

Our Morning Star

Joe Engel, Animal Care Specialist

On Wednesday, November 6, 2002, Wolf Haven International experienced the loss of a lifetime resident and beloved friend in Morning Star.

Several weeks prior to her passing, Morning Star began exhibiting signs of frailty and it was not long before weight loss and restless behavior hinted at a much more serious prognosis. Although she had retained an appetite, and was willing to receive attention from her caregivers, it became obvious that something from which she might not recover had taken hold of her. As her health declined and a variety of medications failed to improve her condition, a decision had to be made... Her advanced age of 14 and deterioration of health, left us with the solemn determination that euthanization would be our only humane option.

Born at Wolf Haven in 1988, Morning Star spent the first years of her life with her siblings. While very young she was the most dominant female pup of her pack, but soon developed a gentle nature and slipped into the position of the lowest ranking wolf (the omega).

Eventually, Morning Star was paired with her surviving mate, Marius, with whom she spent the remainder of her long life. No longer a submissive animal, she became dominant once again as she'd been as a young pup which proved to be a perfect compliment to Marius' shy and subdued personality. In time, the two formed a powerful bond and would often be found lying next to one another in their wooded enclosure. The affection they shared ran deep, and the two seemed content in their role of educating Wolf Haven's guests from around the world.



Morning Star photo by Julie Palmquist.

Friendly and outgoing toward everyone, Morning Star excelled in her role as ambassador to her species. Her countless visitors can attest to her curious and affectionate nature and at a memorial attended by Volunteers and Staff, the most common observation of Morning Star's presence was how it touched children in a way unlike any other wolf in our sanctuary has ever done. Children, in particular, were captivated by her and her interest in them appeared to be equally as rewarding. Morning Star had an effect on children and adults that is difficult to explain and can never be forgotten. As Volunteer Tourguide Marty Weirich remarked, "She was always a wolf I could count on to really make an impression."

Survived by her siblings, Kiowa, Cris, and Little John, Morning Star will be remembered for the grace and dignity in which she lived and the extraordinary ways she touched our hearts.



Wolf No.2 (Continued from page 6)

overall population, with a combined total of at least 29 pups that survived well beyond their first year. Among those individuals, two dispersed to form their own packs known as the Swan Lake and Cougar Creek packs. His unknowing contributions to the biological success of Yellowstone wolf recovery live on in spite of his recent demise following a fatal encounter with other wolves, probably from the Geode pack.

I have noticed a hint of coincidence in #2's life and death: the first among 8 wolves to arrive in Yellowstone 8 years ago, his last litter* consisted of 8 pups, and he lived for 8 years (noteable, for any wolf in the wild); he arrived in Yellowstone in January, paired with his lifelong companion in January and was killed in January - probably by wolves from the same pack of 8 wolves that ended her life, months prior... insignificant

details that perhaps no one else would remark upon, yet to me, everything about #2 was utterly remarkable.

The death of #2, on the eve of the New Year, marks the end of an era. He and all of his peers transplanted to Yellowstone National Park in 1995, are now gone... their first indelible impressions upon the snow now faded from view.

I do believe in the wolves of Yellowstone, not only for the changes they've fashioned in people's hearts and minds. I am grateful to them for testing and reshaping our approaches to wildlife management by teaching us the necessity and rewards of living with a top predator. I believe in the awe they inspire and hope that in some way, I might help others to believe in them, too. 

**At least two news reports attribute 8 litters of pups to #2, however he and his mate were only together for seven breeding seasons and I have found no evidence of the Leopold pack ever having produced multiple litters.*