



Tracking the Pack

The Pups Join the Pack

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator,
International Wolf Center

August 9, 2004, was a long-awaited date for the International Wolf Center staff, nanny participants, ethology students, behavioral observation team members, Web cam viewers and the many visitors to the Ely educational facility. On this day the newest ambassador wolves, pups Grizzer, Maya and Nyssa, joined the adults Shadow and Malik in the Exhibit Pack.

Let's first review the preparations that led up to this event. The three pups were socialized to humans from 12 days of age (8 days for Nyssa) so that they would respond positively to humans. This is no easy task since wolves inherently mistrust people—actually, any unfamiliar activity near their enclosure.

During the first 3 months of their lives, the pups were

exposed to the sights and sounds of the Center's main enclosure and its surroundings, such as weed eaters, wheelbarrows, tarps, fly ointment, ear cleaning, vaccinations and the dogs that frequent the wolf lab. One dog in particular played an important role in preparing the pups for the introduction: Jake, my shepherd-



Nancy jo Tubbs

Above: After Malik and Shadow were let into the enclosure, the pups began muzzle licking and groveling.

husky-greyhound crossbreed. Jake was very good at demonstrating dominance with the growls, muzzle bites, and pins to the ground typical of an adult canid in a controlled wolf lab setting. The pups were first intimidated by Jake but then began to submit to the behavior, and by the last session they were following Jake around, muzzle licking and groveling. The staff wanted to be sure that the pups could tolerate the intensity of an adult canid's dominance display before they met Malik and Shadow.

A few other steps were taken before the introduction:

- Malik and Shadow's food consumption was maximized on the night before the introduction (they were fed two raw turkeys—a change from



International Wolf Center Board of Directors' Resolution in Appreciation of Lori Schmidt

September 10, 2004

BE IT RESOLVED: The Board of Directors of the International Wolf Center acknowledges the outstanding service and dedication that you have provided to the Center in caring for our three new wolf pups. As they have grown from fragile newborns to their current robust state, you have given exceptional care to these pups and met their many needs. In addition, you also cared for the dozens of pup nannies who lent a hand in raising the pups. You did all this while continuing to care for our retired pack of wolves. Beyond the "on-the-ground" care, you also enabled thousands of other people to share the pup-raising experience through Web photos and stories.

You have our heartiest thanks for a job done extraordinarily well!

Editor's note: We know Lori would not accept this appreciation without acknowledging her tremendous wolf care staff: Joyce Riveroll, Damon Haan, Donna Prichard, Nancy jo Tubbs, Andrea Lorek Strauss, Jen Westlund and Larisa Skujins. Thanks to all!



Ellen Dietz



Nancy Jo Tubbs

Top to bottom: Shadow and Malik both regurgitated food for the pups—a good sign that the introduction was on the right track.

Shadow took the lead in greeting and making the pups submit.

By noon, all pups had been in the pond, discovered cached turkey, and been face-to-face with the public at the viewing windows.



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- The pups were familiarized with water since the main enclosure has a large pond.
- Tools for intervention and distraction were gathered: beaver tails, beaver feet, bite sticks and Y-poles. The Center's veterinarian was ready with immobilization drugs.

their normal beaver-and-deer diet).

- The pups were kept somewhat hungry the morning of the introduction to encourage food begging.
- Some of the straw from the pup enclosure was put into the exhibit area to give the pups a familiar smell when they entered the enclosure.
- The pups were acclimated to the smell of the vegetation that dominates the enclosure (wormwood).

- A last-minute call was made to the Wildlife Science Center for professional consultation with Peg Callahan for a final review of the introduction plan.

The wolf care team gathered at 5 a.m. the morning of the introduction. The staff entered the main enclosure to greet Shadow and Malik and to remove a protective steel plate that covered the gates to the pup pen.

As hoped, the adult wolves were full and lethargic. At 5:30 a.m., staff member Andrea Lorek Strauss opened the gates to the pup pen and let Shadow and Malik into a small holding area adjacent to the pup enclosure. Initially, the pups didn't even notice the adults were there. Staff members Jen Westlund and Damon Haan called the pups to the enclosure, and before there was face-to-face contact, Shadow regurgitated for the pups. This was a good sign that the introduction was on the right track, so Shadow and Malik were released into the pup pen. The pups immediately began muzzle licking and groveling, behavior similar to what they did with Jake. Again, Shadow regurgitated a large pile of turkey for the pups, and Malik contributed a smaller regurgitation. The pups seemed to be focused on Shadow, who took the lead in greeting and making the pups submit. This behavior continued for about 30 minutes, and it appeared that Shadow was using very soft bites with the pups, although his growls were intense.

At approximately 6 a.m., the gates were opened to the main enclosure. Grizzer was the first to exit the pup pen, followed by Maya, then Malik. Nyssa became confused about how the others got out of the pen and continued to run up and down the fence in the pup pen. Shadow followed her but then exited the pen. Wolf care staff member Damon Haan eventually picked up Nyssa and showed her the exit door. By this time, Grizzer had already found the pond and took his first swim. He was extremely interested in the upper waterfall and even took a slide from the upper pond down the waterfall to the lower pond.

By noon, all pups had been in the pond, discovered cached turkey, and been face-to-face with the public at the viewing windows. They settled down to sleep the day off. Not a bad start for the newest Exhibit Pack members. ■