

MISSION:WOLF

EDUCATION VS. EXTINCTION

AMBASSADOR WOLF PROGRAM

Thank you for your interest in Mission:Wolf's Ambassador Wolf Program.

- * Educational goals
- * History and content of the Ambassador Wolf Program
- * Background on our Ambassador Wolves
- * Background on program presenters

What is Mission:Wolf?

Mission:Wolf is a non-profit educational facility and peaceful refuge for 40 captive born gray wolves and wolf-dog crosses located in the Wet Mountains of southern Colorado. Mission:Wolf provides both an on-sight educational facility and a national traveling education program. Our goal is to communicate why wolves and wolf-dogs do not make suitable pets and how we can all support wild wolf recovery throughout our country.

OUR EDUCATION MISSION:

Some folks lower jaw drops to the floor when they learn that a live wolf is about to visit their school or business. The first response is shock-“what?” The second response is-“do they bite?” and the third response is-“can I touch it ?” After we have explained what we are doing and why we are here, some folks still seem confused. But after they experience a program and observe the response of the wolves and people together, a loud and clear message prevails as each person soon realizes the wolves are not going to eat them. With the fear of the fabled grandmother-eating wolf overcome, people can now experience the difference between wolves and dogs. As it becomes painfully obvious why wolves born in captivity are not suitable to be returned to the wild, a message of support for wild wolf recovery is acknowledged. Now the thought of owning a wolf or a hybrid as a pet becomes unbearable.

Our mission is to inspire respect for all life, be it a wolf, a human, a plant, or an insect. As people learn respect for a creature as hated by our society as the wolf, they also learn a heartfelt respect for other people. Ultimately this respect is related to protection of wild habitat.

We know it is hard for some people to learn to accept life with a powerful predator like the wolf, simply due to the differences in how it makes a living. As public knowledge and awareness evolves people will continue to find a new set of values. We simply introduce ideas on how people may learn how to coexist with all life, including the wolf

Ambassador Wolf Program 2003

This year's program features:

- Ambassador Wolves

Rami, a ten year old female gray wolf.

Luna, a playful yearling pup who was sold to truck driver in Texas as a pet.

Raven and **Maggie**, two yearling wolf pups who were bred for the movies.

- **Mission: Wolf's Slide Show** "*In The Eye Of A Wolf*" Highlights include wolf to wolf and wolf to human communication, historical backgrounds and stories of resident wolves and hybrids, loaded with beautiful wolf photos. Updates on Yellowstone National Park and Idaho wolf reintroduction.

- **Guest Speakers** representing local wildlife conservation groups may join the wolves on stage to present information surrounding wolf restoration in their region.

Issues to be addressed in this year's programs include:

- Introduction to the world of wolves, captive and wild.
- The Trophic Cascade, lessons from wolf recovery in Yellowstone
- Historical and current status of wild wolves in the US.
- Captive wolf and wolf hybrid ownership experiences.
- Wild Wolf Issues Yellowstone Nat'l. Park, Colorado, Northern Rockies...
- Wolf communication and behavior, how to meet a wolf.
- Refuge internship and volunteer opportunities.

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Wolf Program History and Information

* The endangerment of the wolf as a wild and free roaming species in the United States is the catalyst fueling Mission:Wolf. Ironically, today the real life fact in the lower 48 states is there exists approximately 4000 wolves in the wild and more than 250,000 captive wolves and wolfdog hybrids living in cages. Many of these captive animals die within the years due to irresponsible human ownership.

* This is a result of a basic lack of understanding of how our environment works to sustain life and the differences between wild and domestic; biology and economy. Since the wolf is one of the top predators on the food chain we have found that when a person develops respect to provide wolf habitat they actually develop respect for the entire food chain. After all, if an ecosystem can support wolves it will likely sustain all other life forms as well.

* Through help from voluntary educators the program has reached out to hundreds of thousands of people from coast to coast. The wolves have made guest appearances at many public and private locations. This year's journey will be our 9th consecutive year we have offered the M:W ambassador wolf program Nationally. Past audiences include;

- Government Agencies - USFWS, NPS, USFS, BLM, DOW, USDA, Dept. of Interior...
- Conservation Groups - Defenders of Wildlife, Nat'l Wild Fed, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Sinpu, Wolf Education & Research Center...
- Cattleman's, woolgrowers, farming, hunting, trapping associations.
- Universities- Cornell, Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, CU, DU, UNM, BSU, ASU, CSM,...
- Clubs- Boys and Girls, Scouts of America, 4H, Zoo Keepers, ...
- Museums, Libraries, Nature Centers, Law firms, Auto Part Stores,...
- Appearances with Paul Winter, Los Lobos, Maria Mckee, Michael Blake (Author of Dances with Wolves), Rick McIntyre (Author of Society of Wolves.)
- TV Specials ABC, NBC, CBS, CNN, PBS, BBC, Mr. Roger's, NBC Today Show
- Media coverage - Rocky Mt. News, Denver Post, Associated Press, Regional Newspapers, Defenders of Wildlife (Nov./Dec. 92 -97), Smithsonian Magazine (June 94), Outside Kids magazine (fall 1994), High Country News, National Geographic...

The Wolves at Mission : Wolf

All of the 40 wolves and wolfdog crosses who live at M:W were born in a cage. Due to their imprinting on people, they will not survive on their own in the wild and are destined to a captive life. Wolves are purposely being bred in cages across the U.S. today. Most are bred and sold for pets, some for education or research, others for movie work and still others for their fur pelts. Sadly most captive wolves are dead before they reach their third year due to irresponsible owners. What is the impetus for breeding wolves in cages? The bottom line is money. People sell pups for hundreds of dollars and, while breeders continue to make profits, a lot of animals die prematurely. Many breeders convince buyers that these animals make great pets and are good with children. Some pure wolves are sold as wolfdog crosses to avoid licensing regulations, while other times, a dog is sold as a wolfdog cross in order to hike up the price of the sale.

Whatever the reason or justification for these animals living in captivity the fact is many of them are in need of help. In our pursuit to provide the resident wolves a happy and peaceful refuge we have become close friends with many of them. We do not attempt to dominate, nor do we submit to them. We simply treat them as an equal friend, in this relationship they have taught us much about intuitive communication and respect. All the wolves at M:W have found a home for their entire lives. Unlike in many captive situations the M:W resident wolves die of old age, some reaching their 15th and 16th years.

Wolves often evoke strong emotions in people that can lead to a valuable educational experience full of self-reflection. We believe that once we begin questioning why our world contains so many wolves in captivity and so few wolves in the wild, people will let go of the need to control, or “own,” the wild. Then, we can all prepare for a future of wild ecosystems full of natural diversity.

Ambassador Wolf Program Contents

Each program is structured to accommodate the needs and interests of individual audiences. A speaker will introduce the audience to basic wolf biology and history, the status of wild wolves in the US, and explain why wolves do not belong in captivity. However, over the years, we have learned that we can talk until we’re blue in the face, and what we are able to communicate doesn’t compare to meeting a wolf face -to-face. Calm, quiet, relaxed audiences will get the chance to look into the eyes of our Ambassador Wolves. The wolves are always our first priority, it is always their choice as to whether they make an appearance.

The Wolves of Mission:Wolf Slide Show

Featured in the program will be an optional slide show presented to you by Kent Weber. Experiences will be shared depicting everyday life living with wolves at the refuge and what the reality of taking care of 40 wolves and hybrids is like. Wolf communication is explored with hundreds of beautiful photos illustrating interactions of the different animals and people.

The Ambassador Wolves:

We consider the wolves with an outgoing personality who are willing to meet people to be Ambassadors for their species. Ambassador Wolves are very unusual animals. Wolves in the wild are terrified of people, and under almost any circumstance would not even approach a human within sighting distance. However, Mission:Wolf’s Ambassador Wolves repeatedly illustrate excitement upon entering an auditorium full of people. Because these wolves are so friendly, we immediately emphasize that these animals are wolves and NOT dogs. Even though some of their behaviors resemble that of domestic dogs, wolves have wild and independent minds, with little desire to please humans. We do not treat them as pets nor do we expect them to perform in any manner. Over the years, several wolves have joined the Ambassador Program. However, if any wolf shows signs of stress from traveling, that animal will retire to a peaceful existence at the M:W refuge.

We have a very strong family bond with these wolves that allows us to understand their needs and fears. Ultimately, we are simply interpreters and chauffeurs for the wolves. If ever they do not want to get out of the bus to do a program, they will not be obligated to

make an appearance. If the audience is too noisy, or if for any other reason, the wolves do not readily enter an area, they will not be forced to do so. Our top priority is to maintain a respectful way of working with the animals which honors our friendship with them and does not place them or others in danger of being injured. If we were to allow anyone to get hurt, wolves or people, it would only hurt the reputation of the wild wolf and the work of many dedicated people who support wolf recovery.

Our goal is to allow people a moment to look into the eyes of a wolf with emphasis placed on the tragic results of putting a wild animal in a cage.

This Year's Traveling Ambassador Wolves

Rami

Rami, a nine-year-old gray wolf, is one of the gentlest wolves that the staff of Mission:Wolf has ever known. Her traveling adventures as an ambassador wolf have taken her from coast to coast, meeting thousands of people along the way. Rami is very unique in her ability to interact with children and is eager to leave her enclosure to travel in the wolf bus or meet visitors at the refuge.

She was born on April 27th, 1993 in captivity. Rami is imprinted on humans and cannot be introduced into the wild. Due to her unusually calm disposition and lack of fear of humans, she is the only one of her litter that will tolerate leashes, vehicles and large audiences. When Rami was just a pup, she began to travel with the Ambassador Wolf Program. Within her first year on the road, she earned the nickname "the Scout," by insisting to be the first one out every time we prepared to do anything. Soon she started clinging to her handler's legs by wrapping her forelegs around them and demanding to be the first one into the program.

In Washington DC, she charged into a reception of 150 wide-eyed politicians, dragging her companion Tamas behind her. She is a small wolf, but Rami leaves people with memories of an encounter they will treasure for the rest of their lives. Rami has since grown into the alpha (or leader) of the Ambassador pack and is now teaching the next generation of wolf pups how to meet audiences.

Rami still very much enjoys the thrill of being center stage and exploring new places as she travels across the country. Today, Rami has an accomplished resume that includes appearances on all major television networks and many famous magazines. Through her travels, Rami has earned the reputation of having the largest territory of any wolf in the United States. She has marked her territory from the shores of Oregon to the skyline of New York, and from the forests of the Smokies to the rolling hills of Montana.

Luna

Luna is one of Mission:Wolf's newest residents and was the first pup that Mission:Wolf accepted in seven years. At only ten days old, Luna was sold to a truck driver in Texas as an endangered Mexican Gray Wolf for \$500. A few weeks later Luna was discovered at a Chicago party living in a bathtub by a knowledgeable and caring woman named Marie. She offered the trucker money to rescue the pup, named her Luna, and started contacting wolf refuges.

It took us nearly a week to organize the vehicles and funds but soon two Mission:Wolf staff members, Tom and Ed, headed east to Iowa in our Subaru. Thankfully, Linda Schutt, a Chicago resident and long-time M:W supporter transported Luna west, meeting our staff in Iowa and saving them hours of driving.

Within two days, Luna arrived at Mission:Wolf. It is unlikely that she is a true Mexican wolf and it may be possible that she may have a small amount of dog ancestry. We may never know Luna's true wolf percentage, however, as she grows and reaches maturity, her behavior will hopefully give us a more accurate indication.

Luna has been raised by several of the M:W staff since she was only three weeks old. Due to our constant contact with her, Luna has bonded very strongly with us. She has recently joined Rami as a traveling companion and Ambassador Wolf. Luna's happy, silly, mellow demeanor easily endears her to one and all. Unlike most wolf pups, she loves to cuddle while sleeping with staff members and seems to enjoy riding in the Wolfhound on the way to and from Ambassador Wolf Program events.

Raven and Magpie

Raven and Magpie were born on April 7, 2002, to a British Columbian wolf father and a mother of half British Columbian and half Arctic wolf descent. Although they are believed to be pure wolves, their ancestors were sold as 98% wolf/dog crosses. To the best of our knowledge their litter was intended for a movie project. Their two brothers are now in Utah being considered as possible filming candidates. Raven and Magpie ended up in the care of a private person in South Carolina along with 36 other exotic animals.

Within the first three months of their life, these beautiful little girls were transported by their owner who was relocating from South Carolina to Colorado. They were placed in a temporary enclosure where it was planned they would spend the winter. However, their owner came to recognize the potential for harm to the pups or their escape by the small enclosure and realized that he could not handle the task of caring for two wolf pups as they matured. He called Mission:Wolf to tell us about his situation and to ask if we would be able to care for them. We immediately accepted, and on Aug. 21 they arrived at the sanctuary.

Raven and Magpie spent their first few nights in our veterinary building getting to know the staff and acclimating to their new home. They were soon introduced to Rami and Luna as companions in a large natural enclosure at the Mission:Wolf refuge. Since they are so outgoing around people, the M:W staff decided they would make great additions to the Ambassador Wolf Program. Though they are still timid in new situations and around large groups of people, Rami is teaching Raven and Magpie that traveling on the Wolfhound can be a whole lot of fun. If these two girls grow up to be shy and reclusive, they will retire from the Ambassador Program and join other wolves at the refuge as companions.

Feed Back

The energy demanded of the people at Mission : Wolf to continue the program is overwhelming to say the least. As each journey is concluded in near exhaustion, we find it is the life changing inspirations that are received by the people we meet along our path that provides us the motivation to continue. We are reminded time and time again of the changes that develop after we plant our seeds and move on. When the wolf program started, there were less than 750 wild wolves living in the lower forty -eight states (all in Minnesota). Today, only 15 years later, there are nearly 4000 wild wolves living in twelve states. We are always excited to hear how the Ambassador Wolves affected the communities we visit because it gives us valuable feedback and reminds us of why we work so hard to pull together the program tours each year.

Earth Week Tour '94:

-“This has been a wonderfully eventful Earth Day, Earth Week at our school. By far the high point was your visit on Monday with the wolves. I personally feel changes have occurred in me that will effect the rest of my life though I cannot put them into any rational frame work at present. I know that I will never be the same and that something deep inside has been verified and strengthened. I'm sure the rest will reveal itself in the proper time. I don't expect that everyone had as intense of a reaction as I did but I do know that the impact on the children was tremendous. They have talked about the wolves all week...”

Connie Kimsey, Harris Lab school, 4/22/94

Northwest Tour '92, Boise, Idaho

-“I have striven to share my good fortune with individuals and groups who are giving of themselves for positive change in America. The people of Mission Wolf are such a group. In an era of uncontrolled greed and corruption, Kent and Tracy are living models of what good citizenship is all about. They care deeply for their country and greater world beyond. They constantly put their personal needs second to that of the greater need of restoring our earth...”

Author Michael Blake. “Dances with Wolves”

About the Presenters

Kent Weber:

M:W Founder, Director, President, Educator

Kent was born and raised in the rugged forests of northern Idaho. In 1970 he relocated to the remote central mountains of Colorado. Living amongst a wide variety of native wildlife has given him a high value for wildlife diversity and habitat protection. He received a Bachelor of Science degree from CSU in 1982.

In 1983 Kent became licensed with the federal USDA and the State of Colorado's DOW to provide refuge for a captive wolf. In 1986 Kent along with nearly a dozen wolves and hybrids located a permanent refuge in the remote Wet Mountains of Southern Colorado. By 1988, due to overwhelming demands to care for captive wolves as well as trying to respond to requests to provide a national education program, Mission : Wolf became incorporated as a 501(c)3, not for profit organization.

Kent continues to guide the development, construction and operation of a 449 acre facility that today provides care for forty canines and has to date accommodated thousands of college student volunteers and interns from across the world.

Kent has lead a National education program for fifteen consecutive years that has reached over 500,000 people from coast to coast. Appearances range from schools, universities, museums, institutes of natural history, state and federal government offices, as well as dozens of appearances on television ranging from the Today Show to Mr. Roger's Neighborhood. Numerous articles continue to appear in publications that reach out to millions of people.

The wolf program is currently under high demand and is expected to visit over fifteen states from the Pacific coast of Washington to the New York' Adirondacks in the next nine months alone. The Mission is to provide massive education aimed at stimulating Americans to discontinue keeping wild animals as pets with intentions to cause facilities like M:W to become obsolete. This will result with more wolves free and wild than living in captivity in the US.

Tracy Brooks: *M:W Director, Wolf Caretaker, Photographer, Artist, Educator*

Raised in the mountains outside Boulder, Colorado, Tracy has cared for and worked with canines through-out her life. As a child she raised several Malamutes and other dogs. Tracy's intuitive ability to understand canine behavior has allowed her to be accepted as a friend by every resident wolf, many of whom have not accepted strangers at all.

Tracy joined the wolf program in 1989 and soon took on full responsibility for the animals needs while on the road. For the last nine years traveling nationally Tracy has lead the ambassador wolves in front of hundreds of thousands of people. She has found herself winding wolves through places that no wolf has seen before, working around very tight areas like small stages full of concert equipment and cameras to running with them across the floor in more spacious rooms and gyms.

At the refuge Tracy guides the feeding, veterinary work and socialization of the 40 resident wolves and hybrids. Her understanding of their ways offers her the ability to interpret their feelings and to protect them from scary situations. She has been able to aid and comfort them while they live out their lives so close to people.

Tracy is an accomplished and recognized artist, photographer and silversmith. Income from her Hand-crafted Jewelry along with sales of photos, cards, posters, paintings, and her awesome T-shirt designs help to pay the bills at the refuge. She is currently writing books about life with the wolves which we plan to publish in the future. All the proceeds are used to help build and expand the resident wolves enclosures and help educate people about wolves and hybrids. Through her art she continues to inspire people to become aware and sensitive of this delicate place we share and live on Mother Earth

Annie White: *Wildlife Biologist, Photographer, and M:W Educator, Wolf Caretaker*

Born in the wilds of Montana, Annie spent her first years exploring the forests and plains in and around Yellowstone National Park. She saw her first grizzly bear and bull moose when only a couple of months old, learning early on that nature deserves great respect as well as great awe. Even after moving to Seattle, Washington, Annie's connection to the natural world was constantly reinforced. Raised in a family of nature photographers, she was whisked away from the city at every chance to travel across the most remote parts of the US. From the deep depths of Carlsbad Caverns to the towering reaches of Mt. Denali in

Alaska, Annie has been fascinated with the scenery and animals she encountered. At every stop along the way, she was drawn to the dogs, cats, horses, wolves, bears, deer, and all of the other animals that appeared.

In pursuit of her dream of working with animals, Annie received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado in Environmental, Population and Organismic Biology in 2001. During her studies in Boulder, CO, she focused on animal behavior, doing original research and writing a thesis on captive wolf behavior. Through this research, Annie studied the behavior of wild wolves in Yellowstone National Park as well as Mission:Wolf for three years. While a student at CU, she also directed CU Sinapu, a student and community organization that works for the protection and restoration of wild predators and the habitat in which all species flourish in the Southern Rockies Ecosystem.

Annie first heard about Mission:Wolf four years ago, when CU Sinapu brought the Ambassador Wolf Program to the CU campus. When she got the opportunity to look into Ambassador Wolf Rami's eyes for the first time, Annie knew she was hooked. Within the month, CU Sinapu took a weekend trip to the M:W refuge and Annie fell in love with the place. Since then, she has returned to the refuge at every chance. Now, she is a full-time staff member of M:W, getting to spend her days giving tours to refuge visitors, working on new educational material, caring for the resident wolves, and raising the pups M:W took in this summer.

Visiting the Refuge

Mission:Wolf relies on voluntary labor and materials to operate. Daily ongoing projects include, building wolf pens, cabins, animal shelters, water systems, feeding the wolves, educating visitors and other tasks to keep the wolves secure. If you would like to contribute by sharing your time and energy or resources, we suggest you start by spending a day or two at the M:W refuge. This is not only enjoyable, but allows people to see first-hand how their efforts can be applied best. Due to our limited facilities and funds, all volunteers must be able to fully support themselves. This includes a tent, a sleeping bag and pad, food, water, warm clothing.. Keep in mind the refuge is sixteen miles from the nearest gas station, convenience store, phone or medical facilities. At an elevation of 9200 feet, the sun's rays are intense, as are frequent storms and other violent weather. Please come prepared for cold and other conditions. Please see our web site for directions and a map - www.missionwolf.com.

If visiting the sanctuary is not feasible, you can help in many other ways. Education is a must; we need help organizing and coordinating wolf programs with schools and other groups. You can become a wolf caretaker through a donation to Mission:Wolf or, most importantly, educate others in your life about MissionWolf and the plight of captive wolves and wild wolf recovery.