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**A NEW THREATENED WOLF SPECIES, *Cuon alpinus hesperius*
AFANASIEV AND ZOLATAREV, 1935 IN TURKEY**

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1 Introduction

Although the African wild dogs are sharp-sighted and impetuous in the close distance, the Asiatic dogs or the red dogs (*Cuon alpinus* subsp) are always in a hurry. They first follow the preys using their smelling sense. Body length from the end of the nose to the tail behind is 85 - 110 centimetres. Shoulder height from the ground is 40-50 centimetres. Tail length is 40-48 centimetres. Body weight is 15 to 20 kilograms. Partly atrophied teeth of those species are arranged in a line of 3.1.4.2/3.1.4.2.

The legs are shorter than the African wild dogs. The female has 6 to 7 teats. The general appearance of the skin changes from reddish-brown and rusty-reddish to orange coloured. The head, neck and shoulders are mostly brown. The chest, side abdomen and upper parts of legs are yellow and toes are usually whitish-yellow. The front parts of front feet are with the blackish-brown lined. Tail colour is reddish-brown. The inner cottony hairs and the parts of the spike string hairs close the skin are in dark case and yellowish-grey. The sub-species lives in high mountains and northern part of Asia has thick haired skins. Dorsal hairs reach to 16 centimetres in length. They spread from Siberia and China to front and hind. Sumatra and Java Islands.

The Asiatic red dog usually and specially in winter months lives in forests. They can follow their preys up to 40 000 metres of high mountains and they hide in rocky places. They can be also found in the lower plains in their southern spreading areas. The Asiatic wild dog is the only species among the wild dogs that can live in different temperatures. They can live equatorial zone, pole regions, sea level and in high mountains where oxygen is insufficient. At the beginning of the ice age some relative species had spread most parts of Europe and forward to Spain. At that time, a dwarf island form had even lived in Sardinia (Most, 1969).

Asiatic red wild dog used to exist rather frequently in the Asiatic part of Russia. because of the hunting after the years of 1960, they have been scarce. The red wild dog has continues its life preying on rock goat, mountain sheep, roe deer, deer and wild boar. it preys on reindeer and musk deer in eastern Siberia. Indian subspecies even if feed on mountain sheep, sambar deer (*Rusa sp*) and axis deer. Java red dog particularly feeds on sea turtle. This species has completely different catching ways as to African wild dogs. Because of their too short legs they behave safety and move actively. They can follow their preys for hours. During the prey, they constitute triplet and quartet groups and a flock with approximately 30 individuals. They scatter and waylay the escaping prey like wolves. During the attack, they behave like African wild dogs and catch the prey in back parts. When prey tries to escape they catch on side parts and knock it to ground. Sometimes they chase after the prey toward a precipice to cause it to drop. They immediately begin to eat the prey that it has just made an attack upon the men and livestock.

They are not in good voice like African wild dogs. They don't bark but they give a specific howl. But this characteristic changes from an *Alpinus pallas*, 1811 and *Cuon alpinus hesperius*, Afanasiev and Zolotarev, 1935) have a howling and barking. In reproduction period they roam couples. Pregnancy period longs about 60 days. Female gives birth to 2

to 6 and most cubs. Skin colour of cubs is dark brown and hairy when born (Schneider-Leyer, 1960).

The Tiyan-san wild dogs feed on vegetables in the summer months. They especially feed on young and fresh shoots of plants. The father fattens the cubs with the partly chewed up shoots. They chewed the shoots before come into flower and give them to cubs by mouth.

2 The first Establishment of Turkestan Alpine Wolf in Northeastern Anatolia

The Euro-Siberian Floristic area includes all the northern parts of Anatolia and its reaches to eastern to large parts of Caucasia with the *Crimea peninsula* and Dobrudja mountains. Hardwood tree species are dominant in forests of the region and at high altitudes the softwood species combines to this vegetation. The floristic composition of Colchis province that take place in the eastern direction of Melet river equates with the Caucasian flora. A rainy and cloudy climate prevails in this region and many relic plant species is found in this area. Those are related northern hemisphere Tersier.

The wild boar and jackal are the most common game in this region. Wolf is seen in high wooded areas and partly in Alpine zone. Bear lives its local habitats about 100-2000 meters altitudes. Roe deer is uncommon but in all parts. Deer used to be more common about 30-40 years ago but now it is a scarce species in this region. The chamois and wild goat have local living areas. Badger is common close the fields.

The presence of the Turkestan Alpine Wolf (*Cuon alpinus hesperius*) has been known for a long time in this region. The clearest characteristic of this animal becomes apparent is its voice. It has a scary voice between howling and roaring. It has been known as a kind of jackal by the local people. Its howling is not heard frequently like jackal but it is immediately noticed because of differentiation. In opposition to the jackal it roams couple not reciprocally. It is a very roving animal that its howling can be heard many different places in a location.

About 30 to 40 years ago the howling of this animal was heard in wooded areas from the coast line to alpine zone. Recently it can be heard about 500 to 1 000 metres altitudes.

At 15 January 1989, Cafer Karslioglu, leather dealer received two red dog skins and he informed us that he has not known what kind of skins they are. We went to his store and asked him to give us the skins. We got them to the department and worked on the skins. We concluded that the skins belonged to a male and a female wild red dog. The skins were tanned and currently conserved in our game museum.

On 20 February 1989, we went to Rize-Duzkoy where the red dogs had been hunted. We determined that the red dogs had been hunted by local hunters Memis Altun and Engin Pehlivan in Duzkoy-Sirtmahalle site on 10 January 1989. In fact, a number of chickens were found to be killed within a coop at about the same dates. The villagers were claiming that their chickens had been killed by the red dogs but they knew those animals as kind of jackal. They threw around some waste meat to attract the predator animals in those days. Previously indicated people reported that the predator animals came to the waste meet and they hunted them by using number 5 pellets. They also said they could not recognise what kind of animal they are and later on they brought their skins to Trabzon in order to sell them.

After this incidence, a research has been carried out in Rize. Meetings about the subject with local hunters were performed and the following results, were provided.

It is determined that those animals are Turkestan Alpine Wolves and they have been in existence in Northeastern Anatolia for a long time. However, they have not been noticed sufficiently because of wrong identification. Regional people call those animals Pardi. The pardies howl in the night. This howling is different from the jackal's and it is known as a sign of bad luck. Around a Black Sea coastal town, called Hopa, people use traps to catch those animals. This hunting does not give them any benefit because the skins are not valuable. They catch them and throw them away.

It is supposed that those animals have ranged to Northern Anatolia from Caucasia. It is also known that Turkestan Alpine wolf preys on the chamois, wild goat, roe deer and wild boar because of strong winter almost all high altitude mountains are covered by snow. This makes the Turkestan Alpine wolf go more to the villages and to prey on chickens too. They arrive at the foot of the Kackar mountains in summer.

3 Results and discussion

We found out the following features investigating the two skins and skulls which belong to both male and female Alpine wolves.

Body lengths of female and male from the end of the nose to the behind of tail are 110 and 104 centimetres. Tail length and shoulder height are 37 and 32, 40 and 35 centimetres respectively. Female is a big framed in comparison to male.

The edges of ears, cheeks, nose and eyes of female is blackish-brown coloured. The head is bigger than the male's. Ears are 11 centimetres. The dorsal side of the body is reddish-brown and rusty-reddish. The spike string hairs are light. Cervix and abdomen are grey-whitish and light in colour. the tail is longer than the male's and its hairs also longer. From the dorsal line toward to each side, the colour changes light and yellow-brown.

Male hair lies down on dorsal side, and is brick red-brownish in colour. Hairs on the side of the forehead, ears, cheeks and the mouth is light brown-yellow. Spikey stringy hairs are yellowish-white and neck sides light yellowish. Outer appearance of male is generally lighter yellow than female.

We counted 40 teeth in both skulls belonging female and male wolves. These are arranged in a line of 3.1.4.2/3.1.4.2. The other skull measurements of both male and female *Cuon alpinus hesperius* and their comparison with those of *Canis lupus* were given in the table.

In conclusion, the existence of Turkestan Alpine wolf *Cuon alpinus hesperius* in Northeastern Anatolia was established for the first time. All sub-species of *Cuon alponus* was scarce or extinct in their ranges. Therefore they have been conserved in all habitats. Turkestan Alpine wolf has been first recorded for *Canidae* family of Turkiye. It should be continued population surveys and conservation activities in this region.

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