

# CARNIVORE

EAZA EUROPEAN CARNIVORE CAMPAIGN

## Story competition outlines



Carnivores get a bad press from humans – we learn from a young age in folk and fairy tales onwards to *Wind in The Willows*, that there is the Big Bad wolf, the lazy and cunning fox, the sneaky weasel, the wolf in sheep's clothing...

Perhaps we need to write or tell some new tales about the good side of carnivores!

## Story competition – questions for organisers

### Getting started

Plan your competition carefully and make sure all involved, entrants and judges know the dates and rules / time scheme involved.

You may wish to work with a team of staff – keepers, zoo education, marketing and other staff to plan your competition.

Who is encouraged to take part in your competition? How will you reach them or contact them?

At what level are you organising this?

- National zoo level? (Which language is the entry in?)
- Regional level?
- Just your zoo?

How will you receive entries or create and distribute entry forms?

- By email?
- As a Pdf on a website?
- By post?
- Picked up in the zoo to encourage visits?

It helps if entries are typed rather than hand-written.

It is wise to make entries non-returnable so encourage people to keep a copy, unless you have the time to give feedback.

Why take part?

What rewards or incentives do you have for taking part?

Prizes can range from book tokens to zoo entry or zoo merchandise. Even a certificate for taking part is a simple and cheap way of rewarding entries.

Some commercial writing competitions ask for an administration / entry fee to pay for expenses involved – this can exclude some people from entering. You may wish to raise funds through this.

How do people find out about this?

It is worth involving local or national bookstores to sponsor prizes and be involved in the judging or distribution of competition material.

Some government agencies or educational departments have programmes or competitions for adults with reading and writing difficulties. It is worth approaching them for sponsorship or help.

Your local schools authorities or library services might also be useful for distribution and help.

Your zoo newsletter and also local or national newspapers might be of help to publicise the competition.

### **Judging**

If you look at other competition rules, judges' decisions are final and you don't have to award prizes if there are entries of insufficient quality.

A local or national celebrity author, naturalist, zoo director or media person are useful to promote the competition and present prizes. You might also have links with a publishing company.

There are two genres or types of writing about animals / carnivores you can encourage:

a) natural history writing (descriptive and atmospheric, based on observations or study of wild animals, or inspired by video clips such as on [www.ARKive.org](http://www.ARKive.org)).

b) folk or fairy tale based, involving stock characters (fairy godmothers, wicked stepmothers, heroes, villains and importantly talking animals, sometimes acting as a narrator). Someone needs to tell the tale!

These often have a moral at the end, often based around a proverb or saying such as the wolf in sheep's clothing.

How long is too long?

There are no hard and fast rules about word counts / lengths suited to particular ages or levels of ability. However a word limit is advisable as it stops people writing quantity rather than quality. Is your tale told in 100 words, 250 words, 500 words, 800 words?

Shorter tales or entries are easier to publish or read out at the winning ceremony if you have one.

Age ranges can be linked to school grades, years or ages e.g. primary school (junior and infants, middle and secondary school and over 16 / 18 years).

Entry forms need to have this information clearly stated along with an address, age, contact details, consent form a parent or guardian if needed. Usually there is a plagiarism declaration to say that this is all the applicant's own work.

## Judging issues

You need to give sufficient time of 4 - 6 weeks or 2-3 months for people to find out about the competition and write entries (avoiding such things as public and school holidays if necessary) and at least a month or so to copy and distribute entries to judges. Judges do not have to meet. You can give those grading sheets or criteria.

You may wish to prepare or work from a shortlist of entries if you have large numbers of entries. To avoid judging bias, some competitions hide the names and details from judges and give an entry number to each application.

It is wise from a child protection point to hide or have put on the back participating children's details from applications if they are put on display.

Most competitions exclude employees of related companies such as zookeepers and zookeeper's or judge's families etc to avoid accusations of bias, unless you want to encourage / have a special category for zoo staff.

How will winners be published? When?

On a website

- In a display?
- In a zoo newsletter or local newspaper?
- In a book (which can be expensive) or pamphlet (cheaper)?

Worth checking

What local or national rules are there about running and judging competitions?

## **Guidance to applicants**

Some simple rules will help shape the applications and help entrants such as:

- Carnivores need to be shown in a good, positive light by the outcome of the story.
- Which carnivore they are writing about?
- Each story needs a clear, beginning, middle and end (including possibly a moral at the end of folk tales).
- Each story needs some evocative description of people, places and animals to create atmosphere.
- Themes for folk tales might help: Journey? Quest? Rescue? Discovery?

## **Carnivore tales for EAZA European Carnivore Campaign**

### **Can you finish these stories?**

#### **1. the sheep in wolf's clothing**

Once upon a time there was a young sheep that was fed up with his good but dull life in a field, chewing grass and protected by shepherds. He wanted to see the world, he wanted excitement, and he wanted to play tricks on the other sheep and the bossy shepherd.

He grew fed up with grass and the same fields and having to listen to the umpteenth warning from the other older sheep and the shepherd about not straying away from the herd because of the wolves. Wolves lived in the woods and would gobble up a young and foolish sheep as soon as look at him. He grew bored with the shepherd boasting about how many fierce big wolves he had bravely killed with his own bare hands and which would no longer hunt his sheep, for they now lay around as wolf skin rugs on his cottage floor.

"Baa Humbug" said the young sheep.

So one day he sneaked away from the fields whilst the shepherd and sheep snored in the shade at midday. He trotted down to the stream and rolled around in the mud and dust to grey up his white woolly coat.

He sneaked quietly past the sleeping farmyard dogs and through the open doors of the shepherd's cottage. There inside the cool dark room he froze as the cold staring glassy eyes of the wolf glared at him from the floor. It was a young wolf laying flat in front of the fire as if to spring. Very flat - as flat as a hearthrug.

The young sheep chuckled to himself as he stepped over to it, lifted up the smelly wolf skin in his teeth wriggled and rolled himself into it.

With the toothy head flopping over his and the tail dragging along behind, he practiced creping wolfishly back out of the farmyard past the sleeping hounds. Idle curs, he thought.....

How does this story end?

#### **2. Who's afraid of the good little wolf?**

You've heard many stories about the big bad wolf.

But did you know that he had a good little wolf brother?

No one ever remembered the good little wolf or told stories about him because he didn't go round eating small girls in red or their bedridden grandmas.

Instead he was a small wolf who wanted to make the world a better place...

And this is how he did it .....

How does the story end?

#### **3. One day in the forest, a little old lady befriended a wolf....**

How does the story end?

#### **4. Once upon a time there was a wolf which liked dressing up in old women's clothing, especially their nightgowns....**

How does the story end?

## 5. the were-wolf's tale

At night on the full moon I turn into a wolf and rid the world from evil but if only I had better sense of direction ... I keep getting lost in the forest and this is why I am known as a were-wolf.  
How does the story end?

## 6. Three very caring bears and the girl with the golden hair....

How does the story end?

## 7. Hungry like the wolf?

Once upon a time there was a beautiful but poor girl called Verity (which means "always truthful") who lived in the house of a wicked stepmother. She had two not conventionally attractive step-sisters, called Truly and Awful, who got all the best food and clothes.

Whilst her father had gone away unexpectedly "to sea on a very, very long journey", the wicked stepmother told her, Verity was forced to do all the household chores. She was tired of scrubbing the floors and emptying the bins, washing the fine clothes of her stepsisters and cooking all the fine food- which she was not allowed to eat. She lived on leftovers and hoped that one day her father would return or that someone, preferably tall, dark and handsome, ideally a prince or very rich, would rescue her from this life of drudgery.

As is usual in stories, one day a royal proclamation was made about a grand ball to be held at the palace in honour of the prince's 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. It was a fact well known that a young man in possession of a fortune must be in need of a wife... and so all the young eligible and not so eligible, young and old, lonely, lovely or deluded women of the kingdom dreamed of the dances to come and being picked out by the prince.

Needless to say, Verity wasn't invited - she was left behind on the evening of the ball, having slaved hard for weeks to make a fine ball gown for her sisters and done their hair up nice.

"Ha! Who would look at you, a poor but secretly quite fair and accomplished, uncomplaining, hard working young girl like you as a wife?" asked her two stepsisters.

"surely" said Truly, "he would look for women of fine taste and refined accomplishments like what we are, who appreciate the finer things in life?"

"and if we can't marry a prince, a footballer would do" said Awful.

And off they flounced in their finery, balancing on menacingly high heeled shoes into their awaiting carriage, leaving Verity to clean the house.

Verity sobbed on the doorstep looking out into the cold moonlit night.

"Even if I was allowed to go", she cried to herself, "I have nothing to wear".

If only I had some fine clothes instead of these rags and tatters. They aren't warm enough to go out through the forest to a ball on a dark night".

And hearing her sobs and piteous call, a large grey wolf out of the forest nosed its way out of the forest with strange eyes. It moved into the circles of light from the house, its silver fur shining.

She gasped but the wolf growled softly to her "do not be afraid"

Verity had heard many tales of fierce wolves but there was something familiar and comforting about this one.

"would you like to go to the ball, my child?"

"but the night is cold and I have nothing to wear..."

Verity replied, her eyes wide as the moon.

"Trust in me and do not believe in all you have heard about my kind. I will clothe you in the finest furs and silvers, give you the lightest dancing feet and most beautiful voice of anyone there....."

"but how will I get there in time? She asked, "my stepsisters left hours ago and I couldn't walk that far". There are wild beasts and...

"like me?" asked the wolf. "jump on my back and we will be there in no time, for the wolf is fleet of foot and a great traveller at night..."

“in search of prey?” she cried suspiciously. “you eat children and travellers, kill sheep and deer, how do I know you will not harm me?”

“I do what I must to survive, and pick out the weak to create the strong”, said the Grey Wolf. “after all, do not humans prey on wolves and wild animals- the young and old, weak and strong, to protect their animals so they may one day eat them? That is not the law of the forest. It is I who should be scared of you and your kind”.

Something about his familiar eyes and warm growling voice soothed her fears and she reached out and grasped the thick fur of his mane behind the ears. In a flash, the wolf leapt up and galloped lightly along the snowy ground through the trees and over the streams with Verity clinging onto his dark, warm musky back. Over the glitters of frost, past houses and dog barks in the moonlit valleys until Verity- half asleep in his warm rug of a back- glimpsed the lighted windows of the city and its fine castle where the ball was held.

“we’re nearly there” growled the wolf slowing down to a halt near the city gates.

“but you can’t come with me into the city, for a wolf would be killed and I can’t go in for I still have nothing to wear”, cried the girl, shivering in her old ragged dress.

“old father wolf always feeds and keeps warm his young”, he said, and with that, he rose onto his back legs and entwined himself around the girl.

She felt the soft fur wrap around her, her battered shoes stiffen into the lustre of the wolf’s claws and his head draped around her shoulders like a fox fur stole or wrap, blinking up at her. As he breathed into the night, his breath and slobber on the neck and hair crystallised into the finest pearls and diamonds. She bounded along the road to the city gates with the lightness of a stalking hunters track, surprising the guards in her quiet approach.

“you’d better hurry- the ball has already started” said one of the guards.

“you shouldn’t be out alone on a night like this, miss” said the other guard. “for there are wolves and bears and robbers along the forest roads...”

The girl laughed, the sound tinkling along the roadway like icicles, as she swept passed them towards the sound of dancing.

When she entered the ball room, it was alight with candles, roaring fires, shimmering glass and silver. Decked with dark fir tree branches and dusky with pinewood scent like an echo of the forest...

How does the story end?