

# Wild Kids

The title 'Wild Kids' is written in a colorful, hand-drawn font. Below the text is a silhouette of a wolf in a running or leaping pose.

## Ambassador Wolf Behavior

International Wolf Center visitors often ask our staff what the ambassador wolves might be thinking—especially when the wolves come up to the windows and peer inside. People assume they may be interested in food or looking for wolf care staff, but in fact, we have no way of knowing exactly what animals think or feel.

Some people believe they think or feel the same things humans do, but it's not that simple. In fact, there is a word for this kind of thinking: *anthropomorphization*. That big, hard-to-pronounce word means “giving human qualities to something that is not human,” whether it's an object or an animal such as a wolf.

We must remember that wolves are *not* human, and because of that, we cannot assume they feel the same things we feel. To learn about animal behavior, we watch them over and over again, looking for patterns that might explain what they are trying to do—and why. So, whenever you hear people assign human thoughts or emotions to animals, remember that this is not always accurate. We reach conclusions about animal behavior based only on repeated observations. ■



Denali

Leanne Martin



Andrew Broz

Above: Axel peeks over the window ledge into our auditorium.

Left: Denali looks at the visitors inside the building. Ambassador wolves are socialized, so they're comfortable with having humans nearby.

Right: Grayson stands alertly, showing us those typical gold eyes.

Below: Axel munches on deer ribs.



**Q: Do wolves eat in a certain order, and is the order based on dominance?**

**A:** Not really. Dominance is important in wolf packs, but mainly for keeping order among pack members and ensuring that every member cooperates with others while hunting. Wolves take down prey that can outweigh them by 500 to 1,000 pounds or more. One kick by a bison or a moose can kill a wolf, so pack members need to work together to take down such large prey without getting injured.

With large prey, all the pack members might be able to eat from it simultaneously. With smaller prey, the parents take charge and see that the pups are allowed to eat; the yearlings and any other sibs are allowed to eat later. Sometimes the hungriest wolves may jump on a carcass, as well—and typically, the wolf that happens to be standing directly over a small carcass has the right to defend it or share it.

**Q: What is the usual eye color of wolves? Can they be blue?**

**A:** Most wolves have golden-brownish eyes as adults. Wolf pups start out with blue eyes, but they usually do not stay blue. They change to gold or turn amber or brown after a few weeks. They can also turn to light hazel.

# WOLF FAQ.