



Painted Dog Conservation

*Conservation through
Action and Education*



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PDC Project Update

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A Dog's Life

After the loss of Bullseye, we were concerned about the future of the Kutanga females. In my last update I wrote about the search for Bullseye and finding him dead in a snare, plus the snare wound injury to Juliette, which required intervention and treatment. With Juliette now wearing a GPS collar, we at least felt confident that we could track the packs' movements, no matter how far they roamed in their search for new males.

We were soon to learn how far this search had taken them when another pack, named the Sibindimalisa, turned up at our rehabilitation facility. The Sibindimalisa were originally identified by Greg early in the year and were previously found deep inside Hwange National Park. We were mystified by their appearing at the Rehab Center, but the download from Juliette's collar gave the possible answer. The Kutanga females had been all the way south into the Sibindimalisa territory and it seemed as though the Sibindimalisa chased or followed them out, all the way to our Rehab.

Ester responded as ever to my request for help and collared the alpha female and alpha male of the Sibindimalisa. This enables us to also monitor their movements. It was, and is, rewarding having more dogs around, and perhaps it indicates a change for the better for the local dog population. But we are not celebrating yet.

There is a local expression that translates roughly as "It's the clouds that bring rain." Very appropriate, as the rainy season is now upon us. It brings to mind though, the trials and tribulations of the Ukusutha pack in Victoria Falls. We have been pinning our hopes on the three-year old male, Sithule, to lead the young pack through the difficult transition period to a full life back in the wild. He indeed seemed to be up to this task and had been seen leading many hunts. But one day we were concerned to see him lying rather still, deathly still in fact. Greg approached and Sithule slowly got to his feet, but it was clear he was not well. Further examination through binoculars revealed a mark on his shoulder consistent with a kick. This was soon confirmed by staff at the nearby Stanley and



The Sibindimalisa

Livingstone Hotel. They had seen the pack hunting a few days before and witnessed a zebra giving Sithule a severe kick. We suspected he had broken ribs and kept a closer-than-usual eye on him, ever anxious for his wellbeing. It soon became apparent that he was adding to our concerns by spending time with a lone female who was occupying the reserve as well, rather than devoting his attention to the Ukusutha females.



The Ukusutha males with Bekezela

Named Bekezela, the lone female was in superb physical condition, although her presence created a certain amount of tension amongst the dogs. Sithule certainly liked the look of her but in his injured state he could not keep up with her. The Ukusutha males seemed confused at best by her, while the Ukusutha females did not appreciate her being around at all!

Sithule seemed to be recovering when Jealous and Edward found his carcass. Lions had killed him. Perhaps he had been caught while venturing out on his own, moving between Bekezela and the Ukusutha, with his injury slowing him down.

It wasn't long before the Ukusutha males joined Bekezela. A positive move on the one hand, yet it left

the Ukusutha females to fend for themselves. Their situation took another turn when they left the relative safety of the Vic Falls Private Game Reserve through an open gate.

With Ester again responding, we had three vehicles on the ground and a helicopter in the air, all to no avail, and as I write they are still missing.

Local Success in a Wildlife Quiz

In 2009 we introduced a wildlife quiz to the Iganyana Children's Bush Camp curriculum. It's been hugely popular with the children and resulted in a better retention of the concepts taught.

Such is the impact of the quiz that we decided to arrange for a competition amongst the schools that attend our Bush Camp and it was St Francis Xavier who emerged as the victors with Sir Roy Welensky Primary School coming a close second. News spread and the two schools were invited to attend the Wildlife and Environment Zimbabwe (WEZ) Provincial Quiz in Bulawayo. A trip to Bulawayo, which is a three-hour drive away, is in itself, quite a treat for most of the rural children in our area. Attending a high profile competition is quite another thing altogether. Competing as they would against seasoned schools like Carmel, Petra, Hillside, Dominican Convent and others from the affluent suburbs, in and around Bulawayo.

The children stepped up to the challenge and performed tremendously, with Sir Roy Welensky achieving fourth place. A lot of positive comments came from the WEZ team and other staff from schools that have been in the competition for more than 6 years. The Education Officers based in Hwange and the Provincial Education Director were so happy with the results and congratulated Painted Dog Conservation for their support towards education in the area.



Children and teacher from Sir Roy Welensky Primary School