

## Fasanerie Tierpark, Wiesbaden Wildcat Exhibit

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### LOCATION

Wilfried-Ries-Straße 20, 65195 Wiesbaden, Germany  
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 40907720  
 URL: <http://www.fasanerie.net>

### KEY WORDS

Breeding

### ANIMALS

Family	Species	Common Name	Capacity
Felidae	<i>Felis silvestris silvestris</i>	European Wild Cat	1,1+young

### DESCRIPTION

Fasanerie Wiesbaden is a city owned park with free entrance and the mission to fire people's enthusiasm for nature and educate them about native animals and plants.

The wildcat is a species that became rare in Europe due to habitat loss and hybridization with domestic cats. Small populations still exist in undisturbed forests, even around Wiesbaden, however, are separated from each other. A species conservation program in Germany, called 'Paths for Wildcats', intends to connect remaining and potential wildcat habitats with suitable corridors that will allow natural migration of remaining and released wildcats and other native species' populations.

Fasanerie Wiesbaden has kept wildcats for a long time. The previous wildcat exhibit at the park was part of an aged row of similar exhibits for small carnivores that did not meet visitor expectations any more, even though they were appropriate for the animals. The masterplan 2005-2015 that Monika Fiby developed together with the staff of the park therefore proposed a new stand-alone exhibit in the forest that would look more naturalistic and offer a more interesting visitor experience. The location of the exhibit is near an opening in the forest that allows the sun to reach the ground in the morning.

The biggest change in visitor experience is that visitors do not look from an open space on the path through a mesh towards a dark square shelter any more but leave the main path on a side track into the forest where they discover the exhibit and look the other way round, from a shelter into a light open space, similar to an aviary. A 20m<sup>2</sup> exhibit area adjacent to the visitor shelter is covered so that the cats may choose to stay close to the visitors during wet weather conditions. In the shelter, the barrier between the visitors and the cats is partly glass and partly tension wire. While the glass allows an



European Wildcat © Tammo Zelle, 2011



Site Plan © Monika Fiby, 2008

unobstructed view into the animal space, the tension wire allows a clear focused view, as well as smelling and hearing from both sides of the barrier.

The exhibit perimeter chain-link fence is 3 meters high and made from 2 mm wire and 3.5 by 3.5 cm openings. A spot-welded mesh of 2 mm with 2.5 by 2.5 openings is burrowed 0.5 meter into the ground and tied with the perimeter fence. Along the top edge the perimeter fence is tied to a 186 m<sup>2</sup> woven steel mesh of 1.5 wire with 4 by 4 cm openings that covers the whole exhibit like a tent. The netting is



**Barrier between Visitors and Wildcats © Hans Fiby, 2013**

nettings that need to move in the wind and must withstand snow.

#### **SIZE**

A 50 m<sup>2</sup> shelter is used by the visitors. A 20 m<sup>2</sup> exhibit area in front of the shelter has a rain cover. The mesh surrounding the exhibit is 3 meters high and covered by a steel mesh that is fixed around a tree at a height of 7 meters.

#### **COSTS**

Euro 71,600 including 10% for design.

The costs of the fences was about 5,000 € and the exhibit roof from steel mesh about 30,000 €, including installation. The costs of the shelter with glass and tension wire windows was about 20,000 € including installation.



**Locally sourced hollow logs offers hiding opportunities and weather protection for the Wildcats © Monika Fiby, 2013**

41,000 € was financed by the city of Wiesbaden, 10,600 € by the Fasanerie Wiesbaden Friends' Association and 20,000 € in-house contribution.

#### **OPENING DATE**

March 2009

#### **DESIGN**

Beginning: July 2008

- Conceptual Design: Monika Fiby, Zoo Design, Consulting, Vienna, Austria
- Construction Design: Fasanerie Wiesbaden staff
- Statics: Dieter Jedermann, Wiesbaden

#### **CONSTRUCTION**

Beginning: November 2008

- Construction: Fasanerie Wiesbaden staff
- Fences: Baldur Storck, Wiesbaden

#### **PLANTS**

The existing vegetation was maintained. An oak (*Quercus robur*) was used as main support for the netting.

#### **FEATURES DEDICATED TO ANIMALS**

The Wild Cat exhibit is located in a deciduous forest, the real European Wildcat's natural habitat. Tree trunks and stones from the forest are incorporated into the design of the enclosure, providing the wildcats with a living space that resembles that of their wild relatives.

A nearby forest opening allows the wildcats to sunbathe in the morning.

The exhibit area is large enough for the wildcats to run, play and pounce together, but also separately, since they are generally solitary animals.

A large tree is the main feature in the Wildcat Exhibit. Although the tree serves as a static roof support, it also provides multiple resting spots at various heights



**The Wildcats can retreat into nests between stones and still remain visible for the visitors © Monika Fiby, 2013**

held by steel cables that are fixed to a metal ring around a large oak tree. The metal ring is suspended from the branches of the tree. The construction was conceived by an artisan and craftsman in the staff who is a sailer and knows how to fix cables and

for the wildcats to perch themselves on and overlook their surroundings.

Below the tree are a number of branches, platforms and logs that connect and intertwine with each other, forming an obstacle course for the wildcats and challenging their physical capabilities. Here, they can express a wide range of natural behaviors. Different types of wood provide a variety in texture for the wildcats to dig their claws into, or rub their body against.

Ground cover is a sandy soil, which is used by the wildcats to dig and roll in. There are patches of grass for them to nibble on and weeded areas that provide good hiding spots. There is plenty of shade to keep the wildcats comfortable during summer, as well as a some wooden boxes buried under a pile of rocks.

The chain-link fence and wire mesh roof prevent the wildcats from escaping and protect them from predators. This choice of containment allows the cats to use of the third dimension inside the exhibit, and to look in all directions.

Giving the wildcats many choices in terms of where they want to be and what they want to do encourages them to be independent in a less controlled environment and makes them suitable for a breeding programme.

#### FEATURES DEDICATED TO KEEPERS

There is a double-door 'staff-only' entrance into the Wildcat Exhibit, with a gate containing a lock and key function for security.

A fence field from 2 x 2.5 cm grate behind the visitor shelter can be moved to allow occasional access with big vehicles for maintenance works.

The landscape inside the enclosure is a modified version of the habitat on the outside, therefore minimal cleaning is required to maintain appropriate hygiene and presentation. However, occasional tools and equipment are used by staff, therefore a small adjoining compartment is allocated for storage.

Keepers can visually monitor the wildcats throughout the day, and access all parts of the exhibit when necessary.

#### FEATURES DEDICATED TO VISITORS

A roofed timber shelter of 30 m<sup>2</sup> can hold approximately 20 adults or 30 children. The path and entrance to the shelter are wide enough for groups and even enough for wheelchairs and prams. The structure is open on two sides so that nobody can hide in it which reduces vandalism.

The long side of the rectangular structure runs along the Wildcat Exhibit, allowing several people to stand side-by-side and view the animals together.



The map on the sign shows the range of European Wildcats © Fasanerie Wiesbaden, 2008

Window ledges are low enough for wheelchair users and small children.

#### INTERPRETATION

The natural environment surrounding the Wildcat Exhibit immerses the visitor in the habitat of



The Wildcats at Fasanerie Wiesbaden participate in a breeding programme that aims at maintaining a healthy *ex-situ* Wildcat population for release into restored habitat © Saskia Steltner, 2008



**The Wildcats like to perch on the highest spot in the exhibit © Monika Fiby, 2013**



**Several graphics were used in a successful campaign to raise money for the Wildcat Exhibit © Monika Fiby, 2008**



**The fence allows the Wildcats to look out into all directions © Monika Fiby, 2011**

wildcats. The furnishing of the exhibit aims at providing the wildcats with a maximum of choices in a limited space by looking as naturalistic as possible.

Signs in the visitor shelter display information about wildcat biology, behaviours, their plight and conservation efforts in Germany.

## **MANAGEMENT**

Management practices of the exhibit include scooping faeces, raking the ground and keeping the plants within the enclosure pruned for viewing the wildcats.

In the event of needing to capture a wildcat for a medical check or other reason, cage traps with baits are used.

The floor in the shelter is a gravel mix. This is a non-slip surface with moisture-absorbing qualities and low maintenance requirements. In the event of heavy rainfall, excess water can drain underneath the timber walls and down the slope on the outside of the shelter, through a gap between the bottom of the walls and the ground.

## **CONSERVATION**

The wildcats in this exhibit participate in a breeding programme.

## **LOCAL RESOURCES**

All building materials, except for the steel mesh for the roof were locally sourced.

Objects and furnishing displayed inside the enclosure were taken from the local environment and used to serve a similar purpose as they serve in the wild.



**European Wildcat © Tammo Zelle, 2011**