

So long, Solo

Daniel Curry, *Animal Care Specialist*



WE RECENTLY LOST SOLO, the oldest resident at Wolf Haven. She was 17½ years old and age finally caught up with her. For as long as I knew Solo, seeing and hearing were always her weak points. These only progressively deteriorated with the continuous layering of years. Yet Solo faced her ever-changing world with such dignity and “Soloness” that her world was probably exploding with light and melodies. This is what I figured whenever I would catch her “smiling.”

I would often find Solo walking around oblivious to me or the goings-on outside of her enclosure. This was nice in many ways because it allowed

her to focus on the things she was doing rather than on what the people around her were doing. Solo would get so immersed in her world – whether it was walking around her enclosure on a sunny day or taking a nap under her favorite laurel bush, or possibly enjoying the company of her nephew Denali – that she would get startled once she noticed me. I can remember many times when I would wave my arms trying to make myself visible to her before she got startled.

continued on page 15

At left: Solo photographed in 1999; below: Solo as seen in 2008. JULIE LAWRENCE PHOTOS.



SOLO TRIBUTE continued from page 11

plant nurseries; the resulting young native plants are then planted onto native prairie preserves throughout the south sound area. These natives, in turn, enhance our rare butterfly habitat in preparation for future Taylor's Checkerspot butterfly relocations onto our site.

One of the last butterflies seen flitting about on our prairie for the season is the common wood nymph. The wood nymph has twin "eye spots" on the underside of its wings. This common ploy of nature fools potential predators into thinking its vulnerable eyes are located on the wing, thus allowing many a wood nymph to escape with its head still intact! The wood nymph tucks its eggs into mounds of native kinnikinnick and overwinters there. Wolf Haven's prairie has an abundance of kinnikinnick, and hence one of the greatest numbers of wood nymphs on the native prairies of the south sound. It's nice to see the dark winged visitors well into the fall, when other butterflies are already gone for the year. 🐾



Solo's adoption photo from fall of 2010. JUIE LAWRENCE PHOTOS.

She always looked happy and on a mission, that is until she saw me. Then, it was almost like, "Oh you're here, what do you want? Can't you see I am busy?"

Solo lived her life solidly as long as I knew her. I am pretty sure she was always like that. By solidly I mean she knew herself better than most. She knew when and who to let her sweet side out to. She knew when she had to fight. She knew when it was all right to offer trust. She also reluctantly knew when she needed help. Solo lived a long good life, unabated by her growing age until the very end. I remember the few times when she needed help getting out of her den. She was as stubborn about receiving help as most independent elderly beings are. But after much deliberation, she let us help pull her from her den. This only happened towards the latter part of her life. Solo faced death as she had faced everything else in her life, head on and without fear.

Toward the end of your path you noticed me as a friend instead of a caretaker. Thank you Solo, for the gifts given. 🐾