

When wild pets get too wild, Wolf Run offers a home where they can roam

By Lexington Herald-Leader, adapted by Newsela staff on 01.15.16

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Daron Lockard visits wolves including Jericho (right) in the high-content wolf enclosure at Wolf Run Wildlife Refuge in Nicholasville, Kentucky, Dec. 15, 2015. Photo: Pablo Alcala/Lexington Herald-Leader/TNS

NICHOLASVILLE, Ky. — Wolf Run Wildlife Refuge is home to dozens of animals, including many hybrid wolves, wolves crossbred with dogs. Wild wolves have not lived in Central Kentucky, where the refuge is located, for more than 100 years. Still, the howls of wolf hybrids can be heard occasionally near the Kentucky River in Nicholasville, Kentucky.

Animals Feel Safe

The refuge is a nonprofit, not set up to make money. Founder Mary Kindred says it runs on donations and volunteer work. Animal care volunteer Kara Baird says, “It’s not pretty like a zoo, where all the animals are new and bred for being looked at. These aren’t animals to be displayed. This is a place for these animals to feel safe.”

A pack of five wolf hybrids lives in a large enclosed area at the back of the refuge. Baird says that the animals are high-content hybrids, more wolf than dog, and are indistinguishable from wolves physically and behaviorally. Baird raised two members of the pack herself.

Baird says the refuge is working hard to spread awareness about the wolves. Some programs allow people to get close to the animals, and she says she hopes this will help people respect wolves and realize that they can appreciate them without trying to own one. Baird says, "These are wonderful animals, but they aren't pets." She says people own wolf hybrids, thinking they will be like a dog. Once the owners find out they cannot handle the animals, the hybrids are often put to sleep or taken to a refuge.

Tough Love

One resident animal is Nibbles, a low-content hybrid, more dog than wolf, mixed with a breed of large dog called a Great Pyrenees. Baird says that he does not have a mean bone in his body, but with his size and strength, even cuddling can lead to injury. Nibbles once gave Baird a black eye when he tried to lick her face. She says that is one example of why wolf hybrids should not be pets.

Nayeli is another resident wolf hybrid. She is unusual because of her love of people, and goes with Baird for outreach events to raise awareness about conservation.

Kindred says that the refuge is not a zoo full of perfectly healthy animals. Instead it is a place for animals that have nowhere else to go. A horse named Buddy is one such rescue animal. A dog tore a chunk out of his nose, and now he has a disfigured face and snorts when he breathes. His owners neglected him and someone called Wolf Run. When volunteers arrived, they found Buddy thin and starving.

Some Animals Were Abused

Baird says that Buddy is still extremely social, and waits near his gate to greet anyone driving past. She says, "There are animals here that have gone through abuse and have special needs. They all have different backgrounds. Some of them have been through horrible situations of abuse, and they just come back and still love people."

Bandit is another story of abuse. The large, low-content hybrid used to entertain golfers at a course in Kentucky, and was known at the course for socializing with golfers. Kindred says that one day a golfer got angry because Bandit tried to steal a ball, and beat him with a golf club. Bandit suffered a broken shoulder, and now stays away from people. He lives with another hybrid named Khaleesi and a coyote named Loki.

When Kittens Grow Up To Be Bobcats

If animals are native to Kentucky, many move through the refuge and are released into the wild, Baird says. Volunteers try to ensure that the animals do not become reliant on people, but Loki had other ideas. After volunteers released the coyote, he dug his way into Bandit and Khaleesi's area, and refused to leave.

Not all the animals at Wolf Run have been abused. Some, like bobcats Bob and Apache, come from homes where people tried to keep them as pets. Baird says that both were bought as pets when they were babies, and their owners thought it was cute when they were small. When they weighed more than 30 pounds and started attacking people, it was no longer cute.

Building Safety Fences

Kindred says that the big task at the refuge now is building safety fences around the outside of all the animal homes. It is a new rule by the United States Department of Agriculture, the agency of the U.S. government that manages farming, agriculture and forests. All dangerous animals need the fencing. She says donations and help from the community are the only things that keep Wolf Run going.

People help in their own ways. For example, Boy Scouts have painted barns and built toys and houses for the wolves, and people who find freshly hit deer on the road bring them to the refuge for the wolves to eat, Baird says.

Kindred says she originally bought the land because she had a wolf hybrid and wanted to give her more room to run. Since then, the refuge has been home to many different animals, including African lions, cougars and wallabies.

Quiz

- 1 Which section highlights the idea that some animals housed at the refuge are unable or unwilling to return to the wild?
- (A) "Tough Love"
 - (B) "Some Animals Were Abused"
 - (C) "When Kittens Grow Up To Be Bobcats"
 - (D) "Building Safety Fences"
- 2 Which piece of evidence BEST explains the educational goals of Wolf Run Wildlife Refuge?
- (A) Wolf Run Wildlife Refuge is home to dozens of animals, including many hybrid wolves, wolves crossbred with dogs.
 - (B) The refuge is a nonprofit, not set up to make money. Founder Mary Kindred says it runs on donations and volunteer work.
 - (C) Animal care volunteer Kara Baird says, "It's not pretty like a zoo, where all the animals are new and bred for being looked at. These aren't animals to be displayed."
 - (D) Some programs allow people to get close to the animals, and she says she hopes this will help people respect wolves and realize that they can appreciate them without trying to own one.
- 3 Which two of the following sentences from the article include CENTRAL ideas of the article?
1. *Wild wolves have not lived in Central Kentucky, where the refuge is located, for more than 100 years.*
 2. *Baird says the refuge is working hard to spread awareness about the wolves.*
 3. *One resident animal is Nibbles, a low-content hybrid, more dog than wolf, mixed with a breed of large dog called a Great Pyrenees.*
 4. *She says donations and help from the community are the only things that keep Wolf Run going.*
- (A) 1 and 2
 - (B) 1 and 3
 - (C) 2 and 3
 - (D) 2 and 4

- 4 The CENTRAL idea of the article is developed by:
- (A) describing the animals who have ended up at Wolf Run
 - (B) explaining the activities of day-to-day life at Wolf Run
 - (C) giving detailed information about volunteer Kara Baird
 - (D) explaining how founder Mary Kindred became so interested in the issue