

**Painted Dog Conservation (PDC):**  
**Rehabilitation Facility**  
**Update 2007**

**Narrative:**

The PDC Rehabilitation Facility became operational in October 2002. Designed and built under the supervision of John Lemon, the facility allows the organisation to deal effectively with any eventuality concerning compromised or translocated dogs. A main enclosure, 600m in diameter, a 100m in diameter medium term enclosure and a small intensive management enclosure, are all linked via a series of raceways to facilitate the movement of individuals with minimum handling.

**Goals and Objectives.**

- The facility was constructed as part of the National Conservation Strategy for the species.
- The rationale behind this is based on the organisations ethos that animals in the wild should not suffer and so where such suffering is identified it should be ameliorated.
- Thus a prime objective is to cater for all dogs that need holding while they recover from injuries that they would not be able to cope with in the wild.
- Research has shown that the dogs are obligate co-operators, thus the loss of one individual can affect survival of the whole pack.
- In the wild, whilst injured dogs are recuperating, these dogs are a burden on their packs not only from the point of the loss of an able helper, but as a consequence of the need to assist that individual.
- The ultimate goal is to return the individual to its pack once it is fully recovered and can once more make a valuable contribution to their family unit.
- PDC has had to deal with pups orphaned as a consequence of natural or anthropogenic events, thus a further objective of the facility is pack formation of none related individuals.
- The facility has been designed in such away to meet the aim of being able to rotate these individuals through alternate enclosures, which is a recognised procedure essential for pack formation. The ultimate goal is to reintroduce these individuals back into the wild.
- The third and final objective of the facility is to provide a half way house for packs translocated for their own safety as a consequence of hostile landowners. The aim being to hold the pack in a safe environment for an extended period of time prior to the ultimate goal of releasing them back into the wild.

- The addition of a squeeze cage in 2005 facilitates the administration of any necessary drugs and sample taking.

### **Conservation Impact:**

The facility has huge significance for the species both from a point of view of keeping numbers up, as well as ensuring that whole packs are not decimated. This significance being endorsed by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (dept National Parks) who see the facility as being an essential element in the National Management Plan for the species. At the same time the facility also serves to educate and improve local perceptions of the dogs as supervised visits are arranged as well as the facility forming part of PDC's education programme, conducted at the organisations Children's Bush Camp.

The well-publicised socio economic situation in Zimbabwe is placing an even greater strain on the countries natural resources. Poaching remains a constant threat to all wildlife, but in particular the painted dogs. Confusion and uncertainty prevail on many private wildlife estates, thus increasing the need for active conservation management strategies, which include such a rehabilitation / holding facility for this highly endangered species.

### **Activities:**

Arguably the most significant event to date concerning the rehab was the successful re introduction of 4 painted dogs back into the wild. This took place in two stages in 2005. The first step was to find a suitable release site, which was achieved in March 2005, with the identification and selection of the inappropriately named Starvation Island, on Lake Kariba. The Island is some 2.5 x 1.5 km in size and is over populated with Impala, Waterbuck and Kudu. In consultation with the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (DNPWMA), we release the dogs onto the Island in April 2005.

Apart from the abundance of prey available, the most significant aspect for the dogs was the lack of any other predator. The dogs soon adapted and made their first kill after only two days. We were delighted at such a success. We stayed with the dogs for several days monitoring their progress, but it was hardly necessary.

Regular follow up visits were made throughout the following months until October, when decided to recapture the dogs and move them on to the main land. A relatively smooth operation lasting some five days resulted in the dogs move to the mainland and a new life. Regular, though infrequent, reports still come in of the four dogs being seen in the region.

In June 2006 the rehab became the home to 16 painted dogs from Pilansberg National Park in South Africa. The Management of the park contacted PDC requesting our assistance with finding a home for these dogs, which were considered "surplus to requirements" in SA and faced the possibility of euthanasia. We were astonished with this statement. We approached DNPWMA who produced the necessary import permits and after many more months of negotiating we finally drove down to South Africa and collected the dogs.

We held the 16 at the rehab until October 2006, knowing that it is essential to house them for such a period of time so that they lose the desire to travel back to their “home”. We learnt this lesson in 1997, when we translocated a pack from farmland outside Bulawayo to Matusadona NP. A journey of some 700km by road, 450 km in a straight line. Some of the dogs escaped from the holding boma (which we had not built !!) on the first night and in 2001 we caught them again on the same farmland!!!

When we released the 16 dogs in October, they split into two groups. To our surprise 5 stayed right next to the rehab, while the other 11 moved away. One of the 5 died, the post mortem showing no sign of disease or reason why. The remaining 4 walked back into the rehab two days later when we were preparing meat for the resident “inmates”. These four have now been integrated with our resident dogs and will be released onto Starvation Island in August. 6 of the other 11 are still alive and well. Two were killed by lions, while the other three have simply disappeared out of the area.

In March, I reported on the demise of the Mashambo pack following the death of the alpha male. One surviving pup turned up at the rehab in April looking very hungry but otherwise ok. We took the drastic decision to capture him, knowing full well that a nine month old pup can not survive on his own. He has already been integrated into our “rehab pack” and thus will be part of the re introduction planned for Starvation Island in August.

### **The Next Phase:**

- Is the construction of a Veterinary Clinic. Here injured dogs will be treated in situ rather than having to endure a 4 hour journey to the nearest veterinary practise in the town of Bulawayo.
- A laboratory for processing samples will be housed at the clinic
- Fridges and freezers for storage of these samples will also be housed in the clinic.
- The clinic will also serve as an office for the rehab staff and provide a suitable reception area for visitors
- A cold room will form part of the clinic construction for the safe storage of meat and food supplies for the dogs.

### **Budget: Clinic Construction.**

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT OUTSTANDING	SECURED FUNDS FROM OTHER SOURCES	TOTAL PROJECT COST
Building of Clinic: To include gum poles, wire mesh, cement, and asbestos sheets	US\$ 4000	US\$ 10000	US\$ 14000
Cold Room	US\$ 2500	US\$ 1900	US\$ 4400
Wiring & plumbing	US\$ 500	0	US\$ 500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>US\$ 7000</b>	<b>US\$ 11900</b>	<b>US\$ 18900</b>

Kolmarden Zoo was one of the first organisations to pledge funding support for the Rehab and we sincerely hope that further funding will be forthcoming as we endeavour to keep this essential facility fully operational.

Peter Blinston  
Project Manager