

Some of you may be aware that we have been working on plans to initiate a range wide priority conservation planning process for cheetah. These plans are about to become a reality. We are joining forces with the wild dog working group to initiate a process for cheetah and wild dogs together, drawing on the synergies between the two species, as they have very similar conservation requirements. Our aims in this process are to:

- (1) Identify priority sites for the conservation of wild dogs and cheetahs, including corridors connecting important conservation areas. Priorities will be established globally, regionally and nationally.
- (2) Foster appreciation for the need to conserve wild dogs and cheetahs, particularly at priority sites, among conservation practitioners in range states
- (3) Develop local capacity to conserve cheetahs and wild dogs by sharing knowledge on effective tools for planning and implementing conservation action.
- (4) Encourage policymakers to incorporate wild dogs' and cheetahs' conservation requirements into land use planning at both national and regional scales.
- (5) Prepare specific global and national conservation action plans for both cheetahs and wild dogs
- (6) Collate information on wild dog and cheetah distribution and abundance in an updatable database which can be used to measure the initiative's effectiveness in future years.

We are collaborating with the Canid and Cat Specialist Groups of IUCN, and WCS to implement this process, which will entail three regional meetings (covering eastern, southern and west-central Africa), each followed immediately by a national workshop conducted in the host country. The idea is that those attending the regional meeting from nearby countries will then attend the national meeting as observers, and use their experiences there to develop their own national meetings. This will kick off in February 2007 with an east Africa regional meeting held in Kenya, followed by a Kenya national workshop likely to be hosted by Kenya Wildlife Service (the latter pending formal official agreement).

Do please note that to be effective (and affordable) these meetings need to be kept small so it won't be possible for everyone to attend every meeting, though every major cheetah project should certainly be represented at their regional meeting. Lack of attendance does not negate participation in the information gathering process feeding into the meeting – and we would particularly appreciate any help anyone can provide in an extensive mapping process to establish accurate maps of cheetah and wild dog distribution prior to the meeting. We will be contacting participants individually about attendance at the various meetings; we want to ensure maximal participation by range-state conservation managers so will also be asking for input, at that time, on who else should attend from the country where you work.

We have most of the support we need for the east Africa meeting, but are still fundraising for that and for the later meetings. The cheetah "half" of the first two meetings already has support which should help act as a lever for fundraising for the 'wild dog half' - but if any of you know of individuals or foundations who might be interested in supporting this effort, do let us know.

Best wishes

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