



## Pathology Biology Section – 2011

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### **G126 Fatal Tiger Attack on a Zoo Patron: Patterns and Types of Injuries in Large Predatory Cats**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will gain a better understanding of fatal attacks on humans by large predatory cats.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by emphasizing the expected wound locations and patterns inflicted by large members of the cat and dog families.

On December 25, 2007, a four-year-old Siberian female tiger escaped its enclosure in the San Francisco Zoo and focused its attack on two young males. One of the males was fatally mauled while his companion was injured. Responding San Francisco Police Department officers came in contact with the escaped tiger and used their service pistols to subdue it.

The victim was autopsied at the San Francisco Medical Examiner's Office and showed evidence of large animal bites and crushing trauma typical for a large cat attack including biting of the posterior upper body/neck, fracturing of the neck, and "abrasion rings" surrounding the incisor wounds. Toxicology was positive for cannabinoids and ethanol.

A necropsy of the tiger was done by the San Francisco Zoo veterinarian, with pertinent body parts (head, paws, stomach contents, and tail) delivered to the San Francisco Medical Examiner's Office. The stomach contents contained no body parts, and the back claws showed evidence of shredding of the nails which most likely occurred as the tiger propelled itself up the textured cement wall of the enclosure. It was determined that the tiger was struck three times by gunfire (once in the left frontal sinus, twice in the thoracic cavity with one of the shots being the fatal strike to the heart and lung). The bullet in the frontal sinus was recovered at the San Francisco Medical Examiner's Office before impressions were taken of both the maxillary and mandibular jaws. Plaster casts of the jaws were made for metric comparison to the patterned injury of the deceased young man.

Large feline attacks on humans are quite rare, with the most common attacks by mountain lions in the western United States. This presentation will demonstrate features typical of large predatory cat attack, as well as techniques used in taking impressions of the tiger's jaws to fabricate study models. Also briefly compared will be large cat attacks to large dog attacks.

This is the first known attack by a captive large cat at a zoo in the United States on a zoo patron not in the animal's enclosure. A second documented large cat fatal mauling occurred in 2008 at the Denver Zoo on a trained keeper by a jaguar.

#### **Fatal, Tiger, Attack**