



Member of the IUCN – World Conservation Union

Media Release

9 April 2008

Starts

AFRICAN WILD DOGS RELEASED INTO NORTHERN TULI GAME RESERVE, BOTSWANA

On Saturday, 5 April 2008, 18 African Wild Dogs were released into the Northern Tuli Game Reserve (NOTUGRE). This reintroduction will facilitate the establishment of a viable population of Wild Dogs in the Limpopo Valley region of eastern Botswana. The Wild Dogs originate from the Marakele National Park in South Africa and were donated to NOTUGRE by South African National Parks. The Northern Tuli Wild Dog Project, a partnership between Northern Tuli Game Reserve, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, Botswana Predator Conservation Trust, Botswana's Department of Wildlife and National Parks, and the University of Pretoria, has been established to manage the reintroduction programme.

Although African Wild Dogs (*Lycaon pictus*) were once distributed through much of sub-Saharan Africa, they are now absent from most of their range and are classified as Endangered by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The main reasons for their demise are widespread destruction of habitat, loss of prey, and direct persecution through hunting, snaring and poisoning. Botswana is one of the last Wild Dog strongholds, with 700-800 individuals living in northern Botswana, where they are the focus of intensive study. In contrast, Wild Dogs are seen only infrequently in the south-eastern part of the country, largely as a result of conflict with livestock farmers.

In 2006, the governments of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding to establish the Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area (L-STFCA). This area incorporates the Northern Tuli Game Reserve in Botswana, Tuli Circle in Zimbabwe, and Mapungubwe National Park and World Heritage Site in South Africa. On the southern boundary of the L-STFCA, apart from the previously reintroduced Wild Dog population in the De Beers Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve, Wild Dogs are infrequently seen. Sightings are usually of small, potentially dispersing groups, which have not taken up residence in the area despite the suitability of the habitat, the low density of competing carnivores, and abundance of their preferred Impala prey. Conservationists believe that establishing a resident pack in the NOTUGRE will provide breeding opportunities for transient groups, and will stimulate the development of a viable Wild Dog population in the L-STFCA. The L-STFCA is furthermore expected to expand in the next few years and has been flagged as a potentially important corridor for the movement of wildlife.

Pro-active conflict mitigation measures are essential to the success of the reintroduction. These include regular fence patrols, intensive post-release monitoring of the reintroduced pack, and a novel experimental trial of the "bio-fence" concept which will use Wild Dog scent

Page 1 of 2

EWT Vision:

“A healthy planet and equitable world that values and sustains the diversity of all life”

Private Bag X11, Parkview 2122, South Africa. Telephone +27 (0) 11 486-1102; ewt@ewt.org.za;
www.ewt.org.za

The Gold Fields Environmental Centre, Johannesburg Zoological Gardens. Fax +27 (0) 11 486-1506
Member of IUCN, The World Conservation Union
Fund raising number: 015-502 NPO PBO Registration No 930 001 777

marks from unrelated packs to create a socially-defined boundary at the borders of the reserve. The latter research is being carried out by Craig Jackson (Mammal Research Institute, University of Pretoria) in collaboration with the Endangered Wildlife Trust and the Botswana Predator Conservation Programme headed by Dr. Tico McNutt.

A Community Liaison Officer, Rex Masupe, has been employed to run an education and awareness programme among communities bordering the park, thus providing a direct link between communities in the Bobirwa District of Botswana and adjacent wildlife conservation areas. This programme will later expand to include communities in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Communities will be educated on ways to limit conflict with wildlife, and on the economic importance of wildlife to the tourism sector.

Not only are Wild Dogs important for a balanced ecosystem, but they are also a lucrative tourist attraction. As such, their presence is likely to have spin-off benefits for local communities, many of which rely on adjacent conservation areas for employment.

This project is generously supported by Mashatu Game Reserve, Tuli Safari Lodge and many individuals. Land Rover South Africa provided the translocation costs from Marakele to NOTUGRE.

Ends

Photographs of the release are available on request.

Contact: Harriet Davies-Mostert
Endangered Wildlife Trust
Manager: Carnivore Conservation Group
Mobile +27(0) 82 507 9223
Tel: +27 (0)11 486 1102
E-mail: harrieted@ewt.org.za



Issued by: Hayley Komen
Conservation Programme Developer
Endangered Wildlife Trust
www.ewt.org.za
Tel: +27 (0)11 486 1102

EWT Vision:

“A healthy planet and equitable world that values and sustains the diversity of all life”

Private Bag X11, Parkview 2122, South Africa. Telephone +27 (0) 11 486-1102; ewt@ewt.org.za;
www.ewt.org.za

The Gold Fields Environmental Centre, Johannesburg Zoological Gardens. Fax +27 (0) 11 486-1506
Member of IUCN, The World Conservation Union
Fund raising number: 015-502 NPO PBO Registration No 930 001 777