



The HOWLING REPORTER



SPRING/SUMMER 2020

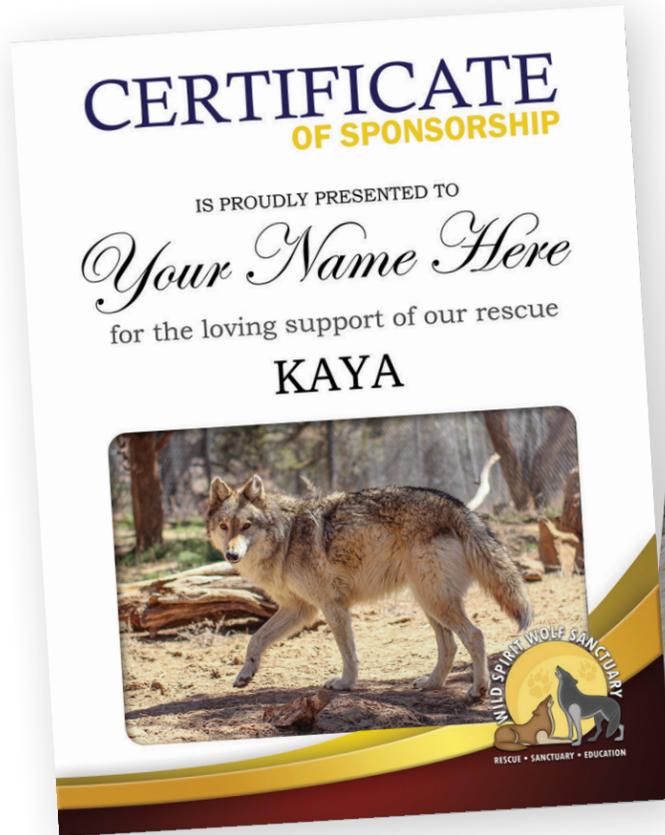
**FEATURED
RESCUE
KAYA**
PAGE 8

- Why We No Longer Take Rescues Off-Site **6**
- Wild Spirit in the Classroom **4**
- Interview with Director of Operations, Crystal Castellanos **12**
- Howling Poetry Contest Winner **5**

HAVE YOU SPONSORED A RESCUE?

Sponsoring a rescue is a great way to support our mission!

When you sponsor any of our rescues, you can choose to create the sponsorship in your own name, in honor of an animal lover you know, or as a gift!



As a thank you for your sponsorship, you may choose to receive an 8.5x11" full-color certificate of sponsorship, a 3x4" magnet commemorating your rescue, or both!



Items are not shown to scale

BONUS!

Sponsor a rescue and have the option to buy the Official 2020 Membership T-Shirt for only \$10!

That's a \$15 discount!



www.wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org

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Special thanks to our printer, The Printer's Press! www.printerspressinc.com

LETTER FROM THE ANIMAL CARE SUPERVISOR

RAE MCCUE



RAE WITH AUSTRALIAN DINGO GLACIER

Dear Readers,

On behalf of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, I want to start by extending a huge thank you to all of our supporters, past and present, who have contributed greatly to our mission of the sanctuary being a safe space and a peaceful home for our beloved rescues. Without your support, Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary would not and could not exist in the capacity that it does, and it would not be possible to provide all that our rescues require to be healthy and happy.

Furthermore, had Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary not been the haven for wild canids that it is, I would have never come to volunteer back in October of 2011. However, it was, and now I am sincerely grateful to the sanctuary and, of course, to the animals for all they have taught me over the years.

When I first came out to volunteer, I was young and ambitious and this was, for lack of a better term, my dream job. Being around the animals and like-minded humans was everything to me. Even after all this time, it has never stopped being my dream job even if at times it is a difficult position to carry out successfully.

So, after eight years dedicated to Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, I am finally planning the next chapter of my life. Effective later this year, I will be stepping down as Animal Care Supervisor, and I will be moving back to the east coast to be closer to family and friends.

I recognize that it's time for me to move on, so that I can continue to grow as a person both personally and professionally. Because of my experiences living in the rural high-desert, relatively isolated from the rest of society, and working a physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing job, I am more than ready for

whatever life throws at me next. My metaphorical tool box is full. I have in me a truly wild spirit, which is the greatest gift I could have asked for.

I will certainly miss my Wild Spirit Family, and the animals tremendously, but I know the sanctuary is being left in the best hands possible in my absence. I am excited to watch how Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary continues to evolve and grow over the upcoming years.

Thank you, readers, supporters, and my fellow team members.

Cordially,
Rae McCue



RAE WITH WOLF-DOG LEIA

WILD SPIRIT IN THE CLASSROOM

BY JARED KAIN-WOODS



Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary is proud and excited to present our newest educational program: Wild Spirit in the Classroom!

Always aiming to improve efforts towards our mission of "Education," this newest program has been developed for off-site events. Wild Spirit in the Classroom will be offered to schools, libraries, and groups throughout New Mexico, starting this year of 2020!

The Wild Spirit in the Classroom program, a dynamic PowerPoint presentation including film and photographs, discusses the history between people and wolves, the domestication process, the differences between domestic dogs and wolves, the existence and definition of wolf-dogs, the exotic pet trade, and, of course, what we at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary do as a nonprofit organization dedicated to rescuing displaced, unwanted, and un-releasable captive-bred wolves, wolf-dogs, and other wild canid species from all over the United States.

The presentation allows the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team to take our mission of Rescue, Sanctuary, and Education on the road, expanding our reach in support of our rescues. The program can and will be catered to many different audiences, depending on the venue and event. The Team has put a lot of effort into this presentation and we are extremely excited to share our experiences, knowledge, and mission with more people!

If your class, group, or organization is interested in reserving the Wild Spirit in the Classroom program or in learning more about it, please email me at: jared@wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org, or call: (505) 775-3304 and request to speak with Jared Kain-Woods.

Wild Spirit in the Classroom will be available for reservation Wednesday through Saturday, and the program fee is \$200.00*, which directly supports a Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary rescue. Your class, group, or organization will be able to choose a rescue to sponsor for the year, and you will receive a certificate featuring the animal and periodic updates on the rescue throughout the year.

*Having trouble fundraising \$200 for the program? Contact us via email to learn more about reduced rate opportunities: jared@wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org. The Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team cannot wait to come visit you!

Please Note:

The Wild Spirit in the Classroom program does not include the presentation of a live rescue, as Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary no longer brings animals off-site for events. Want to learn why? Please check out the article: "Why Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary No Longer Brings Animals Off-Site," published in this issue of the Howling Reporter.

However, while a rescue will not tag along for the Wild Spirit in the Classroom program, all participants will receive a special discount on an on-site Group Tour, which allows everyone a close-up view of around 20 of our rescues, including several species. Your class, group, or organization will be led by a knowledgeable tour guide who will discuss a variety of topics in front of different habitats. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to take photos and/or video of their experience!

The Group Tour will need to be reserved in advance either by phone or email. It will be available at 11:00 AM, Wednesday through Sunday, and the fee will be \$30 regardless of group size. This special discount can only be redeemed once, and must be claimed within one year of the original date your class, group, or organization booked the Wild Spirit in the Classroom program.

When you venture out to Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary for your tour, you and your class, group, or organization will also get the chance to see the sponsored rescue you chose during the program! Please be aware, however, depending on the sponsored animal, smaller groups of even 2 to 3 people will need to be taken at a time to not stress out the rescues.

Come make unique memories at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary while supporting our rescues!

Want to learn more? Please email me at: jared@wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org, or call: (505) 775-3304 and request to speak with Jared Kain-Woods. I am happy to answer all of your questions!



WOLF-DOG ZEUS



Howling Poetry

In November of 2019, Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary hosted its First Annual Howling Poetry Contest! Meant to engage and inspire, the contest provided a fun way for donors, followers, and fans of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary to support the animal rescues.

Participants of all ages and skill levels were welcomed and encouraged to submit an original poem, and the contest was available to international folks as well as those in the United States. A photo prompt was provided to the poets as a point of inspiration. In the photo, our dear elderly wolf-dog rescue named Riot was featured.

The contest opened on November 15th and closed on December 18th for judging before the winner was announced on January 1st, 2020. Submissions were judged based on the poem's relation to and interpretation of the photo-prompt, the poem's inclusion and representation of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's mission and motto, "Wild animals are not pets," and unique flare.

By the conclusion of the contest, 41 poems were submitted, \$455.49 was raised for the rescues, and an additional \$77 was raised from the independent sales of the 2019 limited-edition Howling Poetry Contest apparel printed and shipped from the online company Bonfire. Poems were submitted from all over the United States as well as from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, and contestants were between the ages of 18 and 74.

All participants received the 2019 Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Howling Poetry Contest sticker as a thank you for supporting our rescues.

The winner also received the sticker in addition to the 2019 limited-edition Howling Poetry Contest T-Shirt for free, publication on the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary website, the poem was shared on all of our social media platforms, and it is the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team's pleasure to share the winning poem in this 2020 Spring/Summer issue of The Howling Reporter!

Please join us in howling our congratulations to Mr. Martin Naugher, the winner of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's First Annual Howling Poetry Contest.

Lupine Plea By Martin Naugher

On nights of cobalt blue,
When the moon takes on a different hue.

When cold of winter seems to reach,
Inside our bones, the warmth to leach.

Our eyes reflect the stars above,
As snow settles, like a glove.

We pull together, strength in numbers.
Lone wolf ahead, game to plunder.

To think, we use to be,
Unafraid and roaming free.

Multitudes to thin the herd,
Now scant family must pass the word.

Dependent on humans, we now rely,
With their help, we will survive.

Misunderstood, afraid but proud.
As one, a chorus, a howl so loud.

Take notice and hear our desperate plea,
We must survive, we must be free.



WOLF-DOG RIOT

Why Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary No Longer Brings Rescues Off-Site

BY KENDRA KAIN-WOODS



For Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's long-term Howling Supporters, they likely recall Leyton J. Cougar and Raven, an ambassador wolf, traveling throughout the country for educational outreach events. Raven was a gorgeous, black-coated animal, and he shared an exceptional relationship with Leyton. Together they greeted the public and shared valuable information concerning captive-bred wild canid species, such as wolves and wolf-dogs, the cruel realities of the exotic pet trade, and the importance of respect and compassion towards all creatures whether domestic or wild.

Leyton and Raven got the "Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary" name out there, and they began cultivating our reputation as well as sharing our mission of "Rescue, Sanctuary, and Education" with the world.

Raven has not been the only ambassador to step onto the stage or in front of an audience, however. In Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's 29-year history, Flurry, Storm, and Forest are other well-known names, all three having been wolf ambassadors. While our dear Arctic wolf, Storm, has passed and joined the Big Pack in the Sky, Flurry and Forest are enjoying their retirements at the sanctuary. Both gentlemen are 12-years old, quite healthy but with the aches and pains common in old age. While they still, at times, come out to greet the public on-site, they no longer travel off the sanctuary property.

In fact, Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary has moved away from bringing our rescues off-site completely, and this is for several reasons:

1. In all of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's history, the team has prioritized the rescues. We operate with an "Animals Come First" attitude, and we strictly enforce the rule that socialization is never forced on any animal. That means, if one of the rescues tells us, "No, I'm not coming out of my habitat," we listen.

If we were not to respect that "no," team members could and likely would be injured as a result. Can you imagine leashing up a wolf that does not want human interaction much less being restrained and moved out of their marked

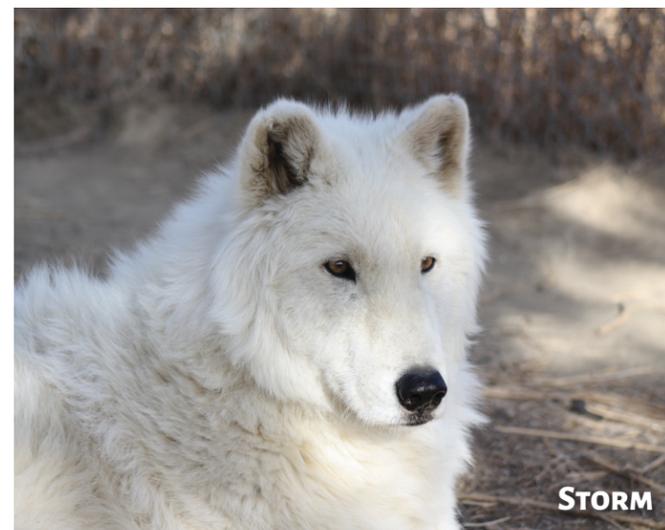
territory where they feel most comfortable? Any stressed animal is capable of harming someone out of fear, and wolves are no different. Even with practiced ambassadors, like Flurry and Forest, there is always a risk when taking one of our rescues out of their habitat.

2. Wolves are naturally afraid of people. As an apex predator, meaning that wolves are at the top of their respective food chain, wolves do not have any natural predators. The only animal historically that has ever posed any kind of threat, has hunted and killed them, are humans. For thousands of years, humans have battled with their fears and misunderstandings concerning wolves as vicious, dangerous predators, and reacted by killing and removing them from the land. As such, wolves innately want absolutely nothing to do with people.

So, ambassador wolves tend to be the "weirdos," and their general comfort with people, including strangers, is not normal behavior. Keeping that in mind, if we were to force our more typical wild canids to not only

leave the comfort of their territories but interact with complete strangers, it would be incredibly stressful for that animal. As an organization that provides lifetime sanctuary to its residents, this is absolutely unacceptable, especially as this particular stress can be avoided.

3. The rescues of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary not only thrive on routine, but expect and require it. This fact has directed the nature of many of our animal care protocols as a result, including the strict feeding time of 9:30 AM. Because the majority of our rescues come to Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary with the experience of prolonged exposure to people, which creates a strong relationship in their mind between humans and food, our rescues do not legally qualify for rehabilitation and release into the wild. This disqualification also



counts for our rescues who were born into captivity with the intention of being sold as pets. If not for organizations like Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, our wild rescues would likely have to be euthanized, as many animal shelters will not adopt wolf-dogs to the public. Although, of course, the laws differ from state-to-state. Unfortunately, many states consider foxes and coyotes to be vermin, so their fate is more often than not euthanasia.

Because our animals thrive, expect, and require daily routine, being sporadically brought off-site to events where everything is strange and unfamiliar can be stressful for the animal, and often unnecessary. To further address this point, the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team has plans to expand what can be done on-site, including basic veterinary care and fecal testing, to not only become more self-sustaining but to prevent unneeded stress wherever we can.

4. Most of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's ambassador animals, especially those that would have left the property, are either in retirement or they have crossed the rainbow bridge to join the Big Pack in the Sky. Even if as a team we still intended to bring animals off-site for educational programs, we currently do not have any rescues who wish to do so.

Some of our younger animals, such as Quinn, a male low-content wolf-dog, and Naia, our 10-month high-content wolf-dog female, do agree to come out on-site, but this is not a guarantee.

In fact, even with our seasoned ambassadors, at times they simply say, "No," and there is nothing the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team can do about it. If a rescue does not wish to come out and greet the public, we will not force them to do so. Each time a trained guide asks one of our ambassadors whether they would like to come out, there is always a chance they will refuse. Furthermore, even if an animal decides to come out, we cannot guarantee how long they will be comfortable remaining outside of their habitat in close proximity to the visiting public.

Finally, there have been situations where one animal out of a habitat is willing to come out as an ambassador, but by doing so it causes drama between pack members. This was the reality for our rescue, Dakota, who used to come out on-site only for meet-and-greet events. However, this greatly upset Powder, one of the Arctic wolves living in the same habitat as Dakota, and out of fear of being disciplined by Powder, Dakota started to refuse leaving the enclosure for public events.

5. Ultimately, for the well-being and safety of all our rescues, the team, and the public, Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary will no longer be bringing animals off-site to events. On-site meet-and-greets may at times still be offered, but we cannot guarantee that our current residents will want to oblige.

Furthermore, it requires extensive training and specialized skills for a guide to be able to properly care for a willing ambassador animal. From the moment the ambassador is leashed up to the encounter to finally returning to the habitat, the guide is watching the body language and subtle cues to how the animal is feeling and reacting to the process. Guides must keep a vigilant eye, as at any moment the animal could decide they have had enough and wish to no longer greet the public. They are not trained dogs, after all, but inherently wild. Escorting any ambassador to the public adds multiple layers of unpredictability, which in turn could lead to safety concerns.

At this time, the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team only includes three trained staff as escorts for meet-and-greets, and we will be giving our farewells to all three throughout 2020. That means when 2021 rolls around, Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary may no longer be able to offer even on-site meet-and-greets.

To all of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's Howling Supporters, whether you have been following and supporting us since the beginning or you are new to the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Family, we, the team, are incredibly grateful for

you all. Your kindness and generosity help us pursue our mission of "Rescue, Sanctuary, and Education," and to provide the best living situation for our rescues as possible. So, a huge howling thank you, to you all!

Many changes have begun to shape the future of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, but change is a necessity for growth. We hope you will continue to support our deserving animals, and watch as the sanctuary continues to blossom into a beautiful haven for our wild rescues.

Howls of love from the Wild Spirit Family.



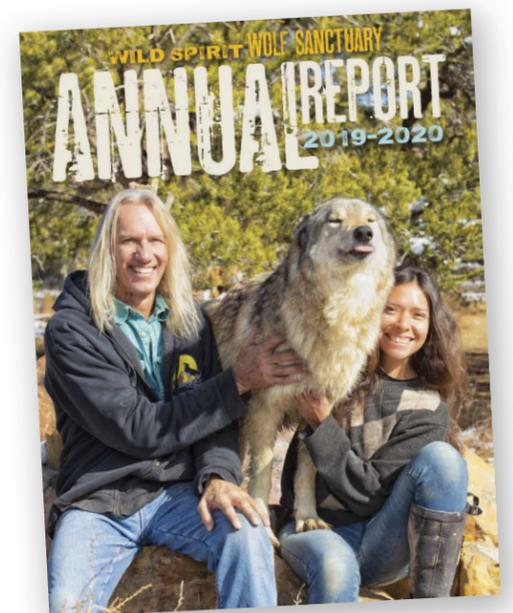
ANNUAL REPORT

The Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team is proud to share once more that the first issue of Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's Annual Report was published in January of 2020! Thanks to the generosity of Gérard and Cathy Vachez who donated their time and skills to assist the team with the design of the publication, and thanks to Kendra Kain-Woods, Grant Coordinator, for gathering all the data and writing the bulk of the content. The Annual Report was successfully developed to better provide valuable information regarding the operations of the sanctuary.

In an effort to become both more transparent and accountable, this data was collected and shared for all of our dear supporters interested in learning more about the sanctuary beyond our rescue's stories and the day-to-day, which we share regularly on our social media platforms as well as our website. The Annual Report highlights 2019 profits and losses, expenses, funds distribution and sources, guest testimonials, donor support, and our goals and planned projects for the upcoming year.

Want to check out the 2019-2020 Annual Report? You can access the online version at: <https://wildspiritwolfsanctuary.org/annual-report/>.

Because the Annual Report is meant to include sponsor and donor information, we will be moving our "Special Thanks" section normally dedicated to our supporters to the Annual Report henceforth, so make sure to stay tuned for the second issue scheduled for publication in January of 2021.



MEET OUR RESCUE **KAYA**



Kaya found her haven at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary late September of 2019. A three-year-old high-content wolf-dog, Kaya is a sweet though robust character. She is certainly not to be trifled with when it comes to highly prized treats, such as her enrichment leg bones; indeed, it would be veracious to say that Kaya is a bit of a glutton.

Over the 6 months she has lived here, Kaya has grown in confidence and playfulness, especially with her caretakers. While she enjoys attention from the female animal care members, Kaya is quite smitten with some of the male personnel. In particular, Kaya demands regular visits from our Building and Maintenance Technician, Brian Adkins, as well as our Multimedia & Outreach Coordinator, Tim Waite. Perhaps she has a fondness for beards?

Before traveling to Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, Kaya lived briefly at the Wildlife Waystation in California before the facility was voted to be shut down by the organization's Board of Directors in August

of 2019. For a couple of years prior to its closure, the Waystation's aging facility had struggled with upkeep after extensive damage from the Creek Fire in 2017 and then flooding in 2019. The Waystation also recently had a change in leadership when founder, Martine Colette, left her position as the organization's president. Suddenly, Kaya, as well as chimps, over 400 tigers, and other wildlife needed to find new homes, and fortunately Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary had space for the young female.

Kaya's caretakers at Wildlife Waystation reported that Kaya was extremely timid, anxious, and was not unknown to fear-snap when folks drew too close. Kaya was said to also retreat from the approach of humans, and she always lived alone. We are thrilled to report that Kaya has since bloomed into a comfortable and social individual! She is intelligent, a bit goofy, and quite the model whenever a camera is aimed her way.

While originally the hope was to pair Kaya with our senior Arctic

wolf, Teton, the couple ended up being a mismatch. After about two weeks of sharing Teton's enclosure, it became evident to the Animal Care Team that the two were not meant to be. 12-year-old Teton had always lived with family. In fact, Teton is one of five animals ever to be born on-site! Teton's mother, Sierra, surprised the team with her pregnancy when she was brought to the veterinary hospital for her spay surgery. After all, as a sanctuary we do not breed, buy, or sell our rescues, and therefore all animals in good health are sterilized to prevent the addition of more wild animals into captivity.

On May 8th, 2007, Sierra gave birth to five puppies: Teton, Shasta, Flurry, Frost, and Trinity. Teton then proceeded to live with his family throughout his youth until Flurry and Frost were relocated to a new habitat and Sierra, Yukon, and Trinity passed away due to the rare fungal infection *Cryptococcus*. For the bulk of his adult years, Teton enjoyed life with his sister, Shasta; the two were considered quite the mischievous duo. Late last summer, Shasta passed away

due to an infection caused by a rattlesnake bite, which she received inside of her mouth. Shasta did always fancy chasing after and harassing snakes, tarantulas, and other so-called pests. . .

Because Teton had only ever lived and socialized with his biological family, his social skills are questionable. While it was obvious Teton was incredibly interested in Kaya, he was unsure how to properly engage and show his keenness. Kaya did not help the situation with her flirtatious tendencies with the neighbors, which ignited jealousy in Teton. As a result, he began to bully her and thus the two were separated.

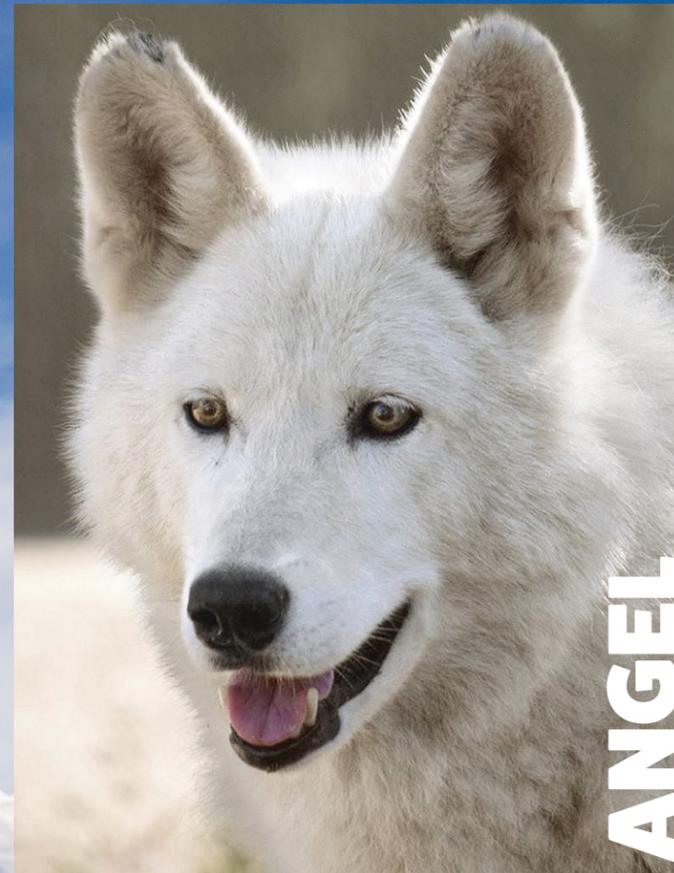
As social animals, the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team continues to keep an eye and ear out for potential companions for our single lady and gentleman. We hope to pair them with new friends sometime in 2020. Fingers crossed!



SHAGGYDOG

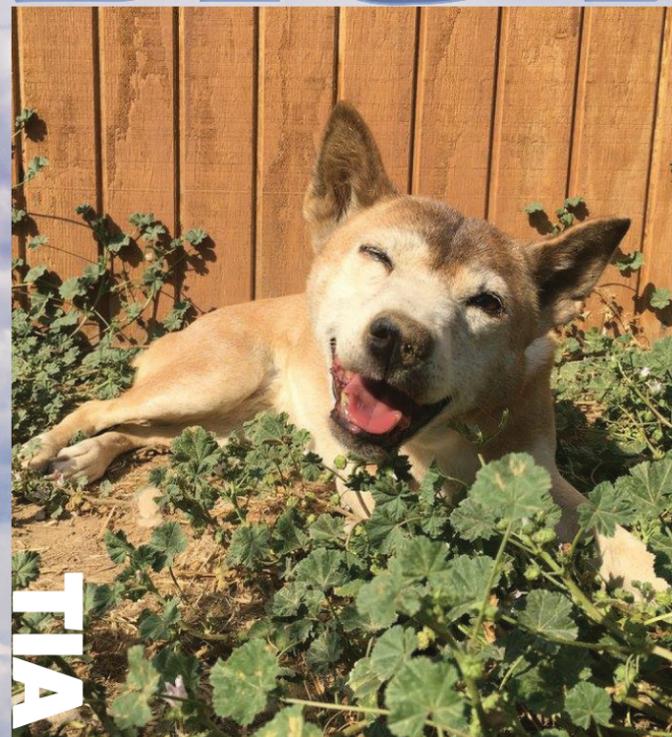


LAIR



ANGEL

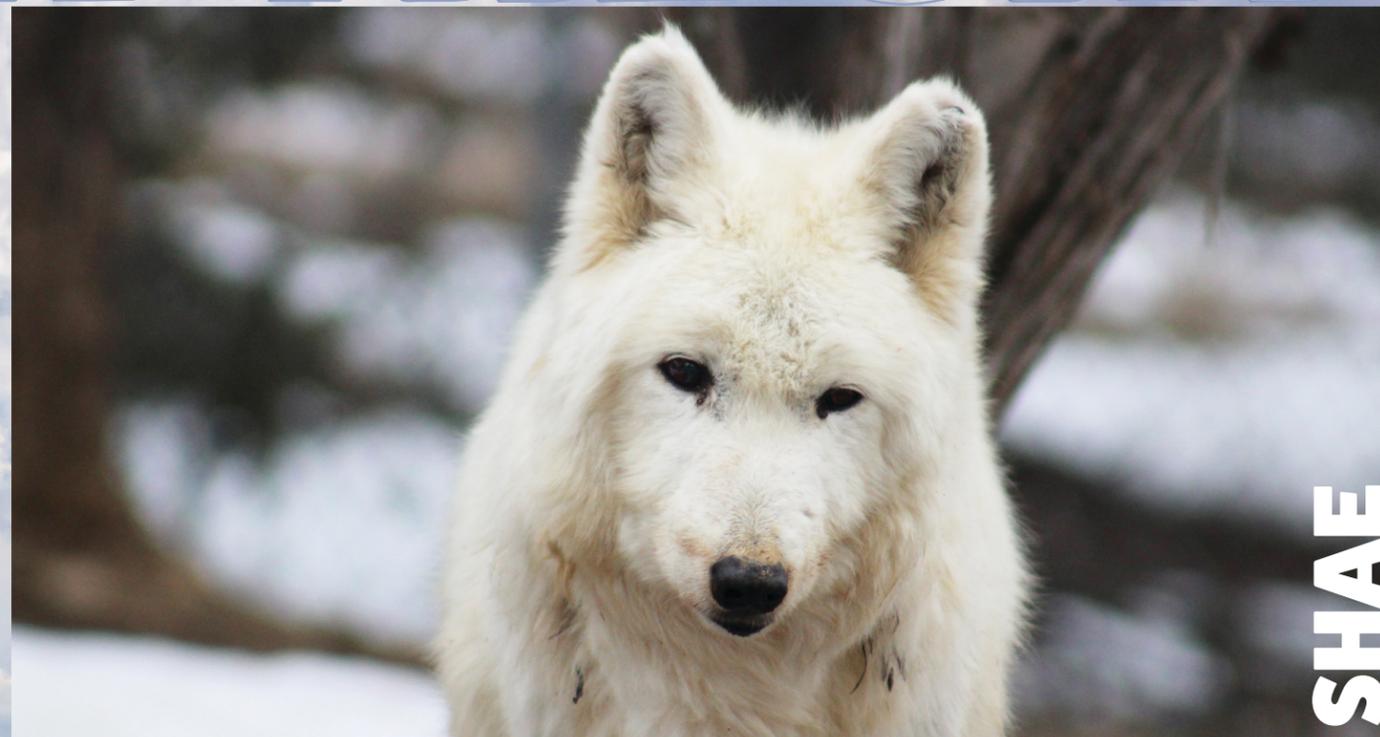
BIG PACK IN THE SKY



TIA



JUAN



SHAE

THE LESSER DISCUSSED:

AN INTERVIEW ON ANIMAL CARETAKING

With Crystal Castellanos, Director of Operations at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary

BY KENDRA KAIN-WOODS

Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, as the name implies, is a sanctuary for rescued wild canid species, including but not limited to wolves, wolf-dogs, coyotes, New Guinea singing dogs, foxes, and Australian dingoes. As a sanctuary, lifetime support and care are provided to every single animal, which includes species-specific diets, enrichment, medical care, and a safe habitat to enjoy for all the years they remain with us. What is not often discussed, however, is the special support provided to declining animals as they age or become ill, and inevitably near death. This is a vital component to operating a sanctuary, and it is a reality that is inescapable.

To learn more about this important element to animal caretaking, I interviewed Crystal Castellanos, Director of Operations at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary.

Let's dive in!

For any new readers, can you provide a brief introduction to the sanctuary, and what your role consists of as a Director?

Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary is a 501(c)3 nonprofit located in a rural community in New Mexico. We rescue captive-bred wolves, wolf-dogs, and other related canid species that cannot be released into the wild. Most often, our rescues come from people who purchased them to be pets only to find out that they are not "pets." We provide lifetime sanctuary to our rescues and we educate the public about the different canids that reside here, as well as the plight of the animals involved in the exotic pet trade.

My role as a Director... I oversee the daily operations, manage the humans, and make sure that our animals are the priority. I ensure that the animals are being taken care of and are getting what they need, that our guests are happy, and that our team is happy, as well. I accomplish all of this by working closely with my staff and ensuring resources are utilized efficiently. Whenever possible, I oversee that protocols and policies are implemented to ensure that our business foundation is strong so that we can move toward becoming a self-sustainable organization.

How long have you worked at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary?

I have worked at Wild Spirit for close to 9 years. I started in 2011 as a volunteer.

How long have you provided care to animals whether domestic or wild?

I've been professionally taking care of domestic and

wild animals for at least 10 years. I was a dog trainer before I came to Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary. Dog training was a hobby long before it became a profession.

The reality of operating a wildlife sanctuary means witnessing the decline of animals as they age or become ill, and near death—can you speak to your experience concerning this?

It's difficult to watch an animal deteriorate in age or illness, especially when you've watched that animal for years and knew them as young, spry chickens! As for witnessing animals near death, I've grown accustomed to the experience in my years here, as each animal that has passed away in its own time has taught me that death is nothing to be afraid of. These animals live in the present, and those lessons of being in the present have been strongest when their age begins to wear on them, when they become ill, or when they near death.

What has been the most challenging aspect for you when caring for declining animals? Would you feel comfortable sharing a particular experience?

The most challenging aspect for me when caring for declining animals is keeping my emotions intact and not projecting my own stuff onto the animals. It's hard... It's hard to see an animal go from vibrant, healthy, having an I-can-do-anything-attitude to, "I can barely move." Due to my humanness, it's easy to fall into the mental trap of, "Poor animal. Poor animal. Poor animal." If they were in the wild, they'd walk off to pass away alone and wouldn't have anyone projecting that onto them. Since they're in captivity and under our care, I know we do everything we can to keep that animal comfortable in their decline, but watching an animal have a difficult time getting up is hard, despite knowing you're giving them the best care. It's especially difficult when I feel my team members' sadness around the same situation.

A particular experience... I'll use Storm. Essentially, I mourned Storm's inevitable passing for a whole year. Any time he stumbled harder than any other day, or when I saw glimpses of him having potential



lapses in almost Alzheimer-type moments... It hit me to my core. It was like, "Oh no!" And I would leave the enclosure and just bawl. Towards the end of his time, while I interacted with him, there were a few times that I would tell myself, "I know it's going to happen. I know he's going to go." I would collect myself, get out of the enclosure, and then cry. I probably annoyed my husband (laughs) many times, by crying so much before he passed. You know it's going to happen, and even if you know it will it doesn't get any easier, especially if you're attached to a rescue.

Wild Spirit operates with an attitude of "Animals Come First," and that extends to a rescue's last few months, weeks, and days. Team members often state, "The animal said, 'No,' they are not ready to be helped." Can you expand upon this statement?

So up until recently, I wouldn't have called it animal communication. Now I'm becoming much more comfortable around this topic... around the actual ability to be able to communicate with non-human animals. Before this though, it was just the visual answer from the animal. For example, I've heard of stories where volunteers would press staff to assist an animal that was "suffering." Leyton, [Executive

Director at the time], would walk up to aid the animal with euthanasia in-hand and the animal, which couldn't or wouldn't walk, would take all of its energy and strength to move far away from him. That was a clear, "No."

I've seen similar instances in my own experience at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary. The best example I have though is in Lucian's last days.

In Lucian's last three days, he laid in the same spot without getting up and, if I'm not mistaken, he refused food in the last day or two. We all knew that his time was coming to an end due to weakness he displayed. Lucian was diagnosed with tumors in his lungs shortly before his decline. We didn't know whether it was going to be days or whether it was going to be weeks, but obviously he was deteriorating. We had the euthanasia on-hand, as he wasn't given a positive prognosis. In those last days, I would come up... and I would clearly talk to him as I'm talking to you now, "Hey, so, I can help you along by..." I was literally visualizing myself euthanizing him with one of his front legs. I wouldn't go straight up to him. I would talk to him from the fence, and he literally growled at me each time I asked him. His energy was so diminished in those last few days, but when I asked him, twice each day, he would muster all of his energy to give me the meanest growl. Those were obvious "Nos" to me.

By the third day, everyone's emotions were heightened; I could feel all of them, and I was tired, and I wanted Lucian to pass away quickly. That sounds so wrong. I wanted him to pass away, to end his suffering, but really I wanted him to pass away so we could all stop suffering on his behalf.

I sadly walked up to his habitat, expecting him to growl at me when I asked the question. Except, when I asked... He laid his head down, outstretched one of his front legs, and I almost got the sense of, "Just do it. I can't." I was so surprised and felt like I had to scramble and said, "Wait! I'm not ready!" So we got prepared. A previous caretaker arrived to say her good-byes, and while she spent alone time with him the Animal Care Supervisor and I gathered the euthanasia, the clippers, and other supplies. I had two caretakers with me that day. One person helped hold off the vein while the other held a water bowl to his lips; Lucian drank water while I injected the needle, and he passed away peacefully. Although he would have likely preferred to go alone, he was totally fine going like that—with three ladies surrounding him with love.

There have been a few animals who have stuck around longer than we, we, would have liked, but [then] finally passed away during the night. And then there are other animals that have held on for

longer than we would have liked, but finally in the end said, "Ok." and they've given us the physical, "Yes, go ahead and do this," like Lucian. But often times, if we're listening, it comes down to the animal letting you know that it's time.

For readers who may be unfamiliar with the process of euthanasia, can you discuss the steps, details, and how—when it is—it is used to help some of the declining rescues?

"It's important for our rescues to have the ability to pass away in peace at home."

A licensed Euthanasia Technician and/or Veterinarian will sedate the animal, ensure the animal is fully sedated, and then find a viable vein to inject the euthanasia solution into the bloodstream. Once the thick solution has been injected, the animal takes its last breath.

As for how we use it for our declining rescues, each animal is different so it's always going to be a case-by-case basis when it comes to that step. As a rescue begins to decline, observations begin to increase as we note the changes in their appetite, stool, energy level, etc. Often times, a veterinarian will be



consulted and/or visited and we'll give the animal supportive care based off of the veterinarian's recommendations, if necessary. When quality of life diminishes for that rescue, staff supports the animal with euthanasia, if it is ok with that assistance. However, each animal is different, so quality of life diminishing could look different for each.

It's important for our rescues to have the ability to pass away in peace at home. We don't believe it necessary to kennel an animal, take it to the van, drive two hours to the city (with the first 10 minutes of the drive being loud and bumpy along our gravel road) to then be surrounded by strange sights, sounds, and smells of a veterinary office where the animal is euthanized in an unknown environment. We prefer for our rescues to choose the day they'd like to slip away, and it seems the animals prefer it as well, especially the companion animals. In that case, the habitat-mates have the opportunity to say "good-bye," and in turn so does the rest of the sanctuary pack. Although it's typically the companion that will sing a solo, mournful song, the other rescues will join in on the first night's mourning song, punctuating the departure of another wild spirit.

What are some of the factors, concerns, and questions considered when making the decision to humanely assist an animal who is declining into death?

Well, one, we'll consider: Is the animal social? That will definitely go into account of how we approach our assistance when the animal, of course, is ready. Even the anti-social animal who wants nothing to do with us, at one point, will eventually say, "Ok, I'm ready." But they're going to be stressed out about having a human come up to them after all the years

of never asking for interaction.

We'll also consider whether we can assist the animal with its companion being in the habitat with us. I've not seen this be an issue, but it could be problematic if you have a companion who is particularly possessive of the declining animal. We'll need to consider how to remove that animal from the equation by either separating it into the sub

enclosure or walking it to another habitat entirely if it's possible. If it isn't possible, we may need to consider having an extra person watching the backs of the technician focused on performing the procedure.

A lot of our animal caretaking job is done whether it's raining, snowing, or the sun is beaming on us. Death doesn't come around on perfectly scheduled days, so we'll need to consider how we can assist the animals as comfortably as possible in those elements. It doesn't deter us; it's just a factor to consider.

If an animal needs to be helped but has a history of being hands-off due to temperament, we'll need to consider sedating the animal with a tranquilizer gun. Thankfully, we rarely have to use this method, but we have one and trained staff to use it should we need it.

The point is to always make those last moments as peaceful as possible. Once again, most non-human animals prefer to wander off and pass away alone, but in captivity they rarely get that chance, so it's up to us to give them the next best thing: A peaceful, completely pain-free and stress-free way of slipping away.

Obviously, there is a huge difference in aiding a domestic animal versus a wild animal—can you expound upon this? What are the key elements to note?

Well, in general, our domestic animals have been a part of our lives and have been acclimated to our routines, other people, and hopefully to the routines of visiting a veterinary clinic. Veterinarians and technicians are trained on the proper handling and restraint of a variety of domestic animals and have different methods or tools to do so safely. I would hope that most often getting to the point of aiding a domestic animal is fairly low-stress and uneventful.

Wild animals don't have the same lifestyle as our domestic animals do. In our case, our wild-spirited rescues come from different backgrounds—from backyard breeding situations, hoarding situations, owner-surrenders, and wanderers of neighborhoods. Some may arrive feral-like, and some may have a social history. It requires time and patience to build relationships with them, and even still, it's not guaranteed we'll ever get to interact with a rescue in its lifetime at Wild Spirit Wolf

Sanctuary. Trying to put hands, much less restraint, on a wild animal like you would a domestic dog could lead to unsafe conditions for the humans and animal involved.

It may not be as easy to put a muzzle on an animal such as Nikki, as it would be to put a muzzle onto my domestic dog, Pandora. Wild animals usually want nothing to do with us humans, so that makes it more difficult for a stranger to restrain an animal like that in order to assist it.

However, I'd like to use this opportunity to mention



that Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary is working towards operant conditioning with our rescues so that we can perform cooperative veterinary care, but that will take time. Still, we're not treating them like a dog, or a cat, and we wouldn't approach them as such.

If you feel comfortable sharing with our readers, can you speak to your personal experience and process, once the decision to help an animal is made, as you prepare to perform that act of kindness?

So, when I first got certified to become a euthanasia technician, I knew going in that this was an act of kindness. It was the last act of service I could provide to our rescues. . .

They don't have to go to a foreign environment and be handled by people they don't know, and they're not being taken out of their home to have to deal with stress for the last few minutes or last couple of hours of their lives. So, I was actually kind of happy that I was going through with it.

I was naïve. (Laughs) I went into a few days of process after my training, and I had to really think about whether I wanted to take this kind of responsibility. I wondered whether it was ethical and humane. It was important for me to truly think about the ramifications of this service.

In the end, I was happy that I was certified. The first animal I helped along was Junior. Junior was the first wolf-dog I was ever introduced to and he and I had become quite close. Being a part of his last day, helping him along with peace and ending his pain, really solidified the act of kindness.

The decision to assist an animal is never made lightly, so when it's made, I do my best to keep my emotions away from [the] whole situation until after it has been completed. After it's all said and done. In my opinion, it's best that I arrive to that animal in a neutral space of, "Ok. I will help you," and have nothing else there. There's been a couple of times where as soon as the euthanasia has entered the blood system, or as soon as the animal has taken its last breath, that's when the tears come pouring out. It's like holding my breath until as soon as either of those things happen, then it's like, "Ok." Now I can finally exhale. Now I can feel all the emotions."

I'm a steward, and I'm a steward until their very last breath. So, I guess the process really has just been when a decision is made, I just do what's necessary, then I make the space to feel all the feels.

In summary, I've had to make my peace around being "the angel of death." My experience here has taught me to trust the animals' ability to tell us what they need. It does weigh on the soul though. It was part of my journey to learn this aspect of life at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary.

What advice, if any, would you offer to someone who is considering taking on this particular responsibility?

There is such a thing as compassion fatigue. If this is going to be a part of your life, I definitely would talk about it to a trusted friend who can hold you in a safe space and. . .cry it out. Your feelings are valid.

I've been lucky. I have a loving partner who can hold me through it. Whether he understands it or not, I've been able to really speak to my feelings around it. For me, writing a long post afterwards has helped in a lot of ways to honor that animal's memory, or writing in my journal.

But this responsibility is definitely not for just anyone. You really do want to come with the intention of you're doing it for them. That death is part of life. . . Keep the human fear, keep the human emotions out of it as much as possible until you can take care of what that animal needs, and then process your emotions afterwards.

It's not easy. So don't come into it thinking that it's going to [be]. . . Maybe even reading about death in ways that we are not accustomed to. . . Getting different perspectives 'cause our society doesn't really provide a healthy perspective on death itself, so that might be very helpful if you are going to be taking on this particular responsibility.

Breathe. Breathe big time. (Laughs)

Thank you so much, Crystal!

We, the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary Team, recognize the immense weight, perhaps even the fear or repulsion, as it applies to the subject of death. Nevertheless, this is a very important topic, and it is an inescapable aspect to providing quality lifetime care to our well-deserving rescues.

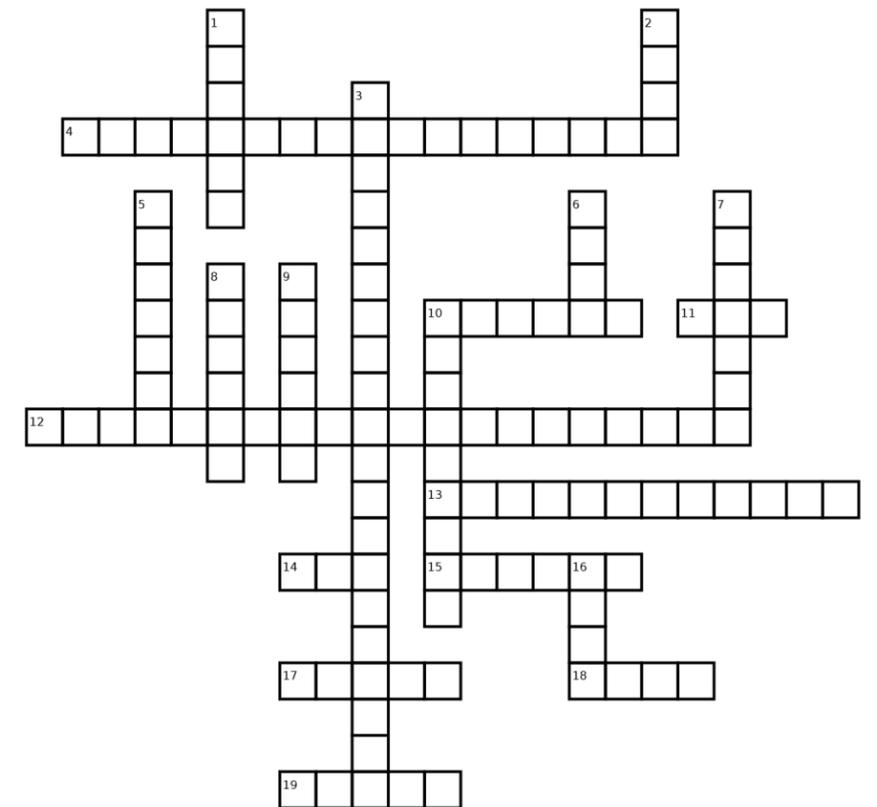
The other reality pressing harder in 2020 is that about 70% of our current rescue population are elderly, meaning that they are eight-years or older. We currently care for 56 animals, and of that total 39 are seniors. Unsurprisingly, many of the aging animals are beginning to slow down, displaying signs of arthritic discomfort, or, for a few, symptoms of other conditions. As a team, we recognize that more good-byes will be in our near future. However, Crystal is right, "Death is part of life," and we would all do well by celebrating the lives we share with others now. We must embrace all of the moments we experience with our rescues, and we must offer the most kindness in those final weeks, days, and minutes when they need the most compassion and understanding without the interference of our own human emotions.

Please join me in once again thanking Crystal Castellanos, Director of Operations at Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary, for speaking to her experience and sharing so much with our dear Howling Supporters: Thank you, Crystal!

“Being willing to be the angel of death means being willing to be a faithful witness to how wretchedly difficult it is in our time and place to do something that is otherwise God given.”

– Stephen Jenkinson, Griefwalker

Wild-Spirited Crossword Puzzle



Down:

- This Arctic wolf ambassador is Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary's resident DIVA
- Our rescue named after a Greek god
- Azteca's scientific name
- This canid is not a hybrid
- Adult grey wolves do not possess this eye color
- One of the truly monogamous mammals
- One of the sub-species of the grey wolf
- This canid species cannot bark
- The scientific order in which all the Wild Spirit Wolf Sanctuary rescues are classified
- Our youngest rescue

Across:

- This canid species operates with a matriarchal society
- This kind of tail is a trait of domestication
- This species is omnivorous
- One of the world's rarest wild canid species
- Romeo's scientific name
- This rescue's name in Japanese commonly translates to demon, ogre, or troll
- This bird species is well known for having a mutualistic relationship with wolves
- This grey wolf coat color is the result of a genetic mutation
- This Westeros rescue has an adorable underbite
- One of the most common domestic dog breeds that are misidentified as wolf-dogs

Crossword Answers

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Flurry | 16. Nala |
| 2. Zeus | 17. black |
| 3. <i>Canis lupus familiaris</i> | 18. Arya |
| 4. Australian dingoes | 19. Husky |
| 5. wolf-dog | |
| 6. blue | |
| 7. coyotes | |
| 8. Arctic | |
| 9. wolves | |
| 10. Carnivora | |
| 11. fox | |
| 12. New Guinea singing dog | |
| 13. Vulpes vulpes | |
| 14. Oni | |
| 15. ravens | |

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WOLF-DOG LEIA