

# Hello Kitty

*A Sanctuary for Exotic  
Wildlife in Melrose*

STORY & PHOTOGRAPHY  
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**R**oughly 50 minutes away from Gainesville, down a dirt road and past an iron gate lies a treasure in Melrose.

Tigers, lions, bobcats, coatis, Malaysian squirrels, panthers, alligators and lemurs populate the 10-acre property of Carl Bovard, a former animal trainer at Sea World and Jungleland Zoo. With a passion for teaching the public about endangered species, Bovard, 40, rescues exotic species so that children and adults can become educated on current endangered species conditions.

"This facility is used for educational purposes," Bovard said while feeding grapes to four lemurs. "Some of these animals have been rescues through the Fish and Wildlife Service, some through USDA [United States Department of Agriculture] and others through trade."

Bovard said he always wanted to work with animals since he was a child helping with his grandfather's farm. He earned a biology degree from Indiana University and began working with sea turtles and manatees at Sea World. Later he

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Mayhem, a 7-month-old mountain lion, jumps on Bovard every time he enters the cage. Bovard uses Mayhem and his sister Chaos to teach about Florida panthers, which have about 80 different names including "mountain lion."



