

TAKAYA

SOME ENDINGS SEEM MORE PROFOUND than others and there are certain amazing creatures who hold our minds and hearts captive to the point of breaking when they meet an untimely end. Such was the case in late March when Vancouver, British Columbia (BC) media outlets reported that the male “Lone Sea Wolf”, Takaya, had been killed. Due in large part to his faithful documentation by Canadian Wildlife Photographer, Cheryl Alexander, who perhaps “knew” Takaya better than any other human, he had become both beloved and mourned around the world.

Takaya lived alone on a small island off the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island for eight years before traversing more than two miles of uncertain waters in late January, only to land himself in an urban Victoria neighborhood (a mere 2-hour drive -plus ferry ride from Wolf Haven). By all accounts, he was truly a remarkable wolf. No one knows for certain what drove Takaya to his island home as a young wolf, nor what caused him to abandon it at the ripe old age of eleven. But in the hope of providing Takaya with a similar environment containing more wolves and fewer people, BC Conservation Officers captured and relocated him farther up Vancouver Island’s western side. Unfortunately, this suitable habitat was also open for wolf hunting.

It has been said that seconds and inches separate us from our fate. Takaya, (named Staqeya, meaning wolf, by the Songhees First Nation) was killed by a licensed hunter on March 24, only two months and 31 miles from where he was set free. What if Takaya hadn’t left his Discovery Island home? Some of us would probably be searching online for updates on Takaya right now, yearning for his safety and delighting in just knowing he exists. The following is a personal account from one of our Wolf Haven Board Members of how Takaya touched her life, as he touched so many of ours. For this is what consoles us and endures in the face of such a loss, fueling our work for wolves and wolf conservation: delighting in the existence of wildlife and of legends like Takaya, and working together to honor them all.

Julie Lawrence, *WOLF TRACKS* Publisher



Takaya photographs
by Cheryl Alexander,
wildawake.com.



THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW TAKAYA, I was in a boat with Cheryl Alexander and we were approaching one of the islands in his Discovery Island home. As we slowly approached a lagoon, he was laying on the beach, howling. He would raise his head to the sky and howl – as I did on Sunday, March 29, when there was a “howling heard round the world” in his honor. I serendipitously met Cheryl while on a sailing trip off the coast of Vancouver Island and we had stopped for gas. I was in the little shop and heard a lady asking about wolves. My ears perked up and I ended up meeting her. That was the beginning of a wonderful friendship and a shared love of this wolf called Takaya who she has followed for six years. I made many trips to Victoria to go out with Cheryl to Takaya’s island world. I would always remark how Takaya was like the center of a web that brought so many different people together into his world. I hope that his story – which has been told in Cheryl’s film, a nature series in Canada, a book and children’s book that Cheryl is writing, and her many incredible photographs – will ensure that his legacy lives on. It is the story of coming to know the world of an individual wolf, living in the wild, on his own, on his own terms. We have all been so privileged to come to know Takaya through Cheryl’s dedicated efforts to learn about, document, and share his story. Takaya was a hero for us all and I’m so grateful to have been a small part of his world. He will be greatly missed.



Harriet Allen, Wolf Haven International Board Member