

# How Jackal got his markings

In the Hottentot tradition, there is a tale of how the Jackal was given his distinctive markings. As we know Jackal was a mean and crafty animal, who was constantly playing pranks on the other animals.

The Creator finally decided to teach him a lesson. He turned himself into a small boy, looking tearful and lost, and placed himself in Jackal's path.

"Oh Jackal" he said, 'I'm lost and weary! Please give me a ride home and my father will reward you with a juicy goat for your trouble!"

Jackal agreed but instantly began to plot how he could take the entire flock and not just one measly goat!

The boy clambered onto Jackal's back, holding on tight to his thick coat. It wasn't far down the path when the boy's grip turned into a vice! A great voice thundered all around !

"I'm the Creator, Jackal, and you have sorely tried my patience! Let this be a lesson to you!" With that the "boy" hurled a fireball onto Jackal's back, then vanished into the air.

Terrified, Jackal howled for forgiveness! His golden coat was ablaze as he rushed about in a panic. Finally he rolled on the gravel path and the flames were smothered!

To this day Jackal carries the burn marks on his coat, together with the "silvery ashes" as a reminder that the Creator always has an eye on him!



# FACTS ABOUT JACKALS

**Species:** Black-backed Jackal (Canis mesomelas)

	Male	Female
Height	16 in	15 in
Weight	22 lb	18 lb
Weight at Birth	7 oz	7 oz
Age at Weaning	2 months	2 months
Age at Maturity	12 months	8 months
Gestation Period		2 months
Number of Young		2-6
Lifespan	10 years	10 years

**Identification:** Not unlike a European fox, though larger and taller, the black-backed jackal is easily distinguished from other jackals by the broad black-and-white patch over its back, which is clearly defined from the yellowish covering on the flanks and legs. It has a bushy tail with a black brush and large, pointed, erect ears.

**Habitat:** Open grassland and lightly-treed country.

**Habits:** Jackals are common all over Africa. They are mostly nocturnal and their distinctive, rather friendly howling call can often be heard at dusk or just after. They are very wily animals and run quickly and lightly. They live with a mate or alone, and hunt from a lair in a sheltered hole, usually near water.

They are “true” dogs, with five toes on the front feet and four on the back. Some zoologists believe many domestic dogs are descended from them.

**Diet:** Jackals scavenge and hunt. They eat such things as small rats, ground-nesting birds and their eggs and chicks; reptiles, fat insects and fruit. They will also kill newly born antelopes left unattended by the mother; and attack young livestock, so farmers regard them as pests to be shot, though they have their good side, keeping down pests like rats. They are often seen waiting for lions to finish eating so they can clean up the remains. The more venturesome will try and dart in to steal tidbits from under the lion’s nose! Their clever ways have been the subject of many tales throughout Africa.

**Breeding:** Usually no more than six pups are born. The parents hide them in holes in the ground and crevices in rocks. Both parents forage at the weaning stage and provide them with regurgitated, semi-digested food.

