



MEDIA RELEASE

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIST SHOWS WHY WE MUST SAVE THE BALI DOG

31 March 2017 DENPASAR, Bali: At an international seminar and workshop today in the Bali capital, keynote speaker Dr Ben Sacks* from the USA presented DNA research on the Bali dog which is helping to clarify the evolution of dogs and humans too.

“The Bali dog is highly important to this significant research and must be protected,” he said.

Dr Sacks, Director of Mammalian Ecology and Conservation Unit, Veterinary Genetics Laboratory, University of California Davis, traveled to Bali especially to participate in the seminar on The Bali Dog in the context of Genetics; Culture; Disease & Other Threats to its Survival; and Human Health.

The scientist gave a genetic perspective in his presentation named *Ancient Asian Dogs and the Genetics of the Bali Dog: Why is the Bali Dog Unique?*

“The Bali dog is a particularly valuable scientific resource and must be protected from swamping by imported dogs,” he said, referring to extensive and unchecked cross-breeding which is eroding the genetic diversity of the pure Bali dog; reducing its numbers; and contribution to the risk it will become extinct.

“Modern dogs carry in their genomes secrets of their past; DNA from indigenous dogs enables reconstruction of their evolutionary histories. However, a significant barrier to this endeavour has been the distortion of their genomes owing to western dog-breeding practices.

“Consequently, many indigenous dog populations such as the Bali dog have become ‘westernised’ which has increasingly eroded the genetic footprints of their regional histories.”

Dr Sacks said research using DNA from ancient dogs including the Bali dog was still in its infancy, yet indigenous dogs were increasingly threatened with erosion of their ancestral genetic diversity.

Bali Animal Welfare Association [BAWA] estimations that only 20% of Bali's 300,000 to 400,000 dog population are pure Bali dogs were disturbing, he said. "Yet there is still time, with real commitment, to save this very valuable scientific and cultural resource from extinction.

"If preserved, the Bali dog has a robust and very meaningful contribution to make to global genetics research."

The Bali Dog seminar was hosted at Udayana University's Denpasar campus by the university's Public Health Department & One Health Centre and was sponsored by BAWA. It was officially opened by Udayana Rector Professor Doctor Doctor Ketut Suastika (SpPD-KEMD).

***Dr Ben Sacks**

Education

Ph.D. Ecology (2002). University of California, Davis, CA.
Dissertation topic: Ecology of canine heartworm in California coyotes

M.S. Wildlife Biology (1996). University of California, Berkeley, CA.
Thesis topic: Ecology and behavior of coyotes in relation to sheep predation

B.S. Biology (1991). University of Maryland, College Park, MD.

Research Interest

"I employ genomic and field-based methodologies to understand evolutionary histories of particular canid** species and the generalities that unite their evolutionary pathways. Much of my research concerns relationships between individual behavior and population-level processes. I am especially interested in research that directly or indirectly helps us conserve endangered canid populations and species."

** Canid: a carnivorous mammal of the canidae family which includes domestic dogs, wolves, foxes, jackals, dingoes and many other extant and extinct dog-like mammals.

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