



Meet and Greet: Hara and Twirly

Meet and Greet

https://youtube.com/watch?v=9R6wCMkk_B4

https://nerdfighteria.info/v/9R6wCMkk_B4

Hey guys, I'm Jessi, and this is Animal Wonders. I was recently surprised when someone that works in the animal care field visited and was surprised to learn that we had names for every single one of our animals *and* that we knew each of their personalities. We have around 80 animals and I think it's necessary to know each of their personal preferences in order to ensure that they're receiving the best care possible. I *love* getting to know every animal, which is why I enjoy our series of meet and greet episodes so much, because you get to know them, too. So let's meet two of our animal ambassadors.

[Intro plays]

This is Hara, the Harris' Hawk. She's about 13 years old and the first question we usually get is, why is she not in the wild? Well there's three reasons. One, she was born in captivity to be used as a falconry bird, which means she doesn't have the necessary skills to survive in the wild on her own. Two, she has damage to her wings that prevents her from being able to accurately fly and catch live prey. And three, she has a contagious parasite, so she can't live near other raptors where it could spread. She was born in a facility in California where she ended up damaging her wings somehow. So they couldn't use her for falconry as they originally intended.

So she was reportedly placed in a breeding situation for about four years, but she never bred. So she was transferred to America's Teaching Zoo, which is where I went to school. During the three month mandatory quarantine to enter the zoo, She started learning to get used to being around humans and perching on a glove. About two months into her quarantine one of her blood tests came back positive for a contagious parasite that attacks the immune system. It's fairly common in falconry farms, but the zoo didn't want to introduce it to their current raptor ambassador. So the zoo needed to find her a home that housed no other birds of prey. They asked and we offered her a home but we didn't have a place to house her. So they had to wait for us to build an appropriate enclosure and also obtain the proper permits.

Three months later, we were ready, but it was winter in Montana at that time and we were a little concerned that a desert bird would get too cold in our weather. So we set up heat perches and a heated lamp that she could use if she felt she needed them. Hara bonded with me after just a few weeks. She now prefers my company over others, especially strangers. She can be a subtle communicator sometimes, but I love when she's obvious with her preferences - if she doesn't like someone, she'll give a blood-curdling scream if they come near. Sorry interns.

Hara's favorite thing to eat, is quail. But she'll also eat mice, rats, and chicks. I use the quail to get her happy and comfortable inside a crate that we use to transport her to presentations. She quickly associated the crate with happy feelings. Now, most falconers will use a hood on their bird when they transport them, the idea is that if they can't see, that they'll be calmer and just sit tight on their perch. However Hara gets extremely nervous when I put the hood on her and she clenches her feet so tight that she can bruise me through the glove and she'll foot anything she hears come near her.

Footing is when a bird of prey intentionally grabs something with their talons as an attack or defensive behavior. So as an individual Hara has shown that she prefers not to be hooded during transport. Sometimes animals don't go by the book. Hara has been an amazing ambassador and I'm so happy that she's accepted me into her pack. So thanks, Hara.

This is Twirly the veiled chameleon. Twirly got her name because of how we met her. We were stocking up on animal supplies at our local pet store and the owner asked if we would take a look at one of the baby chameleons that she had just gotten in. She said that all

the other babies were doing fine, but this one kept falling to the ground and twirling in circles. She said that the person that bred them and brought them in mentioned that they might have dropped one of the babies. She asked if we could take the baby and see if there's anything we could do to help her, and of course, we had to try.

We observed her and we found that most of the time she could climb just fine, but randomly she'd let go with her front feet and fall backwards and down to the ground. Once she was on the ground she would twirl in circles before eventually finding her way back up the tree. Twirly has slight damage to either her brain or her inner ear which causes that balance issue. And sometimes she has a bit of trouble catching her prey, but not enough to cause a major issue. We keep her in a fairly short enclosure so when she does fall? She doesn't hurt herself. But she still has plenty of branches to climb around, explore, and feel safe and hidden.

Like Hara the hawk, Twirly also has preferences for certain people. She doesn't like new faces, and sometimes it can take her months to trust someone enough to let them pick her up. Twirly readily eats crickets, mealworms, and cockroaches, but she tends to turn brighter yellows and blues when she sees the cockroaches coming. She also prefers to be hand fed because, who doesn't like to be pampered, right? But it's good for her to be mentally and physically stimulated so most of the time she has to stalk and hunt her own prey.

I enjoy caring for Twirly because it's so obvious when she's happy and feels well-cared for. She turns bright green with yellow and blue streaks! When she's not so enthusiastic about something or cold or nervous, she turns grey with darker spots and stripes. How do you think she's feeling right now? I think she's a little cold. How about a worm? I hope you enjoyed getting to know Twirly and Hara today. I really enjoyed sharing them with you! If you'd like to go on an adventure with us every week, subscribe to our YouTube channel, Animal Wonders Montana, and you can meet more of our animal ambassadors. Thanks guys.

[Outro plays]

Jessi: She then uses her short sticky tongue to snatch the prey, and bring it into her mouth. Once it's inside her mouth she does something completely different than humans do.