



Tracking the Pack

The Staff That Deliver the Care

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator,
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Maintaining a wolf exhibit requires many skilled and trained handlers, developing long-term relationships with individual animals. So, I'd like to dedicate this issue of "Tracking the Pack" to the Ely wolf care staff, who give their time, energy and creativity to the wolves every day.

Jen Westlund, Program Director. Jen has been active in the wolf care program since her days as an intern in 1999, when she conducted enclosure checks and spent time socializing with the wolves between the fences. She served as a nanny to the pups Shadow and Malik during their first week in Ely in July 2000 and continues to be an important member of the wolf care team. Jen vaccinated Lucas and Malik this year and was recently trained in chemical immobilization of wildlife.

Andrea Lorek Strauss, National Information and Education Director. Andrea began as a naturalist in 1994, when MacKenzie, Lucas, Lakota and Kiana were yearlings. Andrea also helped socialize Malik and Shadow and continues to work with both the Retired Pack and the arctic wolves.

Andrea often works weekends as wolf care lead and keeps the pack and enclosure functioning during unexpected emergencies.

Nancy Jo Tubbs, International Wolf Center Chair. Nancy Jo has been actively involved with the wolf care program since its beginning. As Wolf Curator, I recall Nancy's visits and willingness to help during our first temporary exhibit in 1989. She assisted with the socialization of the 1993 litter and of the arctics in 2000. She has just rearranged her life to assist with the socialization of the 2004 litter.

Gretchen Diessner, Assistant Director. Gretchen came to the Center in May 2001 and has been assisting the wolf care program since her first day on the job. Even though Shadow's growling keeps her outside the enclosure, she rarely misses the Monday 8 a.m. wolf checks.

Jon Zebrowski, volunteer. Jon was an intern at the Center in 1997 and now serves as the coordinator for the Boundary Waters Wilderness program at Ely High School. Jon assists with the retired wolves and works in the main enclosure when the

arctics are out of the enclosure. (A bit of arctic wolf aggression limits Jon from coming into the enclosure when the wolves are present.)

All of the core Ely wolf care staff will be participating in the socialization of the new pups during summer 2004. ■

So Long, but Not Goodbye

Recently, the Center staff said so long to Damon Haan, a Vermilion Community College natural resource student who has volunteered hundreds of hours to the wolf care program over the past three years. Damon has conducted wolf watches and scat collection, processed roadkills, constructed shelves to hold beaver carcasses, delivered medications, monitored chemical immobilization sessions and conducted educational programs. So long, but not goodbye—

Damon will be returning as the Assistant Wolf Curator for the summer 2004 to work with the new pups. When Damon left, a new student entered the program. James Yuenger, a recent graduate of the Boundary Waters Wilderness program at Ely High School, spent the past year working on a Minnesota Job Training program at the Center and will be attending Vermilion Community College's wildlife program. We look forward to James's assistance with the wolf care program for the next two years.



Volunteer Damon Haan with Jen Westlund (left) and Lori Schmidt

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