



Kgalagadi Wild Dogs with Kalahari Research and Conservation

Are there wild dogs in the Kgalagadi? How many and if so where? How can we most effectively conserve them?



Figure 1. Wild dogs in the Kgalagadi just east of Mabuasahube about to start their evening hunt.

Yes, we can safely say with the work we have done so far that the Kgalagadi region of Botswana that there are “good” numbers of wild dogs given that they are not supposed to occur there. We have even found wild dog packs deep into the KTP and seen packs denning. We need a bit more time and more information before we can confidently estimate wild dog number across the landscape. Some of their behaviors we have observed have also been truly remarkable, plenty of nocturnal activity even with no moon light, and moving vast distances each night, often in excess of 40 km. Their prey species are variable ranging from hares, to steenboks, duiker, all the way up to Kudu and even gemsbok. We have seen where two wild dogs killed an adult hartebeest and watched packs successfully chasing down springbok at night. We have been able to individually identify wild dogs from photographs and are building up a

photographic data base. Wild dogs are still very rarely seen in the Nossob and we need to determine why this is?

We have started to also look at possible suitable actions that will help wild dogs in the region and also help farmers, some of whom suffer significant losses of livestock to the wild dog packs that move into farming areas. Things we are considering are early warning systems where farmers are made aware of collared wild dogs approaching their farms so that the wild dogs can be chased away. Using Conservation Performance Payment (CPP) schemes where communities and rural farmers receive direct payments linked to the numbers of wild dogs in their area may also work well. That way some money comes back into to help compensate rural farmers for livestock killed by wild dogs. We need more time to refine these ideas, fundraise for more resources but we will get there. Our wild dog conservation project in the Kgalagadi is still new and the vast size of the area, the sandy conditions, heat and off roading driving often at night are significant challenges we need to overcome to succeed . Our field team does takes strain with long periods in the bush, moving camp every night off road, no showering and difficult logistics but our team are experienced and have risen to these challenges.

We are planning to soon twin this project with supporting a local student from Botswana doing their masters or PhD alongside it. Already under KRC Botilo Tshimologo passed his masters on wild dogs in northern Botswana and recently published it in a good journal. We are now looking for another local student.



Botilo, examining a hartebeest that had been killed and eaten by wild dogs. He passed and published a paper from his masters on wild dogs under KRC and he is now working in lion conservation with CLAWS based in the Okavango Delta. We are searching for the next local student that we can support to also pass their masters or PhD on wild dogs.



Figure 2. Wild prey is their preference as is this hunted kudu in the Kgalagadi. However as wild prey numbers decrease, wild dog packs need to find other food sources and increasingly move into farming areas to do so.



Figure 3 . The best way to find wild dogs in this super sandy area is to use skilled trackers from the local communities to find wild dog spoor and then to track them.

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