

GETTING TO KNOW WILDLIFE

Surviving Against the Odds



By Karyn Jones,

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Karyn worked at the Centre first as a Wildlife Intern and then as Coordinator in the mid-90's. This is her story.

When the coyote pup was brought to the Centre, we were very worried she wouldn't survive. She had been found, along with a sibling, by two young boys who had selfishly kept them hidden for over a week until one of them died. Only then did they attempt to find help for the remaining frightened and malnourished pup.

Suffering from a severe case of sarcoptic mange, a parasitic skin infection that often leads to death, we painstakingly shaved the tiny coyote and started a course of treatment. Not surprisingly, she also had several types of intestinal worms. Treatments were difficult because she had obviously been roughly handled and was terrified of being touched.

While her recovery was slow,

eventually our diligent care began to show results, her skin improved, the distended, bloated abdomen disappeared and her fur started to grow back. Despite her improved physical health, we were concerned about how nervous and stressed she was in what we knew would be a lengthy rehabilitation period. Several volunteers offered to spend time gently talking to her each day which helped to reduce her stress and make the medical treatments more comfortable.

Once she was ready, arrangements were made to continue her rehabilitation at another facility. Audrey Toumay, at the Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, with her usual compassion and generosity, readily agreed to take her as she was already caring for two orphaned male coyote pups.

On arrival at Aspen, we placed her carrier just inside the large outdoor enclosure where the other two coyotes were eyeing us from

behind tall grasses and shrubs. We opened the door of the carrier and left her alone to become accustomed to the smells and sights of her new home. We checked in a few hours later to find our once frightened pup in the middle of a game of chase with her new found coyote friends. She glanced at us with a look that I am sure meant, "Please don't take me away, I like it here". I watched her romp with the boys for a while before walking to my car with a feeling of pride.

The coyote pup that had beaten the odds showed us that all of our efforts had paid off in a healthy and well-adjusted wild coyote. The three coyotes would be over-wintered and released together in the spring when food supplies were more plentiful.

Footnote: Coyotes are wonderfully intelligent and social animals that make a critical contribution to healthy ecosystems. See website below for more information.