Circus lions find new home at PAWS

Written by Lacey Peterson, The Union Democrat May 28, 2010 04:00 pm

Bolivian Lions will make their new home at the PAWS animal sanctuary in San Andreas.Courtesy photo/PAWS

Four rescued circus lions from Bolivia will arrive at their new home in San Andreas today.

The lions’ new spacious outdoor sanctuary at the Performing Animal Welfare Society refuge will be the closest they’ve ever been to freedom. Lions such as these usually live out their lives in rusty cages, hauled in the backs of trucks.

The captive-bred animals were rescued by Animal Defenders International following a monumental June 2009 ban on circus animals in Bolivia, said Kim Gardner, PAWS spokeswoman.

Bolivian President Evo Morales signed Law 4040, which banned wild and domestic animals in traveling circuses throughout the country, making the first national circus ban in South America and the world’s first ban on all circus acts, a PAWS statement said.

There is no facility in Bolivia that could take them, so PAWS offered to take five lions, Gardner said.

Unfortunately, one of the two females, the oldest of the group, died three weeks ago, Gardner said.

Animal Defenders International has committed to supporting the four lions for the rest of their lives, a PAWS statement said.

However, the sanctuary is always in need of support, and donations can be made online at www.pawsweb.org, Gardner said.

The lions were set to arrive in San Francisco Thursday night and will be released into their new habitat today.

Each lion will have its own den area, and the habitat is full of trees and greenery.

“They’ll be at their free will,” Gardner said. “This is kind of a big step ... these lions have lived in tiny metal cages their entire lives.”

The Performing Animal Welfare Society was founded in 1984 and houses 33 tigers, nine elephants and four lions at its three sanctuaries, including ARK 2000 in San Andreas.

According to PAWS officials, it provides peaceful sanctuary for abused, abandoned or retired animals and promotes programs designed to gain permanent protection for all captive wildlife.
Bolivia lions freed to Bob Barker-funded refuge

By CARLOS VALDEZ (AP) – 5 days ago

A lion looks through its cage before being transported to the US at the airport in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Thursday, May 27, 2010. British organization Animal Defenders International, ADI, sent Thursday five lions, which have been rescued from circuses, to a refuge in California. (AP Photo)

LA PAZ, Bolivia — Four lion cubs freed under Bolivia's circus-animal ban took off for California on Thursday, heading to a new life in a refuge built with the help of television personality Bob Barker.

The cubs were rescued under a Bolivian law set to take effect in July that prohibits circuses from having any animals — including pets — making it the world's most comprehensive ban.

A fifth lion, mother of three of the cubs, was also rescued after a lifetime of circus work. But she proved too elderly to make the trip and had to be euthanized, said Enrique Mendizabal, a volunteer with Animal Defenders International.

His group helped house the lions in Bolivia before they were moved out of the country.

The group's president and a big-cat veterinarian accompanied the lions, which were housed in special cages for the 12-hour cargo flight to San Francisco.

They will be released Friday at a Performing Animal Welfare Society refuge in northeastern California in a habitat built with support from Barker, the former host of the TV game show "The Price is Right" who is a longtime animal rights advocate.

In their circus lives, two of the cubs had their fangs cut to protect trainers, who wowed crowds by sticking their heads inside lions' mouths. Another had her claws ripped out at birth — without anesthetic.

Lions can live 40 years in the wild. But the euthanized lion was blind and frail by age 18 after a life of jumping through flaming hoops and performing at the point of trainer's whip.

Such stories of abuse, along with clandestine circus videos made by animal-rights activists, prompted Bolivia to enact its ban last year. The lions' owner gave them to a local animal rescue group shortly after the vote.
Bolivia lions freed to Bob Barker-funded refuge

May 27, 2010 2:02 PM (5 days ago) By CARLOS VALDEZ, AP

(AP Photo)
A lion looks through its cage before being transported to the US at the airport in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Thursday, May 27, 2010. British organization Animal Defenders International, ADI, sent Thursday five lions, which have been rescued from circuses, to a refuge in California.

LA PAZ, Bolivia
Four lion cubs freed under Bolivia's circus-animal ban took off for California on Thursday, heading to a new life in a refuge built with the help of television personality Bob Barker.

The cubs were rescued under a Bolivian law set to take effect in July that prohibits circuses from having any animals - including pets - making it the world's most comprehensive ban.

A fifth lion, mother of three of the cubs, was also rescued after a lifetime of circus work. But she proved too elderly to make the trip and had to be euthanized, said Enrique Mendizabal, a volunteer with Animal Defenders International.

His group helped house the lions in Bolivia before they were moved out of the country.

The group's president and a big-cat veterinarian accompanied the lions, which were housed in special cages for the 12-hour cargo flight to San Francisco.

They will be released Friday at a Performing Animal Welfare Society refuge in northeastern California in a habitat built with support from Barker, the former host of the TV game show "The Price is Right" who is a longtime animal rights advocate.

In their circus lives, two of the cubs had their fangs cut to protect trainers, who wowed crowds by sticking their heads inside lions' mouths. Another had her claws ripped out at birth - without anesthetic.

Lions can live 40 years in the wild. But the euthanized lion was blind and frail by age 18 after a life of jumping through flaming hoops and performing at the point of trainer's whip.

Such stories of abuse, along with clandestine circus videos made by animal-rights activists, prompted Bolivia to enact its ban last year. The lions' owner gave them to a local animal rescue group shortly after the vote.
Jan Creamer, ADI President who has been in Bolivia coordinating the rescue and who will be flying in with the lions, said: "With the Congresses of Peru, Brazil, Colombia and Chile all considering legislation to ban animal circuses, this rescue is not merely symbolic, it shows that we are prepared to make a real commitment to ensure that bans on animal circuses can be fully implemented and animals can be saved.

"As other animals need homes we will be assessing these on a case by case basis. With these lions there were clear welfare and public safety issues. When dealing with lions there are not only welfare and public safety issues, we are therefore delighted to be working with PAWS who have enormous experience with big cats and a reputation for setting the highest standards in animal care."

The ADI rescue operation was backed by Bob Barker.

About Animal Defenders International (ADI):

With offices in Los Angeles, London and Bogotá, Animal Defenders International (ADI) campaigns to protect animals in entertainment; replacement of animals in experiments; worldwide traffic in endangered species; vegetarianism; factory farming; pollution and conservation. ADI also rescues animals in distress worldwide. ADI gathered evidence has led to campaigns and legislative action all over the world to protect them.

ADI's Mission: To educate, create awareness, and promote the interest of humanity in the cause of justice, and the suppression of all forms of cruelty to animals wherever possible to alleviate suffering, and to conserve and protect animals and the environment.

http://adirescuediary.com

http://www.ad-international.org/adi_world/

http://www.stopcircussuffering.com/

http://adiusa.org

http://adiinternationalmedia.org
Rescued Lions to Go Free
SAN FRANCISCO --(Business Wire)--

Four lions, rescued by Animal Defenders International (ADI) from a Bolivian circus when the country banned the use of animals in circuses, will be landing today at San Francisco International Airport (SFO) and then heading on to a life of luxury at the ARK2000 sanctuary in Calaveras County.

ADI, which has previously rescued and relocated animals in Europe, South America and Africa have described it as one of the most complex logistical operations they have ever undertaken but say it will be worth all of the effort when the animals walk free.

CSI actress Jorja Fox, ADI spokesperson for the operation, will greet the lions at SFO later today said, "These magnificent lions have lived all their lives in a tiny cage on the back of a truck. They have never felt the grass beneath their feet or had the space to truly run and play. They symbolize everything that is wrong with using animals to entertain people in circuses and that will be vividly clear when they run free in their new home. What a way to start memorial weekend. These lions really are home for the holidays."

8:00 p.m, PDT Thursday May 27: The lions will be unloaded in the VIP area of San Francisco airport and will be checked by the ADI veterinary team, given a drink of water by Jorja Fox, and will then be loaded onto a truck for the drive to ARK2000.

11:00 a.m, PDT Friday May 28: The lions will be released into the wonderful new natural habitat that ADI have constructed in partnership with the Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) who run the world-renowned 2,300-acre, ARK2000.

Pat Derby, President and Founder of the Performing Animal Welfare Society, said, "Animal Defenders International contacted PAWS last year about providing a permanent home for the African lions remaining in Bolivia. Because we have ARK2000, our 2,300-acre sanctuary in San Andreas, California, we were happy to be able to help.

Ed Stewart, PAWS Sanctuary Director, added, "We have been busy developing plans for the new lion habitat. Each lion has his or her own dening area and a vast natural habitat full of trees, shrubs and grasses.

"The next few weeks will be very busy as we carefully evaluate each animal and determine if any necessary medical treatments may be required. Each of the lion's diets will be assessed and progress reports will be updated several times each day.

"We are all grateful to Bob Barker for his support of our sanctuary. As with every animal at PAWS, we are committed to providing life-time care. Each of the new lions will now have the peace and freedom to do as they please. They can nap or roam, sunbathe or explore. It's their home and they will make their own choices."

Derby said, "We congratulate ADI for their tireless efforts to rescue these animals and we applaud the government of Bolivia and its good citizens for banning the cruel exploitation of animals used in circuses. This is certainly a landmark victory and we hope that other countries around the world, including the United States, will take notice and follow suit."
Bolivia Lions Freed To Bob Barker-Funded Refuge
by The Associated Press

Members of the organization Animal Defenders International, ADI, carry the cage where a lion will be transported to the US at the airport in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Thursday, May 27, 2010. ADI sent Thursday five lions, which have been rescued from circuses, to a refuge in California.
Associated Press
A soldier looks towards two cages where lions will be transported to the US at the airport in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Thursday, May 27, 2010. British organization Animal Defenders International, ADI, sent Thursday five lions, which have been rescued from circuses, to a refuge in California.

Associated Press
A lion looks through its cage before being transported to the US at the airport in Cochabamba, Bolivia, Thursday, May 27, 2010. British organization Animal Defenders International, ADI, sent Thursday five lions, which have been rescued from circuses, to a refuge in California.
LA PAZ, Bolivia May 27, 2010, 05:02 pm ET
Four lion cubs freed under Bolivia's circus-animal ban took off for California on Thursday, heading to a new life in a refuge built with the help of television personality Bob Barker.

The cubs were rescued under a Bolivian law set to take effect in July that prohibits circuses from having any animals — including pets — making it the world's most comprehensive ban.

A fifth lion, mother of three of the cubs, was also rescued after a lifetime of circus work. But she proved too elderly to make the trip and had to be euthanized, said Enrique Mendizabal, a volunteer with Animal Defenders International.

His group helped house the lions in Bolivia before they were moved out of the country.

The group's president and a big-cat veterinarian accompanied the lions, which were housed in special cages for the 12-hour cargo flight to San Francisco.

They will be released Friday at a Performing Animal Welfare Society refuge in northeastern California in a habitat built with support from Barker, the former host of the TV game show "The Price is Right" who is a longtime animal rights advocate.

In their circus lives, two of the cubs had their fangs cut to protect trainers, who wowed crowds by sticking their heads inside lions' mouths. Another had her claws ripped out at birth — without anesthetic.

Lions can live 40 years in the wild. But the euthanized lion was blind and frail by age 18 after a life of jumping through flaming hoops and performing at the point of trainer's whip.

Such stories of abuse, along with clandestine circus videos made by animal-rights activists, prompted Bolivia to enact its ban last year. The lions' owner gave them to a local animal rescue group shortly after the vote.

_________

Online:
Animal Defenders International: http://www.ad-international.org
LA PAZ, Bolivia — An animal-rights group says four lion cubs freed under Bolivia's circustrial animal ban are flying to California, where television personality Bob Barker has helped fund their retirement.

Enrique Mendizabal of Animal Defenders International says the group's president and a big-cat veterinarian accompanied the lions on the 12-hour cargo flight to San Francisco. The cubs left Thursday under a Bolivian law prohibiting all animal displays in circuses -- the world's most comprehensive ban. The rescued mother of three cubs was too elderly and had to be euthanized before the trip.

They will live in a Performing Animal Welfare Society habitat built with support from the longtime "Price Is Right" host, who has rescued other performance animals.

-- Associated Press

*Photo: A lioness (not the mother of the cubs transported to California) is seen in a circus car in an undated photo. Credit: Business Wire*