

The African Wild Dog



The African Wild Dog, *Lycaon pictus*, also known as the **African Hunting Dog**, **Cape Hunting Dog**, **Painted Dog**, or **Painted Wolf**, is a carnivorous mammal of the Canidae family. The Afrikaans name for the African Wild dog is **Wildehond**, and in Swahili, **Mbwa mwitu**. It is the only species in the monotypic genus, *Lycaon*. They are, as their name indicates, found only in Africa, especially in scrub savanna and other lightly wooded areas.

The wild dog's Greek name means *painted wolf* and it is characteristic of the species that no two individuals have the same pattern of coat. Individuals can easily be recognized on the basis of their differing coat patterns. The pelage is an irregular pattern of black, yellow, and white. The wild dog is unusual among canids, due to the fact that they are the only species to lack dewclaws on the forelimbs.

Adults typically weigh between 17-36 kilograms (37-79 pounds). A tall, lean animal, they stand about 30 inches (75 cm) at the shoulder, with a head and body length averaging about 40 inches (100cm) and a tail of between 12 and 18 inches (30-45cm) Animals in southern Africa are generally larger than those in the east or west of the continent.

Wild dogs will reproduce any time of year, with a peak between March and June during the second half of the rainy season. 2-19 pups can be born per litter, though 10 is the most usual number. The time between births is usually 12-14 months, though it can also be as short as 6 months if all of the previous young die. Pups are usually born in an abandoned den dug by other animals such as aardvarks. Weaning takes place at about 10 weeks. After 3 months, the den is abandoned and the pups begin to run with the pack. At the age of 8-11 months they can kill small prey, but they are not proficient until about 12-14 months, at which time they can fend for themselves. Pups reach sexual maturity at the age of 12-18 months. Females will disperse from their birth

pack at 14-30 months of age and join other packs that lack sexually mature females. Males typically do not leave the pack they were born to.

Wild dogs are endangered, primarily because they use very large territories (and consequently can persist only in large wildlife protected areas) and they are strongly affected by competition with larger carnivores that rely on the same prey base, particularly lions and spotted hyenas. The dogs are also killed by livestock herders and game hunters, though they are typically no more (perhaps less) persecuted than other carnivores that pose more threat to livestock. Like other carnivores, wild dogs are sometimes affected by outbreaks of viral diseases such as rabies, distemper and parvovirus. Although these diseases are not more pathogenic or virulent for wild dogs, the small size of most wild dog populations makes them vulnerable to local extinction due to diseases or other problems.

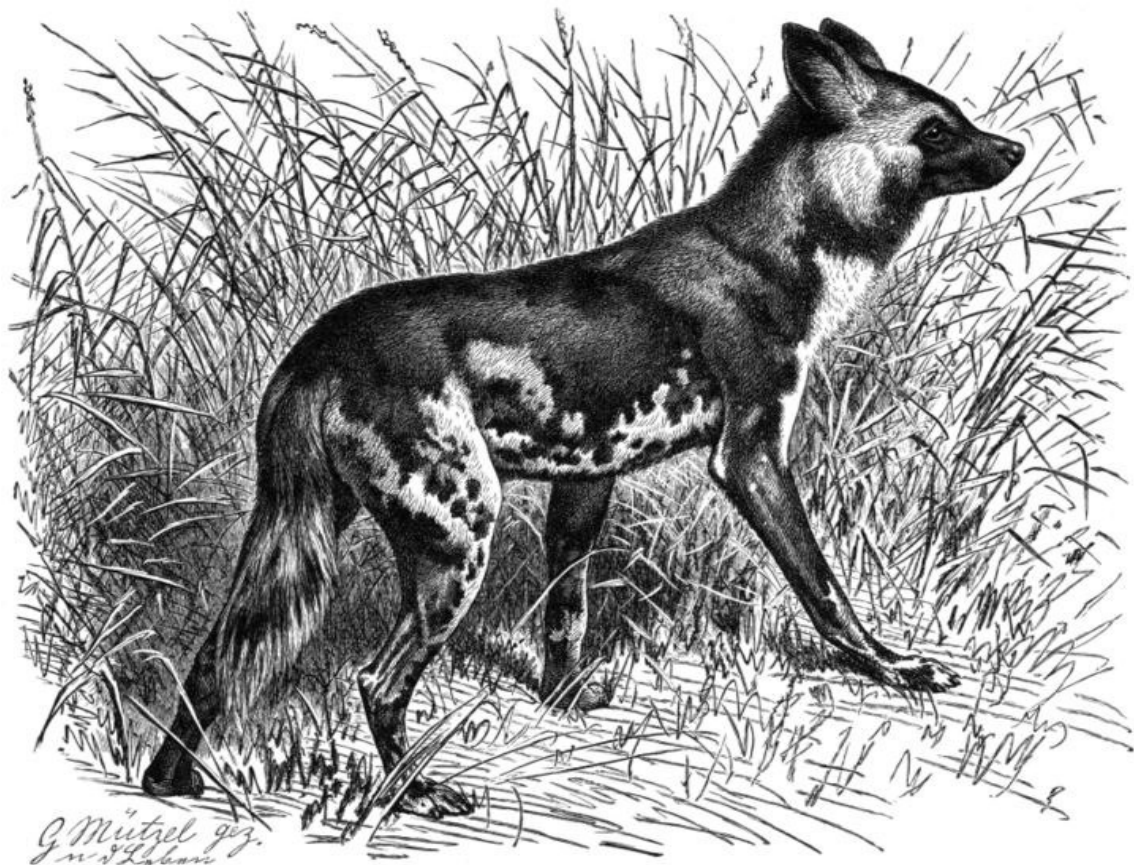
The current estimate for remaining wild dogs in the wild is approximately 3,000. Of these, the majority live in the two remaining large populations associated with the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania and the population centered in northern Botswana and eastern Namibia. Smaller but apparently secure populations of several hundred individuals are found in Zimbabwe, South Africa (Kruger National Park) and in the Ruaha/Rungwa/Kisigo complex of Tanzania. Isolated populations persist in Zambia, Kenya and Mozambique.

The African Wild Dog is primarily found in the eastern and southern portions of Africa. They were once found in 39 nations with an estimated population of 500,000 dogs. Now of the 39 countries only 25 remain with an estimated population of 3,000 dogs. It was not uncommon to find packs of 100 or more but now they are listed as the second most endangered carnivore in Africa. They are listed as a critical risk by the San Diego Zoo.

Habitat loss and hunting are the main reasons for their endangerment. Along with human expansion comes more

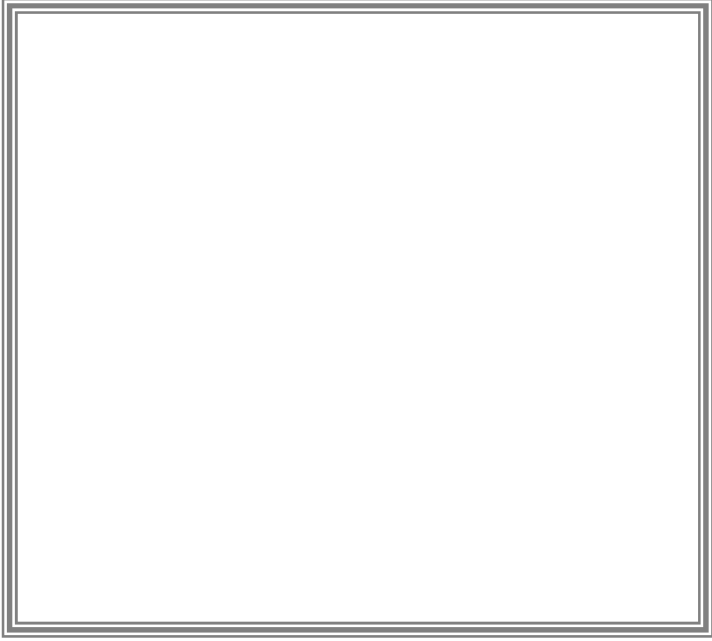
farming and ranching needs. Most of Africa's National Parks are not large enough for even one pack of African Wild Dogs so they have to expand to the unprotected regions of the continent which tends to be ranching or farming land. This makes ranchers and farmers uneasy, so in order to defend their domestic animals they kill the Wild Dogs, significantly contributing to the high percentage of death.

The people of Africa are realizing the problem and the near extinction of the African Wild Dog and have established a conservation effort called Painted Dog Conservation or PDC. It is based in Hwange National Park in western Zimbabwe. The group works with local communities to create new strategies for conserving the wild dog and its habitat.





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Handwriting practice lines consisting of ten horizontal dashed lines.

Main body of handwriting practice lines consisting of fifteen horizontal dashed lines.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 18 horizontal dashed lines on a white background.

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