



Tracking the Pack

The Pack Gets a Pond

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator

As northern Minnesota residents prepared for winter, the International Wolf Center was preparing for next summer. No, we didn't have the wrong month on the calendar; we were taking the opportunity of the slower fall season to improve the Center's wolf enclosure by constructing a new rock outcrop den and a two-tier pond system with a waterfall.

The new den measures 56 square feet and has two entrances. This will provide Lakota (the bottom-ranking wolf) a place to take refuge from the exuberance of the younger pack members, Shadow and Malik. The pond system consists of an upper pond measuring approximately 96 square feet, a lower pond, which covers approximately 500 square feet, and a 20-foot raceway, which connects the two ponds. The lower pond has a maximum depth of 3 feet, allowing the wolves to take a swim on warm summer days.

Researchers observing wild wolves have noticed the tendency of wolves to use high vantage points to survey their surroundings; the Center's captive wolves are no different. Visitors to the Center and viewers of

the Center's Web site (see www.wolf.org) have often observed one of the ambassador pack members standing on a rock in a regal pose. Additional boulders and rocks were added to the enclosure, allowing each wolf to have a rock to claim. As an added stimulus, we stacked three rocks on top of one another to provide ravens a spot to perch. Malik and Shadow appear to be mesmerized by ravens.

To complete this project with minimal disruption to the wolves, a temporary fence was installed to keep the wolves in the back of their wooded enclosure. Malik was most curious, while Shadow was a bit more fearful, but each spent time watching the movement of the contractors and their equipment. Mackenzie and Lucas took advantage of Shadow's intimidation and asserted their dominance over their younger pack member, who usually resisted their efforts. Lakota spent the time trying to avoid the redirected wrath of Shadow. On one evening, she sought refuge in the



Andrea Lorek Strauss

Malik watching Aaron Luestek of Luestek Construction working on the den site.

construction site by digging under the temporary fence and spending the night with the backhoe.

While these improvements to the enclosure will certainly enhance the wolves' physical environment, wolf care

staff are equally enthusiastic about the psychological stimulus these features will provide to the pack.

Thanks to all who supported this project. ■



Nancy Jo Tubbs



Lucas and Shadow (the white wolf) take a swim in the new pond.