



Meet & Greet: Joy and Rook

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Welcome back to Animal Wonders, I'm Jessi, and there has been some talk about not having enough animals in videos lately, so I'm going to counter that with the first of our meet and greets - episodes entirely about meeting animals.

Every single animal on this planet has their own unique experiences in life. That means that no single animal is exactly the same as the other. There are nuances that change the way that each of us perceive and interact with any given circumstance.

A big part of my job when I rescue a new animal is to learn as much as I can about their past experiences, so that I can do my best to give them an easy transition into Animal Wonders and their future. It's always exciting meeting a new animal, but it can also be a little intimidating. It kind of reminds me of the same feelings I used to get when going to summer camp and meeting new people and trying to make friends with them, but I've been doing it for so long now that I've gotten a little calmer and more comfortable doing it, because I'm almost certain that we'll always end up friends at some point even if it takes a couple years.

After planning our meet and greet episode, I realized there's just no way to fit all of them into one episode. I can't even fit a handful of them, so this first one I want to highlight two of our more recent rescues.

(Intro)

This beautiful lady is Joy, the blue and gold macaw, and she was rescued in July 2013 so we've had almost two years to get to know each other. She was rescued from a lady who had rescued her from a previous owner, who had her from a previous owner. She has a long history, a long past. But the reason that this most recent lady rescued her was because she was being abused and neglected in her home. She had things thrown at her, she was screamed at, she was covered up for most of the time that that lady had her. So she rescued her, and then when she fell ill she contacted Animal Wonders and we took her in.

The reason that she might use a blanket to cover up her enclosure is because macaws scream really loud when they're excited or scared, or when they want to greet you, and a lot of people see that as a nuisance. Well, macaws, that's part of their nature, that's part of their behavior. So be prepared if you're going to have one of these guys in your home.

Macaws are said to have the intelligence of a toddler, up to a 4 year old human. Can you imagine a 4 year old human going through experiences like that? She had a lot of trauma in her life, so we had to spend a lot of time rehabilitating her.

So the lady that contacted us actually had quite a few birds. And we rescued six birds that day when we went to her house, Joy included. We immediately purchased a larger enclosure and we plan on giving her an even bigger one once we complete our expansion. Currently we house her next to Archie who is one of the rescue birds that she lived next to in her old home.

Joy was extremely skittish when she first came to Animal Wonders, so I gave her a lot of space just to kind of watch me and feel me out, and determine that I wasn't a threat. After about 8 months I thought it was about time to take the plunge and start teaching her how to be part of our educational programs. Here's some footage of her the first time I showed her a crate, that's the first step in determining if they're ready to do presentations. You can see that she already has a high level of trust in me because she goes right in. Of course, some of her favorite fruits helped out in the process, but I was really impressed with her immediate acceptance of a new object.

We've been acquaintances for about a year, and then we've been friends for about a year, but I have many more years just to get to know Joy better.

Joy has done about ten presentations so far, and she's getting better with each one. She is learning how to communicate clearer to me, and I'm learning how to listen to her better. I know all of her little, little tiny behavioral communications, and if she's showing me that she's stressed out then I can do a couple things. I can either just move her away from the audience, and she gets more comfortable, or if she's done, we go ahead and put her back in the crate and we head on home, huh? What did you see? Did you see a dog walk by?

So I'm sharing these stories because no matter what stage you are in a relationship with an animal, you can always learn more. Do you want more banana, is that what you're telling me? Here. Mmm, yummy. Bananas make everything better.

So Joy and I are a work in progress, as are most friendships.

This is Rook, he's a common raven and he was one of these animals that I was so excited to meet, but reality was a little bit different. Rook was found by just a regular person walking around in the woods, and they said 'Ooh, something's wrong with this raven. Especially, it's not flying away'. So they took it in and they contacted Wild Skies Raptor Center, and they found out that Rook had a broken wing. You see how he carries it a little bit lower, these feathers point out a little bit? So this injury was an old injury, calcified in the wild. He was also found very malnourished, which makes sense if he wasn't able to fly around and catch his own prey.

After a few months of being fed up and brought back to health by the rehabilitator, she contacted us and said 'Hey, do you have a place on your program for this raven? Already an adult, it's going to be a difficult transition. Do you want to give it a try?' And we said yes.

Rook is very wary of humans, and that would serve him really well in the wild, but it's made our relationship difficult. He's showing more wariness of humans than I would have hoped but, you know, that's expected from an adult raven from the wild. You can see that he is a little bit stressed out from this interaction right here. I'm taking it very slow, but continuing to try and establishing a trust bond, just so he knows that I'm not here to hurt him. He actually is doing a lot better than he did a year ago.

Since he can't stretch out this wing at all he absolutely cannot fly. So we've created an enclosure that's very enriching for him. It has lots of places where he can perch and be, and sit, and look at things, but he can navigate it by hopping from branch to branch.

Because ravens are so smart we've been trying to think of new ways to enrich his mind. He's very good at figuring out all of the little puzzles that we give him. Ooh! He quickly learned how to get food out of a bottle, pull a blanket off hidden food, tip over an upside down pail, open up a newspaper ball and rip apart cardboard boxes. Next I think I want to see if he can learn how to pull up a hanging basket.

Rook spends a lot of his time trying to figure out how to get his food, which is exactly what he would be doing in the wild, which is perfect. He also likes to perch and look out his window at the forest around him. He makes calls in the early morning, but we haven't yet heard a wild raven call back.

I do wish that he would enjoy human company a little bit more, because I am concerned about his social needs being met. We have considered another raven for companionship, but there are so



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many complications involved. For now I'll keep working on our trust bond and keep thinking of new ways to enrich his highly developed mind.

So that was Joy and Rook, I hope you enjoyed meeting them, and I would like to continue sharing more stories of animals with you in further episodes of meet and greet. This episode goes out to all of our Patreon patrons who helped us reach our milestone goal by supporting Animal Wonders, and for giving me the gift of being able to share these amazing animals with anyone who wants to meet them and learn about them. And if you'd like to go on an adventure with us every week, subscribe to our YouTube channel Animal Wonders Montana, or you can ask me questions or find me throughout the week on Twitter, Tumblr and Facebook. Thanks guys.

(Outro)

Welcome back to Animal Wonders, I'm Jessi, and today I want to share something that makes me incredibly happy.