



## THE NORTHERN TULI WILD DOG PROJECT

*Craig Jackson*

### The Dogs have pups!

Towards the end of June, after a long wait, the wild dogs finally selected a den site and both the pregnant females have subsequently given birth. The second female gave birth about 9 days after the first pups were born. To date we have not seen the pups. The den is located in the riverine vegetation approximately 1km east of the Pond Drift border post, very close to Rock Camp. This is a great relief considering how far the dogs have travelled during the past three months. The dogs typically get active during the early morning and late afternoon, heading out in search of food and returning thereafter. They normally stick close to the Limpopo River, and the thick bush sometimes makes following them a little difficult. The dogs are continuing to hunt very well and appear to be in great condition. On one of their recent hunts they killed a Kudu bull (approximately three years old) against the fence of their old enclosure... They chased the kudu into the fence and I suspect that he broke his back because when we saw the animal approximately a minute after the chase, he was very much alive, but was only able to lift and move his head. It was not very pleasant to watch and it took close on 15 minutes for him to finally die. The dogs were quite cautious of his big horns at first, and many just lay down close by while a few dogs starting feeding from the rear. *Photograph courtesy of Roger de la Harpe.*



### Build-up to the denning period

We were very anxious to see exactly where the dogs would decide to den as they would typically remain around this area for approximately three months. With both females very pregnant, the dogs moved a long distance to the south west, once again leaving the reserve's boundaries. They used the full moon and slipped under the radar; for two days I did not know where they were. When I did manage to locate them, they were resting at a burrow that they had been excavating that very same morning... It appeared that they had decided to den here, about an hours drive from Pont Drift, well outside the reserve. After establishing that neither of the females had yet given birth, I deployed a few seats around the burrow in an attempt to encourage them to move elsewhere. At the time the pack was resting about 100m away. A favourable breeze carried the scent straight towards the dogs, and evoked an immediate response. After much sniffing, the dogs hoo-called, then rallied together as they do before going out to hunt, and proceeded to move approximately 2km north! This took place at about 11am when the dogs would normally just be resting and not move anywhere. Three days and at least 30km later, the Alpha female gave birth at the current den sight!

En route back to the reserve the dogs passed through the agricultural fields at Tulana Farms and managed to once again kill an impala in a fence alongside the farm. The following day the pack had moved a long distance east, and rested about 2km west of Tuli Lodge. They proceeded to the Pont Drift area, found their desired den sight, and have been around there ever since.

Mashatu



Research  
Botswana



#### **Future Updates**

Wild dogs pups only start venturing above ground after about a month. Hopefully I will be able to provide some photos in the next update!

#### **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 ([erjackson@zoology.up.ac.za](mailto:erjackson@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.