

What did man's best friend look like before wolves appeared?

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

When it came time to adopt a dog, I knew I wanted a *dog*. An angry, yappy gremlin wouldn't do. I was on the lookout for a companion that at least somewhat resembled the gray wolf stock from which our domesticated canine companions descended. A real canid. Jet, a black German shepherd I took in earlier this summer, met that description perfectly.

But while I appreciate that Jet has a bit of ancient wolfishness about him, he's not anything like the earliest dogs. Those dawn canids, which split from their cat cousins around 50 million years ago, were more weasel-like than any modern pooch. These were little ambush predators with dexterous forelimbs that let them grapple with prey. Wolves and other canids as we know them today – pursuit predators that use teeth, rather than paws, to catch and dispatch their victims – are relatively new creatures, and the last remaining sliver of what was once a wider array of prehistoric dogs.

A pair of papers published by two different teams of researchers tell the tale. The latest, published today by Universidad de Málaga's Borja Figueirido and colleagues, tracks how prehistoric dogs changed as forests gave way to grasslands.

Read full, original post: [The Rise and Fall of America's Fossil Dogs](#)