

# A requiem to our deceased residents

Wendy Spencer, Sanctuary Director



An aerial photo of Wolf Haven's cemetery (foreground) and part of the Mima prairie beyond. *Marc Lawrence.*

**AS YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED** from the tributes included in this issue of Wolf Tracks, winter was a difficult time when we had to say goodbye to several of our old friends.

Losing one of our sanctuary residents is never easy. Whether their passing is quick and unexpected, the end to a long disease process, or simply, old age, each one touches us in their unique way. For many of our wolves, we are faced with the difficult task of helping them along when their quality of life is diminished. However, as difficult as that decision can be, we know it will ease their suffering and allow them to find peace as they transition from this life to wherever their journey takes them – our final gift to a friend. Each passing has deepened our profound reverence for the ebb and flow of life and we are honored to bear witness to this intricate cycle.

As part of our obligation as a sanctuary, we commit to treating each wolf, wolfdog or coyote who finds refuge here with compassion, respect, and dignity from the day they arrive until their end of days. As some of you may know, we have a cemetery on site for the residents who have passed on. Many of the animals are buried here – in fact, in the early years, that was what we did for all of our deceased residents. However, in recent years we shifted away from burying them to cremating them- this allows us to bury the ashes of bonded pairs or family groups who pass away at different times together.

Whether burying the body or the ashes, it is a sacrosanct ritual for animal care staff. As a team, we choose the location and we each take part in digging



**Wolf grave sites are lovingly cared for and maintained. Below: A memorial bench provides for restful reflection. *Wolf Haven.***

the grave (though admittedly for the ashes it doesn't involve much digging). Each person then takes a handful of the ashes and gently places them, often reflecting upon a favorite memory of the respective animal. We carefully cover the site, and each grave is marked with a headstone. Lastly, we save a few ashes to let the breeze softly carry them across the prairie, out into the

universe, as we wish our friend safe travels.

The cemetery, which is situated on the prairie, is a hallowed, peaceful place where nature pays tribute with flora and fauna. Staff, volunteers, and the public are encouraged to visit the cemetery and share in the reverence that is the cycle of life – and a requiem for a friend.





Tribute

# carosal

"WHO'S THE COYOTE I CAN SEE THROUGH THE WINDOW?" ONE OF OUR NEW VOLUNTEERS ASKED ONE DAY. I POLITELY REPLIED THAT YOU COULDN'T SEE ANY ANIMALS FROM THE GIFT SHOP - THE WOODEN FENCE AROUND THE SANCTUARY PREVENTED ANYONE FROM SEEING INTO THE ANIMAL ENCLOSURES. "NO, I PROMISE I SAW ONE OF THEM!"

Feeling smug, I asked her to come with me to the window so I could show her how the fence blocked the view - and of course, as I was talking, up popped Carosal. She had jumped up into the crook of a large tree in her enclosure - just high enough that she could look over the fence. "Oh... that coyote" is all I managed to say.

I like to imagine that Carosal took delight in proving me wrong that day. She always seemed to have an air of superiority about her - like she was the smartest and cutest animal in the sanctuary and she knew it.

But Carosal also had a tough side - she was always in charge, took no guff, and even loved to posture and trash talk to her wolf neighbors. Although tough, she was never mean. Carosal used to live with two male coyotes that both had physical issues (Jimmy was slightly handicapped and Os was missing an eye and was epileptic). She was in charge of both, but never took advantage of them. After Jimmy and Os both passed away, she took young, orphaned male coyote Cody under her watch as well.

Sadly, 13-year old Carosal passed away unexpectedly during the night of January 18. This took us all by surprise as she had been acting completely normal until then. We brought her to the clinic for a necropsy, but there were no concrete answers. There were some abnormal findings in her GI tract, a few small nodes on her liver, and a little free blood in the abdomen. However, none of this was conclusive enough to know for sure the ultimate cause of death.

Carosal may have been a small coyote, but her passing has left a large hole in the sanctuary. Rest in peace, Carosal. You will be missed.



Julie Lawrence.

Erik Wilber, Animal Care Specialist/  
Education Assistant



**Tribute**

# sítka

**ROCCO AND SITKA MET WHEN, AFTER HAVING LOST HIS SECOND ENCLOSURE MATE, WE INTRODUCED BEAUTIFUL SITKA INTO HIS LIFE.**

A stunning, black and silver-coated female wolf, Sitka and her lively mischievous energy was a perfect match for Rocco. He was a handsome male wolf with a calm and super gregarious temperament. Their play and feeding time stories became a recurrent topic in animal care conversations and for their near decade together; the two of

them were wonderful friends. As the years passed, both Rocco and Sitka endured some health issues – most probably related to genetic conditions – but their spirits remained sharp and brisk.

One winter day, Rocco's condition took a turn for the worse and he passed away overnight. It seemed that he knew it was his time and had burrowed himself into a very deep chamber of his natural den. When animal care staff found Rocco, he looked serene and cozy in the private space that he had chosen as his last refuge. As is commonly seen between well-



Tribute

# Rocco

bonded pairs, after losing her companion, Sitka started to withdraw and her health quickly declined. On a sunny afternoon we helped our beloved Sitka peacefully transition from this life. We had the honor of burying Rocco and Sitka together in our memorial cemetery, close to each other, as they had always been in life. Knowing them was a gift and their faces, personalities, and the stories about them will remain in our hearts forever.



Pamela Maciel,  
Mexican Wolf SSP Liaison



## Tribute

# Betty (F1199)

IN JANUARY WE SAID GOODBYE TO THE LOVELY AND BOLD MEXICAN GRAY WOLF, BETTY (F1199). SHE WAS BORN AT ENDANGERED WOLF CENTER IN 2010 AND NAMED "BETTINA BLANCA" IN HONOR OF THE ACTRESS BETTY WHITE, HONORING HER SUPPORT OF THE MEXICAN WOLF SPECIES SURVIVAL (SSP) PROGRAM.

Betty lived with her pack for several years, babysitting her younger siblings until she started to squabble with her mother.

At three years of age, Betty was transferred to Wolf Haven to start her own family with Moss (M1066), a suitable candidate in the program. The two quickly bonded and had four beautiful, healthy pups in May of 2015. Through the years, the family's morning ritual could be observed via remote camera as they greeted one another, tails wagging and bumping into one another. Betty was often at the center of the happy family gathering.

She was a wonderful mother and towards the end of her days she started dropping food near her adult children. Her confident, assertive nature held the pack's hierarchy together (which has been in flux since she passed). She was always a curious wolf, often the first to arrive at a deer carcass left by animal care staff for the family. She could eat a drumstick in a few swift bites but seemed to enjoy peeing on her kibble rather than eating it. She and Moss played, howled side by side and showed great affection for each other until her last days.

Betty's decline was swift; within a 12 hour period her movement decreased dramatically and she was taken to the veterinarian where blood work pointed to pancreatitis. A humane euthanasia agent was used to help Betty pass peacefully. Her calm, curious presence will be sorely missed by Moss, her offspring and animal care staff alike. Farewell sweet Betty.



Marinka Major, Animal Care Assistant

Julie Lawrence.