



All creatures great and small find sanctuary at Noah's Ark in metro Atlanta

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Spring fling

Courtesy of Noah's Ark Animal Rehabilitation Center

The noise of the jungle welcomes you in Locust Grove, a short drive south from the city sounds of Atlanta.

It's spring, so the animals are flirtatious – an alligator roars at its mate to join him for a nap; an ostrich waggles his wings and tail in a grand display for the watching females; the monkey habitat reverberates with chatter; the peacocks scream and strut their stuff.

It's just another day for the Noah's Ark Animal Rehabilitation Center, a nonprofit refuge run by Jama & Charles Hedgecoth since 1978 for domestic & exotic animals and livestock that have been abused, abandoned or neglected.

During your visit, you may be lucky enough to be met by Louella Connor. Ms. Connor is the Ark's welcoming committee, Grandma, official tortoise

sponsor, caregiver, daily carrot feeder, and lover of pigs. Dressed in zebra designs from her shoes to the bandana on her collie Savannah (who also sports pink toenails and smells of White Shoulders cologne), Ms. Connor will be happy to tell you of the resident animals and her daughter Jama's philosophy toward running the Ark.

The Ark's animals are supported solely through public donations. Food alone for the over 1,800 animals comes to over \$10,000 per month. While donors have been generous and the sanctuary and animals are obviously well cared for, over 1,200 needy animals are turned away annually because of lack of funds.

Currently, the Ark is running a matching funds challenge – with a goal of \$50,000 to extend habitats for their wolves, tigers, bears, cougars, a lion and a leopard. While adequately housed now, the expansion would allow the animals access to the creek that runs through the refuge for drinking, playing and cooling off in Georgia's steamy summers. It would also allow the Ark to extend the paved path, permitting disabled visitors access to more of the preserve.

The Ark welcomes visitors Tuesdays through Saturdays from noon to 3pm, weather permitting. There is no admission fee, but donations of any size are accepted. More information and ways to donate are available by [clicking here](#).

Check back to read about the Ark's newest residents, find out what their BLT consists of, and discover how to participate in their upcoming adventure safari in Part II.

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