



## tiger haven, inc.

### *A Safe Place for Big Cats*

Readers of ZOOS' PRINT may be interested to know that there is a "Tiger Haven" in the United States as well as the one by the same name run by Billy Singh in Uttar Pradesh.

The USA tiger haven, inc. is run by Joe and Mary Lynn Parker, who did not know of Arjun Billy Singh or the Indian Tiger Haven when they began their refuge for big cats. They know now and are fans of Billy, who has, say the Parkers, similar opinions to theirs on the subject of "surplus" captive wild cats. The Parkers, like Billy, do not agree that selling or destroying an animal when it becomes too old or overbred to be a good exhibit or conservation animal.

The Parkers presently have 51 big cats – tigers, lions, leopards, cougars and ligers. It all started innocently enough. In 1988, the Parkers volunteered for a special project at the Knoxville Zoo – to hand raise and human-imprint two tiger cubs, one white and one standard. The cubs were on loan to the zoo from Josip Marcan, a world renowned tiger trainer and breeder. Joe and Mary Lynn went to the zoo daily for several months to attend their project, until the cubs became adult and the zoo would not allow them to be handled further.

Later the Parkers got an opportunity to handrear another tiger cub which eventually became part of their household, against their best intentions. They moved to the country and built a house for themselves and a large, outdoor enclosure for the tiger, which they named India. A couple of weeks later a young couple brought them a lion cub which they had acquired without knowing the responsibilities that go with keeping a wild animal. The Parkers couldn't say no.

Ultimately the Parkers small collection evolved into a full-fledged rescue centre. Their tiger haven is home to more than 50 big cats, most of whom would have been euthanised had they not been taken in to tiger haven. The Parker's purpose is to provide a permanent home in a peaceful environment so that these large felids can live out their lives free from abuse and hunger. Many big wild cats from captive situations – zoos, circuses, shows – are suffering. If Joe and Mary Lynn hear about it, they try to rescue the cat. Then, **when a cat is taken into tiger haven, it is guaranteed a home for life.**

Naturally people ask why they don't just let zoos take the cats. Zoos, however, do not have the space to take stray cats. Also many zoos are participants in the Species Survival Plan and only take cats whose background can be traced to wild-caught cats. This insures that the species being kept is pure. Visitors also expect to see perfect, healthy cats – it creates a wrong impression if they see old or sickly animals in bad condition at a zoo, whether it is the fault of the zoo or not.

Included in their variety of lions, tigers, cougars, etc., the Parkers also have two "golden tabby" tigers who were given as gifts by a circus man in gratitude for the Parkers taking their retired tigers. The "golden tabby" tigers – first time I am hearing of such – are a ginger colour phase. It was first discovered in captive breeding in USA by Josip Marcan, who is recognised the world over for his training experience and the purity of his tigers. There are about 30 known golden tabby tigers at present. The Parkers write that they heard there were some "documented" at Similipal Tiger Reserve, according to Marcan.

The colour of the golden tabby varies from a 14k gold to a reddish golden colour. The stripes are cinnamon coloured. There is no black on the coat unless it appears on the bottom half of the tail. The black that would be on the face is replaced by white.

The Parkers are interested in colour phases as they had written to us on reading about the black colour phase tiger reported in ZOOS' PRINT some many months ago.

The Parker's and tiger haven have a Web site where you can learn more about them and their unique facility and values. It is <http://tiger-haven:8080/aboutth.htm>. Information in this article taken from a fax of their web site.

Address: tiger haven, 237 Harvey Road, Kingston, TN 37763, USA.