

Project Update: July 2005

Workshop Findings on Research for the Conservation of African Wild Dogs

The vast wilderness of Mozambique provide potential habitat for African wild dogs, allowing for a more or less continuous range between eastern and southern Africa's populations. Wild dog reports from Mozambique date back to the 1970s, with more recent reports available from Niassa and Cabo Delgado provinces alongside the Tanzanian border. We are currently surveying an area of 50,000km² in central Mozambique which includes 40% of protected areas and hunting blocks. The area is typically open woodland (73%), with some forest (21%) and grasslands (6%). Interviews in 59 out of 200 local settlements present in the area returned data on 85 reported sightings of African wild dogs and their interactions with people. Some 300km of transects have been surveyed to assess the abundance of potential prey species and calling stations used to survey large predators.

The areas surveyed present relatively good prey biomass (chiefly red duiker and suni), low human density, few roads, no cattle and low spotted hyaena/lion presence, suggesting good potential for wild dogs. From the emerging data we estimate that at least one pack of up to 25 dogs is resident in central Mozambique, in the North of hunting reserves 12 & 11 (near the settlement of Cine). A second group of up to seven dogs is also reported, and may represent a dispersing group from the Cine pack. We observed three dogs killed by a vehicle collision on the main road near Cine. Road kills and human activities such as snaring and persecution are the main threats we have identified so far to this dog population.

Wild dog records have also been collated from Cabo Delgado and western Tete provinces. No data exists from southern Mozambique. Questionnaire work continues in Nampula, Zambezia and Manica provinces and we plan to extend fieldwork to Niassa and Cabo Delgado. We propose the development of a wild dog conservation programme in Mozambique to develop additional field surveys, and education campaign, deploy road signs and continue cooperation with safari operators, responsible for large tracts of wild dog habitat in the country.