

Published Issaquah Press, Issaquah WA 2/23/11
Published Sammamish Review, Sammamish WA 3/16/11

Dear Editor:

A wet, cold, day might not seem to be a good choice to go to the Cougar Mountain Zoo, but I went to get a big-cat fix. The mountain lion was in his shelter out of the rain, relaxing, enjoying a day without visitors. The tigers, however, were willing to give me a show. Their show included stalking, roaring, chuffing, wrestling each other, wide-mouth yawns and a few flehmens which give a great view of a tiger's teeth. One of the tigers also thought to remark some territory without including me.

The layout of the cats' enclosures at CMZ lets the cats and visitors eye each other across a distance of several feet, where a visitor can clearly see these magnificent cats up close. It should trouble each of us that most, if not all of the animals at CMZ represent endangered species. Our own cougar (*Puma concolor*) suffers from loss of habitat and weak hunting protection in many states, and we have extirpated it in the majority of its former range. What a shame if we in the Americas continue to facilitate the extinction of our mountain lions while wondering how the peoples of other countries allow the extinction of beautiful animals such as tigers, lemurs, some wallabies, other species of small and large cats, colorful birds, and on and on ad nauseam.

While CMZ may lack the scope and grandeur of zoos such as Seattle's Woodland Park, it provides an intimate setting to meet some truly magnificent animals. The staff is accessible, professional, and friendly; the animals happy and well-treated. Take some time to see this gem of ours. The animals will benefit from your support.

Bob McCoy
Sammamish, WA