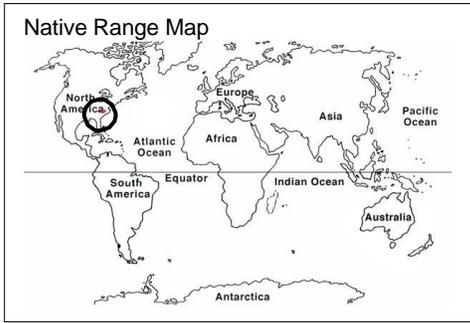


Red Wolf



Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Subphylum: Vertebrata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Canidae
Genus: *Canis*
Species: *rufus*



Photo courtesy Wolf Conservation Center

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** The former range of red wolves included much of the forested southeastern United States, but was gradually reduced to only parts of Texas and Louisiana. Today, the only free-ranging population of red wolves lives in northeast North Carolina, in an area comprised of 60% private land and 40% public land. This area contains 3 national wildlife refuges (Alligator River NWR, Pocosin Lakes NWR, and Mattamuskeet NWR) which provide important protection to the wolves.
- **Exhibit Location:** Wildlife Trail

Characteristics

- Red wolves are similar to their nearest relative, gray wolves (*Canis lupus*), but are smaller in size, have relatively narrower proportions, longer legs and ears, and shorter fur with a reddish cast.
- Total length: 39-51 inches; Tail length: 12-17 inches; Shoulder height: 26-31 inches; Weight: 44-88 pounds (males average 10% larger than females)
- Red wolves usually have underparts that are a mixture of cinnamon, tawny, and gray or black, while the back is often darker. The muzzle and limbs are tawny and the tail is tipped with black. In winter the reddish part of the coat is most prominent. An annual shed takes place in summer.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 5-7 years; **In Human Care** – 12 to 14 years.

Behaviors

- Red wolves are mainly nocturnal.
- They form home ranges that become the exclusive territory of the pack. Packs are made up of a mated pair and their pups, but larger packs have been reported. Packs often live peacefully together; however aggression towards unknown wolves is often seen.
- They hunt over small portions of their range for 7-10 days at a time, then move to new areas within the range.
- Their vocalizations are said to be a cross between a coyote and a gray wolf. They communicate through behaviors, touch, smell, and auditory signals about social and reproductive status and mood. Social bonding is often achieved through touch. Home ranges are communicated to others by scent marking with urine.
- **Enrichments at the Zoo:** bones, boxes, scents, pumpkins, etc.

Reproduction

- Sexual maturity is reached at 2-3 years of age. The dominant male and female are solely able to reproduce within a pack. They are thought to mate for life. Breeding season is in early winter with pups born in the spring.
- The female finds or digs a suitable den, sometimes with the help of the male, to rear young offspring. These dens are often located within trunks of hollow trees, in sandy knolls, or stream banks.
- After a gestation period of 60-63 days, a litter of 3-6 pups is born. Both the male and the female participate in the rearing of the young in the den. Other pack members assist in raising the young and obtaining food for the nursing female. Adults care for the young through the first year of life.

Diet

- **In the Wild:** raccoons, white-tailed deer, swamp rabbits, cottontail rabbits, pigs, rodents, muskrats, carrion
- **At the Zoo:** processed beef with dog food, rabbit once a week

Conservation Status

- **IUCN status:** critically endangered; **CITES Appendix:** I; **USESA (Endangered Species Act):** critically endangered
- Humans exterminated most red wolves in the wild due to the exaggerated belief that they were killing a large amount of livestock and game. In 1967, red wolves were listed as endangered and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service began an effort to protect those remaining. Fourteen remaining red wolves were placed in a captive-breeding facility and became the founders of the present red wolf population. At present, 200+ red wolves exist and reintroductions have been made in some areas of North Carolina and Tennessee.
- Their decreasing numbers also have been affected by land clearing, drainage projects, logging, mineral exploration, and road development that encroached on their forest habitat.
- Accredited zoos in the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) are united in supporting measures to protect this species throughout its range and through captive breeding and reintroduction programs.
- Predators: red wolves from other packs, coyotes, humans. (Pups are preyed upon by alligators, large raptors, bobcats.)

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- There are currently 33 facilities nationwide where red wolves are being bred in human care. There are about 250 red wolves in existence. Of those, about 150 are in AZA zoos or breeding facilities. The rest are living in the wild.

Sources:

- Mulheisen, M. and R. Csomos. 2005. "Canis rufus" (On-line), Animal Diversity Web. Accessed Oct. 28, 2005 at http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/accounts/information/Canis_rufus.html.
- U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, (1993). Red wolf. Retrieved Oct. 28, 2005, from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Endangered Species Web site: <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/i/a/saa04.html>.