



Our Hen House

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Interview with Adair Moran

By OUR HEN HOUSE

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*Following is a transcript of an interview with **ADAIR MORAN** conducted by **JASMIN SINGER** and **MARIANN SULLIVAN** of [Our Hen House](#), for the [Our Hen House podcast](#). The interview aired on Episode 243.*

ALESSANDRA: We'll start off the episode with the jill-of-all-trades Adair Moran, who is not only an actress and stunt performer, but also a wildlife rehabilitator who works with the Wild Bird Fund in New York City. Recently Adair launched another organization to care for NYC's wild mammals called Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation. Find Adair's new organization at urbanutopiawildlife.org and her blog at harlemfarm.blogspot.com.

JASMIN: Welcome to Our Hen House, Adair.

ADAIR: Oh, thank you.

JASMIN: So exciting to have you. Who was that guy?

ADAIR: Oh, that was a wild duck who came into the Wild Bird Fund on a day when I was there as rehabber. He was a domestic duck, which is why he seemed to like people so much.

JASMIN: Is he single?

ADAIR: Beats me. I named him Pavarotti 'cause he liked to sing.

JASMIN: Oh, that fits him well. You mentioned the Wild Bird Fund. Can you explain what it is and what you do there?

ADAIR: Yeah, it's a wildlife center on the Upper West Side in Manhattan that specializes in birds, and so I work there sometimes as a wildlife rehabilitator.

MARIANN: Now, people might think that there are a lot of such facilities in New York City, but that is not the case, is it?

ADAIR: It's really not. Yeah, the Wild Bird Fund is the only one in the city, and then as we're probably gonna talk about later I've recently started a wild mammal group, so we're hoping to address that need.

MARIANN: I think that's wonderful but it really does boggle the mind that there are not more facilities for wild animals. We have a lot of wild animals out there.

JASMIN: Yeah, we've been in situations more times than once or twice or more times than that, where we've actually wound up rescuing pigeons because pigeons in need happen when you're in New York City. And you find these pigeons and you're like, "What do I do?" It blows your mind that there's --

MARIANN: I know. And so many people are in the same position and don't know what to do.

ADAIR: And there are a lot of animals that people don't even know we have here but we actually have lots and lots of wildlife in the city.

MARIANN: What are some of the more unusual animals that you've seen coming into the Wild Bird Fund or that you've run into in your career?

ADAIR: Well, for birds we get a lot of very interesting migratory birds because the birds, as they migrate, tend to pass through the city, like Central Park. It's a big, green place for them to go that they will stop on their way migrating to wherever they're going. And you also hear about -- you get things like foxes and coyotes and you can go on seal watching tours in Brooklyn and see all the seals and whales.

MARIANN: Really! I didn't know that, seals in Brooklyn.

JASMIN: I smell a segment. Is it true that you rescued a guinea hen once?

ADAIR: I did, yeah. I found --

MARIANN: Can we start off by telling, what is a guinea hen?

ADAIR: It's kind of like a chicken, it's a game bird. And so I was in my neighborhood in East Harlem in Marcus Garvey Park, and I spotted this guinea hen, and I went to try to rescue her. And in East Harlem that draws a crowd. When they see a girl trying to tackle a guinea hen... I got a big crowd of people watching.

MARIANN: I guess she wasn't very cooperative. She didn't just jump in your arms.

ADAIR: They don't like to be caught, and the people kept telling me, "You're never gonna catch that bird!" And I was like, "No, no, I catch birds a lot."

JASMIN: It's part of what you do.

ADAIR: And then they all wanted to know if I was going to eat it or if I was going to keep it as a pet. And I said, "Oh, neither. Neither one."

JASMIN: People just go there! "Oh, there's an animal. How can we exploit this animal? How is this animal here for my benefit?" Wow.

ADAIR: But the guinea hen went to a sanctuary.

JASMIN: Oh, that's wonderful.

MARIANN: But a lot of times you would release an animal, a wild animal, if you were to find a wild animal. The primary goal is to release them, is that right?

ADAIR: No, with wildlife, you always, always want to rehabilitate and release. The guinea hen was a domestic animal so that was a different situation, but yeah, with wildlife it's illegal to keep it as pets. You have to let it go.

JASMIN: What are some of the more common wildlife emergencies in New York City that you run into?

ADAIR: Well, the one that I deal with a lot with my wild mammal group is baby squirrels, especially this time of year in the spring and in the fall, the squirrels are having their babies and people find them on the street all the time, and there are just far more baby squirrels than there are rehabbers like me who accept baby squirrels.

MARIANN: Yeah, I found a baby squirrel once, or a friend of mine did, and we had to drive way out on Long Island to find somebody who would take him.

ADAIR: It's really hard 'cause we all get overwhelmed this time of year.

JASMIN: But what should people do if they find a baby squirrel?

ADAIR: The best thing to do is to put it in a box with something soft like a fleece and then like some toe warmers or a hot water bottle and then put it, try to mount that box up a little bit off the ground in the tree where you think the squirrel fell from, and often if you check back in a few hours the mother squirrel will have come back, grabbed it, and taken it back to the nest. But if you check in a few hours and it's still there, then you have to find a wildlife rehabilitator.

JASMIN: These photos that you sent us that we're showing of baby squirrels just leave me all verklempt. Like, they're so --

MARIANN: I want a baby squirrel. I guess that wouldn't be a good idea.

JASMIN: No, you can't have one.

ADAIR: Yeah, you can't have one. They're very cute, though.

JASMIN: You could look at Adair's photos, though. But what are some of the other kinds of animals who are found in the city? You mentioned that there are some surprising ones like coyotes. Has any animal ever wound up in front of you who you're like, "Really? New York City?"

ADAIR: I don't know. At this point nothing surprises me. I've definitely gotten some birds, some migratory songbirds that I'll look at them and be like, "I don't know what that is and I'll have to go look it up because it would be some rare bird migrating through."

JASMIN: You seem pretty unflappable. Did you see that was like a play on words, "unflappable"?

MARIANN: Oh, I didn't get that, I'm glad you pointed it out. Continue to do that, point out your analogies.

JASMIN: Well, I want to talk about this new organization you're founding because you mentioned it. Tell us what it is.

ADAIR: Well, Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation is New York City's very first wild mammal rehab group. And our goal ultimately is we would like to find a space where we can have a wild mammal rehabilitation center because there's just a need. There's a huge need in the city for it and I'm kind of surprised it doesn't exist already.

MARIANN: I can't believe! In a city the size of New York with so many green spaces, it just boggles the mind that there is no rehabilitation center for mammals at all. So I assume you get animals from, these animals are from all over the city, it's not just from Manhattan, I mean at the World Bird Fund and also for your future organization. But the organization exists now but you don't have your space yet, is that right?

ADAIR: Yes. But right now just in my home I'm rehabilitating, I have squirrels from Brooklyn, I have a rabbit from the Bronx, I have another squirrel from Randall's Island. We get them from everywhere.

JASMIN: Sounds like a children's book just waiting to happen. Like, a squirrel from Brooklyn, a pigeon from the Bronx meet at a bar, and you're like the bartender. I'm sorry, I'm going a little off here. But it is just so fascinating, I'm so excited about this new organization. Tell us what your mission will be with your new organization.

ADAIR: Ultimately our mission is to start the first wild mammal rehab center, but in the meantime our mission is to rehabilitate and release as many animals as we possibly can with our current resources.

JASMIN: Is there a way that people watching this might be able to help support your work? Because what you're doing is groundbreaking.

ADAIR: Yeah, definitely. Well, they can check out our Facebook page, which is Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation on Facebook and we have a donate button there. And we are also working on our website, which is gonna be urbanutopiawildlife.org, so that should be up soon.

MARIANN: And you mentioned that these animals are in your apartment, but you're a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Can you explain why it's different for you to take animals into your apartment as opposed to just anybody?

ADAIR: Yeah, there's a licensing process through the state, and you need to have that license if you're going to possess wildlife. Otherwise it's against the law.

JASMIN: Yeah, it's interesting because before we started recording I was talking to you about whether it's inherently exploitative to, say, bring an urban wildlife animal onto the show and we decided, yes, it is. But can you talk a little bit more about why that might be wrong to do?

ADAIR: All right. Well, as adorable as it would be if I'd bring a baby squirrel here, first of all, it might be frightening for the animal. There are bright lights and a lot of people and so that's not great for an animal. And also it's illegal to display wildlife. That's not part of the rehab process, it doesn't really benefit the animal. So that's why I can bring pictures and I can bring videos but I really can't bring the actual animal.

MARIANN: I think that's awfully good.

JASMIN: It makes a lot of sense.

MARIANN: Even if we don't -- there can be an animal here and we don't know that they're frightened because we can't necessarily read that animal, but you have to assume they would be. How do you become a licensed wildlife rehabilitator?

ADAIR: It's through the Department of Environmental Conservation, so you would contact the New York State DEC, they would give you all the information for where to get the study materials. There's a written test and then there is an interview process.

JASMIN: And what was it that initially called to you about this particular cause, 'cause what you're doing, I don't know anyone else who's doing this. And I'm going to talk about your other career in a moment when we run through this which is also fascinating to me, but how did you discover your love and your passion for working with wild animals?

ADAIR: Well, I've always been an animal lover and so I was often, like you talked about finding a pigeon, I was always doing stuff like that. And pigeons are one of the few animals that you actually can possess without a license. So when I found them I would often try to keep them and care for them, and then the more I learned about it and the more I did it, I really loved it and I thought I might as well get licensed and keep learning.

JASMIN: Well, I just mentioned that you have another career. When you're not doing this, you're a professional stunt performer, is that right?

ADAIR: Yeah.

MARIANN: You mean wildlife rehabilitating doesn't pay the bills?

JASMIN: You mean you're not in it for the money? 'Cause we are! I just find that so amazing, Adair, that this is what you do. Tell us about what it entails to be a professional stunt performer. What does it actually mean? Are you like jumping off buildings and just doing flips?

ADAIR: Sometimes. For me I'm usually a stunt double because I'm very petite so they'll often call me to stunt double children and teens and when they need a short person. So it's a lot of different stuff. I've done fighting and getting knocked down, I've been set on fire.

JASMIN: That is so cool! You've been set on fire! You're our first guest who's been set on fire.

MARIANN: What are some of the productions you've been involved in?

ADAIR: Well, coming up, I'm gonna be on *Gotham* on FOX, which is, it takes place in the Batman world, which is pretty cool. And there is a young actor who plays preteen Batman so I was his stunt double.

MARIANN: Wow. I was gonna think it was Robin, but it was preteen Batman.

ADAIR: Preteen Batman. There's also a show that's gonna be airing on MTV soon called *Eye Candy*, so I'm doing some stunt work in that too.

JASMIN: Now I know that you are also a lifelong vegan. You're also the daughter of Victoria Moran, who was recently on our show, and we are very big fans of Victoria and you were the coauthor with Victoria of the book *Main Street Vegan*. So kind of going back to your stunt work for a minute, you're a lifelong vegan. You must have to be in excellent physical shape to be doing this stunt work.

MARIANN: Probably in good shape, one would guess, since you're still alive.

JASMIN: Right. What are some of your secrets for staying so fit and healthy so that you could be jumping off buildings and being set on fire?

ADAIR: Well, personally I do aerial work to stay in shape 'cause I really love it and it will make you very, very strong.

JASMIN: There's actually a great aerial studio here in Brooklyn, I believe, that people could look into.

ADAIR: Yeah, it's pretty popular.

JASMIN: Okay, so you do aerial work, that's amazing. And I just think that it's so cool that you grew up vegan and you're a grownup! So a lot of people I know who grew up vegan are 10 years old because it's becoming much more popular now. What was it like growing up as a vegan when you were growing up?

ADAIR: It always seemed very normal to me, and I actually grew up in the Midwest. I grew up in Kansas City, which is known for its barbecue. But growing up with my mom it seemed like a very normal thing to do. We knew where to go for vegan food and how to travel and how to do all the stuff you need to do as a vegan.

MARIANN: Wow, that's great. If it was that easy then...

JASMIN: Yeah, exactly.

MARIANN: It's gotta be a million times easier now.

JASMIN: And Kansas City, which is where my brother and his family live, has become so vegan-friendly. I love eating the food there when I go there. I'm like, "Why don't we have this in Brooklyn?!" I'm saying that about Kansas City, it's just so phenomenal. And I just am so excited about all of the work you're doing, and I just think it must be really interesting to be you and to wake up one morning and to be like, "What am I going to do today? Am I going to jump off of a roof or am I going to rescue a coyote?" Not that many people can say that, Adair, and I'm very grateful to you for all of the work that you're doing to change the world for animals and for being such a shining example of what we can do when we really kind of put our heart into our passion.

MARIANN: I just think that there's just nothing more important than us paying attention to urban wildlife. Those are the animals we're sharing our city with. We've gotta get onto this issue, and notice them. People don't even notice them.

JASMIN: Well, that's the thing. This is going to sound very dorky, I'm sorry, especially I'm sure you're gonna be totally eye rolling at me later, but we just moved to Brooklyn a few months ago and we have a backyard -- we're in a garden level apartment, I talk about this a

lot on the show. And the urban wildlife we see just in our backyard or in Prospect Park just boggles my mind and I'm so moved.

MARIANN: It's so moving.

JASMIN: Exactly.

MARIANN: It really is.

JASMIN: Do you find a lot of inspiration just in life from the kind of natural genuine nature of the animals who you get to work with?

ADAIR: Yeah, definitely, and just like you talked about, I'm also very, very lucky to have a little Manhattan backyard, and it's amazing, the stuff that passes through that you would never think.

JASMIN: It really opens up your eyes. I think it makes you look at the world as though it's a much more peaceful place than it kind of is.

MARIANN: And it's so important to focus on these animals like pigeons and squirrels, these animals who get taken for granted just because they do well and they're not endangered. We need to look at these animals as the individuals they are, and pigeons really, really --

JASMIN: My pigeon tattoo over here.

MARIANN: I can't show mine.

JASMIN: You can't show yours because it would be inappropriate?

ADAIR: Oh, that's great.

JASMIN: Yeah, Sue Coe designed this.

MARIANN: I love the fact that wildlife rehabilitators work with all wildlife, not just the ones that we've driven to the point of extinction. But all of their lives matter.

JASMIN: And Adair is really bringing that to light more than anyone I know, so thank you so much, Adair. And to stay on top of Adair's work and on top of what's going on with urban wildlife, I hope that people visit your website and they also check out your Facebook page which is already really a bustling, bustling place and I love it. It's Urban Utopia Wildlife Rehabilitation. And your website will soon be coming up, and while you're at it you can probably check out some of the urban wildlife right outside your windows. Just open your eyes!