



## Spirit

Giselle and Spirit are two cougar cubs born right here in Arizona. A rancher killed their Mother, leaving these two defenseless cubs alone. You may wonder why someone would kill a mother cougar with two defenseless babies. All we can tell you is that cougars are not protected in Arizona and predators are regularly sacrificed at the behest of the ranching industry. Giselle and Spirit were taken after their Mother's death for pets. As bad as it was, it got worse. Giselle and Spirit were split up.

When they were confiscated, they were suffering from the worst case of metabolic bone disease that our vets had ever seen. Unable to walk when they arrived, malnourished, and suffering broken bones, we did not hold out much hope. However, with their wills to live, our caring volunteers, exceptional veterinarians, and your support, they made it.

### **Giselle**

The family that took Giselle was not knowledgeable on the care and feeding of cougar cubs and she will suffer from the results of a debilitating condition for the remainder of her life as a result. Because she did not have a proper diet, she developed a metabolic bone disease that made her bones severely brittle and easily broken.

When she arrived at Southwest Wildlife, she was already experiencing the effects of her disease: she was struggling to walk with a broken hind leg. In addition, an ultrasound was performed and showed her kidneys were half the size of normal kidneys. X-rays confirmed that Giselle's bones had virtually no density, and she needed to be on a diet high in calcium to save her deteriorating body.

There was a problem, however. Giselle's diet needed to include mice and rats so she could get the calcium she needed. But Giselle had been raised on hamburger and chicken. She refused to eat mice and rats. So Southwest Wildlife asked Mark Fink, an animal nutritionist, to formulate a special diet for her. After many months on a good diet, her leg healed and she looked stronger every day.

She now lives with Maya & Spirit in an enclosure specially designed to meet the needs of handicapped mountain lions. Although Giselle can't jump as well as she should, she functions quite well. Unfortunately,

many of the long-term effects of her early malnutrition, such as her underdeveloped kidneys, will affect her for the rest of her life. For her personal comfort, an Eagle Scout Troup built her a hammock. She can be seen on warm summer days stretched out in her hammock, swaying in the breeze, without a care in the world.

## **Spirit**

As sick as Giselle was when she arrived at Southwest, nothing could prepare our staff for the condition of her brother, whom we named Spirit. How Spirit got his name will become very apparent. Spirit arrived so small and emaciated that he could not even stand. Our staff held him in their arms and carried him, limp and close to death, into the examining room. We were unsure whether he would be strong enough to take another breath.

He had metabolic bone disease, just like his sister, but much worse. Spirit's bones were so brittle that he had multiple broken bones including a crushed pelvis, three broken legs, a broken tail, and a deformed spine. In addition, Spirit was covered with feces from chronic diarrhea. He was so dehydrated our veterinary staff said he wouldn't have lived another 24 hours without medical intervention. They immediately administered fluids intravenously, which included medication for diarrhea.

Clearly, the family that took Spirit was not knowledgeable on the care and feeding of cougar cubs either. Mark Finke also developed a special diet for Spirit, and he began to respond to treatment.

Just when we thought he was on the road to recovery, he stopped eating. The situation was grave—we knew Spirit was in trouble.

He was rushed to Sonora Veterinary Hospital, where Dr. Arch Roberts rushed from his home to perform an emergency ultrasound. Via the ultrasound, it was discovered Spirit had an obstruction and required emergency surgery or he would die. We didn't think he was strong enough to survive surgery, but we had no choice—we had to try.

Spirit's obstruction was caused by a toy ball. The children Spirit had lived with gave him a cat toy to play with. Typical of a curious baby, Spirit had eaten it. Dr. Steve Gilson performed emergency, lifesaving surgery in the early hours of the morning, after which it was necessary that Spirit have round-the-clock care in order to recover.

Unfortunately, this was just one of the many battles in Spirit's fight to survive. Because of the metabolic bone disease, Spirit's pelvis has not formed correctly. In addition, his legs did not grow normally and, as a result, he is very short for a mountain lion. Southwest Wildlife had to outfit his original enclosure with ramps because the brittleness of his bones would not allow him to jump and scale high places like he's supposed to be able to do.

Each day brought improvement. But the day human beings decided to interfere with nature and selfishly make him their "pet" is the day Spirit's life as a wild and free mountain lion was over for all time.

Spirit, because of his severe malnutrition, will always be a little lion. But he has the spirit of a very big lion. Although he lost his freedom and suffered from broken bones and unbelievable pain and hardship, he never lost his will to live. That is how he got his name.

Spirit and his sister, Giselle, along with their friend Maya, are healthy and enjoying their new enclosure. They will never know freedom. They will never run up a mountainside or stand atop a rocky ledge, surveying their territory. Instead, they spend their days climbing in trees and on their bolder cave, and napping in their hammocks in Southwest Wildlife's sanctuary.