



ELEPHANT AID INTERNATIONAL
One World...One Elephant at a Time

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Carol Buckley (229) 465-3115

Carol@elephantaidthinternational.org

CAROL BUCKLEY RECLAIMS HER ELEPHANT TARRA
Culmination of 10-year legal battle

ATTAPULGUS, GA, December 9, 2021: Carol Buckley has moved her elephant Tarra to Elephant Refuge North America (ERNA), an 850-acre natural habitat refuge in Attapulgus, GA. Tarra joins Bo, a 34-year-old castrated male elephant who arrived at the Refuge in September.

The Refuge, the newest elephant sanctuary in the U.S., is a project of Elephant Aid International, which Buckley founded in 2010. Buckley, an internationally recognized authority in the rescue, rehabilitation and welfare of captive-held elephants, develops innovative models for elephant care, training and handling. Her innovative methods are widely copied and adapted for a variety of captive situations in both the U.S. and Asia.

Buckley co-founded and led the nation's first natural habitat elephant sanctuary, The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee, for its first 15 years. Her management philosophy -- providing elephants autonomy, physical freedom and as natural a life as possible in captivity -- attracted international acclaim, bringing the concept of sanctuary to the public consciousness.

In 2010, Buckley was replaced as CEO. She hoped the Sanctuary would maintain the same high standards of care she set so that Tarra could remain there. But the board of directors drastically changed the Sanctuary's management philosophy and reneged on the agreement granting Buckley regular visits with Tarra.

Over the next 10 years, Buckley was allowed one brief court-ordered welfare check.

Now 47 years old, Tarra is more susceptible to progressive diseases such as arthritis and osteomyelitis [terminal bone disease] that are common in captive-held elephants who spend winter months confined in barn spaces on hard surfaces. Buckley felt it urgent to relocate Tarra before her diagnosed osteoarthritis progressed further.

On November 18, Buckley relocated Tarra to Elephant Refuge North America in Georgia. The mild climate allows the elephants to be outdoors virtually all year, exploring its varied landscape of pastures, woods, streams, ponds and a lake.

Tarra rode in a custom designed elephant transport trailer. When she and her convoy arrived at the Refuge late that night, she took two steps out of the trailer and then seemed to hesitate.

“Hey, babe, it’s me!” Carol exclaimed. Tarra immediately left the trailer, vocalizing her excitement at being reunited with her dearest friend. The two resumed the conversation that had been abruptly severed 10 years before, as though not a day had passed since they’d last spoken.

“Tarra’s wellbeing has always led my decision making for her,” said Buckley. “As she ages, we have to acknowledge and address her changing health concerns, just as with an aging human being. Given that Asian elephants can live into their seventies and even eighties, I want to keep Tarra healthy and happy for many years to come.”

Tarra joined the Refuge’s first resident, Bo, a 34-year-old castrated male elephant and retired circus performer, who arrived in September. The two quickly developed a relaxed friendship and are never too far apart in the 100-acre habitat they currently occupy, accompanied by Mala, a stray dog who chose the Refuge as her home earlier this year. Eventually the trio will have access to the Refuge’s full 850 acres.

Buckley is documenting Tarra, Bo and Mala’s daily lives in EleDiaries (<https://elephantaidthinternational.org/category/ele-diaries/>). You can also learn more about Tarra at <https://elephantaidthinternational.org/elephant-tarra>.

###

About Elephant Refuge North America (ERNA): The Refuge is a project of Elephant Aid International. Its 850 acres of lush pastures, forests, creeks and spring-fed lakes provide a natural environment in which captive-held elephants can retire and thrive.

About Elephant Aid International (EAI): Carol Buckley founded EAI, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, in 2010 to improve the lives of captive elephants worldwide. EAI enlists scientists, veterinarians, mahouts [elephant handlers] and owners in improving elephant welfare. EAI also provides education and hands-on assistance to improve elephants’ care, training and handling. Learn more at <http://elephantaidthinternational.org>.