



KwaZulu-Natal Wild Dog Project

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When trying to decide what to report on in this newsletter I thought about writing up the Wild Dog themed soccer tournament held at KwaJobe near Mkhuze Game Reserve's Ophansi gate. It was an unequivocal success with over 60 participants and more than 100 spectators. But then I thought it may be good to let on that it appears the seven dispersing males within Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park (HiP) have lured across three females from the *Ume* pack, that *Lightening* as a lone male has found four dispersing females, or that the *Nombali* pack from the Hluhluwe side of the park has recently been seen with six late-in-the-season pups which sets the park's Wild Dog population at 87.

Yesterday we saw a pack of dogs select a young impala, separate it from the herd with sleek, agile, high-speed herding and then rush through the dinner in less than 55 seconds; but *Mduna* also needs a mention. As a single dispersing Wild Dog from Thanda Private Game Reserve he was introduced to HiP in September and has negotiated the high density of lions and hyaenas, found a Wild Dog pack, then another, and then finally settled with pack he first encountered.



Earlier in January tourists witnessed lions storming down a hill and connecting with at least one member of a pack of Wild Dogs.

It is also worth noting the assistance and safe passage provided by Nkonka, Bayala, Kube Yini, Sungulwane, Thanda, Lulu Bush and Phinda game reserves which all helped as the three Wild Dogs of the Mkhuze Pack once again went walkabout for four days before returning.



But perhaps this all just needs to be put in context of our country's Wild Dog population. Beyond Kruger National Park's boundaries there are only two game reserves in South Africa with more than seven Wild Dogs, Hluhluwe-Imfolozi and Madikwe. That's it! Small reserve-based packs occur in Mkhuze, Thanda, Pilanesberg, Venetia Limpopo and Tswalu and occasionally reports surface of Wild Dogs outside of protected areas here in KZN and in the northern provinces. With this perspective there is no doubt that this precious heritage needs to be treasured and hopefully 2009 will be the watershed year with a few significant re-introductions into the province.

The project to expand and understand the current range of Wild Dogs through the diverse landscape of northern KwaZulu-Natal is carried out through a partnership between the Endangered Wildlife Trusts' Carnivore Conservation Group and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife; supported by The Green Trust and Land Rover South Africa, and in collaboration with The Smithsonian Institute.

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