

REVIEW

Current status and distribution of golden jackals *Canis aureus* in Europe

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ABSTRACT

1. The golden jackal *Canis aureus* is one of the most widespread canid species with a range covering areas of central, eastern and southern Europe, northern Africa and parts of Asia. Distribution of the golden jackal in Europe has been dynamic, including dramatic declines (until the 1960s), recovery (1960s and 1970s) and expansion (from the early 1980s onwards).

2. We present up-to-date information on golden jackal status in Europe and range expansion.

3. For data collection we reviewed the scientific literature and contacted scientists from the relevant countries. We distinguished between vagrant animals and established populations.

4. In the last decade, there has been an increase in jackal records in areas where the species has not been reported before. Increased presence is recorded northwards and westwards of the distribution range of the golden jackal, specifically in Hungary, Serbia and Slovakia. In Austria, the first case of reproduction was confirmed in 2007; reproduction has also recently been reported in Italy.

5. Results indicate an ongoing expansion in Europe's jackal population, with a particular spread of the Balkan populations towards central Europe. Although there are numerous reports of sightings, only few originate from confirmed sources and in many areas status is unknown or vague. There is a general lack of ecological data and almost no information on ecological consequences associated with the golden jackal expansion.

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