



Helena Ford, del. et lith.

THE DINGO, OR NATIVE DOG.
(CANIS DINGO.)

From a photograph by Victor A. Troul.

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THERE has been much discussion among naturalists with regard to the Australian Native Dog, as to whether the animal is indigenous, or has been introduced into the Country. This is certain, however, that a species of dog existed in Australia many ages ago. Fossil remains of dogs have been discovered at the Wellington Caves, and in other localities, and it must therefore be accepted as a fact that the Dingo is indigenous.

The subject of the illustration represents the light-yellow or tan-coloured variety; colour is, however, of little importance, as the real wild Dingo is subject to as much variation as any other kind of dog. The most common shades are sandy, or tan, with whitish belly, and the inner portions of the legs and feet white; black and tan varieties are rarer.

In one of the oldest publications on Australia, "Collins' Voyage," the author, speaking of the Dingo, says,—
"The dogs of this Country are of the jackall species; they never bark; are of two colours, the one red, with some white about it, the other black; some of them are very handsome." Mr. Gilbert, writing from Swan River, states,—
"The Dingo is very common over all parts of this Colony. There are a very great number of varieties, marked from reddish brown to black, white, light brown, and black and white." The general belief is that a thorough-bred native dog is of two colours only, that it is rarely spotted, and never barks. Several real Dingos have, however, been seen with white and yellow fur, and one, which only howled before, began to bark after being chained up near an excellent watch-dog for a short time; the voice of the Dingo is short and snappish, and can be distinguished at once from that of a well-bred domestic dog. Much has been said and written about the Dingo's cunning, his tenacity of life, and dangerous bite; it is stated that he frequently feigns death, and that he has recovered and escaped after being beaten to such an extent that one would imagine every bone in his body had been broken. A single Dingo will cause great damage to a flock of sheep, and experience proves that the wounds inflicted by its bite are generally fatal. In a case where a number of goats—ten or fifteen—had invaded a garden a tame Dingo was despatched to drive them away; but he ran from one to the other, snapping and biting right and left, and every goat bitten by him died within a few days.

The Dingo is remarkable for power, agility, and grace. A tame one which was being hunted reached his kennel long before the hounds, fairly outrunning the whole pack; and during the chase was seen frequently to clear a three-rail fence at a bound; even with a heavy chain he could jump six feet off the ground. He was very suspicious with regard to his food, and would sooner starve than touch a piece of meat hung up on a string, neither would he take it if it had the least unusual smell. The aborigines of Australia use the Dingo for hunting purposes, and thoroughly tame it; it is no wonder, however, that they succeed in this, as they think as much of their dogs as they do of their children, and treat them as well. A "lubra" will not hesitate to rear a Dingo pup with her own offspring. A gentleman who succeeded in taming several Dingos, found that in one case only would the dog follow at the call of his master. The experiment of taming the Dingo is, however, always hazardous, as the acknowledged master only is respected, and everybody else snapped at furiously. The Dingo howls before rain sets in, dislikes music, and cannot bear the sound of bells; he exhibits, in fact, many traits of the domestic dog, with which he freely breeds. The aboriginal name of the Australian dog is "Warrigal" in most parts of New South Wales, and "Dwer-da" in Western Australia.

The dental formula is as follows:—Incisors $\frac{3-3}{3-3}$, canines $\frac{1-1}{1-1}$, premolars $\frac{3-3}{4-4}$, molars $\frac{3-3}{3-3} = 42$ teeth.



Krefft, Johan Ludwig Gerhard. 1871. "The Dingo, or Australian Native Dog (Canis dingo). [Plate II]." *The mammals of Australia : illustrated by Miss Harriett Scott, and Mrs. Helena Forde, for the Council of Education; with a short account of all the species hitherto described* 1–1. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.314731>.

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