



Fourth Crossing Wildlife factsheet



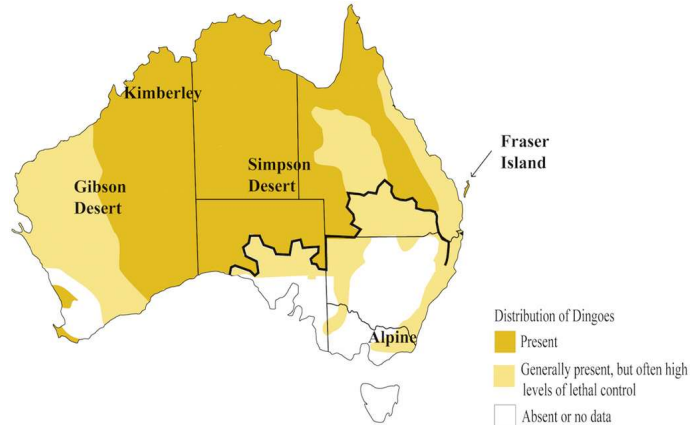
Dingo

scientific name

"*Canis lupus dingo*"
wolf dog

other names

Wolf Dog, Wild Dog, Warrigal and Australian
Native dog



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Description.

Head and body length 860-1220mm, tail length 260-3800mm. Shoulder height 440-630mm. Weight 9 to 25kg. Fur typically ginger varying from sandy-yellow to red-tinger, occasionally black and tan or white. Most have white markings on feet, tail tip and chest, some with white or black muzzles. Ears pricked, tail bushy.

Although not a true native of Australia, the Dingo has been on the Australian mainland for around 4000 years. It was transported to Australia by Asian seafarers and was introduced to Indonesia, Borneo, the Philippines, New Guinea and other islands around the same time. It occupies many areas of Australia from the tropical north through to the hot deserts in central Australia and down into the cool forests and mountains of the south, but is absent in Tasmania. The largest recorded territory is around the Fortescue River area of Western Australia. The Dingo was used as a hunting dog by some Aboriginal groups and also as "blankets" during cold nights. It is considered by many that the Dingo contributed to the demise of the Thylacine and other native fauna on the mainland. Prey ranges from insects to buffalo, depending on the individuals locality. When hunting large animals, such as kangaroo, the Dingo forms a pack for greater success, but hunts alone for smaller animals such as the rabbit. Other prey includes geese, wallabies, rodents, lizards and wombats. Since early European settlement the Dingo has harassed sheep and cattle, however most attacks occur during periods when native animals are scarce, eg: drought and human disturbance to habitat. Although the Dingo is often seen alone, many belong to a socially integrated pack, and the members meet every few days. They commonly group during breeding season to mate and rear pups. During grouping periods howling and scent marking are intensified. Stable packs usually have one dominant female and one dominant male and they are usually the only successful breeders, and other members of the pack assist in rearing the pups. Females become sexually mature around two years of age. The gestation period is about sixty three days and litters are between one to ten pups, with an average of five. The birth and first few months of the pups life are usually in an underground den. Pups become independent at around four months. Most pups remain in the birth area, but some young males disperse to find new ranges. Today the Dingo is under threat of extinction from the interbreeding with the domestic dog in the more settled areas, and the pure Dingo gene pool is being swamped. In some areas such as the south eastern highlands about one third of the animals are cross bred and the extinction of the pure Dingo seems inevitable.