



Painted Dog Conservation

Conservation through Action and Education

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Alpha female Tait (front right) with some of her Vundu Pack



PDC Project Update

Safe and Sound

Aurora and Gaia, the two females that were missing, have been found and they are safe and sound. We obviously could not rest, not knowing where they were, so managed to arrange for our friend and pilot Martin Henriksen to undertake an aerial search. As Martin left Harare on Friday morning, for the four our flight to Victoria Falls, we still had no idea where Aurora and Gaia were and presumed that a Victoria Falls to Hwange National Park search would be needed. Which is a vast area. It made sense to start in Victoria Falls though and we set up for several days of searching, with Ester again taking up the lead roll on the ground in Victoria Falls, with her husband Hans. Jealous had the Hwange side covered.

The first search flight began on Saturday morning after a few technical delays. Ester was in the plane with Martin and was amazed to get a signal from Auroras collar very quickly. They closed in on the signal and after only a hour they had the position of the dogs pinpointed. By Saturday afternoon they were on the ground, 60km from Victoria Falls, observing the two dogs. It was as simple as that. We still don't know how all of the ground searches and previous aerial search with the helicopter had failed to locate them but that didn't matter. They were fit and well. Unfortunately in a fairly hostile – anti dog area so Ester made the tough call to recapture them and on Sunday morning they were locked up again in their holding boma on the Victoria Falls Private Game Reserve. We are currently in discussion with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority about the possible relocation options, taking into account what will be best for the Aurora and Gaia as well as their species as a whole. Without going into too much science, these are Hwange dogs and Hwange has one of the highest genetic diversity of dogs on the continent. The Lowveld of Zimbabwe has one of the lowest genetic diversities of painted dogs on the continent,

so it is our hope that we will be moving Aurora and Gaia to the Lowveld, where they will find dispersing males and contribute significantly to their species survival.

I managed to make another long trip up to Mana Pools to check in on Tait and her Vundu pack. Despite the obvious lion pressure they are doing really well and the pack numbers 28 at the last count. It's hard to count 28 dogs. But it is such a wonderful sight to see them. The information on the ground from Nick Murray, owner of Vundu Camp and his staff, plus information gathered myself from some of the other camps indicates that there are certainly five, possibly six packs, utilizing Mana Pools, which amounts to roughly 100 dogs. Really fantastic and of course we hope to unravel the secrets of why they seem to do so well in Mana relative to other populations in the months ahead.

Back in Hwange we have been keeping a close eye on the Sibindimalisa and the Kutanga females, which to be honest is not difficult as they appear at our near our Rehabilitation Facility every week. The Sibindimalisa males spend time with the Kutanga females but they are still too young to be of real interest to Ester the Kutanga alpha female.

The best news however was the confirmed sightings of



Vusile. She and her mate have managed to beat the odds and raise five pups from last year and currently have three pups from this year. Statistically this is astonishing. Everything we know from Greg's research tells us that two adults can raise one pup at best. Unless they are exceptional adults, and we have always known that to be the case with Vusile.

Bright lights. Glimmers of hope that we cling to.



A Celebration of Painted Wolves

November 19th was Safari Soiree night, "A Celebration of Painted Wolves", promoted as "the" conservation event of the year. It was a truly fantastic fundraising and awareness event for PDC and Dr Rosemary Groom's Lowveld Wild Dog Project (LWDP). Over 200 people attended and the feedback has certainly confirmed that bold statement. The event was the inspiration of long time friend and wildlife artist, Lin Barrie. Supported by Jeremy Borg, of Painted Wolf Wine and a long list of Zimbabwe wildlife experts, operators and enthusiasts. It was a really great event and a tribute to the tremendous commitment to wildlife and its conservation that exists, despite what you read,



in Zimbabwe. I would like to take this opportunity to again thank everyone who contributed to the event and say how much I look forward to the next one!!!