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HOWLING GOOD TIMES

Noel West/MVP Staff
Sally Jo Sousa gets a Canadian timber wolf named 2 Toes to howl at the INSTINCT animals for film facility north of Bowden on April 29. For more see p.22 - 23.



Andrew Simpson works with Canadian timber wolves Jack and Toby at the INSTINCTanimalsforfilm facility, where wolves are trained for film work. *Noel West/MVP Staff*



Sally Jo Sousa works with White Digger, a Canadian timber wolf. *Noel West/MVP Staff*



Simpson pets Duke, a 14-year-old black phase timber wolf. Duke is the alpha male at the facility. *Noel West/MVP Staff*



White Digger goes for a swim. *Noel West/MVP Staff*



Sally Jo Sousa walks 2 Toes next to a pond *Noel West/MVP Staff*

Wolves trained in district for international film productions

BY TIM LASIUTA
MVP Staff

Andrew Simpson opened the wolf pen and walked in to a gathering of wolves that eagerly crowded around him.

"Wolves are misunderstood animals," says Simpson, Innisfail-area wolf trainer and handler and owner of INSTINCTanimalsforfilm.

"They are not aggressive with people but can be with each other. If they are raised in captivity from birth, they are very comfortable with people."

The 47-year-old Simpson walked around the pen,

enclosed by a double pen eight feet tall as the wolves came up to the inner fence and licked my hands and accepted as many pets and head rubs as I could give.

"They communicate through their tongues," said Sally Jo Sousa, co-owner of INSTINCTanimalsforfilm. "Wolves can sense if someone likes them and is 'good' or 'bad'."

Simpson noted they house a number of wolves on the 20-plus acres they currently rent but the couple is in the process of moving further west to an 80-acre piece of land they have purchased and will move to over the next couple of months.

"The new facility will be much nicer, it will be more

spread out and we will be even more sheltered from the public," said Simpson. "Not long after that, I will be heading back to France at the end of June for another film so we have to work fast."

Their wolves are a hot commodity. "To date, my wolves have been in almost 150 films, TV commercials and TV shows. The most current project is Wolf Totem, which was filmed in France by legendary French cinematographer Jean-Jacques Annaud over a two and a half year period in China," he said.

Simpson does not limit his film work to wolves but also provides bears, birds, dogs, jaguars, woodland creatures and livestock for productions.

He also acts as a production consultant if required.

"I have been working in film production for over 20 years already," said Simpson. "I was born in Scotland but left when I was 20 years old and travelled to Australia and chanced on a movie set as an extra in A Cry in the Dark."

"I travelled the world and worked on Braveheart before moving to Canada. It was then that I turned to film work full time, and I have not looked back since. Working with wolves is so much better than an office job with a cubicle."

He added working in film has taken him as far as Siberia for the French production of Loup (2009),

which has resulted in his current DVD and book project, Wolves Unleashed, soon to be released in stores.

"Wolves Unleashed is a documentary of our film shoot in Siberia," he said. "Our film has won 20 international awards already and it is available on iTunes. Viewers follow my wolves as we travel to Siberia, prepare for the film shoot, and captures interactions between myself, the actors and the animals."

The book was launched May 3 at Chapters in Calgary but Simpson will be attending book signings in Red Deer as well.

"We will be producing another documentary based

on our China shoot for Wolf Totem, but haven't started that one yet," he added.

Simpson noted the market for wildlife films is growing again with Disney, National Geographic and other companies producing more films, adding he is ready to help them when necessary.

"Viewers of wildlife films don't realize how long these productions take," he said. "What seems like a simple shot might have taken up to a week to capture, and that is where we come in to make those shots happen."

More information on INSTINCTforfilm productions and Wolves Unleashed can be found at www.instinctforfilm.com.