

PAINTED DOGS



Painted Dog Conservation's Rehabilitation Center in Zimbabwe: Part of the National Conservation Strategy

Xmas Impofu • Dought Nkomo • Renee Bumpus • Dr. Greg Rasmussen

INTRODUCTION

The Painted Dog Conservation (PDC) rehabilitation facility was built in 2002 to effectively mitigate any situation concerning compromised or translocated dogs. The facility aids in keeping population numbers stable and in the case of crisis in the wild, ensures that whole packs are not decimated. The Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (DNPWMA) recognizes the facility as being an essential element in the National Management Plan for the species. The rehabilitation facility also serves as an important part of PDC's education program. Organized visits bring local kids from PDC's Children's Bush Camp (education program), the local community, and tourists eye to eye with this beautiful carnivore, often for the first time. This unique experience helps to educate and improve local perceptions of the dogs.



Goals and Objectives

- The primary objective of the center is to provide a safe recovery area for dogs with injuries that would otherwise render them unfit for the wild. Furthermore, whilst injured dogs are recuperating in the wild, they place additional burdens on their packs by not being able to participate in pack efforts and further require special attention from other pack members. The ultimate goal is to return individuals to their family unit once they are fully recovered and can once more make a valuable contribution to their pack and survival of incumbent pups.
- The facility also provides a half way house for packs translocated as a consequence of hostile landowners. Here, packs can be held in a secure environment until a safe release site is available in the wild.
- PDC administers care to orphaned pups and non dependent adults as a consequence of natural or anthropogenically induced events. Subsequently, these dogs are formed into packs. Furthermore, the facility serves to form packs from none related individuals.



The Facility

The ultimate goal of the rehabilitation center is to not only cater nationally for any situation that threatens Painted dogs in the wild, but where possible reintroduce such dogs back into the wild. The facility was designed with this in mind. There is a main enclosure, 1,970 feet in diameter, a medium term enclosure, 330 feet in diameter and a small intensive management enclosure. They are all linked via a series of raceways to facilitate the movement of individuals with minimum handling. A squeeze cage was also installed for administering drugs without the need of anesthetizing the animal. There is a high voltage electric fence surrounding the facility to keep out unwanted guests. Elephants, lions, leopards, and other Painted dogs are always challenging the fence lines.

The Dogs

The rehabilitation facility has been home to dogs that were victims of wildlife trade (watch more about the trade at <http://tinyurl.com/4vqbr3z>, <http://tinyurl.com/4mrxfqf>, and <http://tinyurl.com/4taegql>), injured by harmful snares, orphaned in the wild, or part of wild packs that needed to be relocated for their own safety.

To date, five packs consisting of individuals housed at the rehab center have been successfully reintroduced into the wild. There have been wild offspring recorded from dogs that have been cared for at the rehab facility.

The Staff

PDC believes it is fundamental to encourage the local community to carry on every aspect of this project. Xmas Mpofu is the head keeper at the rehabilitation center. He is from a village that borders Hwange National Park and has worked with PDC for over 10 years. PDC gave him computer training, a driver's license, and the building skills necessary to maintain the high quality rehabilitation facility. Xmas now manages a team of 3 animal care staff, also from local villages.

PDC's staff are role models in their villages, the youth look up to them and aspire to be in conservation.

Education

So far, Dought Nkomo (head bush camp guide), Xmas, and their staff have given informative educational Painted dog lectures to over 30,000 people including 15,000 local children and their parents, 10,000 Zimbabweans and 5,000 internationals.

International Assistance

PDC brings in experts from overseas to help train and develop the local staff. PDC's head keeper, Xmas Mpofu, worked closely with John Lemon from Perth Zoo to construct the Rehabilitation Center. Consequently, Xmas has the confidence and competence to perform and supervise much needed repairs to the facility over time.

Painted dog keeper, Renee Bumpus, worked with Xmas to enhance the husbandry and management skills at the rehabilitation center. Detailed record keeping, animal conditioning routines, regular enrichment schedules and operant conditioning training techniques were implemented for the rehab dogs.

Training and further animal husbandry techniques were reinforced by Esther van der Meer a Phd student with a strong background in animal welfare.

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