



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

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Tarra the Elephant Celebrates 51st Birthday Elephant Refuge North America

ATTAPULGUS, GA, February 13, 2025: Elephant Refuge North America is delighted to announce the 51st birthday of its matriarch, Tarra, on February 14th! This 8-foot-tall, 9,700-pound Asian elephant has been a cherished resident of the refuge for over three years. Nestled in 850 acres of lush forest, pasture, lakes, and ponds in southernmost Georgia, the refuge provides a mild climate and natural habitat where Tarra and other elephants thrive.

Tarra was captured from the wild in 1974 in Myanmar (formerly Burma) in Southeast Asia when she was only three months old. Sold to a tire store owner in California, Tarra was kept in the back of a delivery truck on display to attract customers. Three months later, Carol Buckley, who is now the CEO and founder of Elephant Aid International, saw Tarra and volunteered to help care for the baby elephant. Soon, Carol asked to take Tarra home with her each night so they could play outside in the grass and dirt until it was time for bed. The store owner agreed. Tarra quickly befriended Carol's dog and has been delighted with dogs ever since.

Tarra embraced Carol, who bottle-fed her and used her dog-training skills to communicate with the baby elephant. Tarra was quick to learn and loved the attention. She chattered frequently to Carol, who learned how to gauge what the young elephant needed by paying attention to both her body language and varied vocalizations—barking, grunting, chirping, etc. Tarra could not get back to her elephant family in the wild, but she had found someone who wanted to understand her.

Long days on exhibit at the tire store were not healthy, mentally or physically, for Tarra, so Carol took out a loan and bought her from the store owner. She also purchased a piece of property in the Los Padres National Forest in Ojai, CA, where she and Tarra could live together. With limited options for raising an elephant in the USA in the 1970s, Carol and Tarra spent their first decade together performing at various amusement parks and circuses. They were a team traveling across the US, always stopping to explore the forests and waterways along the way.

By age ten, it was clear that Tarra deserved a different lifestyle, one with more freedom and elephant friends. Carol began to dream of creating an elephant sanctuary. For the next decade, they lived with other elephants in several different zoos, but all failed to meet the needs of such an evolved, intelligent, and self-aware animal.

So, Carol sold her home, bought land in TN, and built a barn so that Tarra could have the life she deserved, one where she would thrive. For 15 years, Tarra lived at the first elephant sanctuary that Carol founded, and life was good. Together, they welcomed 23 elephants rescued from circuses and zoos. Then, in 2010, a hostile takeover by the sanctuary board changed everything. Carol was out, and Tarra was left with a new management style that did not meet her needs. Tarra suffered and was treated with medication for anxiety and aggression. Learning this, Carol sued the sanctuary and, over a decade later, won as a jury of 12 unanimously allowed Tarra to return to the woman who had raised her. Once again, Tarra's famous chattering would be understood by her caregiver, who had thankfully built another elephant sanctuary—Elephant Refuge North America—that would be her forever home.

Now, at age 51, Tarra lives in an elephant haven on the Florida-Georgia state line with her elephant friends Bo and Mundi. The Three Amigos, as followers of the Refuge's EleCam call them, share an enormous 850-acre habitat and state-of-the-art elephant barn. Together, they explore, graze, swim, wallow, sleep, and play with dogs Mala and Samie, enjoying their best life as a close-knit herd. For more information about Tarra or to contribute to her care at the refuge, please visit <https://elephantaidthinternational.org/elephant-tarra-new/>.

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About Elephant Aid International (EAI): Elephant Aid International (EAI) is a nonprofit organization that creates innovative approaches to the care and management of elephants worldwide. We unchain elephants in Asia, teach humane methods of training and handling elephants, and provide a natural habitat refuge for retired elephants in the U.S. Learn more at <http://elephantaidthinternational.org>.