

CELEBRATE KINGS: Pride in our people, places & products

Farming on the wild side

Listen very carefully and the sounds of lands both near and far come alive at the home of Nova Scotia's only zoo, Oaklawn Farm Zoo, in Aylesford, Kings County.

Since 1984, more than one million visitors have passed through the zoo's gates. This unique and delightful world of domestic, wild, and exotic animals evolved from a small farming operation still owned and operated by Gail and Ron Rogerson.

In 1974, Gail and Ron moved from Ontario to Kings County to pursue their dream of farming. In Aylesford they found good, affordable land and a lovely landscape. Not long after beginning operations, their farm began attracting public interest.

"We kept farm animals and we had a few interesting ones," says Gail. "First we started having children come visit, and then people just started showing up in our driveway!"

It became obvious there was a demand for what the Rogersons offered. "People don't have many grandparents' farms to visit anymore, so we were becoming the family farm."

The number of visitors grew so large the choice became to either move away or formally open. "We decided to expand our particular

lifestyle to include the public," says Gail. With a permit from Kings County, the farm officially became Oaklawn Farm Zoo.

The Rogersons have become an integral part of the community. "Kings County is an ideal place for our farm. The local farming community is a great supplier. We get our meat for the big cats, hay for feed, as well as apples and other fruit for Mr. Bear from local farmers."

The zoo's very supportive and dependable workforce is also local. "Our employees are incredibly versatile – they do everything!" says Gail. "Once we get going full tilt, we have basically 15 full-time employees plus part-time help."

From Easter to mid-November, Oaklawn Farm Zoo runs seven-days-a-week from 10 a.m. to dusk. Visitors can purchase day or season passes. On the grounds, Gail and Ron provide a canteen with family-friendly prices and a gift shop to raise funds needed for sustaining the zoo.

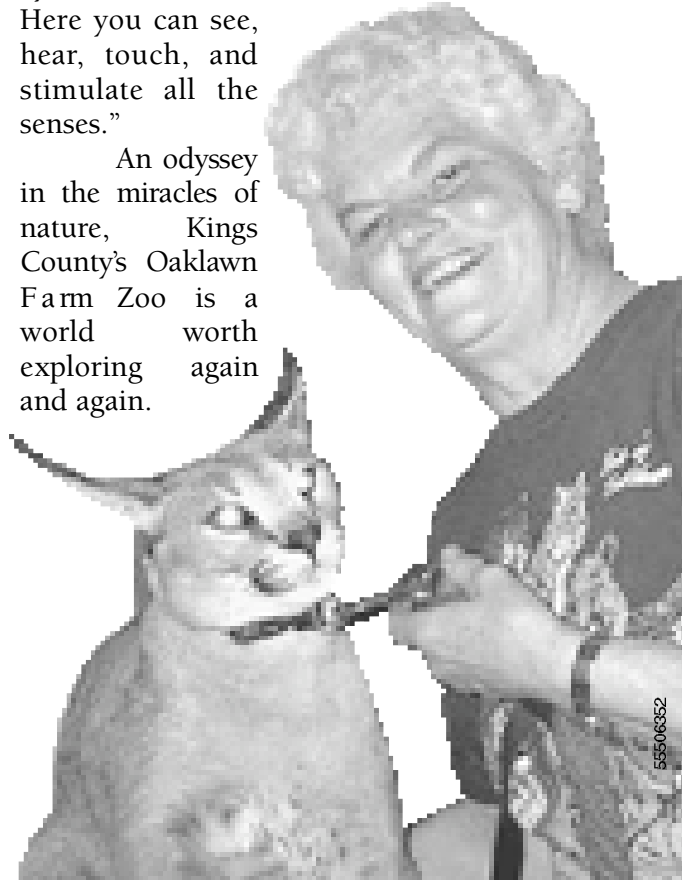
Over the years, the great tourism draw of Oaklawn Farm Zoo has become intertwined with another great attraction, the Bay of Fundy. Both are featured on the cover of the Central Annapolis Valley promotional brochure. Highlighted is one of the zoo's most famed exot-

ic animals, Rutledge, the world's largest lion, who recently celebrated his twelfth birthday.

When Gail feeds and grooms the lions, visitors are amazed at her bravery. "You can't be fearful. I go in relaxed. The lions are my friends, they trust me."

The famed "circle of life" is part of the zoo's draw. "People want their children exposed to the animals – it prevents distorted views," says Gail. "Many children haven't been exposed to the cycle of birth and death. Television doesn't do it. Here you can see, hear, touch, and stimulate all the senses."

An odyssey in the miracles of nature, Kings County's Oaklawn Farm Zoo is a world worth exploring again and again.



**Kings Community Economic
Development Agency**

902-678-2298
www.kingsced.ns.ca

Together making Kings County a better place to live

Optipress
P U B L I S H I N G

Gail Rogerson with the newest addition to Oaklawn Farm Zoo – Cal, a Caracal lynx of African descent