

**The Black-Backed Jackal  
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The black-backed jackal is found throughout southern Africa, the eastern coastline of Africa, but has a stronghold in the Kalahari Desert. The black-backed jackal, living up to twelve years, is the oldest thriving member of the genus *Canis*. The black-backed jackal is extremely adept; it lives in habitats varying from arid coastal desert and savannah to grassland and farmland. The black-backed jackals are vocal, yipping and howling to communicate. They are known in African folklore to be cunning, often tricking and playing tricks on the lion. They are most comparable in appearance and behavior to a fox, and socially to wolves.

The black-backed jackal, however, prefers open habitats. It has been found living in areas at sea level to as high as 3,000 meters and in areas as dry and arid as the Kalahari Desert to areas that receive more than 2,000 mm of rainfall annually. The Kalahari Desert is at an average elevation of 1,000 meters, and receives less than 175 mm of precipitation annually. This places the Kalahari Desert in the middle of the spectrum for elevation for the black-backed jackal's adaptivity, and on the edge of the spectrum in regards to precipitation.

The black-backed jackal's diet varies as much as the terrain on which it lives. As an opportunistic creature, the black-backed jackal will eat what is available. It will eat reptiles, birds, eggs, carrion, rodents, invertebrates and plants in areas such as the Kalahari Desert. In locations such as the eastern coastline of Africa, the black-backed jackal may be found to consume seals, fish and mussels. Their large ears allow them to detect the rustling movement of rodents and prey through grass. Black-backed jackals can be seen foraging together in groups ranging in size from 8 to 10 members, forming packs not unlike North American wolves. The black-backed jackal will scavenge together in these packs, often competing with spotted and brown hyenas for carrion.

The black-backed jackal is nocturnal, avoiding the heat of the day by carrying out most of its activities at night. Avoiding the heat and sun of the Kalahari Desert prevents the need for panting to cool itself. The water vapor on the breath that would be lost to panting in the middle of a hot day is saved by being active in the cooler night air. In this manner, the black-backed jackal is more efficient at budgeting its water in the desert. The kidney structure of the black-backed jackal also suggest that it is a species that is well adapted to water deprivation.

In general, the black-backed jackal gains most of its water from the water content in its prey in arid regions, and can survive going long periods between a drink. The black-backed jackal's territory is primarily determined by the availability of water. Its territory ranges from 2.6 square kilometers (km<sup>2</sup>) to 18.2 km<sup>2</sup>. In dryer regions such as the Kalahari, the ranges of the black-backed jackal will be on the smaller side, ranging from 2.6 to 5.2 square kilometers. The territory is usually centered around a family den, where the pups are raised to the age of two.

**Citations:**

[http://www.canids.org/species/black-backed\\_jackal.pdf](http://www.canids.org/species/black-backed_jackal.pdf)

<http://www.kenyalogy.com/eng/fauna/chacal.html>