



Tracking the Pack

Visitors to the Pack

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator,
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Life in captivity can sometimes become boring for wolves, and it is the Wolf Curator's duty to provide not only for the wolves' physical care but for their mental stimulation as well. This can be done in several ways including scheduling visits by wolf care staff, having dogs present for the summer "Canine Cousins" programs, and providing treats such as biscuits, pigs' ears, watermelons and frozen turkeys. Sometimes stimulating events occur on their own, as when native wildlife enter the enclosure.

I would like to focus here on the presence of native wildlife. Anyone who has been to the Center in winter or viewed the wolves on the Web cam has probably seen ravens in the enclosure. After the weekend "What's for Dinner" feeding program, there is usually food left over for the familiar scavengers to make a meal or two.

Usually, the ravens are agile enough to get away, but every so often the wolves get the edge and turn the scavenger into prey. This happened in December 2002. An entry in the wolf log posted at www.wolf.org read:

12-19-02

Program Specialist Jen Westlund writes: "Today at about 2 pm the arctics got a raven. I didn't see the actual situation of how they got it,

but Shadow was on top of the raven guarding it from Malik. They rolled on it, ripped off some feathers and took it up the hill. A group of ravens followed the wolves up the hill and displayed a very intense distress call."

Over the years, the wolves have had many native visitors to their enclosure. Some had the same fate as this raven, others escaped. Here is a list of wildlife observed in the enclosure:

Red fox: squeezed under the gate, probably in search of a carcass, but never made it past the wolves.

Pine marten: came in through the treetops, stayed

in the pen for several hours. The wolves frantically attempted to climb a tree to reach the marten, only to have it escape through the treetops while the wolves were having a midday nap.

A variety of small mammals: shrews, voles, mice, moles and red squirrels, but none as exciting as the Franklin's ground squirrels that make limited appearances in summer.

Birds, birds and more birds: chickadees, nuthatches, jays, finches, warblers, eagles, vultures, crows, woodpeckers, hawks.

Plan a visit to the Center's wolf enclosure to see wolves and so much more. ■



Left: After the wolves are done feeding, ravens scavenge the leftovers.

Below: Malik eyes ravens in the enclosure.



Nancy Schwartz, International Wolf Center