

Death of a peacemaker

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The vast majority of wild wolves die before the age of eight, with a rare, exceptional individual living beyond ten. Captivity eliminates the primary cause of wolf mortality (humans) and those at Wolf Haven frequently live into their mid-teens. Most of the time we can see the end of their lives approaching: they slow down perceptibly; their appetite wanes; they show a decreased interest in their environment; in the case of cancer, a growth races out of control; etc. In some cases, however, they depart so quickly that it catches us

Poetry contest runner up

Thinking of Destiny

Spring renews,
Fur so soft,
A time to muse,
Destiny calls.

Warm summer winds,
Stone pups need care,
Moose, my friend,
Destiny awaits.

Shadows of fall,
A coat to match,
Eyes of gold,
My Destiny is here.

Winter's dark skies,
Earthy bonds released,
Her back to the wind,
She finds her peace.

Destiny died June 3, 1999

Joel Rothschild



Destiny

completely by surprise. On the morning of April 4, Mom, the matriarch of the pack we received from North West Trek several months before, first showed the symptoms of a heart problem; she quietly slipped away less than twelve hours later.

Precocious as a young wolf, Mom had become an alpha female when she was still just a yearling and held onto the position with an "iron paw" ever since. She had earned her name after giving birth to a litter of four pups in 1989. Three of them survived to make the move with her to Wolf Haven: Akela, the only male; Aurora, the beta or second-in-command female; and Kiani, the pack's omega. Kiani, who began as the pack's beta female, became quite a trial to her mother. Not only did she occasionally try to challenge her for the top position (which Mom easily and sometimes severely rebuffed), but Mom frequently had to break up her fights with Aurora, then the omega. Since the sisters often fought to mutual injuries and were not easily distracted from their aggression, Mom would use rather rough-and-ready techniques to separate the two - by tackling one or the other and then standing between them. The method worked quite well, since the sisters didn't dare fight each other when they would have to go through their mother to do so.

Though certainly an elderly wolf at fourteen, Mom held herself well until



Mom

that final day, ruling the other females of her pack. A somewhat hunched appearance and a slight limp when she first arose from a nap were the only signs of her advancing age, yet it was unsure how long Mom would be able to retain her role as alpha female and peacemaker. Already Akela had announced his dominance over her, though in a benign way with merely a raised tail and a soft growl. She became submissive toward him, but not so toward her daughters, around whom her body language still announced her the dominant matriarch.

While their first breeding season at Wolf Haven proved extremely peaceful, her daughters' past relationship had us worried that violence would follow Mom's sudden death. In fact, Kiani did overthrow Aurora several weeks later, but in a brief, and for once bloodless coup. A few days of fighting, with not so much as a scratch on either female, had Aurora meekly reverting to her omega status, and peace has reigned ever since. I like to imagine that the spirit of Mom the peacemaker had stood between the sisters one final time.

