

Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park

The **Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park**, which is sometimes called the **G.W. Zoo** and formerly the **Garold Wayne Exotic Animal Park**, is a park displaying animals in Wynnewood, Oklahoma. The park is licensed by the State of Oklahoma as a rendering facility.^[1] It was purchased and re-opened by Jeff Lowe, a South Carolina businessman once convicted of mail fraud,^{[2][3]} in February 2016, shortly before its founder, Joe Exotic, attempted to hire a hitman to kill Carole Baskin, Chief Executive Officer of Big Cat Rescue,^[4] who had won a lawsuit against him in 2013.^{[5][6][7]}

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Date opened	1999
Location	Wynnewood, Oklahoma
Coordinates	34°37′32″N 97°12′40″W﻿ / ﻿34.6256°N 97.2111°W﻿ / 34.6256; -97.2111
Land area	16 acres (6.5 ha)
<u>No.</u> of animals	700
<u>No.</u> of species	50
Website	https://www.wynnewoodzoo.org/

Establishment and history

The Greater Wynnewood Exotic Animal Park is situated on 16 acres (6.5 ha) and began as a shelter for endangered and exotic species of animals. The zoo was home to over 50 species of animals and 200 big cats, such as tigers, lions, puma, ligers and tigons. The zoo was dedicated to Exotic's brother Garold Wayne, who died in a car crash with a drunk driver in 1997.^[8]

Legal problems

Between February and June 2006, PETA had an investigator work as an employee.^[9] PETA's undercover investigator made footage which the group released.^[10] PETA alleged that animals were starved and "routinely hit, punched, kicked, sprayed with cold water, and struck with rakes and shovels."^{[11][12]} In 2012, the Humane Society of the United States released video taken by an undercover investigator. It included footage of a tiger being dragged across gravel, big cats being hit and Exotic instructing staff to smack cubs to make them walk.^{[13][14]} HSUS claimed that 5 tigers died during their investigation, one of which did not receive veterinary care.^[14] In May



Tiliger at the G. W. Zoo, pictured in 2013

2014, the USDA cited the park for failure to provide adequate veterinary care. According to officials, an injured bear's wound reopened and an employee attempted to stitch it. The injury subsequently worsened and the bear was euthanized.^[15]

Feeding big cats was a large expense. Exotic would shoot donated horses then feed them to the tigers.^[16]

On October 6, 2017, Exotic's husband, Travis Maldonado, fatally shot himself in the head. The shooting occurred in front of an employee while the zoo was open.^[17] The Garvin County Sheriff's office ruled that the shooting was accidental.^[18]

Arrest and conviction

In September 2018, Exotic was arrested and indicted by the FBI for attempting to hire a hitman to murder Carole Baskin, chief executive officer of Tampa animal sanctuary Big Cat Rescue.^[19] Exotic was arrested and convicted on April 2, 2019^[6] for two counts of murder-for-hire, eight violations of the Lacey Act and nine of the Endangered Species Act.^[6] On January 22, 2020 he was sentenced to 22 years in federal prison.^[7]

New ownership

In 2019, the subsequent owner of the zoo, Jeff Lowe, announced plans to close the zoo in Wynnewood and move the animals to a new location near Thackerville, Oklahoma.^[6]

Documentary

The 2020 Netflix original documentary series Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness was centered on Joe Exotic.^{[20][21]}

The park received thousands of visitors following the release of the documentary. However, Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt required that all non-essential businesses close because of the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic. On March 31, 2020, the Garvin County, Oklahoma sheriff said the zoo had closed to visitors in compliance with the governor's order to shut down nonessential business.^[22]


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External links

- [Official website \(<https://www.wynnewoodzoo.org/>\)](https://www.wynnewoodzoo.org/) 
- [National Geographic article on Joe Exotic \(<https://email.nationalgeographic.com/H/2/v40000016fd42e8e529b5c766e96c660c0/dbc6062c-a4ba-4b33-ae3b-cb86112d1e17/HTML>\)](https://email.nationalgeographic.com/H/2/v40000016fd42e8e529b5c766e96c660c0/dbc6062c-a4ba-4b33-ae3b-cb86112d1e17/HTML)
- [A study of captive tigers by National Geographic \(\[https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/11/tigers-in-the-united-states-outnumber-those-in-the-wild-feature/?cmpid=org=ngp::mc=crm-email::src=ngp::cmp=editorial::add=Animals_20200123&rid=CC8D94CAC95F51BE9F5A4B4F2D84467D\]\(https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/11/tigers-in-the-united-states-outnumber-those-in-the-wild-feature/?cmpid=org=ngp::mc=crm-email::src=ngp::cmp=editorial::add=Animals_20200123&rid=CC8D94CAC95F51BE9F5A4B4F2D84467D\)\)](https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/2019/11/tigers-in-the-united-states-outnumber-those-in-the-wild-feature/?cmpid=org=ngp::mc=crm-email::src=ngp::cmp=editorial::add=Animals_20200123&rid=CC8D94CAC95F51BE9F5A4B4F2D84467D)

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