

A New Native Dog from the Papuan Highlands

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Evidently, at least two breeds of dog have been reported from Papua, a vari-coloured lowland form of domesticated dog, and a small dingo-like dog of the extreme highlands. Skulls and skins of a dog from about 7,000 ft. on Mount Scratchley, Northern Division, were sent to the Queensland Museum by their Excellencies Sir William MacGregor and Sir Hubert Murray, the first specimen being briefly described by De Vis¹ and illustrated from a stuffed skin. Longman² described one skin as "black and white, the black dominant," the other as "russet" (Ridgway), interspersed with darker hairs. The breadth of the palate between the canines was relatively greater than in the dingo, and the upper carnassial tooth-length was comparable proportionately with that of the dingo.

Reviewing this Mt. Scratchley material Wood Jones³ concluded that it probably afforded "definite evidence that the Papuan feral dog is a very definite race, possessing a relatively large upper carnassial tooth typical of primitive canine breeds, and differing widely in its characters from the dogs of certain other Pacific Islands." He stressed the need for accumulating more material before the breed became too hybridized for study purposes.

Fortunately, while on patrol in 1956 in the remote Lavani Valley, or so-called "Shangri-La," in the uncontrolled Huri-Duna country, Southern Highlands District of Papua, a pair of the mountain "dingo" was obtained by A.D.O. J. P. Sinclair and Medical Assistant Albert Speer. As a gift to Sir Edward Hallstrom, the dogs were sent by Mr. Speer to the Hallstrom Livestock and Fauna Station at Nondugi, Western Highlands of New Guinea, in the care of Mr. Fred Shaw Mayer. Recent examination of the almost identical adult male and young female, in Taronga Zoological Park, Sydney, undoubtedly confirm the views of the late Professor Wood Jones and it is proposed now to name the Lavani Valley dog as a distinct species in honour of Sir Edward Hallstrom, President of the Taronga Park Trust, according to the following preliminary description.

Family CANIDAE.

Genus *Canis* Linne, 1758.

Canis Linne, Syst. Nat. ed, 10, 1758, p. 38; ed, 12, 1766, p. 56. Type of genus, *Canis familiaris* Linne.

Canis hallstromi, sp. nov.

Specimens.—Male holotype, female allotype, in possession of Sir Edward Hallstrom at Taronga Zoological Park, Sydney, for eventual lodgment in the collection of the Australian Museum.

General characters: Muzzle or rostral region short and narrow in contrast with the remarkable facial or bi-zygomatic width, imparting the strikingly vulpine or fox-like appearance. This comparison is sustained in the narrow body and very short bushy tail which measures little more than one third of the combined head-and-body length, with the width of the brush a fraction under 4 in. The fleshy, softly-furred, triangulate ears remain erect, though rounded and curved forward in conch-like fashion. Colour (Ridgway) of the head a clear

¹ De Vis, Ann. Qld. Mus., No. 10, 1911, p. 19, pl. 1.

² Longman, Mem. Qld. Mus., vol. ix, pt. 2, 1928, pp. 151-7.

³ Wood Jones, Journal of Mammalogy, x, No. 4, 1929, pp. 329-333, figs. 1-2 (skulls).

tawny brown; the back a darker russet-brown owing to the admixture of blackish-brown hairs, the darker hairs enclosing a yellowish "saddle-mark," somewhat more conspicuous in the female. Outer shoulders and hips clear ochraceous-tawny; tail about tawny-olive brindled above with blackish-brown, tip white; four paws whitish. Underparts a light buffy, a dark mark across the jaw separating the light chin-spot from the pale undersurface.

Dimensions of Holotype: Head and body approximately 650; tail exactly 245, less brush; heel to longest toe, less nail, 145; dew-claw from base to ground, 25; ear, length from outer base to tip 75, mid-width 40; longest vibrissa 52; length of head to extremity of sagittal crest 180 (approx.) and bi-zygomatic width 100; rear molar to incisor 90; width across incisors 23; height of upper canine 16 mm.

Despite difficulties in examining and measuring the sensitive animals, the remarkable identity of their colour, broad vulpine faces, and short wide-brushed tails, which may be curled to one side over the rump, permits of no doubt that a similar identity of unusual cranial and dental features will ultimately confirm the validity of this primitive species. The name *Canis familiaris* var. *papuensis* suggested by Ramsay⁴ for a lowland variety of dog is invalidated as a *nomen nudum*.

⁴ Ramsay, Proc. Linn. Soc., N.S.W., lii, No. 3, 1879, p. 242.



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