Wolves have gained an incredibly bad reputation through the ages, through no fault of their own. Myths and fables have always portrayed wolves as savage and cunning killers, waiting to pounce on unsuspecting humans. To the contrary, wolves are afraid of humans and there has never been a recorded attack of humans by wolves in North America. This timber wolf, Trinka (above), belongs to Fred Keating of Bartlett, a local owner and breeder of hybrid wolves.

Wolves throughout history have attained an almost mythical status, having had feats of unparalleled ferocity and uncanny intelligence attributed to them.

The reputation of wolves has grown out of proportion to their actual behavior, to the point where the sound of a wolf howling in the night causes in humans an almost instinctive fearful reaction.

Fred Keating of Bartlett has been studying the habits and history of wolves for more than 10 years. For the past six years he has been raising Loki, a 120-pound northern gray wolf that is technically a hybrid, being 31 parts wolf and one part Siberian husky. But for all practical purposes, wolves in the wild will sometimes breed with wild dogs, so Loki is about as much a wolf as anything found in the wild.

Two-and-a-half years ago, Keating acquired 85-pound Trinka, who is 7/8ths timber wolf. Together, the pair of wolves has become Keating's pride and joy, and the breeding stock by which he has introduced other wolf cubs to carefully selected individuals in the Valley.

Keating laments the unfair reputation that has followed the wolf. It is a reputation that has resulted in the wolf's virtual eradication in the lower 48 states. "From what I can figure out, it goes back to prehistoric times. When man banded together to hunt, he followed the wolf's style and tactics of cooperation. Since wolves were often hunting the same prey, men considered them competitors and began killing them," Keating explained.

"They were the original monsters. First wolves, then werewolves that tear people apart. It's just not true. They are an incredibly special animal."

—Fred Keating

The wolf is at the door. Never cry wolf.

A wolf in sheep's clothing. Who's afraid of the big, bad wolf? These and other similar phrases have worked their way into our culture over the course of time.

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As he sees it, little has changed. "Wolves are still considered competitors. Farmers and cattlemen across the country want to eliminate predators like the wolf, mountain lions, foxes, coyotes and bears. Over the years in North America, we've imbalanced the balance of nature," he said.

Keating's love for this animal and understanding of its plight comes after years of study. "I did 10 years of research before I considered owning one. As a breed, you have to feel sorry for them. They're underdogs, always being put down. What they really have is a public relations problem. Bad press," he noted.

Historical and contemporary references to the wolf seem to uphold Keating's theory. In literature of the Middle Ages, the devil often took the form of a wolf. In the years of WWII, Hitler's submarine fleet was dubbed the "Wolf Pack," and his private mountaintop retreat the "Wolf's Lair." And, of course, no

WOLVES continued on Page 6

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Wolves
Continued from Page 4

American child grows up without hearing of Little Red Riding Hood’s encounter with the savage wolf. The woodsmen in this story become a hero by killing the wolf.

Random hunting and a systematic annihilation of the wolf population in the United States has resulted in its becoming a protected species. According to Keating, Canada and Alaska still offer bounties on wolves, and airborne hunters shoot them by the dozens.

When one takes the time to separate fact from fantasy, the wolf is revealed as a social animal, with well-established and structured living groups and family loyalties. “Usually in each pack there is an alpha male and female [at the top of the social hierarchy], and they are the only ones to breed,” Keating explained. “When they pair off, it is usually for life.”

Keating has wolves, who have been raised by human hand, still recoil in fright from initial contact with a stranger. Through remarkable adaptability, wolves once roamed from Mexico to Greenland in North America, and throughout most of the rest of the world, as well. Now, few remain in the states, but because of an experiment begun in the 1960s, a wild population has been reintroduced in Minnesota.

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Local innkeeper and farmer, Johnny Edge Jr., poses with Feron, the new addition to the Rockhouse Mountain Farm. The wolf cub was born to Fred Keating's wolves, Loki and Trinka, this past September, and has become adapted to life on the farm. The farm's geese, ducks, horses and cows have become part of the cub's family.

**Wolves**

Continued from Page 6

Johnny Edge, owner of the Rockhouse Mountain Farm in Eaton, is one of the chosen few who has received a Keating wolf. Born Sept. 8, his cub, Feron, has quickly become one of the family. "I was worried at first with all the animals we have here on the farm about even getting a dog, let alone a wolf. We've had German shepherds here, but Feron is different. She has more of a mind of her own than domestic dogs, and seems more intelligent. She's very sensitive to scolding and knows when she's done wrong," Edge noted.

While Feron is a pet, Edge also hopes that her territorial instincts will serve the farm well, and keep predators away from his geese, ducks, and other animals. Because the wolf cub was brought to the farm at such a young age, it is acclimating to all the animals on the farm and considers them part of her "pack."

Knowledge and understanding of wolves is the only way to undo some of the bad reputation with which the wolf has suffered since almost the beginning of time, Keating notes. Through his respect and love for wolves, Keating hopes to enlighten as many as possible to their true nature. "They were the original monsters. First wolves, then werewolves that tear people apart. It's just not true. They are an incredibly special animal," Keating reflected. "And the link and bond between man and beast can be tapped into and enjoyed if humans only would have the patience and inclination."

- Steven Garner

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Ullr is victorious over Odin

The annual duel between the god of winter, Ullr, and his foe, Odin, the god of summer, took place at Attitash Mountain in Bartlett on Saturday, Nov. 28. Sponsored by the Bret-H-Hupfer Ski Club, the duel pits the two gods against one another to see if the ski season will be a fruitful one. Fortunately, the god of winter prevailed (above) and was carried away by his followers. For more photos, turn to Page 25.

(George J. Monahan/Mountain Ear Photo)