



Ninth Update – 30 November 2008

Wild Dogs visit South Africa & Zimbabwe

The pack of wild dogs recently spent two weeks exploring the opposite side of the Limpopo River, in South Africa. There is plenty of suitable habitat in this area, and much of it is scheduled to be included in the Transfrontier Conservation Area.

Unfortunately there is also farming closer to the river, with many of the farmers not being amenable to the presence of the dogs. This is particularly sad given that most do not own livestock but instead grow crops, vegetables or citrus. The dogs moved around parts of the Mapangubwe National Park and Little Muck reserve. They also crossed the main road to Mussina and briefly visited Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve. These areas have lower prey densities than the Northern Tuli Game Reserve and the dogs were a bit on the skinny side by the time they returned home. They crossed back into Botswana in the early hours of Wednesday 5 November and fed on a young eland soon thereafter.

They set out later in the afternoon and within 1km of where they had been resting, encountered three eland calves all on their own. The dogs killed and ate all three within 30 metres of each other, and then had very full bellies once again! Two male dogs, about 18 months of age, did not return from South Africa. We are not sure whether they dispersed from the pack or were killed somehow. The pack now numbers 11 adults and 12 pups.

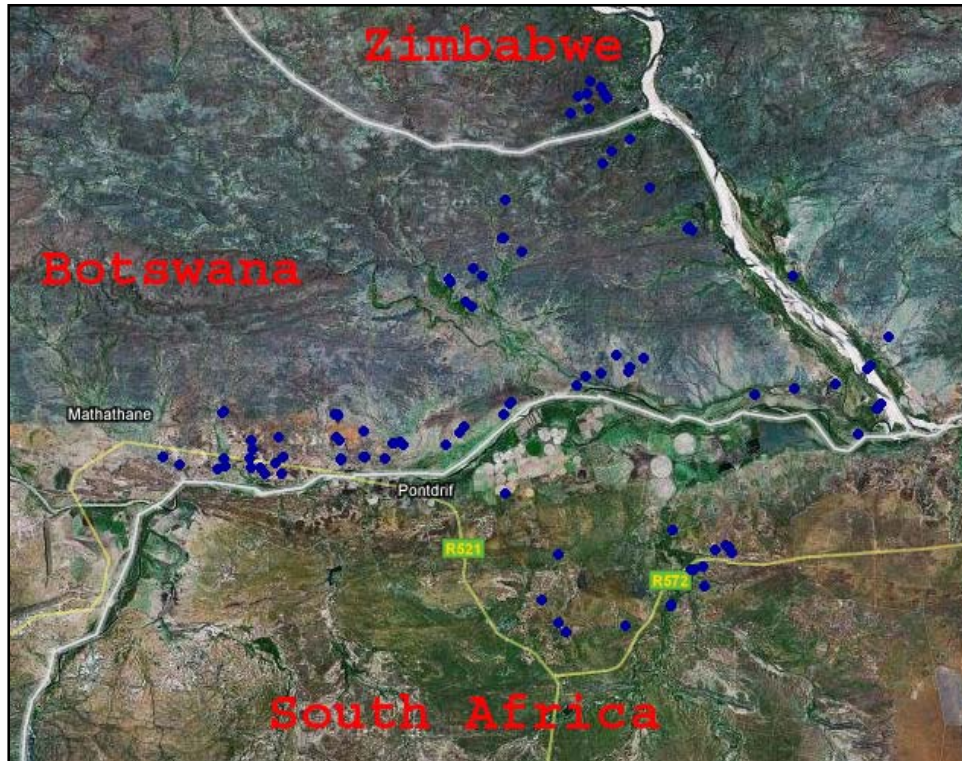
Background to NTGR Wild Dog Project

A pack of 18 wild dogs was reintroduced to the Northern Tuli Game Reserve in November 2007. Initially held in an enclosure, the pack was released on 5 April 2008. The project aims to establish a viable pack of this endangered species within the Limpopo Valley region of eastern Botswana. A research programme has been established in addition to a community outreach initiative, educating local communities about wild dogs, predators and conservation in general.



PROJECT PARTNERS





The Blue circles on the map indicate the areas visited by the wild dogs during the past month.

After moving back into the reserve, the dogs headed west up to the BioBoundary, where they then turned back east. Further evidence of the dogs picking up on and responding to the chemical cues in the field. They then gradually moved east, more or less along the Limpopo River. After spending a short time in the Shalimpo and Charter regions of the reserve, they moved across the Shashe River into Zimbabwe. They did not stay there long though, and continued moving northwards, eventually entering the Tuli Circle area in Zimbabwe. They spent about two days there before moving a long distance back into

the central region of Mashatu. Here they were seen killing five impala in a single afternoon! Unfortunately the impala ewes are close to giving birth so when the dogs catch a female you often see the unborn impala kicking before its is eaten. The Horse Safari guests also got to see some of the action from the saddle. The dogs denned very close to Horse Safaris and became very accustomed to seeing the horses out in the bush, so are not perturbed by their presence.



Photo by Bashi



The reserve received the first rain of the season during the past few weeks. The dusty landscape is now rapidly changing into a lush, green environment. Both the pups and adults have enjoyed playing in the mud puddles and often chase each other back and forth through the water.

The good rain also means that the scent marks deployed as part of the BioBoundary experiment have probably been largely washed away. We should be receiving a fresh batch of frozen scent marks from Dr Tico McNutt within the next few days. This will allow us to reinforce the areas that we previously demarcated, as well as focus on new areas as the need arises. The dogs have now had one short visit across the Shashe River into the Maramani communal area, and we would rather this not happen again, so this would be the ideal place to further test the effectiveness of the BioBoundary.





Thank you

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, the Land Rover Club of Southern Africa kindly donated a set of tyres and rims to the project. The tyres were handed over at a function in Johannesburg at the end of October. The old tyres had worked hard and needed replacing. Thanks again to Mike Illsley and the club for the valuable contribution to the project.

Email list

Should you have received this update “via the grapevine” and would like me to email it to you directly in future, please send me an email (crjackson@zoology.up.ac.za) and I will add you to the mailing list. Please note that I do not have regular email contact and may not respond to email for several weeks at time, and this also hampers getting regular updates out.

Until next time,
All the best

Craig Jackson



Disclaimer

I have compiled this document as a means to update interested persons on the current happenings of the NTGR wild dog project. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, its landowners, or the project partners and/or sponsors.