

COURTESY OF JEAN MACGUFFIE

Keowee Key resident Sandy Alford reaches out to the infamous elk that's been spotted in three Upstate counties on Sunday at the Keowee Key Golf and Country Club.

Celebrity elk spotted at Keowee Key

BY ERIC SPROTT
THE JOURNAL

SALEM — The wild elk that wandered into South Carolina last month, lighting up social media and making history in the process, has wandered back down from the mountains and taken up temporary residence in the Keowee Key area.

Kevin McCracken, the community general manager at Keowee Key, confirmed the elk has been spotted at the community's golf course, and he's urging residents to keep their distance.

"We have advised our residents to give it a wide berth and not to feed it," he said. "We'd hate to see someone get hurt, and we don't want the animal to get hurt, either."

The young elk, the first spotted in South Carolina since the 1700s, wandered away from its herd in North Carolina last month and has been spotted at various spots in Pickens County.

Earlier this month, the elk was spotted in Greenville before being tranquilized and moved to a remote location in the South Carolina mountains.

Richard Morton, the Region I Wildlife Coordinator for the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, told The Journal on Tuesday the elk is still on the loose, and he said residents who see him shouldn't be inclined to report sightings to DNR.

"We know where he's at, and we still hope he has an opportunity to turn back north and go toward Mountain Rest," Morton said. "We're just kind of playing it by ear, and we'll see what happens.

"We took him as far up in the mountains as we could, but he turned around and came right back down to town, so it didn't work."

Furthermore, Morton stressed the importance of avoiding contact with the elk, who could be at risk of being euthanized if he doesn't return to a remote area.

"It seems like he's very domesticat-

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Sandy Alford
Keowee Key resident

ELK: 'It was magical'

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ed, which is not good for him, because people won't stop feeding him and touching him as much as we put it out there to not do that," he said. "It's not good for him, and it could be dangerous to others, but people still do it, and that's the worst thing they can do for this elk."

Keowee Key resident Sandy Alford witnessed the elk with a friend at the Keowee Key Golf and Country Club on Sunday, saying it was a surreal experience.

"Our hearts were just pounding out of our chests because this is such a magnificent creature who has blessed us with his presence," she said. "It's such a gift he's given us to let us see him. It was magical."

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