

# Tracking the Pack

## Formation of a Pack: Maturing of the 2012 Pups

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Every four years the International Wolf Center acquires and socializes two wolf pups to add new life to its Exhibit Pack. In 2012 Luna and Boltz were our newest additions, and despite some initial management challenges, Wolf Care staff integrated the pups into the Exhibit Pack. Initially, observations led to some concerns about food resources for the pups, and

staff responded with increased feedings. As winter progressed, Luna demonstrated the tenacity of a small but intensely possessive dominant female. Of course, she's the only female, so without gender-specific competition, she had very few limits on her behavior. Luna showed threat displays whenever food resources were present, and eventually her confidence led to active

dominance displays, which included scruff biting Denali or facing off with Aidan.

Boltz, as a male member of the pack, had limits. Aidan clearly displayed tolerances for Boltz, but when his juvenile testing behavior became too excitable, Aidan would display a hard muzzle bite and pin Boltz to the ground. Boltz would respond with a drop of the head, a submissive tail wag and lick to the side of Aidan's face, all submissive gestures. Having three males increased the interactions within the male rank order and activity within the Exhibit Pack. In our experience, captive wolves can be more prone to gender-specific, rank-order displays than a wild pack, which typically consists of a dominant pair and its offspring. By late winter, Boltz willingly accepted the lower-ranking position,

*Aidan and Luna  
dominating Denali.*



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*Luna asserting dominance over Denali.*

but we observed some increasing confidence when Aidan was close. The presence of a third male on the Exhibit seemed to motivate a more defined rank than displayed by the two adults, Aidan and Denali, prior to the introduction.

The overwhelming question for Wolf Care staff is whether an association of a dominant male and dominant female will develop. Even in a captive facility with spayed and neutered animals, we have observed pair-bonding behaviors including closeness when sleeping, parallel walking and social guarding behavior. In 2005 Shadow and Maya displayed these behaviors and maintained this relationship until Shadow was retired in 2010. The Vermilion Community College ethology class will be monitoring the interactions of Luna and Aidan to see if similar behaviors develop as the 2012 pups mature and help form the dynamics of the new Exhibit Pack.

To watch these behaviors emerge, tune into our YouTube channel at [www.wolf.org](http://www.wolf.org). ■

## Survey Results Encouraging

Following our first full-color edition of *International Wolf* magazine, the editorial team decided to conduct a reader survey via email. We wanted to get a better understanding of your perspective on the magazine and the organization. We also wanted data to share with future sponsors of the magazine. We surveyed 3,052 members/readers via an email link. Roughly half clicked on the link, and 336 actually took the survey. You might be surprised by some of the results.

**81%** said *International Wolf* was a “very” or “extremely important” member benefit.

**63%** said having the magazine in color added “high” or “extremely high” value to their reading experience, but only 25% said it made them more likely to remain a member in order to receive the magazine.

### When asked to identify activities we could do more effectively, the top choices included:

**56%** Educate individuals on what they can do to promote wolf survival

**51%** Be more vocal about wolf issues in the media

**50%** Focus more on wildlands to minimize wolf-human conflict

### When asked what topics they’d like to see more of, respondents overwhelming said they wanted to see more stories about:

**67%** Specific wild wolves like O6

**62%** Personal encounter stories

**59%** Scientific wolf research articles

**58%** Wolf management strategies

**53%** Wolf Center operation/program updates

**42%** Pro and con stories about controversial issues

**32%** Current news about wolves in other countries

**29%** Book reviews

### Other interesting findings include:

Only **53%** of the respondents said they have visited the Center in Ely, Minnesota.

**70%** of respondents were female.

**75%** were 50 years of age or older.

**63%** have at least a college degree.

*To all of you who took the survey, thank you again for your time and efforts.*

*You are helping us become a better organization.*



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