

| tribute

Daniel Curry, *Animal Care Specialist*



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 elegant songs together. Letting the notes ever so slowly spill from their mouths, to then be 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 it would be hard to distinguish them as individuals. If you would just stop and really listen and feel their art, it would affect you in ways that no other music could. They had voices that opened your eyes to the beauty that cannot be seen but can be felt. Their chorus would captivate me with an intangible splendor each time that I heard it. It was something that 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 Brita became more withdrawn and tended to stay at the rear of her enclosure even more than she did when Grey was alive.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 here at Wolf Haven that recently lost his sister as well. Rocco was quite a bit younger than Brita when they first met but that 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 around the corner as to not disturb what they were doing. Sometimes I would spot them laying down next to each other soaking up the golden rays of sun on a summer day. 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



Brita. PHOTO BY JULIE LAWRENCE.

her caretakers were near, even with the ever persistent Rocco 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 had 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 know deep down that what happened was neither coincidence nor a random fluke. 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 full 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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America. They are used to their drinking water and do not grow ill from it. If we were to drink that same water, we would most likely get sick since we are not accustomed to the same bacteria's that they are. A wolf's digestive enzymes and stomach acids are able to process foods that a domestic dog's may not be able to digest.

Q. If an animal with sharp teeth, designed to eat meat (i.e. coyote), can eat plants and fruit; can an animal with teeth designed to grind plant material (i.e. deer) eat meat?

A. This question still continues to stump me. A coyote's back molars also known as carnassials are used for crushing and grinding. This is why they are capable of eating vegetation as well as meat. I've never heard or read any research that deer, or members of the deer family are capable of eating meat. They are herbivores and therefore eat vegetation.

Q. How long do coyotes live in captivity?

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 pig?

A. Mexican gray wolves whose former range includes parts of Mexico, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico have been known to eat javelinas. 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. 🐾

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around, they are even well matched in size. Both are smaller in stature than many of our other wolves (with the exception of the Mexican and reds) though Sitka is slightly smaller than her new mate.

To see Sitka is to see the wolf of lore and legend, as dark phased wolves are often depicted. Her rich sable pelage gleams auburn in the sunlight and guard hairs are banded with black and buff. Her mask is darker still, accentuating swimming auric eyes. The fear that once flashed so intently in those eyes has now been replaced with a spirited, impish glint. Gone too is the frantic 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 the beginning Sitka was very vocal, but instead of her melodious, sing-song howls we have become so accustomed to, her haunting howls during that first day were laden with unease and unrest. 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, Sitka Rose." 🐾

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euthanize Brita. Brita was found on the morning of March 4. She had passed away sometime the night of March 3, naturally.

Brita, I am thankful for the opportunity to get to know you as much as you allowed me to. I will never forget the gift that you gave me. I know that it is something that very few people were given. I hope that you know that I love you and that even though we were not very close, that I respect you and admire you. I am also thankful that you are with your sister again and that the two of you can continue to sing with each other, in peace forever. I look forward to hearing your songs again my friend. 🐾

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POKER RUN "The Pack is Back"

Saturday, September 13, 2008 • 9:00am -5:00pm

Our sixth annual charity poker run is going to be more sensational than ever. Riders of all levels will love this scenic ride through 3 counties followed by a Hog Feed, cash prizes, entertainment by *The Fabulous Johnsons*, dinner and tons of give-a-ways. *The Fabulous Johnsons* is a Seattle-based hard and classic rock band www.FabulousJohnsons.com. Pre-registration online is always recommended: \$25 for single riders/\$45 for couples. Registering after September 1 or at the event: \$30 for singles/\$55 for couples. A free poker hand and commemorative pin comes with every reservation. Additional hands available for purchase along with commemorative T-shirts. Shirts are limited (300 are available for purchase before September 1) so order yours early to avoid missing out. End-of-ride Hog Feed is for adults 21 and over. Special hotel packages available on a first come/first serve basis for individuals, families and groups. Call for more details. Great Wolf Lodge is offering a \$119 room rate for families (must have reservation code provided by Wolf Haven) and Eagles Landing also offers \$119 for individuals and adult groups (no code necessary). Thanks to our sponsors: *Lucky Eagle Casino, Kamilche Trading Post, Little Creek Casino, Quick Throttle Magazine, Rusty Tractor Restaurant, Wired Energy Drinks/ Twisted Chopper, Northwest Harley, Sitting Duck, KMAS Radio, Kickstart Espresso, The Junction, and Jack Daniels.*

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 Sound so keep checking our website WolfHaven.org for the most updated calendar.

HOWL-O-WEEN

October 26, 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 spooktacular sponsors: *KMAS AM1030, Kids Directory, Dave's Market Place, The Olympian, and Rutledge Corn Maze.* 🐾