



# **Tarra & Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends**

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Best friends come in all shapes and sizes! After retiring from the circus, Tarra became the first resident of the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. When other elephants moved in and developed close friendships, only Tarra remained independent? until the day she met a stray mixed-breed dog named Bella.

It was love at first sight as this unlikely duo became inseparable. They ate together, slept together, and even understood each other's language. And when Bella suffered a severe spinal injury, Tarra stayed by her side and was there for her until Bella regained her health.

Brilliant color photographs of Tarra and Bella at home in the Elephant Sanctuary deftly illustrate this inspiring story of companionship, and an informative note about the Sanctuary provides a great resource for parents and teachers.

## **Tarra & Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends Details**

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**Carol Buckley**

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# From Reader Review Tarra & Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends for online ebook

Eva Leger says

I need stories like this. Sometimes I hear stories that make me want to lose faith. And sometimes I find a story like this.

I couldn't stop thinking the last few nights about an article I read about a "woman" who, because of anger towards her boyfriend, picked up his puppy and threw him or her out of a second story window. The dog didn't live. I suppose that was a blessing in itself. The boyfriend? Was he furious? Did he want the person responsible locked up? Punished? No. "She didn't mean it." That hurts. And I volunteer a lot of my (and my daughters) time to animal rescue. Dog rescue for the most part. We've seen a lot that hurts.

So every once in awhile, when I'm really hitting bottom I need a story like this. One where a *good* cry is called for. Whether it involved human and animals or only one - doesn't matter. This happens to involved both.

I remembered this title the other day (the day after reading the article mentioned above) and I ordered it from my library along with Owen & Mzee: The True Story Of A Remarkable Friendship which I'd heard of awhile back and just hadn't ordered. Turns out this was sitting at my library so I didn't have to wait for it to be moved. Good thing.

How can people be so violent and angry and evil and animals be so pure and loving and giving? Aren't we supposed to be the evolved? The smartest? I think we're fooling ourselves.

This story is about Tarra, a retired show elephant (don't get me started) and Bella, a stray dog. One can only wonder and guess what their lives before finding each other were like. IMO it's safe to assume both most likely met with horrors like most of us will never know.

Bella wanders onto the TN. reserve that Tarra lives on and even though Tarra is somewhat of a loner (she didn't pair with a friend like the other elephants), after she wakes up to find this tiny (to her) dog sleeping with her, they become best friends. Literally.

Tarra and Bella ate and drank together, they played together, they slept together.

Tarra didn't move from one spot where Bella was found hurt for *two days*, waiting for her friend to come back. How many of us would give up two full days for a best friend? After the two days Tarra went straight to where Bella was resting (after having a vet visit and the vet finding a spinal injury). The caretakers say Tarra had no way of knowing where Bella had been taken. I can believe that so easily.

With Bella barking and wiggling to get outside and Tarra outside making her elephant noises, the overwhelmingly caring people picked Bella up and *carried her outside*. To see her friend. The pictures show a man carrying Bella, setting her down gently, supporting her so she could keep on her feet... and Tarra. Tarra gently nosing her trunk along Bella's body. Like she was checking her, or hugging her.

Every day after that the ritual was performed until Bella was healthy enough to go back to her friend.

Imagine an *elephant*, and a *dog*, standing next to one another. Taking a walk together. Playing in water together. That's what you see here. And I can't understand why we can't be more like them. It hurts so bad that these animals have so much to teach us and most of us aren't listening. It hurts so bad that these animals want only love and basic care, if that, and nothing more yet so many people can't seem to give this to them. Why?

The people who opened and run this reserve are heroes. Much more so than any football player, golfer, rapper, singer, etc. If there's anyone *I* want to be like, or want my daughter to make her idol, it's these people. It's the man in the pictures who was so clearly gentle with Bella. It's the person who made the reserve possible in the first place. It's the person who made the choice *not* to keep the strays from wandering onto their property. What if they had? Bella and Tarra would have never met. Tarra would possibly have never known her best friend. Bella would have died, last October (probably much, much sooner without the care

she received at the reserve), still a stray, still unloved by animals and people alike.

The book gives a website - [www.elephants.com](http://www.elephants.com) - I can't say how much I recommend visiting that site. There are numerous ways to donate (guess how much it costs to feed an elephant for a day?) and there is so, so much more. Visitors can donate in Bella's honor which is a beautiful, beautiful gesture.

When we finished the book Julia asked me if Tarra and Bella were still alive and together. We went to the website and the first thing my eyes fell on was Bella's death date. My eyes instantly welled up, Julia saw me and hers did the same. She knows Tarra is alive and well and she knows Bella is in heaven waiting for her best friend. But she just couldn't understand how sad Tarra must be without her best friend.

It's a terribly hard thing to see your child cry. Yet I can honestly say I hope Julia never sees the day where she wouldn't cry over something like this.

Bella was a beautiful dog and Tarra is a beautiful elephant. The people shown and talked about are beautiful people. (The type of beautiful that actually count for something.) All of that equals a very beautiful story that I wouldn't recommend missing.

**\*\*Parents/guardians/teacher/etc.** - The end of the story does **not** end with Bella dying. In fact, as this was written in 2009 and Bella didn't pass away until October of 2011, it ends with 'Today, Bella and Tarra can be found walking through the woods..... They are truly forever best friends.'

Even a very, very young child stands to gain so much from these pictures and this story, not to mention the people and the *animals*.

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## **Dolly says**

This is a very nice tale about an elephant and a dog who became the best of friends. The story is very similar in many ways to the "Owen and Mzee" tale, of course with other animals. And the photography, story and information about the elephant sanctuary are from the founding director and CEO of the sanctuary, so I'm sure it's a bit of an effort to advertise her pet project.

But to be fair, it's a heartwarming tale and our girls really enjoyed hearing it. They also enjoyed hearing about the different kinds of elephants at the sanctuary, different characteristics and their preferred foods. And they thought it was very interesting that they are all females! We've read this book a couple of times.

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## **Cheryl says**

Tarra was the first resident at the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. Other elephants soon arrived and they formed friendships. But Tarra remained alone and lonely until the arrival of Bella the dog. Thus began an inseparable relationship. This true story of a remarkable friendship will touch your heart and the hearts of young readers.

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## **Amy says**

This book tells such a sweet story, and the photographs are beautiful! My niece enjoyed this story more than my nephew did, but surprisingly, neither kid seemed too emotionally invested. I think the kids *\*liked\** this book, but I think their reactions to it were less enthusiastic than I expected. I really thought that my niece

would just love this book, but I was much more swept up by the warm-fuzzy factor than she was. My niece spent most of the story wondering how the friendship between this elephant and dog was going to "break," (who knew she was so cynical?), and my nephew spent most of the story wondering when the elephant was going to step on the dog.

Still, the reactions of my niece and nephew aside, this is a lovely book that tells about a wonderful interspecies friendship/companionship. I really think that sensitive children would enjoy this story, and I think it could work well in a classroom setting, too.

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### **Ann says**

I made it about 75% of the way through this book before I had to grab a metaphorical tissue. :)

This is a wonderful (true) example of finding friendship in the most unexpected places. I love the sincere and unbreakable bond between Elephant and Dog - their loyalty is truly something to aspire to.

The book chronicles the elephant's (Tara) arrival to the sanctuary, her part in introducing new elephants to the sanctuary and how she never gets her one best friend. Until the sweet dog, Bella, shows up and then they are forever together.

Until Bella gets sick (and yes, this is the tissue part) because Tarra stays with Bella until the keepers find and take Bella to get better.

Even then, Tarra's loyalty shines through, and the bond between Tarra and Bella never falters.

As far as prose, I didn't find anything exceptional here, but the pictures were quite beautiful in illustrating the story.

Definitely recommended! And, though this book definitely tugs at the heart, it's in a good way and the book will leave you with a smile.

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Thanks for the recommendation, Katie!

I actually just saw a segment about Tarra and Bella on Oprah last week! lol! They looked so adorable and there was this very touching bit about when the dog (Bella, or Tarra?) was house-bound for a while. Sniffle! I hope you can find this at the library, if not, I'll have to find it on Amazon:)

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### **Lauren M says**

So cute,I have to say it was an amazing story

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### **Tracy The Great says**

I think it is a good book and i think it such an inspiring book and i recommend it to anybody who loves animal friendships

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## **Brenda says**

I want to read this book everyday. The true story of an older nurturing elephant who lives on an elephant reserve in Tennessee is charming enough. But add to that a stray, chubby dog named Bella who is adopted by Tarra. They play together, "chatter" and take advantage of the "meals on wheels" service that is available to them....until the day that Bella is badly hurt. The story is a fascinating story of animal emotions and strange friendship. The photos look as if someone has followed these two around lovingly capturing every delightful moment.

This is a wonderful way to start a unit on nature, or friendship or even loss (don't worry Bella lives - but Tarra is lonely for a few days).

I highly recommend this picture book

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## **Mischenko says**

See my Q&A including updates with Carol Buckley and learn more about Tarra at [www.readrantrockandroll.com](http://www.readrantrockandroll.com)

*Tarra & Bella: The Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends* by Carol Buckley is the touching story about an unlikely animal friendship between Tarra the elephant, and Bella the dog at the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee.

The story itself is so heartwarming, but the added photographs of Tarra & Bella make it one of the best animal friendship books we've read.

After reading about Tarra & Bella, we headed over to [www.elephants.com](http://www.elephants.com) to take a look at the live Elecam video feed. Children can view the elephants at the Elephant Sanctuary in real time.

Even though this book came out in 2009, it's one of our favorite children's books in 2017.

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## **Michele Knott says**

This story of an unlikely friendship will for sure go straight to your heart!

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## **Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says**

Tarra was a roller-skating elephant in the circus, in a movie, and on television. Finally, she was retired and taken to live in a sanctuary for elephants in Tennessee. Usually, an elephant will befriend another elephant, but Tarra did not make a friend there for a long time. One day, however, she met Bella and, unexpectedly, the two became best friends.

The text is simple and easy to understand. The book is illustrated with photographs of Tarra and Bella.

A little:

“Bella was rushed to the animal hospital, where the vets said she had a spinal cord injury. No one knew if Bella would ever walk again, but they took Bella home and made her comfortable in the heated office above the elephant barn while they tried to nurse her back to help. Through a large window Bella watched longingly as the elephants played outside. Meanwhile, for two full days, Tarra remained standing at the exact spot where Bella had been found, waiting for Bella to return.”

Children’s comments:

One child said, "I like how a little bitty animal and a big animal are friends." Another child said she liked how loving the pictures are. Both boys and girls liked this book. Most gave it a five, but a few thought it was a three.

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## **Kathryn says**

I love elephants! I love dogs! And I really, really liked this book! It tells the sweet, resilient friendship of two unlikely companions.

Terra is a retired show elephant, who starred in such films as "Annie" She was the first elephant at the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. And she was very welcoming to all the other elephants that arrived as the sanctuary expanded. But, while the other elephants formed bonds with one another, Tarra didn't have that one special soul-mate. Until one day Bella found her! Bella is one of the many stray dogs that live at the sanctuary. Usually, the elephants and dogs avoided one another but Bella and Tarra quickly became inseparable.

This book, written by Elephant Sanctuary co-founder Carol Buckley, is more a factual story than a feat of storytelling but it's very touching, none the less. The photographs are similarly nothing artistically remarkable but as they feature an elephant and a dog as best buddies who cares!? They're wonderful! ;-) I would have been very nervous at one point if my sister hadn't read this first and assured me it wouldn't end with me balling my eyes out in sorrow. Still, it's a very touching story and I wish that people who don't believe animals have emotions or intelligence would open their minds and hearts read this book!!!

The back of the book contains information about the Elephant Sanctuary. It sounds (and looks) like a wonderful place; of course, the author is a little biased but it does seem their intentions are good and that the elephants (all retired from performing, etc.) are happy there, allowed to truly be elephants for the first time in their lives. I've been to a similar facility locally and it was a bit sad but they didn't have nearly the space this place has. Interested readers can learn more about the Sanctuary on the website which also has an "EleCam" so you can watch the elephants 24/7! :-)

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## **Peacegal says**

This is a delightful children’s book on the subject of an inter-species friendship between Tarra, an Asian elephant at Tennessee’s Elephant Sanctuary, and Bella, a mixed-breed stray dog who showed up on the

property. Despite their obvious differences, the two became fast friends.

The full-color photographs do a great job in study of perspective. We get to see how truly massive the elephant is in relation to the little dog—and how gentle she must be in order to look after Bella.

A section in the back, geared toward adults, explains the purpose and mission of the Elephant Sanctuary and directs readers to websites for further information.

This book would be an excellent read-aloud choice for a humane education presentation.

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### **Cris Ingram says**

A retired circus elephant befriends a stray dog in the elephant sanctuary. They become best friends and inseparable . The photographs are good and the two are so cute together.

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### **Laura says**

Good story about how a dog became friends with an elephant. I liked it a lot!

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