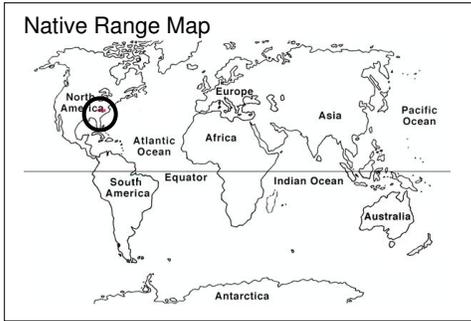


Red Wolf



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



Photo courtesy of Kate Woodle

Habitat

- **In the Wild:** Formerly the range of red wolves included most of the habitats of the southeastern United States, and was then reduced to only parts of Texas and Louisiana. The only free-ranging population of red wolves today lives in northeastern 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 Trails

Characteristics

- Red wolves are similar to their nearest relative, grey wolves (*Canis lupus*), except that they are smaller in size, have relatively narrower proportions, longer legs and ears, and shorter fur.
- 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 normally blackish. The muzzle and limbs are tawny and the tail is tipped with black. In winter the reddish part of the coat is the most prominent. An annual shed takes place in the summer.
- **Lifespan: In the Wild** 5-7 years; **In Captivity** oldest was 14 years old

Behaviors

- Red wolves are mainly nocturnal.
- Home ranges are formed and 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, always moving to new areas within the range.
- The vocalization of the red wolf is said to be a cross between a coyote and a gray wolf. They communicate through behaviors, touch, smell, and auditory (heard) signals. These all serve to communicate 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. It is thought that they mate for life. Breeding season is during February and March with pups born in April and May.
- The female finds or digs a suitable den, sometimes with the help of the male. Dens are built within the home range 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, an average litter of 3-6 pups is born. However, litters of up to 12 pups can happen. 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. The young are cared for through their 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; **USES Act (Endangered Species Act):** critically endangered
- Humans pretty much eliminated red wolves in the wild due to the belief (an exaggerated one) 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 engaged in an effort to protect those left at that time. The 14 remaining red wolves were placed in a captive-breeding facility. They have become the founders of the present red wolf population. At the present time, 200+ red wolves exist, and reintroductions are happening in a few areas of North Carolina and Tennessee.
- Their decreasing numbers were also affected by land clearing, drainage projects, logging, mineral exploration, and road development that moved in on their forest habitat.
- Measures are being taken to protect this species throughout its range and through captive breeding and reintroduction programs.
- **Predators:** red wolves from other packs, coyotes (pups are preyed upon by alligators, large raptors, bobcats)

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- There are, at the present time, 33 facilities nationwide where red wolves are being captively bred. There are 250 red wolves in existence. Of those, about 150 are in 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>.