

LIONESS IS LOOSE FOR FIVE HOURS

By Glenn Fowler

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After a Two-Hour Search, She Returns to the Zoo

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A 4-year-old, 400-pound lioness named Elsa escaped from her cage at a zoo in an Albany suburb yesterday morning, led a posse of 150 state troopers, sheriff's deputies, conservation officers and policemen from four towns on a five-hour chase through the rolling countryside and finally returned to the zoo at the call of her mate—a tiger named Linus.

The chase began at 10 A.M. when an attendant at Fox's Zoo in West Sand Lake, 10 miles east of Albany, inadvertently left open the cage occupied by Elsa and Linus, who grew up together and who are believed to be expecting cubs later this year—a rare occurrence.

Elsa immediately fled the zoo, and in her rampage mauled two horses, one of which is not expected to live. She also approached a 5-year-old girl playing outside a house, but was chased away by a dog, according to sheriff's deputies.

Linus did not venture far and was quickly tranquilized with a dart gun. But Elsa had disappeared, and a hunt for the lioness was quickly mobilized under Sgt. Fred Hulsopple of the sheriff's force.

The zoo, which has 300 animals and is the only major one in the Albany area—attracting as many as 3,000 visitors on sunny Sunday—did not open yesterday because of the escape. Roads in the vicinity were closed to traffic to protect motorists and to facilitate the search.

Harold Fox, owner of the zoo, said the escape was the first in the 16 years since he opened in West Sand Lake. He said Elsa and Linus had been bought from an entertainer in Ohio who kept them on leashes as cubs, and that they had shared the same cage since they came to the zoo four months ago.

Begins to Yowl

When Linus recovered from his tranquilizing shot, he began to yowl for Elsa.

“As the afternoon wore on he put up quite a racket,” Mr. Fox said in a telephone interview last night. “I think that's what brought Elsa back.”

When she returned to the zoo, Elsa crawled under a station wagon for the State Environmental Conservation Department. She was shot with two tranquilizing darts.

“We overtranquilized her,” Mr. Fox said. “When we got to her she was actually dead. But we revived her with heart massage, and I think she's going to be all right.”

Mr. Fox had great praise for, the force of law-enforcement officers, conservationists and neighbors who were mobilized for the search for Elsa.

“Not one of the people who were trying to find Elsa thought of putting a bullet into her,” he said.

Elsa went back into the cage with Linus after her recapture. If the escapade did not affect her pregnancy, the offspring will be tiglons. Mr. Fox said he knew of only one example of a living tiglon. It is in a Florida zoo.