

THE HOO-CALL

NEWSLETTER OF THE WILD DOG PROJECT

Jan 2008, Vol 5



EDITORIAL

This, the fifth e-Newsletter, reflects on the important conservation developments in 2007. We also highlight recent project activities and developments for African wild dog conservation in Namibia.

The **Wild Dog Project** Team

Namibia - best hope for expanding African wild dog population in Southern Africa

Last December Wild Dog Project Manager, Robin Lines, traveled to Botswana to participate in a Regionwide Conservation Planning Workshop for the African wild dog, together with a cross section of regional and international experts.

Extensive discussions indicated that Namibia had the greatest scope for increasing the recoverable range of African wild dogs in all of Southern Africa, with Etosha National Park (ENP) and the Communal Conservancies of Kunene Region flagged as key areas.



Community staff learning to 'work-up' an immobilized wild dog. Biomedical samples are taken. The dog is released, unharmed, within 45mins after being fitted with a radio/GPS collar to monitor movements.

Farming development threatens 'core' population

The African wild dog has fared poorly in the face of expanding livestock farming in Namibia. This pattern is broadly reflected throughout much of Africa where land tenure is a key political issue.

With protected areas covering <10% of Namibia's wild dog population the threat of expanding livestock farming has become a real and urgent conservation issue if local extinction is to be avoided. So the proposed development of nearly 500,000ha of communal wildlife area into farmland represents an immense challenge to maintaining Namibia's only viable wild dog population in Tsumkwe District.

Newsletter Spotlight

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[TWO DECADES IN CONSERVATION: NAMIBIA NATURE FOUNDATION AT 20](#)

2007 Field Season Update



Rescue missions weren't restricted to wild dog hit by cars. This baby elephant was one of 3 pulled from drying waterholes

In 2007 total time camping in the field approached 200 days, based out of Klein Dobe camp, with the kind permission of Nyae Nyae Conservancy & Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Tsumkwe. Focus remained on monitoring the status of the free ranging population, looking at existing and new conservation threats, with additional baseline data collected on ranging / feeding ecology. Data on competition with other predators was also collected to investigate the impact of a lion recolonisation in the area. A management tool for allowing local community members and park staff to more accurately monitor wild dog populations has been trailed and will be refined in 2008.

Environmental education initiatives have been expanded to include a wider range of stakeholders and partners, but with the same core strategy of focusing on the youth.



Lion pug mark and the owner: Lion numbers are on the rise in Nyae Nyae Conservancy for the first time in a decade.

The implications for wild dogs and the local community are being carefully monitored.



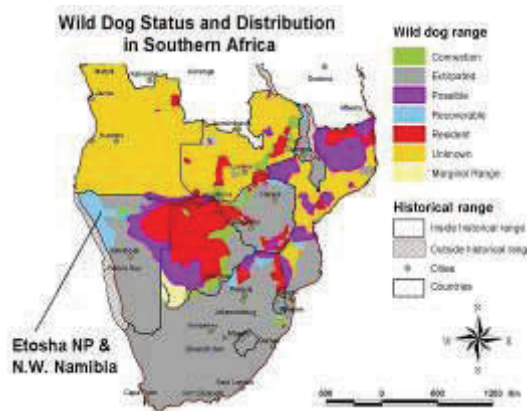
Questions or comments? Email us at wilddog@mweb.com.na or call +264 81 277 2333

Additional project information available online at http://www.nnf.org.na/NNF_pages/wilddogproject.htm

Recoverable Range and Reintroductions in Namibia: A Conservation Priority?

ENP and the wildlife-based Communal Conservancies of N.W. Namibia are considered areas where habitat and prey remain over sufficiently large areas that either natural or assisted recovery of the species is possible. These **connected** areas, totaling over 6m ha, would enable Namibia to establish a second viable wild dog population under protected area coverage - considered critical for survival of a species fairing so poorly under land developed for farming.

Since the early pioneering reintroduction attempts to ENP (that failed) in the 1980's, there has been >25 Regional successes. Techniques have been refined considerably. Conservative estimates suggest this initiative could double the National population to nearly 1000 individuals over perhaps 10 years. But many challenges remain, not least gaining political support for the introduction of a high conflict species.



The **Wild Dog Project** is leading the debate for expanding the free ranging population into former areas

Land Use, Climate Change & Implications of Farming on African Wild Dog Conservation

For over 50,000yrs, until the 17th century, Namibia was sparsely populated by nomadic hunter gathering groups - the remnants of which still exist today as the San. The influx of mainly Bantu groups from Central Africa, followed soon after by European colonialists, resulted in the development of a livestock farming industry that has persisted to this day, dominates vast areas of the country, and is central to the politics of land use and ownership.

With climate change predicting increased temperatures and reduced rainfall in Namibia, livestock farming will become increasingly unsustainable in this fragile environment already suffering extensive land degradation and water shortages due to poor land management.

These developments have been directly responsible for the reduction of prey species, introduced exotic diseases and persecution that decimated the African wild dog population throughout the country.

So what does the future offer?

Resource economists increasingly provide persuasive arguments that in fragile environments, subjected to harsh climatic conditions, the most sustainable land use is based around utilisation of indigenous wildlife. Through consumptive and non-consumptive management regimes land can be better and more profitably farmed. With large predators such as the wild dog considered a key component to a balanced ecosystem it is hoped over time the trend will revert to wildlife areas and wild dogs can become part of the wider landscape. This is the long term vision of the **Wild Dog Project**.

2007 Field Season Update - Core Area Population Monitoring

Status: 8-9 packs observed within boundaries of Nyae Nyae comprising 42-45 adults with 26 pups at 3 months old. Average pack size: 5 adults. Packs without pups at end of denning season 3-4.

Conflict with local farmers: No incidents recorded in Nyae Nyae, no livestock losses, no direct persecution recorded.

Conservation threats: 3 adults hit and killed by vehicles on main Grootfontein-Tsumkwe road, 1 collared female died, probable old age, no other deaths recorded. No new threats recorded.

Feeding ecology: 78 kills recorded; Steenbok 32%, Duiker 26%, Kudu 15%, Hares 12%, Wildebeest 5%, Roan 3%, Unknown 7%.

Conclusions: Pack numbers stable, population size declining in response to unknown factors, reproductive rates declining, dispersal rates increasing.

Recommendations:

1. Increase prey base though reliable water point management
2. Reintroduction of Common Impala
3. Promote responsible driving and road accident awareness

SUPPORT & SAVE

Direct to Namibia:

Bank: NEDBANK of Namibia
Branch Code: 461609
Swift Code: NEDS NANX
Account Name: NNF/ WILD DOG PROJECT
Account : 11000061214

In the U.K. (Gift Aid Scheme)

TUSK Trust
Contact: Tim@tusk.org
Details: http://www.tusk.org/standing_order_form_g.asp?page=25
Tel: 44 (0) 1747 831 005
Quote: NWDP

URGENTLY NEEDED

PLEASE HELP SECURE THE FOLLOWING EQUIPMENT

SOLAR POWER SUPPLY 4X4 TYRES GROUND TO AIR RADIO SAFARI TENT
SHIPPING CONTAINER EMERGENCY SATELLITE PHONE
REPLACEMENT 4x4 FOR 22yr TOYOTA HILUX WITH 450,000KM

2007 Field Season Update - Conflict Population Monitoring

High levels of persecution continue across farmlands adjacent to the 'core' population, although reports are sporadic and opportunistic. Many incidents remain unreported with farmers covering up persecution. Reports and follow-ups confirmed 5 breeding packs (n=36 adults & min. 22 pups) eradicated in 2007. The level of underreporting is unknown and could be many times higher. Shooting, snaring, burning of dens and indiscriminate poison use are widespread. Road kills are common throughout range, especially the Trans-Caprivi Highway and through Tsumkwe District. But the wild dogs appear resilient in many of the more arid eastern communal areas characterised by low human population density and limited infrastructure, albeit at very low densities. Logistical constraints (staff/vehicles) restrict expansion into these isolated farming areas. Lack of capacity and coherent management policy hinders Officials ability to mitigate conflict.

Interestingly, the first wild dog seen close to Windhoek in over 35yrs turned up in early December on a livestock farm. It was likely a lone survivor from a dispersing group 300km to East in Botswana, the nearest resident population. This demonstrates the incredible dispersing ability of the species, and though the individual was shot by a farmer, it does suggest possible recolonisation of the species to former areas under the right conditions.

2007 Environmental Education

The Nature Film Club continued in 2007 with 5 shows. The Tsumkwe Environmental Education Radio show entered it's 3rd year on the local language NBC network. A training workshop for human-wildlife conflict management was held at Klein Dobe together with a number of Conservancy meetings, supported by the Wild Dog Project. We had our first **'Wild Dog Flying Kilometer: A Race Against Extinction'** which we hope to make an annual event, attracting a lot of good interest and local runners.



The first Wild Dog Flying Kilometer race attracted 68 competitors in 3 age groups

A 2nd reprint of the **'Truth About Wild Dogs'** posters and leaflet started being distributed to schools nationwide which will continue into 2008 as further funds for distribution are raised. The Wild Dog Project continued to support workshops on human-predator conflict management together with Cheetah Conservation Fund, lecturing twice in 2007. Over 12 articles were published in national papers and magazines, including The Namibian, Die Republikein, AgriForum together with regional press. Live interviews on national radio continued and drew much interest and debate.

In 2008 we plan to scale up operations to provide significantly more support in the high human-wild dog conflict farmlands around Gam area to the south of the core wild dog conservation area in Nyae Nyae. There is also an exciting **National Conservation Art Project** planned and discussions are underway with the registered Communal Conservancies in Tsumkwe District to designate a **'Wild Dog Conservation Area'** covering 2m ha of core habitat.

Namibia Nature Foundation at 20

The Namibia Nature Foundation was established in 1987 as a small but dynamic non-governmental organization, not for profit, to promote the conservation and wise management of Namibia's rich natural heritage. Today the NNF has a staff of 25 people, some 10 contract employees, and a number of associate scientists and volunteers who run more than 70 projects and programmes.

Over the past 20 years the NNF has been a key player in the environment and sustainable development sectors in Namibia, both at the level of influencing policy and turning policy into effective action and outcomes. It has implemented programmes that have effectively linked poverty reduction with conservation objectives, and has worked as a catalyst between government, community, NGO and private sectors. The NNF has initiated, led, coordinated and contributed to a large number of innovative local, national and regional initiatives, including the first survey of elephants across the subcontinent, integrating economics and natural resource issues at national and transboundary levels, internationally recognized integrated river basin programmes, community-based natural resource management initiatives, fund raising and grants making for conservation and sustainable development, conservation and wise use of fragile ecosystems, effective contributions to land reform and resettlement processes, monitoring and protection of rare and endangered species and habitats, national level support to environmental education, combating desertification and promoting appropriate forms of land use (e.g. wildlife & tourism), and many others.

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Cheetah Conservation Fund
Rare and Endangered Species Trust
Harnas Foundation
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Royal Zoological Society of Scotland
Tusk Trust
NedBank Go Green Fund
Peoples Trust for Endangered Species
Cymot PTY Ltd
Dunlop Tyres
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