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Pelican Harbor
SEABIRD STATION

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OBITUARY FOR BRUCE THE OPOSSUM

- **Made Famous in the New York Times and on Instagram**

Miami, FL – It is with a heavy heart that we share the news of Bruce the Virginia Opossum's passing. Bruce passed quietly on the afternoon of Thursday, February 11th in the company of his beloved friend and caretaker Mary Diddle, who serves as the bookkeeper at Pelican Harbor Seabird Station (PHSS). Bruce and Mary formed a close bond during Bruce's busy tour schedule onsite and at local schools, where she served as his handler and espoused the many benefits of opossums. Bruce, who was unable to be released due to a neurological disorder affecting his ability to walk, was often in our administrative office and beloved by all.

Bruce would have turned three years old next month was preceded in death by his close friend Orange Blossom (a.k.a. Merle), who served as our first education ambassador opossum. He is survived by Basil, who celebrated her first birthday this past October. Bruce will be laid to rest beneath his favorite tree at our new 2.6-acre riverfront preserve. The average life span of an opossum is two to four years, so we knew Bruce's time was close.

Bruce was made famous with his May 18, 2019 cover on the [New York Times Art Section](#) with New York Times Best Selling author Thomas Harris, creator of the Hannibal series, whose new novel "Cari Mori" is partially set at PHSS. Bruce's national fame was further elevated after the New York Times cover garnered him many over 13,000 additional fans when his photo was shared on a [celebrity opossum named Sesame's Instagram page](#) called [@ItsMeSesame](#), which has 200,000 followers. This national attention combined with Bruce's adorable look and personality quickly made him PHSS's most popular ambassador animal.

He received fifty honorary adoptions during his time with us. He was so popular in fact that out of eight different animals, Bruce received the lion's share of adoptions accounting for 34% of all honorary adoptions. With more than 400 opossums treated last year (mostly orphaned babies), these funds not only went to Bruce's care but also for that of orphaned babies. The mission of PHSS is to rehabilitate and release native wildlife, but Bruce was given a second chance at life by joining our family. "Pelican Harbor Seabird Station enabled Bruce to live his best life in spite of his disabilities. He was a fine possum and a good companion and support to me when we were dealing with the New York Times. He will be missed by his best friend Mary and all the friends of The Seabird Station", said Thomas Harris.

Baby opossums often come in litters of thirteen. Wildlife rehabilitators distinguish the babies from each other by color-coding the ears with a dot of non-toxic nail polish. Bruce's ear was painted green, and thus the "nickname" Bruce was assigned due to the Hulk, Bruce Banner being green. "We don't typically name our patients said Wildlife Rehabilitation Manager Yaritza Acosta, but we knew very early that Bruce was a special boy and that he would be a candidate

to join our ambassador program since he couldn't fend for himself in the wild. He will be missed." In lieu of flowers, friends are asked to make an [honorary adoption](#) of Bruce's friend Basil to support her care and that of the hundreds of orphaned opossums that will come through our clinic this year. Alternatively, [memorial gifts](#) of any size can be made in Bruce's honor.



RIP Bruce
2018 - 2021



A younger Bruce with pal
Orange Blossom (aka Merle)



Bruce's younger friend Basil
with staff member Stephanie



Mary and Bruce, aka
Bruce-e as she called him



Mary taking a break from
Quickbooks to groom Bruce



Bruce and Mary educating
schoolchildren on a tour

[Bruce's Easter Basket "Enrichment" Video](#)

[Orange Blossom Fostering Babies Video](#)

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If you would like more information about this, please contact Christopher at 305.751.9840 or Christopher@pelicanharbor.org