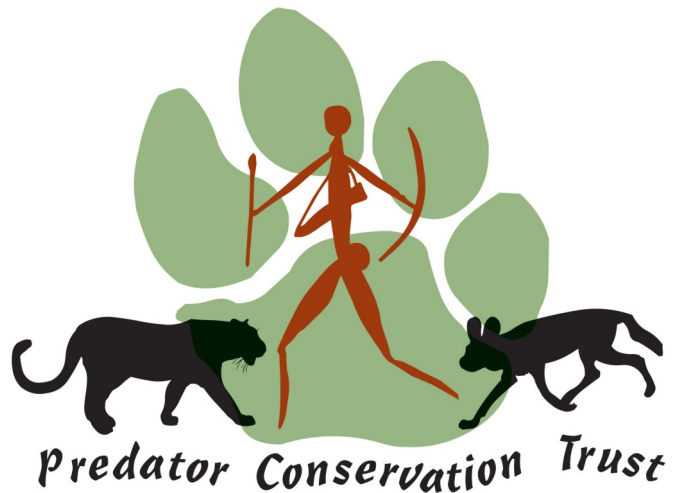


Newsletter

December 2010



Welcome to our latest newsletter. Since our last newsletter at the end of May, we've sent almost £3500 to Cheetah Conservation Botswana to fund their good work, and almost £1400 to the Niassa Carnivore project in Mozambique. During the rainy season, field work in the Niassa reserve is impractical, so equipment has been stored in a mud hut for the rainy season till now. Unfortunately this has resulted in a lot of damage caused by moisture, rats and termites. The Niassa project team were due to have some equipment shipped to them, so Predator Conservation Trust provided a grant to purchase the shipping container. This will be used as a secure, waterproof storage facility for the rainy season.

In September I was lucky enough once again to spend time with Lise Hanssen in the Caprivi. Lise is currently staying at Sijwa, a camp owned by IRDNC which she is helping to look after. This camp offers many benefits over her previous camp which had no facilities—Sijwa has solar power, toilets, fresh water and space to sleep and work. As I found, however, there are a few drawbacks—there are plenty of snakes in the area and on one occasion we had to remove one from the bathtub. Access to the camp is also tricky—you can either wade through waist deep water, or drive through in a 4x4. Since the water is connected to the river via a shallow channel and can contain crocodiles, wading was not something I chose to do.

The dirt tracks that Lise uses to get to her

baiting and camera trap sites are very poor and inflict serious wear and tear on her vehicle—I don't think it's managed to last more than a month at a time without needing parts replacing. During my short stay her radiator was badly damaged and needed welding, which is a problem when the nearest place to get it repaired is several hours drive away in Katima Mulilo. Luckily people in the Caprivi are helpful and Lise managed to get a tow to Katima Mulilo after a few days.

Life in the bush as a field researcher studying large carnivores is extremely tough but also rewarding. Luckily all the projects we fund are run by people like Lise Hanssen, Keith and Colleen Begg, Ingrid Wiesel, Greg Rasmussen, Peter Blinston, Rebecca Klein and their teams—these are people who have the scientific knowledge, the fieldwork skills, the skills to communicate and work well with all sorts of people, and above all, are able to cope with basic living conditions that many of us would struggle to cope with.

As the year draws to an end, the rains in Southern Africa are limiting fieldwork, giving many of the project teams a chance to head for a town or city where they can enjoy basic things that we all take for granted—such as mains electricity, convenient shops etc. During their breaks the project leaders will have little time to rest—they're always busy working on writing reports, applying for funding etc. Running a conservation project is hard work all year round.

Anthony May

CAPRIVI CARNIVORE PROJECT UPDATE

East Caprivi developments

The baiting site on the border of Mudumu National Park and Mashi Conservancy was removed after approximately one month without being visited by spotted hyaenas. On two occasions, hyaena spoor was seen along the northern cut line, but they did not leave the road to visit the bait despite a lot of effort going into making scent trails. The remote camera took over 300 photos of which about 280 were of the same side-striped jackal running around the base of the baiting tree. A leopard visited the baiting tree twice and jumped onto the bait occasionally then never returned. This was surprising as most of the human/predator conflict occurs in Mashi and Sobbe Conservancies supposedly because of these two Conservancies proximity to the park.

A new bait site was established in the Ngonga Wildlife Corridor near the new Njalingombe waterhole. The wildlife corridors are areas that have been set aside for movement of wild animals (mostly elephant) to and from the west Caprivi that cross over into the east Caprivi. The wildlife corridors are one way to reduce human wildlife conflict (HWC) of which elephants are the major cause. These corridors are approximately 2 km wide and stretch from the eastern side of the Kwando River up into the forest areas of the east Caprivi where there is no human habitation.

There has been a lot of spotted hyaena activity within the Ngonga wildlife corridor and spoor has been seen right up against the floodplain going back up into the forest. Spoor has also regularly been seen around the Njalingombe waterhole and the whooping sound of hyaenas communicating are also becoming more frequent. Although this is not an indication of increasing numbers of hyaenas, it is possible that there is more frequent use of the area due to use of the newly available water supply and lack of human habitation. Hunting within the wildlife corridor is also forbidden.

Procuring meat for bait is a much simpler process in the east Caprivi as no quarantine rules apply as it falls within the foot and mouth zone. Buying meat from east Caprivi farmers rather than a commercial butchery in town also supports local trade. Much effort went into setting up the Njalingombe baiting tree which included securing the meat onto a high branch with a steel cable to prevent theft by a passing leopard. Copious amounts of decomposed blood were used to lay a scent trail and vegetation was cleared with a machete to allow accurate line of sight from a parked vehicle. Small pieces of meat were strewn around the base of the tree and a remote camera was set up approximately 10 metres from the baiting tree to monitor the date and time of any night time visitors.



A large female hyaena was captured on camera on the very first night of baiting and was photographed visiting the bait every single night thereafter. Only after three weeks was she joined by another hyaena, which was a male. Thereafter no additional hyaenas visited this baiting site even though it was kept active for approximately six weeks.

The East Caprivi hyaenas are exceptionally shy of people as they are killed in retaliation for livestock predation and they are trophy hunted. Despite sitting at the bait for over 40 hours altogether spread out over more than a month and driving over 800 km to service the bait site, the female hyaena was seen briefly only on two occasions. The hyaenas would not approach the bait when a vehicle was parked anywhere in the vicinity. The hyaenas began to totally avoid the baiting site when I parked my car there. After deciding to spend one last night at the bait site and then remove it altogether due to the trophy hunting activity that was taking place in vicinity at the same time, the male was seen

standing in the road in my headlights. He was immediately immobilized. He was in excellent condition although very scarred due to fighting. This is interesting as it suggests the presence of other hyaenas. He is a 3 years old adult and weighs approximately 55 kg. Blood samples and blood smears were taken and he was ear notched and collared. CCC-7 the first east Caprivi hyaena to be captured will hopefully produce very interesting information on the movements of hyaenas within the livestock farming areas within the conservancies.



Unfortunately the GSM collar has not yet transmitted any data on CCC-7's movements. The collar has been set to take a location every hour on the hour throughout the night so that nightly movements can be monitored. GSM collars are dependent on an adequate cellphone network and will download data at a preset time. Despite the east Caprivi having adequate cellphone towers, the hyaena is obviously not within that range at the right time for now. Mark Jago, the Game Capture Vet for the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), was in the Caprivi along with an entire veterinary and capture team collaring elephants and buffaloes. He was kind enough to make time in his busy schedule to track down CCC-7 with radio telemetry from the aircraft. This one location provided fascinating insight about the distribution of hyaenas. Although captured and regularly seen with a female right on the boundary of Mayuni and Mashi Conservancies, he was located within Mudumu National Park about eight kilometres south of the border. Additionally his location is much closer to the next baiting tree near Sachona and Lubuta, which is near the junction of Mash and Sobbe Conservancies and Mudumu, then it is to the Njalingombe baiting tree where he was captured. Although extremely limited, this information suggests large movements across a number of conservancies as well as a national park, which has implications for conservancy species management decisions. Thank you so much to Mark and MET for this much appreciated assistance.

New Mudumu/Conservancy baiting site

The junction between Mashi and Sobbe Conservancies and the Mudumu cutline was investigated as a potential baiting site even though the previous attempt at baiting on the Mudumu cutline was not successful. It appears that the area surrounding this junction is a hotspot of livestock losses attributed to all predators, but mostly to spotted hyaenas. Along with Davies Chelezo, a game guard from Mashi Conservancy I drove approximately 20 km along the Mudumu boundary towards the track that separates the Sobbe and Mashi Conservancies. I am trying to establish why this particular area is prone to livestock losses to predators.

There was nothing exceptional about the area at all and it seemed no different to many of the other areas of the Mudumu North Complex. Davies, however, informed me that during the wet season there are pans close by that fill with water and due to this water availability and grazing, large numbers of cattle from the villages of Sachona and Lubuta which are about 5 km north of the Mudumu boundary are allowed to roam in the veld unsupervised and are not kraaled at night. Together we chose a new baiting tree that falls just within the conservancies. A bait was hung on a steel cable and a remote camera inside a protective metal housing was placed a few metres away. This will be left undisturbed while the infrared camera monitors any visitors during my absence when I travel to Omega to start hyaena capture in the west Caprivi.

MNC Waterhole monitoring

Two waterholes have been established through MET's Integrated Community based Ecology Management (ICEMA) programme. Lwazaze waterhole is situated approximately 15 km east of the

Kwando River and about 5 km south of the Zambian border right in the north of the MNC and Njalingombe is situated within the Ngongga wildlife corridor. Two remote cameras have been monitoring species of wildlife that have been visiting the waterholes. Many of these species including giraffe, wildebeest and eland have recently been reintroduced into the area. In addition to these valuable observations, these cameras have been performing double duty in monitoring predators. The Lwazaze camera has recorded more predators than any other species of wildlife, which is very interesting considering the thickness of the forest in the area. Predator records include leopards, wild dog and spotted hyaenas.



Through photo ID only, I have managed to identify five individuals of one clan that use this waterhole. They are regular visitors and repeated photos have helped with identifying association of individuals within groups as well as recording some interesting behavior. The group consists of one sub-adult and two adult females of which one has two large cubs of approximately one year old. The mother is easily recognizable as one of her eyes is damaged and this shows up in the infrared flash. While monitoring the cameras, I have picked up additional data on prey species through a carcass found near the waterhole as well as in scat. All predators have approached the waterhole from the north, which suggests that they are also likely to also live in the Sioma Ngwezi National Park just over the border in Zambia. From photographic evidence only, the age classes of these hyaenas suggest a stable group. This clan would be ideal for a trans-boundary study between a National Park in one country and a subsistence farming area in another. Thank you so much to Jo Tagg, ICEMA, Simon Mayes and Bennety Busihu for sharing this valuable data and thank you to IRDNC for the contribution to petrol for this exercise. I would also like to thank Vincent Kakuwe, Luscious Mushendami, Bar-grey Tubaweni and Kebby Likando for their assistance in field work in the Kwando Conservancy.

Diet of East Caprivi hyaenas

The remains of a duiker in the form of a hoof and some hair were found lying next to the water at Lwazaze. The only other evidence of choice of prey is based on three scats which were picked up at both waterholes and on the track leading to Njalingombe waterhole. Some of the prey items identified for East Caprivi spotted hyaenas are Bush buck, Duiker, Kudu and Springhare. No livestock has been present in any of the samples. Despite extensive driving and walking throughout the Mudumu North Complex, no hyaena latrines have been found. Access to the forest areas is limited to vehicles so the extensive network of game trails need to be explored on foot. Game Guards who patrol fixed routes throughout their conservancies only occasionally find the odd hyaena scat and no latrines were located during the wildlife transect count which is carried out on foot throughout the entire MNC conservancies. When more data on the movements of east Caprivi hyaenas is obtained from the collars then these areas can be examined for evidence of latrines. Thank you so much to Dave Ward for continually keeping an eye out for latrines and taking the time to collect scat which provides valuable information. Three additional latrines of the Kwando Clan in the west Caprivi have been located thanks to Dave's efforts.



Lise and game guards discussing the contents of some Hyena scat.

A note on a camera eating hyaena

Spotted hyaenas are known to eat a wide range of food items including car tyres, aircraft struts and beer bottles. Before capture CCC-7 was the source of much dismay and frustration as he developed a habit of attacking the remote cameras, both at the bait and at the waterhole. Both cameras were attacked twice each with the baiting camera sustaining the worst damage both to the housing and the electronics. Both clips and the handle were chewed off and the camera was eventually found hanging open with the wiring ripped out too. The waterhole camera had a bite taken out of it and one clip bitten off, but was patched up and replaced at a position that is hopefully out of hyaena reach. The new baiting site's camera has been placed inside a protective metal housing as camera eating is a very expensive pastime. Other cameras exposed to whole groups of hyaenas for extended periods of time have remained unharmed. This aggressive response to cameras seems to be a quirk of only one hyaena. I have included some photos below from the remote cameras recording their own demise.



Exhibition at Grande Provence Wine Estate

The "Baiting Tree" exhibition made up of photos taken of animal movements around the baiting tree in Bwabwata National Park as part of the spotted hyaena study was moved and launched at The Gallery at Grande Provence Wine Estate. The photographs were auctioned along with two works of art donated by MJ Lourens and Graham Williams. Funds raised from this auction will go towards the spotted hyaena project in the Caprivi Region. Thank you so much to Alex Van Heeren, Fransje Van Riel, Johann Du Plessis, Frananda Venter, Amanda Roberts, Grande Provence Wine Estate and The Gallery for organizing and hosting this wonderful evening. Thank you also to Peter Alexander who originally put together the collection and thank you so much to MJ Lourens and Graham Williams for their generous donation.



Additional acknowledgements

The last few months have been exceptional in the number of setbacks that have befallen this project. A number of people have come to the rescue during this challenging time and deserve a special mention. Firstly my laptop crashed without warning and was unable to be rescued. Anthony and Jean May from the Predator Conservation Trust in the UK visited the Caprivi and stayed with me during September and brought a brand new Dell computer with them from England to replace my old one. Thank you so much to Anthony and Jean for always being there and the support they have shown during the most difficult times. My thanks also go to Francois Rocher for lending me a computer to keep me going. Around the same time my vehicle was incapacitated with a hole in the radiator and needing a clutch replacement. Thank you so much to Dan Stephens from Mashi River Safaris for lending me his bakkie to continue field work and to Dave Ward and Raymond Peters from WWF in Namibia for taking me hyaena catching in their WWF field vehicle. I would also like to thank the staff from Namibia Nature Foundation who has carried out a valuable service in administering the accounting for my project. They have been incredibly supportive even though their workload of administering funds for over 70 projects must be overwhelming on occasion. Although they have not yet been delivered, two satellite collars will be put on spotted hyaenas in the Caprivi for the first time. Thank you so much to Greg Stuart-Hill from WWF in Namibia for arranging the funding and to Pierre Du Preez and Werner Kilian from MET for making all the arrangements for the manufacture of these collars along with their own project orders. Thank you to Escape Safaris and Tours for making a donation to the project.

Lise Hanssen

BROWN HYENA PROJECT UPDATE

Tosca's data download was due at the beginning of October. Sarah, our volunteer from the UK, and I drove to Atlas Bay to start with the search for her signal. We did not have to search for long, but the signal that we received indicated that the battery voltage of the collar was already low, which meant that I had to try to trigger the drop-off. We found Tosca lying together with another hyena close to Bains Bay. I triggered the drop-off, but when Tosca and the other hyena moved off, we could see that the collar was still attached. Well, this was not really a surprise, as the same happened with Tosca's previous collar drop-off. However, similar to the situation when Minerva's drop-off triggered collar did not want to come off, I had to fly to Europe three days later and therefore urgently needed to find Tosca again and/or the dropped-off collar. No such luck. We searched for Tosca the next day and Sarah did an intensive search the day after, but no sign of the collar or Tosca anywhere. Therefore we feared that the collar may have dropped off at Jungle den and that the cubs may have taken it deep inside the den, so that we could not get a signal. I unfortunately had to leave, but contacted Gino to find out whether he would be able to try to locate the collar from the air while I was away. Luckily he was able to fly in the middle of November. He quickly received a signal close to Kolmanskop ghost town. However, the thick fog made it difficult to navigate and Gino had to stay at high altitude. Wherever he received a strong signal he recorded a GPS position. Two of these positions were quite far apart and it became clear that the collar was still moving.

Therefore we all assumed that the collar still hadn't dropped off. This was unusual as the longest time a collar had stayed on after triggering the drop off was 14 days. In Tosca's case more than a month had passed. This was a very puzzling situation. Therefore, one of the first things I did when I arrived back in Luderitz at the beginning of December was to drive to the position that Gino had recorded to get some answers. To my surprise, I received a signal on my way to the recorded position. Good news...either the collar did drop off or...bad news...Tosca may be dead. Together with the two project volunteers, Kathrin and Daniel, I walked to Gino's recorded GPS position, but we did not find anything but could continue to track the collar. We came closer and closer to the railway line that is in the process of being built. There was a bit of truck movement and some workers studied us while we were getting closer and closer to their position. Suddenly the workers jumped into their trucks and drove off. I managed to get the attention of one of them, who waited until we arrived. I received a strong signal from exactly the area, where the trucks were parked and therefore ask the worker if he had seen a collar. Obviously the answer was no and he drove off. I feared that the collar would be buried under lots of layers Kathrin and Daniel with the 'long lost' collar of building sand and already told the volunteers to be prepared to dig for it. I tried to get as exact a position as I could with my telemetry equipment and suddenly spotted the collar!!!! The collar was lying nicely next to the railway line, some footprints and truck tyre tracks next to it.

Well, we will never know what had happened, but it looks as if one of the truck drivers had the collar on his truck and threw it out when we approached, possibly guessing that we were looking for it. Therefore it also makes sense that Tosca's collar was still moving when Gino tracked it in November. We were so lucky to retrieve the collar and we got 13 000 data sets that still have to be analysed.



The only brown hyena that is still collared is Obelixa. Her download was due in the middle of November. I managed to drive into her area in the middle of December and found her walking on the road leading through Elizabeth Bay ghost town, carrying a dead seal pup in her mouth.

The two project volunteers were with me and we decided to follow her and wait until she finds a resting site for the day to trigger the download. We followed her to the old Diamond Mine plant where she disappeared inside. But, not only did Obelixa disappear, with her went her signal. That was strange, but there are deep tunnels inside the old plant, but the plant is not safe any more and we could not follow her into it. However, we were surprised about the amount of hyena activity around the plant and I knew from many years ago that the Elizabeth Bay clan animals used these tunnels as a den.

As we could not do a download without a signal, we drove back to the office and prepared four camera traps, which we wanted to set-up around the plant in order to find out whether there were cubs around and also to start with an ID catalogue of the Elizabeth Bay animals for a monitoring programme that is done in connection with the extension of the mine at Elizabeth Bay.

Everything seemed to be perfect and we drove out a few days later with our traps and with the download equipment. We received Obelixa's signal from the ghost town and triggered a download, which went very well. We then carried on and went to the plant to set up the camera traps. We had identified four good sites and set-up the first trap. When we checked the trap the next morning, close to 400 photos were taken to our surprise. I immediately knew that something had to be wrong. And indeed, the camera was malfunctioning and instead of only taking a photo when movement was detected it automatically took a photograph every 1.5 minutes.

Well, equipment failure can happen, so we proceeded to set up two more traps – all of them malfunctioning... what was happening – are the Elizabeth Bay ghosts playing games with us? We decided to leave them out for one night, but of the hundreds of photographs that were taken, only a few showed evidence of hyenas – but we got images of at least one cub, so we know that the den is active. However, all camera traps are faulty and we have to wait for replacement cameras before being able to monitor the den in more detail.



We've set up camera traps around Bogenfels and Van Reenen Bay to monitor the brown hyena population. This does not mean that we have given up on trying to collar animals there (see newsletter articles about various darting attempts over the past few years), but we just wanted to try a different method for a change. The camera trap that we set up at the northern end of the seal colony at Van Reenen Bay works very well. We got good identification shots – there actually has never been another camera trap that was so successful...no nose or hair photographs yet, whereas the other camera traps record the regular nose shots...We are busy identifying the animals and will hopefully be able to do the first abundance estimate in January 2011.

Ingrid Wiesel



CHEETAH CONSERVATION BOTSWANA UPDATE

In November, CCB completed its livestock guarding dog demonstration area at our base in the Ghanzi farmlands. Kraals, herder accommodation and shelters for the goats and dogs have been built and with the arrival of a small herd of goats the set up is complete. This will act as a demonstration livestock guarding dog (LSGD) project for farmers' workshops and visitors to the camp. With this initiative, CCB will showcase the predator-friendly farming techniques that we promote in an attempt to minimize livestock losses to predators and in turn mitigate human-predator conflicts. When farming in a wild landscape like Botswana, which is rich with a diversity of predator species, it is essential to keep your livestock safe.

Certain farm management techniques can reduce the susceptibility of livestock to predators. Such as using LSGD's along with kraaling livestock at night, reinforcing kraals with thorn bushes, keeping young livestock kraaled, reducing breeding to once or twice a year and synchronizing breeding seasons to those of wildlife.

CCB is excited to have this new demonstration farm and looks forward to teaching this and other predator friendly farming techniques to those in and around the Ghanzi region. We also look forward to learning more about farming and all its joys and challenges in the process.



From all of us at CCB we'd like to wish you a joyful holiday season and all the best for 2011. Its been an eventful year at CCB and thanks to all of your support we have made some great progress in every department. Our Ghanzi camp has grown with the addition of our livestock guarding dog demonstration area; we've completed some great community outreach and education in the Western Kalahari Conservation Corridor; completed several research studies and promoted a National Strategy for the Conservation of Cheetahs and Wild Dogs.

All of this has been made possible by our wonderful network of supporters around the world that believe there is a future for the rich biodiversity of Botswana's wildlife and that coexistence with rural communities is an achievable dream. With the cheetah as our flagship species, we look forward to 2011 and further developing our programs to ensure that this dream becomes a reality.

Thankyou for all your support and may 2011 bring an increase in understanding and global action towards the conservation of our world.

Rebecca and the CCB team

PAINTED DOG PROJECT UPDATE

Project Update November 2010: Monitoring dogs in Mana Pools.

November was a pivotal month for Painted Dog Conservation. After many years of trying, we finally succeeded in our ambitions to begin monitoring the dogs in Mana Pools. "Mana" is a key national and regional population and as such, collecting data on pack numbers, individuals and their movements is considered vital.

To this end, I went to Mana Pools with long time dog friend and chairman of PDC Netherlands, Ron van der A. For me it was a real "bus man's holiday" as we had a single focus. Apart from a cooling swim in the Zambezi River after we arrived at Vundu Camp, hot and bothered from our long drive, it was all about the dogs. Vundu camp is owned and run by Nick and Desiree Murray. It was purely by chance that we booked to stay at the camp, however it was soon clear that we had made the right choice as Nick is almost as fanatical about the dogs as we are and has years of experience operating in Mana Pools.

We set out at 4:00 AM the following morning, the sky heavy and threatening rain. The temperature quickly soared to impossibly uncomfortable degrees. Nick knows Mana Pools like the back of his hand and we dissected the place, hindered by the limited road network. By 10:00 AM we were extremely hot and frustrated, then Desiree called on the radio. The dogs, the Vundu pack, had been seen to the west the day before, on the Wilderness Safari Concession. Nick sought permission for us to drive onto their private concession, which was granted without any hesitation. Mana Pools is a remote place and the operators there work cooperatively with each other and we have a good relationship with Wilderness through our work in Hwange, however we were all delighted by their willingness to help. It got even better, as they had actually seen the dogs that morning, while on a game drive with their clients. One of the guides knew me from our work on Starvation Island and he took us to the spot where the dogs had been resting just an hour before. Nick and I walked into the thick bush, dodging elephant herds and hoping that the lion we had just seen was walking the other way! I was thinking that it would have been good to have Jealous with us to track them down but I need not have worried. Nick's tracking was as good as any I have seen and we soon found the dogs resting in a dry river bed. It was 11:30 AM and really, really hot. It felt like my eyeballs were melting!! Far too hot to even think about darting dogs and so we watched them for a short while before they moved on into thicker bush.

We came back in the afternoon and Nick tracked them down again while guiding us around a large bull elephant. He lost the tracks on hard ground and we searched around a little, before looking at a distant tree line and simultaneously saying "they must be over there." Sure enough they were. The tree line marked another dry riverbed but the dogs had found a last remaining puddle of water in a bend in the river. It was muddy and smelly but particularly inviting as a way to cool down and avoid the annoying flies. We sat quietly on the bank of the river above them, not much more than 20 metres away. Ron was with us this time and we counted over and over again but could not come up with the same number of individuals in the pack. I had never seen so many dogs in one pack. I gave up counting so I could just enjoy sitting with them, watching them play happily together. Elephants eventually disturbed the dogs and they reluctantly left their precious muddy puddle. We edged back to the vehicle as night fell, nervously avoiding the same elephant herds but so happy that we had found the pack.

At 4:00 AM the next day we set out again and in typical dog following tradition we could not find them. Completely frustrated we returned to camp at midday and did what we could to keep cool in the blistering heat. The offer of an afternoon on the river, swimming and generally taking it easy was so tempting but we stuck to our mission and went out again to bounce around in the Land Rover



looking for mystical dogs. Nothing. But the rains finally came and relieved the oppressive heat. 4:00 AM again. Our last morning. We drove around with increased tension and saw impala running hard through the bush. Straining our eyes through binoculars we searched for the dogs but could not see anything and kept moving. Nick picked up what could have been the footprint of one dog. However because it was only one and not 20+ we moved on and turned down into the riverbed where they had been resting the two days prior. This time he stopped the car and leapt out quickly to confirm the footprints of at least 18 dogs walking through the deep sand. We raced around and finally caught up with them on an airstrip near to where we had seen the impala running. It was almost the perfect situation for darting dogs. Open ground, good shade trees nearby and water. However, the dogs were quite full. Normally we do not dart a dog when its stomach is full, however we were under some pressure and luckily we had a vet with us from the USA, who happened to be a guest at the camp. I decided it was worth the risk and we closed in on the alpha female.

The darting and collar fitting were all done quickly and efficiently and soon the alpha female, now named Tait, after Nick's daughter, was back with her pack, wearing a GPS collar. We waited with them for another couple of hours and finally agreed that there were 23 dogs in the pack. Mana Pools is quite inaccessible during the rainy season and so the GPS collar will give us vital data on the pack's movements during this period. We drove back to Harare, tired but very pleased that this first "mission" had been so successful.



Despite what I now consider to be the usual difficulties, it had been another successful year for PDC. Wilton and his team supervised more schools than ever before through our Children's Bush Camp programme, including one from Zambia. Our anti poaching units have worked well with National parks and we have been encouraged by the sightings of new packs of dogs in Hwange National Park. It's your support that continues to make this possible and we cannot thank you enough for that. We are of course looking forward to working with you again in 2011.

Peter Blinston

PCT ACCOUNTS: 2009-2010

Our latest financial year ended on 30th June 2010.

During the financial year, our income including all donations, limited funds donations, and Gift Aid reclamations was **£14427.46**

During the year we made several grants totalling **£14862.72**, and these are summarised below

| | |
|--|----------|
| Brown Hyena project | £1395.90 |
| Lise Hanssen's Caprivi Carnivore Project | £3139.73 |
| Cheetah Conservation Botswana | £7844.09 |
| Niassa Carnivore Project | £1483.00 |
| Painted Dog Conservation | £1000.00 |

Our accounts have been filed as usual with the Charity Commission.

NIASSA CARNIVORE PROJECT UPDATE

We are finally back in Cape Town after 8 months in Niassa, nearly got stuck in some heavy down-pours but just managed to slip and slide our way out. Now for a couple of months of fixing equipment, writing reports and fund raising with some good food, and family. It has been a tiring year and we look forward to a little bit of a change of pace.

It has been a tough season with more than 100 elephants poached in Niassa, one lion being snared and one old female dying of old age and constant battle to stem the tide and build political will for conservation. But the year ended on a positive note with the Lion Fun days (see website for details) and the Mbamba school buildings have now got new roofs, shutters, doors and a new coat of paint all ready for the wet season. We managed to collar two new male lions right next to camp in the last month, bringing to ten the lions collared this year, we think they are the new pride males in the area. One of the females we have known from birth in 2006 has just had her first litter of two cubs.

We had a meeting with 34 school teachers from the district to present them all with the new story-book and provide some guidance on how it can be used. Everyone has been very positive and we are hopeful that we are successfully spreading information on how to keep safe from carnivore attacks. With the help of the teachers we have developed a questionnaire which we will be using to test whether the children and teachers are hearing the messages in the books, extension work and posters and will be monitoring the number of people using safe shelters and building goat corals. Agostinho has finished his season of fieldwork for his Masters degree and over the next few months will be writing up his thesis; these are such exciting times for him. One of our field assistants, Batista Amadi is in Lichinga getting his driver's license this wet season so lots of learning and growing while the rain falls.

To provide an objective assessment of the snaring of lions, an intensive capture of lions in L5 South around Mbamba and Nkuti villages has been undertaken. All lions are fitted with radio collars with a mortality signal (a special signal is sent when animals have not moved for more than 24 hours). Nine lions have been radiomarked since April (7 males, 2 females) and additional three lions were radiomarked in 2009, two males are currently unaccounted for. A further three lions are known about and will be caught when possible. Ongoing monitoring of the lions is done by Euzebio Waiti, NCP research assistant from Mbamba village. Data will help us assess movement patterns around villages as well as mortality. Ongoing work in the Mbamba community has revealed that on average 2-3 leopard skins and 4-5 lions skins are sold from the Mbamba village each year. Two leopard collars being returned to us from leopards caught in snares. This year, all three of the collared female leopards have been snared and killed in the intensive study area highlighting our concern over snaring. Lions and leopards are not targeted but are caught inadvertently in snares set for bushmeat. A simple questionnaire survey to assess bush meat (preference for different animals, prices and capture techniques) and snaring has been initiated.

Blood samples from the 10 lions have been sent to Onderstepoort Veterinary lab for disease analysis (canine distemper, canine parvovirus).



Photo courtesy of Keith and Colleen Begg

Mitigation of conflict – “living fences”

The experimental fence of *Commiphora africana* planted in Mbamba village in November has copiced well and has shown that “living fences” are viable in Niassa. Two Mbamba residents have already asked the owner of the fence Chefe Ngongo for cuttings to start their own fences, suggesting that this will develop its own momentum once sufficient source material is available..

Cuttings of *C. africana* have been collected in Pemba and one truck load and three land rover loads have been transported into Niassa. Following a community meeting and collaboration with Reserve management, fences have already been planted around two fields in Mbamba village and Mecula village. More fences are currently being planted. It has been suggested to the Mbamba community that groups of neighbouring fields should plant one fence to decrease labour and increase area covered. These will function as experimental plots and tests of the fences as well as sources of future fencing cuttings.

The critical elements of planting the living fence are to “criss-cross” the cuttings to prevent holes at the base, plant cuttings 20 cm deep to prevent drying out, plant before the rains to prevent rotting, and cutting back of first growth (and replanting) to encourage development of hedge. At this stage two parallel lines of fencing are planted.

Community outreach, education and extension work

The Niassa Story book entitled “Lions, leopards, Mother Nature and one small girl” written and illustrated by Afra Kingdon, has been completed, 40pp. 1000 Portuguese copies have been printed and shipped to Mozambique. In November these will be distributed to all Niassa teachers at the teacher meetings to enable teachers to incorporate them into 2011 lessons. The book has a basic ecological message and more specifically provides specific guidance on ways to protect yourself from carnivore attack (safe shelters, safe behaviours, fences). An associated workbook and conservation ABC cloth capulana (cloth worn by women) are in production.

Illustrations for the safe behaviour’s poster have been completed by Conor Rawson and a poster is being professionally designed to have the most impact. This poster will be designed to be understood by literate and illiterate adults and will reinforce message in the storybook and by extension officers. These will be distributed throughout NNR in 2011.

The two day training workshop for the Community Scout Program was held between 2-4 October. Four new community scouts were trained from the western complex; this brings to 15 the total number of community scouts trained. A MOMs coordinator has been identified that will work exclusively with the MOMS monitors ensuring regular contact, data entry and reporting. NCP provides full financial support for this program. These scouts are essential link between Reserve management and the Niassa communities and valuable information is collected on human- wildlife conflict, domestic dog numbers and sightings of special species that is essential for a sustainable monitoring system. This has proven particularly important for monitoring African wild dog status through pack sizes and pack sightings.

Keith and Colleen Begg

SUMMARY OF GRANTS MADE

Since PCT was founded in June 2003 we have made grants totalling over £52,000 to conservation projects.

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|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Caprivi Carnivore project: | £11651.57 |
| Painted Dog Conservation: | £8915.55 |
| Kunene Lion Project: | £8282.00 |
| Brown Hyena Project: | £8114.99 |
| Cheetah Conservation Botswana | £9906.09 |
| Carnivore Atlas Project: | £2700.00 |
| Niassa Carnivore Project | £2504.00 |

The Trustees expect to be able to make another grant to one of the projects in the very near future.

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