



Hello and welcome to the Global Sanctuary for Elephants' brand new podcast, Global Rumbblings. Global Sanctuary for Elephants, or GSE for short, is a nonprofit organization with a mission to create vast, safe spaces for captive elephants where they are able to heal physically and emotionally, often from very traumatic pasts. I'm your host, Nadia Mari, and I'll be taking you to the lush jungle of the Mato Grosso region in central Brazil, home of GSE's initial project Elephant Sanctuary Brazil, currently home to six female Asian elephants, lovingly referred to as "the girls."

Nadia: 01:12

Hello and welcome to episode four of the Global Rumbblings Podcast. I'm again joined by Kat and Scott Blais, co-founders of Global Sanctuary for Elephants, and we are still talking about the exciting story and adventure of how it all began. Hi, Kat. Hi, Scott.

Kat: 01:15

Hey Nadia.

Scott:

Hey Nadia. How are you doing?

Nadia: 01:52

I'm fine. Okay, so we, last episode, we talked about the elephant sanctuary in Tennessee and what the elephants taught you, not what you were teaching the elephants. But no, the elephants were talking to you. They were telling you to listen, telling you what they needed and showing you how profound healing is possible in a sanctuary environment. And so today we're going to go back to South America, where we left off at the end of episode two with you rescuing Ramba from the circus.

Nadia: 02:17

We talked about the change in legislation, meaning that elephants were being confiscated from zoos and circuses but having nowhere to go. Yeah. So let's continue from, from there. You had left the

Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee 2011 to do your 9 to 5 job and to find out who you were, and Ramba caught you again and brought you back into the elephant world.

Nadia: 02:25

So yeah, let's pick up from when you rescued Ramba from the circus and what did you do then?

Scott: 02:49

Well... (everyone laughing) this is a different type of communication than the last episode. You know, but this was our own period of self-discovery, if you will. I think for me, more than Kat, because of how my life had been for so many years of just inside the sanctuary walls and everything that we had been living in that bubble of magic, you know, it was difficult.

Yes, it was very stressful. And yes, it was a lot of responsibility. But it's pretty magical living in that environment and almost overwhelming with the amount of lessons we were learning from them. So, you know, I think we talked about a little bit before, of stepping away into a normal life and what that was like. And after some time realizing, hey, you know, we need to do more.

You know, elephants have given us a lot of gifts and we need to be able to give back to them somehow. We didn't know what that was going to be. And we had already been, talked about doing a feasibility study in South America about, you know, we were asked to do a feasibility study in South America for Elephants Sanctuary Brazil.

So realizing that when we started looking at doing a feasibility study and we had some difficulty with trying to find funding for that, we decided to move forward with the development of a new nonprofit organization. Initially, it was going to be a US nonprofit organization to help fund and develop Elephant Sanctuary Brazil. And then we quickly realized as we're going through that process, that the need is substantial internationally, and should we be thinking on a bigger scale. Because, yes, elephants in South America are in crisis.

There's a lot of progressive legislation banning them from circuses, elephants being removed from the circus, similar to Ramba, but no place to go. And, you know, so there's a necessity there, but there's also necessity globally. And that's when we kind of shifted the form in our thinking to a bigger scale and looked, and changed the name to Global Sanctuary for Elephants, thinking that what we will be doing is providing leadership, providing expertise, providing guidance for those formidable years of the initial part of developing sanctuaries internationally and, until they can be self-sufficient, and then we move forward and help other organizations move forward because sanctuaries are needed, again, in many more places than just South America.

Kat: 05:31

And the realization of that, you know, just like elephants, it wasn't this altruistic "whatever." It was more about knowing where we came from in Tennessee and the ability that an organization like that would have to be able to help other organizations and elephants around the world that were struggling and hoping, probably not to get to that size, but at some point being able to offer assistance to sanctuaries that are struggling, because the beginning is hard and there's someone working on a sanctuary in Europe, and one of the big things is they want all of the funding up front. They want all of this stuff guaranteed, and it's almost impossible. So things just go nowhere. And, you

know, we were well aware of the situations between big organizations that go nowhere to smaller groups who simply don't have the funding or the public to help them get anywhere with what they're trying to do. So we were trying to look forward and see that, if somewhere down the line we could possibly help with those kind of situations. In other places.

Scott: 06:32

We had no idea what form that would take or how long we're involved with each organization or even what it's going to be on the global scale. Even in Brazil, we really had no clue at that point. We just knew that, based on this world that exploded in front of us when we started the sanctuary in Tennessee, of all the unknowns that elephants exposed us to, it, really one of the things it taught us is to keep a much more open perspective of what's in front of us and what we have left to learn. And, and in this case, what we have, what we can do to help. We know there is no limit, but we don't know exactly what form that can take. But that pathway doesn't really matter at that point. It's just knowing that we had the capacity to try to help and make a difference.

Nadia: 07:08

So Brazil is a huge country. So you, you founded Global Sanctuary for Elephants in 2013. Elephants have certain requirements from, from the elephant sanctuary in Tennessee. You would now obviously know the minimum requirements or the ideal conditions you would be looking for. So how did you then actually end up in the Mato Grosso region where you are now in central Brazil? Did you travel around Brazil looking for property like people look for houses? How do you explore such a huge country?

Kat:

(Everyone laughing) It was so much fun.

Scott:

This is a story.

Kat:

And in case sarcasm doesn't come across, that with sarcasm. (everyone laughs)

Scott:

This is a story. This is where the fun in South America begins.

Nadia:

Okay, listeners, grab your wine and grab your beer wherever you are.

Scott: 07:46

The popcorn. This is, how many episodes that we have to spend on this? We'll try to abbreviate something and maybe we'll touch base on some of the finer points as time goes on and revert back to this as we move forward.

Kat:

As pretty as so many people think these things happen, and it's all wonderful and it comes together or there's some level of struggle. It was, I mean, it was a little bit of a joke at points and not a funny one, but so it goes.

Scott: 08:26

So we're going to start with our first exploratory trip. So this is actually after we had already founded Global Sanctuary for Elephants. We know we're moving forward. We know that sanctuary is needed in South America. We were actually talking on multiple levels at that point because there were contacts with the, the one of the principal volunteers who had been working with ElephantVoices on the legislation.

And they had a facet of ElephantVoices in Brazil called ElephantVoices Brazil. And one of the principal people there is, she was our primary contact and kind of the lead person here in Brazil helping to guide us on different different avenues. So we know we're moving forward in South America, but we didn't know how. Because she had contact with somebody in Cambodia we thought, well, maybe, do we do, not the same form as Sanctuary in Tennessee, but we do more of a halfway house here where they get out of the circuses, similar to what was happening with Ramba, removed from the circus, go to the roadside zoo, go to this halfway home while they get the testing, training, sanitary requirements, etc. paperwork goes through, and in the process they're getting better care and then move them to their ultimate home, which is in Asia. This was part of the exploration. This is part of exploring the unknowns. It would have been very easy to say, hey, you know, let's replicate TES, you know, and that's the answer.

But part of our responsibility is to think further than that and see what all the options that exist. So we were actually exploring this idea of bringing elephants to Cambodia and developing this halfway home. And as we started looking at that, what that would take, this halfway home, it became more and more grand because what about those elephants that can't be moved?

Kat: 09:58

You know, the reality is that the population of elephants here is so old. You're talking about 95% is geriatric and they're unhealthy. So you're not going to be able to move every elephant.

Scott: 10:20

Then you have to think about what happens if they can't be moved. But then what happens if they can't be moved but their best friend can be moved? And then you start talking about, okay, that's

going to disrupt the herd dynamics again and you create abandonment issues because you are trying to move one to the ultimate dream of returning to Asia and then sort of realizing, wait a minute, there's 10,000 elephants and more than 10,000 captive elephants in Asia. Shouldn't we be focusing on that space that's available in Asia for the elephants in Asia? And we can focus on the elephants in South America in an idyllic, delicate climate in South America and really separate those two ideas and go back to that more along the TES model. So that's where we started going, is focusing on this prime sanctuary in South America that will house all the elements in South America. We knew approximately how much land we were looking for, but didn't understand a lot about different climatic regions in Brazil. And the reason for focusing on Brazil is at that point, 35 of the 50 captive elephants at that point were in Brazil. It makes more sense to focus on where most of the elephants are currently located.

Kat: 11:32

And we were, we knew what we were looking for... in general. We knew we wanted a dynamic property. 20 acres of flat land is very different than 20 acres that have hills and a stream. So you're looking for dynamic. You're looking for, one of the big things for us was if we could find somewhere where the elephants wouldn't have to spend any time inside. For all that Tennessee provided for the elephants: gorgeous property, nice weather. We saw the elephants digress every single winter. Both with their relationships with each other, the relationships with the caregivers. Physically, we would see elephants that hadn't stereotyped for seven months come inside the barn and, after a few weeks of cold temperatures and they're not spending all day in the barn, they're just coming in around 4:00 in the afternoon, sleeping in the barns, going out in the morning. But was still such a significant change in the in the progress that you would see otherwise, that one of our big goals, which we weren't sure we could attain, was finding somewhere where they could be outside 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365, blah blah blah, but at the same time it couldn't be so hot that their bodies couldn't release the heat that they stored during the day. So at night the temperatures had to cool down enough and it had to have enough rain so that they could live essentially if they needed to, off of that habitat. Once again, all year, because elephants are designed to graze 15 to 20 hours a day. And not only is that an emotional and mental stimulation for them, but it is what their bodies are designed for. And in order to return their GI system, their teeth, so on and so forth, back to a healthy place. That is what they need. So it wasn't exactly a small order.

Nadia:

I was going to say that's a long, that's a long list.

Scott: 13:27

Yeah. And again, this is just one facet of trying to understand what it's going to take to move to a different country and start a sanctuary. You have the political realm. Are, is it going to be supported? How is it going to be perceived from zoos? You know, what community support do you have in that from animal welfare groups, from the political side, from cities, from, you know, we had all these things that we wanted to explore.

Kat:

Would we be able to afford the property when we found a nice property?

Scott: 13:50

Is there a way to do a partnership with somebody that already had property? Because, you know, we're a new nonprofit organization at this point, there's no money in the bank, you know, any negative negative money in the bank (everyone laughs). So, you know, there's, I don't think we had a bank account. (laughing) We probably did at that point. You know, this is in its infancy. This is starting from zero again, sort of. It's starting from zero with the sanctuary development. But it's starting with years of understanding what elephants not only need, but how much more profound their lives will be. And this level of complexity that we discussed in last episode, which pushes forward the further to try to find that really idyllic land that's going to further their development and really, you know, who knows where this is all going to lead.

Kat:

So we hopped on 19 planes.

Scott:

19 planes in 30 days.

Kat:

And saw a lot of properties that weren't remotely what we would have wanted. We were actually shown the wrong properties in some places. (laughs)

Scott: 14:45

So this is a: no we're not going to go into every story, but we'll tell two quick ones. One was, is a story who, somebody that wanted to, that did some wildlife rehab and they had a couple hundred acres of land and we're there walking and exploring the land. And all you hear and feel is the vibration of the highway. The highway is about three miles away. It's not right on the highway, but that's all you feel. And, you know, knowing the communication dynamics of elephants. Yeah, a beautiful property. It's not going to work. It was colder. It was a great location for, it would have been a good location because it's between, you know, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Kat: 15:22

And when you have no money and somebody wants to offer you property, you know, of course the knee jerk response is to almost immediately be, like, sure. But you know, you're talking about long term welfare and thinking down the line and, you know, does it really benefit the elephants to put

them somewhere that is going to be somewhat harmful to their overall well-being? So unfortunately, that ended up being a no.

Scott: 15:46

So during this time, we went to a film festival for animal welfare and met some folks there. We met several politicians in different groups, different cities, went to a couple of sanctuaries and a few times people said two things: Mato Grosso or Tocantins, and Tocantins because the land is cheap.

Nadia:

Okay.

Scott:

So we said, okay, fine.

Kat:

We have no money. (everyone laughs)

Scott: 16:04

So somehow in this 30 days it happened that somebody had a contact who knew somebody who had a large land in Tocantins, and maybe we can use part of that land. And in the process of that, somebody else knew a realtor who had a bunch of land that he could sell. So we decided to go to Tocantins. Tocantins is not easy to get to.

Nadia:

Where's Tocantins? Just to pinpoint us.

Scott: 16:37

It is west, I'm sorry east of Brasilia. It's all most of this was in the Cerrado region or on the lower end of the Amazon. And Tocantins is part of the savanna, the Brazilian cerrado. It's much drier than many places that we looked at, but we had to go there anyway. Again, when you have that price of land and say, Hey, let's look at it. I think it's five 500 reals per hectare or something like that. You know, less than \$100 an acre. I mean, it was, it was low.

Kat:

It was low for a reason. (laughs)

Scott: 16:57

Yeah. So we go there, but all that region was pretty low. So, so, we go there and it's two flights there and flight delays and we, you know, our hotel that is not really much of a hotel at all. And they pick you up in the morning.

Kat:

It's like, it looks like an hourly hotel from the outside. And pretty much is.

Scott: 17:26

We, we don't have high standards. I mean, we live behind a locked fence of a sanctuary. I mean, I've been dirty my whole life, you know, working with elephants. So, you know, we don't have high standards by any means, but this was pretty low. So when we go to look at this land in what is an hour and a half, 2 hours away from, I think it was actually the small town was 2 hours from the airport, and then the land was another hour and a half away from this small town. And you drive in, you take a left hand turn off the road and you're basically driving through a field and we're like, this is the entrance to the property. This is not, you know, well, we'll have to make a road, but we're like, okay, land is cheap. We can put a road in. So we start driving down and we get to some point and they get out of the vehicle and they said, okay, let's walk around. And we're looking at each other like, this is all feels weird. You know, the Americans, they get dumped off in the middle of Tocantins, in the middle of nowhere. We're going to walk out of here with just the clothes or maybe not even the clothes on our back. We had a...

Kat:

This is how horror movies start.

Scott: 18:14

We had no idea what we're really getting into. And we actually had a Brazilian with us who was from Sao Paulo, and he was looking at us with concern on his face as well, like, this feels a little strange. So they show us a map and they say, okay, we're going to walk from here to there. And we start walking. And I come back and, you know, I look at the map and it's like, no, the scale is wrong. You know, according to the scale we just walked, you know, three kilometers in 10 minutes, you know, that's not possible.

Nadia:

(laughs) Quite fast.

Scott:

So the scale was like, yeah, we're not that fast. You know, we could not walk here. Oh, no, we're in the wrong place. Let's take you around the corner. So we go around the corner and they walked us down again, and we walked down to the creek and they showed me on the map: we just walked from here. It's like, none of this makes sense. This is not possible on this map. And it's just a simple topo(graphical) map. It's not like this high-end map or anything. There's no cell phone reception. So you can't look at satellite imagery out there. Even if you could at that point, the maps were really, really basic. At that point, you're, you know, and so none of this is making sense.

And at some point during that trip, I say we passed this old dilapidated house. I said, okay, what does it cost to build a house like this? So somebody blurted out a number in reals. And I knew very little Portuguese at that point, but I knew a little bit and the guy's like: no, no, no. And they started talking amongst themselves and you can hear them talking. "Don't give them that number, give them the really high number. These are Americans." And, of course, we can understand enough of what they're saying.

Nadia:

You have no money.

Scott: 19:46

(everyone laughs) Americans with no dinero. So when we walk out of there, they gave us a crazy high price on the land - not on the land, on the, on the housing. So we walk out of there and we go back and like, none of this is good. It's the drive, it's the roads, it's the: Oh, and by the way, you're three kilometers from a calcario - a calcium carbonate mine. But don't worry, they don't do explosions every day. (everyone laughs) It's like, what the hell? Who thought this would be a good idea? So we know this is not all of Tocantins. This was one experience, one realtor. But we saw enough of Tocantins in our drive to realize that climatically it was not going to work. It was just way too dry. The dry season was too long, climate wasn't right. It was too hot, really remote. Politically, it was not going to be right. Culturally, it was going to be challenging. So we go back to São Paulo, two planes, more delays, more wonky airport and more wonky hotels. We go back to São Paulo and we're going to be in São Paulo I think, for like 6 hours before we jump on a plane for somewhere else. And they call up and say, "We showed them around the wrong property. They need to come back."

Nadia:

No (laughs)

Scott:

No, it's not going to happen.

Nadia:

It's not going to happen.

Scott: 20:55

So that was one of the stories. So from there, we actually visited with, it was an interesting visit all the way around, not only for the land but politically it was interesting. We met with folks in São Paulo and in Brasilia. The Brasilia one was most interesting because it was somebody who works for IBAMA, which is pretty much the equivalent of USDA. I-B-A-M-A is the acronym. And when we met with him, he actually said to us, once you're ready, you point out the elephants that you think are in trouble and I'll confiscate them.

Nadia:

Oh wow.

Scott:

And it was like, no question. This is what's going to happen. This would never happen in the United States. Is this truly real? He had already confiscated elephants that would never have been confiscated in the United States based on what we saw on their health. You know, elephants are not confiscated in the US until they are very, very ill.

Kat:

If at all.

Scott:

If at all. And what we're seeing here is they're confiscated at a much earlier stage in their, you know, digression of health. So...

Kat: 22:08

The other thing we found that was, along those same lines, was at two different zoos we were asked if we could take their elephants. Like now. It's, like, we don't have a property, we don't know what state we're going to be in. We don't, again, have any money. And it was just elephants - one was confiscated and sent to a zoo that, they were actually great with her and their exhibit was probably the best exhibit we saw, but they didn't really know how to care for her and they didn't feel they could provide for her. And they didn't want her to be alone. Oddly enough, that ended up being Bambi. So of course we had to tell them no. And then the Brasilia Zoo talked to us about taking one of their males who had also been confiscated. He was living in a crocodile enclosure, who they would not want, and they were struggling with because of his behavioral issues from circus, and being able to work with him. And again, in the United States, that would never happen. So it was one of these

trips where, you know, we thought it was something that could work, but left knowing that it was something that not only could work, although we still hadn't found a property, but that we had to try to find a way to make it work because of the impact it could have and how quickly.

Nadia:

So it does sound as if starting a sanctuary was received very positively in Brazil?

Scott:

Yeah, with certainty. I mean, it was very well received everywhere, almost too well in some cases. There was, a lot of it was very positive and almost unfortunately came with this expectation of "when do you open?"

Kat: 23:47

Yeah, it was, so much of it was different and part of the other part, aside from looking at land, which is why we ended up at other facilities, was trying to see what captivity looked like for elephants in Brazil. You know, you don't, things are very different in very different parts of the world. And we didn't want to just go with whatever understanding we thought we had of what was going on. We wanted to be able to see elephants there. We wanted to see what facilities looked like, what diets were like, what elephant care was like, and get a better understanding really, of the full picture for elephants before we tried to figure out what to do next.

Nadia:

How did you then find the, the land that you have now, the property you have now?

Scott: 24:37

We're three episodes from that (everyone laughs); you know that was a long journey. So what, we're still, we're still on these first 30 days. We haven't even left Brazil. And actually during this time we actually started getting photos. We had already, we have been in relatively close contact with the folks in Chile with Ramba's care and between Ramba's, between the time Ramba left or was confiscated from the circus. And now actually during that time frame is when we learned that TES was not going to be able to take her. So now Ramba is essentially homeless at this roadside zoo. You know, she can stay there, but the owners are pushing to move her out. There is a lot of pressure to get things happening quickly. And then we also saw Ramba, her physical condition started declining. So we were really concerned. And it was at the end of this 30 days that we actually went to Brazil, I mean, went to Chile for I think about ten days to see what was happening with Ramba and understand what we could do. Fortunately, we were able to make some changes to improve her health again. But during this time, this 30 days, that was a big push for us. It's: what about Ramba? What about Ramba? What about Ramba? Because she has no time. Yes, we're getting contacts in Brazil that are saying: help our elephant. But at the same... Or will you take our elephant? But at the same time, we had Ramba in the back of our minds all the time. We've got to get her out of here and what can we do, even temporarily? So we actually talked to a welfare organization in São Paulo. They

had a very small property, but she had about four acres of land that maybe we could develop something for Ramba there. We actually put that on the back burner because there was somebody that we contacted that contacted us in Brasilia and they had an association that was more with meditation and healing and, you know, just...

Kat:

A human retreat

Scott:

A human retreat, yeah. It was a beautiful land. And they said they didn't use the whole bottom part of the land. And we could use this, which is about 800 acres.

Nadia:

Ooh

Scott:

And they said, we can use this at essentially no charge. So this was really exciting for us. And we started talking to them more and I think we went back there twice and explored different parts of it and really trying to get an idea of: Would this work? Was the climate right? I know and we actually started working on can Ramba even fly to directly to Brasilia? It's her jumping way far forward because we had the permits, they already had land use permits. They had, everything was in place. We just needed to nail down the agreement. So we, some of the owners or some of the main people involved were not there at the time, but we were in communication with them through email. Or Daniel was, one of the prime volunteers here in Brazil who still works with us. He's...

Kat:

He's lovely.

Scott:

A biologist and one of the former directors of the association here. He was in close contact with them because of the circles that he was working in with animal welfare. And when we left here, we actually were working towards developing this land and converting one of the houses as part of a nighttime care facility. We had a lot of plans that were, were being put into place. During this time we also came to Mato Grosso, which was the other area that people had mentioned, and some people said the Pantanal is beautiful; you can develop sanctuary for elephants there. So we visited the Pantanal, which is...

Kat:

It is beautiful.

Scott:

It is stunning, it's described as a living zoo. And I hate to use that term because it's definitely not a zoo. It is a free roaming, you know, habitat. It is wild habitat for animals.

Kat:

The diversity is just stunning.

Scott: 27:53

And the number of animals is astounding. I mean you are driving down the main road, the Transponteerra highway. And it is animals on all sides, and birds on all sides, and caiman in and there is and, you know, capybara. It's just wildlife.

Nadia:

It's a huge wetland, isn't it? It's a huge wetland? Wasn't that affected two years ago with the wildfires as well, in Brazil?.

Scott: 28:17

Yeah, it's a stunning area, but the more you dig into it and we actually even look for land that was for sale there and explored that because we're trying to keep our mind open to everything is like, well, you know, let's understand this more. And aside from the 80 wooden bridges that we would have to cross to get to the property.

Kat:

And are not in good condition.

Scott: 28:37

Yeah, you have to use it when you call it a bridge, which is supposed to allow you to pass from one side of one thing to another side. Not all of them were able to be classified as a bridge anymore. A bridge to the creek below (laughs). You know, many of them were not possible by an elephant truck for sure, or steel trucks. And that was a big question. What would it take to build make that happen? But then also it's a wetlands. And, you know, it's only for a couple of months out of the year, but that it is fully saturated. But for those two or three months out of the year, it is underwater with the exception of very small islands.

Nadia:

Oh

Scott: 29:17

Then you start thinking about the impact on the elephants' feet. And I mean, there's just, the list goes on and on and climatically - even though only about 3 hours away from us, they get much colder than we are. They will get down to zero and we will never get that here just because of the topography and, you know, they, so it's a, it's a lowlands area and because of its proximity to the mountains and the cold fronts coming out of the mountains, etc., etc., etc.. So we actually all looked at another property in Mato Grosso, which was stunning. We had no idea that we were going to end up buying a property, or this property, which is only about an hour and a half away from one of those original properties that we looked at. It was beautiful; it was diverse. It was the most dynamic property that we saw, even compared to the Brasilia property, which was beautiful in its own right, but offered much less, but it was free. So we, we're still looking at Brasilia as a primary primary element of it, a primary property, but had these other alternatives in Mato Grosso that we were exploring as well. And so we left here with, hey, we have a lot of opportunity in front of us.

So going back to the United States, quickly realized that Brasilia was not going to work. It didn't matter all the conversations we had with English speaking individuals, with Portuguese speaking individuals, speaking to Portuguese individuals, what ended up happening is they didn't realize somehow in the communication that, once we let elephants on that property, it meant that their human retreat, part of exploration and that property could no longer be had. It was going to be elephant land. And they still had this idea of: we're going to be able to walk through the elephants. We have no idea how that got lost in translation.

Kat:

You know, it's like the first thing out of our mouths is it's their property, no human contact, blah, blah, blah. We say it over and over again. Yet, I guess, willful ignorance. They did not hear it once.

Scott: 31:14

And that's when we realized we started talking about the, the dream, the vision of being a part of the project versus what the reality of this project actually is. And it was they were living the dream: Wow, we're going to elephants in our backyard.

Nadia:

Yeah

Scott:

And I think they were very supportive of that concept eventually. I just don't think they fully thought it through - what it meant, even in spite of what we said over and over and over again. So that ended up not working. So then now Ramba's still stuck where she is. We are in the United States trying to figure out what to do, trying to expedite things, to be able to ultimately give Ramba a life before it's too late, before she either gets kicked out of where she is.

Kat: 31:51

Because I had only agreed to take her for six months while she was waiting to go to the sanctuary. And part of the agreement for her when she was confiscated was they weren't allowed to show her. They weren't allowed to profit off of her so they could not do any, take pictures with her, (have people) feed Ramba, any of that, which is essentially how the roadside zoo exists. So once they found out that it was going to be longer than six months and they weren't going to be able to profit off of her, and their caregivers had to take care of her, they were not pleased to say the least.

Scott: 32:25

And during that time, Global Sanctuary for Elephants actually started paying for their care. The care, the direct elephant care. It was supposed to be the responsibility of the roadside zoo, because even Ecopolis, the nonprofit organization who was responsible for the paperwork and pushing the confiscation, they don't have the financial means either to provide for an elephant.

Kat:

No. You know, they're a tiny little cat and dog, they do carriage horses. You know, it's just they never thought that was something that was going to be put on their plate either because they just didn't have the ability.

Scott: 33:12

So there's a lot of pressures at this point. So, you know, not only are we now have the expectations of Brazilians that we're starting a sanctuary. We have the expectation of what's happening in Brazil, I mean, happened in Chile for Ramba and needing to get her out of there and still with, you know, some options before us, but nothing solid. And so that may be the best way to segue to the next episode, because, you know, we get into what happens when you actually moved here because that was the next step a few months later. That trip was December 2013, and we moved here June of 2014. So kind of a chaotic next couple of months to pull a lot of things together to be able to pack up and move to Brazil.

Kat: 33:39

I mean, because the realization was, for all the communications we had, one of the things we learned on our first trip was no matter what people said through emails or through phone conversations, it changed as soon as you got there, because the first property that was supposed to be donated to us,

you know, we asked questions over and over again and we were told: no problem, yes, we have the paperwork. Yes, it's fine. But as soon as we showed up, all of that fell through. So we had an understanding that what we wanted to do was never going to be accomplished if we stayed in the United States and tried to continue to do it from there, although that would have been much more convenient because we could have kept our paying jobs and stayed in our comfortable rental house. We realized that if we were going to make any of this happen, it had to be a different level of commitment. Maybe one we weren't 100% sure if we were ready for, but I mean, it was hard to walk away from. And we knew the only way to make it happen was to move to Brazil.

Nadia:

So you left America, moved to Brazil without having a property, but just knowing you had to be there on the spot in the country to actually find a property to make it work. That it wasn't going to work with the distance. Wow. That is, that is a commitment.

Kat:

Yeah.

Scott: 35:07

We have often joked that we had just enough crazy to make it happen. And you know, when you think back and we look back it we may have less sanity than we thought. (Nadia laughs) You know we, again, when you have that motivation, as we talked about in the last episode, what this means for elephants, you know, and what alternatives don't exist for elephants in South America that are waiting for their chance. We really had no way to turn our backs. We had to move forward. You know, everything about us screams, you know, let's make this happen. These elephants need it. You know, we have to do this.

Kat: 35:40

Because the worst that happens is we try and we fail and we come back home with our tail between our legs and so goes it. But our egos aren't that big that, you know, that option was off the table. We just felt like Ramba was a big push, you know. We knew her, we took her from the circus, we spent months with her making sure she was comfortable in her new home and helping train her new caregivers to make sure she got the proper care. And Ramba is amazing. You know, there's something very special about her. And, you know, not that all elephants don't do that, but she definitely found a way into our hearts very quickly. And she had been through so much in her life. And to know that she had been that close to a good life and a life of sanctuary, and yet it got yanked out from underneath her. It felt terrible to not at least try to push forward, even though we had no idea really what was going to happen. And we still had no money. We felt like we had to at least try.

Scott:

We made a promise to her at that point.

Nadia: 36:47

You made a promise to her. I remember, and one of the I think was the first episode you said in the first episode you were working the safari park, and then you said to the elephants, I don't remember her name that you bathed the first time and you treated her differently and said, Look, I'm going to have a bath and everything. You said it totally changed your experience with her and you said that she left an elephant sized hole in your heart. So Ramba did that as well and obviously caused you to do a what? A gigantic step of commitment? A leap of faith? leaving America to go to a country that you didn't know just to save an elephant. I mean, that is, yeah, that is incredible. Remarkable.

Kat:

Well, I mean, the reality is if we didn't do it, it just would have been because it was easier not to. And that's not really a good reason.

Nadia:

Oh, so maybe it's a good time to, to wrap up this episode. And we've arrived back in the United States, but we're going to pack for episode five because then we're going to be flying back and moving to Brazil. So I think it's a, it's a good time to end the episode. And yeah, thank you again for your time. I'll say it again. I can listen to you for hours and Scott can luckily talk to us for hours, so there's lots and lots of episodes to come. So thank you very much, Kat and Scott, for your time.

Scott: 38:00

Thank you, Nadia. Once again, it's always a pleasure. And once again, we have storms rolling in at the end of the episode here, so it's a good time for a...

Kat:

I guess this is how we'll close out most of our episodes.

Nadia:

Like last time you said there's a storm coming and then suddenly you were like, gone. And Amie and I were here saying: Oh, they've gone, they've gone.

Scott: 38:14

It's gonna happen again. So we'll say an official goodbye this time and we look forward to the next episode. Nadia, thanks again.

Both Scott and Kat:

Bye

Nadia: 38:41

Okay, thank you. Bye. And thank you also to all our listeners. Join us next, send us an email, subscribe and like our podcast, and have wonderful elephant dreams. Bye.

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