

WOLF

T R A C K S

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It's 'Birthday Time'

Wolf rescue
The gift of a
lifetime

**All
about
ungulates**

**Welcome
Yuma &
Ukiah!**

What makes
Wolf Haven
International



Gift of a lifetime

The fine art of wolf rescue

Wendy Spencer, *Animal Curator*

OVER THE PAST MANY years Wolf Haven has provided lifetime sanctuary to wolves in need. Often, the animals that we are called upon to rescue have been neglected or abused or are facing destruction and Wolf Haven is their only hope. It is a call that we gratefully accept and a commitment that we do not enter into lightly. Never turning our backs on a wolf in need has become one of the organization's life missions and we have been honored to provide a permanent home to more than 150 animals over the course of the last 28 years.

Recently we were contacted about a pair of wolves who were in need of a new home. The brother and sister wolves, Yuma and Ukiah, were purchased as pups and were intended for the pet trade with a private owner. As is so often the case, the owner got in over his head and realized too late that raising a pair of young wolves is far more challenging than raising domestic dogs. As a result, the owner ended up with animals who were poorly socialized to humans and no longer tractable.

Sadly, last year the owner passed away and the care of the wolves fell to his widow, who wisely decided that it would be in the best interest for all concerned to place the pair elsewhere. However, trying to place two wolves left to their own devices since adolescence was a daunting task. Normal channels of adoption, like shelters, were not an option because "rehoming" these wolves within the private sector posed potential legal and liability issues. Another factor for consideration was that no one had been able to get close to these animals for over a year; just the task of catching them up required experienced handlers. That left only a facility like Wolf Haven.

Thankfully, we had a vacant enclosure for Yuma and Ukiah so Animal Care Specialist Daniel Curry and I headed out on another rescue mission. This time our destination was a remote location in the hills of northern California – a comparatively short trip for us.

PRIOR TO DEPARTURE, we made the decision to arrive a day early so that we could meet the wolves, see their enclosure and assess the situation. We knew that this was going to be a challenging undertaking, and we needed time to develop a strategy for



Yuma, one of the recently rescued pair. PHOTO BY JULIE LAWRENCE.

catching the pair up. Unlike many of the wolves that we rescue, who are usually confined to a small kennel or tethered to the end of a drag chain, these wolves were in a large, open space with no holding area or shelter to funnel them into. It has been our experience that when the private sector acquires wolves, seldom do they fully consider enclosure design. Not only are basic containment measures such as fence height and thickness frequently inadequate, but the majority of private owners don't give enough (or any) thought as to how to catch up their wolves should they turn out not to be tractable (or simply don't want to be caught). As a general rule, the more secure the space the better for the animal(s), but a smaller area within the confines of the enclosure is advantageous to funnel the animal(s) into if/when the need to catch them up arises.

Yuma and Ukiah's enclosure was approximately 1/8 of an acre in size, constructed of eight foot field fence on a steep incline. At the bottom of the hill, the dirt had begun to pile up, so in that corner the fence was not quite seven feet. Originally the fence was even lower in that area and it was only after Ukiah escaped over the top a couple of times that the owner tacked another two feet to the top of the existing fence. There was a large wood pile in the middle that the wolves had managed to dig a natural den under and a few small oak trees in the bottom and top corners.