

Animal lover opens her backyard to unwanted

By GRETTEL C. KOVACH
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A zebra with golden stripes and blue eyes runs and plays in the hills above Kailua-Kona with her African-born mother and three-month old sister.

Zoe's playmates at Hawaii's only exotic animal sanctuary include oryx, including a grumpy gal named "Mama" who broke off one of her long thin horns in an attack, flamingos, a one-winged Hawaiian owl and a parrot recovering from mental illness.

The sanctuary's name, Three Ring Ranch, started as a joke about 18 months ago when endangered or exotic animals and misfit pets who began moving in to Ann Goody's backyard. Now, Goody said, "life's always a circus around our house." Especially since a baby heron named "Ugly" moved in, waking her husband at 2 a.m. with loud squawks for a meal of fish laced with vitamins.

Goody said she's worked with animals her

entire life, and as a child in California she always had a garage full of cages with animals others didn't want. "But the sanctuary evolved from something I love to do to something I needed to do. There wasn't another place for the animals," she said.

The animals come from across the state, many from resorts or wildlife parks that closed, she said. It was time-consuming and difficult to convince state authorities she wasn't running another "safari park" and eventually would give up on the animals, she said.

But now Three Ring Ranch is a licensed animal sanctuary with state and federal permits to care for endangered animals and has filed for non-profit status, she said.

"To give (the animals) all they need emotionally and physically is a full-time job," Goody said, who also works as a triage nurse.

For example, Pele, a parrot, started plucking out her feathers and ripping her chest apart after her owner died, but now has

regrown her full head of fire-red plumage.

A flock of lesser flamingos once housed at Hawaii Tropical Botanical Gardens in Hilo are in the pink again, nesting and preening their shining feathers near a sunny outdoor pond chock full of tasty spirulina. A worried director gave up the birds after shady conditions caused their feathers to fall out and sores to develop, Goody said.

The sanctuary is closed to the public, but Goody said she plans to lecture at Big Island schools.

"This is their home, not an exhibit," she said, but Goody is developing a Web-site — ThreeRingRanch.org — featuring pictures of the animals.

"I love teaching people about what animals need to be healthy. And they teach people patience, trust, to look back on our own instincts," she said. "I can only do so much and I want to teach children why zebras don't belong in your backyard."

Most of the animals will remain at the sanctuary and will not be sold or bred. However, endangered species offspring will be sent to accredited breeding facilities, and in some cases, returned to the wild, she said.

Goody receives advice from scientists at the University of California San Francisco, the Honolulu Zoo and elsewhere, but she also has training in animal behavior and science and is the former director of The Humane Society in Big Bear, Calif.

Bringing animals into Hawaii illegally can result in fines up to \$50,000 or jail time, but Three Ring Ranch acts as an amnesty station for people with illegal animals. Although Goody is required to report illegal animals, she is not mandated to submit identifying information about those who turned them in, nor would she do so, she said.

Those with exotic or illegal animals that needs sheltering may call Goody at 331-8778 or e-mail animals@kona.net.