



# The Wild Side

Quarterly newsletter of  
Peace River Refuge & Ranch

July 2009  
Volume 2009 No. 3

[www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org](http://www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org)

## Goodbye to a dear friend

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### Peace River Refuge & Ranch — *A True Sanctuary*

- \* Fully licensed by state and federal authorities
- \* Accredited by the American Sanctuary Association (ASA)
- \* Recognized as a World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) *Member Society*
- \* Animals receive *lifetime care* and are never bred or exploited
- \* **Guided tours offered only twice a month by reservation**

Printed on recycled paper

We are often at a loss for words when we lose one of the rescued animals that we have loved and cared for at the sanctuary.

Yogi, the bear rescued almost 10 years ago, had to be put down last month. His hind legs finally gave out and he didn't respond to treatment.

I'm sorry if this is the first time you are hearing about this, but sometimes it is just hard to sit down and write these things.

As always, Ashley is the most articulate, so I am repeating what she posted in

her blog:

"Sitting in the sun, I cried. The decision was made and I'd helped make it. There was no other choice, no other option. The finality sunk in, the clouds rolled in and it began to rain.



I wonder at his expression until I place it... *Acceptance.*

As the cold drops sting my skin, warm tears fill my eyes until they reach the brim and flow down my cheeks and fall like the rain into the damp soil beneath me.

'He's still alive.' Is all I can think, and I feel ashamed to cry in front of him. The facts are right in front of me but are so hard to look at.

As he sits appearing content, I know he will never walk again. He quietly observes me, without worry or care, there is no confusion as for my actions. I wonder at his expression until I place it... *Acceptance.*

*(Continued on page 2)*

## New arrivals

Please join us in welcoming the two newest arrivals to the sanctuary—Buddy and Ophelia. They are native opossums that were formerly rescued by the Folke Peterson Wildlife Center in Florida.

Disabled and unable to be released, the center was planning to keep the

opossums for educational purposes.

Unfortunately, the poor economy was too much for the facility and they were forced to close their doors due to financial difficulties.



Buddy & Ophelia in their new home at Peace River

Fortunately, we had the perfect spot for them here at the sanctuary.

Now, a little bit about their natural history:

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Upcoming events

We have a few events before the end of the year that will give you the opportunity to have fun, meet other Friends of Peace River and help us to raise money to care for the animals.

**\* Saturday, August 15, 2009  
4:00pm—??**

Please join us for our first **Poker tournament**, hosted by Celtic Crossing, our local pub, located at 222 W. Main Street Wauchula, FL 33873

The food and drinks are fantastic and the environment is always exciting!

There will be raffle prizes, a silent auction and lots of fun. \$50 donation for a ticket to participate (available at the door). Please join us for a spirited evening to help the animals. Please RSVP by August 9 at [RSVP@PeaceRiverRefuge.org](mailto:RSVP@PeaceRiverRefuge.org) or call us at 863-735-0804.



Rescued wild animals eat a LOT of food!

Watch our website at [www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org](http://www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org) for more details....

**\* Saturday, December 12, 2009**

Golf Tournament:  
**Sun 'n Lake Golf and Country Club**  
5223 Sun 'n Lake Blvd.  
Sebring, FL 33872

**\* Saturday, December 19, 2009**

9th Annual  
Christmas for the Animals:  
Peace River Refuge & Ranch  
2545 Stoner Lane  
Zolfo Springs, FL 33890

## How has the economy affected the sanctuary?

As you probably suspect, the current state of the economy has had a substantial impact on the sanctuary.

This year started out with the sudden loss of the donated meat and fresh produce for the animals.

As a result of the increase in home foreclosures at the end of 2008, a bill was passed in Florida. The bill allows the grocery stores that had donated food to the animals for the past 10 years to now give that food to human charities with no risk of liability if the food is handled improperly and someone becomes ill.

As a result, we are suddenly forced to purchase food for 200 animals at full price.

This has happened at a time when donations are at an all-time low.

Since the animals receive no government funding, they rely on you, their loyal supporters to help with their care.

It costs \$2,000-\$3,000 every month to buy food for the animals, in addition to their veterinary care, habitat construction and other basic overhead expenses to operate the sanctuary.

The sanctuary does not pay salaries, so 100% of your gift goes directly to the care of the animals.

If you are able to help, we need it now more than ever. Charitable contributions may be mailed to:

Peace River Refuge & Ranch, Inc.  
PO Box 1127  
Zolfo Springs, FL 33890

Donations can also be made securely through our website at [www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org](http://www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org)

*Thank you!*

## Goodbye to a dear friend...

*(Continued from page 1)*

The rain lets up to an intermittent drizzle as we proceed with the grim task at hand.

As the injections are given the reality hits and the illogical questions of doubt arise and are dismissed internally. Respirations are counted...waiting... until they finally stop.

Unbraced for another surge of reality

I'm once again overwhelmed. Slowly, I attempt to say my goodbyes and collect myself.

I wander away leaving the door open behind me, as yet another wave of sorrow crashes down around me.

To Yogi, my final goodbye. You are sorely missed and are never forgotten. A friend for almost half my life and always willing to listen.

I apologize for not having gummy

bears on hand for your final hours and will think of you every time I eat them. - Ashley

Thank you to all of the hard-working volunteers and supporters who have helped us to care for Yogi and his friends over the years. You helped us to give Yogi an opportunity to experience sanctuary for the last part of his life.

## The effort to secure a new location continues...

When an 8,000 acre housing development was approved near the sanctuary, we realized that a fight would eventually begin.

Similar fights in other areas have shown that the animals always lose the fight and are forced to move from the property with very little notice.

We made our plan to secure the future of the animals by making a long-range commitment to move them to a new location rather than waiting until we were forced to spend money on legal battles only to prolong the inevitable.

Please help us to be proactive so that we are not backed into a corner with nowhere to go.

Although the recent economic downturn will slow this process, the housing development has been approved and construction is sure to begin as soon as the market improves.

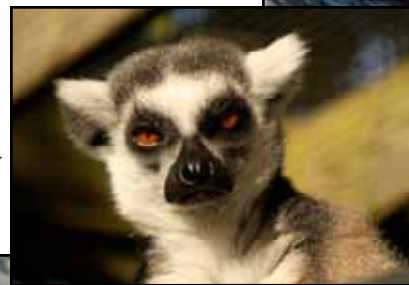
We have had our eye on a piece of privately owned land in the Ocala National Forest, one of the largest black bear habitats in the State of Florida. This land is surrounded on all four sides by thousands of acres of

Federally protected land so that there will never be a risk of human encroachment again.

Before the economic downturn, we had agreed on a price for the land, but things have not gone as smoothly as we had hoped. We are still in negotiations with the seller but the bottom line is that we still need as much of a downpayment as possible to make the purchase happen.

Once we have secured the land, it will still take us several years to completely build a facility before moving the animals.

Please help us to be proactive so that we are not backed into a corner with nowhere to go.



Your gift today will help to secure this land and the future of the animals.



## Stay up to date by visiting us on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter

How do you network?

Peace River Refuge & Ranch is on several social networking sites—You can stay in touch with us and communicate with other people who love the animals.

**Facebook:** You can show your support in two ways on Facebook, by joining our “Group” and sharing your experience with other fans and by joining our “Cause” so that you can spread the word and help us to recruit more supporters!

To become a participant in our “Group,” simply search within Facebook for “Peace River Refuge & Ranch” and you will find the group at the top of the page.

To join the “Cause”, simply visit this page: <http://apps.facebook.com/causes/119297> and sign up.

Check us out on Facebook, MySpace and Twitter!  
Help the animals—spread the word!

**MySpace:** We have a profile on MySpace that can be found at <http://www.myspace.com/peacriverrefuge>

It would be great to have you as a friend!

**Twitter:** Do you tweet? You can follow us on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/PeaceRiverRefug> (with no “e” on the end)

Of course, always remember our official website at

[www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org](http://www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org)

## New arrivals

*(Continued from page 1)*

### North America's only marsupial, the nocturnal *Virginia opossum*:

The opossum is the oldest and most primitive of mammals in North America. Fossils show that it has changed little from its ancestors that roamed 70 million years ago. At one time, it could be found throughout the continent, but for some reason, disappeared. The opossum slowly migrated back into the United States from South and Central America.

Being a marsupial, they raise their babies in a pouch. They average 9 offspring per litter. Newborn young are the size of a honeybee. After birth, they must climb through their mother's fur and find their way into the pouch to nurse.

The baby opossums will continue to grow in the pouch for 50-70 days and are weaned at 80 days.

They grow to a length of 15-20 inches and reach a weight of 8-10 pounds – about the size of an average house cat.

Opossums have a very short lifespan, living only 1-2 years in the wild. In captivity, their lifespan is still seldom

over 4 years.

A common misconception is that opossums hang upside down by their tails—their prehensile tail is used to assist in climbing and carrying small objects. Their great ability to hang upside down is the result of having opposable, clawless thumbs on their back feet.

Their body is generally grey with cream underfur and face, with a hairless, scaly tail.

Opossums have 50 teeth, more than any other North American mammal. They bare their teeth in order to make themselves appear vicious to avoid attack by a predator.

Opossums are omnivores, eating a wide variety of plants and animals including carrion, insects, other small animals, eggs, fruits, vegetables and nuts. They are not good hunters, so they eat items that are readily available.

The saying "playing 'possum" refers to the opossum's custom, when threatened, of rolling over and going into a state of shock that appears like death until the danger has passed. Scientists believe that this habit can not be controlled by the opossum, but is triggered by extreme fear.

Opossums are extremely beneficial animals. As



Ophelia



Buddy

scavengers, they help to prevent the spread of disease and are an integral part of "nature's cleanup crew."

This wouldn't be possible without your help!

## Volunteer spotlight

### Jack Whitwham, Animal Care Coordinator

first came to Peace River Refuge & Ranch as an international (British) volunteer in 2008 and has returned to fill the long term, volunteer internship position of Animal Care Coordinator at the sanctuary:

"I have had a passion for animals since a child. At college, I studied Animal Care and



Management at NVQ Level 2 and BTEC First Diploma, which lead me to work for a branch of the R.S.P.C.A. I did so for 2 years and achieved supervisory status and head of the cattery department. I am now currently looking to further my skills, working with more exotic animals and have a particular interest in endangered species and conservation. I am no stranger to hard work, long

hours and working outdoors in all conditions. I am ambitious and want to help and further my experience and knowledge within the animal welfare industry. " - Jack

We were so pleased with Jack's performance and skill set that we offered him the opportunity to stay with us for as long as his visa will allow him to remain in the US as a volunteer.

Please join us in welcoming Jack to the Peace River Family!

**Yes!! I will help!!**

I know the need is great and I want to support the animals at Peace River Refuge & Ranch

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I am enclosing my tax-deductible donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

-OR-

\_\_\_\_\_ Please charge my Visa\_\_\_ or MasterCard\_\_\_ in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

My card number is: \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_

Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Please send instructions for me to set up regular monthly gifts from my bank account or credit card

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**The animals can count on me!!**

## Why doesn't the sanctuary have regular visiting hours?

As a true accredited sanctuary, our concern for the well being of the animals must always come first.

As many of you already know, most of the animals at the sanctuary have suffered at the hands of humans before their arrival here.

As a result, it is not in line with the definition of 'sanctuary' if we allow our need for funding to override the right that the animals here have to a stress-free environment.

The compromise that we have found

If you would like to visit the sanctuary, please call us at 863-735-0804 or contact us through the website at [www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org](http://www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org) to schedule a guided tour

is to offer exclusive guided tours twice a month, led by one of our founders.

By limiting the frequency of tours and ensuring that the people are accompanied by someone that the animals all know and trust, we can satisfy everyone.

We are still mindful of the privacy that the animals require and the animals are confident that all of the strangers will maintain a respectful distance because they are with someone they have grown to trust.

We request a minimum donation of \$15 per person for a 2-hour guided tour, to help with the care of the animals.

The more notice you give, the more likely we are to be able to accommodate your requested date. To request a tour, contact us at 863-735-0804 or through our website [www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org](http://www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org)

## On any given day, there are almost 200 animals at Peace River Refuge & Ranch Here's how your donations help with their care:

- \$ 25 buys monkey biscuits for all of the primates for five days
- \$ 75 feeds the fruit bats for a day
- \$200 provides glucosamine supplements for all of the arthritic animals
- \$1,000 pays for the care of all of the animals for one day
- \$5,000 feeds a tiger for a year

**Peace River Refuge & Ranch**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

PO Box 1127

Zolfo Springs, FL 33890-1127



## The Wild Side

**Peace River Refuge & Ranch**  
PO Box 1127 - 2545 Stoner Lane  
Zolfo Springs, FL 33890

Phone: 863-735-0804

Fax: 863-735-0805

E-mail: [info@PeaceRiverRefuge.org](mailto:info@PeaceRiverRefuge.org)

Nonprofit wild animal sanctuary  
and educational facility



Dear Friends,

Your continued, caring support has allowed us to provide lifetime care to so many animals in need. From opossums that were injured and cannot be released to monkeys retired from research labs, they now have room to roam and a wonderful sanctuary to call home.

With the economy in its current state, we need your continued support more than ever. Please share this newsletter with a friend and help us to increase the number of sanctuary friends to ensure that the animals continue to receive the level of care they deserve.

*Happy Summer!*

Lisa Stoner, VP  
Peace River Refuge & Ranch

