

Daniel Curry, *Animal Care Specialist*

Denali

WHAT AN HONOR IT IS to be at a loved one's side while they pass from this life to the next. Sometimes this honor is intertwined with relief, for it means an end to a loved one's suffering. This was not the case as Wendy and I watched our friend Denali slip away from this life. He was not ready, but our feeble arguments held little weight with death, as it relentlessly pulled Denali from his body. CPR, respiration stimulants, IV fluids, nothing helped him, not even our prayers.

It was a hopeless feeling not being able to help our friend. If we could have seen that medical efforts were futile, we might have decided to just sit peacefully next to him in his enclosure as he passed on. Instead we fought tooth and nail to try to save him. We had no choice. Our actions the day he passed away were already decided the moment we took Denali on as our responsibility,

so long ago. At Wolf Haven, we vow to give the best care we can to our friends. We promise to fight for them no matter what the arena: whether it be a court room, muddy hole, or an unwelcome death bed.

We walk alongside them as friends every day. They give us gifts of love and trust, relationships and memories. The animals that are our responsibility are also our family. Wendy and I could not just sit by; we had to fight for our friend. We hope Denali knows we fought for him with all the love in our hearts. It was an honor to be next to Denali as he made that journey.

Denali, most of my views of you were obscured by brush. You would use



the vegetation as a cloak around your body to hide from us, flitting in, around and out of the brush like a whisper. I never had the chance to truly get to know you, but maybe in that mystery lay the core of your spirit. You were always one who wanted to be left alone. I hope you know we really respected that and tried to accommodate you in this regard as best as we could. I just pray that you know that love was always the guiding factor in our care for you. See you again Denali. 

Peyote – our final “duel”

ONE OF MY NEATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS at Wolf Haven International was to convince Peyote that I wasn't a bad guy. When I first met Peyote he was many things to me, but a friend he was not. He was so scared of me that he would just run around his enclosure until I left the area. It hurt my heart to see him so scared and know that I was the root of that fear. This took such a toll on me that I eventually just didn't spend time around him. I'd simply do my animal care duties and leave. After awhile, I realized that this was not helping Peyote either; he was just waiting out his fears. I was sad that Peyote couldn't find peace in the one spot that he should have had it.

One day after repeating this senseless self-perpetuating routine, I charged him. He had no clue what to do at first and was in limbo somewhere

between panic and curiosity. He froze and looked at me while I looked at him. I could almost hear western stand-off music playing as we squared off. Suddenly we both made a move – I turned to the left and ran as fast as I could outside his enclosure and Peyote raced along the fence next to me. It was just him and me, and we had finally found a common ground, not only to meet on but also to run on. I stopped, turned on a dime, he on a penny, and we both dug in for round two, counterclockwise.

Before I left I stopped to look at



him and say thanks and what I saw was him stopped, saying thanks to me. We took a moment and regarded one another as friends. The next time I did the sanctuary walk-through, I again heard western dueling music blaring in my mind as I saw Peyote slowly walk up to his launching position. It was too late – we were already biting at the ground with our feet before even realizing that we

had formed a new tradition that was going to be a long-lasting one.

Peyote and I never became extremely close like he was with some of the other people in his life. But in

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the state outside of Yellowstone National Park and the Wind River Indian Reservation. This leaves wolves in two other federally protected areas, Grand Teton National Park and the National Elk Refuge, subject to the state's management plan, drastically different than the missions and management responsibilities of national parks and wildlife refuges. This plan will harm continued recovery of wolves in Grand Teton.

Glimmer of hope

ON A POSITIVE NOTE, a proposed rider to the 2012 National Budget that legislatively delists wolves in Wyoming did not pass, and we will not have a repeat of 2010's legislated wolf management in the northern Rockies. Decisions involving endangered species are best left to experts in conservation, and we are relieved that the future of Wyoming's wolves will be decided through an open and fair process with plenty of citizen input!

Great Lakes Western Great Lakes wolves no longer considered endangered

Tami Williams, *Conservation Specialist*

THE USFWS CONSIDERS wolf populations in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin recovered and no longer requiring protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) as of January 21, 2012. Wolves will be managed by state and tribes, and will be monitored for at least five years to ensure that they continue to thrive; if not, they can be protected under the ESA again. There are currently more than 4,000 wolves in the three states (estimated 2,900 wolves in Minnesota, 690 in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, 782 in Wisconsin), exceeding recovery goals. The USFWS has also determined that all wolves in the Western Great Lakes region are *Canis lupus*, and not a mix

of *Canis lupus* and *Canis lycaon* as previously debated based on recent taxonomic information.



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some ways we got closer because we were able to experience two different kinds of relationships with one another. We were able to build a bridge across the gap between us and forge a friendship. Peyote, what a special guy you are. I miss you brother.



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educational expenses, like making banners, signs, flyers, things to attract the attention of the public. We try to stop bull fighting and hand out material in front of arenas. I also go to animal rights conferences and schools to talk about animal rights.

I'm asking you to generalize, but how do you feel that wolves are viewed by most people in Mexico.

I think that they are not so much "viewed" as they are not thought about at all. We need to put them in the panorama. Mostly, they are seen as aggressive animals because people are not well-informed. So the first thing is to inform people about how wolves behave in the wild, and that they are not hostile by nature. And how they have this complex social structure and what is their inner value that they have as a living being. Also, they are so mysterious and powerful. Stories like Little Red Riding Hood or the Twilight movies show the wolf as aggressive. They will defend themselves, but they will run away – they have their own life.

The biggest problem in Mexico is finding the best reintroduction location. Some people don't understand that they cannot be placed in cities, but must be in mountains where there aren't people. In Mexico, people leave the cattle to roam everywhere, so that's a big

issue that we should try to solve with education. You cannot say 'just put your cattle in a safe place', it's not that simple sometimes. Some communities do not have the money to put up big fences to protect their cattle. For them it's like 'my cattle goes first before any other animal', so education is needed about the importance of all parts of the environment. Neither the wolf neither the cattle should be seen as more important. We should look for equilibrium. Some work has been done in Mexico about how communities might take care of the wolves and their land at the same time and maybe make money through ecotourism.

Is there anything else that you would like to say?

I want to talk especially about Wolf Haven International because for me it has been – I have no words really! It's wonderful to find such a place where people work really hard, are really organized, live in harmony. You can feel that the environment is light and gentle. All this is done for the well-being of each wolf, not just to keep alive the species. Every wolf here, each one, is important. And the animal care team knows very well each wolf, their character, what they need, how they feel, everything. They take care of such detail. I'm very happy to find a team like this. I want to learn more about you. I have plans to come back next year maybe to work, to help you, to learn how I can transfer some of this to Mexico. I love that the animal care staff respects the animal's space so much. I said "Well, that's what we are, right – the wolves' servants." The people here are taking care of their needs and letting them have their own lives.

If I were a wolf I would definitely love to live here, more than in the wild. Living in the wild is very hard.



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