



The Toronto Elephants: Arrival Day, Part 2, "The Greeting"

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Elephants are very emotional, expressive animals and they become easily excited by social events. The deep, throaty rumbles and roars that elephants produce during intensely social interactions can sound like a pride of lions roaring. They can also be intimidating, even feel threatening, if you haven't had the chance to experience them in a natural setting in the wild.

At ElephantVoices we have studied elephant social behavior and communication for decades and have put together online databases of their vocal signals and their postures and gestures so that other people can understand elephants better. I have gone through the PAWS' video "The Greeting" and written a brief comment about what I see and hear. All vocalizations and behaviors in italics or in bold can be found in ElephantVoices fully searchable online databases:

Calls Database:

<http://www.elephantvoices.org/multimedia-resources/elephant-call-types-database.html>

Gestures Database:

<http://www.elephantvoices.org/multimedia-resources/elephant-gestures-database.html>

0:00 STARTS

0:00-0:10 Introduction.

0:50-1:10 Toka walks in.

0:34 A very soft low *rumble* can just be detected.

0:41 The PAWS elephants (can't see who) break into powerful, throaty and highly modulated *greeting* type *rumbles*.

0:49 *Social trumpets* are heard; the elephant in view reaches her trunk out to sniff Toka [**Trunk-Sniffing**] and immediately raises her head high, flaps her ears vigorously, raises her tail and urinates [**Head-Raising, Rapid-Ear-Flapping, Tail-Raising, Urination** are all components of **Greeting-Ceremony**].

1:11 A *social trumpet* is heard as deep, throaty *greeting* type *rumbles* continue - *social trumpets* are emitted during intensely social events such as **Greeting-Ceremony, Mating-Pandemonium, Female-Chorus** and births are a bit like an exclamation mark, punctuating the rumbles and extreme level of excitement).

1:24 A *roaring rumble* - *roaring-rumbles* are typically heard when elephants are extremely

excited such as during a **Greeting-Ceremony**, births, coalitions, etc.

1:26 Several more *social trumpets* and continuous *rumbling* as the PAWS elephants reach their trunks through the bars toward Toka.

1:40 A *nasal trumpet* - this form of *trumpet* is typically heard during very exuberant forms of play and indicates to me how very excited the elephants are.

1:40 Toka raises her tail [**Tail-Raising**] and urinates [**Urinating**] and flaps her ears rapidly [**Rapid-Ear-Flapping**]. These are all signs that are typical of greeting behavior.

1:46 Several “*trump*” bursts can be heard and the animated movement of a PAWS elephant can be seen through the bars.

1:53 Toka can be seen still **Rapid-Ear-Flapping**, which indicates that she, too, is rumbling. Her head is raised [**Head-Raising**] and she reaches her trunk through the bars toward the other elephants. Her appearance indicates to me that she is participating in the **Greeting**. There is no sign that she is frightened. The elephants continue to rumble in a rhythm - almost as if they are rumbling while exhaling, taking a deep inhalation of air, and then rumbling again.

The behavior described above continues and below I just list what I observed:

2:18 Very excited *roar*.

2:20 *Social trumpet*.

2:28 Overlapping *rumbles*.

2:30 *Social trumpet* and more overlapping *rumbles*.

3:03 Very throaty *rumbles*.

3:11 *Social trumpet*.

3:18 *Rumble*.

3:22 Long *social trumpet*.

3:27 Toka can be seen **Trunk-Twisting**, a sign that she is uncertain.

3:48 More *rumbles*.

4:00 *Rumble*.

4:04 *Social trumpet*.

4:13 *Social trumpet*.

4:18 *Rumbles*.

4:31 *Social trumpet* and *rumbles*.

4:39 *Social trumpet*.

4:37 Mara is streaming with temporal gland secretion [**Temporin**] and the floor is wet with pee [**Urination**].

4:47 Mara is climbing the bars in her effort to reach Toka.

4:56 More *social trumpets*.

5:58 Toka can be seen **Sniffing-Toward** the PAWS elephants.

ENDs

Summary: The video demonstrates the intense social nature of elephants. The behavior is similar to that observed in the wild when members of a family are reunited, or when they jointly experience an event of great social significance. As far as we are aware this is the first meeting between Toka and any of the PAWS elephants. One might, therefore, ask why they would exhibit such behavior toward one another. It may be that the relative lack of social network in captivity releases the extraordinary demonstrativeness in their interaction. I see no sign of aggression in their behavior.