

## THE IN-PLACE EXTINCTION OF THE SCOTTISH WILDCAT

While all living cats are derived from the two members of the ‘cat’ kind on the Ark, this group has broken up into about 40 living species. Domestic cats (*Felis catus*) have all the hallmarks of having derived from the African wildcat (*Felis lybica*), though smaller and more docile. They then spread across the world due to human activity. Wildcats, on the other hand, made it to far-flung corners of the world a long time before their domestic counterparts.

According to studies on ancient and modern cat DNA, these two cat species have been living side-by-side in many places of the world for millennia, almost never interbreeding. Yet, in Scotland, the native European wildcat (*Felis silvestris*) seems to have disappeared, overwhelmed by genes from domestic cats over the past 70 years or so. What caused this relatively sudden change? It’s hard to say, but one thing is clear from this: domestic cats and wildcats are the same created kind.

Scientists might like to break cats into various species, and there are valid reasons for doing so, but there is a chain of reproductive continuity across the entire cat kind ([creation.com/the-cat-family](https://creation.com/the-cat-family)). Thus, the diminutive rusty spotted cat of India and Sri Lanka (*Prionailurus rubiginosus*) and the massive Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*) all descend from that single pair of cats that were on board Noah’s Ark.

Jamieson, A. *et al.*, Limited historical admixture between European wildcats and domestic cats, *Curr. Biol.* **33**:4751–4760, 2023.

Howard-McCombe, J. *et al.*, Genetic swamping of the critically endangered Scottish wildcat was recent and accelerated by disease, *Curr. Biol.* **33**:4761–4769, 2023.



## ‘VESTIGIAL’ STRUCTURES LET DOLPHINS DETECT ELECTRIC FIELDS

Dolphins are mostly hairless, but are born with a small number of hairs on the top of their ‘beak’. They lose these hairs as they grow up, leaving behind pits.

Bottlenose dolphins have a row of six of these hairs on each side; the hairs are gone by about a week after birth.

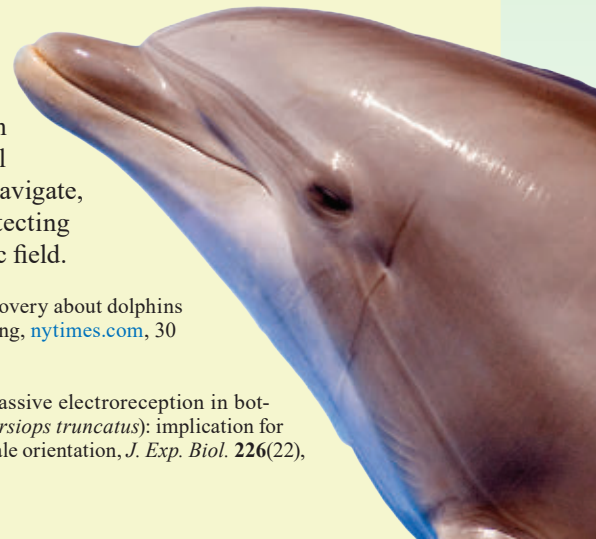
Evolutionists claim that dolphins evolved from land mammals. So, they maintain that the hairs, and the pits left behind, are vestigial—i.e., leftovers from the whiskers of their evolutionary ancestors. As such, they thought that the pits had no function.

However, in late 2023, German researchers discovered that the pits of Guiana dolphins had no hair follicles and could sense electric fields. Now their further research has established that bottlenose dolphins’ pits can detect electric fields to the same level of sensitivity that enables another mammal, the platypus, to detect prey in murky water using electrosensing.

Dolphins may use this ability to help catch fish, which release electrical signals—or to navigate, by indirectly detecting Earth’s magnetic field.

Wilke, C., This discovery about dolphins isn’t entirely shocking, [nytimes.com](https://nytimes.com), 30 Nov 2023.

Hüttner, T. *et al.*, Passive electroreception in bottlenose dolphins (*Tursiops truncatus*): implication for micro- and large-scale orientation, *J. Exp. Biol.* **226**(22), 2023.



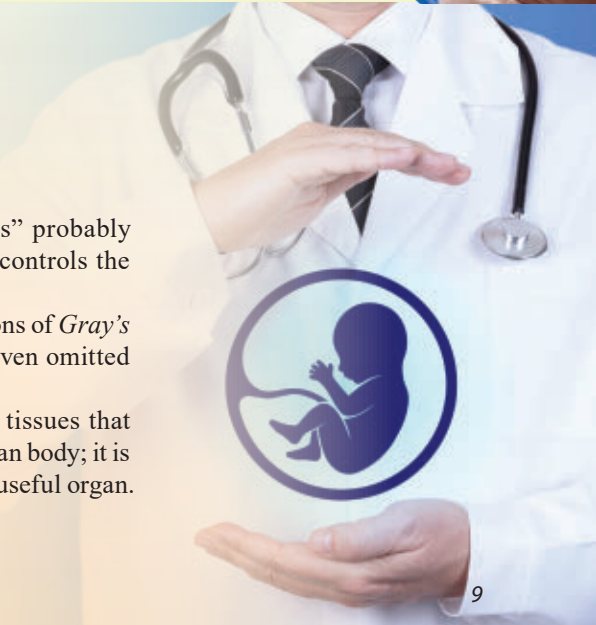
## YET ANOTHER ‘USELESS’ ORGAN IS USEFUL

A tiny tubular appendage on human ovaries “previously dismissed as useless” probably performs a very important role. Researchers at Duke University reckon that it controls the release of eggs from the ovaries.

The structure, known as the *rete ovarii*, was first described in 1870. Early editions of *Gray’s Anatomy*, the standard anatomy textbook, included it. However, recent editions even omitted it altogether!

The scientists found that the tiny organ ‘lit up’ when they were looking for tissues that express a protein called PAX8. This small protein has multiple functions in the human body; it is extremely important. They are working on deciphering the precise role of the now useful organ.

Le Page, M., Forgotten body part may affect fertility, *New Scientist* **261**(3480):16, 2 Mar 2024.



## MUTANT WOLVES?

The nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, Ukraine, happened in 1986. Ever since, there has been an exclusion zone for people, with only strictly regulated access. However, animals can freely roam there, which exposes them to ionizing radiation at more than six times the legal safety limit for humans.

Such radiation is known to damage DNA. In addition to reduced fertility and lowered immunity, the negative effects include increased risk of cancer, birth defects, inherited diseases, and cardiovascular and neurological disease.

However, the area's wolves seem to be thriving. Researchers think they have become resistant to some of the cancer-causing (and perhaps other) effects. Finding out how might benefit human cancer patients.

This apparent resistance might have been present in the genes already, enhanced by natural selection—those which had it were the ones more likely to survive and mate to pass the trait on.

But the researchers think it might be from mutation. Such genetic damage only very rarely confers a benefit, generally traded off against downsides. E.g., an island cormorant with a wing-losing mutation expends less energy finding a mate and is less likely to be blown out to sea, so more likely to reproduce despite the downsides.

The answers will have to wait, due to the ongoing Russian invasion stalling the research. Not surprisingly, some headlines have jumped the gun, declaring them 'mutant wolves' and suggesting the ability arose 'from scratch'.

Griffin, A., Mutant wolves roaming Chernobyl Exclusion Zone have developed cancer-resilient abilities: study, [nypost.com](https://nypost.com), 8 Feb 2024.

The Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology, Mutant Chernobyl wolves evolve anti-cancer abilities 35 years after nuclear disaster, [newswise.com](https://newswise.com), 5 Jan 2024.



## NO DARK MATTER AFTER ALL?

The idea of a mysterious, unseen, and unknown substance called 'dark matter' was first put forward to explain galaxy rotation rates. It was later realized it could overcome big observational and theoretical problems with 'big bang' models. Thus, the leading (standard) model today is called Lambda Cold Dark Matter (ΛCDM).

Dark matter and its stablemate 'dark energy' are together supposed to make up a staggering 95% of the material universe. Doubts were occasionally expressed about whether they truly exist. Some secular researchers have called their role in propping up cosmological theory the equivalent of the 'tooth fairy'.

Now two separate studies in early 2024, using differing theoretical proposals, have caused a stir by claiming that these 'dark twins' may not exist.

One is co-authored by John Oppenheim, a quantum gravity expert at University College, London. His approach over the last five years seeks to unite gravity with quantum theory and says it "can explain the expansion of the universe and galactic rotation without dark matter or dark energy." The paper suggests this dark duo may be unnecessary scientific constructs. It cites celestial spheres, the ether, and the planet Vulcan (between Mercury and the sun, not Spock's home) as having similarly once been widely believed to be real.

The other, by University of Ottawa physicist Rajendra Gupta in *The Astrophysical Journal*, claims to show that these dark entities do not, in fact cannot, exist.

Of course, not much time has passed since the announcement, and further critical analysis is bound to follow. But it seems to suggest significant cracks in cosmology, with one of the favourite problem-solvers for big-bangers (dark matter) at risk.

Devlin, H., Controversial new theory of gravity rules out need for dark matter, [theguardian.com](https://theguardian.com), 9 Mar 2024.

Reich, A., Standard model debunked? Scientists say dark matter is impossible, never existed—study, [jpost.com](https://jpost.com), 17 Mar 2024.

## WebWatch

Type the words in **bold** into the search box on: **CREATION.com**

- Stars, their purpose, and **people**
- Richard **Dawkins**—**cultural** Christian?
- Human **genome** functional
- **Global** Flood of **Genesis**
- **Human life** precious
- **Cain** married intelligent **animal**?