



Critters On The Roadside

In my many adventures along the beautiful back roads of the North Georgia Mountains, I have noticed something I have felt compelled to share. There are many different types of animals that we are able to view; one of them that led to this writing is the donkey. Why are so many living in what are normally stables and farm fenced properties usually housing horses and cattle?

I have always loved the sight of a beautiful donkey, but have often wondered why so many people own them. -What are they used for? -Are they just pets? -Are they used for manger scenes at Christmas and then the remainder of the year are sent out to pasture?

Believe it or not, with having such an inquisitive mind as I do, I wonder this when I see them. I know that Donkeys, Mules, Burrows, Jackasses (whatever one wants to call them) are used routinely for riding through rough terrain and pathways like at the Grand Canyon. So does this answer my question on what they are used for in the North Georgia Mountains? To some degree it does. I have seen people riding them, and with the abundance of horses in the area, it is always a pleasurable sight to behold. Any that I have ever seen have a very identifiable face; this is one thing I always look for when I am viewing wildlife and domestic animals. As an artist who paints primarily wildlife, I look for their character and try and capture it on the canvas.

On many occasions I have noticed the beautiful

Donkey in the pasture down the road from the hospital. I have always wished I had my camera with me to catch the "Perfect Picture" of it. But being that I am usually on the way to drop off my recyclables down the road, I don't think about bringing my camera along. I have though taken a few snapshots of one's in the pastures along the mountain back roads. When I return home from my outings I view the photos with a smile on my face. I am in the process of painting one of these magnificent creatures and will have it posted for sale on my website when I have completed it.

FACTS ABOUT DONKEYS:

-Females are called Jennies and males are called Jacks and babies are foals (jack foal or jenny foal).

-They live 30-50 years in captivity (about 10 to 25 years in the wild). This could explain the phrase "Donkey Years". Then again it could be a play on words because 'donkey ears' are very long too!

-Donkeys (sometimes known as asses) are related to horses, ponies and zebras.

-They have tough hooves so don't need shoes like horses.

-Donkeys were one of the first draught animals used by man when he took up agriculture and they can be seen in cave paintings across Europe and Africa.

-Donkeys have been used for work and pleasure ever since and are still very valuable animals in many countries throughout the World. They are a major form of transport in some countries.

-Donkeys are among the worst abused animals on earth. In many societies donkeys are regarded as low status animals and can be bought very inexpensively. Because of this, they are usually very mistreated.

-In a lot of countries they are used as working animals. Often they are forced to do more work than their small bodies can handle. And because they can be bought so inexpensively, they are very poorly taken care of. Because a new donkey is often cheaper

than veterinary care, sick or injured donkeys are often tied to posts without food or water and left to die. It is also very common for stray donkeys to get severely abused just for fun.

In countries like Spain and Greece, donkeys are used as "Donkey Taxis". The majority of Donkey Taxi operators only care about the profit and do not take good care of the animals at all. During the day they are exposed to very high temperatures with little or no shelter, food or water and are made to carry people that are too heavy for their bodies. At night, they usually get their feet tied together to prevent them from walking off.

So do these facts about Donkeys explain why there are so many on our back roads? Not really, but I like to think, because I am such an animal lover, that at night they are brought in from their pastures and tucked in their stables for a good night's sleep. Awaken the next day, eat their breakfast of grain, and display themselves in the pastures for all locals and visitors like myself to see and enjoy. I would love to hear from the owners of these beautiful animals, and what they use them for in this area. If you would like to share with me photos, and information about your Donkey, please contact me through my website. I would appreciate the information.

