

“With their unique and striking coat patterns, their intelligence and their highly interactive and caring nature, African wild dogs are truly one of the most awe inspiring species alive today”



**African Wildlife
Conservation Fund**

--- General information biology

The Latin name, *Lycaon pictus*, literally translates as 'painted wolf-like animal' and consequently African wild dogs have commonly been referred to as painted wolves and painted hunting dogs.

Wild dogs are unmistakable amongst Africa's carnivores and are easily identified by their large, round ears, uniquely mottled coat patterns and bushy, white-tipped tails. They are cooperative and highly social, pack-orientated animals which rely heavily on every pack member for key aspects of survival including hunting, breeding and predatory defence. A typical pack structure includes a dominant breeding pair (alpha male and alpha female), the alpha pair's offspring from one or more litters, and additional subordinate adults. African wild dog packs can consist of two (breeding pair) to 50 individuals but an average pack size is 10 wild dogs.

Once a year, typically between May to August, a wild dog pack will occupy a den and bear puppies. Usually only the alpha female reproduces, and wild dogs can have up to 20 puppies, but average litter sizes are a slightly more bearable eight to 10 puppies! This seemingly disproportionate litter size is only possible because of the cooperative nature of the pack, and the fact that all pack members help to provide for, protect and raise the young. Pack members returning from a successful hunt will regurgitate meat to the pups (only from about 5 weeks old) as well as any 'baby sitters', injured or weak individuals left at the den.

African wild dogs hunt at sunrise and sunset (crepuscular hunters) and are visual predators, relying on line of sight more than any other sense. They hunt



medium-sized prey species, such as impala and wildebeest, and run or chase down their prey (coursing predators). They are known to chase prey for up to four kilometres at speeds of 50/60 kilometres/h. They are amongst the most efficient hunters in Africa and rely on their stamina and the power of the pack to bring down their prey!



--- Status and threats

Today, fewer than 6 600 wild dogs are left on the African continent. They are the most endangered large carnivore in southern Africa, and the second most endangered in Africa. Wild dogs are currently resident in less than 9% of their historical range (sub-Saharan Africa), and the species is declining. Habitat loss and fragmentation, snare-wire poaching, disease (rabies), competition with lions and human persecution threaten wild dogs throughout their range.



African wild dogs are a wide-ranging species and can occupy territories as broad as 3 000 km²! As human population pressures continue to infringe upon and fragment natural habitats, wildlife species, including wild dogs,

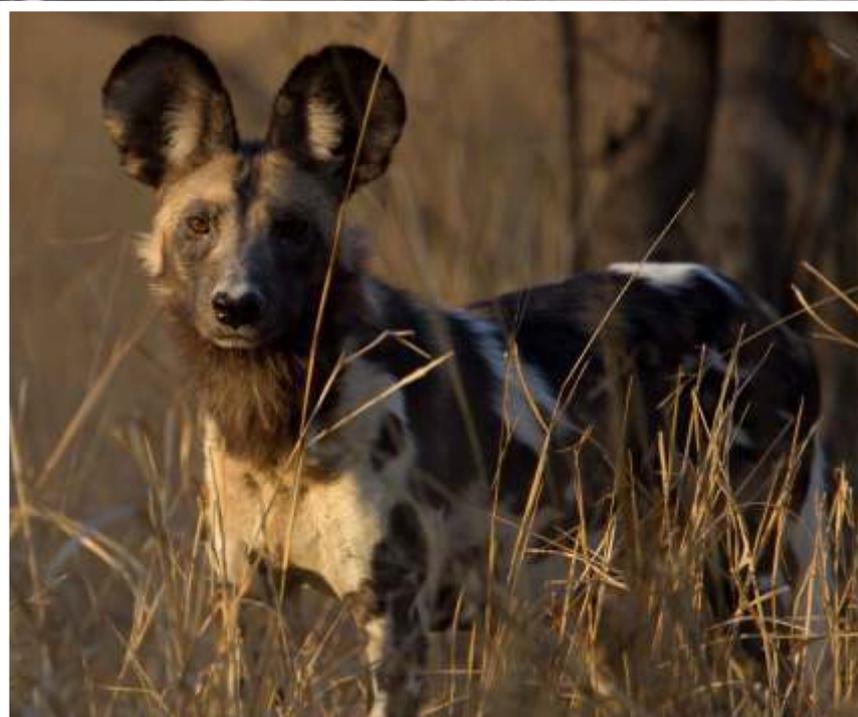


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are forced to move beyond the boundaries of protected areas where edge threats are greater. Consequently, large expanses of protected land, such as transfrontier conservation initiatives, are fundamental for their future conservation.

The Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA) encompasses parts of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique and hosts globally significant populations of African wild dogs. Zimbabwe is among the last stronghold of the species.



--- Who are we and what are we doing to conserve the African wild dog



The African Wildlife Conservation Fund (AWCF) is passionate about, and dedicated to, wildlife conservation in Africa with a focused goal of safe-guarding endangered African wild dog populations in the Zimbabwean Lowveld. AWCF began with the efforts of a few dedicated people striving to continue the work of the Lowveld Wild Dog Project (1996) which monitored, safe-guarded and strengthened a small vulnerable population of just 36 wild dogs. The AWCF was formed in 2005 as a way to channel attention and funding to on-the-ground wildlife conservation efforts in south-east Zimbabwe.

Most work to date has focussed on the Savé Valley Conservancy (SVC), where the project leader and team are based. Here we have successfully built up, monitored and conserved a high density population of African wild dogs; in 2004 they were at one of the highest densities recorded globally.

The AWCF field-based team is a very dedicated, highly-skilled unit producing impressive results for wildlife conservation in the region. We have since expanded our conservation efforts, monitoring and collaborations to the larger, regional population of wild dogs in the Greater Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA). Subsequently, our work now covers the entire Zimbabwean portion of the GLTFCA encompassing key wildlife areas, Savé Valley Conservancy, Gonarezhou National Park (GNP) and

AWCF aspires to end the cycle of poverty and reduce human-wildlife conflict...

Bubye and Nuanetsi wildlife areas, and involves pro-actively tackling known threats to predators in the region to ensure the viable long-term conservation of GLTFCA large carnivore species.

African Wildlife Conservation Fund is registered as a non-profit organisation in the USA [501(c)(3)] and a registered Trust in Zimbabwe (Prot. No.: 0000476/2012). All of our work is done with the financial support of granting institutions and private donors. We have developed unique and progressive projects that have the potential to not only benefit African wild dogs, but all GLTFCA carnivores, well into the future.

--- Our major projects

The Lowveld Wild Dog Project

(<http://www.africanwildlifeconservationfund.org/projects/lowveld-wild-dog-project/>):

AWCF aims to mitigate the major threats to wild dogs in the Zimbabwean portion of the GLTFCA; a key area for the conservation of southern Africa's large carnivores.

Primary goals include:

Population monitoring: including collaring and monitoring (population trends, dispersal events, adult and pup mortality) of packs using traditional spoor tracking, radio telemetry, camera traps at dens and photographic identikits for effective long term conservation management.

Genetic sampling: assessing the genetic health and dispersal dynamics of wild dog populations in the Zimbabwean Lowveld, as well as connectivity with Kruger National Park, South Africa.

Schools-based education programme: working in primary schools and communities surrounding wildlife areas to increase awareness and improve education standards with the hope of reducing human-carnivore conflict and reducing illegal activities and wild dog mortalities.



Reduce direct mortality: carrying out rabies vaccination campaigns in the domestic dog populations surrounding key wildlife areas to prevent outbreaks of communicable diseases in wild canid populations, removing snares from wild dogs and treating subsequent wounds and assisting anti-poaching efforts to remove wire snares from key wild dog home ranges and den site areas.

Other major projects include The Gonarezhou Predator Project (<http://www.africanwildlifeconservationfund.org/projects/gonarezhou-predator-project/>) which was established in 2009 acknowledging the need for information on the status of the Gonarezhou National Park large carnivore populations, and our Education and Outreach Initiative (<http://www.africanwildlifeconservationfund.org/projects/education-and->





outreach/) which was established in 2011/2012 and currently involves 123 primary schools, 84 within 10km of Savé Valley Conservancy boundaries and 39 within 15km of Gonarezhou National Park boundaries. The education program is multi-faceted and includes a conservation awareness program, a literacy program, a mobile education unit and DVD program and a secondary school scholarship program. AWCF aspires to end the cycle of poverty and reduce human-wildlife conflict by improving education standards and hopefully providing local communities with opportunities to make a living without relying on illegal harvesting of resources from protected areas.

--- *Final additions*

For more information on any of the above please contact Projects Director, Rosemary Groom at rosemary@africanwildlifeconservationfund.org, and follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/AfricanWildlifeConservationFund) to learn more about what we do, and what your funds will ultimately be supporting! Details of our Zimbabwean, South African, USA or UK accounts are available on request, or make use of our safe and secure PayPal link (www.africanwildlifeconservationfund.org/donate/)

