



Contact:
Randy Bird
Tel: (905) 342 – 3053
Email: randy@randybird.ca
Official website: www.randybird.ca

FROM MUSTANGS TO ELEPHANTS

Internationally renowned horse trainer Randy Bird of Harwood, Ontario, along with filmmakers Albert Botha, Rob and Mike Davidson and James Gardiner received national attention in 2005 when they rescued eight Mustangs from a government yard in Rock Springs Wyoming, U.S.A. These older mustangs were fourteen and fifteen years old and destined for slaughter. This was the result of a bill having been passed in congress which stipulated any Mustang over the age of ten could now be sold. This resulted in the transport of five older geldings from the Rock Springs facility in Wyoming to Randy Bird's facility in Harwood. Bird was asked to try and train one of them in order to prove to the world that it was possible to train the older Mustangs. In doing so, it would prove these older horses could have a useful life and possibly overturn the bill to hopefully prevent them from being sold for slaughter.

One of the geldings named Casper was successfully trained to drive and was featured in a documentary called "Saving the Mustangs" which was released in 2010. Fortunately this, and several other events which got overwhelming and international attention, did in fact get the sale of the horses stopped. Bird was later asked why he had agreed to the project, which was not only a very dangerous undertaking, but a financial and time consuming one as well. His answer was simple, "It was the right thing to do as an incredible breed of horse could have its numbers critically depleted, and possibly in time, be eradicated". Two of the original horses brought from Wyoming, who are now twenty seven years of age, and one other who is a third generation, still reside at his facility in Harwood.

Years after the incredible challenge of training these Mustangs, Randy finds himself involved in another project with another species of animal whose numbers are also in rapid decline. This time however, it is on another continent: Africa. The species? An African elephant. This amazing and majestic creature whose numbers were once in the millions are now falling rapidly. The elephant is being eradicated at an alarming rate, due to natural causes and poaching. Recently, Bird received one of the most satisfying and exciting gifts he could imagine. Thanks to his wife and daughter, who were spending some time in Africa, he was signed up as an adoptive parent of a ten month old female elephant calf that was found wandering alone in a national park. Her mother was a suspected poaching victim, and the calf would surely have perished had she not been rescued and taken to an elephant orphan nursery in Nairobi, Kenya. He receives monthly newsletters on the progress of the calf, and along with it, other fascinating information regarding elephants. It is amazing how some of the elephants problems are very similar to the ones being faced by the Mustangs. Bird is now totally committed to this cause and plans to travel to Africa in 2019 to finally meet the orphan calf, and watch her as she is reintroduced back into the wild.

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