

Our beloved Tahoma

Jack Laufer, Curator

On August 6, 2002, Wolf Haven lost on of our oldest and closest friends, with the passing of Tahoma.

Tahoma had been a major part of our sanctuary for the past eighteen years, serving as an ambassador for her brothers and sisters in the wild, as well as being the loving mate of Onyx. After a very long life in which she outlived all of her siblings, her age finally caught up with her, and we saw that she simply could go on no longer.

Born in the Spring of 1984, Tahoma was a remarkable animal from day one. She was born to Princess Lilypad and Benonie, and shared the beginning of her life with five other puppies from the same litter. Starting life with a sooty-gray colored coat, and slate blue eyes, within a few months her eyes and coat had changed to the mixture of browns and gold that were to stay with her for the rest of her life.

Shortly after birth, it was difficult to distinguish Tahoma from her brothers and sisters, until we began bottle-feeding the pups. It was at that time that her dominating character was first noticed. It's not that she shoved her littermates away from the bottle; it's just that if she got a hold of a finger (thinking that it was the bottle) you had a problem: Tahoma was a ball of fur attached to your finger

that you were not going to shake off!

Later in her life, Tahoma always maintained her independence by viewing humans as rather large play-toys which were intended to be jumped on, knocked over and dragged – all in play, but it hurt nonetheless! On walks around the sanctuary as a young adult she was fairly controllable until she saw fresh buttercups. While buttercups may be flowers to us, they were big game for, to be stalked and chased; all with a helpless human in tow.

As an adult, Tahoma always maintained her independence, but she also showed an incredible willingness to cooperate and compromise with – and for – her mate. Onyx was very lucky to have shared his life with Tahoma, as she was very tolerant of him, and sensitive to his needs and personality. They were a grand pair, and he appears to miss her dearly.

Tahoma was fortunately in very good health until only a few days before her death. She was not moving well or eating on Saturday morning, but we were able to medicate her and she responded well. Three days later, we found her lying under the branches of an oak tree, unresponsive and unable to stand.

We summoned our Veterinarian, but before he arrived, Tahoma had passed away. In her own special way, independent to the very end.

Tahoma now lies in the cemetery we've created for our wolves, resting beneath an oak tree. It is our wish that she is now with her family again, roaming fields full of plump deer and meadows of buttercups.



Tahoma. Photo by Julie Palmquist.



Smokey. Photo by Julie Palmquist.

Good-bye, Smokey

Julie Palmquist, Communications
Director / Staff Photographer

Having a great deal of respect for the wolves at Wolf Haven and all wild animals, I must rely upon subtle body language to determine when and how an animal is comfortable being photographed.

Smokey's body language and vocal communications were anything but subtle. Time and time again, Animal Care Staff would assure me, "It's only show... You've got to win his confidence by not being intimidated..."

Gutturally growling at his caretakers before reducing himself to a quivering state over their attention or a canid cookie, Smokey

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When Tahoma was a pup, she acted as an off-site ambassador wolf. Wolf Haven discontinued its use of off-site ambassador wolves in 1989, feeling that both wolves and humans benefit more from observing wolves in their natural environment. Daily World photo by Greg Lehman.



Wolf Haven Volunteers and Staff attend a memorial ceremony for Smokey at his graveside, led by Kari Taylor, Wolf Haven Office Manager. Photo by Julie Palmquist.

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was always one for “setting the record straight” before letting his guard down. And so, I would wait (not being the least bit ashamed of appearing intimidated) until he was preoccupied by his snack or some other form of enrichment, before quietly observing him through my lens.

Known affectionately by Animal Care Staff as “Mochi-Mochi,” “Smoke,” and “Smokers,” Smokey was born in 1986 and lived the first few years of his life as a family “pet” until he began behaving less like a puppy and more like a maturing and essentially wild animal. Smokey arrived at Wolf Haven in 1990 and records tell of a slightly difficult adjustment period, followed by his eventual

uch with a beautiful submissive white companion wolf named Hurricane. The two occupied a private enclosure not located along Wolf Haven’s public walking tour route, because of Smokey’s

wariness of humans and unpredictable behavior... Some have speculated that, with a keen intelligence attributed to his kind, Smokey’s early experience of abandonment on behalf of humans led to an inherent mistrust of them. Following Hurricane’s death in 1997, it became evident that Smokey preferred to remain without subsequent canid companionship.

Whatever the inspiration for his behavior, Smokey was loved dearly for what he was and I treasured my moments near him. After a brief yet severe decline in health, Smokey was euthanized by Wolf Haven’s Veterinarian on Thursday, July 18, at 2:30 in the afternoon. Upon his death, and at his memorial service, a feeling of closure seemed to prevail for those who knew him, and an appreciation for what we were able to provide him with: Green grass beneath his paws, shady trees to lie beneath, a few trusted human servants for his keep... Haven among his kind and peace.

