

Newsletter no. 1 Spring 1978

Friends of Howletts and Port Lympne

Mila

Some Aspects of Breeding Tigers and other Big Cats

by John Aspinall

Over the years it has become almost habitual for us at Howletts, and now Port Lympne, to leave the males of our breeding pairs of cats in with mother and young from conception up to the time the young are removed at one year or more for re-accommodation or disposal. I say almost, because there are a few exceptions to the generality. At the time of writing (10.10.77) we have, between the two zoo parks, bred nineteen tigers so far this year, seven Siberian from two litters (0.4 and 1.2), the first litter of four female cubs was born to Gonza from the huge male Zarif. In their case we make a point of separating the parents some time before birth. Zarif has proved erratic in his behaviour towards Gonza when she has littered down in the past, but next time she breeds we intend to allow Zarif another try at being a good father. The other litter of 1.2 was born to Gulya from Sukam. Sukam has always proved to be a most reliable and tolerant father. His good character is well known and understood by his mate who allows him into the breeding den even when the cubs are a few days old.

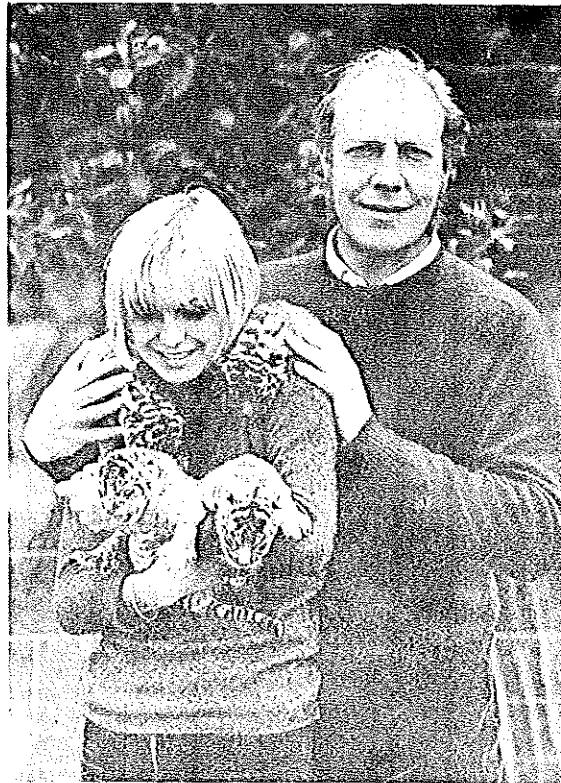
With our Indian tigers we have successfully bred 9.3 this year — an unfortunate sex ratio which will make problems for us next spring when we will have to find a home for all of them except the young pair Khan and Khala (from different litters) who were hand-raised. These cubs came from five different litters, from our different mothers, chronologically as follows: —

by *Zarka out of Zombie* (0.1): rejected — hand-raised.

by *Indus out of Tapti* (4.0): one removed to be hand-raised as future mate for previous reject. Indus remained with the cubs for three months and was then removed because he was fighting too roughly with Tapti.

by *Jhelum out of Zorra* (1.1): all four have remained together. Zorra has mothered eighteen cubs successfully in litters of three, four, five, five and two respectively without the loss of a single cub other than one that was born dead. Jhelum is regularly left in with any tigress he has mated with and has never harmed them or his offspring.

by *Zarka out of Zombie* (2.0): (second litter of '77) all four are together. Zarka is an excellent father and allowed in with the babies immediately after birth. There is no recorded instance of him acting aggressively towards *Zombie* or the cubs.



John and Sally Aspinall with four ten-day-old Indian tiger cubs

Daily Mirror photograph by Dela Zola

by *Bhenji out of Putra* (2.1): this is Bhenji's first and Putra's second family. He has proved a reliable and friendly father so far but the cubs are less than a month old and have not ventured out of the den yet. We are confident that Bhenji will prove to be a tolerant parent.

Conclusion: It seems that tigers make tolerant and good-natured fathers, often allowing and even encouraging their children to play with them and clamber over their bodies. Out of the six pairs that have mated successfully this year, only in one case was the male not allowed to remain with the mother and cubs, and of the others only Indus was removed after three months.

The enclosures vary from 1,000 to 5,000 square metres. In two of these, well separated cabins were available to the animals, in the other four, one breeding cabin had to be shared by both parents and young. From our experience at Howletts and Port Lympne, over a period of fifteen years, we are tempted to wonder whether the male tiger has a more positive parental role in the wild state than has generally

been though male in the d be predators to his mate d

At the pr leopards run cubs (1.1). T the breeding George Schal pair-bonder. no reason w or, for that m

Also runni panthers wi weeks old. T the cub was s any anxiety.

The North young, thou that a male.

With Clou

A romp with m



HELP Spring

been thought hitherto. Certainly the presence of a male in the den area would act as deterrent to would-be predators and his hunting skills could prove useful to his mate during late pregnancy and early lactation.

At the present time we have a family of Snow leopards running together, mother, father and two cubs (1.1). The mother did not allow the male near the breeding den until the cubs were ten weeks old. George Schaller believes that this cat may be a genuine pair-bonder. If this were true in the wild there seems no reason why the male should be removed before or, for that matter, after the arrival of the young.

Also running together are a breeding pair of Black panthers with their solitary cub, a female of ten weeks old. The male was seen entering the den where the cub was sleeping alone without the mother showing any anxiety.

The Northern lynx are also left together with their young, though this year only one kitten was born and that a male.

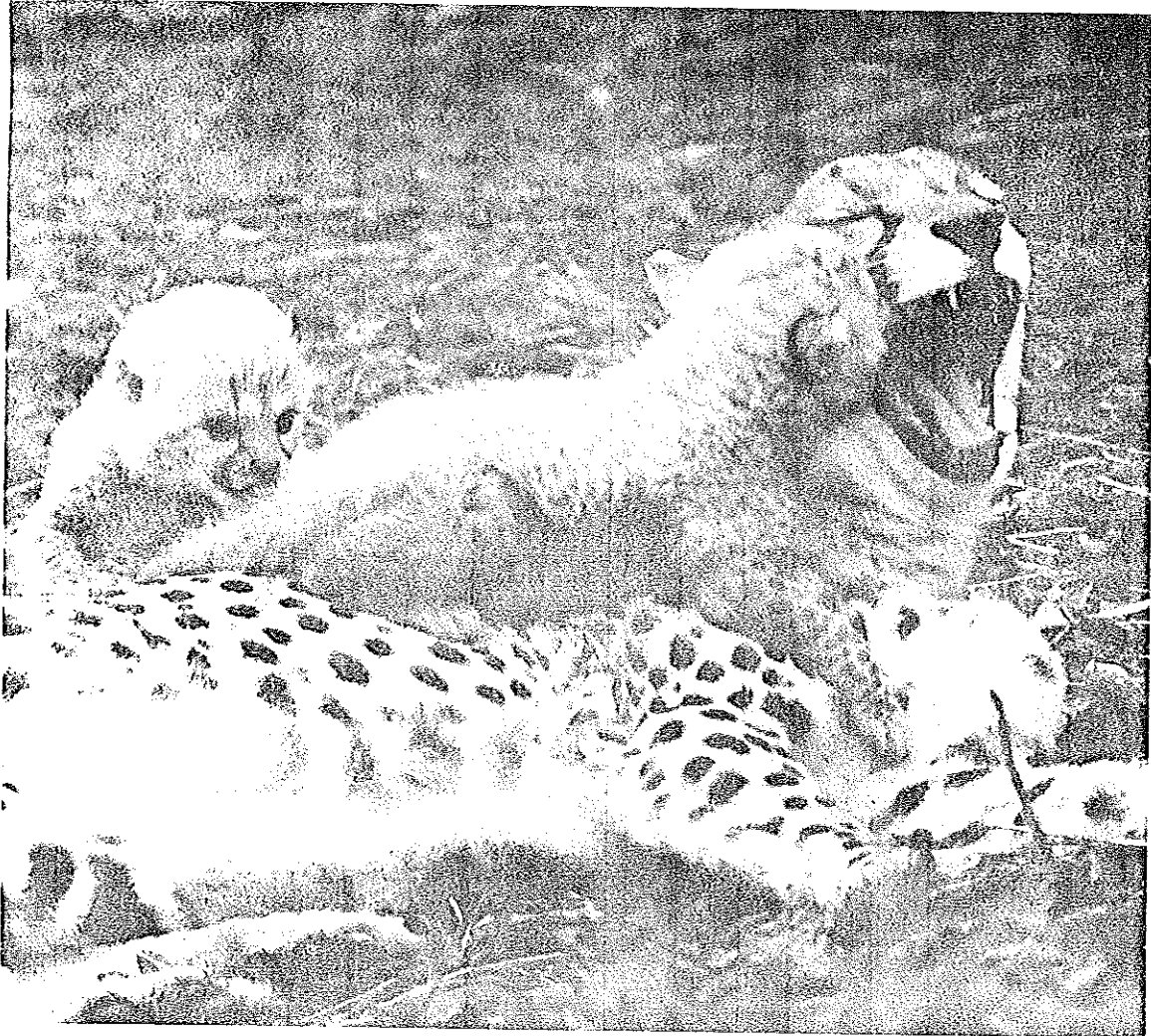
With Clouded leopards we scored an initial success

many years ago by leaving the male in with his mate after the birth of three female cubs, however when they were sixteen months old he killed one of them and since then we have always followed a policy of separation on pregnancy. We think now though that we have a compatible second generation pair that could be left with their cubs.

The advantages of this course of action are obvious provided that no harm comes to mother or young: no alternative accommodation has to be found for the male — in the case of tigers and leopards this can be quite a problem — the father can participate in the joys of parenthood and avoid separation from his spouse.

All those who are interested in the husbandry and propagation of wild felidae should take note of our experience. Few ethograms have been made of these predators and little is known about their natural behaviour. There must be many surprises in store for us.

A romp with mother for two S.W. African cheetah cubs born on November 3rd



Breeding the Howletts Cats from January— August 1977

by Brian Stocks and Nick Marx

Clouded Leopards

Although we are the only zoo in the country to breed these rare cats, we still have problems. The three cubs born to a pair, also born at Howletts, was the first litter for nearly two years. On noticing the female was pregnant the male was separated. Prior to this the female was left alone as much as possible because of her nervous disposition and previous record of killing her own cubs. She was fed in her outside run and as the food was disappearing it was assumed she was in good health.

On August 11th three cubs (2.1) were born, two had been taken outside into the run and 'dumped'; the third was still in the shed. The cubs were removed and are being hand-raised. Unfortunately one male died due to wounds inflicted by the mother; the other two however are doing well.

Servals

Kittens were born to our breeding pair of servals on 31st March. Unfortunately only a head was found of this litter. It had not been cleaned after birth so it was assumed that the kittens were stillborn, but on 26th June, less than 80 days after the previous litter, two kittens were born. The cage was fenced off to keep the public away as this has caused problems to previous litters. On 5th July the female brought her babies out for the first time as it was a warm sunny day, and since that time has been exceptionally aggressive to her keepers at feeding time. The kittens are well and show no fear of people outside their cage due to the lack of interference they have experienced. Indeed they spend almost the whole day playing in the long grass where the public can watch.

Lynx

As Czmar's first baby the previous year was stillborn it was with much satisfaction we welcomed this year's kitten born on May 20th. The youngster, although guarded fearlessly by his mother, shows no fear

whatsoever of anything that goes on around him. While his mother is protecting him from adversaries outside the cage, the kitten will generally be chewing her hind leg, or playing with her tail.

Snow Leopards

On June 30th there was obvious disturbance in the Snow leopard cage — scratch marks on the concrete outside the shed, and the bedding straw dragged outside. Kush, the female, refused to leave the shed and became very aggressive when attempts were made by the keepers to discover the contents of the shed. However at 10.00 p.m. on July 5th, a cub was heard calling from the den and, by the second week in August, the two cubs were venturing outside the shed, their mother keeping a close watch to ensure that the father didn't start interfering with her young. So far, however, he has shown no interest in his offspring.

Indian Tigers

Tapti had four sons born on April 8th to Indus. He is normally tolerant towards females and young, but had to be moved to a separate cage as he was becoming increasingly rough with Indus. Before he was moved, however, he mated with her, when the cubs were only six weeks old. This is interesting behaviour as the female does not normally come into oestrus before she has stopped lactating. One of the cubs has been removed and sent to Port Lympne to be hand-raised as a mate for a tame young tigress already there. The remaining three are all fine but very nervous of people. Zorra also was mated by Jhelum at the end of March and gave birth to three cubs, (1.2), on July 15th. Unfortunately one female was stillborn which seemed to upset Zorra for a while but she has settled down and is doing a great job of looking after her babies which are now venturing outside.

Bred the from Aug

by Brian Ste

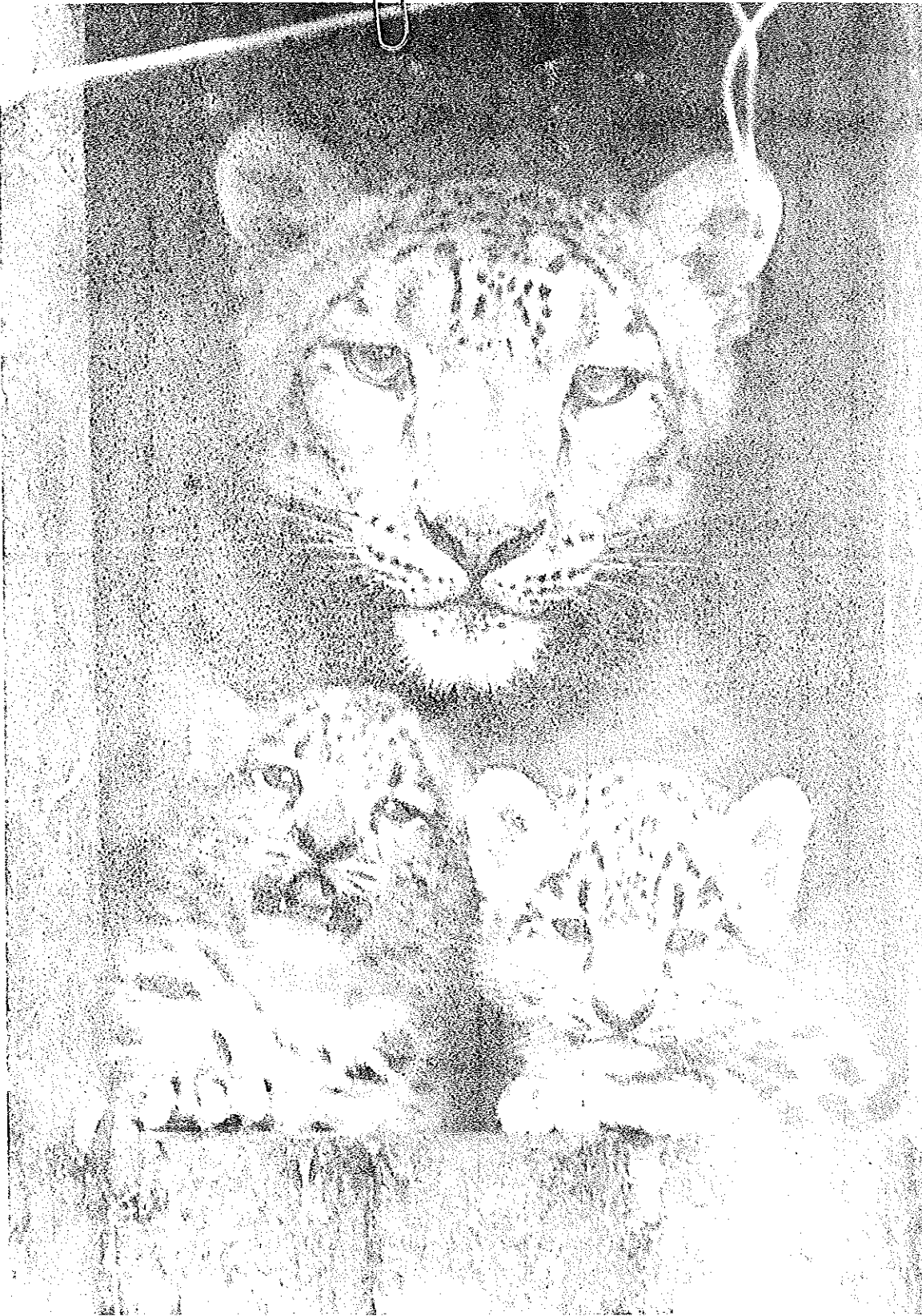
Although we
bred these ra
three cubs bor
the first litter
female was pre
this the femal
because of her
of killing her ov
and as the too
was in good he

On August
had been taken
third was still
and are being
died due to wo
two however a

Kittens were
31st March. U
this litter. It ha
assumed that
June, less than
kittens were b
public away as
litters. On 5th
for the first tim
that time has
keepers at fee
show no fear o
lack of interfe
they spend alr
grass where th

As Cznan's f
it was with mu
kitten born or
guarded fearl

HELP Spring 19



Snow leopard cubs, Kanchen and Junga at ten weeks, with Kush