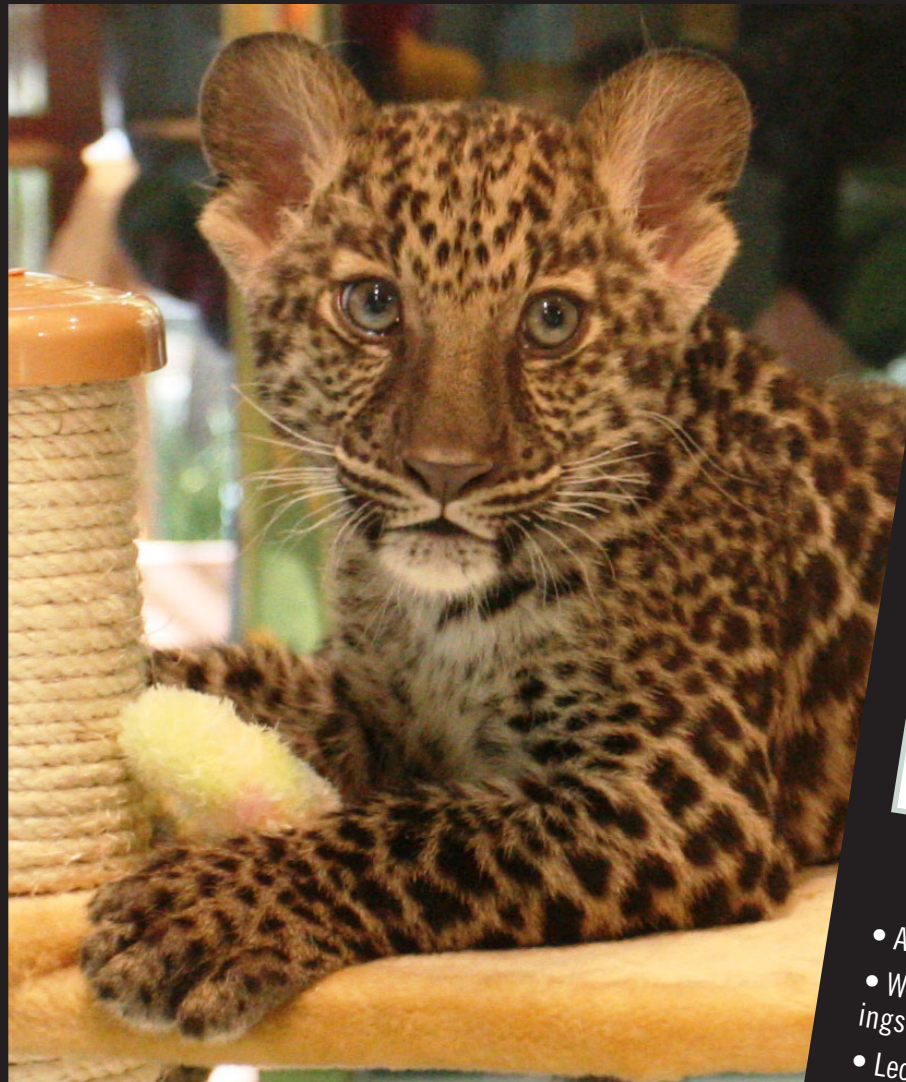


ON THE PROWL

DISCOVER THE LAS VEGAS STRIP'S 'WILD' SIDE



Java

BY JEANNIE BORBE

We all come to Vegas to bring out our wild side and it's usually at night. But with all of the animal-themed attractions featured on the Las Vegas Strip, you can experience a whole different kind of wild side during the day. From the Secret Garden at the Mirage to the Shark Reef at Mandalay Bay, you can see an amazing variety of animals.

"People come [here] seeking the unusual," said Jack Jewell, curator of the Shark Reef Aquarium. "Animal attractions fit the bill perfectly in the midst of the glamour and glitz."

Visiting a tranquil aquarium or a peaceful garden during the day might help you save up some energy for the nightlife.

"Coming to one of the habitats is very relaxing compared to the activity and energy on the Strip," said Robin Matos, wildlife manager at the Wildlife Habitat at the Flamingo.

From exotic cats to fierce reptiles, here are just some of the wild (and tame) animals that call the Vegas Strip home.

Java

Siegfried & Roy's Secret Garden and Dolphin Habitat at the Mirage

LEOPARD CUB

FAVORITE FOOD: Gourmet cuts of prime rib and a special blend of meat and fowl developed by Siegfried & Roy's veterinarian and nutritionist.

HEIGHT & WEIGHT: Five feet long (from his nose to the tip of tail), 68 pounds.

FAVORITE TOY: None, but loves to practice his agility skills wherever he can.

BIRTHDAY: Born last year on Thanksgiving day, Java turns one this November.

'PET' PEEVES: Like a typical infant, Java becomes very cranky when he is removed from his playground for 'cat nap' time.

Photo courtesy MGM Mirage



Fun facts

- As adults, leopards can carry three times their weight up a tree
- When leopards jump and bounce, it is estimated that they calculate their landings three destinations in advance.
- Leopards love to sleep up high on a tree branch with all four legs dangling – but don't be deceived – they may look relaxed, but they always have their eyes on the horizon.

Komodo D.

Shark Reef Aquarium inside Mandalay Bay

KOMODO DRAGON

FAVORITE FOOD: Rodents.

AGE: 10 years old.

BIRTHDAY: October 30.

MEASUREMENTS: 82 inches long, 80 pounds.

YEARS IN VEGAS: One.

'PET' PEEVE: Having his nails trimmed.

Photo courtesy MGM Mirage



Sebastian & Felix

Gregory Popovich's Comedy Pet Theater, V Theater, Miracle Mile Shops



CAT

AGE: 10 years old.

FAVORITE FOOD: Fish bones.

HOBBIES: Sleeping on the furniture and playing with pieces of newspaper.

'PET' PEEVES: Hairballs.

FAVORITE SPOT TO HANG OUT: Top of the refrigerator.

DOG

AGE: 9 years old.

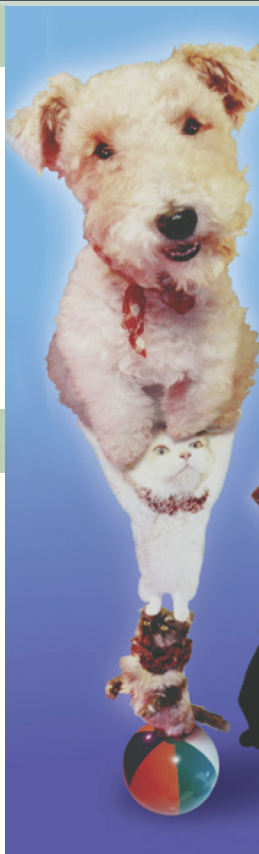
FAVORITE FOOD: Hot dogs.

HOBBIES: Watching 'Animal Planet.'

'PET' PEEVES: Other doggies stealing my toys.

FAVORITE SPOT TO HANG OUT: The sofa with family.

Photos courtesy Gregory Popovich



Quotes

"I am a purr-fect performer. I'm fast on my paws and I'm always pushing that doggie around. Don't tell anybody, but I'm the REAL star of this show."

— Sebastian

"My dad has taught me lots of tricks so I can play on stage with the other animals. My buddy Sebastian and I have our very own routine. We work great together and the audience loves us ... (even though he's just a cat)."

— Felix

Petunia

Wildlife Habitat at the Flamingo

FLAMINGO

FAVORITE FOOD: Flamingo maintenance kibble.

MEASUREMENTS: 3 feet, 8 inches tall, five pounds.

HOBBIES: Trying to steal the other flamingos' boyfriends.

YEARS IN VEGAS: 14.

'PET' PEEVES: Lowest on the pecking order and wants to move up. Having a boyfriend helps, but the boys don't seem to like her.

WILDSIDE: She's the only flamingo that approaches the wildlife specialists to get extra flamingo food.

Photo by Robin Matos



Fun facts

- The Flamingo hotel also has a pair of flamingos that incubated and tried to hatch their eggs in an electrical box last Spring. They built a nest around it and defended it.
- Flamingos are typically timid animals.