caswell Messenger Jacob the tiger enjoys sunning in his yard at Conservators' Center, Inc. CCI is home to more than 80 lions, tigers and other not so well-known creatures - like caracals and binturongs.

Appearance matters

Experienced people can interpret these situations correctly. We cannot expect the public to do so.



Appearance matters

What looks
like people
throwing
things at
lions...



Appearance matters

...is a birthday party. Oh, what a dirty cage!



Appearance matters

Once you've done it, you can't take it back.

Eye-to-Eye Books, Wild Cats - 1998, Somerville House Books Limited, ISBN 1-58184-005-5, ~\$11.99

Wild Feline Captive Husbandry "How To" Manuals

Introduction to Responsible Private Captive Husbandry of Wild Felines

Tri-fold brochure, provides a brief overview of private captive husbandry for those who are considering getting their first wild feline. Send Mainely Felids, P.O. Box 80, Lycoming, NY 13093 Tel. (315) 342-4997

Introduction to Responsible Private Captive Husbandry of Wild Felines, Rev. 2

A comprehensive introduction to responsible private captive husbandry of wild felines for new or prospective owners and a valuable reference for experienced owners. The manual includes sections on permits, disposition of wild felines, facilities, contingency planning, nutrition, health care, and selection for the novice, and behavior training. Six appendices at the end of the manual provide extensive additional useful information including descriptions of all 36 species of wild feline, a list of state permit offices, a reference book list, and a list of equipment and supply vendors. 4 Send \$15.00 to: Mainely Felids, P.O. Box 80, Lycoming, NY 13093 Tel. (315) 342-4997

BE AWARE! Husbandry mnemonic wallet card.

The handy BE AWARE! husbandry mnemonic presented on this card makes it easy to remember the routine things you should be looking for in the care of a wild feline (or any other animal). The back side of this card suggests easily observable indicators for Behavior, Enclosure, Appetite, Appearance, Responsiveness, which should then be Evaluated. When taking care of a wild feline BE AWARE! Send \$1.00 and SASE to: Mainely Felids, P.O. Box 80, Lycoming, NY 13093 Tel. (315) 342-4997

Basic Cat Training for Professional Zookeepers and Animal Handlers

100 Pages, B&W photos. This book provides a easy to understand, basic introduction to handling large wild felines. ~\$25 Cat Tails, Zoological Center, N. 17020 Newport Hwy, Mead, WA 99021 Tel. (509) 238-4126

Exotic Cats as Housepets

100 pages, Color Photos. This book provides an introduction to private captive husbandry of wild felines. ~\$35. Wildlife on Easy Street, Attn: Book Dept., 12802 Easy Street, Tampa, FL 33625 Tel. (813) 920-4130

Technical / Medical books

MANAGING DISASTER AFTERWARDS

- Containment
- Documentation
- Accountability
- Future Prevention

MANAGING DISASTER AFTERWARDS

Containment

- Understand that real containment is almost impossible
- Know who was present
- Know who saw what
- Anticipate who will hear about it
- Know about footage taken (cell phones!)

MANAGING DISASTER AFTERWARDS

Documentation

When it hits the press,
this will give you the
tools to control the spin

- Incident reports
- Incident statements and liability
- Photo document everything
- Notify the people who need to know

MANAGING DISASTER AFTERWARDS

Accountability



- Who was supervising?
- Were standard procedures followed?
- Exactly WHAT went wrong?

MANAGING DISASTER AFTERWARDS

Future Prevention

- Do you need a new policy or procedure?
- Do you need to retrain on existing policy and procedure?
- Is there a repair or modification needed?
- How will you reduce the chances of this ever happening again?

NEVER

- Blame the victim
- Attack another facility verbally
- *Guess* what happened in an incident at another location
- Say your animals could never hurt anyone
- Say your animal could never escape, bite, etc.
- Lie

ALWAYS

- Assume the public knows nothing about ownership of exotics
- Assume fear is the usual public response
- Treat their fear as valid
- Stick to known facts
- Play down your emotional response-- they will cue off you
- Explain why this bad thing is unlikely to happen to your facility (Review your policy/procedure, all OK)
- Explain the animal's behavior
- Express regret or sorrow over the situation, especially over people involved

In your own literature

- Be careful not to undermine yourself with woeful claims
- Promote your expertise *without bragging*
- Saying private/pet owners are all bad reflects on you, private owner
- Saying that if you don't get money, the animals will die backfires in the long term (Boston area zoos this month) and is highly unprofessional

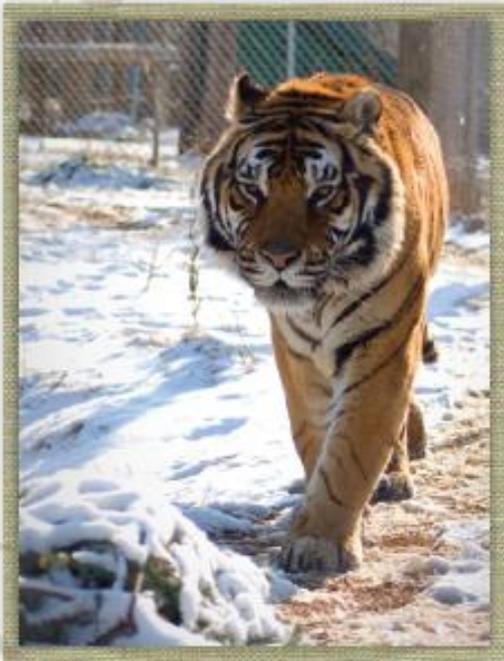
When we met her vs. Now

How can you spin this so the good work you have done is obvious, but so you don't deride every other owner, or make them seem incompetent?



A positive change

Rescue Update: **Tonka Tiger**



Last year, the Conservators' Center took in Tonka Tiger from a now-defunct Missouri facility. For the first few weeks he was with us, Tonka did not appear to be in good health – his advanced age coupled with the stress of moving left him exhausted and despondent. But within the month, the staff and volunteers at the Conservators' Center noticed remarkable changes in the elderly tiger. He began approaching the fence to greet visitors and soon was happily chuffing with anyone he could. Tonka is an incredibly talkative tiger and enjoys escorting staff and volunteers the length of his enclosure. His health has improved dramatically, allowing for a vasectomy that will enable Tonka to join Tigra and Samantha Tigers. Just six short months ago, Tonka was facing euthanasia. Now, he has blossomed into one of the Center's most handsome and

affectionate tigers. Your continued support allowed us to make this happy ending possible.

If you are interested in adopting Tonka Tiger, please email Shelley Benson at lifetimeadoptions@conservatorscenter.org or call us at 336.421.0883.



Keep It Positive!

- Focus on your successes
- Look at what we've achieved
- Acknowledge any issues, and show how you are overcoming them

Constantly Growing & Improving

The Conservators' Center has generous and devoted donors who fund great projects. Here's a sample of recent improvements:



The "Cadillac of Lion Homes" is one of the many projects Claude and Amy Bittle have funded. Mufasa Lion and his pride clearly love their roomy, wooded enclosure.



Daniel Harrison and David Worster adopted Abigail and Alico Kinkajou, which helped move the climbing kinks into a much-improved cage with hammocks, swings, and platforms.



Photography by Abbie Cooke

On monthly workdays, crews of volunteers build cages and enrichment for the animal residents; and they mow, trim, and plant to make the compound more attractive for visitors. The Center's terrific volunteer crew leaders ensure everyone has a great time. And, really, what's more satisfying than talking to a tiger while you work? To receive regular updates about scheduled workdays and progress reports, contact Steve Simmons at construction@conservatorscenter.org.

When you make those relationships

SUNDAY Green hotels make relaxing easy on you and the environment. **D1** Is there a lion on the prowl in Alamance County? **C1**

ACCENT **REGION**

Local breaking news all day on TheTimesNews.com

Times-News

Burlington, North Carolina June 14, 2009 www.thetimesnews.com



REGION

C

SECTION

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Business Page 4

SUNDAY, June 14, 2009

Men say they saw lion in county

Authorities have been unable to confirm sightings

By **Roselee Papandrea**
Times-News

roselee_papandrea@link.freedom.com

J.B. Ross isn't an animal expert. But the 76-year-old farmer from the Pleasant Grove area knows what he saw on the afternoon of June 4. At the time, he was raking hay at Cal Jeffries Farms on Pleasant Grove School Road when he claims he saw a female lion walking in the middle of

the 175-acre farm plush with woods. "She was walking slow in a straight line," Ross said.

When the lion got about midfield, it turned her head toward Ross.

"She didn't turn her body, just her head," he said. "I was about 200 feet from it, and I decided to take a U-turn and get in my truck."

The sight of the lion definitely scared Ross a bit, he admitted.

"But I wasn't too scared when I got that shotgun," he joked.

Within 30 minutes, Ross saw the lion another two times. At one point, it was drinking from a man-made pond. It was brown and slick with a long tail that was dragging the ground, he said.

"Poor as a snake," he said. "I could count every rib."

Shortly after the third sighting, Alamance County animal control officers were searching for the lion, too. Ross didn't call them. Another farmer, who was raking hay on nearby farm, also claimed he spotted the lion drinking from a pond.

Sgt. Kurt Lankford, the county animal officer who responded, said he received a call mid-afternoon the same day about a lion sighting on another farm on Pleasant Grove Union School Road, not too far from Pleasant Grove Elementary School.

A farmer was mowing hay when he spotted what he described as a "brown lion."

"Of course, when we got up there, there was nothing there," Lankford said. "It ran into a more heavily wooded area."

Animal control checked the area and spoke with a school resource officer from the elementary school so that area could be searched.

"We didn't find anything," Lankford said.

Lankford is careful to label the call as "an alleged lion sighting," he said.

"We have no evidence to prove where and if we do have anything," he said.

Lankford contacted Jeff Brown, an officer with the N.C. Wildlife

See **COUNTY LION** / Page **C2**

It is always worth the time.

COUNTY LION

Continued from Page C1

Commission.

"Lions are just a little bit out of my day-to-day realm," Lankford said. "We can do something in an emergency instance, but tracking and removal will fall to state wildlife or some zoological factions."

Lankford also contacted Conservators' Center Inc. in southern Caswell County. The non-profit center rescues wildlife in need, includ-

ing lions. He said none of the wildlife that lives at the center is missing.

Cal Jeffries, who owns the farm where Ross was raking, said he thought people in the community should know that at least two people say they spotted a lion in that area.

"I think it's worth a story just so the local population can know that there was a lion up there by Pleasant Grove school," Jeffries said.

Animal control has received several calls from concerned residents who live in that area, but none of the callers actually saw a lion. He said there is some second-hand information that some-

The odds of wildlife escaping from the Conservators' Center is minimal, Brown said.

"That place is topnotch," Brown said. "For something to escape from there would be unlikely and if that happened, they would notify us immediately."

Brown thinks the farmers saw some other animal. Ross is adamant about what he saw.