

USC Roski X Wolf Connection

Answer the Howl

DES 530 Co-Lab
2022.Spring Semester

Introduction

OVERVIEW This project was initiated in response to a request from Wolf Connection, who challenged our team to develop a creative strategy that would both raise awareness of the organization's mission and help generate public support and donations for the rescued wolves. This project was developed during the 2022 Spring semester as part of the "Design Studio Co-Lab" course at USC Roski School of Art and Design. Conducted as a team-based collaborative studio, the course encouraged students to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration, community-driven research, and design-based responses to real-world challenges. Our team partnered with Wolf Connection, a California-based nonprofit that rescues and rehabilitates abused or displaced wolves and wolf-dogs. The objective of this collaboration was to explore how design could support empathy-building, emotional awareness, and healing through interspecies connection.

TEAM MEMBERS Allen Zimmerman
Chloe Lee
Sharon Wang
Yumi Na

FACULTY April Greiman
Ewa Wojciak

About Wolf Connection

Wolf Connection is more than a wolf sanctuary—it is an education and empowerment organization that leverages the therapeutic power of wolves to support human development. The organization rescues wolves that have been neglected, abused, or bred in captivity, and provides them with a lifelong home while also integrating them into programs that work with youth from foster care systems, juvenile justice programs, and trauma recovery organizations. The central belief of Wolf Connection is that wolves, with their strong social bonds, intuitive presence, and deep sensitivity, serve as powerful companions in human emotional healing and transformation.

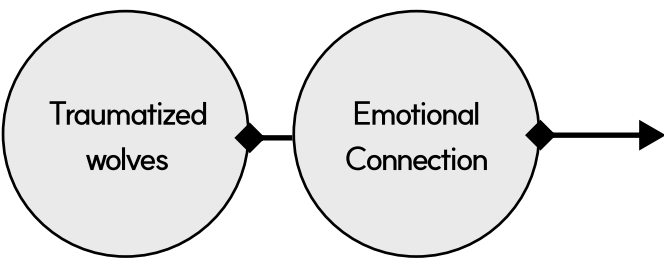


Site Visit Experience

To develop a grounded and empathetic design approach, our team conducted a site visit to the Wolf Connection sanctuary. During the visit, we engaged in immersive learning experiences including direct interaction with the wolves, guided walks, listening circles, and educational sessions led by Wolf Connection staff. The experience of being in the presence of rescued wolves—many of whom had been through traumatic circumstances—was both humbling and inspiring. We observed how wolves communicate, relate to each other, and build trust over time. This first-hand experience deeply influenced our perspective, allowing us to move beyond abstract design thinking into a more emotionally attuned and embodied design process.

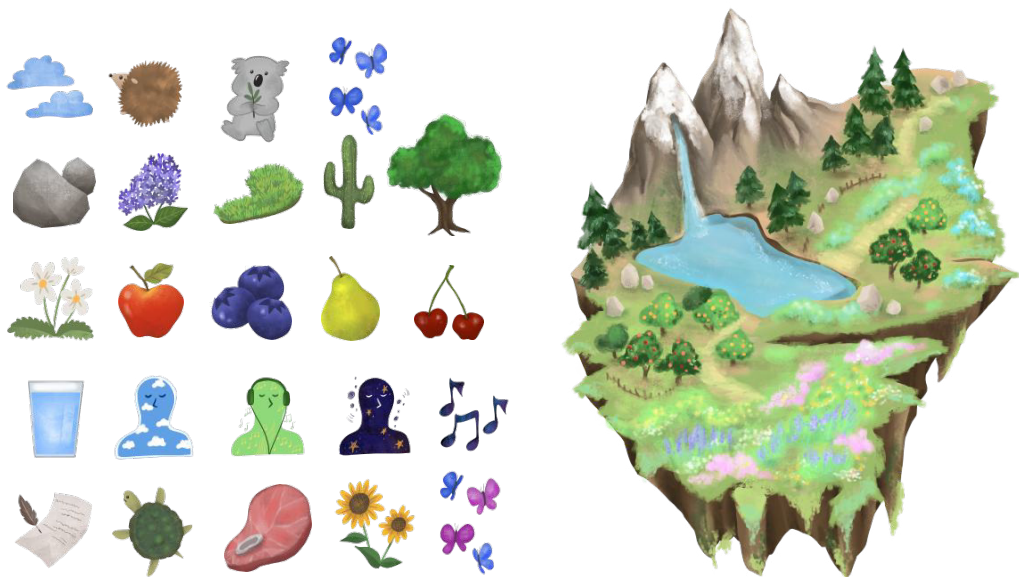


Design Motivation



We came to see the wolves not simply as animals, but as beings with deep emotional presence—and it was through this connection that the foundation of our design began to unfold.

Our design journey began with the question: Can design help heal the human–animal relationship? Wolves have long been misunderstood in cultural narratives, often portrayed as threatening or aggressive creatures. Yet what we saw at Wolf Connection was the opposite—wolves that were gentle, curious, cautious, and resilient. We recognized that public perceptions, shaped by fear-based storytelling, contribute to real-world harm, not just to wolves but to our collective understanding of coexistence and emotional depth in animals. We sought to design an experience that could reframe these narratives and present wolves as emotional beings capable of connection and mutual trust. Our challenge was to translate the healing, grounding presence of the wolves into a digital experience that felt personal, soothing, and restorative.



Wolf Island

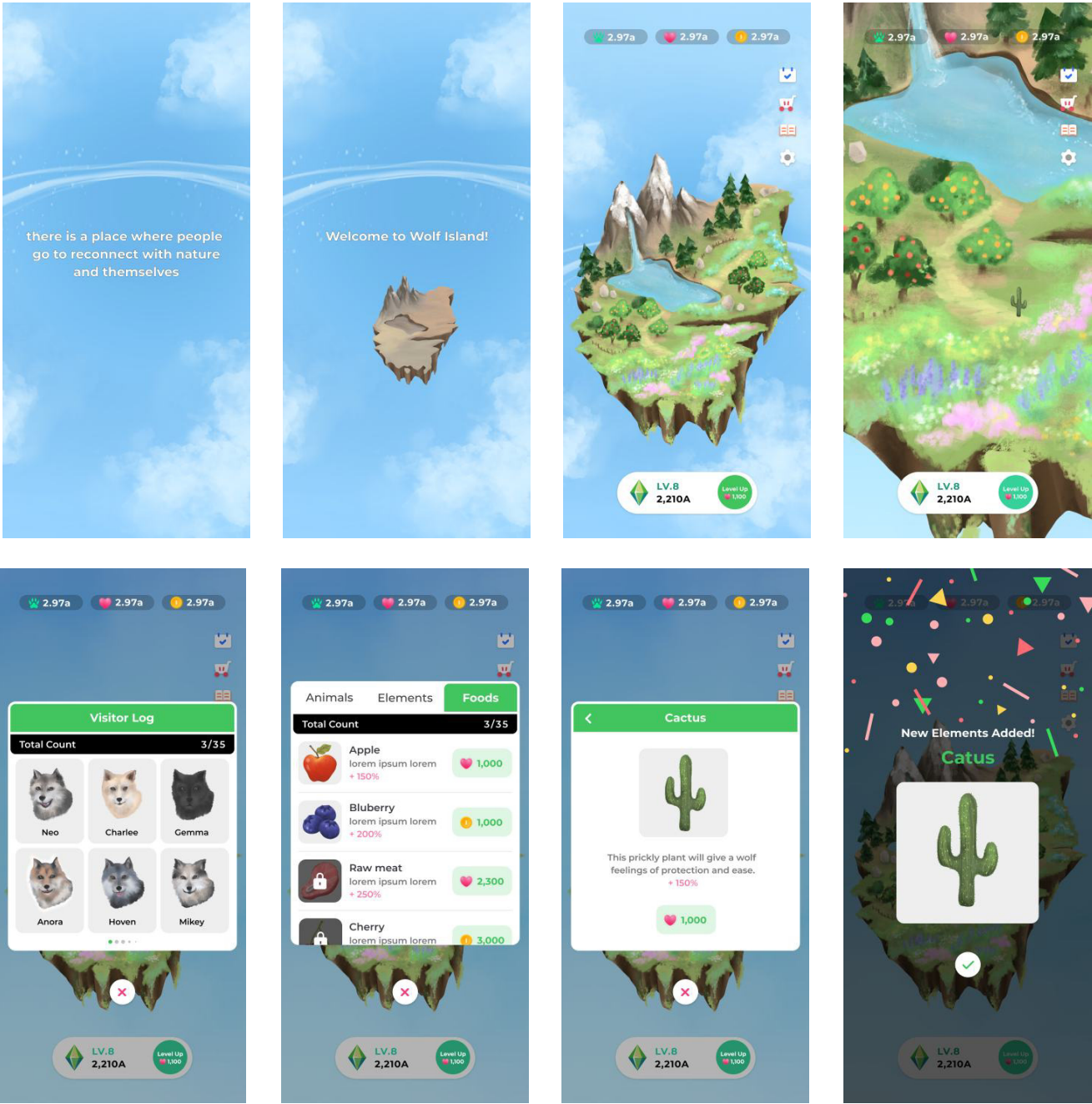
A Healing App From this process emerged Wolf Island, a conceptual mobile application designed to offer users a virtual space for emotional restoration. The app is set in a stylized, tranquil island landscape inspired by the natural habitats of wolves. Users are greeted by a gentle wolf avatar, whose calm energy guides them through a variety of healing rituals such as:

- Breathing exercises synced with the rhythm of a resting wolf
- Mindful walks alongside the avatar in calming virtual environments
- Daily reflection prompts inspired by wolf behavior and symbolism
- Short narrative quests that encourage users to practice empathy and patience

Each feature is designed to promote mental clarity, inner peace, and a sense of safe companionship. Rather than gamifying the experience, Wolf Island invites users to slow down, listen, and reconnect—with themselves, and symbolically, with nature. The app is a digital meditation on what it means to be present, still, and open to connection.

Reflections & Future Vision

Wolf Island demonstrates how design can translate emotional connection into digital healing. It offers a vision for future projects that merge empathy, technology, and interspecies care.





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