The Arabian wolf (*Canis lupus arabs*) is the smallest subspecies of the gray wolf, it ranges throughout the Arabian peninsula, save the northern borders with Iraq and Jordan where it is likely to intergrade with a larger subspecies often called the Indian wolf (*Canis lupus pallipes*).

No systematic census has been taken of the Arabian wolf, but the total population on the peninsula is estimated to be around 600 animals.

A preliminary survey of the wolves in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was initiated in December 1991 for a period of three weeks in collaboration with a team of researchers from the Asociacion Amigos del Lobo in Spain headed by Dr. Javier Castroviejo. We made three short trips into the central part of the country. The first visit was to an area near Al Qudayyah, about 240 kilometers (150 miles) west southwest of Riyadh, where we visited a small camp in the desert. The owner, Saad Al Usaymi, has long had a love of wolves and has been keeping them for several years. Next to his house, he has constructed two 4-by-4-meter (13-by-13-foot) enclosures where he holds five wolves (three males and two females). These wolves are what is left of the progeny of a pair he trapped in the area several years ago. That first captive female gave birth to six pups the first year and five pups the second year.

Body measurements and blood samples were taken from two of Mr. Usaymi’s captive animals: A five-year-old male measuring 131 centimeters (51 inches) in total length weighed 19.5 kilograms (43 pounds), and an eight-month-old female measuring 115 centimeters (45 inches) weighed 14 kilograms (31 pounds). The blood samples, along with other samples taken from six animals at the Riyadh Zoo, are being compared with blood samples from European wolves by Mr. Carlos Vila, one of the Spanish team members. Such studies could help to determine how related Arabian and European wolves are. Al Usaymi told us that breeding activities of the wolves take place in January and February and that pregnancy lasts about two months. Few wolves are present in the area. Because wolves prey on sheep, goats, and chickens, shepherds and farmers kill and hang the predators on trees or posts as revenge. Such a carcass was observed not far from the camp.

The second area we visited was about 60 kilometers (37 miles) southeast of Riyadh. We were informed of the presence of wolves, and a few had been killed in that area not long ago. In an area of sandstone rocky escarpment, we located skeletal remains of a poisoned...
wolf. The remains of a female with its pup were a few kilometers away. The three animals had been killed about a year earlier. Close to our camp, we heard a wolf howling before dawn. In the morning, we discovered its footprints clearly marked in the soft soil near our tent.

The third area visited was about 350 kilometers (217 miles) northwest of Riyadh. We did not see wolves, but local people informed us of their presence in the rocky outcrops nearby. Single wolves and pairs attacking sheep were reported by the shepherds.

During the past year, several reports from the western region of the Kingdom cited wolves attacking sheep and goats. In April 1992, a wolf attacked and killed a lamb in a Bedouin camp north of Jeddah. In another report in September 1992, two wolves of a pack of about ten, attacked and killed a lamb and a goat in a settlement east of Medina. This report was unusual as most wolves in Arabia are thought to live alone or in pairs.

We plan another field trip into the northwestern part of the Kingdom to slowly but surely add to our knowledge about the Arabian wolf.

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Saudi Arabia is the largest country on the Arabian peninsula, home to an estimated 600 wolves.

The most important prey of wolves in Minnesota and Wisconsin is the white-tailed deer.

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