No matter how long Maia and Guida have to acclimate to the container, there is nothing that we can do to prepare them for the strange sensation of being lifted into the air in their crates and loaded onto the transport trailer. The container will be positioned into place and the crews will carefully attach straps to the lifting points. As each container slowly starts to be elevated, the first moment of lift-off will cause the container to shift a little. The sliding and twisting movements will cause the elephants to react. Maia and Guida may verbalize or even bewail with fear. Our job will be to help keep them calm, reassuring them that this will soon pass and their fear will subside.

When both containers have been secured onto the trailer, we’ll open the doors to check on the lovely ladies one more time and offer a few extra treats. Then it will be time to get on one way. There will be another short period of anxiety for the girls when they get jostled as the trucks bump over the rough terrain navigating out of the farm. Once we hit the open road, the steady vibration, wind through the vents and the familiarity of their traveling days will help them to settle in. The anxiety, agitation or fatigue. For the next 1,000 miles, we’ll continue to make periodic checks, and let Maia and Guida determine the pace.

An Unconditional Love Story - continued from page 3

While it may be tempting to share personal pain as a part of being emotionally open as we forge relationships with the elephants in our care, this is not their burden to bear. Some elephants may feel they should try to rescue you from your hurt while others need to walk away as a means of self-protection.

Providing care to an elephant that has been rescued from captivity changes you in the deepest and most profound ways imaginable. By sharing their daily struggles and little victories, caregivers learn what it means to let go of the past and to forgive. As they bear witness to the heroic journey of physical and emotional healing of elephants like Maia, Guida and Ramba, the caregivers who work with GSE will experience their own astounding transformations. Like Kat and Scott, they will learn what it means to be accepted into the beautiful and amazing world of elephants — a privileged world of unconditional love.

The Big Move - continued from page 6

A NEW LIFE FOR CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS IN SOUTH AMERICA IS JUST A TRUNK’S REACH AWAY. THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING!

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What’s Inside
BRAZIL
PROGRESS
The First Elephant Care Center, fence and more

THE LIFE OF A CAREGIVER
An unconditional love story

GETTING TO KNOW MAIA & GUIDA
Who they are and how they will transform

THE BIG MOVE
An inside perspective about what matters most when transporting elephants

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WHAT'S INSIDE
THE LIFE OF A CAREGIVER IN SANCTUARY: AN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE STORY

Caregivers are one of Global Sanctuary for Elephants’ most valuable assets. Through consistent, compassionate daily care, they build the foundation of trust that elephants rely on to safely explore what it means to really live. Caregivers are the backbone of the healing that goes on at sanctuary, honoring every part of the elephant’s being and holding the space that allows for their vulnerability and growth. Because they witness and record every critical step in the healing process and share those experiences with the world, caregivers enable our supporters to be part of the journey as the elephants discover who they were always meant to be.

At GSE, we look for a unique mix of qualities in the men and women that we hire to care for elephants. The best caregivers are naturally empathetic, altruistic, flexible, dedicated and willing to learn from mistakes. Because it may take years to fully understand how captivity has shaped an elephant’s personality, caregivers must also be open to instruction and mentoring that, in the moment, they may not fully comprehend. The learning never stops; with each new day there is more to experience, another layer of complexity that brings an understanding to past lessons and opens the door for the next. Embracing that personal experiences can color our perceptions is critical.

Different people can watch the same interaction and draw completely different conclusions. What one caretaker sees as aggression that requires intervention another may view as natural play. A balance must be found with everything.

While prior experience working with elephants can be a plus, specific skills like training and footwork can always be taught. In some cases, old habits, routines and methods picked up over time can prevent a caretaker from seeing an elephant as a unique individual and from forming a relationship that supports growth. For this reason, we don’t limit our search to those with prior experience working with elephants. What one caretaker sees as aggression that requires intervention another may view as natural play. A balance must be found with everything.

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Recognizing and appreciating the unique nature and personality of every elephant that we work with is integral to facilitating physical and mental healing in sanctuary. In over two decades of rescue work we have learned that beyond the specific characteristics that define the species as a whole, each elephant has a distinctive way of expressing their individuality and communicating special needs. Through careful observation prior to rescue, we begin to understand how life in captivity has shaped who they have become so that we can begin the critical process of helping them to discover who they truly are.

**Guida**

Guida’s keepers refer to her as the “soft” elephant or the “easy” one. Because she is passive, doesn’t cause problems and takes direction well, she is the favorite. The truth is no one truly knows the real Guida — including Guida. She has spent the majority of her life responding to external commands rather than internal cues and as a result her innate sense of autonomy has not developed. Guida has never experienced and enjoyed the concept of freedom of choice so she has simply shut down and learned not to choose. The naturally lovely, curious elephant that was born free in the wild over four decades ago has been lost in “stereotyping,” the rocking movement she uses as an escape mechanism which currently defines 95% of her day. While her keepers appreciate Guida’s submissiveness, it is most likely related to the fact that she is exhausted and it is easier for her to briefly slip out of the swaying behavior and do as she is asked rather than risk dropping her guard to let a little of the world in, only to be disappointed again.

In the five hours that we spent with Guida during our visit, she only stopped swaying and bobbing for approximately ten minutes in response to direct human contact or feeding. Shutting out the world in this way is how she has dealt with being chained to the same small, sterile patch of land for years. While it is always difficult for us to witness the suffering of any elephant in captivity, the time we spent with Guida was especially heart wrenching because the steady pace of her repetitive movement prevented us from making a lasting connection.

One of the beautiful things about life in sanctuary is that whether we learn that Guida’s distinctively sweet and gentle face belongs to an extremely strong willed, or a more quiet and reserved elephant, she will not be judged. We understand that in the process of rediscovering what it means to be an elephant, she will express emotions that she has kept bottled up for years. From the first day that she walks off of the transport truck, Guida will receive the encouragement she needs to reengage with her environment and adjust to living in a wide open, stimulating natural habitat. With each passing week she will get used to walking freely again as she curiously explores her new home in sanctuary. Little by little she will begin to listen to her senses, becoming aware of the chirps and cackles of colorful birds, the sweet smell of tropical flowers and the tactile changes under her feet. With time, the sad swaying movement that has defined her existence will start to diminish.

Because of the unique and complex ways in which Guida has been impacted by captivity, we expect many twists and turns on her long journey to physical and emotional healing. There will be little victories and expected daily struggles, but slowly and surely she will regain her confidence and experience that aha moment when she realizes that to be Guida — to be an elephant — can be wonderful.

Maia

While Guida is seen as having a quiet and easy manner, Maia is referred to as the “bad girl,” because she has been aggressive with keepers in the past. As far as we have been able to discern, this aggression takes the form of her trying to escape when she is about to be chained. For a highly intelligent and sensitive wild animal who would instinctually roam miles every day given the opportunity, Maia’s desire to break free of restraint is a completely normal response. In our experience, captive elephants like Maia who are labeled as headstrong or willful are simply rebelling against their circumstances, desperately trying to have a say in life and hold on to a little piece of themselves in a restricted environment.

Maia also stereotypes, but not with the same intensity as Guida. While Guida essentially escapes from her reality in movement, Maia seems to sway as a means of self-soothing, while occasionally sharing little glimpses of her personality. When we first met Maia, she came across as very guarded. Whether she was approached by a man or a woman, stranger or keeper, her reaction was always the same. The swaying continued, but her eyes would widen, her body would tense and she would become extremely watchful.

Even though it is obvious that decades of circus life have made Maia self-protective, and rightfully so; her personality is much closer to the surface than Guida’s. To ensure that she did not feel threatened during our meeting, Kat sat a small distance from the hotwire fence that currently surrounds Maia and in a soft voice, quietly reassured her that she is not a bad elephant and that her life would soon change for the better. As they observed one another while sharing a granola bar, Maia visibly softened while Kat soothed her. Although she continued to sway, her face became much more relaxed and every once and a while she would offer a cute little quirk of acknowledgment — her special way of letting us know, “I’m still here.”

Although Maia’s journey at sanctuary is expected to be a little more straightforward than Guida’s, as with most rescued elephants, it is hard to predict exactly how her healing will progress. When Maia receives unconditional acceptance she may immediately blossom into the curious and open being that we caught glimmers of during our meeting or she may try to test limits. Often the most intelligent elephants have a hard time believing that even their negative actions will not warrant any repercussions. They will essentially push against any perceived boundaries to see what kind of response they get. After many decades of daily uncertainty, Maia may need to prove to herself that her hope is not misplaced and that she can relax into this new life where she will be revered and not punished. However Maia reveals herself to us, we are grateful to have the opportunity to care for her — with no judgements and no expectations, just respect, support, acceptance and love — as it should be.
Maia and Guida deserve to be appreciated. They deserve honest care and respect. They deserve sanctuary.

Because Maia and Guida will be the first residents of Elephant Sanctuary Brazil, we will be starting from scratch as we purchase all of the supplies needed for their care. The girls will need basic necessities as well as the extra goodies that will help them to feel loved and appreciated. Your generous gift will secure their future, support critical daily care and also help to provide some well-deserved pampering.

There are several ways that you can help. Check out the girls’ Wishlist to purchase supplies specifically for Maia and Guida’s rescue or items needed to restore their bodies and spirits to health. You can also make a donation toward general needs or pick an item off the sanctuary Wishlist – supplies essential to completing the property development that will help provide Maia, Guida and all of the elephants to come with a life of comfort and respect. You can sponsor the purchase of anything from the water line needed to bring beautifully fresh water from the spring directly to their barn to probiotics needed to help Guida’s GI system recover so that she can return to a healthy weight.

You can also sponsor Maia or Guida and become an “Ele Guardian.” As a guardian you will receive:
- A certificate of guardianship along with a current photo of Maia or Guida
- Personal email updates, highlighting weekly victories and struggles on the journey to physical and mental health
- Private links to video updates that will provide an inside look at elephant life in sanctuary
- In six months, an updated photo of the elephant whose life you have helped to transform

To become an Ele Guardian or donate, see the enclosed envelope or visit our website at GlobalElephants.org

As we near the end of the phase one development and make final preparations to move Maia, Guida, and Ramba to sanctuary, we are already laying the groundwork to rescue more elephants from captivity. With Lady, Koala, Carla, and Mara waiting in the wings, the area currently allocated for Asian elephants will soon be filled. We have also been asked to give sanctuary to several African elephants along with a male Asian elephant desperately in need of a safe and secure home.

With your continued generous support we can make life-saving expansions to Elephant Sanctuary Brazil and create a brighter future for more elephants suffering in captivity. Together, we have the opportunity to build on our momentum, expand our reach and change these precious lives forever. From all of us – Thank You!

**Elephant Rescue - FAQ’s**

**Will Maia and Guida be able to lie down to sleep when traveling?**

No, the crates are too narrow to permit them to lie down. However, they can lean against the side reinforcement of the container and sleep while standing, Some captive elephants go for years without lying down to sleep, due to fear and lack of trust in their environment.

**Will you stop at night to let Maia and Guida rest?**

There are several factors that influence when we stop and for how long. In hot weather it is often better to find a nice shady location and stop for 4-6 hours in the middle of the day. If we realize that stopping increases the girls’ anxiety, we will make shorter, more frequent stops to help control their anxiety and allow them to relax their muscles a bit.

**Will the elephants be sedated in preparation for the journey?**

No, Maia and Guida will not be sedated. We will have a variety of medications available, including sedatives, but since it is a 18-hour trip with sedation, these will only be used in critical circumstances. When transporting elephants we want them to be fully aware so they can process each stage of the journey.

**Almost here - the final push to bring Maia and Guida home**

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**Buenos Aires Zoo Closing Its Doors - a positive outlook for elephants**

Recent action in South America made international headlines as the Mayor of Buenos Aires announced that the city will be closing their zoo. We applaud this bold and progressive move as a vital first step in helping to restore respect and appreciation for animals taken from the wild.

As this newsletter goes to print, we are in communication with the Argentinian authorities and soon hope to announce the relocation of Mara, Kuki and Pupi to Elephant Sanctuary Brazil. We can accommodate Mara, a female Asian as soon as Maia and Guida settle in. To rehome Kuki and Pupi, the two African elephants, we will need to duplicate the phase one Asian development and quickly build an additional African elephant care center, plus two 20 acre corrals that will eventually be annexed to several hundred acres of enclosed property. Like the Asian elephants at ESB, Kuki and Pupi and the other African elephants that will join them will have the freedom to roam, explore, build friendships and get lost in a world that was created especially for them.

**The Big Move - a glimpse into the delicate balance of elephant transport**

While the details and logistics of every elephant rescue may be different, our feelings on the day of the big move are always the same: a little anxiety, a lot of excitement and a strong determination to make sure that all will go according to plan. Having traveled for years as circus performers, for Maia and Guida being moved from one location to another is somewhat old hat. Thankfully, this transport will be like nothing they have ever experienced. There will be new faces and new voices, but most importantly, this journey will also mark the beginning of a newfound level of consideration, concern and respect that will embrace them for the rest of their lives at their final destination in sanctuary.

Like Maia and Guida, we have a lot of experience with elephant transport. We have rescued dozens of elephants over the years and have developed confidence in our process. Coordination between the two move locations is extensive. We plan for the best and prepare for the worst, applying one of the countless lessons we have learned from elephants over the years to every move – be ready to adapt along the way as circumstances require.

Our number one priority throughout the move will be the comfort and safety of Maia and Guida. They will experience some stress and concern but this is life for all living beings in our world. This is what allows us to learn who we are and how to adjust to find our inner balance. That said, our job is to minimize the impact of external stressors and to focus on the needs of the girls. As with all of our interactions with elephants, we will take great care to honor the high level of sensitivity they will have to everyone in their environment: current keepers, authorities, camera crews and the members of our GSE team who will be participating in their very first elephant transport.

Because so many have waited so long for Maia and Guida’s rescue, it will be hard for everyone to contain their excitement on moving day. Regardless of what we feel on the inside, we have to keep the team calm and assure them that we have done this many times and the transport will be a walk in the park. We will talk them through the process, review possible complications and contingency plans and ask them to meditate on the vision of Maia and Guida making a joyful exit on to wide open pastures.

We’ll also take time to share our feelings and any concerns about the journey ahead with Maia and Guida and allow them the space they need to express all of their emotions to us. It is not unusual for an elephant to feel fear in response to a major change and that is okay. We know that when fear is repressed in an elephant it can manifest in unpredictable ways. For some elephants fear is the root of aggressive behavior. We encourage Maia and Guida to bring powerful emotions to the surface, to acknowledge and embrace them, it helps transform fear and anxiety into acceptance and trust.

To help the loading process go as smoothly as possible, we’ll give Maia and Guida a few days pre-rescue to investigate the transport containers. Before we start walking them into the containers, we’ll make sure that the rescue crew is calm and settled. Depending on how Maia and Guida feel that day, the load-in could take a few minutes or a few hours. We’ll coax them with treats, their favorite fruits and vegetables and an occasional peppermint candy to reward them for their cooperation. When Maia and Guida are both safely secured, everyone will breathe a momentary sigh of relief. While some may be ready to celebrate, we know from experience that getting the girls into the containers is only the first step on the road to rescue.

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