

Conservation and Animal Preservation Are Roaring Topics at Tiger World

by Linda Pliagas

With only 200 Siberian tigers left in the world, conservation of endangered species is a global issue that is on the forefront. Tiger World is an example of how one organization, and one woman, can make a difference in the lives of animals on the brink of extinction.

Located in Rowan County, North Carolina, Tiger World is planning a summer opening in July, 2008. Tiger World is not a typical zoo; instead, it is dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and preservation of exotic animals while providing education to the public regarding them. The staff at Tiger World is dedicated to providing the best possible care for the animals in its facility and also to educating visitors about the tigers, all the while maintaining the best possible environment for the animals.

The Tiger World website, www.tigerworld.us states that "The intimate setting is a great place to bring the family and learn about the animals up close and personally." Tiger World owner, Lea Jaunakais, adds "We want to teach people about the animals; we want to give kids a personalized approach. I want kids to see the natural behavior of the animals."

As numerous investigative reports have testified, human ac-

tivities are the main reason why the tigers are disappearing in our natural world. One of the major contributors of the demise of the healthy tiger populations is the illegal activities of poaching and illegal trade. Another major problem is the destruction of the tigers' natural habitat.

It is due to these compelling reasons, that zoos and private facilities are crucially needed in order to not only spark an interest in the causes of these endangered species, but also provide assistance to genetically diverse breeding programs that are aimed at resuscitating the low numbers of

tigers on the planet.

According to an article in the *Rock Hill Herald*, Tiger World recently purchased an older zoo formerly known as Metrolina Wildlife Park. Jaunakais, 31, actually volunteered for several years at the previous facility before finally deciding to purchase the old zoo and renovate the entire park.

"I'm so excited, I'm so excited," said

Jaunakais with tears in her eyes as she was being interviewed by a



Herald Online camera crew. "I'm elated after all these years of work, after all these dreams I've had since I was a little kid, that I'm

licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture

and that in just a few months I'm going to be open to the public and teaching them all about the animals."

Tiger World will be inhabited by a spectacular array of felines:

30 tigers, 10 lions, 2 leopards, a jaguar, bears, and reptiles, as well as numerous primates and snakes. Upon visiting Tiger World, guests will receive personal attention and be guided throughout the facility. The experience will allow viewers to see the animals in their own natural setting and observe them in action. Tiger World aims to provide an individual, hands-on experience to guests.

Tiger World will have special group rates for educational groups, such as homeschoolers.

Admission to the facility will be \$8 person for groups of ten or more. Visitors will be able to observe the animals playing, swimming and being fed.

Without a doubt, safety concerns will be central importance to visitors of Tiger World, especially in light of the recent Christmas Day attacks in a San Francisco zoo. Currently, the staff at Tiger World is busy improving and renovating the facility, which had fallen into disrepair.

"Over the next few months, I'm going to be making improvements and creating the park I want," Jaunakais said to *The Independent Tribute*, and added: "Those improvements are of the highest importance right now." Some of the improvements at the facility will include: Lock-down safety measures, double doors into all animal enclosures, secure shelters for the animals, 24-hour surveillance cameras and steel-reinforced enclosure bars to help eliminate the risk of animal escape.

According to *The Independent Tribute*, Jaunakais estimates that the improvements will cost more than \$300,000, which she will pay with money she's made working at the family business: Industrial Test Systems in Rock Hill, S.C., where she is vice president. Tiger World is now coordinating their summer tour schedule, for additional information, please call 704-279-6363 or email tigerworldsc@aol.com. To view video or learn additional information about Tiger World, please log on to: www.tigerworld.us. L.P. ■

