

Background information and species management guidelines

CONSERVATION GOAL:

To increase the population of African Wild Dogs in Namibia to more than 1,000 individuals through active management of the existing free-ranging population, and the establishment of a second viable population under protected area coverage, combined with structured reintroductions into large freehold conservancies and other wildlife areas.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS REQUIRED:

- Reintroduce African Wild Dogs to Etosha National Park and assist recolonisation to wildlife areas in Kunene Region;
- Limit human-induced persecution in the free-ranging population through environmental education, community outreach and law enforcement;
- Reduce road kills in wildlife areas through traffic calming measures;
- Maintain and improve prey densities in and around wildlife areas;
- Train local farming communities in the benefits of integrated livestock and predator management.

BEHAVIOUR & HABITAT:

- African Wild Dogs are highly social pack animals; hunting, breeding and dispersing in close cooperation with other pack members. Average pack size is 8 animals (range: 2 to over 30). A typical pack consists of an alpha (dominant) male and female, their siblings and related pairs of subordinate females and males.
- Home ranges average 560-750 km², but can exceed 3,000 km² in semi-arid habitats outside protected areas.
- African Wild Dogs are efficient and specialised predators, chasing prey to exhaustion at speeds of up to 65 km/h and killing them quickly through disembowelment. Prey are small to medium-sized antelopes e.g. steenbok and duiker, but they may also hunt species as small as hares and as large as adult kudu and wildebeest. They rarely scavenge.
- African Wild Dogs can live in all African ecosystems except rainforests and true deserts.

REPRODUCTION & POPULATION DYNAMICS:

Lifespan	Average 6-7 years in the wild
Gestation period	70 days
Seasonal breeding	Winter, in the Southern Hemisphere, but can be all year round
Sexual maturity	18 months but reproduction is dominated by an older alpha female who is usually over 3 years old
Breeding lifetime	3-4 years if the female maintains alpha dominance
Fecundity	A litter typically consists of 8-12 pups. A female produces one litter per year
Survival rate	1 in 3 pups die in their first year; adult mortality drops to 1 in 4 dogs per annum
Sex ratio (female:male)	In Namibia, 1:1.6
Density dependence	Unknown, since most populations are below carrying capacity

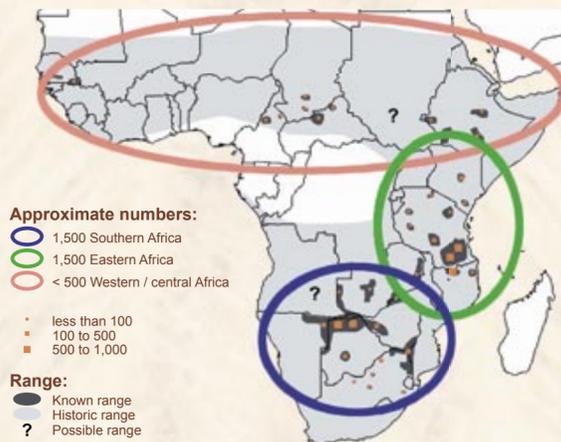


The alpha female and male pair dominate breeding. A beta female may occasionally breed but pup survival in a beta litter is low.

Under exceptional conditions, populations can increase quickly, recovering from localised extinction to medium densities in 5-7 years.



DISTRIBUTION IN AFRICA:



LIMITING FACTORS:

- Human-induced factors are the most significant threat. Direct and indirect persecution kills more than 50 wild dogs in Namibia every year. They are persecuted in livestock and game farming areas as a consequence of prejudice and misunderstanding;
- They are particularly susceptible to persecution during their breeding season when they need most protection;
- Persecuted packs are more likely to prey on livestock because their ability to hunt wild prey has been reduced. However, if wild prey are maintained, even at modest levels, and persecution is minimal, livestock predation is well within tolerable limits - typically 2-3% of total losses;
- In wildlife areas, competition for food with hyenas and lions can limit African Wild Dog numbers.

Human-induced persecution

Direct
shooting
poisoning
spearing
trapping
den burning

Indirect
road kills
prey reduction
domestic animal diseases

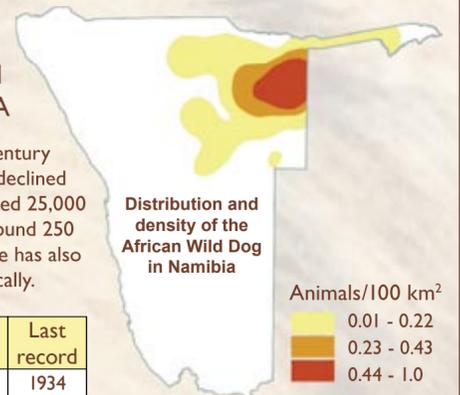
LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS:

Key stakeholders include Conservancies, Ministry of Environment and Tourism and local farming communities.



SITUATION IN NAMIBIA

Over the last century the population declined from an estimated 25,000 wild dogs to around 250 today. The range has also shrunk dramatically.



Area	Last record
Orange River	1934
Keetmanshoop	1940s
Maltahöhe	1944
Karibib	1958
Windhoek	1959
Namib-Naukluft	1969-70
Kunene	1975
Etosha National Park / North Central area	Mid 1980s

In 2008 Namibia's Wild Dog population was estimated at between 160 and 259 animals, with the population declining by 10% per annum.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AFRICAN WILD DOG:

- The African Wild Dog is the most endangered large mammal in Namibia and it is likely that our population will be reduced to <1% of historical numbers within 5 years. Immediate conservation intervention is needed to ensure the establishment of a viable population within Namibia's protected areas.
- Live trade and trophy hunting are not economically significant for this species; their economic significance is strongly linked to photographic tourism.
- Studies in Nyae Nyae Conservancy showed that tourists will pay over US\$100 per person/day to track dogs and visit denning areas. Estimates indicate that at least US\$80,000 per annum could be generated. The majority of income would benefit local communities through employment, training and other payments.
- It is estimated that reintroducing Wild Dogs to Etosha National Park could generate additional income of over US\$100,000 per annum.
- The benefits of African Wild Dog tourism to the Namibian economy could outweigh the costs of predation to farming communities by a factor of ten.



TRANSBOUNDARY CO-OPERATION:

Collaboration on conservation initiatives between Namibia, Botswana, Zambia, Angola and Zimbabwe is essential for maintaining genetic fitness and population viability across borders.



The Namibian Wild Dog Project

The Namibian Wild Dog Project was conceived by the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) in 2002 in response to a growth in local community complaints about African wild dogs following the progressive registration of Communal Conservancies in the Eastern Communal Lands.

The project's aim is to combine ecological, social and economic approaches to conservation, increasing the understanding of interactions between African wild dogs and humans, and finding ways of mitigating conflict and persecution. The project promotes stakeholder involvement in active management based on rigorous scientific enquiry, while engaging in environmental education and tourism development as a means of realising economic value.

The Wild Dog Project is a long term interdisciplinary study and conservation initiative under the management of Robin Lines and the NNF.

The Namibian Wild Dog Project, PO Box 245, Windhoek, Namibia
wilddog@mweb.com.na; www.nnf.org.na/wilddogproject.htm