

Emily Sexson  
Education Specialist  
World Wildlife Day  
2/27/18

From a sweet purr to a ferocious roar, felines of all shapes and sizes have the ability to attract attention in a variety of ways. Domesticated cats are a beloved pet to many, and exotic cats are often used as symbols of power and command. These charismatic animals with unique adaptations that help them survive are the theme of this year's World Wildlife Day, which is celebrated annually on March 3<sup>rd</sup>.

World Wildlife Day is the day that the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora or CITES began in 1973, and is a global celebration. CITES is the international agreement between governments that aims to ensure that the trade of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. This year the awareness event's theme is Big Cats: Predators Under Threat focuses on 7 species of big cats that are facing threats. These species include cheetahs, jaguars, leopards, African lions, pumas, snow leopards, and tigers.

Lee Richardson Zoo plans to highlight the big cat species that reside at the zoo this Saturday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> with activities available from 1:30 to 4:00 PM. There will be keeper chats and discovery carts stationed at our African lion habitat, Cat Canyon (home to our jaguar and pumas), as well as Wild Asia, where you'll find our Amur and Snow leopard habitats. Guests are encouraged to visit each of our big cat event locations to receive an opportunity to be entered to win a plush snow leopard from the Safari Shoppe.

"Big cats are among the most powerful creatures to grace this planet, but they are also the most fragile. They are facing many threats to their survival in the wild, be it loss of habitat and prey, poaching and smuggling, human-wildlife conflict or climate change" (CITES). During our World Wildlife Day celebration, we will be presenting information about each species and encouraging solutions that can be taken to help ensure the future of these magnificent predators.

World Wildlife Day is a global celebration of the diversity of wild plants and animals on our planet as well as a day to raise awareness of the benefits that conservation efforts provide to the survival of many threatened and endangered species. In the last 20 years, leopards have been wiped out from at least 40% of their historic range in Africa and over 50% of their historic range in Asia. Find out what is threatening leopards as well as other species of big cat by joining us for World Wildlife Day on March 3<sup>rd</sup> from 1:30 to 4:00PM. For more information, please contact us at 620-276-1250, by emailing [zoo.education@gardencityks.us](mailto:zoo.education@gardencityks.us) or by visiting our website at [www.leerichardsonzoo.org](http://www.leerichardsonzoo.org)