

YZC Animal of the Month, October 2012

Wolf

Canis lupus



Find the case of carnivores in the lower gallery, behind the Polar Bear, Lioness and Elephant Seal and you can find the skeleton of a wolf. The Grey or Common Wolf is the largest member of the dog family. The domestic dog that you might have as a pet at home is descended from the wolf, but wolves tend to have longer legs, larger feet, narrower chest and straighter tail.

As well as being pretty big, wolves are pretty widespread. You can find the same species as far north as the Arctic, as far south as Mexico, and across North America, Europe and Asia. However, there are many

areas where they used to be found but are not any more. It's over 200 years since the last wolves were killed off in the UK, and by the early 1900s wolves had disappeared from much of Western Europe. There are several sub-species of wolf, and lots of different coat colours. In the Arctic tundra you can find white wolves, and there are dark coated and black wolves as well as the more familiar grey-brown coloured animals.

Take a look at the mouth of our wolf and you can see some impressive sharp, slicing teeth. Wolves are carnivores. They eat meat, usually from other mammals larger than themselves like deer, moose, and muskox. They usually hunt in packs of several wolves, and each animal can eat a lot at once: wolfing down (pun intended!) up to 9kg of meat at a single sitting.