

## Video Transcript for The Wild Animal Sanctuary, Introduction Part 2:

*[Pat Craig speaking]*

“We weren’t open to the public for a lot of years. The main reason for that was these animals are very territorial. Carnivores have instincts like any other animal, and territory is important to them. Having people on the ground is kind of like almost trespassing to them, and it’s a threat to their territory. People are used to going to the zoo, and a lot of times you’ll see at a zoo where the animals are pacing back and forth and things like that. And that’s because of the pressure that people create when you’re on the ground is really bad for the animals. They don’t like somebody being right outside their door. It would just be like if somebody was outside your living room window every night, and you were trying to watch TV or relax and there’s people standing right there.

“So what I learned early on, when I first started rescuing these animals, is that they don’t consider the sky or the air to be territory. And so you could be 10 feet up in the air and the animals couldn’t care less, but if you are right outside their cage 10 feet that would really bother them, because that’s their territory. So at the Sanctuary, when I started to rescue animals, the first thing I wanted to do was to make sure that we gave them natural spaces to live in. I didn’t want them to just live in cages all their lives. I wanted to rescue and save their lives, but at the same time I didn’t just feel like keeping them in small cages...that was almost just like operating a prison and that’s not what I wanted to do.

“So as the Sanctuary grew over the years, we knew we needed lots of land to be able to give big open spaces. Over the years, we’ve become the pioneers of this kind of thing even though there’s places like the San Diego Zoo’s Wild Animal Park. They do hoof stock like giraffe and zebras and things like that, but they don’t do lions and tigers in big spaces because nobody’s ever taken the time to really learn how to get these animals to live together nicely in groups like that in captivity.

“We build 20-acre habitats, and we’ll have a group of lions or tigers or bears that get to go out and live together and roam freely in that 20 acres. So for us to be open to the public, we had two problems. One, we didn’t want to infringe on their territory, and two, we didn’t...to get people to be able to see them when you have big 20-acre expanses...and the Sanctuary’s grown to 720 acres, now, so it’s very hard for people to be able to see that. So to solve that problem, we built an elevated walkway. That protects the animals’ privacy – even though people are there they’re up in the air where it doesn’t bother them. And the second thing is that it we are now able to get the walkway to go right over the top of all of these habitats. And so, we have over 320 acres of habitats right now, and we are building more right now. Over the next few years, we will wind up with over 700 acres of habitats.

“Right now the visiting public can come to the Sanctuary, we’re open seven days a week, and they basically are going to go up on to our elevated walkways and go right up over these different habitats and be able to



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see the animals that have been rehabilitated and are living out there. We have prides of lions, bears and tigers and wolves and all these things that live freely out there. And we have the main compound where a lot of the animals that are in that rehabilitation stage that are learning to be friends with each other and getting used to the sights and sounds get to spend some time there. We have a nice balance between the two. When people come to visit they see the tigers and lions that are in the rehabilitation stage, and then they get to go see the ones in the habitats. And we have a Bolivian Lion House where we rescued 25 lions from Bolivia two years ago (2011). That whole complex is an 80-acre complex that people can visit and see the lions both inside and outside (the Bolivian Lion House).

“Very few people have ever visited a sanctuary before and so just learning what a sanctuary *IS* is important. Animals here are the number one concern. We’re not here to entertain people; we’re not here for anything other than for people to learn about what we do and why these animals are in captivity. But we want to make sure the animals come number one, so we actually give the animals the freedom and kind of cage the people on the walkways.

“When people first visit, they have the zoo mentality of going ‘Oh, I’m going to go there and there’ll be these glass windows, and I can go right up to two feet away from this tiger or lion.’ Here, there are some animals in the main compound that you’ll be within 10 to 15 feet of so you’ll be very close to them. And then when you get out onto the walkway and you’re looking into these habitats you could have a tiger right below you or you could have one almost a half of a mile away. People have to get used to the beauty and the idea that these animals have the freedom and that you could look off into the distance and see a pride of lions walking across the grasslands out here and how great that is. It’s totally different than what you would ever see at a zoo.

“We have large decks with tables and chairs. People can bring a picnic, and they can sit down and actually sit. And it’s quiet – you can hear the birds and see the lions roaring and wolves howling. You can just slow down and really enjoy it. Most people that come spend at least a couple of hours here, and some people spend the whole day.

“We are open seven days a week, and we encourage people to come because it’s the only place in the world that’s like this. It’s the longest elevated observation walkway in the world, and the habitats and the Sanctuary is the largest and oldest in the country. It’s quite a unique experience.”

**The Wild Animal Sanctuary is located at 1946 Weld County Road 53 in Keenesburg, CO. To learn more visit: [www.wildanimalsanctuary.org](http://www.wildanimalsanctuary.org).**



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