A NEW LIFE FOR LOVABLE LES

LES THE GOOSE has proved himself a survivor. He’s shown a remarkable memory. But his most impressive trait might be his ability to forgive.

“For what he’s been through it seems odd that he’s so friendly toward people,” says Brian Schafer, who along with his wife, Karen, adopted Les from the South Florida Wildlife Center. “He and his mate are the friendliest goose I’ve ever seen.”

More than a year ago, Les was one of two geese found shot with arrows in a Florida canal. A compassionate woman discovered the severely injured pair and called for help. His companion died from the injuries, but Les was rushed to the center, where veterinarians operated to repair a fractured wing and other damage.

For two months, Les recuperated in the center’s hospital before moving to an outdoor habitat. Because Les is a domestic goose—a nonnative species in Florida—staff could not release him into the wild. He needed someone to adopt him.

The Schafers visited the center intending to add another swan to the two swans, four ducks and two geese already living on their Florida property, which includes a quarter-acre fenced pond. But after hearing his story and meeting the charismatic goose, they adopted Les instead.

Initially, Les seemed happy in his new home, enjoying the company of the other waterfowl. But he wasn’t too sure about Brian. That is, until the woman who had rescued him stopped by.

“It was amazing—he recognized her,” says Brian. “He came all the way from across the pond to see her. … After that, we all hit it off.” It seemed Les had decided that if his hero thought the Schafers were OK, they were OK in his book, too.

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