



Akela 1989 - 2005

It was with heavy hearts that we all said "goodbye" to our dear friend Akela this winter, on January 10.

Akela came to Wolf Haven in 1999 along with his two sisters (Kiani and Aurora) and mother (Mom) from Northwest Trek Wildlife Park in Eatonville, Washington. Due to a disruption in the social structure of the small group brought on by the death of their mother, Kiani was moved to an off-tour enclosure in 2001 to reside with a male wolf named Ramses; while Akela and Aurora remained together in their on-tour enclosure.

Akela and Aurora were well suited to one other and rarely squabbled. Even in his advanced age, Akela remained playful, "stalking" his caretakers until charging to the fence and bounding playfully to and fro... Although, it is our guess that Akela might best be remembered as he was often observed, napping beneath the young conifers atop his favorite mound at the front of his enclosure.

We are grateful to our friend Akela, for his life and his teachings. It is always difficult to lose such a dear friend, yet we are comforted in knowing that his legacy lives on in our hearts and in our mission.



#### AKELA MEANS NOBLE

*I'll never forget the first time I saw you,  
And our eyes met.*

*I'll never forget how on all my tours you'd be right up in front  
of your enclosure or peeking at me from behind a tree,  
And our eyes met.*

*I'll never forget the last time I saw you looking at me from  
behind that same tree,  
And our eyes met...for the last time.*

*How well you lived up to your name, till the very end:  
Akela, the noble one.*

Marcy Peterson, Volunteer

clumsy and exaggerated. Large feet that would usually step so lightly, on Onyx, are like giant clown shoes that to this day continue to trip him up as he trots around his enclosure. His tail is neither carried up high as so often is the case with more dominant wolves nor is it tucked close in submission. Carriage is occasionally at half-mast, but usually it hangs relaxed against his hindquarters, flagging back and forth, like a slow paced metronome keeping time with each step, speeding up when he thinks that food is coming.

Up until last year one of his favorite past-times was a romping game of hide and seek (as best a wolf can) and in fact, it had become a morning ritual with his caretakers. Often as we approached his enclosure he would run to one of his trees and "hide" – frequently in plain view. Indulging him, we would play along and pretend to look for him, all the while calling his name. "Onyx... Onyx," we would call. We would walk around the perimeter, continuing to search as he watched us, his big pie eyes twinkling with glee, his face set with a toothy grin. Eventually he would give up – perhaps he felt sorry for us because we couldn't seem to "find" him or perhaps he just couldn't wait any longer for his morning snack (I suspect the latter) – and he'd come bounding down the hill, tripping over his feet once or twice.

After eighteen years he has grown weary of the game, but still looks forward to his daily treat so every morning he comes bounding down the hill. The gait is a little slower, and the steps are a bit more deliberate, but the exuberance has not waned.

We know wolves to be sentient creatures, and Onyx is no exception. As much as we like to err on the side of science, there can be no doubt these animals are capable of feeling. Not to say that they experience the same range of emotion as humans, but changes in behavior are often indicative of changes in emotion. We've watched Onyx lose two mates, first Araby, then Tahoma and we've watched as he adjusted to life with his third companion, Cris. Unfortunately this was not an easy transition. Onyx had been a bachelor for over a year and after a lifetime of having to share food, enrichment and even attention from caretakers, he seemed to delight in having it all to himself. However, Cris had recently lost her mate, Napanee, and was becoming increasingly despondent. Her appetite waned and she slept all the time (not good for an arthritic animal). While Cris seemed glad for the company, Onyx did not... And at the risk of sounding anthropomorphic, he took to "sulking." He stopped coming up for treats if she was there, or if he was at the fence getting attention and she approached, he would walk away like a petulant child. Frequently he could be seen standing on one of his hills watching her (or at least in her direction) with what appeared to be a sullen look on his face.

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