Our Brita

It's sad when you lose a family member, especially one that you never truly got to know. That is how I felt when my friend Brita passed away on March 4, 2008. During the entire time that I had the privilege of knowing Brita, I knew her as a very shy wolf. She felt safest when most people were far away from her. Her strongest bond was with her sister Grey. They were two parts of a whole you could say. Brita relied on Grey's strength, while Grey relied on Brita's tenderness. They did have a common quality: Brita and her sister Grey had an amazing gift they would regularly share with the other animals and people within the sanctuary. They would sing the most beautiful songs together, letting the notes echo so slowly and spool from their mouths, so that they were carried away to grace the ears of others that were fortunate enough to be sharing space with them. They would harmonize their melodic tones so perfectly that if you were to close your eyes, you would be hard to distinguish them as individuals. If you would just stop and really listen, you could feel it, it was something I never tired of.

With the passing of Brita's sister Grey in December of 2007, Brita lost her best friend. Brita became more withdrawn and tended to stay at the rear of her enclosure even more than she did when Grey was alive. It was evident that she needed companionship right away. There was another male wolf at Wolf Haven that recently lost his sister as well. Rocco was quite a bit younger than Brita when they first met, but they did not hinder them from becoming good friends. Rocco and Brita brought each other another reason to live, and live they did. Brita underwent a change that was exactly what she needed. She became much more bold and outgoing, she started to stand up for her self with Rocco, something that she never really did with Grey. When I would arrive at their enclosure during rounds, I would slowly walk, always keeping an eye on the two of them. One of my favorite things about Rocco and Brita's new relationship was the fact that Brita became more playful than I had ever seen her. She still kept her guard up by remaining cautious when her caretakers were next even with the very persistent Roccy trying to solicit play. All in all, I think that Rocco helped bring some of the qualities of Brita's youth back to her.

One of my most memorable times with Brita was on my 25th birthday. Brita had never before come up during rounds to take her medication and treats from me. On July 4, 2007, I walked up to their enclosure just like any other day ready to give Rocco and Brita their medications. Brita was on the far side of their enclosure. When she saw me, she started to come forward, which is something that she never done before. With no hesitation, she came directly up to me and looked straight into my eyes and proceeded to take her treat and her medication from my hand. I knew deep down that what happened was neither coincidence nor random luck. Brita gave me a gift that I will remember forever, a gift that only she could give me. That day for a brief moment Brita gave me her trust, without any questions asked. For years I had known this beautiful girl, and for years I tried to earn her trust, but to no avail. On that day, she gave it to me as a gift. She never came up to me again while she was alive.

Brita's journey became a difficult one toward the end of her life. She was battling a disease that was quite common amongst her family. Cancer had taken the lives of two of her three brothers, and also her sister Grey. Since Brita's quality of life was still good we decided that the best thing to do was to help make her as comfortable as possible. She did well for some time, but eventually her health declined to a point where the only thing we could do for our friend was to aid her passing. We scheduled our veterinarian to come out on March 4 to humanely
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A: Defiance, a former Wolf Haven resident lived to the age of 18. At Wolf Haven we find that coyotes generally have the same longevity of wolves in captivity living well into their teens.

Q: Why do pronghorn have a white rump?
A: The white rump of a pronghorn can serve as a defense mechanism. If they sense danger they can contract their rump muscles thus causing their white rump hairs to stand on end. Other pronghorn may be able to sense this from up to two miles away alerting the herd of danger nearby.

Q: Do Mexican gray wolves eat wild pigs?
A: Mexican gray wolves whose range includes parts of Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico have been known to eat wild pigs. Most people think javelinas are a wild pig but they are in fact members of the peccary family a group of hoofed mammals originating from South America.

NATIONAL WOLF AWARENESS WEEK
October 19-25, 2008
Numerous activities will be happening all week long, including various events at select Timberland Regional Libraries. Programs on wolves and wolf conservation will be scheduled throughout the South Fork so keep checking our website WolfHaven.org for the most updated calendar.

HOWL-O-WEEN
October 31, 2008 • 3:00pm-6:00pm
Enjoy pumpkin painting, wagon rides, mini tours of our sanctuary, tours, treats (cider and cookies) and a costume competition that will help you and your little ones get into the Howl-o-Ween spirit. Spooky storytelling by Bobbie Bush and balloon art by Jim Jacobs will be available throughout the event. A special thank you to our sponsors: KXXM AM/1030, Kids Directory, Don's Market Place, The Olympian, and Radledge Com Media.

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around, they are even more well matched in size. Both are smaller in stature than many of our other wolves (with the exception of the Mexican and reds) and although Sita is slightly smaller than her new mate. To see Sita is to see the wolf of lore and legend, as darkly pelaged wolves are often depicted. Her rich, sandy pelage gleams auburn in the sunlight and guard hairs are blended with black and buff. Her mask is darker still, accentuating swimming auric eyes. The fear that once flashed so intently in those eyes now has been replaced with a spirited, impish gleam. Gone too is the fratic behavior displayed whenever more than one person would approach. She is now solicitous with a few of us and if Rocco is at the fence getting attention, she will often grab the tip of his tail and pull him away so that she can position herself front and center for treats or scratches. Rocco pays her no mind though, he just muscled her out of the way until he gets back into position.

From this beginning, Sita was very vocal, but instead of her malodorous, singeing howls we have become so accustomed to, her haunting howls during that first day were laden with unease and content. Often the other wolves would howl back in response and instead of joining in, she would fall silent and just listen. "What were they telling her?" I wondered. Perhaps words of comfort and reassurance. Perhaps too it was the same sentiment that I echoed, though far more beautiful and eloquent, "Welcome home, Sita Rose!"