

## Tributes

### Our Idaho girl

*Rick Castellano,  
Executive Director*

**W**endy Spencer-Armestar was busy doing her usual morning rounds of the animal enclosures on the morning of December 28. When she approached the Idaho Six enclosure, she noticed what appeared to be a stump overturned in the enclosure's feeding area.

Upon closer inspection, Wendy discovered the lifeless body of one of our Idaho Six females. Apparently, the young female had managed to lodge herself in the crotch of a small tree, where three branches intersected. As she struggled to free herself, she must have slipped further into its grip, thereby suffocating. This bizarre occurrence appeared to have taken place during the very early morning hours, when no animal care staff were able to assist her.

We are all very saddened by this unforeseen and very tragic incident. We also recognize that in a naturally landscaped enclosure and in the wild tragedies such as this can occur - in spite of our utmost care and precaution. Prior to the Idaho Wolves' arrival, their 2.5-plus acre enclosure was carefully cleared of whatever we perceived as potential hazards to curious young wolves. Dying tree limbs, dead trees and piles of brush were removed and ground holes were filled. We have since taken further safety measures - by removing the tree with the three intersecting branches and others like it - and encourage our readers with pets to do the same. Please take time to look around your own yard and consider trimming or removing any objects which might prove dangerous to your pets.

The reality of this incident was sudden and difficult for all of us, but we are comforted by knowing that although her time with us was brief, the young female found spacious and playful sanctuary within our gates. 🐾



*Thunder, by Julie Palmquist*

## A sudden passing: Thunder

*Judy Loeven, Animal Care Specialist*

**O**n the morning of October 30, I discovered a tragedy as I conducted my morning rounds. Thunder, a spirited five-year-old male whom I had seen healthy and vigorous just the afternoon before, was lying down, unresponsive, at the back of his enclosure. Though he eventually got up, very shaky but willing to take a bite of food, he soon lay back down, exhausted. Before the vet could arrive and while I was checking on him, Thunder drew his last breath.

In the four years I had worked here, we had not had a wolf die of anything other than diseases related to old age. Usually I was prepared for the death of an elderly wolf, one that had been in failing health for some time. Even the more sudden deaths of vital organ failure were easier to accept with the thought that the wolf had lived a long, fulfilling life. Thunder's youth made his sudden passing bewildering and heartbreaking. A full necropsy showed no heart failure, no infectious disease, no indications of liver or other organ failure. The only alternatives were therefore the cause our vet suspected: either a burst aneurysm in his brain, or a massive stroke.

Part of a pack of three which came to us from a private facility in California, Thunder was a large, handsome male who had grown from being an omega in his original pack to exuberantly lording it over the two sisters he now lived with. Grey and Brita deferred to him, especially over the food which he was so often greedy for, but the three were a close-knit clan and were often seen resting amiably together. We were very lucky that Brita and Grey had each other when Thunder died, as they appear to have adjusted much better and quicker to life without their packmate than do wolves who are left alone with the loss of a mate.

Thunder was buried near a beautiful oak tree in Wolf Haven's new cemetery, which is more accessible to the public. Staff members put special tokens in and on his grave, and I came across a raven feather just before he was buried. According to the beliefs of many cultures from around the world, the raven helps to guide spirits to the beyond. As I placed the feather on his body, I fancied that its former wearer helped Thunder find his way home. You are missed, big fellah. 🐾