

# A TRIBUTE TO BLACKFOOT'S SON: JEREMIAH

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On March 7, 1997, Wolf Haven lost one of its most gentle and gracious wolves just before his 15th birthday. Jeremiah personified all the goodness in the wolf spirit: a devoted and loving companion, a dignified ambassador, and a gentle friend.

Jeremiah was born at Wolf Country Foundation, South Prairie, Washington, in the spring of 1982, to Wolf Haven's founding wolf, Blackfoot, and his companion Kyra. Both of his parents were thought to belong to the subspecies *Canis lupus nubilus*, the Great Plains or buffalo wolf, which is now extinct in the wild. The local residents objected to having wolves in their town, so five months later, Jeremiah and his parents and littermates, Nehani, Nimrod, and Nakomis, came to Wolf Haven. Also along were two older sisters, Kathleen and Windsong, who had been born the year before. Two years later, Windsong became Jeremiah's lifelong companion.

With his large size, thick silver and gray coat, and warm golden eyes, Jeremiah was an extraordinarily handsome wolf. He and Windsong, similar in coloring though considerably smaller, were one of Wolf Haven's most attractive couples. While still on public tour, they made quite an impression on visitors, not only with their looks, but also with their friendly demeanor.

Their contrast lay more in personality, with Jeremiah's quiet amenities a perfect foil to Windsong's spritely ways. Though he was certainly the alpha of the pair, he tempered his dominance with gentleness. Few were their squabbles, even when it came to morning treats or attention by Animal Care staff, which can be a source of minor contention between other pairs. Both patiently waited their turn, often moving in synchrony, so attuned were they to each other. Jeremiah always treated his companion as a precious lady, as he was obviously devoted to her. No other pair of wolf eyes ever turned his head.

Their enclosure, hidden by thick bushes behind the gift shop, was originally the old homestead's apple orchard, and Jeremiah developed quite a taste for the apples that fell within his reach. When they were not in season, he could frequently be spied resting by the small concrete pond in the back. Perhaps he even liked to hunt the frogs that lived there. Both wolves were certainly inveterate diggers, as their enclosure held several den-sized holes and many smaller ones for food caches.

One of Jeremiah's daily joys, which Windsong shares to this day, was when Animal Care staff would refill his water bucket each morning. Water in a bucket was okay to drink, but nothing beat it straight from the tap. They would both bite at the stream coming from the hose, savoring the cold, fresh water even in the middle of winter. Often we would let the water overflow the bucket, just so they could continue their fun a little bit longer.

On March 4, however, Jeremiah was found lying under the bushes with no appetite, little energy to move, and a racing heart. Blood was taken and our vet gave him a massive dose of antibiotics and vitamins. Blood tests revealed several problems, including an internal infection, but heart disease was the major condition. He would take little food, so oral medications were not administrable. When he did not respond to yet another injection of antibiotics and vitamins, there was nothing left to be done but our most heart-wrenching, and yet our kindest, care. He was euthanized and, as he was in life, his death was gentle and compassionate. We surely miss this most gracious of spirits, and we howl with Windsong at his passing.