#### What is a Sanctuary?

A sanctuary is a place where animals live and are protected for the rest of their lives. After drugs and weapons, the exotic animal trade is the third largest source of illegal profit in the Americas and the world today. In a sanctuary animals are not bought, sold, or mistreated. They are provided a setting where they can live naturally in an environment as close to their natural habitat as possible.

#### Captive Wildlife Crisis

Although a baby exotic animal might cute and playful, they grow to become very large, hungry, and often unmanageable as adults. In the U. S. alone there are approximately 30,000 large carnivores living outside the zoo system. Many large carnivores, like tigers, bears, and wolves, are used as pets or for theatrical performances. Often they live in roadside stands, Vegas acts, circuses, basements, garages, magic shows, and other entertainment or private endeavors. These animals are often neglected and once they are full grown can exhibit behavioral issues - related to their constant confinement - that can be unsafe and jeopardize public safety. Within a country as well as from country to country, there are few regulations for humane treatment of these animals, their breeding, and requirements for licensing.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Figure 1Tiger Cubs | Figure 2Brown Bear with Cubs |

#### Animal Care Program

In a sanctuary, the goal is to get animals to interact with their own kind. This starts with a natural habitat to which they are gradually introduced. In many cases the animals have to be taught to trust humans again. The habitat can include trees, prairies, lakes, underground dens, play structures, and toys. A diet is established that mirrors that of their real environment. This means that the animals are not fed every day at the same time. They are fed on a random schedule, like they would be if hunting their own food. Sanctuaries do not take road kill or hunters’ discards. They feed high quality USDA-inspected meats mixed with vitamins and nutrients. Additionally veterinary care is exceptional in these environments. Each animal is checked upon arrival and neutered – as there is no breeding in sanctuaries. This care may vary slightly form establishment to establishment but in general sanctuaries are concerned with the welfare of the animal - the animal come first.

#### The Wild Animal Sanctuary

The Wild Animal Sanctuary is a state and federal licensed facility established in 1980 and located outside of Keenesburg Colorado, 30 miles northeast of Denver. This nonprofit facility houses over three hundred fifty large carnivores on 720 acres. It is the largest of its kind and the oldest in the United States. It is the home for tigers, lions, bears, leopards, wolves, bobcats, foxes, camels, emu, horses and rescued dogs and cats. Of the seventy sanctuaries in the U.S. only twelve take in large carnivores.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  |  |

##### Current Programs

The Wild Animal Sanctuary (TWAS) has large centralized animal houses within the rehabilitation area. These areas allow for temperature and food control along with the ability watch the animals and remove one that is ill or adjusting poorly.TWAS is known for its feature called the “Mile IntoThe Wild” Walkway. This is actually a system of elevated walkways that enable visitors, sponsors, and donors the ability to see the rescued animals in their natural environments without being placed in danger.

#### Education is the Key to Change

The main way to stop the suffering of large carnivores in captivity is to educate the public on their deplorable conditions with posters, and videos. Additionally information on sanctuaries like the Wild Animal Sanctuary, helps to heighten the visibility of the alternatives available for these animals.