

Arctic Wolf Pups Make Smooth



Heather Wiczorek

Malik greets Lucas. Lucas' tender response to Malik demonstrates how well the introduction went in Ely this summer.

Transition Into Center's Pack

First encounter marked
by **playful** interaction.



Nancy Gibson

Lucas, Lakota, and Malik explore the enclosure in single file.

The morning of August 9, 2000 was a historic one for the International Wolf Center, when our two arctic wolf pups were introduced to our existing pack of adult wolves at the Center in Ely. Although the pups and adults had seen, smelled, and licked each other through the fence for six weeks, this was their first full-contact meeting!

This summer, the International Wolf Center undertook the socialization of arctic wolf pups for the purpose of expanding our educational effectiveness about wolves around the world. The two male pups were born at a private breeder's facility on May 8, raised by Board Member Nancy Gibson for the first seven-and-a-half weeks of their life, and then brought to the Center in Ely. A series of pup nannies helped Lori Schmidt, our wolf curator, continue their socialization

process until the bond between the pups and humans was cemented.

The pup introduction to the adults was carefully planned to avoid shifting the hierarchy dynamics of the existing pack. While the pups were in their overnight holding pen, Lakota and Lucas were each directed into separate holding areas. The pups' holding pen was then opened to the main enclosure, where they ventured out to explore and greet our alpha female wolf, seven-year-old MacKenzie.

by ANDREA LOREK STRAUSS

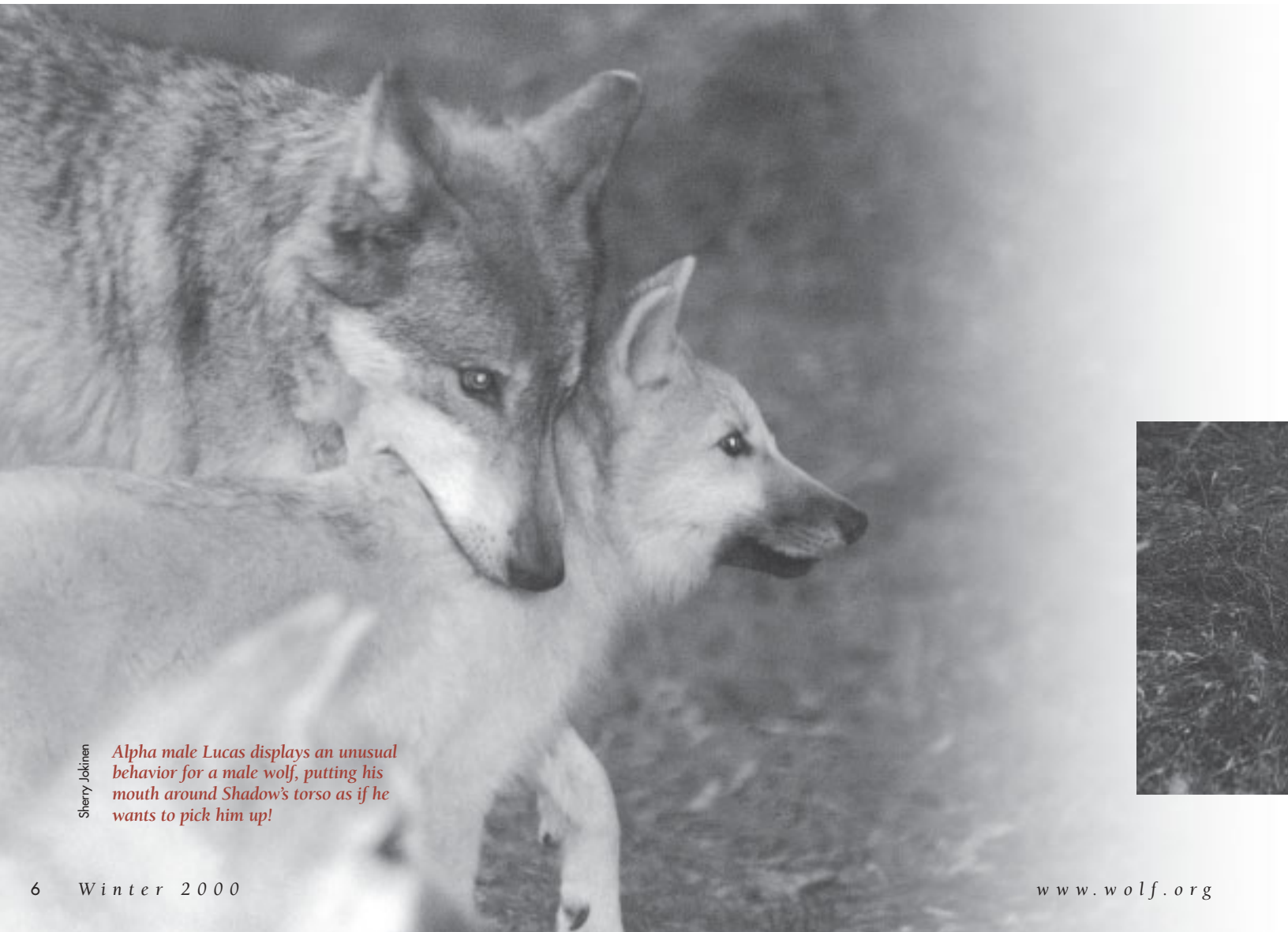
Thank You, Nancy Gibson!!

The International Wolf Center extends its sincerest thanks to Board Member Nancy Gibson, who nurtured and cared for Malik and Shadow, our two new arctic wolves, during the first weeks of their lives. Nancy's commitment, patience, and hard work has translated into two healthy, thriving wolves who have a new family and can help us extend our educational outreach even further. Thanks, Nancy!

The pups ran around, alternately exploring and greeting MacKenzie by licking her muzzle and smelling her. MacKenzie responded well to the pups, smelling them and following them as they explored. After about 15 minutes, Lucas, our alpha male, was let out of his enclosure, and he joined the smelling/licking/chasing romp. The pups continued to explore the new sights and smells of the main enclosure. When Lakota was released from her pen, she investigated the

pup enclosure at length before greeting the pups, apparently searching for food scraps.

As the next few hours unfolded, the interactions among the animals ranged from complete submission of the pups to the adults, to defensive snaps from the pups to the adults. The pups are learning their new subordinate role in the pack structure. At times, the pups were observed climbing over MacKenzie while she rested, muzzle mouthing



Sherry Jokinen
Alpha male Lucas displays an unusual behavior for a male wolf, putting his mouth around Shadow's torso as if he wants to pick him up!



Nancy Gibson

each of the adults, racing through the grass in the enclosure, and getting mouthed around the torso by the adults. Board Member Dave Mech commented that it seemed like Lucas was using his mouth to attempt to pick Shadow up by the torso, a behavior he had not observed in adult males before. Lucas' mouth fit nearly all the way around Shadow's torso!

Other behavior observed included active submission/roll over behavior by Malik to all of the adults; occasional submission by Shadow to the adults; Malik dominating Shadow; Shadow snapping at Lucas with Lucas jumping away; and general romping and exploring. Shadow's snapping could have been attributed to his insecurity with the adults, but it could also be related to the defense of a bone he had found in the enclosure. Wolf care staff anticipated this sort of pup behavior while the young ones establish their place in the pack structure.

The social dynamics of the new fivesome were watched around-the-



Nancy Gibson

Malik settles in.



Sherry Jokinen

Alpha female Mackenzie shelters Malik and Shadow during their first hours in the enclosure. Above left: Mackenzie (right) displays the motherly attitude she's taken toward the pups since they were introduced to the pack.

clock for the following ten days to ensure complete acceptance and tolerance of each other.

Important to the success of the pups' acclimation phase were the Behavioral Observation Teams, who donated their time to observe the pups and document their interactions. This surveillance was a preventive measure allowing for instant intervention should any problems arise.

During this time, Malik adapted easily to the new setting. He and Lucas developed a strong bond and they are often seen together. Shadow was more reserved and easily intimidated by growling and other dominant behavior from the adults, and would stand apart from the other wolves and seek out human contact whenever available. We expected the pups to take at least a few days to

develop relationships with the adult wolves, having been raised by humans. By day eight, the entire pack was observed playing and howling together, a good sign of their comfort level with each other.

Wolf care staff including Lori Schmidt, Nancy Gibson, Dave Mech, and former Wolf Curator Janice Templeton, were all pleased with the ease of the introduction and optimistic that things will continue to go well. The pups' development is featured on the Center's Web site (www.wolf.org), including Behavioral Observation Notes that detail specific interactions between the pups and adults. ■

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