

# “Harris Hawk”

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Harris's Hawks are highly social raptors, often found in groups with complex social hierarchies that engage in cooperative hunting and breeding. Groups can consist of up to seven individuals, including both related and unrelated adults of different ages. These gregarious hawks employ some of the most sophisticated cooperative hunting strategies known in birds, and they feed according to dominance hierarchies within the group. Group members perch in tight

proximity, and territories are occupied and defended year-round. Aggressive encounters are infrequent and relatively benign between members of a group, usually taking the form of foot grabbing. Harris Hawks soar at high altitudes, sometimes plunging into dramatic dives, or even hovering and flying backwards. Sky dancing, consisting of a dramatic dive, may be used as a territorial display, or by males courting females.

Harris's Hawks are fairly common, but their populations have declined by around 2% per year between 1968 and 2015, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey resulting in a cumulative decline of 62%. Harris's Hawks are vulnerable to habitat loss due to urbanization and oil and gas development, which reduces habitat quality and prey availability. An additional side effect of urbanization is a shift away from natural perches—hawks increasingly perch on power poles, which often results in electrocution, sometimes killing several members of a group. Thankfully, electric utility companies are working to retrofit many utility lines to reduce electrocution risk for raptors.

**Laura Palermo donates 10% of the profits from all wildlife art sales to conservation of our threatened and endangered species.**