



# Endangered Wildlife Trust

[www.ewt.org.za](http://www.ewt.org.za)

Member of the IUCN – World Conservation Union

## Media Release

8 November 2007

Starts

### **AFRICAN WILD DOGS CROSS BORDERS**

**On Tuesday, 6 November 2007, a pack of 18 African Wild Dogs was translocated from Marakele National Park (South Africa) to the Northern Tuli Game Reserve (NTGR, Botswana). The pack, which was donated by South African National Parks (SANParks), was transported to Botswana by road using Land Rover vehicles which were provided as part of Land Rover's ongoing commitment to Wild Dog conservation. This is part of a long-established partnership between the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Group (EWT-CCG) and Land Rover South Africa. It is intended that this reintroduction will facilitate the establishment of a viable population of Wild Dogs in the Limpopo Valley, specifically within that part earmarked for incorporation into the recently proclaimed Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area.**

The African Wild Dog is southern Africa's most endangered carnivore, with fewer than 500 individuals occurring in South Africa, most of which occur in the Kruger National Park. A Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) held for the African Wild Dog in Southern Africa in 1997 recommended the expansion of the Wild Dog's range by reintroducing packs into several protected areas across the country. To date, nine Wild Dog subpopulations have been established, including those in Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park, Madikwe Game Reserve, Pilanesberg National Park and the De Beers Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve. Management of these populations is the responsibility of the Wild Dog Advisory Group ([www.ewt.org.za/wag/](http://www.ewt.org.za/wag/)), a voluntary association of scientists and managers.

Wild Dogs were first reintroduced into Marakele National Park in May 2003 when a pack of 16 Wild Dogs were released into the park. Since then, the population has fluctuated between 21- 41 individuals in 1-2 packs, comprising between 13% and 22% of the Wild Dogs in protected areas outside Kruger. This subpopulation has also provided 17 Wild Dogs as founders for reintroductions to other sites across the country including Balule Game Reserve and Mkhuze Game Reserve.

Despite the success of the Wild Dogs at Marakele, this population remained vulnerable. The park is completely predator-fenced, however it contains mountainous and extremely inaccessible terrain, with many water-courses that make fence maintenance extremely difficult. As a result a number of Wild Dog breakouts were recorded. In an attempt to alleviate the resulting conflict with neighbouring landowners, and to safeguard the pack, SANParks made the decision to capture and relocate the pack in May 2007.

**EWT Vision:**

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“A healthy planet and equitable world that values and sustains the diversity of all life!”

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Fund raising number: 015-502 NPO PBO Registration No 930 001 777

At a meeting of the Wild Dog Advisory Group in June 2007 it was recommended that the pack be relocated to the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, situated in the far eastern corner of Botswana where South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana meet. The 72,000 hectare reserve supports high numbers of impala and relatively low lion densities – making it an imminently suitable area for the reintroduction of African Wild Dogs.

By early November the import/export permits had been approved by the relevant authorities in Botswana and South Africa. Land Rover South Africa had committed to providing transport in the form of three Land Rovers as well as pledging financial support for this complex relocation.

At dawn on 6 November, the scientific and technical team – comprising EWT-CCG and Land Rover staff, Marakele Pty Ltd staff and volunteers, and the SANParks veterinary team headed up by Dr. Peter Buss – met up at the Marakele bomas. All 18 animals were quickly sedated and loaded into individual transport crates and by 09h30 the six-vehicle convoy was underway. The Wild Dogs crossed into Botswana through the Grobler's Bridge border post, where they were met by Pete le Roux of NOTUGRE. They arrived safely at the holding boma in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve just before sunset – in time for a daylight release.

The pack will spend the next 2-3 months in the boma before being released into the reserve. Prior to their release they will be fitted with tracking collars to enable researchers to closely monitor the success of this reintroduction.

The Northern Tuli Game Reserve comprises the Botswana section of the newly proclaimed Limpopo-Shashe Transfrontier Conservation Area. "The reintroduction of Wild Dogs represents an ideal opportunity to establish a viable population of this endangered large carnivore in the region", said Harriet Davies-Mostert, Manager of the EWT-CCG. "The neighbouring population of Wild Dogs on the De Beers Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve – just a few kilometres south of Tuli as the crow flies – should provide substantial opportunities for natural pack formations in the this important conservation area."

Thanks to South African National Parks, Marakele Pty Ltd, Northern Tuli Game Reserve, Land Rover South Africa and Dan the Trailer Man for contributing towards Wild Dog conservation in southern Africa.

Photographs are available on request.

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