Interview with Ailurophile Ian Anderson
(yes, that Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull!)

By Rennia D. Marsik, MS ED

While preparing for the article, “Lyrical Felines: the Cat in Music,” I had the distinct pleasure of chatting with the venerable ailurophile, Ian Anderson of Jethro Tull about two of our favorite topics, cats and music. Mr. Anderson is a lifelong cat lover with a personal passion for raising awareness about the plight of the endangered 26 species of small wild cats.

I: In the music arena, he's currently touring with a new production, Jethro Tull, the Rock Opera, which tells the story of the original Jethro Tull’s (1674-1741) life. Instead of being an agricultural pioneer and inventing the seed drill, the story is set in modern times with Tull as a biochemist and covers themes of genetic engineering and changes in the scientific balance. The production features virtual guests on video, some newly written material, and classic favorites with slightly rewritten lyrics to better tell the modern-day tale. Visit www.jethrotull.com for more information and tour dates.

For an enhanced reading experience, read Mr. Anderson’s answers with what he describes as the “dulcet tones of my BBC actor, Andrew Lincoln.” So we get his cat for Dead. [His daughter, Gael, is married to the lead actor, on the drama, The Walking Dead. [His daughter’s family cat and they spend about six months of the year in Atlanta where my son-in-law is one of the lead actors, or they're in a bad mood with their ears flat. Or they turn their back to you and all you get is your beautiful kitty picture is an expensive porn shot of the rear end! There were many more topics that we talked about including the importance of microchipping, collars and tags, being gretted by cats when coming home from a trip, the fascinating parallels of human DNA testing and genetics, and of course, music. Should you find yourself with the opportunity to listen to Ian Anderson speak about small wild cats or catch a show, you're sure to have an enchanting, educational and entertaining time.

Small wild cat conservation

RM: Most people know you as the frontman from the band Jethro Tull, but you're also a passionate advocate for the conservation of small wild cats.

IA: These are subjects close to my heart. While I have nothing against lions, tigers or even snow leopards, they will attempt to bite my head off if I get too close. I'm more interested in those wild felids who are the forerunners of the domestic cat. (Tambourine jingle in background.) In many countries of the world we have endangered species of small wild cats with relatively few people doing much about it. In most cases it’s just you and your'n should we be bothered?

I'm actually going to the Edinburgh Zoo (October 19, 2015) to give a talk to people on the conservation society about small wild cats in particular the Scottish wild cat, the Felix sylvestris grampia, as it is most authentically known, with a view to try and drum up some public awareness in our only surviving wild cat in the United Kingdom.

We don't know for sure there are any 100% pure Scottish Wild Cats left in the environment. We could be down to the last tens or hundreds of Scottish Wild Cats in existence. If you happen to be west of the Colorado River, you will know how difficult it is to get that one shot of a cat because very often their eyes are closed, they're fast asleep, or they're in a bad mood with their ears flat. Or they turn their back to you and all you get is your beautiful kitty picture is an expensive porn shot of the rear end!