

THE AFRICAN WILD DOG



CHARACTERISTICS

<i>Kingdom</i>	Animal
<i>Phylum</i>	Chordata
<i>Class</i>	Mammalia
<i>Order</i>	Carnivora
<i>Family</i>	Canidae
<i>Genus</i>	Lycaon
<i>Latin name</i>	Lycaon pictus
<i>Weight</i>	18 to 40 kg
<i>Length</i>	90 to 150 cm
<i>Height at withers</i>	60 to 80 cm
<i>Sexual maturity</i>	12 to 18 months
<i>Reproductive season</i>	November
<i>Gestation</i>	70 days
<i>Number of young</i>	2 to 10
<i>Interval between reproduction</i>	1 year
<i>Diet</i>	Carnivore
<i>Longevity</i>	11 years
<i>IUCN status</i>	Under threat of extinction

Do you know that the African wild dog is the only canid with four claws on each paw? Other canids have five. Another feature is its coat, which is coloured brown, black, yellow, and white, and varies from one individual to another. It may be a way for “painted wolves” to recognise each other. Their large round ears have hairs that stop insects from entering. Those nomads of the Eastern and Southern African savanna live in packs of between 5 and 50 individuals. They range over a territory that sometimes covers over 2 500 km². The social organisation is dominated by a couple, and func-



Marking its territory.

Lycaon
Lycaon pictus.

tions splendidly, the harmony being rarely troubled by fights. Unlike the lion, young African wild dogs are the first to feed after a hunt, and older or wounded individuals are not excluded: the rest of the group feeds them on pieces of regurgitated meat. Group cohesion makes itself felt during hunts that are perfectly orchestrated in silence. In spite of their relatively small size, African wild dogs are formidable predators. They generally choose prey that are young or ill, and they are capable of pursuing for 5 km at 60 km/hr. That said, a large pack can overcome a lion with no problem. Their diet includes Thomson's gazelle,



impala, antelope, etc. An adult eats 3 kg of meat per day. Young animals start feeding from the age of two months, eating pieces regurgitated by their elders.

In general only the female of the dominant couple gives birth to young, bearing between 2 and 10

pups per litter once a year. When that happens, the troop becomes sedentary and live in the same den. During the first three weeks, the cubs do not leave the den. They are breast-fed for one month, and they are spoilt by the whole clan. After three months, the pack resumes its wanderings. Until recently, the African wild dog was considered a cruel and harmful animal, and humans have always sought to exterminate it. Of the 100 000 individuals counted in Sub-Saharan Africa at the start of the 20th century, fewer than 3 000 are alive today. Since 1990, the IUCN has classed the African wild dog as a species under threat of extinction. Given the retreat of its natural areas, it is in increasingly ferocious competition with other carnivores like lions and hyenas. The increasing number of enclosures has broken up its territory, causing the fragmentation of populations and the isolation of groups, which causes serious problems of consanguinity. African wild dogs are



Just 3 000 African wild dogs are alive today.

also the victims of cars and of the enlargement of the road network.

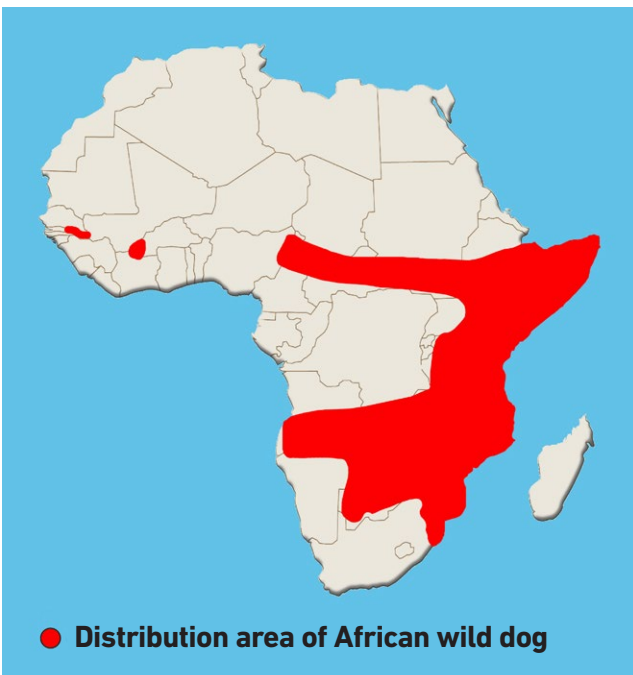
African wild dogs are sensitive to disease. They were contaminated and decimated by the canine

African wild dog fitted with a transmitter collar for radio-tracking.





*Intimidating
behaviour by the
African wild dog.*



*The African wild dog is under great threat; the IUCN
classes it as a species under threat of extinction.*

distemper virus originating from domestic dogs and spread by jackals and hyenas. Today, they survive mainly in reserves. The mortality rate amongst young animals is very high, which makes it difficult to re-introduce the species to its natural environment.

*Text by **Laurent Tenard** - Photographs by **Gilles Martin***