

Ontario Zoo Review Report #4

Bergeron's Exotic Animal Sanctuary

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ZOOCHECK CANADA INC.

Zoocheck Canada Inc. is a national animal protection charity (#13150 2072 RR 0001) established in 1984 to promote and protect the interests and wellbeing of wild animals.

Zoocheck works to improve wildlife protection in Canada and to end the abuse, neglect and exploitation of individual wild animals through:

- investigation and research
- public education and awareness campaigns
- capacity building initiatives
- legal programs
- legislative actions.

INVESTIGATOR PROFILE

Else M. B. Poulsen

In 1978 Else Poulsen received her B.Sc. in Biology from Brock University and in 1995 her 4 year Diploma in Zookeeping from the City of Calgary Apprenticeship Programs.

Ms. Poulsen began her career in animal behavior in the early 1980s working as a field biologist in Alberta's energy industry. When the oil market took a downward spiral a few years later, she became a zookeeper at the Calgary Zoo.

As an entry level keeper Poulsen worked with a wide variety of animal species. She became particularly interested in large carnivore behavior and over time became a specialist in captive bear management and care.

Poulsen found it difficult to accept that the captive bears in her care displayed abnormal pacing behaviours, so she set out to better their lives. This led her to research captive bear problems, publish her findings and advocate for change.

After 18 years at the Calgary Zoo she left to work at a major US zoo and then at a specialist bear facility in Ontario. Over the years, she has provided expert assistance and advice about modernizing bear husbandry methods, environmental enrichment programming and enclosure design issues to zoos, sanctuaries and animal welfare groups around the world.

Poulsen has more than 40 papers and articles to her name in scientific research and technical journals, textbooks and other publications. She consults as an animal behavior and captive environment trouble-shooter. She has also lectured on modern bear care and animal welfare issues to audiences as diverse as university students studying population genetics to First Nations Band Council members in northern Canada.

THE AUDIT PROCESS

The Zoo Exhibit Quick Audit Process (ZEQAP)¹ assessment tool that was used to grade the conditions in the zoo exhibits investigated in this report was developed for the World Society for the Protection of Animals and their member societies worldwide by Rob Laidlaw.

The ZEQAP provides a relatively simple approach to auditing terrestrial mammal exhibits, because it is based almost entirely on specific, critical housing and husbandry points.

How the Audit Works

Each exhibit is assigned a starting score of 50 points based on a series of conditions that must be satisfied. An exhibit must retain 40 points to pass.

The ZEQAP presents the investigator with a series of factual statements. These statements are divided into 11 sections, each assigned a numerical score. For example, the section on Behaviour is allocated five points, while the section on Privacy is assigned two points.

Points are deducted from the starting score in each section if the statement is not true, as this represents an exhibit deficiency. For example, in the section on shelter, the investigator is presented with the statement, "Shelters are present in the exhibit." If no shelter is present, two points would be deducted from the five points assigned to this section.

The lowest possible score in each section is zero.

Critical Deficiencies Mean Automatic Failure

The presence of any of the following critical deficiencies results in an exhibit automatically failing the audit and receiving a score of zero.

1. Severely cramped conditions (or restraints) that prevent normal postural adjustments and movement in any direction of less than three body lengths (including tail).
2. 100% hard or wire substrates.
3. Barren exhibits lacking any useable features or furnishings.

Additional Observations

In addition to auditing specific exhibits, the investigator toured all accessible areas of each zoo. Conditions were documented through photographs, video and hand written notes, which were transcribed shortly after each zoo visit.

Note: A passing score does not mean an exhibit is optimal or needs no improvement. It simply means that at the time the audit was conducted, certain basic animal housing and care criteria were met. Captive environments, by their very nature, are deficient when compared to the environments that animals inhabit in the wild and can always be improved.

¹ Copies of both ZEQAP documents are available from the Canadian office of the World Society for the Protection of Animals.

General Commentary

Bergeron's Exotic Animal Sanctuary advertises itself a sanctuary but appears to operate like a typical zoo. Based on my site visit and other information I reviewed, they apparently 1) purchase animals from other zoos and individuals, 2) breed animals and, 3) accept injured, non-releasable animals, including native wildlife from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources.

In my view, a number of the animals appeared to be in poor physical condition. Some did not seem to have appropriate muscle mass, while others (e.g., big cats, baboons) appeared overweight. Some of the big cats kept in groups, such as the cougars, had minor injuries including battered tails and ears indicating aggression between cage-mates.

One Jungle Cat, one black panther and one Canada lynx were observed to be pacing in what appeared to be a stereotypic fashion. Other animals were inactive. The large carnivores became more alert as their afternoon feeding time approached.

Free-roaming waterfowl and pheasants were observed throughout the facility. Occasional masses of feathers next to the carnivore cages suggest that some of these birds are killed by the cats after wandering too close to the cages. A docent standing outside of a cougar cage jokingly commented on the "suicide chicken," actually a pheasant, that was walking by the cage during her presentation. These birds should be safeguarded.

A number of animals were held in cages that were makeshift, rusty, patched up and that appeared unsafe. Some of the cages and enclosures were also undersized.

In several cases, overcrowding was evident. For example, the tiger cage was too small for the number of animals it contained. The owners seem to understand that overcrowding was a problem and were in the process of expanding the tiger cage.

Wooden shelter boxes were sometimes old, dilapidated and rotting. Several appeared large enough to contain only one animal at a time. The cage bottoms were covered with straw providing a soft, usable substrate for most animals. A few of the cages were overgrown with ground vegetation and did provide some privacy from public viewing. Other cages were empty and gave the animals no place to remove themselves from public view, unless they sat inside their shelter box.

I saw no indication of a facility-wide enrichment program or even of an understanding of enrichment and the importance of environmental variability. The parrots had toys to play with in their pens, but many of them were in need of replacement. Some of the mammals had a ball in their cage and a Japanese macaque had a hanging tire/swing in their cage, but proper furnishings and enrichment was lacking.

Human safety was a real concern. Generally speaking, the cages and enclosures are makeshift and do not incorporate standard safety features, such as double-entry doors and secondary confinement areas for the segregation of animals during cleaning and maintenance. I observed only one padlock on a cage door during my visit. Most cage and enclosure doors were secured with twisted wire. I also observed holes in the fencing that were repaired by placing a new section of fencing overtop of the damaged piece with the new section being secured by pieces of twisted

wire at inconsistent intervals. The door to the Jungle Cat exhibit was held in place by an angled log propped against the ground. The lack of padlocks on cages and enclosures housing potentially dangerous large carnivores is a serious safety concern.

Public stand-off fencing to keep visitors away from the animal cages is in place but is not always solid. The zoo seemed to understand the rickety status of their stand-off fencing as signs were placed periodically asking the public to not lean against them.

The facility is in the process of building a 3.65m (12 ft) tall perimeter fence, but is not yet finished with the project.

Grain in small cups was available for purchase by visitors for feeding to the animals. Children could feed and touch waterfowl, pheasants and hoof-stock, but there did not appear to be any hand-wash stations or any signage alerting the public to the importance of hand-washing to prevent disease transmission.

The zoo seems to be making an effort to educate visitors by posting graphics that cover everything from taxonomy to aberrant behavior. This information appeared to be accurate.

Bergeron's also provide a large carnivore feeding demonstration and tour/talk and I attended one of them. The guide on my tour provided a great deal of incorrect information. For example, while standing in front of one of the cougar exhibits the guide informed the 25 or so visitors, including me, that 1) "Cougars are not dangerous, a human can easily overpower a cougar," 2) "If you are hiking out west and you come across a cougar you should just find a stick a beat it on the nose and it will run away," and 3) that the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources is secretly releasing western cougars into Ontario without informing the public, because cougars are not dangerous, it completes the environment, and the public wouldn't like it."

During the large carnivore feeding show it became apparent that the large carnivores are fed once a day, at the same time everyday. Individuals are not separated from each other for feeding to reduce inter-individual aggression and stress. One black panther appeared particularly stressed and vocal during feeding which I recorded on video. The guide laughed at the cat's aggressive behavior, but no attempt was made to address the animal's tension. She correctly interpreted the cat's behavior as an aggressive stress response, but made no attempt to correct her own behavior that stressed the cat. Such a daily feeding demonstration promotes stereotypic behavior and takes away any opportunity for the daily ration to be presented in a fashion that is enriching for the animals. It did provide a "show" for the visitors who were in attendance.

Also, the meat for the 2 pm show was put out at the various cages in uncovered buckets between 12:30 and 1 pm. I observed that the meat was covered in flies for the entire time it was sitting out and that pieces of it were being eaten by the free-roaming chickens who seemed to be waiting for it, an indication that this is a regular practice.

Exhibit Evaluations

Five exhibits were evaluated. All five exhibits failed.

Images

<http://www.zoocheck.com/programs/zoocheck/Report064/images.shtml>

American Black Bear

The American black bear exhibit that holds one adult female black bear is too small to allow for species-typical movements and behaviours. The canopy is too low to allow for the bear to stand on its hind legs to sniff the air as they often do in the wild. This cage is substandard in every way and brings daily hardship to Edna the bear. The caging is poorly maintained and not properly locked. There is a significant potential for escape should the bear be sufficiently motivated. FAIL.

Baboon

The baboon exhibit is a barren, invariable environment. There is minimal furniture and no evidence of enrichment. The caging is poorly maintained and unlocked. If sufficiently motivated, the potential for escape is significant. FAIL.

Cougar

There are three cougar cages housing eight cougars. The cougars have minor abrasions and injuries, a possible indication of incompatible social groupings. The furniture is aged, rotting and needs to be replaced. There is no sign of enrichment programming. The cage fencing is poorly maintained and the exhibit is not locked. There did not appear to be any buried fencing to prevent the cats from digging underneath the fence line. The potential for escape is significant. FAIL.

Wolf

The wolf "pack" consists of Timber/Arctic wolf crosses. These animals were purposely cross-bred at the facility to generate a "wolf social structure." It is unclear to me why this breeding was facilitated as sanctuaries generally discourage all breeding of animals. The exhibit is barren, open to the elements and too small for five adult wolves. There is no indication of enrichment programming. The fencing is old, poorly maintained and I saw no indication of buried fencing or a ground-level skirt protruding into the cage to prevent digging underneath. In my opinion, there is a reasonable potential for escape if the animals are sufficiently motivated. FAIL.

Jungle Cat

The Jungle Cat exhibit is too small to house the three cats observed. Apparently, I did not see all of the animals; I learned that there are more in the group. One cat was observed to be pacing. There was minimal furniture and no indication of enrichment programming. The presence of what appeared to be Jungle Cat cubs in another cage suggests they are being bred. Breeding is not something that recognized sanctuaries allow. FAIL

Bergeron's Exotic Animal Sanctuary

AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE		COMMENTS
	POSSIBLE	ACTUAL	
APPEARANCE	5	5	No animal observed
UNHEALTHY, INJURY	-2		
REQUIRE GROOMING	-2		
FUR/FEATHER/SKIN CONDITION	-1		
BODY WT. INAPPROPRIATE	-1		
BEHAVIOR	5	5	Informed that bear was sleeping under the brush or in day bed.
ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR	-2		
PERFORMANCES	-2		
S.S. GROUPING	-1		
WITHDRAWN	-1		
PUBLIC FEEDING	-1		
SPACE	10	0	
ALLOWS NORMAL MOVEMENT	-4	-4	Cage too small and overgrown to allow for the normal gait of a bear.
FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE	-4	-4	If stressed the bear has no place to retreat to.
VERTICAL SPACE USE	-2	-2	No vertical space usage. The cage canopy is approximately 1.5m (5 ft) above the floor. An adult bear could stand up on its hind legs as bears often do to get a better view or scent from the ir surroundings.
OVERCROWDED	-2	-2	Cage is approx. 3.65m (12 ft) x 4.5m (15 ft). Too small and overgrown for one adult bear.
BARRIER	3	0	
MAINTENANCE	-2	-2	Very poorly maintained, patch work on fencing.
SAFE FOR ANIMALS	-1	-1	Potential for escape if motivated.
HOT WIRES, PRIMARY BARRIER	-1	-1	No hotwire.
SUBSTRATE	5	4	
< 25% SOFT SUBSTRATE	-2		
ALLOWS FOR S.S. BEHAVIOR	-1		
FLAT, NO VARIATION	-1	-1	
SIGNIFICANT FLOODING	-1		
FEATURES & FURNITURE	5	0	
NO S.S. FURNITURE	-2	-2	Cage too small to properly outfit with furniture. No indication of meaningful enrichment programming.
ENOUGH FOR GROUP	-2	-2	No furniture or enrichment.
DESIGN	-1	-1	Poorly designed; little thought re bear's needs.

LOCATION	-1	-1	
REPLACEMENT	-1	-1	
EASE OF REPLACEMENT	-1		
SHELTER	5	0	No shelter provided; animal digs day beds in substrate.
AVAILABLE	-2		
EFFECTIVENESS	-1		
SHELTER ACCESS	-1		
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1		
BEDDING/SOFT SUBSTRATE	-1		
PRIVACY	2	2	If animal was in enclosure and staff informed me that she was, then "Edna" has the ability to dig down into the substrate and disappear from sight.
PUBLIC VIEW/CAGE MATES	-2		
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1		
360° VIEWING	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: OUTDOOR	5	4	
S.S. CLIMATE	-1		
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1	-1	No variation in topography
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: INDOOR	5		
S.S. ENVIRONMENT	-2		
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1		
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1		
SAFETY	3	0	
BARRIER CAN CONTAIN IND.(S)	-2	-2	The gauge of mesh is too small for a bear and can be broken if the bear is sufficiently motivated.
DEFECTS IN EXHIBIT	-1	-1	The cage is too small for the bear and the mesh is too flimsy and old.
PUBLIC BARRIER	-1		
GATES/DOORS LOCKED	-1	-1	The bear gate is not locked, but instead is wired shut.
DOUBLE DOOR ENTRY	-1	-1	No double door entry.
SHIFT AREAS	-1	-1	No shift area for bear.
SIGNAGE	2	2	
1 OR > EXPLANATORY SIGN(S)	-2		
PROMINENT LOCATION	-1		

ACCURATE INFO.	-1		
TOTAL SCORE	50	22	FAIL

BABOON

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE		COMMENTS
	POSSIBLE	ACTUAL	
APPEARANCE	5	4	
UNHEALTHY, INJURY	-2		
REQUIRE GROOMING	-2		
FUR/FEATHER/SKIN CONDITION	-1		
BODY WT. INAPPROPRIATE	-1	-1	Both animals appeared to have too much body fat and not enough muscle, indicating an inactive lifestyle.
BEHAVIOR	5	4	
ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR	-2		
PERFORMANCES	-2		
S.S. GROUPING	-1		
WITHDRAWN	-1		
PUBLIC FEEDING	-1	-1	It is assumed that the public could feed the animals grain purchased from the zoo since there was no signage to indicate otherwise
SPACE	10	3	
ALLOWS NORMAL MOVEMENT	-4	-2	The cage is small but does allow for a normal gait, but not much distance to cover.
FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE	-4	-3	Cage is open to public view on two sides without any significant areas to hide. Open to noise of facility vehicles and pollution as they are parked by the cage. Animals cannot get away from vehicles as they are started up and make noise.
VERTICAL SPACE USE	-2	-1	There are two shelves in a corner where the baboons tended to stay and one platform in the exposed center of the cage. Very poor use of space.
OVERCROWDED	-2	-1	This cage is too small for two animals since it is mostly barren. However, it is vital to have at least two baboons together as they are highly social.
BARRIER	3	0	
MAINTENANCE	-2	-2	The fencing is rickety, rusty in places and the mesh gauge is too small for baboons.
SAFE FOR ANIMALS	-1	-1	The baboons could easily drive mesh wire into their hands and feet by playing with unfinished ends of mesh etc.
HOT WIRES, PRIMARY BARRIER	-1		
SUBSTRATE	5	1	
< 25% SOFT SUBSTRATE	-2	-2	The substrate is hard packed dirt and pebbles and no vegetation. The baboons would benefit from soft loamy earth that supports vegetation growth of tall grasses.
ALLOWS FOR S.S. BEHAVIOR	-1	-1	No place to dig for grubs, make ground nests, hide and eat and pick at grasses.
FLAT, NO VARIATION	-1	-1	Flat barren exhibit.
SIGNIFICANT FLOODING	-1		

FEATURES & FURNITURE	5	0	
NO S.S. FURNITURE	-2	-1	Two shelves and one platform in center of exhibit are provided. No indication of meaningful enrichment programming.
ENOUGH FOR GROUP	-2	-1	There are elevated platforms for both but no other furniture and no meaningful enrichment.
DESIGN	-1	-1	Very poorly designed. Cage is large enough to accommodate furniture and enrichment changes to greatly improve the lives of the baboons.
LOCATION	-1	-1	Not enough furniture or enrichment to comment on location.
REPLACEMENT	-1	-1	Old platform materials and dead tree placed in exhibit.
EASE OF REPLACEMENT	-1		
SHELTER	5	1	
AVAILABLE	-2	-1	One old nest box at rear of exhibit
EFFECTIVENESS	-1	-1	Appears very small for two baboons.
SHELTER ACCESS	-1	-1	One entrance for two baboons, one animal can control entrance blocking another's access
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1	-1	No
BEDDING/SOFT SUBSTRATE	-1		
PRIVACY	2	0	
PUBLIC VIEW/CAGE MATES	-2	-2	The only way the baboons can remove themselves from public view is to step into the nest box, otherwise they are on exhibit. There is no way for one baboon to get away from another and be sheltered at the same time. Facility trucks and machinery are parked near this cage potentially disturbing the baboons.
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1	-1	No
360° VIEWING	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: OUTDOOR	5	0	
S.S. CLIMATE	-1	-1	Baboons are not tolerant of Ontario winters. Nest box is too small to house baboons for winter, therefore these animals need winter quarters. There is very little cover in cage from wind or sun.
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1	-1	Flat, barren and uninteresting.
NOISE	-1	-1	Disturbed by public and facility machinery noise.
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1	-1	No potable water was observed.
ENVIRONMENT: INDOOR	5		
S.S. ENVIRONMENT	-2		
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1		
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1		
SAFETY	3	0	
BARRIER CAN CONTAIN IND.(S)	-2	-2	Gauge of mesh is too small for baboons which, if properly motivated, could probably escape. Cage

			properly motivated, could probably escape. Cage door wired shut, not locked.
DEFECTS IN EXHIBIT	-1	-1	No double door to protect staff and prevent escape.
PUBLIC BARRIER	-1	-1	Public barrier stops abruptly on the west side.
GATES/DOORS LOCKED	-1	-1	No locks on doors
DOUBLE DOOR ENTRY	-1	-1	No double door entry
SHIFT AREAS	-1		
SIGNAGE	2	0	
1 OR > EXPLANATORY SIGN(S)	-2	-2	No signage at exhibit describing what specie of baboon and behavior. Signage up at exhibit for public top not lean on public barrier fence.
PROMINENT LOCATION	-1		
ACCURATE INFO.	-1		
TOTAL SCORE	50	13	FAIL

COUGAR

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE		COMMENTS
	POSSIBLE	ACTUAL	
APPEARANCE	5	3	
UNHEALTHY, INJURY	-2	-1	Most of the cats observed had old ear and tail injuries. These sorts of injuries are indicative of improper social groupings.
REQUIRE GROOMING	-2		
FUR/FEATHER/SKIN CONDITION	-1		
BODY WT. INAPPROPRIATE	-1	-1	
BEHAVIOR	5	2	
ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR	-2		
PERFORMANCES	-2	-2	The "interpretive program" gave the impression of being a large carnivore feeding show. Aggression and feeding stress within the group was not taken seriously and joked about by the tour guide.
S.S. GROUPING	-1		There are eight cats held in three groups in cages too small for the number of cougars present in each.
WITHDRAWN	-1		
PUBLIC FEEDING	-1	-1	Cats being fed by guide in a show style.
SPACE	10	3	
ALLOWS NORMAL MOVEMENT	-4	-2	Each cage with cougars is too small for the number of animals.
FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE	-4	-2	No place to run if stressed. Can hide behind brush.
VERTICAL SPACE USE	-2	-1	Aging platforms provide some ability to use vertical space, but platforms are in poor condition and some of the wood is rotting.
OVERCROWDED	-2	-2	Too many cats in too small cages.
BARRIER	3	0	
MAINTENANCE	-2	-2	Fencing appears poorly maintained. Mesh rusty and wood rotting in places. Many places where there have been mesh repairs.

SAFE FOR ANIMALS	-1	-1	Not safe for animals. Cats can get hurt from the substandard aging materials.
HOT WIRES, PRIMARY BARRIER	-1	-1	No hot wires used.
SUBSTRATE	5	4	
< 25% SOFT SUBSTRATE	-2		Soft straw and earth substrate allowing for vegetation growth.
ALLOWS FOR S.S. BEHAVIOR	-1		
FLAT, NO VARIATION	-1	-1	Ground is flat without variation.
SIGNIFICANT FLOODING	-1		
FEATURES & FURNITURE	5	1	
NO S.S. FURNITURE	-2	-1	Old, decaying furniture. No enrichment programming.
ENOUGH FOR GROUP	-2	-1	No enrichment for anyone. Not enough furniture variation for group.
DESIGN	-1	-1	Poorly designed.
LOCATION	-1		
REPLACEMENT	-1	-1	All existing furniture requires replacement.
EASE OF REPLACEMENT	-1		
SHELTER	5	5	Shelters were not obvious and could not be assessed.
AVAILABLE	-2		
EFFECTIVENESS	-1		
SHELTER ACCESS	-1		
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1		
BEDDING/SOFT SUBSTRATE	-1		
PRIVACY	2	2	
PUBLIC VIEW/CAGE MATES	-2		It was not easy to see cougars at times. Therefore it can be assumed that they can remove themselves from public view and each other if need be.
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1		
360° VIEWING	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: OUTDOOR	5	4	
S.S. CLIMATE	-1		Can withstand winters if they have proper shelter. Shelters were not apparent.
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1	-1	Flat ground, not varied.
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: INDOOR	5		
S.S. ENVIRONMENT	-2		
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1		
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		

POTABLE WATER	-1		
SAFETY	3	0	
BARRIER CAN CONTAIN IND.(S)	-2	-2	Cage fencing appeared poorly maintained. No evidence of buried fencing to prevent cats from digging underneath fence.
DEFECTS IN EXHIBIT	-1	-1	Cages undersized; floor surface overgrown; mesh too small a gauge for cougars; some fencing rickety and old.
PUBLIC BARRIER	-1		
GATES/DOORS LOCKED	-1	-1	No locks on animal gates. Very dangerous and easily accessible by public.
DOUBLE DOOR ENTRY	-1	-1	No double door entry.
SHIFT AREAS	-1	-1	No apparent shift areas.
SIGNAGE	2	1	
1 OR > EXPLANATORY SIGN(S)	-2		
PROMINENT LOCATION	-1		
ACCURATE INFO.	-1	-1	Extremely inaccurate interpretive talk given, completely underrating the danger and disposition of cougars.
TOTAL SCORE	50	25	FAIL

WOLF

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE		COMMENTS
	POSSIBLE	ACTUAL	
APPEARANCE	5	5	The Bergeron website states that some of the wolves are Timber/Arctic wolf crosses. These hybrids were bred and raised at the facility to provide a pack social structure. Breeding animals is not an activity that accredited sanctuaries approve of. In fact, they do everything possible to ensure that no breeding occurs.
UNHEALTHY, INJURY	-2		
REQUIRE GROOMING	-2		
FUR/FEATHER/SKIN CONDITION	-1		
BODY WT. INAPPROPRIATE	-1		
BEHAVIOR	5	5	
ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR	-2		
PERFORMANCES	-2		
S.S. GROUPING	-1		
WITHDRAWN	-1		
PUBLIC FEEDING	-1		
SPACE	10	0	
ALLOWS NORMAL MOVEMENT	-4	-3	Allows normal gait but does not allow for wolves to run as a pack
FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE	-4	-3	Exhibit too small and barren to provide flight distance and much privacy.
VERTICAL SPACE USE	-2	-2	No vertical space use. Wolves like to get up higher so they can pick up air-borne smells which gives

			them environmental information.
OVERCROWDED	-2	-2	Five wolves in a half acre exhibit is too small.
BARRIER	3	0	
MAINTENANCE	-2	-1	Fencing not well maintained.
SAFE FOR ANIMALS	-1	-1	Appears that wolves can dig out. No buried fencing or interior ground level skirt observed.
HOT WIRES, PRIMARY BARRIER	-1	-1	No hotwire used to prevent digging.
SUBSTRATE	5	4	
< 25% SOFT SUBSTRATE	-2		
ALLOWS FOR S.S. BEHAVIOR	-1		
FLAT, NO VARIATION	-1	-1	
SIGNIFICANT FLOODING	-1		
FEATURES & FURNITURE	5	0	
NO S.S. FURNITURE	-2	-1	Some logs and shelters provide places for wolves to lay on. Fairly barren exhibit. No evidence of meaningful enrichment programming.
ENOUGH FOR GROUP	-2	-1	Not enough lounging furniture for all five animals.
DESIGN	-1	-1	Poorly designed. Open field with little shelter or variation.
LOCATION	-1	-1	All furniture provided is centrally located for public visibility.
REPLACEMENT	-1	-1	New materials and enrichment needed.
EASE OF REPLACEMENT	-1		
SHELTER	5	5	
AVAILABLE	-2		It appears that the wolves have access to building behind the exhibit providing adequate shelter, assuming the animals all get along.
EFFECTIVENESS	-1		
SHELTER ACCESS	-1		
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1		
BEDDING/SOFT SUBSTRATE	-1		
PRIVACY	2	0	
PUBLIC VIEW/CAGE MATES	-2	-1	Animals can only remove themselves from public view or each other if they move indoors.
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1	-1	Not all animals can seek privacy at the same time.
360° VIEWING	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: OUTDOOR	5	5	
S.S. CLIMATE	-1		
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1		There are some boulders, a cement funnel and some logs strewn about
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: INDOOR	5		

S.S. ENVIRONMENT	-2		
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1		
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1		
SAFETY	3	0	
BARRIER CAN CONTAIN IND.(S)	-2	-1	There does not appear to be buried fencing at the base of the enclosure fence or a ground level skirt to prevent digging.
DEFECTS IN EXHIBIT	-1		
PUBLIC BARRIER	-1		
GATES/DOORS LOCKED	-1	-1	Gate not locked - wired shut.
DOUBLE DOOR ENTRY	-1	-1	No double door entry.
SHIFT AREAS	-1	-1	It is likely that the shift area is limited to the shelter.
SIGNAGE	2	0	
1 OR > EXPLANATORY SIGN(S)	-2		No signage apparent.
PROMINENT LOCATION	-1		
ACCURATE INFO.	-1		
TOTAL SCORE	50	24	FAIL

JUNGLE CAT

CHARACTERISTIC	SCORE		COMMENTS
	POSSIBLE	ACTUAL	
APPEARANCE	5	5	
UNHEALTHY, INJURY	-2		
REQUIRE GROOMING	-2		
FUR/FEATHER/SKIN CONDITION	-1		
BODY WT. INAPPROPRIATE	-1		
BEHAVIOR	5	2	
ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR	-2	-2	One cat observed pacing.
PERFORMANCES	-2		
S.S. GROUPING	-1		
WITHDRAWN	-1		
PUBLIC FEEDING	-1	-1	Grains in cage indicates that public is throwing food into cage, even though cats do not eat these materials.
SPACE	10	0	
ALLOWS NORMAL MOVEMENT	-4	-3	Three cats have access to two small cages. Allows for normal waking gait but not running or climbing.
FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE	-4	-3	Cage too small to satisfy flight response.

VERTICAL SPACE USE	-2	-2	No vertical space use.
OVERCROWDED	-2	-2	Space too small for three cats to exercise normal Jungle Cat behaviors, such as hiding, climbing, running, playing.
BARRIER	3	0	
MAINTENANCE	-2	-2	Appears poorly maintained. The cage door is held shut with a log propped against the door. Patchy mesh.
SAFE FOR ANIMALS	-1	-1	Animals can drive rusty mesh into their paws.
HOT WIRES, PRIMARY BARRIER	-1		
SUBSTRATE	5	3	
< 25% SOFT SUBSTRATE	-2		Soft straw and earth substrate with vegetation in most places.
ALLOWS FOR S.S. BEHAVIOR	-1	-1	Requires greater vegetation coverage to allow for shy nature of cats.
FLAT, NO VARIATION	-1	-1	Flat, no variation
SIGNIFICANT FLOODING	-1		
FEATURES & FURNITURE	5	0	
NO S.S. FURNITURE	-2	-1	Requires more vertical space use such as high placed branches for lounging or shelving with privacy. No indication of meaningful enrichment programming.
ENOUGH FOR GROUP	-2	-1	There are a few logs on ground and cats can lie on top of crate which is "nest box." No sign of meaningful enrichment programming.
DESIGN	-1	-1	No indication that there is a species-specific plan.
LOCATION	-1	-1	
REPLACEMENT	-1	-1	Logs need replacing
EASE OF REPLACEMENT	-1		
SHELTER	5	1	
AVAILABLE	-2	-1	Several crates available to act as "nest boxes"
EFFECTIVENESS	-1	-1	Crates too small to be effective shelter.
SHELTER ACCESS	-1	-1	Access faces public, so does not give privacy.
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1	-1	Two crates, three cats.
BEDDING/SOFT SUBSTRATE	-1		Straw bedding available.
PRIVACY	2	0	
PUBLIC VIEW/CAGE MATES	-2	-2	Only one crate is facing away from public so it can provide some privacy.
ENOUGH FOR ALL	-1	-1	No.
360° VIEWING	-1		
ENVIRONMENT: OUTDOOR	5	1	
S.S. CLIMATE	-1	-1	Cats cannot acclimate to Ontario winters.
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1	-1	No variation.
NOISE	-1	-1	Cannot get away from public noise.
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		

POTABLE WATER	-1	-1	No potable water observed.
ENVIRONMENT: INDOOR	5		
S.S. ENVIRONMENT	-2		
VARIED TOPOGRAPHY	-1		
NOISE	-1		
GARBAGE/FECES	-1		
POTABLE WATER	-1		
SAFETY	3	1	
BARRIER CAN CONTAIN IND.(S)	-2		
DEFECTS IN EXHIBIT	-1		
PUBLIC BARRIER	-1		
GATES/DOORS LOCKED	-1	-1	Animal door not locked, kept closed with upright log at 90° angle.
DOUBLE DOOR ENTRY	-1	-1	No double door entry to protect keeper or public, or to prevent escape.
SHIFT AREAS	-1		
SIGNAGE	2	2	
1 OR > EXPLANATORY SIGN(S)	-2		
PROMINENT LOCATION	-1		
ACCURATE INFO.	-1		
TOTAL SCORE	50	15	FAIL

CONCLUSIONS

This report is the fourth in a series of investigative reports about Ontario zoos in 2006. It provides a snapshot view of Bergeron's Exotic Animal Sanctuary, a privately-operated menagerie located just outside of Picton, Ontario, on August 16, 2006.

While Bergeron's advertises itself as a sanctuary, I was unable to determine how they differ from most zoos as they appear to operate and manage their facility and animal collection in the same fashion.

Five exhibits were reviewed using a modified version of the Zoo Exhibit Quick Audit Process (ZEQAP) described earlier in this report. All received failing grades.

Several aspects of the Bergeron facility and operation were identified as being of concern, including:

1. Cages and enclosures that appeared makeshift and unsafe.
2. Cages and enclosures that may be compromised because of numerous patchwork repairs.
3. Access points to cages, enclosures and non-public areas that were not locked.
4. Lack of a perimeter fence to discourage escaped animals from leaving the zoo grounds.
5. Undersized cages and enclosures for some animals.
6. Lack of structural enhancements to increase the complexity of the animal's living space.
7. Overly simplistic furnishings or lack of furnishings.
8. Lack of meaningful facility-wide enrichment programming.
9. Waterfowl, pheasants and other birds being allowed to roam freely throughout the zoo. The birds did not appear to have adequate facilities (e.g., protection from wild predators, swimming area, potable water) and could be a possible stressor to carnivores.
10. Inter-species breeding and the production of hybridized animals.
11. Unmonitored public feeding of some animals and lack of hand-washing stations.
12. Inaccurate and/or misleading information being conveyed to the public by staff and/or volunteers.

It appeared as though some improvements were in process. For example, I observed that sections of a perimeter fence had been erected and that the size of some of the animal enclosures was being increased. As well, some of the cage and enclosure graphics seemed to be relatively new and interpretive talks were being provided to visitors. However, from the look of the facility, it was obvious that Bergeron's Exotic Animal Sanctuary is operating on a very modest budget and that improvements are proceeding at a relatively slow pace.

Overall, the cages and enclosures appeared rudimentary and unsafe. Many of them should be reconstructed or refurbished with both the biology and behaviour of the animals and the safety of keepers, visitors and neighbours in mind. All cage and enclosure access points and/or hazardous areas should be securely locked.

The perimeter fence should be completed as soon as possible to discourage animals from leaving the zoo grounds, should they escape; to prevent feral animals from accessing the zoo grounds; and to discourage human trespassers or vandals.

Free-roaming birds should be properly restrained and provided with appropriate facilities that satisfy their biological and behavioural needs.

A comprehensive facility-wide enrichment program is needed for all animals to encourage species-typical movements and behaviours.

Cross-breeding of species should be prevented and public feeding of animals should be prohibited.

Native Wildlife

A number of Canadian wildlife species are held at the Bergeron facility, including silver fox, cougar, Arctic/timber wolf and American black bear. Some of these animals are "regulated" by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR).

Zoos and other public display facilities in Ontario that display native wildlife (meaning those species listed as "specially protected and game wildlife" in the *Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act*) must obtain a license from the MNR. There are several conditions attached to licenses, including three general welfare conditions, that presumably must be satisfied before a license is issued. The welfare conditions are:

1. Animal enclosures in which animals are on public display should be of a size which enables the animals to:
 - a) exercise natural behaviours to facilitate public education and interpretation;
 - b) achieve a distance from the public and other specimens at which the animals are not psychologically or physically stressed;
 - c) achieve a full range of body movements and physical movements normally performed.

In my opinion, these conditions are not being entirely satisfied at Bergeron's Exotic Animal Sanctuary. The American black bear exhibit is undersized and does little to enable the bear to "exercise natural behaviours to facilitate public education and interpretation." The low ceiling height of the exhibit also does not allow the bear to "achieve a full range of body movements and physical movements normally performed."

The wolf exhibit is deficient and does little to encourage natural behaviours. It is relatively barren and lacks sufficient shelter and privacy areas.

The Canada lynx exhibit makes poor use of the available vertical space and lacks a sufficient number of raised, sheltered, privacy areas.

General Recommendation

There are currently no rules or regulations for zoos in Ontario. This lack of regulation has resulted in a large number of zoos and wildlife menageries operating at a standard of their own choosing.

The Government of Ontario must implement and administer a comprehensive zoo regulatory program that requires anyone holding native and/or exotic wild animals in captivity to obtain a license and to satisfy a series of conditions as to their knowledge, experience, financial abilities, wild animal housing and management practices, safety procedures and other relevant issues. Licenses should be issued annually and only after an inspection of the premises to be licensed is conducted. The regulatory program should include the ability to conduct special inspections, penalties for non-compliance and provisions for license revocation.

A draft document entitled *Minimum Standards for Zoos in Ontario* was completed by the Ministry of Natural Resources in July 2001. If implemented and enforced, they would rectify many of Ontario's substantive wildlife in captivity problems, including some that have been described in this report. To date, the Ontario government has not acted.