

# A boy named Sioux

Daniel Curry, *Animal Care Specialist*

IN 2003, Wolf Haven International was awarded the honor of participating in the Red Wolf Species Survival Plan (SSP) program. There are not many of these species left on the planet, either in captivity or in the wild. The Red wolf differs greatly in appearance from their cousin the Gray wolf. Red wolves are much smaller in stature and have sharper features and their coats are adorned with various shades of red, ranging from burnt orange to a deep rust color. The beauty of their magnificent bodies is only surpassed by the beauty of their souls.

On December 20, 2005, Sioux arrived at Wolf Haven. In the beginning, he was very quiet and reclusive, and one of the most calculating wolves that I have ever met. You could see in his eyes that his mind was always engaged and thinking about the world around him. Sioux had severe arthritis in his front feet and bilateral cryptorchidism (undescended testicles). These ailments made him ineligible for breeding in the SSP program. Wolf Haven was happy to give him a home where he could live in peace and teach people about the integral part that Red wolves play in balancing the ecosystem. While Sioux lived here, he formed strong bonds with two different girls. His initial partner was Raelin, and after she passed away, his second mate was Ruby.

Sioux was very fond of both of his mates, but it did appear that he and Ruby had a special relationship. Sioux was Ruby's source of strength; he helped her come out of her shell. You see, Sioux had a pretty special talent, he knew how to have fun. When Ruby first arrived, she retreated to her den and hid during Animal Care staff's early morning walk through the sanctuary. While she was hiding, Sioux would frolic with reckless abandon. He would tear around his space at break-neck speed, using the objects in his enclosure as launching pads to propel himself airborne. The effect of Sioux's graceful exuberance and happy, youthful spirit upon Ruby was amazing!



Sioux gazes toward the setting sun. PHOTO BY JULIE LAWRENCE.

Eventually, you could walk up to their enclosure and see two wolves performing an acrobatic display with perpetual grins plastered on their faces. It was a beautiful dance filled with fun, and a zest for life. Many have a hard time finding such joy, yet these two wolves found it in each another.

This went on for sometime until they decided that their routine was missing something – grass! Sioux and Ruby began using their mouths to tear out a clump of grass and toss it high into the air. Then up went their lithe bodies, following the streaming clods of earth laden grass. They were so light on their feet that you could hear the grass come to a halt with a thud as it lost its battle with gravity, and yet the impact of their seventy pound bodies would sound like nothing more than the wisp of grass as foot pads met the ground. It was a beautiful thing.

Sioux's journey sadly came to an abrupt end. We found Sioux in the early hours of February 9 lying next to his enclosure fence, a mere shell of himself. The bright look of playful exuberance that was often in his

eyes was replaced with a light that was slowly fading into the backdrop of his physical body. Sioux's body was dying and his spirit had to leave. We immediately brought him into the vet with the bleak realization that most likely we wouldn't be bringing Sioux back to his home or his girl Ruby. Sioux's kidneys had shut down, which put him on a short one-way path. There was nothing that we could do for our family member. It was with a deep sadness that we decided that the best thing for Sioux was to help end his suffering and he was honorably euthanized.

Sioux your life still beats in the hearts that you traveled through, especially in Ruby's. She took your passing very hard and is still mourning the loss of her dear friend and mate. But it is evident as she sails through the air that she has not forgotten your teachings. Now she will be the stronger one next time she meets a wolf that has receded to the dark and quiet part of its mind. She will be strong because she carries the strength that you imparted to her. She carries you, my dear friend Sioux. 🐾