



FREE ROAMING WILD DOG SUCCESSFULLY COLLARED

26th November 2013

Start

The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Programme (EWT-CCP) in partnership with Dr Peter Caldwell from Old Chapel Vet Clinic and helicopter pilot Lambert van der Westhuizen from West Dunes Aviation, recently darted and collared a member of one of the very few remaining free roaming packs of Wild Dogs in the country. This is particularly important for the EWT's efforts to conserve Wild Dogs as these free roaming Wild Dogs provide important genetic connectivity between the packs in South Africa and those in the rest of the region but have previously proven to be extremely difficult to dart or track.

"The African Wild Dog is South Africa's rarest carnivore, with less than 450 left in the whole country," said the EWT-CCP's Manager, Kelly Marnewick. "A small population of Wild Dogs occurs naturally in the northern parts of Limpopo. These dogs were not introduced by human beings to the area; they live outside of formal protected areas; and as a consequence they face continual threats from direct persecution and being killed on roads. Despite this, these Wild Dogs manage to persist in this environment and likely survive in the area because of the rugged terrain and their elusive nature. However, this also makes collecting data on these intrepid mavericks in order to conserve them almost impossible. That is why this collaring is such an exciting development for us!"

The pack that was sighted and collared had recently been frequently spotted in Lapalala Wilderness and staff on the reserve found a fresh kill on Thursday morning with Wild Dog spoor around it. The kill meant that the dogs, after consuming a big meal, would not be moving too far off and so Lapalala called the EWT-CCP and informed them about the full bellied carnivores in the area. In a stroke of further good luck Dr Peter Caldwell, an experienced wildlife veterinarian, and Lambert van der Westhuizen, a local helicopter pilot, were available and immediately rushed to Lapalala.

The Dogs were swiftly spotted from the helicopter and a male Wild Dog was darted. Darting a Wild Dog is no easy task as the dart area on the animal is roughly the size of an apple; the animals are running at full speed; and the down draft from the helicopter blades whips trees and vegetation around the Dogs into a blinding frenzy. Nevertheless, the team was successful and the Dog went down. He was loaded into the chopper and flown to the airstrip where the ground crew was waiting. A drip was put up to help the Dog recover quickly, the collar fitted and identification photos, measurements and genetic samples taken. Dr Caldwell gave him a health check and with

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The Endangered Wildlife Trust is a non-profit, public benefit organisation dedicated to conserving species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people.

NPO Number: 015-502, **PBO number:** 930 001 777, **Member of IUCN** - The International Union for Conservation of Nature
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everything in good order he was loaded back into the chopper. He was flown back to the area where he was darted, woken up and gleefully reunited with his pack mates.

We are all now waiting, with great anticipation, for the data to be collected on the secret lives of the free roaming Waterberg Wild Dogs. The collar will log GPS locations four times per day and these will be downloaded via satellites to a server and the researchers will be able to map the locations.

Many thanks to Lapalala Wilderness; Lambert van der Westhuizen from West Dunes Aviation; Dr Peter Caldwell from Old Chapel Vet Clinic; West Rand Honorary Rangers for sponsoring the collar; and the EWT Bosman Wild Dog Emergency Response Fund. The EWT Waterberg Wild Dog Project is supported by Jaguar-Land Rover South Africa, Land Rover Centurion, IQ Business Group & the West Rand Honorary Rangers.

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