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Picture Books

Just for Elephants
Carol Buckley
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Pachyderms are known for their memory, but the welcome of a new member of a elephant sanctuary herd came as a tender surprise.

Shirley lived at a zoo for twenty-three years after a broken leg rendered her unable to do circus tricks. When she arrived at the 2,700-acre natural habitat refuge for elephants in Hohenwald, Tennessee, the sanctuary owners knew that it might take time for her to enjoy her new freedom and to bond with the other females. Almost immediately, there was a joyful reunion between Shirley and Jenny, who had been a baby in the same circus decades earlier. Their joyful recognition is emotional for the elephants and readers as they trumpet and cry big elephant tears. Jenny introduces her old friend to tromping without shackles around the refuge, and the pleasures of elephant games in a swimming hole.

"When they met up with other elephants, they shared excited trumpet calls and gentle touching with their trunks. Everyone welcomed the newcomer into the family," Buckley writes.

Told by one of the sanctuary's owners, the book promotes, without preaching, the importance of giving elephants freedom in their "retirement" or after rescue from abuse—or better yet, life in the wild. After years of living chained or caged, sanctuary elephants are able to roam freely, enjoying each other's company, mud holes, and exploring fields and ponds.

The delightful photographs offer texture and insight: close-ups of wrinkly, rough skin and an eye, or of pachyderm behavior (trunks entwined; elephants walking or enjoying a group nap).

Buckley is the author of *Travels with Tarra*, named a *Smithsonian* Notable Book for Children, about another refuge resident, and for thirty-two years has cared for elephants.

She skillfully builds appreciation for the intelligence and bonds within elephant society, especially when these magnificent creatures are allowed to enjoy liberty, rather than captivity. This is a book for the whole family to enjoy.

Linda Salisbury