

Tashina (arctic wolf)

HOWL CHRONICLES

The Wolf Mountain Nature Center

May 2024

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(a non-profit 501(c)3 organization) Founded in 2006 by Will Pryor

Head Animal Caretaker's Message...Will Pryor

I knew there were three. Natani had moved the pups twice in their first nine days. One of the pups, whom I later named Tala, was paraded around the enclosure in Natani's mouth. Our Siberian husky female, Glacier, does the same thing several times a day with her hedgehog stuffed toy. There is nothing unusual about momma wolf carrying pups around and often she will relocate the pups to a different location. On day ten I decided it was time the pull the pups and begin their socialization. After safely locking up the adult wolves, my team had to locate the pups in any one of three possible den sites. The first two dens yielded no pups—the last one of course was the deepest and darkest of all. It was just at that moment when we were about to enter that the sun sent a ribbon of bright light directly into the den opening, revealing three healthy wolf puppies who came out of the darkness following the light. I knew there were three.

I named the two females Tala, and Tashina, and the big male puppy was named Dancing Turtle in honor of my friend Raymond Dancing Turtle, who had just passed.

And so, the journey began.
Sleeping with the pups to keep them warm and feeding them bottles every two hours. From that moment and then along all our paths in life, we shared things most humans will never experience: we sang songs together, napped, laughed, and cried together. A lifetime to walk with them and be with them as they each took their final breaths has been an honor and privilege.

The last of the three, Tashina, has seen her way through sixteen winters and now walks the wolf trail to meet up with her family. As I attempt to put feelings to words (our human language is so lacking), I find myself taking deep breaths and reflecting upon images, sounds, memories...

I am overwhelmed with all that has been. With the passing of each of my dear friends, I feel a void that cannot ever be filled on this short earth walk. Oh, how I love those old wolves—in their fading eyes lies the answer to all things...and then there were three....

Walk in balance. Will



Director Dialog...Erin Lord-Astles

The Sounds of the Season

Springtime is finally here, and summer is right around the corner. I'm excitedly sowing seeds in my garden and hosing off the kayaks in anticipation of warmer weather and sunshine. But my absolute favorite part of spring is when the many sounds of life return after a cold, stark winter.





Aside from the many songs and calls of returning bird species, the real first sign of spring for me are the frog choruses. Our first vocalizers tend to be more forest dwelling frogs, the most well-known and recognizable are spring peepers, who are aptly named for the *peeping call*. If I'm lucky, I may chance upon **chorus frogs** if I wander into the appropriate habitat, but I have certainly heard many **wood frogs** already, which sound sort of like a raspy giggling chatter described as a "ca-ha-ha-ac, ca-ha-ha-ac" sound.

Soon thereafter, we should expect the *sustained high-pitched trilling* calls of the **American toads** (calls lasting 5-30 seconds) and the *abbreviated musical flute-like trill* of **gray tree frogs** (call lasts ~0.5 seconds, repeating). We also start hearing the calls of more wet meadowland species like **leopard frogs** (*sounds like a low growl or purr – think Predator movies*) and **pickerel frogs** (*sounds like a bit like garbled snoring, ending with staccato "guck!"*). Later in the summer we should expect the typical pond frog calls; **bull frogs** sound a bit like the phrase "ruuuuuum, ruuuuuuum, jug o rum" in a deep bass tone, while **green frogs** sound like an *out of tune banjo*. (Link to frog sound files

here: Calls of Frogs and Toads of the Northeast | Music of Nature, Video of amphibian call phenology).

We also are gifted with many insect vocalizations when the weather warms up. Bees buzz happily through the

dandelions and daffodils, working their pollinator magic. **Crickets** and **grasshoppers** create *chirping or buzzing* sounds, **Katydids** congregate in tree canopies and produce a series of *clicks*, lispy "zeet" sounds, and the typical synchronized chorus of a phrase that sounds like "Katy did? or Katy didn't?" (Link to insect sound files here: <u>Singing</u> Insects: Identification Guide With Audio - Owlcation).

2024 is a particularly interesting year for **periodical cicadas** in the southern and mid-western states. The 13 year (Brood XIX) and 17 year periodical cicadas (Brood XIII) will emerge in unison within their respective ranges this year, which is the first time this has happened



since1803 when the Napoleonic Wars began, and the Louisianna Purchase was made between France and the United States. In 2024, the distinct *buzzing* sounds of the cicadas should be intense in the southern and mid-western states. We will miss this event in NYS but locally, our own resident **annual cicadas**, which have shorter lifecycles of 2-5 years, can be heard every summer in smaller numbers. New York State won't experience another major periodical cicada event until Brood XIV emerges in Long Island in 2025, Brood II emerges in the Lower Huson Valley in 2030, and Brood VII emerges in western NY in 2035.

There is more to these ecological soundscapes than just appreciating the beauty and intrinsic value of the animals who sing to us. Many wildlife professionals use acoustic monitoring to assess the health of an ecosystem, as our amphibian friends are considered some of the best bioindicators of something gone wrong in a particular population or habitat.



Wishes and Wants: As a non-profit we rely heavily on donations. Below are some of the many items that would help the center. If you can help, please contact us or simply bring the item(s) on your next visit!

Spring has finally arrived and we will soon be busy with landscaping and construction/maintenance type tasks.

Having certain skills in these areas is helpful, but not required as we will train you as most tasks are fairly simple to master. Please contact us 607-627-6784 or twmncwolves@yahoo.com if you, your family, your work place, etc would like to sign up to help! Work days occur both weekdays and weekends. Please note all workers must be at least 16 years old. Thanks in advance!

Animal Care

Metal "pooper-scoopers"
Old fire hoses (minus the nozzles)
6' round/oval galvanized water troughs
Commercial grade garden hose (3/4")
Gift Cards: Tractor Supply/Country Max

Gift Cards: Chewy.com



Landscaping/Maintenance

Picnic tables &/or benches
Gift Cards: Lowe's/Curtis Lumber
Working push mower
Various power drill bits
Contractor size trash bags
Salt/sand spreader for pickup truck
Use of bulldozer



Office/Classroom

Toilet Paper
Paper Towels
Hand Sanitizer
Non-latex gloves (large/XL)
Heavy Duty Staple Guns
AA batteries





Join our expanding Volunteer Team!

Karley Bush, Volunteer & Intern Coordinator

Spring is here in true New York fashion, and with the changes in weather comes changes all around. Two former center interns have accepted positions within the conservation field in their preferred discipline. Jai (Summer 2022, Paul Smith's College, Fisheries and Wildlife with a Wildlife concentration) is working in California as a Biological Science Technician through the US Fish & Wildlife Service studying salmon and sturgeon populations. Alex (Summer 2021, SUNY Oneonta, Biology with a focus in Conservation Biology and Ecology) is working on the Voyagers Wolf Project,



studying the summer ecology of wolves in the Greater Voyagers Ecosystem in Minnesota. Congratulations and best of luck to you, Jai and Alex!



As our summer season approaches, we would like to welcome two of our new interns Lillian and Conner! Lillian is a Wildlife Management major from SUNY Cobleskill who has studied rhinos in South Africa. Conner, joining us from SUNY ESF, is majoring in Wildlife Sciences and is an Eagle Scout with landscaping experience. Both have a passion for wolves and bring their own unique skills to our team. We are excited to have them join us this upcoming season!

April is Volunteer Appreciation Month and I'd like to thank anyone who takes the time out of their busy daily lives to give it to organizations in need, but especially our entire staff. Every contribution matters and even small acts of kindness can have a profound impact. Last year our core volunteer staff dedicated over 8,000

hours to our center. This does not include the just as valuable intern, special event staff, and one-time volunteer hours contributed as well. Every single one of you is appreciated!

We currently have openings for volunteers, as well as opportunities for one-time projects, if volunteering with us is something you are interested in. Volunteers help in many various aspects of running the sanctuary including admissions, gift shop, leading guided tours, landscaping, construction, habitat development, and animal care.

Please join us at the center on Sunday, June 2nd 12 – 3 pm for more in-person information on those events or fill out a volunteer application on our website under the Volunteer/Intern tab. We have a



limited number of summer intern positions open as well! Whether you are looking to volunteer with us or not, I



strongly encourage you to seek out an opportunity to volunteer with an organization that you are passionate about. You can make a difference, develop valuable skills, meet others who share some same interests, and connect to your community. Volunteering is a rewarding experience that has a positive impact on yourself and community!

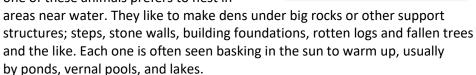
Snakes!!



Niki Cesar Tracchia, Wildlife Advocate

As Spring moves along, we will start to see snakes moving about their natural habitats...anywhere outside our homes. And that's okay! These snakes are waking up and looking for easy and safe prey items to eat after a long winter brumation - this is like a type of resting. They are not fully asleep, and do have moments of activity and drinking water. The most common snakes we see this time of year in New York State are Common Garter snakes, Eastern Milk snakes and Northern water snakes. Each

one of these animals prefers to nest in



Common Garter snakes bear live young, having between 4 to 80 babies between late July and October. They are a contractor, but they do have venomous saliva to help them paralyze and eat frogs. They can also eat poisonous animals, and although immune to the poison themselves, they can poison any animal who eats them afterwards! They typically eat earthworms,

amphibians, leeches, slugs, snails, insects, crayfish, small fish and other snakes. Garters can grow up to 2-3 ft long and live only around 2-3 years in the wild. In captivity they have been known to live 10 years.

Eastern Milk snakes lay 6 to 24 eggs in loose soil or rotting logs from mid-June to July. These snakes are non-venomous constrictors. They primarily eat mice, but will also take other small mammals, other snakes, birds and their eggs, and slugs. Milk snakes can grow up to 3-4 ft long and live around 15 years in the wild. In captivity they have been known to live 20 years.



Northern Water snakes give live birth to up to 30 babies at once. These snakes are nonvenomous constrictors. They primarily eat fish and amphibians, but can also take small mammals, birds, crayfish, and insects. Water snakes can grow up to 2-4.5 ft long, and although their lifespan in the wild is currently

unknown, they can live up to 10 years in captivity. Northern Water snakes are often killed for being mistake as water moccasins - another name for the venomous Cottonmouth.









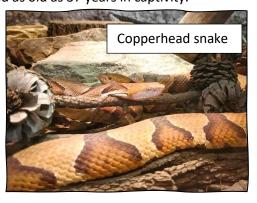
Milk snake

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Though far less commonly seen, there are 3 venomous snakes found in New York: Timber Rattlesnake, the Massasauga (or pygmy rattler), and the Copperhead. The Timber Rattlesnake dens underneath rocks, fissures in rocky ledges or other crevices. Often these dens are shared with other snake species too, both venomous and nonvenomous. Rattlesnake eggs mature inside the mother's body, rather than in a nest. The gestation period is 6-7 months, up to 20 eggs. August is peak season for Rattlesnake births. They give birth every 2-3 years, depending on the species. Their primary food source is small and medium sized rodents; mice, shrews, chipmunks and squirrels. They will also eat birds, lizards and amphibians. Timber Rattlesnakes can reach 2.5-5 ft long and live as long as 30 years in the wild! They have been recorded as old as 37 years in captivity.

Timber Rattlesnakes are venomous - and cytotoxic. This means the venom is tissue destructive, and can cause wounds and necrosis. Some rattlesnake venom also has neurotoxic properties. Seek help within half an hour of a bite. Left untreated, it can lead to organ failure and death in 2-3 days.



Check it out!







Niki with an 11-foot male invasive Burmese python in the Everglades

Foxes & more...

Peg Fuller, Head Fox Care Specialist

Aurora Borealis and Avalanche are Wolf Mountain's ambassadors for all that is wonderful and magical about Arctic Foxes. One of the many things about Arctic Foxes that visitors find interesting is how they change their color. In the winter Arctic Foxes have a very thick white coat. The fur is approximately two inches thicker in the winter. In the summer they have a very thin coat, and it is brown, black, and grayish. I have been asked many times what other animals change like that. No other animal at Wolf Mountain changes. Our wolves get heavier



winter coats, but the color doesn't change, neither do the coyotes. The Gray Foxes look the same in the summer and winter.

There are a few other mammals and a few birds that change coloring. There are also some reptiles, amphibians, fish, insects, and spiders that change color with their environmental conditions. But I will discuss some of the birds and mammals.

In the Arctic region, changing to a white coat in the winter serves as a good camouflage in all the snow. In the summer a darker coloring helps these animals camouflage themselves amongst the dirt, trees, and rocks.

The Arctic hare, the mountain hare, and the snowshoe hare all change their colors from winter to summer. They turn from a white to a darker brownish and grayish color, similar to the Arctic Foxes. Arctic Hares may remain white all winter based on the snow coverage. Snowshoe hare's fur is brown in the spring and summer and white in the winter.

Three species of weasel swap their brown summer coats for white coats to match the winter snow: the least weasel, the long-tailed weasel, and the short-tailed weasel (stoat or ermine). If the weasel lives in the arctic they will have a white winter coat. If they live in a warmer climate, they may change to white or not at all. Research shows the color change is related to phototropism (amount of light during the day) and not temperature.

Peary Caribou are a subspecies of caribou native to northern Canada and Greenland. They have silvery coats in the summer and white coats in the winter. No other caribou completely change their coat color.

Arctic Lemmings turn from brown or gray in the warmer months to white when the snows come. Not all lemmings are in the same genus and others do not change coat colors. Another small mammal is the Siberian hamster. It is often sold as a pet. In the winter or darker months, it has a mostly white coat and when it is lighter out it has a silvery coat.

There are also some birds that change colors. Ptarmigans have brown plumage in the summer and white feathers in the winter. There are three species of ptarmigans. The white-tailed ptarmigan turns entirely white. The willow and rock ptarmigans keep some black feathers on their tails. An interesting fact about them is they also grow white feathers on their feet to help walk on the snow. The birds also have air bubbles in the white feathers which helps with insulation. Like the white coated mammals, the white coat may have better insulating properties—because melanin, the substance responsible for colored hair, is absent from white fur, leaving air spaces in the hair shaft.

Studies are looking at climate change and if it is a threat to the survival of these color changing animals. The question is if in reduced snow cover will the white coated animals now be vulnerable with no camouflage.









Dave Conner, Head Coyote Care Specialist

Some good news for New York State's eastern coyotes (and other species!) On December 22, 2023 Governor Kathy Hochul signed legislation which bans wildlife killing contests in New York State. It makes it illegal to organize, sponsor, or participate in the wasteful killing and slaughtering contests of various wildlife species such as eastern coyotes, foxes, bobcats, squirrels, raccoons, rabbits, woodchucks, and crows for prizes or money. The new law is set to go into effect in November of 2024.



The majority of the hunting contests usually target eastern coyotes which results in the needless killing of large numbers of them for prizes or money; the carcasses are then disrespectfully discarded. Eastern coyotes are an important part of our ecosystem and crucial to helping maintain balance. Coyotes help reduce the spread of disease by eating rodents which are the main carriers of ticks which are the cause of Lyme disease. Coyotes help our forests, fields, grasslands, gardens and crops by eating rodents and rabbits that often feed on our trees and vegetation. They clean up carrion from our communities and countryside and keep wildlife populations healthier by removing sick and injured wildlife.

People caught violating the new ban on wildlife killing contests will have any wildlife killed confiscated by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation officers and will be fined not less than \$500 and not more than \$2000. This new law is overdue and will benefit everyone in New York State by helping to maintain a healthier and balanced ecosystem.

With the recent incident in the news out of Wyoming where a yearling wolf was run down with a snowmobile, her mouth duct taped shut, then dragged into a local bar to be shown off, tortured, and eventually shot, we continue to be horrified as to how cruel some people can be. While still in the court system being reviewed, it appears the perpetrator simply pays a nominal fine of \$250 and is free. Many, many animal protection advocates and others are fighting for the justice of this poor wolf and we pray more stringent penalties are enacted to prevent and deter such a horrific act from ever occurring again.

As a wolf preserve, we are committed to encouraging the just and humane treatment of all animals, both wild and domestic. A world in which we treat animals with care and respect, is a world that we must strive for. Animal cruelty must never be tolerated. We encourage all of our followers to do whatever you can to promote and create a world in which animal cruelty is absent.

Did you know...we are inspected, regulated, and licensed by both the USDA and the DEC!

But funding and support comes from YOU! Donate at:

https://www.thewolfmountainnaturecenter.org/donatesponsor.html

We are registered with NYS Charities (reg # 49-06-68). EIN #20-5274163









The Complexity of Multi-Predator Ecosystems using Yellowstone Wolves as a Case Study

by Alex Gross, Caretaker Assistant & Aspiring Conservation Biologist

We have seen time and time again the importance of the ecological role that large predators have. These roles include keeping prey populations in check, which trickle down to impact other biological processes, such as primary productivity, carbon cycling, and more. The numerical response of prey to being killed by predators is known as *density-mediated effects*, and the response of another trophic level (say plants for instance) to less prey in an ecosystem is known as *indirect effects*. So, to summarize with a well-known example (and topic



of this newsletter write up), the density-mediated effect is wolves preying on elk, and the indirect effect of this is more aspen trees because there are less elk to graze. This example is what we visualize when we think of the impact wolves had on Yellowstone's ecosystem after their reintroduction. It has been used as the poster child example of how predators positively impact ecosystems. However, this idea is an oversimplification that leads to a much larger question. That question is, how do multiple predators in an ecosystem impact food web dynamics and cause trophic cascades?

I will begin by saying we don't entirely know the answer to this question. But what we do know is that in Yellowstone, the ecological impact of the wolf may not be as large as we once believed, and the narrative that wolf reintroduction initiated a trophic cascade, may be too simple. Let's start by saying that wolves are far from the only predator that occupies Yellowstone National Park. Grizzly and black bears, cougars, humans, and other species all compete for space and food with wolves. Before wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone, a few things were going on. (1) Cougar and grizzly bear populations were on the rise and (2) elk populations were undergoing a decline and continued to decline when wolves were officially back in the park. Because of the timing of wolf reintroduction and elk numbers decreasing, wolves were attributed as the driving force behind elk decline and its subsequent indirect effects (aspen regeneration, less erosion, etc.). This was reinforced even more by the media since the return of wolves to Yellowstone captured National attention. In 2004, Rachel Cook and her colleagues found that a multiyear drought following wolf reintroduction had influenced elk numbers in Yellowstone. Two years later, Gregory Wright and his colleagues in 2006 found that from 1995 (the year wolves returned to Yellowstone) to 2001, wolves did not have a very large effect on elk numbers. The average predation rate was only 3.7%, and elk that were predated on had low reproductive value (i.e., individuals not in breeding condition). All that being told, wolves in Yellowstone are not all that influence the food web dynamics there. This is where more research needs to be done. If wolves alone are not driving trophic cascades in Yellowstone, then are wolves, bears, cougars, humans, etc. doing it together? What combination of species have a greater impact on food web dynamics? How does multiple large grazing prey (remember elk and bison occupy Yellowstone) change the picture? These are just a few of the questions that need answering.

This is a good time to segway into why this is so important. By oversimplifying food web dynamics in Yellowstone, we have overestimated the trophic effect of single predators, while simultaneously underestimating the total trophic effect



of entire predatory guilds within ecosystems, as well as mischaracterized the source of trophic cascades. As such, we cannot accurately inform and make recommendations to game managers and politicians on decisions regarding wildlife in large, uncontrolled, multicausal biological systems. Yellowstone National Park is not the only ecosystem with multiple large predators so answers to these questions in Yellowstone can be used to inform decisions in other ecosystems across the world.

Open Hours and Admission Rates

*Last admission is 30 minutes prior to closing time.

	Sundays	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fridays	Saturdays
Regular Season September 1 – June 30 (closed in January)	Open 12 – 4 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Guided Tours at 12:30	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed
Summer Season July 1 – August 31	Open 12 – 4 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Guided Tours at 12:30	Closed	Closed	Closed	Closed	Open 12 – 3 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Self-Guided Tours	Open 12 – 3 pm Various animal enrichment programs; Self-Guided Tours

Regular Admission: ages 6 and up: \$8/person; kids 5 and under free

(Please note special events/programs may have different admission fees applied)

Upcoming Special Programs

Wolf Communication Program (Howl Night)



Join us as we discuss methods used by wolves to communicate including scent marking, body language, and vocalizations.

Understand why wolves howl and the distinct types of messages behind each howl.

We finish with a pack howl!

May 25 6 pm – dark June 22 7 pm – dark July 13 7 pm - dark July 27 7 pm - dark

Howl Programs include tours of all wolf & coyote exhibits. Please note that our Arctic Fox exhibits are closed during this program.

This is a group tour/lecture—visitors are expected to remain with the group at all times.

Admission is \$8.00 per person (5 and under are free)

Wolves & Watermelons

July 28 12 - 4 pm

Celebrate summertime with us and the animals as Caretakers present various special treats & enrichment activities to the animals throughout the day. Kandi's Kitchen will be on-site selling concessions to visitors.



Please visit our website's "events" tab for more upcoming programs & special events including camping, enrichment programs, photography opportunities and more! Activities are updated often throughout the year!

www.TheWolfMountainNatureCenter.org

Camp with the Wolves!

July 13-14 July 27-28 August 10-11

\$100 pre-registration required via website (must be 12 or older)

Spend an overnight at the Center with the wolves!
Bring your own tent or rent one of our tepees for an unforgettable experience.
Tours, nature walks, animal feeding, howl program, meals, campfire and more!

