



Tracking the Pack

Three Subspecies, But Still All Wolf

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator,
International Wolf Center

For those of you who follow the lives of the Center's captive wolves through wolf logs, webcams and Youtube videos, you may already know that the Center is experiencing an historic event. It is the first time we are managing three age structures and three subspecies in the Exhibit Pack.

As the International Wolf Center, it is our mission to teach people about

wolves all over the world, not just the wolves found in Ely, Minnesota. Visitors can see the physical differences between the *arctos* subspecies that survives in the harshest climates in North America, the *nubilus* subspecies that has recolonized across the great lakes region, and the *occidentalis* subspecies that is making a comeback in the western

United States. Clearly, when one looks at the Exhibit Pack, one can see the differences, but there is more to this wolf exhibit than looks. The question is, do these subspecies act differently?

To help us answer this question and record the behavioral data, Center staff utilizes an Ethogram, developed specifically for the Exhibit Pack. So, What's an Ethogram?

Wikipedia defines an Ethogram as: "In ethology, an Ethogram is a catalog of the discrete behaviors typically employed by a species. These behaviors are suffi-

ciently stereotyped that an observer may record the number of such acts, or the amount of time engaged in the behaviors."

In our behavioral observations, a wolf is driven by innate behavioral responses to stimuli, and while physically different, the responses from each of these individual wolves are similar. If a wolf is exhibiting more dominance, tail responses, ear postures and facial expressions will show its

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A constant feature of the International Wolf Center's captive wolves is various types of interactive behavior.

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In honor of
Nancy Jo Tubbs:
Kathleen Kilpatrick

In honor of
Michael Vieths:
Michael Heinsohn
Brenda Sherrod

In honor of
Susanne Wentz:
Holland Etheridge

In honor of
Joanne Wessels:
Sandy Eaton

In honor of Grizzer,
Maya, Aidan,
Denali and in loving
memory of Nyssa:
Christian Mueller

Matching Gifts and Foundations

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on behalf of:
Lois Nichols

status. Conversely, a submissive wolf will lower its head, flatten its ears and roll to the ground, seeking acceptance from a more dominant wolf. A wolf will guard its food from any other pack member by showing a lip curl, then following through with a lunge display if threatened. Is there extra food after a meal? Caching behavior is witnessed with the wolf using its nose to tamp and cover the valuable resource. Regardless of the geographic region, the wolf has evolved to be a pack animal and these are the behaviors

necessary to communicate and live in a pack.

Dog owners may even recognize these responses in the domestic dog, as many of these instinctual behaviors remain after thousands of years of domestication. If you would like to learn how to record the behaviors inherent to wolves and dogs, the Center has produced the Ethogram in a soft copy book or in a web-based DVD format that includes video clips. To purchase either of these Ethograms, check out the Wolf Den store at www.wolf.org. ■



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