Canis mesomelas.

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Canis Linnaeus, 1758

Canis Linnaeus, 1758:38. Type species Canis familiaris (= Canis lupus Linnaeus).


Valpicanis Blainville, 1837:279. Type species Canis aureus Linnaeus.

Simenius Gray, 1868:494, 506. Type species Canis simensis Rüppell.

Lupadella Hilzheimer, 1906:363. Type species Canis mesomelas Schreber.

Schaeftia Hilzheimer, 1906:364. Type species Canis adustus Sundevall.

CONTEXT AND CONTENT. Order Carnivora, family Canidae. Seven species of the genus Canis are currently recognized: C. adustus, C. aureus, C. latrans, C. lupus, C. mesomelas, C. rufus, and C. simensis (Wzenarczak 1993), although the validity of C. rufus is questioned (Clutton-Brock et al. 1976; Everw 1973; Wayne 1993). Recent analysis of microsatellite DNA indicates C. lupus lycaon may warrant specific status as C. lycaon (Wilson et al. 2000). Also, analysis of mitochondrial DNA suggests that Canis is a paraphyletic group that should include Caon alpinus (Vila et al. 1999; Wayne et al. 1997). A key to species (Banfield 1974; Clutton-Brock et al. 1976; Hall and Kelson 1959; Smithers 1971) follows:

1 Condylar base length >190 mm; body mass >26 kg          2
   Condylar base length ≤190 mm; body mass ≤26 kg        3
2 Condylar base length >213 mm in males or >203 mm in females; relatively broad teeth; no conspicuous cingulum on outer edge of M1, specimen not from southeastern United States ............. C. rufus
   Condylar base length <213 mm in males or <203 mm in females; relatively narrow teeth; conspicuous cingulum present on outer edge of M1, specimen from southeastern United States ............. C. lupus

3 Specimen from North America .................................. C. latrans
   Specimen not from North America .................................. 4
4 Rostrum long; distance from posterior edge of alveolus of canine to posterior edge of P3 (of both upper and lower jaws) > total length of P4 + M1 + M2 .......... C. simensis
   Rostrum short; distance from posterior edge of alveolus of canine to posterior edge of P3 < total length of P4 + M1 + M2

5 Carnassials relatively small, length ≤83% of M1 + M2 and 130% of M2 + M3; tip of tail white; ears dark gray behind; dark stripe on either flank ............... C. adustus
   Carnassials relatively large, length >83% of M1 + M2 and >130% of M2 + M3; tip of tail dark; ears reddish brown behind; no dark stripe on either flank ........................................... 6
6 Flat postorbital process; dark saddle patch sharply marked off from brighter rufous sides .................................................. C. mesomelas
   Strongly convex postorbital process; no clearly defined saddle patch .................................................. C. aureus

Canis mesomelas Schreber, 1775

Black-backed Jackal

Canis mesomelas Schreber, 1775:370, Type locality “Vorgebirge der guten Holung," South Africa, Cape Province, Cape of Good Hope.

Canis variegatoideas Smith, 1833:37, Type locality “South Africa.”
Canis schmidti Noack, 1897:520, Type locality “Somaliland.”
Lupadella mesomelas Hilzheimer, 1906:363, Elevation to generic status.
Canis macmillani Heller, 1916:6. Type locality “Muto Andei Station, British East Africa, altitude 2,500 feet.”
Canis arenarum Thomas, 1926:295, Type locality “Borera, central Great Namaqualand, South-West Africa.”
Canis achrates Thomas, 1926:295, Type locality “Roobain, Kuiseb river, near Walvis Bay, coastal south-west Africa.”

CONTEXT AND CONTENT. Context as above. Between 3 and 5 subspecies were recognized in Africa (Coetzee 1971; Ellerman et al. 1953; Lombaard 1971; Shortridge 1934). However, minor and inconsistent morphological and genetic differences and lack of a barrier to gene flow within the range of C. mesomelas (Wayne et al. 1990) suggest that many subspecies are not warranted (Meester et al. 1986). Consequently, 2 subspecies are recognized:

C. m. mesomelas Schreber, 1775:370, see above (achrates Thomas, arenarum Thomas, and variegatoideas Smith are synonyms).
C. m. schmidti Noack, 1897:520, see above (macmillani Heller and mecmillani Heller are synonyms).

DIAGNOSIS. The black-backed jackal (Fig. 1) is a small canid distinguished from other members of the genus Canis by a dark saddle extending from neck to tail in bold contrast to the rufous head, flanks, and legs. Other distinguishing characters include tan coat; long, triangular foxlike ears; and black-tipped, rufous tail (Estes 1991; Stains 1975; Van de Merwe 1953a). Although C. mesomelas is longer and taller than the golden jackal (C. aureus), the skull of C. mesomelas is smaller (Bueler 1973; Sheldon 1992). In contrast to C. mesomelas, the side-striped jackal (C. adustus) has a white-tipped tail. C. aureus has mottled black and gray does not have an identifiable saddle (Nowak 1999).

GENERAL CHARACTERS. The black-backed jackal is a slender, long-legged jackal with large ears (Kingdon 1997). Head resembles that of a dog, with a pointed muzzle and erect, pointed