



The eyes of Seneca

HOWL CHRONICLES

February 2019

The Wolf Mountain Nature Center

562 Hopkins Crandall Rd., Smyrna, NY 13464
(607) 627-6784

twmncwolves@yahoo.com
TheWolfMountainNatureCenter.org

(a non-profit 501(c)3 organization)
Founded in 2006 by Will Pryor

Head Animal Caretaker's Message...Will Pryor

Winter rounds checking fence lines, water buckets, and the animals' behaviors often can be magical. Winding through snow covered spruces, balsams, and pines bent down creating a kind of snow cave effect I cross paths with some fresh wild eastern coyote and grey fox tracks. The hardwood trees look like they are flexing their muscles in defiance to the weight of the fresh snowfall. The quiet early morning air welcomes the ancient song of the center's wolves howling along with their noisy barking and yipping coyote neighbors. It's a celebration of a new day; the sun is climbing higher in the sky and the days are noticeably longer. This is my New Year's celebration—giving thanks to the earth for continuing to cycle and provide all we need to survive and live well.

As I walk around the North Pack's 9+ acre enclosure, I recall my early morning walk here with a cup of coffee many years ago envisioning

this future home. I can still feel the physical pain of fencing this natural habitat that was over eight years in the making. Today I wonder if there will be pups born here in April...

Our older wolves are utilizing their wood shelters and raised platforms more as they age. Like me after a long day, it's nice to sit and rest the bones.

As the snows cover and protect Mother Earth, these slower days give me the chance to observe winter and breeding season behaviors in the animals, and to plan for upcoming projects. I'm concerned that because of current tariff prices, the costs of steel supplies such as poles and fencing will make new projects more difficult to fund.

All in all, it has been a good year. I have come to accept the loss of older animals. Still, I will miss their physical presence every day.

Working with these wolves is an honor and I will continue to provide for their social, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. They, in return, give to me and all who are aware, the enduring spirit of the wolf.

And so, another day comes to an end--the winter sunsets are breathtaking from the caretaker's cabin—I wonder if the wolves have stopped to watch the painted sky as well...

Ah ho!
Walk in balance

Will Pryor





critter capers



Nipahwi & Tashina

Nipahwi has learned increased tolerance and sharing with his pack mate, Tashina. On several occasions they have received pumpkins or gift-wrapped presents filled with wolf treats such as livers, kidneys, hearts, and chicken. In the past, Nipahwi would become very food aggressive and not allow Tashina any of the special treats; however, over the past few months, Nipahwi has focused on his stash of goodies and left Tashina alone to enjoy hers. Due to this food guarding behavior, the two have not been given any deer as caretakers did not want to possibly instigate any fights between the two wolves. Recently our DOT folks have been dropping off numerous deer at the center (sometimes as many as four in one day!), so our head animal caretaker decided it was a great time to



give Nipahwi and Tashina the opportunity to enjoy some venison. Each was given a large, meaty rear deer leg which both thoroughly enjoyed! Nipahwi was so thrilled with his “catch” that he pranced around with it for several minutes before urinating on it to let Tashina know that this meat was most definitely HIS! Tashina, on the other hand, was so grateful to once again have deer that she settled right in to wolf hers down. Though Nipahwi tries hard to be the boss of the habitat, caretakers often observe the two playing together, yet Nipahwi has learned that when Tashina wants her space and alone time, he smartly obliges (most of the time).



Dyani, Okwaho, & Sequoyah

As mid-winter approaches, signs that the wolves are nearing breeding season become more and more evident. Dyani (our breeding female) spends measurably more time scrutinizing the landscape for suitable denning sites and has begun excavations on new and existing dens. Her chosen mating partner, Sequoyah, patrols the nine plus acre enclosure with more frequency searching for potential threats and intruders. Some of his perceived intruders include some of our animal caretakers, especially the males, resulting in only a select few being allowed a very cautious entry into

Sequoyah’s territory. Our staff have been carefully trained in wolf behaviors and body language, their messages, and how to react. Of course, we always respect the wolves’ wishes and follow their rules prior to entering their enclosures.

Okwaho has been deemed the omega, or lowest ranking wolf in the North Pack, and has learned to keep his distance from Dyani when she is in one of her “moods”. Dyani often chases Okwaho at top speed through the habitat with the intent of nipping him in the butt, yet a mere few minutes later, the two will be seen playing together. Talk about mixed messages! However, when a deer carcass is brought into the enclosure, Okwaho is often the first to begin eating.



Tala & Tamarack



With the passing this winter of her mother Natani, Tala has taken a bit of time to howl again. Although Tala and Natani had a very contentious relationship, Natani was still “grandmother wolf” whose howl signified the onset of the entire group of fourteen wolves. Without her voice, Tala seemed a bit confused and did not join in howls for several weeks after her momma’s death.



As time passed, Tala’s howl returned. A week after Natani had passed on, Tala and Tamarack were allowed into Natani’s enclosure to scent mark and investigate all the unfamiliar odors. The two spent hours checking every tree, fence post, food cache spot, and den—a fantastic enrichment activity for them! Staff and visitors were happy to once again look out the gift shop windows and witness wolves looking back at them!

Tamarack and Tala are doing great together despite their age difference (Tamarack will be four this spring while Tala turns eleven). Numerous dead deer have been donated by our local DOT and these two wolves absolutely enjoy their meals of venison and share very well. Though Tamarack’s energy level and stamina is at a much greater level than Tala’s, they both run after one another at top speed while playing. One of our goals here is to have the wolves in spacious sized enclosures where running, chasing, and exercising is easily achieved, thus allowing healthier, happier animals.

Cayuga & Seneca



Two of the center’s black phase wolves, these brothers look stunning against the white winter snows! While Cayuga continues to be the dominant of the two, Seneca certainly stands his ground when a deer is brought in. For whatever reason, Seneca and Cayuga seem to be the most reserved and “shy” about interacting with caretakers compared to the other wolves. Animal Caretaker Pam has been coaxing these guys with fresh apples to ease their apprehensions. Both wolves are responding—after all, who can resist a ripe juicy apple? Seneca now greets Pam at the gate searching for his special treat which he gently takes from her hand. Cayuga runs over in anticipation of the reward but is still a bit hesitant; he has only taken the apple

directly a few times but is improving and hopefully understanding that staff are safe and pose no threat. He continues to growl at Seneca when Seneca is getting attention from staff, but it is still unclear as to whether Cayuga is trying to protect his brother from staff or if he is simply jealous.

Once spring arrives and cleanup/repairs are completed in Natani’s old enclosure, Cayuga and Seneca will be relocated into that space for their new home. Their current habitat is surrounded by open space on three sides which proves to be a bit stressful on the brothers during days with high numbers of visitors. The new space is more secluded from openness and visitors, yet still affords guests an opportunity to see the wolves through the gift shop windows.



Nakoa and Dancing Turtle



This father and son duo continue to impress folks with their large stature of robust Arctic wolves. Being almost thirteen and eleven years old, the two have less energy than the younger ones do and instead prefer to nap on the decks of their shelter. However, when deer is brought in, they both experience a renewed vitality and exuberantly dive into their preferred meal. In less than one hour, Nakoa and Dancing

Turtle can polish off an entire adult deer; of course their bellies are completely full and round almost to the point of looking uncomfortable, but wolves' stomachs are built to overeat thus allowing them to either survive off the contents of their bellies for many days or to carry the food back to their dens to regurgitate for hungry young pups.

Having been in their current enclosure for less than a year and a half, Dancing Turtle and Nakoa are doing great and seem to be very comfortable in their space. Each has a favorite tree where he can be found when not on the shelter' decks. The boys have seemed to mellow with age yet get super excited when caretakers come to visit. Both run with enthusiasm to staff and rub against them almost as if to say, "scratch my head!" If ignored, they will nudge staff in a determined way until they receive the attention they desire.



Cypress & Tauriel

It is hard to believe our "pups" are almost two years old already! Except for an obvious growth and physical development factor, these siblings still act very much like young puppies in many ways. Their relentless energy knows no boundaries and they are often seen running full speed around their huge enclosure. Usually Cypress is chasing his sister in play, but Tauriel is certainly quicker and more agile and can easily outrun her brother. When Cypress does catch Tauriel, she typically gives in to his playful chewing until it gets too rough—then beware as she snaps at



him to give her some space! Tauriel is also our jumping wolf; when she sees the food truck coming or if caretakers are entering the airlock in preparation for a visit or clean up, Tauriel springboards straight up off the ground sometimes as high as six or more feet! Good thing their fence is eight-foot-tall with an additional two-foot jump guard!

As growing youngsters, Cypress and Tauriel also receive a fair amount of deer to feed on. While the deer supplies needed nutritional value, it also provides the wolves with enrichment activities. Although the deer are delivered already deceased (almost always road kill), the young wolves can practice their "attack" skills, investigate unfamiliar scents, cache the food, and practice guarding their meal. All of these behaviors are typical instinctive skills wolves would require to successfully survive in the wild.

2018 Farewells

Natani 4/2/06-12/18/18

Almost thirteen years ago the first two wolves arrived at Wolf Mountain Nature Center. Coming from two separate litters, the pups were six weeks old and in time were named. Nakoia, the white male, meaning “warrior” and the gray female Natani meaning “daughter” thus opened the book to chapter one of founder Will Pryor’s vision of Wolf Mountain. The two wolves grew quickly and in 2008 produced a litter of three healthy pups of their own: Tala, Tashina and Dancing Turtle completed the initial pack of five. Natani was an excellent mother who was very defensive of her precious pups; she would not allow staff to enter her enclosure. Will learned quickly just how fast a mama wolf can go from 0 to 40 mph!



For the past 12 years Natani gifted the winds with her deep ancient howl and she came to earn the title of “Grandmother Wolf.” She became more beautiful with age and grew into a much kinder, gentler animal allowing staff more physical contact with her. After losing her partner and enclosure mate Hunter two years ago, Natani seemed to really enjoy being in a space by herself (her pups had long since grown up and moved to enclosures with packs of their own). It is with sad hearts that we must announce the passing of Natani on December 18. She had gone to the veterinarian for an exam of her bleeding mouth and after a lengthy surgery to remove some molars and a rather large tumor of what appeared to be oral cancer, Natani left this world shortly afterwards, leaving a huge void at the center.

In the words of Founder Will Pryor: “Thank you Natani for being the first wolf to bless this land with your presence. Your legacy lives on in your offspring and your spirit, now joined with Hunter, will linger on and on. There are no words in the human language that can ever tell you how grateful I am to have experienced your spirit—I will joyously meet you again one day on the wolf trail. Have a great journey. Ah Ho.”



Annui 6/2/14-11/20/18

One of four Arctic Fox kits born here at the center in 2014, Annui was always a feisty girl. Being the smallest of the foxes, she would find the tiniest little soft spot in the dirt and start digging and digging until she had created a hole just large enough to squeeze her small body through in an attempt to escape the confines of her enclosure and go explore the world. Our eagle-eyed staff would always catch her in the act and retrieve Annui. Of course, caretakers would then haul in more stones and cinder blocks until eventually the entire perimeter of her pup enclosure was fortified. When sneaking out the bottom was no longer an option, Annui then decided to explore the upper junctures of the fencing and on two occasions, managed to get herself stuck between layers of fencing and the roof. Again, caretakers were taught another valuable lesson

about keeping foxes safe and secure! As the permanent large fox habitat was constructed when the foxes currently reside, workers scrutinized every inch of the enclosure searching for possible escape routes. We decided to layer the entire “floor” of the space with chain link fencing which has proven very effective. In addition, the significantly larger space has so many areas to climb, crawl, and squeeze safely, that the foxes have not been found to dig.

Annui loved to test new caretakers; she often nipped at heels or grabbed items away from staff. She also was our most vocal fox and loved to “scream” at the others, sounding somewhat like a monkey. She passed away quietly in her sleep one night, but her lively spirit lives on in our hearts.

Arctic Foxes

The Arctic Foxes are so comfortable now that the cold and snow have finally arrived! Although they are incredibly adaptable, chilly winter is when they appear to be the most comfortable and playful. They have thoroughly enjoyed their deer legs over the past several weeks. Interestingly, this season their thick fur coats were delayed in turning from the summer gray/brown to the winter whites. Since this coat change is triggered by phototropic environmental factors we wonder if the changes in our climate plays a role in this delay. And if so, will it affect the wild Arctic Foxes ability to continue to thrive and survive?



Coyotes

Our four Eastern Coyotes are all healthy and strong and doing well. Sitka and Kaliska have received deer this winter, but still seem to prefer their chicken and beef hearts for dinner. Several months ago, all three of the males (brothers) were neutered and caretakers have noticed a marked decrease in the coyotes' aggression and hostility towards one another. Kaliska continues to enjoy being the only female yet she still rules their domain. Kenai has become very friendly with staff and loves to watch the dogs play in the backyard. Now that funds have been secured, construction on the new coyote habitat will begin once the winter weather ceases.

Wishes and Wants: As a non-profit we rely heavily on donations. Below are some of the many items that would help the center. If you can help, please contact us or simply bring the item(s) on your next visit! Thank you!

Animal Care

- Red meats
- Chicken (store bought)
- Venison
- Non-latex gloves (lg)
- 5-gallon buckets w/ handles and lids
- Water lines (black plastic)
- Metal Rakes/Shovels

Landscaping/Maintenance

- Concrete mix
- Picnic tables & benches
- Fence Posts
- Used or new fence
- Lumber
- Use of bobcat with auger
- Small equipment repair
- Cattle Panels
- Firewood (for campfire/heating)

Office/Classroom

- Postage stamps
- Printer paper (all colors)
- Cardstock paper (all colors)
- Printer ink (hp 902XL/902)
- Hand sanitizer
- Baby wipes
- AA batteries
- 30 or 55-gallon garbage bags
- Brown paper lunch bags

Volunteer Spotlight: George Rogers

George began working at the center in 2013 when he responded to a plea on Facebook for folks to help with building projects. Since then he has assisted with all types of projects including building construction, erection of fencing for enclosures, and repairing and operating machinery at the center. He has become our “go-to” guy when anything needs fixing. After several years at Wolf Mountain, George completed training to become an Animal Caretaker; hence he spends a fair amount of time with our foxes, coyotes, and wolves. He usually has a big smile on his face and shares his knowledge of the animals with visitors during tours. George plays the role of the woodcutter in our play in the woods version of Red Riding Hood.

When not at the center, George works for a local DOT and brings many road kill deer to the wolves and coyotes! He also enjoys spending time with his daughter and racing cars at Anchors Away Speedway!



Volunteer Spotlight: Shenequa Perry



Shenequa started volunteering at Wolf Mountain in May 2018 as a Junior in High School. With completion of courses in Honors Biology and Animal Science, experience working directly with animals at a veterinarian’s office, and an active member of her local Environmental Club, Shen is a perfect match for the center! Additionally, she has hands-on experience with agricultural fence construction and is a huge asset when building wolf enclosures. As a dedicated, quick learner and hard worker, Shen has recently begun the training program to become an Assistant Caretaker with our Arctic Foxes.

Currently a high school Senior, Shen’s aspirations are to continue her education at college with a focus on biology and environmental science.

Open Hours and Admission Rates

*Last admission is 30 minutes prior to closing time.

	Sundays	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fridays	Saturdays
Regular Season September 1 – June 30 (closed in January)	Open 12 – 4 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Self or Guided Tours	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Summer Season July 1 – August 31	Open 12 – 4 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Self or Guided Tours	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open 11 am – 3 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Self or Guided Tours	Open 12 – 3 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Self or Guided Tours
Admission	Children 5 & under Free Folks 6 & up \$5.00	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Children 5 & under Free Folks 6 & up \$5.00	Children 5 & under Free Folks 6 & up \$5.00

2019 Special Programs

Wolf Communication Programs

Learn the variety of methods used by wolves to communicate including scent marking, body language, and vocalizations. Understand why wolves howl and the distinct types of messages behind each howl. We finish with a pack howl!

February 16 4pm – dark
 March 23 5pm – dark
 April 20 6pm – dark
 May 18 6:30pm – dark
 June 15 7pm – dark
 July 13 7pm – dark
 July 27 7pm – dark
 August 10 7pm – dark
 August 24 7pm – dark
 September 14 5pm – dark
 October 26 4pm – dark
 November 9 3pm – dark
 December 14 3pm – dark

All Howl Programs are held on Saturday evenings and include tours of all wolf & coyote exhibits. (Please note that our Arctic Fox exhibits are closed during this program.) This is a group tour/lecture—visitors are expected to remain with the group at all times.

Admission is \$5.00 per person (5 and under are free)



Camping with the Wolves (requires pre-registration; \$75 fee; ages 12 and up only)

Camp under the stars with the wolves nearby! Includes tours, howl program, dinner, breakfast, guided hike, evening campfire program at the tipis, and the option to assist caretakers with animal feeding. Visit website for more details.

July 13-14
 July 27-28
 August 10-11

Photography Options

Wolf Photography Sessions (requires pre-registration; \$75 fee; limit of ten persons per session)

Begins with a 30-minute classroom presentation followed by a 10-minute easy hike to the photography platform situated above fence lines where participants will have up to two hours to take pictures.

February 16 9am – 11am
 September 14 8am-10am
 October 26 8am – 10am

Arctic Fox Photography (requires pre-registration; \$50 fee; limit of four persons per session)

Begins with a 30-minute classroom presentation followed by an approximate 45-minute photo taking session with no fencing obscuring views.

Every Sunday in February & March
 12:30-2pm

Special Events

Visit our website as specific events approach for more details and for additional special events and programs. All Special Events include tours of wolf, Eastern coyote, & Arctic fox exhibits.

**Admission \$5.00 per person
(5 and under free)**

Wolves & Watermelons July 28 12 – 4 pm

Includes tours, animal enrichment programs with watermelons which can be filled by visitors, free melon for visitors too!

Honoring the Spirit of the Wolf October 13 11 am – 4 pm

Includes tours, sled dog demonstrations, zoo exhibits, children's tent, Native American tipi program, DEC exhibit, animal enrichment programs with pumpkins, food vendors, and more!

Winter with the Wolves December 8 11 am – 3 pm

A celebration of the winter solstice and holidays. Tours, sled dog demonstrations, Grinch, and the presentation to the animals of their own holiday gifts and treats!

