DEAR FRIENDS

The year 2020 has been challenging for so many people, those of us here in Mato Grasso, Brazil, included.

Yet we now house five elephants, we have the helping hands necessary to expand our capacity and tackle previously intangible projects, and we have received ample provision from you to nurture these resources, our sanctuary land, and its inhabitants.

We are extraordinarily connected to our supporters and understand what it means for you to hear from us and, likewise, feel connected by holding this publication in your hands. We acknowledge that some time has passed since our last newsletter, and while we regret the delay, please know that elephant wellbeing is always our top priority, sometimes resulting in the postponement of less urgent tasks. And the last several months have not been without urgency. Just the opposite!

The global pandemic’s biggest impact on GSE has been the scarcity of supplies and industrial labor. Our remote location has kept everyone healthy, but the well diggers and backhoe repairers we hired back in March were unable to complete their jobs due to sickness outbreaks and company shutdowns. These misfortunes, thankfully, are not dire to our normal functioning. Early on, we overstocked supplies for the girls, and we plan to resume construction on the African habitat as soon as it is safe. The “sanctuary bubble,” as we call it, is holding strong.

Our work otherwise has, in fact, picked up. With your help, we have been able to rescue a number of elephants in an unusually short amount of time. With every rescue and every elephant in waiting, there is much to be done, in addition to the daily care of our current residents. As we focus on each sequential mission at hand, the months pass extraneously as we race along. The dynamic nature of sanctuary life can cause a complete loss of perspective of time, and it goes both ways.

For example, we’ve only had Bambi for a couple of weeks, but her presence feels natural, like she’s been here forever.

continued on page 10...
IN MEMORY

GUIDA

Our Elephant Who Was Supposed To Live Forever

We want them all to live forever, but Guida became so vibrant, so alive at sanctuary that it didn’t occur to us she would dim so soon, so quietly. She surprised us at every turn, the deceptively feisty little girl she was, up until the very end.

We repeatedly laughed at ourselves for underestimating her will to thrive. At the farm where she was kept by the lawyer of her former circus, she was lost in habitual stereotyping, a coping way for the boredom of captivity, glazed eyes looking past you to another world. Sanctuary isn’t always an instant fix, and we were genuinely worried about her reengagement with the outside environment.

But Guida turned our expectations to dust. Upon rescue, she walked right into her crate and ceased to sway. She was ready to go home over the fence into undeveloped habitat, longing to wander. Like an old ship that teaches us all to transcend the ocean, she knew that sanctuary was a gift for the soul, she knew that. Her dynamic character drew you in as she connected to everything around her; you felt like she really saw you.

When Kat found she had passed away one morning, Ramba was smiling peacefully, her body temperature and muscle mass, her mind powerfully got lost in the splendor of foliage, left this world. We believe she was at rest, and that her spirit still connects to our heart.

In October 2019, she was finally released to GSE. Ramba’s survival story had inspired many, the remainder of her existence was a transformative im

IN MEMORY

Ramba at Rest

Ramba is the South American elephant we knew the longest, tracing back to our Tennessee days when we assisted with her transfer from the circus to a roadside zoo. Her difficult path paralleled the countless little, hard-fought steps we took to establish GSE. Later, when our first-year plans in Brazil fell apart and any sane person would have given up, it was in the end impossible to walk away from the hope of Ramba.

The last circus elephant in Chile, Ramba’s first relocation was destined for opposition—delayed permits, a bureaucratic ultimatum, armed police, and a fist fight, but here is where we first glimpsed her undeterred character. Ramba triumphantly entered her crate just before dawn as if she knew the government’s deadline: her eventual home at a US sanctuary fell apart and any sane person would have given up, it was in the end impossible to walk away from the hope of Ramba.

The moment of this dramatic rescue came to an abrupt standstill when her eventual home at a US sanctuary fell through, and a layover became the destination. We began plans for GSE. Ramba deserved better than to die at the zoo.

She packed a lifetime of experience into the 10 weeks she lived with us. Once she left the small yards, she went everywhere. We had to make her slow down to eat! She’d walk past food into grass and ponds. She crossed the creek on a record second day. She was able to venture outside herself, touch something bigger, and thus change it forever by befriending Rana, who enthusiastically reciprocated.

When Kat found she had passed away one morning, Ramba was smiling peacefully, not a blade of grass disturbed around her. But her—Ramba til the end. Anything she could control within her limited autonomy, she did. She left this world on her terms.

We often receive letters from followers describing how the elephants impact their lives, and Ramba’s journey continues to resonate. We call this “the Ramba effect.” all the people who relate to her struggle resonate. We call this “the Ramba effect”:

We believe she had a stroke due to mild seizure-like activity just before passing and otherwise good health.

She left behind a transformative impression so deep that her influence on GSE will never end. Showing forgiveness and compassion to Maia, her former circus mate of forty years who if she got off chain would knock Guida to the ground. Guida was just as instrumental in Maia’s reengagement with the world, but instead she embodied the impact they had on visits to the zoo, we’d whisper in her ears, “morning tea with her. She would know the smartypants inside who reverse trained her own caregivers to omit certain exercises she didn’t like, and so revered herself to them that they took their morning tea with her. She would knowingly lean her head down to meet your eye level, in conversation.

Veterinarians gave her a year to live due to major renal issues, but our suspicions hadn’t held on for seven years through medical intervention and determina

Ramba had internalized the promise of a full life. Once when off her chain at the circus, she raised a corridor wall only to reach a fruit tree on the other side, and on visits to the zoo, we’d whisper in her ear about the paradise surely to come.

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BRAZILIAN BEATS

Catch up with life at Elephant Sanctuary Brazil

AFRICAN BARN

Our African habitat will be years in the making, and, like many of our properties here before it, will take many years of hard work for us to realize that dream. The barn and its interior gates are complete, as well as the land for fencing. Remaining are the walking trails that not the barn and the fencing for two additional yards, trenching those yards that we have thoughtfully planned for Kenya (Ecoparc Kenya) and Pigs and Bulls (Ecoparc Buenos Aires). COVID-19 caused an unexpected setback in repairing our backhoe, which is necessary to lift and dig holes for the giant recycled oil drilling tubes we use for fencing. However, it is now up and running, and we are eager to resume construction after the dry season.

UPDATE

African Barn

W e were able to purchase two new security cameras over- looking the main habitat, with their solar panels and batteries, through the generous donation of a foundation underwriter. While the security house was designed so that camera sounds funnel up to that exact location (meaning we can hear the girls talking pretty much 24/7), it is infinitely helpful to monitor the girls in real-time without altering their behavior. The cameras are also really fun, most notably the infrared night vision feature. For example, we saw Mara standing over Rune while she was sleeping one night—a alarming sign of affection we have not seen during the day. While our internet isn’t stable enough just yet, the system also includes streaming capabilities that can be used for live feeds in the future.

HELLO CUTIE

Milo is our newest furry friend—an endearing five-month-old sheep who thinks he’s a dog. He is a small world here, as GSE worker Cassia has his very own barn at a nearby farm and drives him here at just seven days old in the back of her car. His mother had died from mastitis, and we were fortunate to be able to save little Milo from the fate of so many orphaned animal babies. Milo is now a strong, a dorable young man. He makes us laugh daily. His favorite pastimes include: eating man— gone (his nose is constantly overrun in sticky juice), stealing Pringles chips from Kat, and cuddling with the dogs on the patio. Our dog Molly around like a girlfriend!

MEET WALL-E

WALL-E, our affectionately named drone, was an in-kind donation from a wonderful supporter and has been a huge help for seeing the elephants from a new and exciting angle, but even more so for fire patrols during the dry season. When we see smoke over the hill, it is impossible to tell if the fire is close without a bird’s eye view. Our girls rarely respond to WALL-E, and if we try to bother them, we would/back away. Our property is open and we can’t see everything; it is a nice, non-invasive way to peek to tell if the fire is close without a bird’s eye view.

AN HONOR BESTOWED

In July of this year, we received the honor of accreditation by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS). This means that our animal care and ethics, sustainability, finances, staffing, education, and other operational aspects meet GFAS’s rigorous and peer-reviewed standards.

MEET WALL-E

Chasing the unknown and the bravery to overcome it. Zoo-sanctuary relationships around the globe are historically tenuous, but watching Bambi’s struggle together opened dialogue between the zoo and GSE teams. They saw our core values through the customized care we provide and our pains-takingly detailed crate, and we saw their lack of resources to properly care for elephants even when the desire is present.

Scott has moved nearly 50 elephants, and all have been ready to roll within a couple of days. This is not a deadline set by us; it is wholly determined by the elephant’s decision to enter the crate, a staggering introduction to autonomy. It took Bambi seven days to achieve this comfort level, signaling her acute sensitivity to change, but our remaining passive, following her lead, and building trust all supported the highest priority—that she never feels forced.

Finally at sanctuary, Bambi walked right out of her crate (others have taken up to 14 hours!) and has significantly relaxed. She didn’t like bathing at the zoo, so layers and layers of dead skin have accumulated all over her body. Accordingly, her most popular activities are exfoliating with dirt and rubbing her body against trees for a good scratch. Her social skills are expanding, eyeing Kyle from a distance and sharing a friendly touch with Maia through the fence. We promise to share future progress reports as we and Bambi both learn who she is on her self-reclamation journey. Ensuring everyone is happy and healthy is more even of a balancing act now. It requires next-level observation and adjustment from us, watching Maia’s face when she meets Bambi or shifting Bambi outside while we treat Lady’s feet, but we’ve never been more up for the challenge.

AN HONOR BESTOWED

Visit Facebook to watch Bambi explore sanctuary
https://www.facebook.com/GlobalSanctuaryforElephants

A LONG JOURNEY HOME

And Bambi Makes Five

It’s crazy to reflect on the ebbs and flows of life in Brazil and realize that we now have the most elephants ever at one time—five! We are over the moon to welcome Bambi to the GSE herd. The relative ease with which she has settled in, however, belies her stressful days just before us as she grappled with fear of the unknown and the bravery to overcome it. Because the recent alterations between Bambi and her enclosure-mate Maia were withheld until our arrival at the Ribeirão Preto zoo, the relocation period we estimated was too short for her mental state. Bambi had been hiding in her stall for days on end, and where for many elephants the crate is the first stimulus they’ve had in years—new smells, new compartments to explore, new people, the stimulus of Maia’s violence was still fresh on her mind. We unequivocally disregarded our original schedule; we were on Bambi time.

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FACTOID

Drones and other unmanned machinery are fairly nonintrusive to elephants in Central America.

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**Operation Mara**

The striking difference between Mara and the other girls’ rescues is that it occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic across a national border. Due to Argentina’s strict lockdown, the intricate plans already in place to relocate Mara from EcoParque Buenos Aires to GSE were no good anymore. Only trucks with essential supplies were traveling in and out of Argentina. This meant, for the first time ever, we wouldn’t be present for the first leg of the trip.

We worked hand in hand with Tomás Sciolli, the ecoParque’s wildlife and conservation manager and a longtime champion of Mara’s rescue, to pivot and lobby Argentinian authorities to expedite the revised paperwork.

*Green light!* The crate was already at the border, the intricate plans already in place—eating, drinking, standing, sitting with the ecoParque team beforehand, and overall Mara was doing well when our paths met at the Brazilian border.

From there, the GSE team resumed our typical role, leading the way to sanctuary. The added stress of remembering to sanitize every touched surface evaporated, and Mara’s growing confidence indicates that it occurred during the same language and can relate to the same horrific life experiences. Rana is an elephant for elephants, steadfast in meeting them where they are. She is our welcoming committee of one—the first to meet newcomers because of her outgoing personality that adapts well to the energy of newcomers because of her easygoing personality.

Mara and the other girls’ rescues were able to begin her positive reinforcement conditioning, and on the big day, to close her into the crate and load it on the truck—all tasks we would normally perform.

It’s nerve-racking when someone else manages your responsibilities, especially when they entail the wellbeing of a precious elephant, whose every little movement on the read—eating, drinking, standing, sleeping—reveals nuanced details of her true condition. We were able to share some of our experiences with the ecoParque team beforehand, and overall Mara was doing well when our paths met at the Brazilian border.

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**The New York Times**

**Mara Made the New York Times!**

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MAIA
Our Big, Bold, Paragon’s Personal Growth

With a monumental stature and personality to match, Maia appears untouchable. She moves fast, trumpets loud, and exudes power in everything she does. She is the elephant who reminds us most of how elephants behave in the wild.

Hiding just beneath that armor, however, is a vulnerability sealed for decades in captivity, compounded by the recent loss of her best friend. At one time our most vocal elephant in Brazil, Maia is quieter these days and expresses joy more subtly than when Guida was alive.

Pre-sanctuary, Maia was the “bad elephant.” Her aggression toward people and circus-mate Guida was a direct reflection of her environment. Circus elephants are often suppressed, and an elephant’s ability to match, Maia appears untouchable.

Over time, Maia warmed to ever-patient Rana, and then Ramba. We believe Rama’s death may have confirmed for Maia that death didn’t just come to Guida, but to all elephants. Here at sanctuary, loss often delivers abundance.

Unfortunately, the condition of her feet partially contributes to her insecurities with both humans and other elephants. Foot disease is one of the leading causes of death in captive elephants, and Lady’s feet are in the top three worst we know. After decades of inadequate trimming, ongoing abscesses, and considerable overgrowth, the damage is treatable but not curable.

The first step, winning her trust enough that she allowed us to work on her feet, was the hardest. She lashed out at the slightest emotional discomfort, sending a clear message that her trust had been betrayed many times before and we needed to respect her boundaries, which were slow to relax. Through it all, however, glimpses of softness told us that she wanted help. While cyclical issues persist, her feet have improved, and she now understands our motives.

While Lady’s healing journey may be longer and more complex, it is even more beautiful. The effort Lady applies to her recovery shows not only how much she wants to forgive and move on, but also how deep the inner wounds of captivity can be. Lady is one of the toughest elephants we have ever met and flashes a smirk that enamors everyone who meets her, even when she is showing some attitude.

A childlike innocence inside overriders the limitations of her emotional scars.

KAT BLAIS
Director of Elephant Health

A Lady’s Pedicure
Strength in the Struggle

Lady is our petite, spunky girl, an ex-circus and zoo elephant who holds onto a significant emotional baggage from her traumatic former life. We often mention how it’s rarely the case that walking onto sanctuary grounds fixes everything. It is incredibly difficult for some elephants to shed decades of abuse and neglect. Lady is one of those elephants.

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Sanctuary heals, mentally and beyond, and over the months, Lady has permitted herself the vulnerability to trust and tolerate her humans when we care for her feet, even when it’s physically uncomfortable. She now understands our motives are out of love and a desire to help her feel better. Lady is the epitome of resilience. In a world where she was abused and mistrusted, where the easiest response would be to shut down, she has opened up her heart to what sanctuary offers and is learning to trust in herself and those around her for the first time.

A childlike innocence inside overriders the limitations of her emotional scars.

KAT BLAIS
Director of Elephant Health

HOLD STILL
Lot tells her through treatment:

LOTS OF PRAISE
A soothing water bath

A little relief
Slow and steady improvement

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While Lady’s healing journey may be longer and more complex, it is even more beautiful. The effort Lady applies to her recovery shows not only how much she wants to forgive and move on, but also how deep the inner wounds of captivity can be. Lady is one of the toughest elephants we have ever met and flashes a smirk that enamors everyone who meets her, even when she is showing some attitude.

Unfortunately, the condition of her feet partially contributes to her insecurities with both humans and other elephants. Foot disease is one of the leading causes of death in captive elephants, and Lady’s feet are in the top three worst we know. After decades of inadequate trimming, ongoing abscesses, and considerable overgrowth, the damage is treatable but not curable.

The first step, winning her trust enough that she allowed us to work on her feet, was the hardest. She lashed out at the slightest emotional discomfort, sending a clear message that her trust had been betrayed many times before and we needed to respect her boundaries, which were slow to relax. Through it all, however, glimpses of softness told us that she wanted help. While cyclical issues persist, her feet have improved, and she doesn’t let them hinder her explorations of the habitat or dips in the ponds.
DONOR SPOTLIGHT

I will never forget that morning in October 2015 when the elephants of GSE first became a part of my life. I was volunteering at a refuge center for domestic animals in the outskirts of southern India when a wild elephant broke the fence overnight to reach the deliciously sweet and water-rich fruits of a juicily ripe mango tree. The next day, I received an email from Animal – Spirit that mentioned GSE’s plans to establish a sanctuary in Brazil. The connection between these two events was profound. It hit me hard: an Asian elephant in Brazil wanted me to know about the work of GSE.

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The implications of this knowledge give me a sense of responsibility to our planet and the life on it, and the privilege to be living on a land of such awareness. I feel connected to the elephants in a profound way. They have entered my life as characters carving their names, and as symbols for transition or death. We are one life on this planet together, manifested into different expressions such as elephant and human.

To let me express my appreciation for GSE with a humble thank you for sharing the sanctuary experience can be born from so many levels. It is such an honour to be on this journey with you. You keep open for each elephant to open up to who they truly are at their own pace and in their own time at individuals and as a herd member, and we get to witness this magic as the elephants return home. I believe this moment deeply within us humans since all of us eventually want to return home, whatever home means to each of us.

-- Karen, Ireland

FROM THE TIPS OF OUR TRUNKS

Thank You

continued from page 1... The recent wildfire that devastated much of our property (all people and animals were spared) is an apt metaphor for the adage: good always triumphs. The horrifying experience of watching our land burn and seeing the black devastation that exists in place of our once lush, green habitat is harsh, but also filled with countless reasons to be grateful. Our team in Brazil is remarkable, along with brave firefighters, who exhausted all efforts, toilng through the night until the fire was out. The unity shown by our sanctuary protectors was a cherished sight during a tragic moment. We know how quickly the urdu (the resilient Brazilian savanna biome) will recover, within weeks, we predict the foliage to begin regrowth. Already, we have seen some wildlife reemerge—white-chested capuchins, macaws, our rehabilitated tapirs, and others.

Even in the darkest of scenarios, sanctuary reminds us of the beauty within the balance, and we count you among our most beautiful blessings. Words cannot fully express our appreciation for your generosity of time, talent, and treasure. Because of you, we get to continue the important work of giving elephants, and now this stunning gesture, a chance for healing restoration. Each glorious sanctuary sunrise is a gift—a daily opportunity to introduce new levels of joy to the animals, and with each breathtaking sunset, there are more stories to be shared.

-- Scott and Kat Blais, GSE Co-Founders

To learn more about the sanctuary wildfire, please visit https://www.globalelephants.org/blog/.

HORIZONS AND HOPE

Pocha and Guillermina

Mother and daughter—the picture of nurturer and nurtured as old as time itself, and so it is for Pocha and Guillermina. Pocha, 47, raised Guillermina, 22, from birth in a concrete pit at Ecoparque Mendoza, Argentina. Guillermina has never left this pit. She has never touched vegetation on the ground or seen the horizon line, only the surrounding rock and a sliver of sky with her limited view. Like sprigs of green shooting up through sterile cracks of pavement, Guillermina manages to thrive as a young elephant under Pocha’s protection, in spite of having essentially nothing. Imagine raising a toddler in a basement with no toys. It is a testament to Pocha’s care that Guillermina displays the common self-destructive behavior or advanced stereotypic tendencies as elephants in captivity. A mother’s love sadly does not cancel the effects of captivity. Concrete, much unlike the soft natural landscape of grass and mud, is notoriously bad on elephants’ feet. No significant health issues are obvious at this time, although no medical testing has been done, and they are both overweight. Guillermina’s social status is substantially lacking in the way of a spoiled child. While we have yet to fully know their personalities, we know they both possess their own unique charms in spades, just waiting to burst free at sanctuary.

The government of Argentina is no longer able to cover the cost of their transport, nevertheless, we are immensely grateful for the progressive choice of Argentina and the ecoparque to outwardly support the elephants’ relocation to GSE. The ecoparque’s CITES permits just came through, and we only have a few more steps to go. Our consultant will revisit the elephants for training as the rescue approach. We are in the final stretch!

GSE needs your help to provide Pocha and Guillermina with a life of kaleidoscope colors, juicy fruits off the vine, lush green shade, soft grassy trails, and endless playtime in the mud. With your gift, we can restore the joyful spirit in Pocha and Guillermina every elephant deserves through the natural experience of sanctuary.

The transport of Pocha and Guillermina from Argentina to GSE will require tens of thousands of dollars. Your support will help to cover the cost of truck rentals, truck drivers, cranes at the ecoparque and sanctuary, transportation of GSE caregivers, food for the elephants, and other incidentals. Multiply everything by two!

WE NEED YOU

YOUR GENEROSITY MOVES ELEPHANTS!

Kenya & Tamy Update

We have not forgotten our covenant with Ecoparque Mendoza. Kenya, 25, will join the African habitat when it is complete and her permits are approved. Tamy, 30, is Guillermina’s father and will join us when we are able to build an Asian male habitat. Unlike Pocha and Guillermina, Kenya and Tamy are alone in their respective orders and face extreme burdens and loneliness that can only be remedied by a healthy environment and the company of other elephants at sanctuary.

Coming Soon!

2021 is already an improvement over 2020! At long last, we are so pleased to offer you a year of elephants.

Our official calendar includes twelve great images of the ladies of ESB and special GSE anniversaries and throughout the year. Proceeds from the sale of the calendar support the work of GSE.

Visit Globalelephants.org/Shop/
Global Sanctuary for Elephants is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, public charity (EIN 46-3564818), and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

Shop with a purpose! Share your compassion for the elephants of GSE with everyone you meet by using our stylish products at home, work, or around town. Help raise awareness about the devastation of elephant captivity and the importance of sanctuary.

Got a friend or family member who loves animals? These items are perfect gifts for the approaching holiday season and can be ordered online from the safety of home. A small percentage of sales benefit GSE. [https://www.zazzle.com/store/globalelephants](https://www.zazzle.com/store/globalelephants)

Global Sanctuary for Elephants exists to create vast safe spaces for captive elephants, where they are able to heal physically and emotionally. There are elephants around the world in need of sanctuary, but too few exist to be able to care for even a fraction of them. Global support is necessary to build sanctuaries for elephants in need of rescue and rehabilitation.

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