

Project Update April 2007:

We have successfully caught the surviving Mashambo pup.

After last months bitter disappointments, April ended on a high note with our man Jealous (who else) capturing the Mashambo pup, with the significant help of our visiting vet nurses, Lesley and Kate, not to mention Xmas and our Rehab staff.

We were getting worried. Actually that's a huge understatement, as the pup had been "missing" for almost two weeks and we were losing hope. To our immense relief he turned up, looking very hungry but otherwise in remarkably good shape. He had somehow avoided the larger predators, who would kill him, and must have managed to eat something during those weeks. Our plan was to feed him the moment he turned up, in the hope that he would relax, perhaps sensing that being in the vicinity of our rehab was the safest place to be. Our rehab "inmates" even seemed to play their part, showing no aggression towards him, rather making the comforting sounds, which we often hear between a mother and her pups. To make sure we had the edge, we placed tranquilizing tablets in the meat we gave him and then waited.

After an hour or so, it was apparent that the harmless drugs had worked. The pup lay, not sleeping, but very relaxed, near the fence line, so Jealous, Xmas and the team proceeded to set up a couple of capture nets, working their way behind the pup in the process. Without any noise or fuss they then walked towards him. As we had hoped, he got to his feet but only walked forward, in a rather drunken fashion, into the nets. Jealous quickly moved in to hold him while the immobilizing injection was administered. Within minutes he was examined, a few minor injuries treated and placed in the rehab enclosure. Another injection and he was wide awake, though still very "relaxed" thanks to the tranquilizers.

We were delighted. This unprecedented action was justified without doubt as he would have died if left alone in the wild. Painted Dogs only reach maturity and are considered able to fend for themselves at 18 months of age, he was only 9 months old.

Our intention is to integrate him quickly with our two other males, Londoloji and Ulaka, and thus prepare him for release back into the wild as part of a strong (in numbers anyway) pack. Once this integration process has been achieved, he will go with Londoloji and Ulaka to Starvation Island, along with the three Pilansberg females we still hold. These six dogs will then spend a year or more on the island adjusting to life in the wild, gaining hunting experience in a relatively safe environment for them and one where we can keep a close eye on them, to make sure all is going well.

Such is the life we lead at Painted Dog Conservation. Front line conservation work, which delivers blows that knock you to your knees and highs you dare not dream about. PDC staff have adopted Greg's determination and spirit never to give up. For some of us, like Jealous, it's an inherent quality. An unconquerable spirit that kept Greg alive.

Behind the headlines we have a great staff, lead by Forggie Wilson, who keep equally significant aspects of the project, such as the Children's Bush Camp and Anti Poaching Unit's rolling along. Making Painted Dog Conservation the "Model" that it is.