



# The Wild Side

Quarterly newsletter of  
Peace River Refuge & Ranch  
*Forest Animal Rescue*

April 2012  
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[www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org](http://www.PeaceRiverRefuge.org)

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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)
- \* Animals receive *lifetime care* and are never bred or exploited
- \* **Guided tours offered only twice a month by reservation**



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## How did the sanctuary begin so many years ago?

My husband, Kurt and I founded the sanctuary in 1998, almost 14 years ago, and this has been one of the most common questions.

Kurt and I had been friends for 10 years before we became romantically involved, were married, and moved to south Florida in 1993. We each had extensive backgrounds working with wild animals and had one primary thing in common...in our younger years, we had both worked and volunteered at a variety of places ranging from vet clinics, zoos and grooming salons to rehabilitation facilities and almost any place that cared for animals.

We also shared the same experience that in order for a place to truly do what we

thought was the right thing; they seldom made enough money to afford to pay employees. As a result, we had both

decided to follow career paths unrelated to animals to earn a living and have volunteered our time with animals.

My education and experience is in finance and business management, self-employed for most of my life. Kurt's background is also as a business owner with the bulk of

his career in car and boat repair and painting. These careers paid the bills but were never enough for either one of us to feel truly happy.

In 1998, we were living in South Florida with two young daughters. We had been

*(Continued on page 3)*



## Progress report: Moving the sanctuary to Marion County

When a huge housing development was approved near the sanctuary, we realized that a fight would eventually begin and we would be forced to move.

We made our plan to secure the future of the animals by making a commitment to move them to a new location sooner, rather than waiting until we were forced to spend money on legal battles only to prolong the inevitable. We could stand and fight, but the animals would be destroyed in the end.

We have acquired a beautiful 80-acre piece of land in the Ocala National Forest, surrounded on three sides by Federally protected land. The animals will never be at risk of losing their home to development again.

It will take a lot of manpower and funding to complete the construction and move the animals, but with your help, we are confident that we can accomplish the move

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Alternative Break volunteers

This season was another very productive one for the sanctuary.

We had four separate colleges come to volunteer with us as Alternative Break projects.

Students from Ohio State University, University of Maine, Eastern Michigan University and Wake Forest University came to the sanctuary and

They signed pledges that they would be on their best behavior (no drinking and partying) - and they worked *very hard*.

Instead of spending their spring break hanging around with friends and relaxing, these hard-working students chose to volunteer to help the animals.

They cleared fence lines and fire breaks and helped to install over a half mile of 8' tall perimeter fence.

With help like this, our construction will keep moving ahead at a wonderful pace.

What a great bunch of volunteers!



helped with construction at our new property in Marion County.

They made new friends within their groups through their Alternative Break programs.



*Thank you!*

## Caregiver Spotlight: Alison

At the sanctuary, we have an extremely limited budget. We cannot afford to have a paid staff and instead rely on our fantastic volunteer base and regular college interns. Once in a while, one person stands out in the crowd and we would like to recognize Alison, our current intern from Lees-McRae College in North Carolina.

Alison graduated with a degree in Wildlife Biology last year and has been with us through the changing

weather and changing volunteer base. She has been a trooper, taking everything in stride—even the basic insanity surrounding most of the management staff travelling back and forth between two properties almost 4 hours apart to continue with construction.



Ali maintains the animal care to our high standards even when the days are long and hot.

She has stepped up to the challenge without missing a beat. Ali is a fantastic worker, a great supervisor for our volunteers and a pleasure to be around.

Thank you Alison for being such a great team player and always being here for the animals!!



## How did the sanctuary begin so many years ago? (continued)

*(Continued from page 1)*

volunteering for various wildlife facilities, rehabilitating and releasing native wildlife out of our house in the suburbs. One wildlife facility that we had been helping, teaching the owner how to provide better care for his animals on a limited budget, was responsible for the series of events that led to the inspiration for the sanctuary.

This facility was located on ¼ acre on the Seminole Indian Reservation. The owner meant well but his attempts to take in non-releasable abandoned animals while paying the bills as a tourist attraction were failing. He needed help and we agreed to offer animal care and business management advice to help improve the quality of life for the animals in his care. At the same time, we would show him how to increase his cash flow to continue to improve his facility. The primary requirement was that he had to stop taking in attempted exotic pets that failed and were dropped off by members of the public.

Unfortunately, there was little we could do about his decision to be open to the public because it was his only livelihood and he knew nothing else at that point. His heart was in the right place so that was a good place to begin. Most of the animals on his property were failed attempted pets, dropped off on his doorstep. Others were confiscated by authorities and placed with him because he had all the proper licensing to keep them. At least he was not breeding or selling the animals.

We offered our assistance and he thankfully accepted it. The golden rule was that he had to *stop* accepting new animals; he agreed.

We showed him that by spaying and neutering his cougars and bobcats, he could connect existing habitats and

allow the animals to play with others of their own kind. They would all have more room to live on his cramped, ¼ acre property without requiring completely new construction.



We demonstrated that by deworming the animals and improving their routine veterinary care, they would require less food to maintain body weight and they would be healthier in the long run.

With enrichment, toys and things to do, they would be happier. He quickly learned that with the animals content, playing and in improved health, visitors would pay to see his facility and would return with friends because it was a positive experience.

He was still open to the public, but the animals did wind up with a much-improved quality of life in a non-breeding setting. His bottom line improved, but most importantly, the animals in his care benefitted.

One day he broke the golden rule....he accepted a tiger cub that was dropped off at his office. The cub came from a so-called "sanctuary" that was breeding for white tigers. When the

cub was born orange in color he was to be killed unless they could give him away. This little 25lb cub was named Zulu.

Zulu had no habitat to live in, so he ran around the concrete-floored gift shop, biting tourists on the ankles.

On the Indian Reservation, there were no lawsuits resulting from his play-induced injuries, but this obviously was not a long-term solution.

The man took Zulu home with him at night. One evening when Zulu was allowed to run in the horse pasture...his son accidentally let the horse out of the barn....

Of course the little tiger thought he was a big tiger and grabbed the horse by the leg. The resulting kick injured him badly.

Our phone rang. Zulu was severely injured and the man knew he couldn't afford major vet bills – he was planning to shoot him. Of course, the reason why he called us is because he knew we were "suckers" ...we agreed to pay the vet bills. We picked him up and took him to the vet. After a complete exam it was determined that the little tiger had a fractured hip and needed restricted exercise for a few months on a soft surface while he healed.

The facility had nowhere to restrict his exercise and no soft surface for him to live on. With our experience with wild animals we qualified for a permit from the State of Florida to keep Zulu in an empty bedroom in our house until he weighed 40 pounds or reached 6 months of age. That would give him enough time to heal.

We had two kids in the house...the *last* thing we needed was a *tiger* in the house! At least he was small and the arrangement was temporary!

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## Progress report: Moving the sanctuary to Marion County (continued)

(Continued from page 1)

before the population increase will pose a threat to the sanctuary where it is now. We are over halfway there.

All of our zoning and wildlife permits are in place and we are working with U.S. Forest Service to ensure that we make the most ecologically sound decisions as we proceed.

The management plan for this piece of property includes habitat restoration and the

removal of one type of pine—sand pine. All of the hardwoods and the three other varieties of pine trees will remain, but we have learned that the sand pine has such a poor root system that they will fall in a windstorm, potentially hurting animals or damaging enclosures.

Fortunately, the land is so heavily wooded that the selective removal of

sand pines will not change the lush landscape. The empty spaces left by the trees that have been removed are filling in almost as fast as we are taking the trees out.

Tree removal is one step to the construction process, we also need to clear brush and fallen trees to reduce the risk of wildfire. We are clearing fire breaks around the property and making steady

progress with the construction of the 8' perimeter fence and habitats.

We still need your help to finish building as quickly as possible so that we can move the animals to safety and sell the old land before the expense of carrying two properties overwhelms our tight budget or the

population around us increases enough around us to pose a threat.

*Your gift now will help to ensure a lifetime of protection for all of the animals at the sanctuary.*



**As long as we continue to make steady progress, we will meet our goal and the animals will be safe**

***Please donate today.***

Charitable contributions may be mailed to:

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

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

## 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 “liking” our Page, 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!

Our Facebook Page is located at <http://www.Facebook.com/peacriver>

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

**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)

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



## Would you like to be a Charter Member?

We are launching our new “Charter Member” program! As the move to our new location grows near, you can be an instrumental part in making the move happen.

With this new membership program you will receive exclusive *members only* benefits. For a \$200 per person or \$350 for a family (two legal guardians and their minor children) each year you can become a *Charter Member*.

Each member will receive a tour pass to visit the animals at their current location in Zolfo Springs and receive a personal invitation to any events that we have.



**As long as we continue to make steady progress, we will meet our goal and the animals will be safe**

There will be exclusive opportunities to visit the new location to watch the construction as it happens and you will be on the mailing list for our ribbon-cutting event when the sanctuary completes the move!

You will watch first hand as the wild, native land becomes a beautiful habitat for rescued wildlife as well as the native wildlife already there.

To become a charter member, simply include a note with your donation to indicate that you wish to be a charter member and be sure we have the name(s) of the family members to include in our member roster.

We look forward to meeting you!

## Lasting gifts...easy yet so valuable to the animals

There are two ways to make valuable, lasting gifts to the animals; through our Monthly Giving program and our Legacy Society.

With the *Monthly Giving* program, you can painlessly give as little as \$10 a month to care for the animals automatically. This allows us to budget for their care and plan ahead much more effectively.

We will track your donations and issue a receipt at the end of the year for income tax purposes.

Your gifts can be made automatically through your employer's payroll deduction, recurring payments you direct through your bank, or you can set it up to process on a credit card at Razoo.com (<http://razoo.com/story/Peace-River-Refuge-And-Ranch>) - alternatively, you can simply mail a check every month, but that costs more in postage and time.

Even if you can't afford to help now, you can always make a planned gift. Peace River Refuge & Ranch honors every planned gift donor with a



membership in the *Legacy Society*—but we can't honor you with this if you don't tell us!

This society is created exclusively to honor and recognize people who have helped to continue our lifesaving work through a gift to Peace

River Refuge & Ranch in their wills, estate plans or trusts.

As a Legacy Society member, you will receive a certificate of appreciation

and a Legacy Society lapel pin to serve as a reminder to others of your support of our mission.

Your gift can be recognized publicly, unless you prefer to remain anonymous.

If you have already arranged for a bequest or other planned gift, please notify us and become a member.

If you are still considering such a gift, please let us know so we can help you and your advisors complete your gift in a way that benefits your estate and makes clear your intention to help Peace River Refuge & Ranch. You can call us at 863-735-0804 or email [development@peaceriverrefuge.org](mailto:development@peaceriverrefuge.org)

Whether you participate in the monthly giving program or become a member of the Legacy Society, you demonstrate your commitment to the prevention of cruelty to animals. By helping to ensure the long-term strength of Peace River Refuge & Ranch you are instrumental in providing lifetime care to all of the animals at the sanctuary.

## How did the sanctuary begin so many years ago? (continued)

*(Continued from page 3)*

A few months passed and Zulu healed. As agreed, we took him back to the Indian Reservation. They had a temporary habitat built for him, but nothing nearly sufficient for him to live in as an adult tiger. We knew that once Zulu grew to full size it would cost \$5,000 a year just for meat to feed him. The math just didn't work, there was no way they could afford Zulu's care for long.

In addition to Zulu's predicament, there were upcoming changes to the captive wildlife laws that were going to leave countless attempted exotic pets with nowhere to go.

We have never figured out whose idea it was, but we decided to sell our house and everything we owned and start a sanctuary to give Zulu and other wild animals in need a permanent home. I guess the plight of this little tiger had a profound impact on both of us.

We bought 70 acres of land in Hardee County and started construction. Staying in tents, travel trailers, and a small rented house, we managed to get it off the ground... Word spread that we were rescuing animals and they started pouring in – even faster than we expected. Animal habitats were built first; 3½ years later we were able to have a house for ourselves again.

We had just finished the first tiger habitat when the phone rang again...the facility on the Indian

Reservation could no longer afford to care for Zulu and he would be destroyed if they couldn't find a home for him. Fortunately, we had our permits in place and were able to take him.

It had been over 18 months since we had last seen Zulu but when he first



saw us it was obvious that he remembered who we were. It was heartwarming to know that he was so happy to see us.

Tigers are dangerous wild animals, even when raised by people from cubs. No matter how much Zulu cared for us and vice-versa, we knew better than to try to make him something he was not. Zulu was put into a habitat with another young tiger (Blizzard) and we stayed out. Just because some tigers seem friendly to us doesn't mean they are not potentially dangerous; they are simply too strong and wild to be handled safely. The best way for us to show our love for them is to respect their capabilities and guarantee their safety by

ensuring that they are never given the opportunity to harm someone.

As Zulu grew, his pelvic fracture as a cub caused some complications. He became impacted and had emergency surgery at the University of Florida Veterinary Medicine Teaching Hospital. They removed his large intestine because the opening in his pelvis was too narrow. They passed his small intestine through that opening and reattached everything. It saved his life and made him "famous" in the veterinary journals.

Zulu lived a full life in spite of his injuries as a cub. Countless students from the University of Florida have contacted us over the years, doing case studies on Zulu. They are all amazed that he lived a healthy, uncomplicated life at the sanctuary after that procedure – thanks to the careful attention to nutrition, exercise, and care at our sanctuary.

It was a sad day last year when we suddenly lost Zulu to cardiac arrest. His loss was unexpected because although he was 16 years old, he was otherwise in very good health. We had planned another huge habitat for him at our future location in the Ocala National Forest and were looking forward to seeing him enjoy it. I guess some things are not meant to be.

Zulu will always hold a special place in our hearts. All of the other rescued animals at the sanctuary have Zulu to thank for his inspiration to start the sanctuary.

## Our website was hacked

We had been working to redesign our website and before we had the opportunity to add all of our content, our site was hacked. I have had to take it down and start from scratch. Please stay tuned; I will be adding tons of new content in the next several weeks.

You can still read basic information about us, sign up for our email updates, read past newsletters, donate and contact us through the website. Unfortunately all of our animal biographies and other news stories need to be rewritten.

You can still see photos of the animals and stay in touch through our Facebook page at

<http://www.Facebook.com/peacerriver>

Apr 2012

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

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: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 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 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 to ensure complete nutrition for all of the primates for five days
- **\$ 75** provides the fruit bats with the fresh fruit that they need for a day
- **\$200** provides glucosamine supplements for all of the arthritic animals to ensure their comfort
- **\$1,000** pays for the loving care of all of the animals for one day
- **\$5,000** feeds a tiger for an entire year

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## Peace River Refuge & Ranch

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Zolfo Springs, FL 33890-1127

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## The Wild Side

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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,

I apologize for the sparse newsletters lately. We have been building to move and funds have been so tight that it has been difficult to put it together.

You mean the world to us and we want to stay in touch.

Even with all of this chaos, if you ever have a question or would like more information about the sanctuary or an animal that we have rescued, please feel free to call or email me personally. I would love to chat with you.

We couldn't rescue and care for so many animals without you and we are committed to keeping you informed on all of our milestones.

*Happy Summer!*

Lisa Stoner, VP  
Peace River Refuge & Ranch

