

Big cats returned to California sanctuary threatened by fire (Update)

July 28 2016, by Delara Shakib



Wildlife Waystation staff members return "Tyson," a tiger, who was evacuated from the sanctuary in the Angeles National Forest in the Sylmar area of Los Angeles, on Wednesday, July 27, 2016. About a dozen lions, tigers and cougars returned Wednesday to the sanctuary north of Los Angeles, four days after they were evacuated in the teeth of an advancing wildfire. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

About a dozen lions, tigers, cougars and other big cats came home to a sanctuary north of Los Angeles days after they were evacuated in the

teeth of an advancing wildfire.

Ten to 15 big [cats](#), along with some hyenas and raccoons, returned Wednesday to the Wildlife Waystation in the Sylmar area from another animal facility, spokesman Jerry Brown said.

A crowd of staff members carefully took a large cage holding an orange-and-black Bengal tiger off a truck and rolled it to a barred enclosure, where the feline was released.

Martine Colette, the 74-year-old founder of the sanctuary, watched carefully as the cats returned.

"Every one of them is something in my life and is special in my life," she added.

They were among some 300 wild and exotic animals ranging from snakes to parrots to bears that were taken from the sanctuary last weekend as authorities urged staffers to leave.

Volunteers heeded a call for help Saturday to provide trucks and trailers as a fast-moving fire tore over ridgetops and roared toward the sanctuary, which had already begun moving some animals.

The Los Angeles Zoo and an animal sanctuary in San Diego provided some of the cages to transport the creatures.

"Animal people take care of animal people," Brown said.



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Trucks streamed out of the rural shelter, carrying animals large and small to warehouses, along with fencing, food and medicine.

"The first animals that went out were the small animals that have difficulty with bad air, as in smoke and ash," Brown said. "The bigger animals, the [big cats](#), the chimpanzees, they can handle the [poor air quality](#) better; their problem is fire, so they went out during the day."

Fire officials determined the sanctuary was no longer in immediate danger by Saturday night and told staff members they could stop the

evacuation.

The [animals](#) that already were moved started returning Tuesday and more will arrive in the next few days, Brown said.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles County officials said owners have been reclaiming some of the hundreds of horses, goats, llamas, chickens and pigs that were removed from threatened ranches.



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