



Rob talking to Martin Chamot from Coat Fur Le Refuge

MARTIN

It was co-founded by Willy and a friend of his, and the idea in the early 2000 with the first wolf that was shot in the countryside, there came the idea of thinking about how these animals were treated and then on the 6th July 2006 they founded the refuge in Lescouët-Gouarec.

ROB

And how many wolves are there here today?

MARTIN

Today, actually, there's fifteen in four different sets and since 2006 there's been over forty wolves here.

ROB

And they'll come here after some painful stories. I mean this is a refuge for wolves.

MARTIN

Yeah, sometimes it's illegal detention by the sake of making money for selling the baby wolves or sometimes it's some that have had a quite chaotic way, circus animals or for film-making and so they arrive here in a state that's not always the best. Sometimes, they're underfed and sometimes they're quite stressed and they try to work with the animals to give them a better comfort and it is.

ROB

What kind of activities are put in place to help the wolves calm down. To destress?

MARTIN

Yes, it's a feeding. Also, there's an isolation spot down there where they can feel safe. The wolves can hide if they don't want to be seen and they can be in shade and there's also the feeding. That's quite an important side. Also, going up front with the wolves and trying to make them interact. So, it's a refuge globally as well 'cos all the animals here are all kind of refugees. This dog was, Knut, that's lying on the floor, she was saved by the side of the road and if you walk down there's deer around and there's a Highland cow that nearly went to be chopped up in meat but it got saved by Willy.

ROB

And so it's not just wolves. But let's just talk about the wolves for a minute. Is it possible to see them all the time?

MARTIN

So sometimes, depending on the weather. If it's really hot they will go and hide in the shade but you can get a view of them walking round 'coz again it's a big population here; fifteen wolves. So, you do get to see them and they also offer here some stay overnights at the Yourte. So, for a special experience with the wolves by hearing them. The first time you hear them I think it's heart-shaking.

ROB

So there's a Yourte you can actually stay on site?

MARTIN

Yeah, you can stay on site here.



ROB

It's a wonderful sunny day today are we likely to see them today?

MARTIN

Ooh, it's possible depending on the people walking round and it's also the way you see the refuge is it's a silent way. So, if you play the game of the whole track walking round and being silent you can then get to see them. It's not like a zoo where the animals are put, shown on display, but it's really in their most natural possible habitat.

ROB

And they have enough space. Two hectares with the walls at the site itself is much, much bigger isn't it?

MARTIN

Yes, it is. Its thirteen hectares are used by the whole refuge.

ROB

Because, like you said it's not just wolves that are here.

MARTIN

Exactly.

ROB

And you're a volunteer here. Your English is incredibly good. What is it about wolves that interests you?

MARTIN

One part of it is the eyes, the contact. You get them staring at you and you realise how wild they are and also the fact that you're quite involved when you come here 'cos you're kind of saying no to animal abuse. When you get in contact with the wolves you see also that they are in better health and they look alive.

ROB

But it's not dangerous is it?

MARTIN

No, no, no, no,.

ROB

Because that's the myth about wolves, is that they're dangerous.

MARTIN

Yeah, it is. It is. They aren't, they aren't. They are if people put them in places like walking them on the streets with a leash. Obviously, that may be dangerous but if they're kept natural and well-guided, they can't be dangerous really.

ROB

Tell me about your own work here. What do you actually do?

MARTIN

The refuge opens from April to September. So, I come over here either to work to prepare for the cutting the grass. I do the feeding of the animals as well because there's a lot of animals but it's all volunteer and I come here to have a good time more than anything.



ROB

Tell me something about the stories. Where these wolves come from. Can you think of some examples of some the stories that you've heard?

MARTIN

Well there is. Here there's a pack of seven, seven wolves that all arrived here at the same time. So they were all brother and sisters and they were detained by someone trying to make money from the selling of the calves and it was a real fight with the people that had the, these wolves. You can see them now that they're living better.

ROB

Is Brittany suitable for wolves?

MARTIN

Look around. I think it is totally. If you come here I think you get the message 'cos it's always better here than in an apartment in the middle of Paris trying to get sold on black markets.

ROB

Was it difficult for Willy to set this whole thing up because it's unusual?

MARTIN

It is, it is. So, at the beginning it wasn't easy. Although, they did have a good help from the commune, and the people probably, who didn't enjoy it the most were the hunters around here and the farmers who lost a bit of land but now I mean sixteen years through it, it's all working good. It's settled in perfectly.

ROB

Because I think people must have a prejudice against wolves. Do they not?

MARTIN

Yeah, there's an idea of them but they're safer here than outside and I think that's a way as well of getting that prejudice away is coming here and having a visit.

ROB

So, it's a highly recommended visit for anyone who's exploring in Central Brittany?

MARTIN

Exactly.

ROB

Well, Martin Chamot, volunteer at the 'Refuge des Loups', thanks very much for your time.

MARTIN

And to you.