



Animal kingdom in our backyard

RANCH SANCTUARY FOR EXOTIC ANIMALS

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It's no ordinary backyard.

Instead of tree houses and flower gardens, sheep and llama graze on tall grass, flamingos nap in the shade and Hawaiian hawks perch on loose tree branches.

Founded in 1998, the Three Ring Ranch Exotic Animal Sanctuary is located on five acres above Kailua View Estates in Keaolani Subdivision. Its owners, Drs. Ann and Norman Goody, began the sanctuary with five exotic animals, plus some sheep and chickens. They now have about 80 animals, ranging from zebra and oryx to Hawaiian owls and hawks.



Ann Goody speaks passionately about all the animals under her care at Three Ring Ranch Exotic Animal Sanctuary, including this spur thigh tortoise which suffers from a shell abnormality due to improper feeding by the reptile's former owner.

While some animals, particularly the native birds, are treated and released after injury, many are illegal in Hawaii and become Three Ring Ranch residents, such as Oreo, Zoe and Tootsie, plains zebras who have lived at the ranch since its creation.

There's such a tremendous need, especially for the injured animals, Goody said. Three Ring Ranch is the only sanctuary in Hawaii accredited by the American Association of Sanctuaries, and one of only 49 facilities in the United States to have earned this distinction. It is for this reason that several of their animal visitors and residents come from other islands, as well as the Honolulu Zoo.

"We're the place that the old, crippled and blind animals are brought to," Goody said. "We provide a lifelong home for them, as close to their natural environment as possible."

Every animal is screened and discussed before being accepted, and each animal is thoroughly researched.

"We don't assume to know everything about each animal," Goody said. "And we want to ensure that we are the place for them -- that there's not another place where they would benefit more."

Breeding is not done at the ranch, unless it's a rare or endangered species, and they are asked by government authorities, Goody said. "Why breed another animal into captivity. There's no reason for it."

The sanctuary has a "hospital" where the injured animals are treated and rehabbed, and area veterinarians offer their services when needed. The community support is wonderful, from individual donations to group collections, Goody said.

Initially funded by the Goody's, money now comes from grants and donations. The ranch does not receive monetary compensation for animals taken in and they are a 501(c)3 organization, Goody said.

Despite community support and enthusiasm, Goody said they are having problems with some residents and have recently placed their property on the market. While they are hoping to relocate to another area on the Big Island, Goody said if they can not find a place, they will pack up their animals and move to the mainland. However, she hopes this does not happen.

The ranch's main mission is education, Goody said. Goody visits local schools and teaches a series of classes, bringing the animals with her at times. The final lecture is given at the sanctuary, as the children walk through and see the animals.

"Animals speak to us through their movements. It's not magic -- it's understanding," she said. "Anyone can learn how to do it."

The ranch works with University of California at Berkeley and UC Davis veterinarian students through internship programs.

Stephanie Wan, a third-year veterinarian student, said she's had a wonderful experience with the animals this summer.

"Ann's a great teacher. It's so different from classroom learning -- this is very hands-on. You get to actually see the animals," Wan said.

And that is the point of the ranch -- to teach children and young people the nature of wild creatures, while also learning compassion when working with the injured animals, Goody said.

"It's not who they think I am. It's about what you do with what you have," she said. "It's measured by what you've done, for all those you leave behind walking on two legs and on four."