

Last 500 Ethiopian wolves endangered by lack of genetic diversity

This post from SciAm's "Extinction Countdown" blog highlights the importance of genetics in modern conservation efforts. With tiny populations and little genetic diversity, these wolves have precious little of the genetic variation that translates in nature to adaptability and, ultimately, survival:

The last wolves in Africa face a difficult road if they are going to survive. Just 500 Ethiopian wolves (*Canis simensis*) remain in the mountains of the country for which they are named. The animals now live in six fragmented populations located hundreds of kilometers apart from one another; three of these populations have fewer than 25 wolves each. According to a study published last month in [Animal Conservation](#), the Ethiopian wolf now suffers from low genetic diversity and a weak flow of genes between packs. As we have seen with other rare species such as [Florida panthers](#), [Tasmanian devils](#) and [great Indian bustards](#), low genetic diversity can result in inbreeding, impaired birth rates and the inability to adapt to diseases or other ecological threats. The danger for Ethiopian wolves is not theoretical—rabies outbreaks in 1991–92 and 2003 each killed several hundred wolves.

View the original article here: [Last 500 Ethiopian Wolves Endangered by Lack of Genetic Diversity](#)