



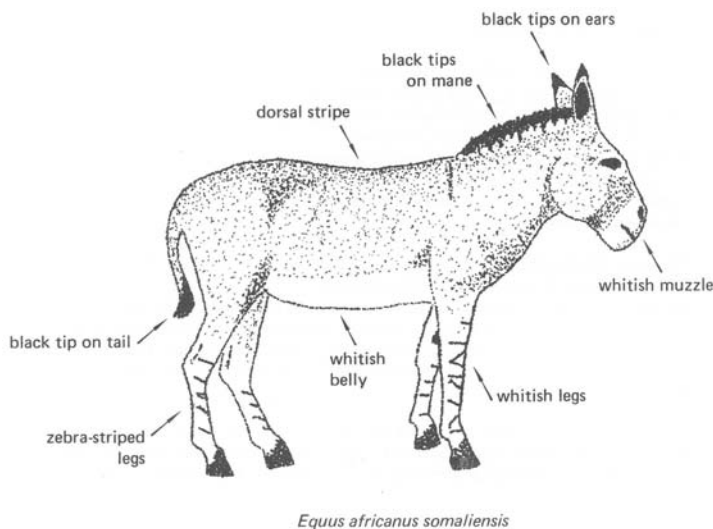
# Equus africanus

Fitzinger, 1857

**Common names:**

engl.: African Wild Ass  
 esp.: Asno salvaje del Africa  
 fr.: Ane sauvage de l'Afrique  
 de.: Afrikanischer Wildesel  
 ital.: Asino selvatico africano  
 kis./swa.: Punda

**Scientific synonyms:** *Equus asinus* (used for domesticated forms) Also *Asinus africanus*, with ssp. *taeniopus*, *somalicus*, *atlanticus* (extinct) and *palestinae* (extinct).



## Characteristics:

### Adult:

**General appearance:** Wild progenitor distinguished from descendant domestic donkey by larger size, uniform markings and wild temperament. There are two subspecies of African wild ass: the Nubian wild ass (*Equus africanus africanus*) and the Somali wild ass (*Equus africanus somaliensis*).

**Weights and measurements:** The *africanus* ssp. shoulder height: 110-120 cm, at 200-220 kg, and *somaliensis* ssp. Shoulder height: 125-135 cm, at 230-250 kg.

**Head:** (both ssp.) Large, with slight convex profile over os frontale and flat or concave profile over os nasale. Pronounced recess or groove down axial length of os nasale. Face narrows noticeably in the os maxillare sup-region. Ears large, erect, motile.

**Mane:** Erect, no forelock or tufts.

**Legs:** Common equine legs distinguished by very narrow, tall hooves. Metapodials are short and horse-like, measuring only 65-70 percent of upper leg segment (radius and tibia) lengths. In onagers and domestic donkeys, metapodials measure about 80 percent of upper segment lengths.

**Coat:** Short, sometimes sleek. No winter coat.

**Colour:** In *africanus*, yellow-grey over most of body with whitish muzzle, underside and inner parts of legs. Dorsal stripe runs into tail and prominent shoulder stripe is evident. Mane and tip of tail is dark. In *somaliensis*, grey with occasional rose tint over most of body. Muzzle, underside and legs whitish. Legs have conspicuous zebra stripes. Faint dorsal stripe, and occasionally a faint shoulder stripe. Extremities of mane and tail dark. Ear edges in both subspecies are dark.

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**Distribution:** Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan.



**Population:**

Wild population:

*E.a. africanus*: estimated 1643 africanus in Sudan.

*E.a. somaliensis*: estimated 1475 somaliensis in Ethiopia, 350 in Somalia.

Captive population:

All *somaliensis* 37 specimens in 6 collections recognized by studbook, 15 in 1 collection not recognized by studbook. Main breeding herds in Israel and Switzerland.

**Trade:**

There have been two commercial captures in recent years, one in Somalia exported to Switzerland (Basle Zoo), and one in Ethiopia, destined for U.S. but diverted to Israel (Hai-Bar Wildlife Reserve). Trade volume: Very slight, mostly breeding transfers to recognized institutions. There is, however, a strong commercial demand which is unsatisfied mainly because of unavailability of specimens.

**Intraspecific variation:**

Markings distinguishing *africanus* and *somaliensis* ssp. are noted under "Characteristics". Occasionally, domestic donkeys exhibit markings characteristic to *Equus africanus*, such as cross stripe on shoulder, or zebra stripes on legs. Generally, however, the donkey is a smaller animal, with a much darker body colour, cinnamon coloured ears, proportionately longer metapodials, and narrower hooves. Some domestic types, e.g. the Poitou Ass and Spanish Giant Ass, are large, but these are dark brown in colour and not easily confused.

**Similar species:**

*Equus hemionus* (sheet A-118.001.001.005) is brown in colour, with shaggy winter coat, shorter ears and wider hooves. *Equus przewalskii* (sheet A-118.001.001.006) is brown, with dun markings, stockier build, shorter ears and a typical horse tail, fully haired.

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