

Botswana Wild Dog Research Project

A fascinating and captivating carnivore that lives an extraordinary cooperative social life, African wild dogs are near extinction. Seattle-native **Dr. John “Tico” McNutt** aims to help protect the dogs in Botswana’s Okavango Delta. Through creative conservation work, such as a “biofence,” which uses

scent to encourage wild dog boundaries and thus avoid conflicts with people, this beautiful predator faces a more hopeful future.



Botswana, Africa

Partner since 2001

SUCCESS BITES

Leader of the Pack. One of the primary research packs is thriving, with 12 pups added to the group. Even the 2-year-old male, Scree, is supported by the other dogs, despite a formerly badly broken leg, which has healed enough for him to continue with his pack-mates.

Go Wild Dog Research Football Team! Sporting their new jerseys, and using equipment generously provided by a donor, the local children learn about our program and have fun playing soccer at the same time!

Follow the (Wild) Dogs A University of Puget Sound graduate joined BWDRP this year, continuing his studies toward his doctorate, and continuing to strengthen the connection between the Pacific Northwest and Botswanians.

People’s Choice! The BBC documentary “A Wild Dog’s Story,” the true story of one of our wild dogs, Newky, received a People’s Choice Award at the Missoula Wildlife Film Festival.

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African wild dogs were once widely found throughout sub-Saharan Africa. But, over the past century, their range has been reduced to just a few small populations, isolated in protected en-



claves in eastern and southern Africa. The huge decline in wild dog populations and their range is due mostly to loss and fragmentation of habitat, to diseases such as rabies, transmittable from domestic dogs, and to expanding human population with its attendant increase in livestock populations. Research indicates that some populations are declining as much as 20% every two generations.

To address the issues of the urgent conservation needs for this species, Dr. J. Weldon “Tico” McNutt and his



wife, anthropologist Lesley Boggs, started the Botswana Wild Dog Research Project (BWDRP) in 1989. BWDRP is a predator conservation program of applied conservation and education with

African wild dogs as its flagship species. Core field research focuses on wild dog population monitoring with which the program hopes to provide a broad conservation effort for wild dogs and wild predators throughout southern Africa. The overall goal of the project is to promote through applied research, management, and public education the conservation of African wild dogs in conflict with human communities.

The project aims to maintain positive relationships

with all the region’s stakeholders from local farmers, to professional hunters and from local NGOs helping local children to the Department of Wildlife and National Parks regional wildlife biologists. In general, the BWDRP is highly regarded by the local community and the relationship with the region’s communities is active and positive.

Many species, especially canids, combine scent marking with vocal and/or visual signaling to communicate territory or presence. Chemical communication through scent marking is probably the primary means by which wild dogs gather information regarding pack boundaries. Using this hypothesis, a biochemical “fence” composed by synthesized scent markings form boundaries to separate the wild dog populations and thus limit the opportunities for conflict.

The BWDRP became involved last year as the sole sponsor of the Shorobe village football soccer team who previously had no sponsors. Shorobe is the only relatively large village, more than 1,000 people, near the research camp. BWDRP was able to provide all new soccer cleats and uniforms for the entire Shorobe football team (with Wild Dog Research boldly written on the front of the jerseys). The connection to this community has been considerably strengthened through the project’s involvement with the football team and the efforts to help find sponsorship support.



The conservation project—football sponsorship relationship contributes in an innovative and decidedly positive way to increasing awareness of the project’s presence and conservation aims for wild dogs in the region.

WOODLAND PARK ZOO

is making a difference to help these endangered wild dogs. Support from WPZ helped with the purchase of an ultralight airplane, which allows researchers to follow the packs and establish safe areas for their continued survival.

TOGETHER we are making a difference. Additional financial support for BWDRP has come from The World University Service of Canada, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Conservation International, the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the Zoological Society of Philadelphia, Denver Zoo, Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx Zoo, Calgary Zoo, the International Institute for Environment and Development, Elefriends of Australia and numerous private contributors.

YOU can make a difference. Contribute to this important project protecting this fascinating wild dog at http://www.zoo.org/zoo_info/involved/donate/donate.htm.

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