

# First finding of crossbreeding between dogs and golden jackal confirmed

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Sri Lankan jackal, Yala National Park. Credit: Wikipedia.

(Phys.org)—A team of researchers with members from institutions in

Croatia and Italy has confirmed the first known finding of crossbreeding between domesticated dogs and golden jackals. In their paper published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*, the researchers describe how the offspring of the bred pair were found, how they confirmed the crossbreeding and what it implies for crossbreeding between wild canines and domestic dogs heading into the future.

Biologists have seen instances of [crossbreeding](#) in other canine species with dogs before, e.g. dogs and coyotes and/or wolves. But never before has anyone seen, or at least reported, an example of a domestic dog mating and reproducing with a golden jackal, a native of Croatia. In this new effort, the researchers report that a group of hunters brought the dead samples, which they initially thought were jackals, to the attention of the researchers after noting some dog characteristics—hunting jackals in Croatia is legal because the small wolf-looking canines sometimes kill livestock. The animal carcasses were taken to a lab where tissue samples were taken and subsequently underwent chromosomal, DNA and other testing. The analysis confirmed that the dead animals were all offspring of female jackals and male domestic dogs, which make them the first known instances of such crossbreeding.

The researchers noted that the male/female pairing they saw were the most likely to occur as jackals have a limited breeding season and male [domestic dogs](#) are quite often allowed to roam freely in Croatia. The finding adds to a growing body of evidence that suggests that dogs can mate and produce viable offspring with almost all other types of canines. It also adds new material to the discussion surrounding dog breeds, which historically have violated the general rule in biology that denotes one aspect of species differentiation as an inability to breed with others that are different from them and also raises questions regarding whether "species" such as the golden jackal should be protected against crossbreeding for fear the breed will eventually disappear. The researchers note that biologists have been at work creating a new type of

concept to apply to canines to differentiate them from one another, to replace the tradition of calling them different species.

**More information:** First evidence of hybridisation between golden jackal (*Canis aureus*) and domestic dog (*Canis familiaris*) as revealed by genetic markers, *Royal Society Open Science*, [rsos.royalsocietypublishing.org ... /10.1098/rsos.150450](https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.150450)

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