

CANID NEWS

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Arctic wolf (*Canis lupus arctos*)
on Ellesmere Island



Photograph by Katha Dittombée

FOREWORD

Dear Canid enthusiasts,
Welcome to *Canid News* 2026 Issue 3, the newsletter of the IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group (CSG) for the global canid community.

Canid News provides an informal hub for exchange among canid researchers, conservationists, managers and enthusiasts, while our peer-reviewed journal, *Canid Biology & Conservation*, welcomes scientific work on canids.

We are very pleased to announce a new **online submission platform for *Canid Biology & Conservation***, where manuscripts can now be submitted directly at www.canidbiologyandconservation.org.

The redesigned www.canids.org **is live!** A few words from Raimundo P. Solar: "A warm thank you to everyone who supported this project, and to the photographers for their wonderful images that **bring life to our screens**. I hope the site makes it easier to access, share and **exchange information** about wild canids. Enjoy exploring it! 🐾"

On a more sombre note, David Macdonald, the CSG's founding Chair, shares memories of his friendship with our colleague Gus Mills, who sadly passed away in July.

This issue is packed with canid news. Our feature article, "*Beyond species boundaries: What North American Canis can teach us about conservation in a genomics era*", by Bridgett vonHoldt, explores what genomics can teach us about species boundaries and conservation, with the full essay available [here](#).

IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group

We also bring you several remarkable firsts and rare observations from around the world: a rarely documented sequence of **Arctic wolves hunting ringed seals** on sea ice in the Canadian High Arctic; the first confirmed photographic record of a **Tibetan fox in Bhutan**; the first **satellite tracking of dholes in Baluran National Park**, an important stronghold for the Javan dhole; the extraordinary **4,126 km odyssey of three African wild dog** brothers across Zambia; and the first **recorded vocalisation of a wild short-eared dog**, one of the world's most elusive canids.

Recent research highlights include a study from the hyper-arid Jordan Rift Valley examining how **human activity influences Red fox movement**; work from Israel's southern Negev Desert on how evolutionary history and season shape **interactions between Red foxes and Rüppell's foxes**; and an analysis of 78 historical and contemporary specimens revealing new insights into **sexual size dimorphism and the ecomorphology of Iberian wolves**.

Finally, read how **Local Ecological Knowledge** can help fill gaps in our understanding of dholes living in shared landscapes, and about the **current state of wild canid research and conservation in Argentina**, including the creation of the Argentine Canid Study Network (RECAN-AR), an important step towards interdisciplinary collaboration across the country.

As we share this newsletter, nature conservation continues to face mounting challenges worldwide. Protecting ecosystems and maintaining viable wildlife populations remain essential to safeguarding biodiversity and ecological resilience.



We are grateful for all your contributions. *Canid News* thrives on your updates, so please continue sharing canid-related content, big or small, through the [Canid News Content Submission Form](#).

We wish you all a good reading!

Nucharin, Geraldine & Claudio
Co-Chairs & Emeritus Chair

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Gus Mills – reflections on a friendship

It all began in 1972. Gus headed to the Kalahari's brown hyaenas, and I to Oxfordshire's red foxes. The first link between us, aside from somewhat undistinguished school years redeemed by a shared obsession with animals, was that both our doctorates were supervised by Hans Kruuk. From Hans, one of the great naturalist scientists of a generation, we inherited a loyal bond and a way of thinking about carnivores, and their conservation, that would last a lifetime.

Gus Mills was born in England in 1946 but grew up in South Africa, where a childhood visit to Kruger National Park sparked what became a lifelong fascination with African wildlife.

Gus and his inseparable wife and frequent co-author, Margie, spent 12 years in the Kalahari studying first brown and then spotted hyaenas. That work culminated in *Kalahari Hyaenas: The Comparative Behavioural Ecology of Two Species* and led Gus to become Chair of the IUCN SSC Hyaena Specialist Group.

By 1984, Gus and Margie had moved to Kruger, where his work increasingly encompassed African wild dogs and lions. In 1996 he became the founding Head of the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Group, and for many years he was an influential voice in conservation management in Kruger. Retirement in 2006 did little to slow him down. He returned to the Kalahari, where years of meticulous fieldwork produced *Kalahari Cheetahs: Adaptations to an Arid Region*.

Two institutions weave particularly strongly through our shared journey: WildCRU and the IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group. I became the founding Chair of the CSG in 1985, and Gus was one of its founding members. As the Group grew and specialist sub-groups were established, Gus became Chair of the *Lycaon* Working Party.

That role helped shape thinking about African wild dog conservation for years to come. Gus and I co-supervised Harriet Davies-Mostert's doctoral work at WildCRU on wild dogs introduced to the fenced Venetia reserve in the Limpopo Valley. Gus also championed the concept of metapopulation management that emerged from this work. That approach became an important part of conserving wild dogs in fragmented southern African landscapes.

My memories of Gus stretch far beyond papers and meetings: flying in helicopters to find wild dogs in Kruger, tracking cheetahs from vibrating fixed-wing aircraft in Namibia, watching gorillas in Rwanda and Ethiopian wolves in the Bale Mountains, and navigating Kalahari dunes by the Southern Cross while pausing to catch cricket scores on a crackling radio.

Gus approached life with the same energy he brought to field biology. He was an avid runner, completed the Comrades Marathon several times, and continued running through both surgery and chemotherapy. In 2021, he became the oldest man to climb Africa's third-highest peak in the Ruwenzori Mountains.



Photograph by Margie Mills

Gus Mills' story is an essentially African one, built on extraordinary fieldcraft, curiosity, friendship and a lifelong commitment to understanding and conserving carnivores.

At moments of sadness, my father would quote Horace: *Eheu, fugaces labuntur anni* — heyho, the fleeting years have flown.

I can't improve on that.

David W. Macdonald
Founding Chair, IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group, 1981–2004

This obituary is a condensed version of a fuller tribute by David Macdonald, available on the [WildCRU website](#)

Beyond species boundaries: What North American *Canis* can teach us about conservation in a genomics era

North American *Canis* species are an unusually powerful natural system for understanding gene flow, hybridization, admixture, population connectivity and the conservation value of genetic diversity. Across wolves, coyotes and Red wolves, genomic data continue to underscore a complex history of divergence, connectivity, admixture and adaptation. These canids remind us that conservation does not always fit neatly into species boxes.

Rather than viewing gene flow simply as a threat to species integrity, conservation genomics allows us to ask a more nuanced question: **which genetic variation is important to preserve, where did it come from, and how can we maintain it into the future?**

Grey wolves (*Canis lupus*), eastern wolves (*C. lycaon*), Red wolves (*C. rufus*) and coyotes (*C. latrans*) have complex histories of divergence and gene flow. Several North American *Canis* populations consequently carry measurable mixed ancestry, challenging researchers and regulators to move beyond simply asking whether an animal is “pure” and instead consider ancestry, demographic history, adaptive variation, ecological function and genetic diversity.

The Red wolf offers a particularly compelling example. Coyotes in the southeastern United States can carry substantial amounts of Red wolf ancestry, raising difficult conservation questions.



North American *Canis* discussed in this essay, from left to right: Grey wolf, Alberta, Canada, © Brettfried / iNaturalist; Eastern wolf, Ontario, Canada, © Terrymcbride / iNaturalist; Red wolf, North Carolina, USA, © djgphotographics / iNaturalist; Coyote, Baja California, Mexico, © Erik Meling / iNaturalist.

If endangered genetic variation persists within an admixed population, what value should be placed on that variation, particularly if those animals also retain morphology, behaviour or ecological functions associated with Red wolves?

Answering such questions will require researchers, conservation practitioners, managers and policy makers to work together and share genomic data, samples, ecological observations and expertise. New genomic and monitoring tools can tell us increasingly more about not only what a canid is called, but also its evolutionary history and potential conservation value.

For North American *Canis*, reproductive compatibility does not erase evolutionary divergence, just as genomic admixture should not erase conservation value. Their genomes record histories of divergence, secondary contact, gene flow, demographic contraction and range expansion. Our conservation frameworks should be capable of recognizing that complexity.

Submitted by Bridgett vonHoldt

[Read Bridgett’s full essay on the CSG website](#)

Seal predation by Arctic wolves

The Arctic wolf (*Canis lupus arctos*), a subspecies of the grey wolf, inhabits the Canadian Arctic Archipelago and northeastern Greenland. Its primary prey include muskoxen (*Ovibos moschatus*), Arctic hares (*Lepus arcticus*) and Peary caribou (*Rangifer tarandus pearyi*) in the Canadian High Arctic. Here, we documented a complete predation sequence by Arctic wolves on ringed seals during the seal pupping season. While ringed seals have occasionally been reported in the diet of Arctic wolves, either through scavenging or active hunting, direct observations of predation events appear to be exceptionally rare.

On 9 April 2026, near Eureka on Ellesmere Island, Canadian High Arctic, we observed a pack of Arctic wolves attacking, killing, and consuming a female ringed seal (*Pusa hispida*) and her whitecoat pup, estimated to be only a few days old.

The circumstances under which the wolves initially encountered the seal remain unknown. At the time the observation began, the adult female was on the sea ice approximately 300 meters from the coast, in close proximity to a breathing hole. Four wolves were attacking the seal, repeatedly biting and restraining her while preventing access to the nearby breathing hole. Within seconds, one additional pack member joined the attack.

Despite multiple injuries, the seal attempted to propel herself across the ice toward the breathing hole using her foreflippers while displaying defensive behaviour with open jaws.



Arctic wolves feeding on a ringed seal (*Pusa hispida*) on sea ice near Eureka, Ellesmere Island, Canadian High Arctic. © Patrick Meier, Katha Dittombé.

As the attack progressed, both the frequency and intensity of these defensive movements gradually declined until they ceased. The whitecoat pup, lying about 40 m from the female, had already been killed. A yearling wolf, which did not participate in the hunt, joined the adults once feeding had begun. Both the female seal and the pup were consumed by the pack. The entire event, from the initial attack to the consumption of the adult female and her pup, lasted approximately 50 minutes.

The pack remained near the kill site until 14 April, completely consuming both carcasses before departing the following day. To our knowledge, no comparable photographic documentation of a complete predation sequence has previously been reported. Because predation events on sea ice are seldom witnessed, opportunistic observations such as this provide valuable insights into Arctic wolf foraging ecology.

Submitted by Patrick Meier, Katha Dittombé and Sandra Lai

First photographic evidence of the Tibetan fox in Bhutan

A nationwide snow leopard camera-trap survey has produced the first confirmed photographic record of the Tibetan fox (*Vulpes ferrilata*) in Bhutan.

During the 2022–2023 survey, researchers deployed cameras across high-elevation habitats throughout the country. After more than 22,000 trap-nights, one station near the Bhutan–China border, at 4,582 m above sea level, captured 11 photographs of a solitary Tibetan fox walking through an alpine meadow.

The discovery confirms a species whose presence in Bhutan had previously remained uncertain. Although IUCN range maps included parts of northern Bhutan within the fox’s potential distribution, no verifiable published record had existed. The new observation therefore extends the species’ confirmed range southward into the eastern Himalaya.

The same camera station also recorded snow leopard, red fox, Asiatic wild dog, Himalayan wolf and blue sheep, as well as Bhutan’s first confirmed record of the woolly hare, highlighting the remarkable biodiversity of the country’s northern alpine landscapes.

The authors suggest that Tibetan foxes may have been overlooked or misidentified in previous camera-trap surveys and recommend reviewing archived images alongside targeted surveys of alpine habitats, particularly areas supporting pika populations, the fox’s principal prey.



Bhutan’s first confirmed Tibetan fox, photographed by a camera trap at 4,582 m near the Bhutan–China border during the national snow leopard survey.

Dhendup, T., Rinzin, P., Tandin, T., Letro, L. & Wangdi, S. (2026). First photographic evidence of the Tibetan fox in Bhutan. *Canid Biology & Conservation* 29(4): 12–14.

First satellite tracking of Javan dholes in Indonesia

Four Javan dholes (*Cuon alpinus javanicus*) have been successfully captured and fitted with satellite-GPS collars in Baluran National Park, northeastern Java, marking the first time dholes in Indonesia have been studied using satellite tracking.

The four animals all belong to the same pack and were collared as part of a collaboration between Baluran National Park and the Copenhagen Zoo-Baluran Programme.

Baluran National Park is one of the most important remaining strongholds for Javan dholes, supporting a breeding population of this rare and protected canid. The new tracking study aims to provide detailed information on daily movements, space use and pack dynamics, filling important gaps in our understanding of dhole ecology in Indonesia.

Data from the collars will help researchers better understand how the pack uses the Baluran landscape and provide evidence to inform future management decisions and conservation interventions.

As an apex predator in the Baluran ecosystem, the dhole plays an important ecological role but remains poorly studied. The successful collaring therefore represents an important step toward building the knowledge needed for its long-term conservation in Java.



Four Javan dholes fitted with satellite-GPS collars in Baluran National Park, Java, Indonesia, as part of the first satellite-tracking study of dholes in the country.



One of the newly collared Javan dholes photographed by a camera trap in Baluran National Park.

Submitted by Sulistiono Sulistiono, Arif Pratiwi and Linnea Worsøe Havmøller

An African wild dog odyssey: 4,126 km across Zambia

In July 2025, four 3-year-old female African wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*) left the Mayukuyuku pack in Zambia’s Kafue National Park. Two weeks later, three males from the same pack followed them.

What came next was extraordinary.

Tracked by GPS collars, the dispersers travelled thousands of kilometres through protected areas, game management areas and unprotected human-dominated landscapes, navigating major roads, cities, rivers and reservoirs in search of new breeding opportunities.

After travelling more than 1,000 km from their natal range, the male and female groups remarkably encountered one another again in central Zambia. They remained together for only a day before separating and continuing their journeys.

The females eventually reached a small forest patch near Kabwe. Their movements then changed abruptly: the collared female repeatedly returned to the same location, behaviour that in wild dogs can indicate an injured or trapped packmate. The researchers suspect that one of her sisters had been caught in a wire snare set for bushmeat hunting. Soon afterwards, the collared female also died, probably in a snare, and contact with the remaining female was lost.

The males fared differently. After navigating around Kabwe and two large reservoirs, they continued east into the Luangwa Valley ecosystem and eventually settled in a new range.



African wild dogs rallying on a track in Zambia. © Daan Smit

By then, they had travelled an astonishing 4,126 km, a journey highlighted by *Science* as the longest movement yet recorded for an African mammal.

These journeys show that African wild dogs retain an extraordinary ability to move between distant ecosystems, even through landscapes heavily modified by people. Recent movements documented across Zambia have connected, or nearly connected, many of the country’s major wild dog populations.

But movement is only a part of connectivity. The fate of the females “is a sobering reminder of the lottery of dispersal,” says Claudio Sillero, who wasn’t involved in the study.

Creel, S. et al. (2026). Extraordinary movements connecting distant ecosystems by African wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*). Ecology 107: e70504.

“Large social canids can disperse over remarkable distances, and advances in tracking technology are revealing just how extraordinary these movements can be. But movement is not the same as connectivity: animals must survive the journey, encounter conspecifics and successfully reproduce.”

Together, the contrasting fates of the Mayukuyuku siblings illustrate both the remarkable resilience of African wild dogs and the hazards they face once they leave protected strongholds. Protecting the landscapes between populations, particularly by reducing mortality from wire snares, will be essential if these extraordinary journeys are to translate into demographic and genetic connectivity.

First record of wild short-eared dog vocalisations

The short-eared dog (*Atelocynus microtis*) is the Amazon basin’s only endemic canid and one of South America’s least-understood carnivores. Its elusive nature has earned it the nickname “ghost dog”, and even basic aspects of its behaviour, including its vocal communication, remain poorly documented.

On 8 May 2025, during a systematic camera-trap survey near the Las Piedras Biodiversity Station in southeastern Peru, a camera recorded an adult male short-eared dog in terra firme forest. The dog paused in front of the camera and produced a distinctive seven-second vocal sequence. Beginning with a soft whine, the call developed into a series of brief, high-pitched hoots or howls that progressively increased in pitch and volume. The dog then scent-marked a small tree before leaving the camera’s field of view.

The recording offers a rare glimpse of vocal behaviour by a free-ranging short-eared dog in its natural habitat. Previous descriptions of the species’ vocalisations have largely involved captive or reintroduced individuals and included growls, snarls and roar-like howls. The newly recorded call sounds unusually bird-like and differs markedly from a typical canid howl.

Its function remains uncertain. It may be a long-distance communication call suited to dense forest, while mate attraction is another possibility. Its close association with scent-marking makes the behavioural context particularly intriguing.



A) An adult male *Atelocynus microtis* emitting a bird-like howl. **B)** The individual marked a small tree shortly after the call. Both images are from the same camera trap video acquired on the Las Piedras River, southeastern Peru. Camera trap images recorded by Holly O’Donnell on a camera trap belonging to San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance (SDZWA).

Additional recordings from different individuals and situations will be needed to understand when and why short-eared dogs produce these calls.

Beyond its natural-history value, the observation may also support improved monitoring of this cryptic species. Acoustic recorders can complement camera traps by detecting animals over a wider area and capturing behaviours that cameras may miss.

The raw video and both original and processed audio files have therefore been made openly available to support comparative studies and the eventual development of automated acoustic-detection tools.

Champagne, P., & O’Donnell, H. (2026). First record of vocalizations of wild *Atelocynus microtis* (Carnivora: Canidae) from southeastern Peru. *Mammalogy Notes*, 12(2), 600-600.

Red fox energy and risk trade-offs in a hyper-arid human-modified environment

When a generalist canid like the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) is given the possibility to use human resources, it will probably find a way to do so. This is especially true in resource-poor environments such as extremely arid deserts, where human settlements and agriculture provide resource-rich areas, strongly contrasting with the natural environment. But reaching these resources can introduce several challenges: the risks posed by humans or other carnivores, within- and between-species competition, and the energetic costs of travelling from an individual's home range to human habitats and back.

Starting in December 2022, we used GPS collars to track 10 red foxes for up to two years in the extremely arid desert of the southern Jordan Rift Valley. We found that nine of the ten foxes lived in the natural desert habitat, only visiting human habitats at rates ranging from once every three nights to almost every night. Additionally, eight of the ten foxes maintained territories that only slightly overlapped, suggesting strong within-species competition. Testing the effects of different environmental factors on the visitation rate, we found only weak relationships, with low relative humidity being the strongest incentive to travel to human habitats.

We then looked at the distances that the foxes had to travel and found that they strongly affected the rate of visitation to human habitats. Foxes residing closer to human habitats visited them much more often than those residing further away.



A GPS-collared female red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) from the study population in the southern Jordan Rift Valley. © Eran Gisis

Finally, we were able to pinpoint the cost of these visitations, in the form of increased movement. During nights that did not include visits to human habitats, all foxes had similar home range sizes and nightly travel distance. But this changed during nights that included visits to human habitats. Foxes residing further away from human habitats increased their home range size and their nightly travel distance by up to threefold on nights with visits compared to those without.

Our results paint a more complicated picture than the simple paradigm suggesting that mammals reduce their movements when they are close to human habitats. In contrast, the red foxes in our study system had to increase their movements to use these habitats.

Furthermore, the elevated risk and energetic costs associated with these movements seem to affect the foxes' decision to use human habitats and their resources. Accounting for these fine-scale considerations improves our understanding of canid behaviour, especially in the face of human modifications to the natural habitat. This can help improve the design of human-wildlife conflict mitigation strategies.

Efrat, R., Segev, N. & Berger-Tal, O. (2026). [Use of Human Habitat in an Extreme Desert by the Generalist Red Fox: Risk and Energy Considerations](#). *Ecology and Evolution* 16.9 (2026): e74392.

Submitted by Ron Efrat

When Rüppell’s foxes and red foxes meet

Smaller carnivores are often expected to avoid larger, more dominant competitors. **But what happens when two species have shared the same desert landscapes for thousands of years?**

A new study in *Animal Behaviour* examined interactions between red foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and the smaller, desert-adapted Rüppell’s fox (*Vulpes rueppellii*) in Israel’s southern Negev Desert.

Researchers carried out 34 field experiments over five years. At each site, two feeding stations were placed 50 m apart. One included a taxidermied Red fox together with Red fox urine and faeces to simulate the presence of a competitor, while the other served as a control. Camera traps recorded 1,291 videos of visiting foxes.

The researchers expected Rüppell’s foxes, which weigh roughly half as much as Red foxes, to show greater vigilance and avoidance in response to the larger species.

Instead, the opposite pattern emerged.

During the dry season, neither species showed a significant change in stress responses when confronted with the simulated red fox. During the wetter breeding season, both species responded more strongly, but Red foxes were substantially more likely than Rüppell’s foxes to display stress-related behaviours such as vigilance and cautious inspection.



Experimental setup used to test fox responses in the Negev Desert. Feeding stations with and without a taxidermied Red fox, supplemented with Red fox scent cues, were monitored by camera traps. From Geffen et al. (2026)

Why might the smaller fox be relatively unfazed?

The authors suggest that the answer may lie in the species’ long evolutionary history of coexistence. In the Negev, the two foxes already partition their environment: Rüppell’s foxes favour open desert habitats and rely heavily on invertebrates, while Red foxes are more closely associated with human-modified areas and consume more vertebrate prey. Such ecological differences may reduce direct competition and encounters between them.



Rüppell’s fox
© César María Aguilar Gómez

That balance, however, may be vulnerable to human-driven change. Expanding settlements, agriculture and anthropogenic food sources can favour red foxes and potentially increase their abundance in desert habitats. Maintaining intact and heterogeneous desert landscapes, while reducing access to human food waste, may therefore be important for conserving Rüppell’s fox populations as conditions change.

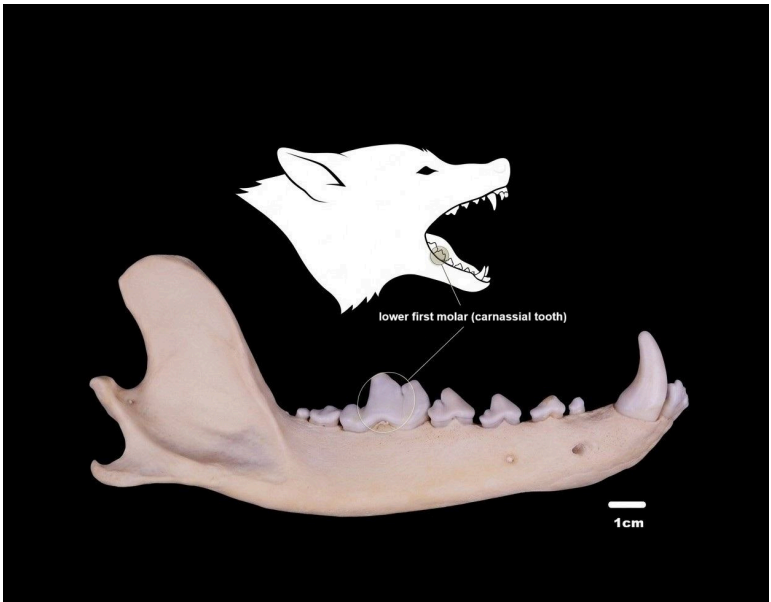
Geffen, E., Hefner, R., Ucko, M., Leader, N. & Barocas, A. (2026). Evolutionary history and seasonal dynamics shape interspecific interactions between two sympatric desert fox species. *Animal Behaviour* 239: 123675.

What can a tooth tell us about an Iberian wolf?

The Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*) is endemic to Portugal and Spain, characterized by a predominantly brownish-grey coat that varies seasonally and distinctive dark stripes along the forelimbs. Although historically distributed throughout the Iberian Peninsula, fewer than 2,000 individuals remain in the wild today, including approximately 300 in Portugal. Despite its conservation importance, morphological data on the subspecies, particularly body mass and sexual differences, have remained scarce for more than two decades.

In a new article published in *The Anatomical Record*, Cotts et al. (2026) used lower first molar, or carnassial tooth, measurements from Iberian wolf museum specimens to estimate body mass and classify sex. The researchers examined 78 historical and contemporary specimens collected between 1900 and 2006 and developed a body-mass prediction equation specifically calibrated for the Iberian wolf.

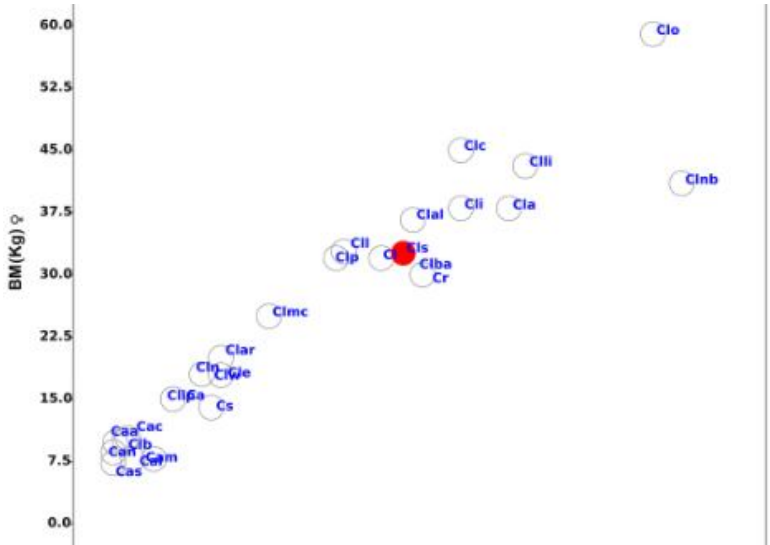
Remarkably, a single carnassial tooth provided accurate estimates of adult body mass. The same measurements also allowed researchers to classify the sex of specimens with an overall accuracy of 79%. Adult males were consistently heavier than females, confirming sexual size dimorphism in the Iberian wolf.



Lower carnassial tooth morphometry used to estimate body mass and classify sex in Iberian wolf specimens. From Cotts et al. (2026)

The researchers also compared the Iberian wolf with 27 other *Canis* taxa. Its body size fell in an intermediate position within the genus: larger than smaller canids such as the Coyote (*Canis latrans*) and Golden jackal (*Canis aureus*), slightly smaller than the Italian wolf (*Canis lupus italicus*), and considerably smaller than large northern wolves such as the Northwestern wolf (*Canis lupus occidentalis*). Iberian wolves were similar in size to Mexican wolves (*Canis lupus baileyi*) and Red wolves (*Canis rufus*).

No significant differences in estimated body mass were found between mature male wolves from north and south of Portugal’s Douro River, suggesting a degree of morphological stability between these populations.



Comparison of body mass estimates across *Canis* taxa, placing the Iberian wolf in an intermediate position. From Cotts et al. (2026)

The study highlights the value of museum collections for recovering biological and ecological information that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. Teeth preserved in historical specimens can provide new insights into body size, sex and variation within threatened canid populations, without requiring access to complete animals or contemporary biological samples.

Cotts et al. (2026). Body mass and sex estimation from lower carnassial tooth morphometry in the endangered Iberian wolf (*Canis lupus signatus*): An ecomorphological analysis of sexual size dimorphism. *The Anatomical Record*

Submitted by Leonardo Cotts

Among Us: Dholes and people in shared landscapes

Protected Areas remain important for wildlife conservation, but many animals also occur in multi-use landscapes alongside agriculture, plantations and people. Understanding how species persist and share space with people is increasingly important for conservation. For an elusive species like the endangered dhole (*Cuon alpinus*), these shared landscapes can create interesting relationships with local communities.

Much of what we know about dholes comes from ecological studies in Protected Areas. Yet people who work in forests and agroforestry plantations, live near forests, or spend time in these landscapes may encounter dholes regularly. Their observations can offer unique insights into a species that is otherwise difficult to study.

Listening to local knowledge

We documented Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK) about dholes in two regions of India’s Western Ghats: Wayanad in Kerala and Valparai in Tamil Nadu. We conducted 476 interviews with Forest Department staff, tea and coffee estate owners and managers, plantation workers and local residents. Through semi-structured surveys, we gathered information on dhole sightings, pack sizes, behaviour, movements and interactions with wildlife, livestock, domestic dogs and people.

Familiarity breeds content

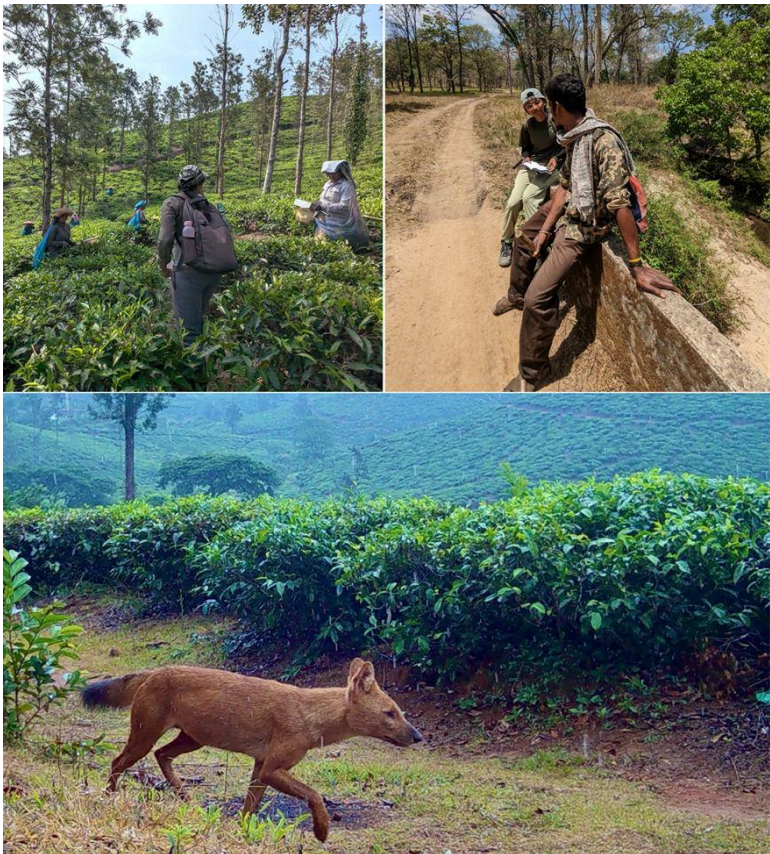
Local observations provided surprisingly detailed ecological information. People described encounter frequencies, pack sizes, locations and dhole behaviour across habitats, with many observations broadly matching previous ecological studies. Dholes were also seldom associated with “conflict”: livestock interactions were limited and depredation extremely rare, while encounters with domestic dogs were reported much more frequently.

Forest Department staff were generally supportive of dhole conservation, and those with greater knowledge of the species were more likely to recognise its ecological importance. Not every observation was reliable, however. Local names were used inconsistently, dholes were sometimes confused with other wild canids, and some accounts reflected myths rather than ecological observations.

Coexistence in multi-use landscapes

People living alongside dholes can possess ecological knowledge built through everyday observation. These insights can complement conventional research by helping us understand where dholes occur, how they behave and how they navigate shared landscapes.

LEK cannot replace ecological studies and should be interpreted carefully, but combining both forms of knowledge can help fill gaps in our understanding of dholes outside Protected Areas. Dhole conservation may therefore depend not only on protecting forests, but also on understanding and preserving the wider landscapes they share with people.



Surveyors conducting interviews with tea plantation workers (top-left) and forest department personnel (top-right) to document Local Ecological Knowledge. Bottom: camera-trap image of a dhole from a tea plantation in the Western Ghats. © The Dhole Project

Saravanan, P., Sheikh, S., Shukla, M., de Rozario, J. E., Srivathsa, A. (2026). Local Ecological Knowledge offers opportunities to study and monitor elusive carnivores in coexistence landscapes. *Scientific Reports*.

Submitted by Pooja Saravanan and Arjun Srivathsa

Strengthening wild canid conservation in Argentina

A new publication brings together the current state of research and conservation of Argentina’s five native wild canid species and highlights the importance of greater collaboration across regions and disciplines.

The work grew out of the 2024 Argentine Conference on Mammalogy, where researchers from seven provinces came together for the roundtable “Canids of Argentina: Updates, Challenges, and Opportunities in Research and Conservation.”

The exchange identified shared challenges—including habitat transformation, interactions with domestic animals, persecution, disease, and limitations in funding and standardised methodologies—as well as opportunities to strengthen collaboration.

One outcome of this collaborative effort was the creation of the Argentine Canid Study Network (RECAN-AR), bringing together researchers working across Argentina to promote methodological standardisation, foster collaborative research, strengthen communication, and support evidence-based conservation.

Together, these efforts represent an important step toward a more federal, interdisciplinary, and One Health approach to the conservation of Argentina’s wild canids.



M. Belén Natalini, Rodrigo Bay-Jouliá, Tamara Fariñas Torres, Diego F. Castillo, Mónica V. Pía, Karen E. DeMatteo, Nathalia P. Scioscia, María J. Corriale, Diego E. Procopio, Estela M. Luengos Vidal, & Sophia Di Cataldo (2026). [Toward a National Network for Research and Conservation of Wild Canids in Argentina: Reflections from a Federal Roundtable Discussion](#). *Mastozoología Neotropical*

Submitted by Karen DeMatteo

About the IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group

The IUCN Species Survival Commission Canid Specialist Group (CSG) is a global network of researchers, conservation practitioners, and wildlife managers dedicated to the study and conservation of wild canids.

Our mission is to promote the conservation of all canid species by advancing scientific knowledge, supporting evidence-based management, and fostering collaboration across regions and disciplines.

We work to assess the conservation status of canids, identify threats, and develop strategies that support their long-term persistence in a rapidly changing world.

The CSG also serves as a platform for communication and exchange within the global canid community, connecting experts and practitioners working across diverse ecological and cultural landscapes.



Get involved

We welcome contributions from researchers, conservationists, students, and canid enthusiasts worldwide.

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