



## **Wild Dog update September 2010.**

By Dewald van Wyk

When the necessary permits for the research and my resident permit finally came through in the beginning of September, I was anxious to return to Mashatu and catch up with the wild dogs. A lot has happened with the wild dogs over the last few weeks. The wild dogs ran into some trouble during my absence and we got a report that the pack was seen with two dogs having snares around their necks. The wild dogs cover large distances, bringing them into contact with people and their activities, including wire snares set for bush meat purposes. Sometimes when they get caught in a snare they are able to break the wire from its anchoring point around the tree, but in the struggle to break free the wire gets pulled tighter and finally starts cutting into the neck, which could be a fatal injury. Luckily the dogs were located and could be treated. Unfortunately both dogs received very severe cuts into their necks. The one dog was cut so deep that the trachea was cut open! A very serious injury and we thought that the chances of survival were slim for that young female!

Below: Deep incision into the neck muscle from the snare.



Below: The other female with an open trachea from the snare.

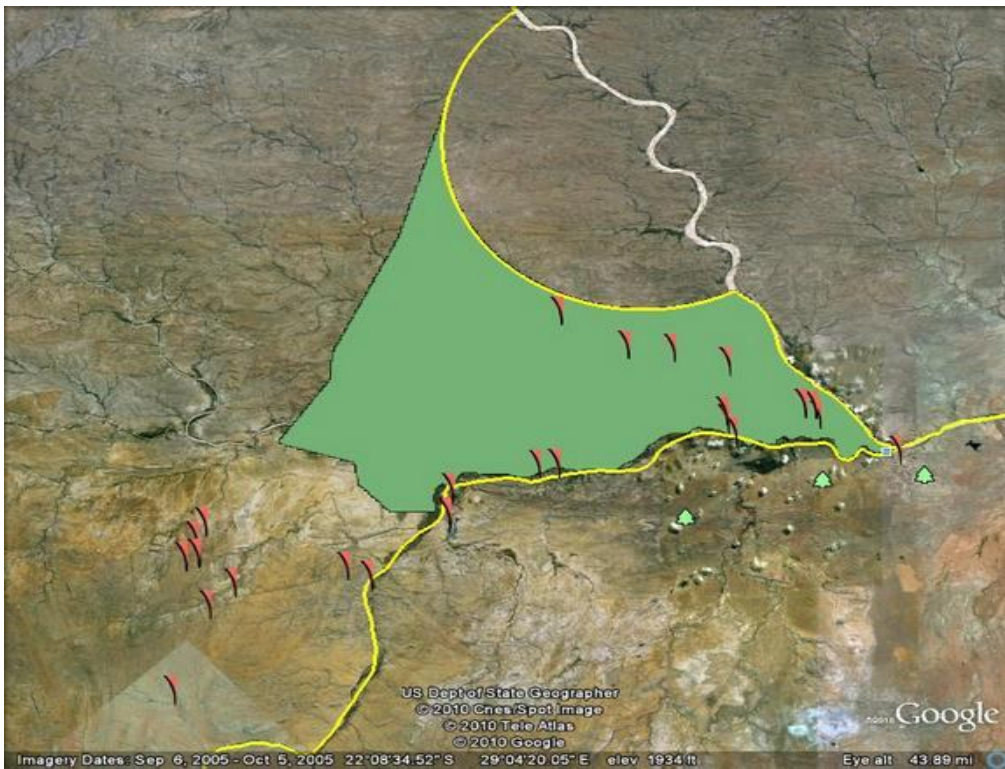


Just after the snaring incident the dogs moved all the way to the south - eastern part of the reserve. They moved up north all along the border of the reserve and the border of their territory, and then made a semi circle before heading west again. This behavior, where they cover large distances all along their boundary of their territory was noted in the past when the young adult dogs were ready to disperse. They disperse in order to hopefully find other dogs in the surrounding areas and in this way new packs are formed.

Not long after that we got a report that five male wild dogs were now in Limpopo-Lipadi Game Reserve and were seen with the alpha female from that reserve. This reserve had a wild dog pack that they reintroduced earlier this year. It seems like the five males chased away the resident males from that area and bonded with the female there.



The dogs movement before the dispersing event (The Northern Tuli Game Reserve shown in green).



There are currently no working collars on the Northern Tuli Game Reserve pack. The alpha female's collar battery died about two months ago due to old age and the other two adult dogs (Tuli and Kalahari) that were fitted with new collars earlier this year are not with the pack any more. These two dogs sadly either dispersed, or it is possible that they died. This is rather unfortunate and means that I can't monitor the dogs actively now. It is only possible to follow up on sightings from them. Hopefully we will get a sighting of them soon and will be able to get to them to deploy new collars. This is very important for monitoring the wild dogs and for the research! The wild dogs have mainly been using the south-western part of the reserve for the last six months and there are sightings of them every now and then.

The pack currently comprises only five dogs after the dispersing events (Cairo, Namib, one young male and two young females from last years litter). Amazingly the two young dogs with the snare injuries survived and are still in the pack and seem to be doing well!

Below: Alpha female with the failed collar and the young female with the scar from the snare.

