

*WOLVES : a real wolf encounter
in the Alaskan wilderness*

By Merle Crouse

(August 14, 2006)

Here in Denali

People talk about grizzlies

Moose

Caribou

As the wildlife you really look for

On the bus trail into the park.

The drivers comment a little about wolves

But the expectation for seeing one or more

Is not high.

Our group of campers from New York, Illinois,
Colorado, Florida, Indiana and

Washington State

Was resting on the rocks of a Savage River tributary

Not far from camp

When Mary said: "There's a wolf!"

In full view

A lanky, yellow-tan wolf trotted across the open
space

Alert

Wary

Curious.

He stopped and looked at the humans scattered
around.

He was rusty behind his ears,

Black on his face and tail.

Then he melted into the brush

Moving up stream.

(August 17, 2006)

Three days later

Back in camp after a long day deeper in Denali
Park,

It is 1:00am or thereabouts.

We are buried in our sleeping bags

At rest

When the quietness of the woodland is broken.

"Hey! Listen! Wolves!"

A mixture of whining and howling penetrates the
silence.

How many wolves are joining in the group sing?

What is the message?

Who is the message for?

Who is listening?

Finally a major voice stands out with a howl

That goes up the scale to the perfect note

Loud

Clear

Prolonged

A dominating sound

Ringling across untamed hills and valleys

Wilderness soul music

That causes lesser creatures to hold their breath and
cringe,

Hoping to be invisible,

Reminding them that they live in a dangerous
world,

That the wolf is a monarch in the North Country,

That this part of the earth at least

Belongs to Nature's children.

--Merle Crouse

August 14 & 17, 2006

Savage River Campground

Denali National Park, Alaska

Denali/Kenai Fjords Learning Tour

New Community Project