

CAT

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news





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Original contributions and short notes about wild cats are welcome

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Review of the Conservation Strategy for cheetah and African wild dog in southern Africa

At the end of 2007, a workshop was held to develop a Regional Conservation Strategy RCS for cheetah *Acinonyx jubatus* and African wild dog *Lycaon pictus* in southern Africa (IUCN/SSC 2007). The strategy was to form a framework for the development of conservation action plans for cheetah and wild dog in all range states. The regional workshop was conducted as a partnership between National Wildlife Authorities, the IUCN/SSC Cat and Canid Specialist Groups and the Range Wide Conservation Program for Cheetah and African Wild Dogs RWCP. Here we report on the revision of the RCS that took place in August 2015 in South Africa.

The workshop in 2007 followed the IUCN/SSC planning process, with two key outputs. Firstly, an updated, expert-based, map of known cheetah range. Secondly a strategic plan for conservation of cheetah and wild dog across the region, with eight main objectives, namely to (i) develop capacity in all aspects of cheetah and wild dog conservation in the region; (ii) improve knowledge on the conservation of both species; (iii) ensure that information relevant to both species is disseminated to stakeholders; (iv) minimise conflict and promote coexistence between cheetah, wild dog and people; (v) minimise

the adverse effects of land development and implement best land use practice for cheetah and wild dog; (vi) obtain political commitment to cheetah and wild dog conservation; (vii) review and harmonise existing legislation and policy affecting cheetah and wild dog conservation; and (viii) facilitate the development and implementation of national conservation plans for both species. The regional strategy was deliberately developed in a format that would facilitate translation into national conservation action plans, and by 2013, seven of the eight southern African range states had established National Action Plans.

Review Workshop

In August 2015, nearly eight years after the strategy was developed, a workshop was held to review progress against the strategy (Table 1) and revise and update the strategy to make it fit for purpose (Table 2). The workshop was organised by the RWCP in partnership with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) who sponsored the workshop under their Saving Animals From Extinction SAFE Program. The process was endorsed by the IUCN/SSC Cat and Canid Specialist Group. Altogether 48 participants attended (Fig. 1), including five from the RWCP, 23 from field programs from all eight range states, 11 government wildlife authority representatives from seven range states (all excluding Zimbabwe), five from AZA, one from the Pan African AZA PAAZA, a GIS expert, a representative of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species CMS, and the co-chair of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group.

The workshop included presentations by the seven governments on the progress made by their respective wildlife authorities towards the objectives of the 2007 regional strategy (IUCN/SSC 2007), as well as presentations by the 18 field projects represented, outlining their progress towards achieving the strategy's objectives. Presenters were asked

Table 1. A summary of progress in implementing the 2007 Regional Conservation Strategy for the Cheetah and African Wild Dog in Southern Africa. Progress is expressed as a percentage of the NGOs (projects) or government wildlife authorities which had made some headway towards each objective. This deliberately excludes the RWCP's contribution, as the RWCP focuses on implementation gaps.

Theme	Objective	Project Progress	Government Progress
Capacity Development	1 Develop capacity in all aspects of cheetah and wild dog conservation in southern Africa.	43%	22%
Knowledge & Information	2 Improve knowledge on the conservation biology of wild dogs and cheetah across southern Africa.	63%	55%
Information transfer	3 Develop and implement mechanisms for the transfer of information relevant to cheetah and wild dog conservation and ensure active commitment of stakeholders.	47%	34%
Coexistence	4 Minimise conflict and promote coexistence between cheetah, wild dogs and people across southern Africa	50%	63%
Land Use	5 Minimise adverse effects of land development and promote and implement best land use practice for cheetah and wild dog conservation.	26%	13%
Political commitment	6 Obtain political commitment to the conservation needs of cheetah and wild dogs	6%	12%
Policy & Legislation	7 Review and, where necessary, revise, international, national and local legislation, policies and protocols affecting cheetah and wild dog conservation.	20%	49%
National Planning	8 Facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy and develop and implement national action plans for the conservation of cheetah and wild dogs in all range states.	28%	40%



Fig. 1. Workshop participants from the eight southern African range states (Photo RWCP).

Table 2. Comparison of the Objectives from the original strategy (2007) and the revised strategy (2015).

Vision: Secure viable cheetah and wild dog populations across a range of ecosystems, that successfully coexist with, and are valued by, the people of southern Africa

Goal: Improve the status of cheetahs and wild dogs, and secure additional viable populations across their range in southern Africa

Theme	Original Objectives (2007)	Revised Objectives (2015)
Capacity Development	Develop capacity in all aspects of cheetah and wild dog conservation in southern Africa	To develop capacity in all aspects of cheetah and wild dog conservation in southern Africa.
Knowledge and Information	Improve knowledge on the conservation biology of cheetah and wild dog across southern Africa	To improve knowledge and generate information for the conservation of cheetah and wild dogs across southern Africa.
Information Transfer	Develop and implement mechanisms for the transfer of information relevant to cheetah and wild dog conservation and ensure active commitment of stakeholders	To increase active commitment of stakeholders and awareness of the wider public by transferring information relevant to cheetah and wild dog conservation
Coexistence	Minimise conflict and promote coexistence between cheetah, wild dog and people across southern Africa	To promote coexistence of people with cheetahs and wild dogs across southern Africa
Land Use	Minimise adverse effects of land development and promote and implement best land use practice for cheetah and wild dog conservation	To promote best land use practice for cheetah and wild dog conservation and minimise adverse effects of land development
Political Commitment	Obtain political commitment to the conservation needs of cheetah and wild dogs	To advocate for increased political commitment to the conservation of cheetah and wild dogs
Policy and Legislation	Review, and where necessary revise, international, national and local legislation, policies and protocols affecting cheetah and wild dog conservation	To advocate for stronger international, national and local legislation, policies and protocols to support cheetah and wild dog conservation
National Planning	Facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy and develop and implement national actions plans for the conservation of cheetah and wild dogs in all range states	To maintain and implement up to date national action plans and utilise other relevant frameworks for the conservation of cheetah and wild dogs in all range states.

specifically to report back on progress towards each objective, and, where appropriate, to identify objectives that they had found particularly challenging and barriers to implementation.

These presentations were inspiring, and demonstrated that much had been achieved

since the first workshop in 2007 – both by projects and governments. They also showed that people faced significant challenges and barriers to progress in some areas. The presentations were followed by a session to reach a consensus on updates to the Southern African distribution maps for cheetah

and African wild dog. The wealth of expert knowledge present at the workshop was key to this process.

Prior to the workshop all project and government participants had been asked to fill out their progress against the logframe of the original 2007 Regional Strategy (IUCN/

SSC 2007). This information was pulled together by the RWCP regional coordinator for southern Africa (RG). This was an extremely informative and valuable exercise, and was summarised during the workshop simply by indicating against which activities an organisation had made progress, and then summarising these by objective (Table 1). This demonstrated clearly in which areas most progress had been made and where less progress was made. This information was used to guide the revision of the strategy. In particular, most progress was achieved in the themes covering knowledge and information, coexistence and national planning (once adding in the RWCP's contribution to the latter), fair progress in the capacity development, information transfer and policy and legislation. However, much less progress has been made in the challenging areas of addressing land use change and engaging political commitment.

The remainder of the workshop was spent on a revision and update of the strategic log-frame for the new strategy. While the goal and vision remained in place, the objectives, results and activities laid out the roadmap for achieving the goal, thus participants were asked to build on their experience gained in 8 years of implementation of the strategy, to review and, where necessary, revise this roadmap to make it fit for purpose for another 7-8 years. To do this, participants were split into four working groups (Fig. 2), and each tackled two objectives. Final editing was conducted in plenary (Fig. 3) to reach a consensus on the final structure and wording of the strategy. Significant changes were made to the Land Use and Policy and Legislation Objectives which proved so difficult to implement from the last plan.

The whole process has demonstrated the immense value in workshops to review and revise such plans to keep them relevant, realistic and up to date. The revised strategy is substantially improved from the first version, as participants brought to bear their considerable experience in implementing the strategy in their revisions. The distribution maps were updated taking into account that there is considerably more information available on cheetah and wild dog distribution, although substantial gaps still remain – particularly for Angola. More difficult to quantify was the impact the workshop had on the enthusiasm and motivation of the participants. Firstly, the workshop demonstrated that the cheetah and wild dog strategy is a living working document, and that not only is it meant to be



Fig. 2. A working group meets to update objectives, targets and activities from the 2007 Regional Strategy (Photo RWCP).



Fig. 3. Participants discuss the way forward for Cheetah and African Wild Dog Conservation in southern Africa (Photo RWCP).

implemented, but there would be follow up on progress. Secondly, individuals working at the coal face of conserving such challenging species as cheetah and wild dog, can often get demoralised in the face of the substantial challenges faced by these wide ranging species. The feedback session demonstrated that while no single project or government is likely to be able to save the cheetah or wild dog alone – together we can have real impact. The revised strategy for the conservation of cheetah and African wild dog in southern Africa will soon be available at www.cheetah-andwilddog.org. This was the first review workshop of an IUCN/SSC strategy, and so the process will be used to inform future

IUCN/SSC workshops. Its success underlines the importance of such workshops for other species.

Reference

IUCN/SSC 2007, Regional conservation strategy for the cheetah and African wild dog in Southern Africa, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.

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