



*Gray wolf, Shasta
Photo by Julie Lawrence*

RESCUE AND SANCTUARY – WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL

Overview

Since 1982, Wolf Haven has rescued and provided a lifetime home for over 300 displaced, captive-born wolves and wolfdogs. Most of our rescues come from private ownership, and have often faced destruction, neglect, or abuse. Wolf Haven is their last hope.

The Need for Sanctuary

Captive wolves and wolfdogs are purchased as pups from exotic animal breeders for a variety of reasons, but however well-intended the “owners” may be, they are often ill-equipped to care for a wild animal. Wolves have a natural tendency to be wary of people and it is one of the many traits that make them unsuitable as pets. In a captive setting, they may become destructive of property, unpredictable, or dangerous due to dominance issues. A change in life circumstances may affect an individual’s ability to care for their animal and some wolves spend their entire lives chained outside or restricted to small kennels. Many captive-born wolves and wolfdogs are euthanized by the age of 18 months.

Wolf Haven’s Role

Over the years, Wolf Haven has responded to distress calls in California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, Minnesota, and many other states. Our animal care team strategically plans each wolf rescue, assessing the least stressful method to safely capture the animal and transport them back to our sanctuary. Once at Wolf Haven, our animals receive the best possible care in the best possible environment. Each of our circular enclosures is between 1/3 and 2½ acres, with an 8’ fence, 3’ tip-in, and additional barriers underground. This design considers the incredible digging instincts and jumping skills of wolves (which most private owners are unprepared for). In 2018, Wolf Haven also began managing a wolf sanctuary in Montana, which is home to 20 captive-born wolves.

Outcome

In the wild, a wolf has a lifetime expectancy of five years. At Wolf Haven, it is not uncommon for wolves to reach their teen years. Because of our animal care staff’s experience, and our longevity as a wolf sanctuary, Wolf Haven has come to be regarded as a leader in humane wolf management and wolf identification. Wolf Haven hosts an annual Wildlife Handling and Chemical Immobilization course for professionals and is one of only two wolf sanctuaries accredited by the American Sanctuary Association (ASA). Wolf Haven is also the only wolf sanctuary with Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS) accreditation, confirming the highest standard of care is provided.



*McCleery wolves
Photo by Julie Lawrence*

McCLEERY RANCH – WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL

Overview

Wolf Haven International manages a satellite wolf sanctuary in Bridger, Montana called McCleery Ranch. Twenty captive-born wolves currently live at the sanctuary and their care is overseen by Wolf Haven's Director of Operations, Wendy Spencer. The Montana facility is closed to the public.

Background

In 1920s America, there was a bounty on wolves. E. H. McCleery, a small-town Pennsylvania doctor with a love of wildlife and a fascination with wolves, was distressed at the wholesale effort to eradicate them. He wrote to the government, offering to pay for wolf pups to be shipped to him rather than be killed. Over the next decade, he purchased more than 20 wild wolves from the government, zoos, and trappers. Dr. McCleery's intent was to save the remaining buffalo wolves (*Canis lupus nubilus*) from extinction in the United States.

For many years, Dr. McCleery's wolves lived and bred in captivity in Kane, Pennsylvania. His captive wolf population numbered nearly 100 individuals at its zenith.

Following his death, Dr. McCleery's assistant, Jack Lynch, took over the operation. He relocated the wolves from Pennsylvania to Washington, and later to Montana. Following Jack's death in 2006, his wife Mary cared for the wolves until her passing in 2016. Mary's son, Ed Wheeler, and his wife, Terry, provided care for the remaining wolves for the next two years.

Wolf Haven's Role

In 2018, Wolf Haven assumed responsibility of McCleery Ranch. The transfer of ownership included (at the time) 33 captive wolves, the property home, and various outbuildings. Wolf Haven manages McCleery Ranch as a satellite sanctuary, allowing the wolves to continue receiving the best possible care without displacing them from their current home.

Wolf Haven is honored to provide the McCleery wolves with compassionate care and comfort in their remaining years in the only home they have ever known. Cryopreservation has been arranged to fulfill the McCleery Buffalo Wolf Foundation's mission of preserving 1920s buffalo wolf lineage DNA. The Montana property will also be proposed as a future pre-release facility in support of the Mexican Wolf Saving Animals From Extinction program.



Wolfdog, Willow
Photo by Julie Lawrence

WOLFDOGS – WOLF HAVEN INTERNATIONAL

Overview

A wolfdog is a canid that has both wolf and dog DNA. However, wolves and dogs can make a dangerous mix. Wolves possess a natural fear of people, which is an adaptive behavior that promotes survival in the wild, whereas dogs have adaptive behaviors such as playfulness, loyalty, and protectiveness, which promote their survival as companions for people. When the two are combined, the result is often a conflicted animal caught between two worlds.

Many wolfdog breeders promote the “wolf content” of pups and set their prices according to the “amount of wolf” in the litter. This is not based on sound biology or genetics. When a dog is bred with a wolf, the offspring will inherit 50% of their genes from one parent and 50% from the other. In this case, the offspring would be half dog and half wolf. However, when these animals are backcrossed with other wolves, dogs, or hybrids, there is no way to calculate or manipulate which genes are inherited or expressed. This contributes to the variability and unpredictability in behavior between animals, even from the same litter.

The Need for Sanctuary

Wolfdogs are often purchased by people who are unaware of the animals’ unique physical and social needs, behavioral traits, and possible characteristics. When wolfdogs are forced to conform to a human-centric lifestyle, they can become destructive of property and/or dangerous in dominance disputes. There are some wolfdog sanctuaries around the country, but not nearly enough to accommodate the large number of animals in need of placement. It is much easier to attain a wolfdog than it is to find placement for one because unlike domestic dogs and cats, these animals cannot be “rehomed” through normal channels of adoption (shelters and rescues). Sadly, many captive-born wolves and wolfdogs are euthanized by the age of 18 months, when they reach sexual maturity and begin to display instinctive behaviors.

Wolf Haven’s Role

Wolf Haven actively discourages the breeding, selling, owning, trafficking, and promoting of wolves and wolfdogs as pets. Since 1982, we have rescued and provided a lifetime home to over 300 displaced, captive-born wolves and wolfdogs. Most rescues come from private ownership and have often faced destruction, neglect, or abuse. At our sanctuary, they receive individualized care, companionship with others of the same species, and large natural enclosures to make their own. At Wolf Haven, they no longer have to be conflicted about who they are. They can simply *be*.