

# THE WILD DOG WATCH CAMPAIGN



## THE TANZANIA CARNIVORE PROJECT

The Tanzania Carnivore Project at the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI) is funded by the Zoological Society of London and the British Government through their Darwin Initiative. It aims to build the capacity of the TAWIRI to monitor and conserve carnivores, with a special emphasis on Cheetahs and Wild Dogs, two threatened species of which Tanzania holds globally important populations.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP US MONITOR WILD DOGS

Wild dogs are in decline across Africa. Once demonised and persecuted, they are now seen for what they are – amazing hunters with a complex social life. However they range widely and today they are one of the most endangered carnivores in Africa.

Their endangered status means that it is especially important for us to be able to monitor their numbers so that we can anticipate and hopefully prevent further declines. However in order to do this we need your help...

Your photographs of the wild dogs you see on your safari can help us to keep track of wild dogs in Tanzania. Each wild dog can be individually recognised from photographs through unique white and tan blotches on its coat. If you send us your photographs of as many members of each pack you see as possible, together with some rudimentary information about where and when you saw your wild dogs, you will help us to monitor wild dogs across the country. In return we can tell you whether the wild dogs you see on your safari are known to us, and if so a little of their history.

## RECOGNISING INDIVIDUAL WILD DOGS

The tan and white markings on wild dogs are unique for each individual. Look at the two different wild dogs below – and see if you can tell them apart:

A)



B)



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please help us to monitor wild dogs in Tanzania by sending us your photographs and filling in the form below for each group of wild dogs seen:

Your Name .....

Your Address.....

Email .....

When did you see the wild dogs? .....

In which park or region in Tanzania did you see the wild dogs?

How many wild dogs did you see in the group?.....

What was the sex of the wild dogs you saw (if known)?

If there were pups with the wild dogs you saw how big were they (please tick box)?

Less than half size..... Half size.....

Three-quarter size..... Full-grown .....

What was the name of your safari company and guide?

Where did you see the wild dogs? Please give a rough location?

Where did you pick up this leaflet?

Please sign below if you consent for us to post your sighting on the web on [www.tanzaniacarnivores.org](http://www.tanzaniacarnivores.org):

Signature .....  
(this allows us to inform you about the wild dogs you have seen)

By signing this form I hereby give permission to the Tanzania Carnivore Project to post my name and sighting information on their web site, and I agree to indemnify and hold them harmless from any and all liability, cost or damage arising from their use of my name and sighting information on their web site.

Please send your form and photographs to:  
**Tanzania Carnivore Project, TAWIRI, Box 661,  
Arusha, Tanzania**  
**Or email photos to [carnivores@habari.co.tz](mailto:carnivores@habari.co.tz)**

## WILD DOG CONSERVATION



Wild dogs used to be widespread across Africa, and were found in all habitats except rainforest and desert. However most of the wild dogs surviving today are concentrated in protected areas in sub-Saharan Africa. Few areas hold more than 100 individuals.

Tanzania is a critical country for wild dog conservation, as it holds the largest population of wild dogs in the world, including the largest single population in the Selous Game Reserve. However, despite protection, the world-wide population continues to decline due to habitat loss, persecution and disease.

### SOME INFORMATION ABOUT WILD DOGS

Whilst wild dogs have a social system similar to that of wolves, they are only distantly related to other canid species, and are the sole species in the *Lycaon* genus.

### ECOLOGY AND BEHAVIOUR

Wild dogs are most often found in wooded savannah, although they can be seen in habitat ranging from open grassland to thick bush. They live in packs ranging from 2-30 dogs, made up of a combination of adults and yearlings and males and females. Including puppies, packs as big as 56 dogs have been seen. Packs cover large areas, with yearly home ranges usually between 200-600km<sup>2</sup>. Despite their large ranges, they are territorial and packs invariably fight if they encounter one another. Wild dogs are always found at low density, probably because of competition from larger carnivores such as lions and spotted hyaenas.

## REPRODUCTION

Like wolves, usually only the dominant or alpha male and female in a pack reproduce. The alpha female is usually the oldest in the group, and she gives birth in a den after a 3-month pregnancy. The timing of birth varies among ecosystems, depending on patterns of prey availability. The pups are kept at the den for the first 3 months of their life. The alpha female generally stays with the pups to guard them, sometimes with another member of the pack, while the other members of the pack leave the den twice a day to hunt. When they return to the den, the pups and their mother solicit food, and all members of the pack regurgitate food for them. Wild dog pups leave the den once they are 3 months and travel with the pack, joining them at kills. They are usually allowed to eat first at a kill, while the rest of the pack waits until they have finished eating before feeding themselves.

Once they reach adulthood, the new pups may choose to remain with their natal pack, or disperse. Wild dogs generally disperse in single sex groups, and either make contact and join another pack, or meet another set of opposite sex dogs and form a new pack. They are old enough to reproduce after 2 years, but rarely do so until they have achieved sufficient status in the dominance hierarchy.

## HUNTING

Wild dogs are active at dawn and dusk. They are coursing predators, which means that they kill after running down their prey, in their case after a hunt that averages about 600 meters. They kill through disembowelment, There has been a lot of contention over their killing technique, and this has led to their demonisation and persecution and much of their elimination from their former range. Fortunately, today such prejudices are disappearing, and people now acknowledge the important role these remarkable predators play in the ecosystem. Because their hunting technique focuses on weaker prey (unlike stalking predators that rely on surprise rather than endurance), wild dogs tend to remove the old and sick, and hence keep prey populations healthy.

Wild dogs take a wide range of prey from hares to adult zebra or juvenile buffalo, many times their body weight. However in most areas, impala and wildebeest are the most commonly taken prey. Wild dogs often lose their kills to spotted hyaenas where the density of these predators is high. They very rarely scavenge, possibly because of the danger of meeting other large carnivores at kills.

## WILD DOG FRIENDLY WATCHING

We hope you are lucky enough to see wild dogs during your stay in Tanzania. If you do, then please help them by making use of wild dog friendly watching practices. The national parks and game reserves in Tanzania are a sanctuary for the wild dog, where they should be free of persecution at all times.

Wild dogs are fascinating to watch. Because they are very social, individuals communicate with other members of the pack constantly, through sound, smell and body language. However, when watching them, please ensure you keep your impact on them to a minimum through a few simple rules:

1. *Never drive directly at wild dogs.* Approach slowly at an angle or in a zig-zag fashion.
2. *Pause frequently as you approach and observe through binoculars.* Make sure you do not drive into the middle of a pack by accident, separating members of the pack from each other.
3. *Always keep quiet in the vicinity of wild dogs and try to keep vehicle movements to a minimum.* Wild dogs need their rest time.
4. *Be very careful when driving through areas with wild dogs and keep to the speed limits.* Many wild dogs die on roads - killed by people driving too fast.

If you see harassment of wild dogs by other visitors then please note the number plate of the vehicle and report them to parks or game reserve staff.

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This campaign is supported by the Darwin Initiative, the Zoological Society of London and the Wildlife Conservation Society.



**If you would like more information about this project please visit our web site on:**

[www.tanzaniacarnivores.org](http://www.tanzaniacarnivores.org)

**or email us at:**

[carnivores@habari.co.tz](mailto:carnivores@habari.co.tz)