October 11th marked Maia and Guida’s second anniversary of freedom from captivity at Elephant Sanctuary Brazil. They celebrated their happy day of rebirth as they do most days, trumpeting and rumbling exuberant songs of joy throughout the lush, green valley that is now their forever home. After more than 40 years of living physically together in captivity, but emotionally apart, they have finally become family; supporting one another, playing and swimming side by side, and lovingly sheltering one another from the intense heat of the Mato Grosso sun.

As we bear witness to the restorative power of sanctuary, we marvel at the life force that has re-emerged from within Maia and Guida over the past two years. Their unique personalities have blossomed in the care, safety, and comfort of ESB. Bold, outspoken, impossible to ignore, Maia has grown calmer and gentler as she becomes more grounded, and her stress and tensions ease. Much to our delight, in recent weeks, our once reserved Guida, nick-named “sweet rumbles” for her soft, shy contented rumbles, has become more vulnerable and spirited, frequently calling out to her now dear friend Maia to join in an ele-party of two with the intentionally deep bellow typically reserved for family.

While we continue to navigate the agonizingly slow, final steps of acquiring the permits needed to rescue and transport Ramba, Mara, and other captive elephants from across South America, we sometimes wonder if the often infuriating delays are not part of the bigger picture of sanctuary. As painful and stressful as it is to know that refuge is just a trunk’s reach away for these deserving spirits, we take comfort in the fact that the strong bond Maia and Guida have built in the two years they have shared healing, learning, and growing in sanctuary, may be what they needed to enable these amazing beings to offer nurturing and friendship to each and every elephant that follows in their very big footsteps.

As we watch Maia and Guida eagerly greet each new day of freedom and listen to their soothing rumbles of peace and glorious songs of elephant life echo across the hills and valleys of sanctuary, it is clear that their extraordinary spirits will help to transform their new brothers and sisters as they have helped to transform each other. In this sacred place of second chances, we like to think of it as divine elephant intervention, and that is exactly as it should be.

To learn more and to hear their song visit us at: GlobalElephants.org
Dear Friend,

In 2014 we arrived in Mato Grasso to establish Elephant Sanctuary Brazil, the first of its kind in South America. We’ve shared with you the many routine obstacles, setbacks and delays that have become a part of our daily reality. Over the course of our first two years here, our resilience and determination was tested in unimaginable ways, but ultimately the guiding spirit of sanctuary prevailed and we set, met and celebrated every milestone for development as we looked forward to the arrival of our first residents. In 2016, ESB officially opened its doors and welcomed Maia and Guida, the two extraordinary spirits that you have come to know and love.

While Maia and Guida blossom and thrive and their connection continues to grow, we are working diligently to navigate what seems like an endless maze of red-tape in preparation of new arrivals. Once one hurdle is cleared, another illogical road block to rescue pops up testing our perseverance and tenacity. While some may ask how we hang on despite the never-ending, sometimes overwhelming challenges, we know that there are elephants across South America who will never have a chance to live in peace without the beautiful, life altering gift of sanctuary. We want to make sure that the sheer joyfulness that radiates from Maia and Guida and inspires us every day can be experienced by every elephant in need of rescue.

As a testament to how quickly tides can change, we are thrilled to announce that as we were recovering from another disappointing, “Sorry, you will have to call back” response, last week we received the very welcome communication that a new resident may soon be joining in the chorus of elephant songs that resonate throughout the valleys of sanctuary.

We want to thank you for your kind-hearted patience in hanging in with us. With the great benefit of your generous support and your belief in a brighter future for captive elephants across South America, we will continue to do what we do best, restore hope and heal precious lives. That is our mission and that is what keeps us going.

United together for all elephants,

About GSE

Founded on the principle that we must create the positive future needed for elephants in captivity, Global Sanctuary for Elephants is dedicated to the development and long-term support of expansive sanctuaries for captive elephants worldwide. Captive elephants have endured years of suffering, and now it’s time to give back, to return their dignity through nurturing protection and uncompromising respect. In sanctuary, for the first time in decades, their lives will belong to them. With your generous support, our experience and our shared devotion, we can change the world and give rise to the future these sacred beings need and deserve.

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What’s Up in Brazil

At Sanctuary, Every Life Matters

Here at Elephant Sanctuary Brazil we work with local authorities for the rehabilitation and release of wild animals. To date we have released 4 tapirs with another progressing through the stages of preparation.

This little sweety is a grey brocket deer. There are conflicting stories but his mom was either killed by hunters or hit by a car. When they found him as a very small infant (just a few weeks old) someone had the idea to raise him in a chicken coop with the intention to eat him after he had grown. Fortunately another neighbor (the fellow in the photo) stepped in, took the deer and called for help. He is now grown and beautiful and nearly ready to be released.
Rana (pronounced Hana, but also known as Rani) is a sweet girl with a tragic and complicated past, but with hope and your help she has a bright future ahead at sanctuary. Like so many other elephants across South America, Rana has lived the bleak, soul-crushing life of a performing animal, at one point belonging to a circus that visited 600 cities in 50 countries. As a result of state bans on performing animals in Brazil, Rana was retired and for two years shuffled from a rural property where she lived on chains, to a zoo where she suffered a broken leg, and then eventually relocated to a hotel with a zoo where she has been the lone elephant on display for the past six years.

Rana’s rescue has been an ongoing and delicate work in progress. After a long series of conversations and negotiations, four months ago the hotel abruptly stopped communications. Because we never walk away from an elephant in need, we continued to pursue Rana’s freedom with the help of our skilled legal team. Last week one of our lawyers messaged us with the fantastic news that due to pressure from government authorities to upgrade the zoo, the hotel is now ready to donate Rana to sanctuary. The hotel is also planning to relocate other animals including 2 bears and 3 hippos and have asked for our assistance in finding appropriate sanctuaries for these other species. We are currently working with a dedicated group of individuals and organizations to find suitable and safe homes for all of the animals.

In two weeks, Scott and Simone (ESB) are scheduled to fly to the northeast of Brazil to see Rana for the first time. This critical visit will allow us to assess her situation including the culture of the hotel, her care parameters and restrictions and to gain a more comprehensive understanding of her physical and emotional state. We only have a few photos of Rana. We haven’t seen video of her walking so there are many unknowns with regard to the state of her health. While we don’t know what to expect upon arrival, we are confident that we’ll be able to help her make a safe journey to the sanctuary where Maia, Guida and a joyful and peaceful life awaits.

Because Rana is located in Brazil, international permits are not required for her transport. If we are able to secure funding and expedite final preparation, Rana could arrive at ESB for the holidays. By the time you read this newsletter, we’ll hopefully have a signed agreement, updates from our visit, including insights about her health, our preparations for her journey and hopefully a little about who Rana is behind the dark veil of captivity.

Rana’s life story has been a heartbreaking tale of deprivation and drudgery, never valued, forced to perform in city after city, isolated on chains and now simply existing without freedom to experience elephant life as it’s meant to be lived. With your help we can rewrite Rana’s story. Please open your heart to Rana and help us restore her dignity and give her the life in sanctuary that she deserves.

Help us bring Rana home for the holidays and give her the greatest gift of all - Sanctuary Life

Donate to Rana’s Journey home - $17 brings her one mile closer
Many of you learned of sweet Pelusa in our fall newsletter of 2017, when her story simultaneously opened hearts and crushed hearts with worry for her weary state. It now breaks our hearts once again to share the news of sweet Pelusa’s passing on June 14th, 2018. Although many gave their all to try to bring her to sanctuary, the painful moment arrived when she couldn’t find the strength to fight another day.

In May of this year, our dear friend and caregiver Suz Garrett traveled to Argentina to care for Pelusa, providing the little extra TLC to help ready Pelusa for transport. We want to share Suz’s experiences and feelings about her precious time with Pelusa so you will understand what truly makes a caregiver and why she quit her job and flew to Argentina for an elephant.

“When Scott and Kat first asked me to care for Pelusa, they were incredibly honest. The goal was to help her become healthier and stronger, understanding that at any moment our objective may turn from rescue to hospice care. Although I knew that Pelusa was losing weight and sparkle rapidly, none of the discussions prepared me for what I saw upon arrival at the zoo: a tiny dirt enclosure juxtaposed with a severely underweight, yet very tall elephant with a spirit too large for her space, too large for her body.

Caring for Pelusa involved shoveling poop, cleaning her barn and making sure she ate regularly, but my most important job was to believe in her, and to love her. Pelusa’s entire life had been sacrificed to other people’s expectations of what an elephant should be, my aim was to honor her to the fullest.

Nobody had ever let Pelusa just be herself. She wasn’t allowed to try and fail, so frequently she didn’t even try. A big part of what GSE needed me to do was bring the caring and empathy that defines sanctuary to Pelusa, allowing her to just be, without expectations—to try, to fail, to explore, to learn, to start, to stop, to forget, to enjoy. I needed to ensure that Pelusa understood that she was loved and supported unconditionally, no matter what while asking and wanting nothing in return—not affection, not love.

After a couple of weeks in my care, Pelusa’s health began to improve. With daily fresh water and produce, good hay, and extra attention and adoration, she began to flourish and her appetite increased. She was eager to eat and as a result, she started to gain weight. There was new life in her eyes as she became more expressive and started to explore her surroundings.

There were exciting behavioral changes as well, even behaving mischievously again, a behavior reminiscent of her youthful past. Pelusa’s caregivers said that she was a handful when she was younger, but as she aged and fell ill, the playful part of her had disappeared. Under my watch, her curiosity and playfulness returned and she started to get into a bit of mischief. One morning, a few weeks into my visit, as I approached her barn, I could see that the enclosure where she usually stood in the warming sun was empty and her hay was untouched. Pelusa was standing off in a corner with her back to me. My heart stopped because I was afraid that she had gone off of her food again. As I entered the barn the puzzle pieces came together. Pelusa had stolen a bale of hay from inside the barn, carried it into her enclosure and was triumphantly eating it. When she saw me she looked a little nervous, as if she knew she was “bad”. Actually, I had never been happier. This elephant who had been unable to walk five feet to eat her favorite food less than a month before had managed to lean through the bars and use her muscles and trunk to carry a 50 lb. bale of hay all the way across her enclosure, simply because she wanted to.

While it’s not a behavior I would typically reinforce, I couldn’t help but smile from ear to ear. When Pelusa saw my face, her expression changed from “I’m pretending to be sorry because–oops?” to “Hahahaha, I am so proud of how I did what I wasn’t supposed to do.” My heart felt so light and happy that I just laughed and laughed. More than any other, that was the moment I truly believed she was going to make it to Brazil and her “happily ever after” in sanctuary. I believed it with all of my heart because that triumphant face of hers said that she was a fighter who would never give up.
When Pelusa's health tragically took a turn for the worse everything shifted quickly. When she went off her food for the last time, it was different than all the previous times. Those final few days before she went down, I had a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach walking up to her barn. On her last morning, I found Pelusa in the enclosure going down on her front knees, looking wild and confused. I gave her everything I could until the very end and then sat vigil with and over her alongside Scott, the vet team, the zookeepers, former zookeepers, security guards and town mayor. Pelusa's care shifted rapidly from emergency triage to hospice over those first 24 hours. With all of our emotions on overload, Pelusa lay there, covered in layers of blankets, under her white tent with supplemental heat and surrounded by her care team, there was a sense of peace, it was clear that Pelusa was ready to give up the fight. The next day the zoo made the decision to euthanize Pelusa and she slipped quietly from this world.

I think the hardest thing about losing Pelusa was the loss of hope for everyone in her life who saw her for who she truly was: a smart, big-hearted, hard-headed, sometimes silly, always magnificent elephant. Pelusa was just an incredibly unique being who deserved so much more than a small, mean life alone in a tiny enclosure in a tiny zoo.

When Argentineans fought for a better life for Pelusa and the fight was picked up internationally, people started to dream of finding a place for her at sanctuary. Her caregivers would read Facebook posts about other elephants at ESB, and their eyes would mist over. They loved Pelusa more than anything and couldn’t wait to see videos of her at the sanctuary in her hot tub enjoying the friendship and love of other elephants. It was the loss of what could have been, what should have been, that hit everyone the hardest. It was the tragic loss of a life combined with the tragic loss of a dream.

Many of us who knew her, and even more who never had the privilege of meeting her were left feeling “never again”. Never again should this happen. Never again should an animal ready for sanctuary die in captivity waiting on permits. The other tragedy is that Pelusa's entire life was reduced to serving as a source of entertainment in captivity. In her own special way, Pelusa communicated what no human being ever could about the critical need for sanctuary. She opened hearts and eyes to a sad reality.

So how do we move forward? The answer is to never stop dreaming, never stop hoping, and never stop fighting – fighting for permits, for better laws, and, of course, for more funding for ESB so they can keep rescuing elephants from life in captivity which is really no life at all. If we never give up, we can give them the world – or at least a giant slice of heaven.”

Although Pelusa never stepped foot on sanctuary grounds, she is an elephant who will exist deep in our hearts forever; she was that kind of special. Not only will Pelusa live on in spirit, she will live on by helping all elephants that find refuge at ESB. We are honoring our promise to Pelusa having created the Pelusa Medical Care Center which is equipped with critical veterinary equipment including blood machines that will allow for immediate diagnostics in emergency situations as well as yearly health monitoring. We also planted two trees in Pelusa’s memory. A jambo tree was planted just outside of the elephant enclosure where Maia and Guida will be able to reach its bright pink, pear-shaped fruit, Pelusa’s favorite. Nearby the elephant garden we planted a pata-de-elefante, otherwise known as elephant’s foot - her symbolic step onto sanctuary grounds.

Let us dedicate our lives to helping the many other elephants in captivity, in servitude and in suffering. In their freedom, we will finally offer tribute to our beautiful Pelusa. ~ Nishant, GSE supporter
We are delighted to share news of Mendoza Zoo elephants Pocha, Guillermina, Tamy and Kenya’s progress toward restored health and freedom. As part of our comprehensive captivity-to-sanctuary care and rescue program, in September, we arranged for highly skilled and empathetic trainer Karissa Reinbold to spend six weeks with the Mendoza4 to begin positive reinforcement, protected contact training in order to prepare for the testing required during quarantine.

Karissa’s first ele-encounter in Mendoza was with the female African elephant Kenya. Although Kenya has not been known for her patience or cooperation, Karissa’s caring demeanor and true respect for elephants made working with Kenya a joy. She is now allowing treatment of the malformed tusk that grows through a hole in her skin of her trunk as well as the trunk holding and manipulation required for trunkwash testing. Through Karissa’s kind encouragement, Kenya is now also willing to present her ear for drawing blood and her feet for foot work.

Although we had hoped to focus on Pocha and Guillermina during the six week visit, unfortunately the training walls had not been completed in their habitat. However, Karissa did make progress toward the important goal of separating the mother and daughter pair so they may safely travel independently to sanctuary. Even though the two elephants have never been more than a few steps from each other throughout their time in captivity, Guillermina seemed excited by the training, rewards, and novelty of doing something other than pacing in her pit or standing idly staring at a concrete wall. She would enthusiastically trot over when called, leaving her mother behind without a look back. Her acceptance of training bodes well for her long journey to Brazil as well as for the rest of her training.

During her time in Argentina, Karissa developed a soft spot for male elephant Tamy. We were absolutely thrilled to have someone on site doting on him and showing him the love that has been missing from his life in captivity. Karissa also worked closely with Tamy’s keepers to help them gain trust in him, something he has never experienced. Now they enjoy working with Tamy as well, providing the critical enrichment that makes his days less monotonous.

Pocha and Guillermina’s habitat at Elephant Sanctuary Brazil is now ready and we will begin the permit process while they continue to train and prepare for their journey home. The inside of Kenya’s barn is being finished and then it’s on to fencing. We will need to raise additional funds for the yards that must be completed for her rescue. Tamy’s habitat has not been funded yet.

Sanctuary Life - Where every day brings a new reason to celebrate
In addition to offering our supporters some glimpses into the day to day business of caregiving, construction and fundraising, we want to share a bit about some of the unique, behind the scenes challenges we face bringing elephants to sanctuary in South America. Before there can be more happy trumpets from joy-filled elephants here at Elephant Sanctuary Brazil we must work closely with sanctuary affiliates and contacts in multiple countries to forge and strengthen relationships with zoo officials, caregivers, and government agencies to expedite rescues. Every country we negotiate with has its own set of legal frameworks, cultural norms and particular ways of doing business that can sometimes present unexpected and unfortunately very long delays. Approval of the multiple permits required to transport elephants across country borders which we would expect to take from 30 to 60 days, may take up to 120 days or longer. Sometimes when we least expect it, the process can grind to a complete halt because of bureaucratic obstacles that must be accommodated despite the negative impact it may have on a sick and suffering elephant waiting for rescue. In some cases, the impact can be absolutely devastating as it was with sweet Pelusa who simply could not survive the wait.

One of the most effective tools that we have to ensure that another elephant in need of rescue is not lost in an endless maze of paperwork is to build positive, mutually respectful relationships with the zoo facilities housing elephants in need of sanctuary. Through our sanctuary outreach program, we work on location with zoo administrators and caregivers. Working side by side with zoo keepers, demonstrating our specialized care techniques gives us an opportunity to both improve elephant health and well-being and reassure concerned administrators that their elephants will be released into the best possible hands eliminating one possible obstacle to rescue.

Simultaneously, we must build and kindle relationships with public officials, regulatory agency officials, form collaborations with university professors and grow our pro bono legal team to help us navigate the complex bureaucracy. Each needs to be developed independently from one another while the actions and process is at times intertwined with overlapping responsibilities. By continuing to build strong alliances in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil we are gaining confidence of important stakeholders who can help us to accelerate the rescue of captive elephants across South America.
**Pure Devotion - From beginning to dignified end**

Creating and managing a sanctuary requires lifelong dedication and extraordinary commitment. With Global Sanctuary for Elephants our holistic approach to caregiving begins pre-rescue with lifestyle adjustments, nurturing care and relationship building and continues here at sanctuary through to the end of what we hope will be a very long life. Our devotion to captive elephants begins with site visits long before they step foot into the transport carrier. The sense of respect, hopeful change and depth of reverence that we bring to each new visit which resonates with all elephants, is the first taste they get of sanctuary. Many times facilities invite us to touch, feed or stand close to an elephant and we respectfully decline, partially for safety reasons but more importantly, because we want to communicate that the visit is not about us it is about the elephant and what is best for their wellbeing.

Our site visits are multi-faceted. The most critical aspect is seeing the elephant with our own eyes to get a sense of who they are not who others think they are. We also finalize agreements and transportation plans and explore logistics of crate locations. We often visit potential rescues long before discussions about transfer to introduce ourselves and initiate rescue discussions. Ideally, Kat and I will visit together which allows Kat to observe quietly without interference while I spend time with management teams. It is difficult for one person to negotiate logistics while keeping an attentive heart that gives the elephant room to feel.

After the initial visit, next steps vary with each elephant and facility. Regardless of whether or not we have a finalized agreement, from that first meeting we become a part of the elephant’s life. In some cases we recommend changes to basic husbandry, diet or medical care, while we offer other facilities assistance with legal and transportation requirements. The Mendoza elephants need ongoing help with training in preparation for the move so we provided a caring, patient, protected contact trainer. At another zoo we were able to influence changes with care staff creating a more empathetic team. Whatever the need, we remain attentive and flexible, providing skilled care that will keep the elephants in the best health until rescue while opening communication channels that will help bring them to sanctuary as quickly as possible. When the needs are great as Pelusa’s were, GSE sent a dedicated on-site caregiver. We remained devoted to Pelusa despite realizing on the day she went down that she was not going to make it to sanctuary. This realization intensified our commitment to show her love and respect, to ensure she was honored, to listen to her needs and carry our reverence through to her last breath until the final shovel of dirt was placed over her body. From the first hello to the very last goodbye, for eternity, our hearts are theirs.

### Help Return the Joy to the Lives of Elephants:

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A new life for captive elephants in South America is just a trunk’s reach away. This is just the beginning!