



**National Conservation Action Planning workshop for cheetah, wild dog and lion**

**Oasis Camp, Juba, Southern Sudan**

**30 March – 3 April 2009**

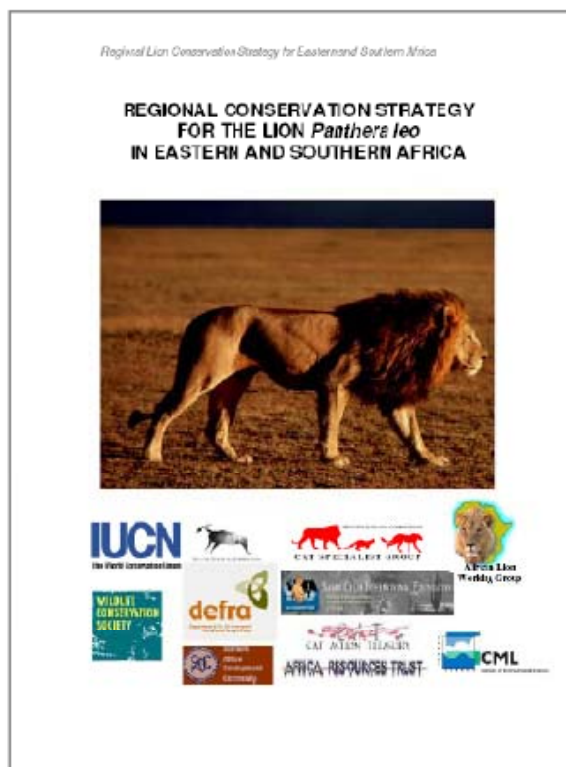
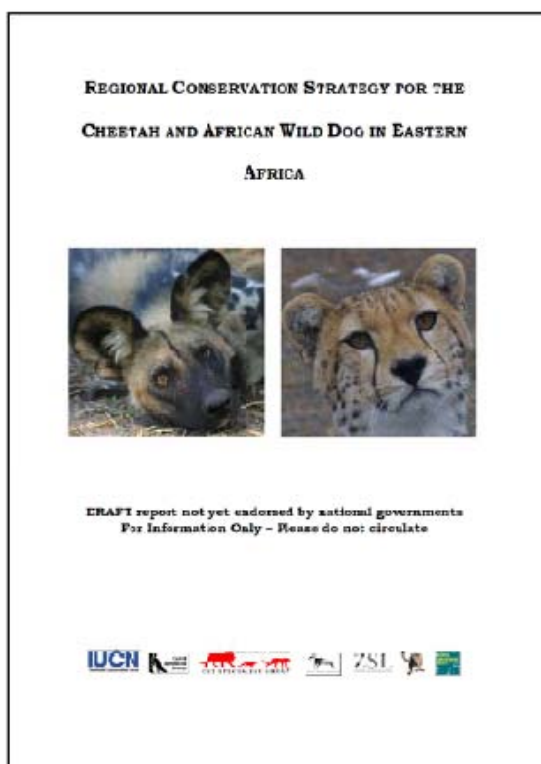
Christine Breitenmoser-Würsten, Sarah Durant and Amy Dickman

African wild dogs, cheetah and lions present major challenges for conservationists in the 21st Century. All three species were formerly widely distributed in Africa, but have experienced dramatic reductions in numbers and geographic range in recent decades. All large carnivores need large areas to survive. As human populations encroach on Africa's last wild areas, they – being particularly susceptible to the destruction and fragmentation of habitat – are often the first species to disappear.

Despite their threatened status, ecological importance as top carnivores, and value to Africa's tourism industry, to date remarkably little conservation action has been implemented for these species and the gaps in knowledge is still huge. The majority of Africa's protected areas are too small to conserve viable populations, and active conservation efforts on unprotected lands have so far been restricted to a handful of projects.

Recognising these concerns, in 2006 the Cat and Canid Specialist Groups of the IUCN/SSC, in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), initiated a Rangewide Conservation Planning process for cheetahs and wild dogs. A key component of this process is a series of workshops, bringing together specialists on the species' biology with conservation managers from governmental and non-governmental organisations. Close involvement of government representatives was considered absolutely critical since they represent the organisations with the authority to implement any recommendations at the management and policy levels. While the process is covering the entire geographic range of the species, the large number of range states involved means that productive discussion and interchange would have been very difficult to achieve at a single workshop covering the whole area. Workshops are therefore being conducted at the regional level. For cheetahs and wild dogs a regional workshop has been conducted in Kenya for East Africa and in Botswana for southern Africa.

The situation of the lion drew international attention at the October 2004 COP13 (13<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to CITES). A proposal to transfer the lion to Appendix I sparked extensive debate among African Range States, and highlighted the need to achieve pan-African consensus on the way forward for lion conservation. The proposal was withdrawn, and Range States agreed that a series of regional workshops should be held to address the conservation needs of the African lion. IUCN-The World Conservation Union was asked to organize workshops which would develop sub-regional conservation strategies using a participatory approach based on a logical framework. The IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group partnered with a parallel initiative of WCS to organize a Rangewide Priority Setting (RWPS) exercise for lions. The Eastern and Southern African Lion Conservation Workshop was held in early 2006 in Johannesburg, South Africa. It followed a similar regional workshop for lions in West and Central Africa held in Douala, Cameroon in fall 2005.



Since wildlife conservation policy is formulated, authorised and enforced at the national level, it is critical that conservation planning be enacted at this level. The development of national plans, through national workshops, is thus a vital component of the Rangewide Conservation Planning process. Each regional workshop has therefore to be followed by a series of national workshops in the range countries.

The Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism of the Government of Southern Sudan asked for support to conduct such a national workshop to develop an action plan. To use the available resources in a most efficient way, we decided to include all three species for this national planning workshop. After the workshop dates were postponed twice in 2008, we finally managed to have a final date at the end of March 2009. The workshop would never have happened without the tireless efforts and the incredible commitment of Martin R. Malek, who organized everything on his personal budget as the Ministry was not able to help. On our side it was Sarah Durant, ZSL/WCS, Amy Dickman, Ruaha Predator Project, WildCRU, and Christine Breitenmoser, IUCN/SSC Cat Specialist Group, supporting this workshop as facilitators.



Martin Ring Malek



Amy and Sarah busy preparing talks

When the date was finally set - and we were sure it was going to happen this time - we started to look for flights and visas. The first was easy, the second developed at least for me into an adventure. As Southern Sudan is currently not formally recognised as a country, we had to apply to the embassy of Sudan for a visa. Amy and Sarah were able to get theirs in London. Switzerland has no embassy, but a "Mission permanente" with the UN in Geneva. They were very unhelpful, and finally it was agreed after three weeks that they would send the passport back without a visa as in the meantime we had developed a plan B. Southern Sudan has so called liaison offices in the neighbouring countries, all of whom were very helpful. As we were flying through Ethiopia, it was planned that I would get the visa there. A day before we left I learnt that plan B did not work either, and I still did not have my passport back. Martin assured me that this was no problem as there was now even a plan C, and that was to get the visa in Juba directly. To make sure that I had a passport to travel, I had to organize a temporary passport the day before I left...

#### FRIDAY 27 MARCH 2009

The passport finally did arrive in the morning. We were supposed to meet in Heathrow around 7 p.m. Then there was this phone call of a panicking Sarah, she was stuck in a traffic jam. Amy arrived in time and we were wondering whether we had to travel on our own. Amy was especially worried that she might find herself alone in Juba to singlehandedly run the workshop, as I still had no visa. Then another panicking phone call came, as they had closed the check-in for our flight three people before it was Sarah's turn. We ran to the transfer desk of Ethiopian Airlines. The lady told us first that she could not do anything for us as the flight was overbooked by 30 people. We simply told her that this was not possible as we even had reserved seats. After 20 minutes of excitement and many phone calls back and forth, Sarah was allowed to check-in. We only met her at the gate just when we were called for boarding. What a start!

#### SATURDAY 28 MARCH 2009

After changing plane in Addis Ababa we arrived in time in Juba. Martin and Paul Peter were waiting for us on the airfield. Martin cut an imposing figure, in his uniform with two stars on the shoulders, and he managed to get all necessary stamps in our passports and our luggage quickly checked through. I had now a stamp in my passport but still no visa. The International Airport of Juba, a little building, was very busy as our plane had been full. We were happy that everything went so smoothly.

We stopped at the office of WCS – Southern Sudan Program, and met the country director Paul Elkan and his wife Sarah, as well as their pilot and GIS technician Falk Grossmann. We discussed the agenda and Falk, whose geographical knowledge of Sudan was far superior to ours, agreed to help us with the mapping exercise during the workshop.

We were very happy when we finally were dropped at the Oasis Camp at the board of the Nile. The Camp used to consist of tents; today there are little huts with iron roofs and the luxury of air conditioning, which we very quickly learnt to appreciate.

We went to bed early as we were all really tired after a long trip and a sleepless night in the airplane



The Oasis Camp has a nice terrace at the Nile.



Communal area with dining room (left)

#### SUNDAY AND MONDAY 29-30 MARCH 2009

We used these two days to finalize our talks and the agenda. On Monday afternoon we went back to the WCS office to practice using the projector pen, called eBeam, which Sarah had brought. It is quite an amazing tool. We projected a map of Southern Sudan, and with the pen we were able to draw on the screen and save the map together with the drawings as a jpg file. On the drive there we got to see a little bit of Juba. The open land adjacent to our hotel had been temporarily settled by a number of people, who had constructed makeshift huts. However, construction is currently booming in Juba, during the reconstruction process in southern Sudan, and the landowners were keen to develop the land. Sadly, in the name of this 'progress', all these huts had been destroyed, leaving only desolate ruins, which some people have continued to try to use. However, the workers in the offices and hotels currently being built also need places to live, and there is little cheap housing available in Juba.



The WCS office in Juba





One of the destroyed areas near the Oasis camp



Juba

In the evening we organized an icebreaker to welcome all the other participants also staying in the Oasis Camp had arrived. Unfortunately not everybody was able to come because of transport problems. It was a very hot night and we were sitting in a corner of the camp where no breeze coming from the Nile could reach us. Even our African colleagues were sweating.



Margret, Martin, Amy and Sarah



Sarah and Martin greeting the participants

#### TUESDAY 31 MARCH 2009

Now the big day had come, the opening of the workshop was planned for 9.30 h and the Minister was expected to come and open the workshop. As usual the start was slower than anticipated, and, because of a heavy schedule we started ahead of the official opening, as the Minister had not yet arrived. Some other participants were also delayed because of transport problems. Martin welcomed everybody and we got started with presentations. At 11.30 h the Minister, Agnes Poni Lukudu, arrived and we were able to officially open the workshop.



Martin starts the workshop



Geraldo Wol presenting protected areas



The Minister Agnes Poni Lukudu (centre) opens officially the workshop



Group photo with the Minister

The session with presentations was very instructive for us as we received a lot of background information. There are two categories of protected areas in Southern Sudan with the same legal status: Game Reserves, which are under the Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism, and National Parks, which are under the President. There are 5 National Parks and 14 Game Reserves. There was some discussion about the boundaries of these protected areas, as it was unclear whether the borders were currently legally valid, and opinions were expressed that the boundaries were not enforced in many protected areas, and basically only existed on paper. The area west of the Nile is still not safe, as there are a lot of people heavily armed in this area, and hence nobody dares to go to the Southern National Park. WCS has been conducting substantial aerial survey work to establish the distribution of large mammals, but has so far concentrated its activities mainly east of the Nile, including Boma National Park. They have surveyed the Southern National Park only once, in 2007, as they risk being shot at in their small plane. As the vegetation is much thicker there, the results have not been as good as for the eastern part of Southern Sudan.



Falk Grossmann from the WCS Southern Sudan Program presented information about the aerial surveys that they had been doing over the past three years. They are very few sightings of carnivores, as lions are nocturnal, cheetahs are well camouflaged, and wild dogs are rare, so it is very difficult to detect them in aerial surveys. He also presented data on prey species. There are still large herds of migrating white-eared kob and tiangs and areas with reasonably sized elephant herds. But in most areas the numbers have gone down dramatically compared surveys conducted in the 1980s by John Fryxell. The only exception is the Jonglei region where numbers have not dropped, but where the overall density is a lot lower compared to e.g. Boma NP.

In the afternoon, we updated the distribution maps from the regional strategy workshop using the magic projector pen. There were only 6 confirmed cheetah sightings, 14 for wild dogs, and 20 for lions. Most of the observations date from after 2000.



Capturing information on the map with the pen



Capturing information on the observations

#### WEDNESDAY 1 APRIL 2009

We started the day with the problem analysis for the three species. There were six broad topics discussed: (1) Legislation and policy, which had the longest list of items; (2) Law enforcement; (3) Education and awareness; (4) Conflict and persecution; (5) Broader wildlife issues and (6) Capacity development, which again had a very long list of items. Most of the problems were valid for all three species with a few exceptions, e.g. intentional hunting for cultural use and illegal trade were both relevant to lions and cheetahs, but not to wild dogs.

This session was followed by two talks presenting possible solutions to some of these problems: “Tools for conflict resolution” by Amy Dickman and “Monitoring methods for large carnivores” by Sarah Durant. The session finished with presentations from Frazer Tong and Paul Elkan summarising the conservation work already being undertaken in Southern Sudan, and their plans for future activities.



Frazer Tong



Paul Elkan

In the afternoon, we started the national action planning process for cheetah and wild dogs. The vision and goal from the regional strategy were reviewed, discussed and amended in plenary. After this, the participants split into working groups to work on the objectives, targets and activities. The working groups in action:



At the end of the day everybody was very tired.



THURSDAY 2 APRIL 2009

We start the day with the presentation of the group work. The discussion was extremely lively and took a lot more time than we had planned, but as the items discussed were critically important for the implementation of the action plan we let it happen. A lot of the arguments were around responsibilities and time lines. The Ministry is underfunded and understaffed. They formulated it as following: “We have very few people with a pen” meaning that there are very few people with a proper education for their job. The few that there are get often get hijacked by the international organizations where they get higher salaries.



Three important people from the Ministry



Sarah explaining the next steps

A few other problems that were addressed had to do with the fact that not all faculties of the universities of Southern Sudan had yet moved back, with some of them still in Khartoum. This workshop was funded through US sources, and hence had to abide by the current strict US government funding restrictions to Sudan. This meant that no funding support could be given to any delegates from north Sudan, and participants from the faculty of social sciences in the University of Khartoum were unable to attend. We were lucky that the wildlife science section of the University of Juba had moved back south after the war. After the peace agreement was signed, because of capacity shortages, staff had to be moved away from their families. For example, Martin's family is from Wao, yet he is now stationed in Juba, many kilometres away from his home. He has not seen his family for three years, as it is difficult for him to return to his home town for security reasons. Many weapons were left in the country at the end of the war, and there are now many people out in the bush with guns. Just three weeks ago, there was a major cattle raid in and around Boma where it was reported that more than a hundred people were killed. Boma is one of the more secure places in Southern Sudan...

Once in a while boats passed along the river. They transport displaced people from Khartoum to the south with all their belongings, and the trip takes four days. They have to find a place to live in Southern Sudan or go as refugees to one of the neighboring countries. Everybody was always running outside to greet these people and wave them a welcome.



We finished the day at 6pm, with a final National Conservation Action Plan for cheetah and wild dogs. The discussions during the presentations were very long and everybody actively participated; disagreements were handled with good humor.

FRIDAY 2 APRIL 2009

The last day was confined to the development of a Lion National Action Plan. We learnt during the morning that the Minister was coming at 4 p.m. to close the workshop, so we really had to work hard to get everything done by then. As the participants were already familiar with the process, we were able to speed up quite a bit. An important topic that arose during the discussion of the targets and activities was associated with CITES. Sudan has two representatives at the CITES meetings and both are from Khartoum. However, wildlife issues and trade are also happening in Southern Sudan and hence the region should be represented on CITES. It has been agreed internationally that Sudan is a country with two systems, so now the Ministry of Legal Affairs and Constitutional Development has been asked to take care of this matter.

We had just finished the presentations of the group work on activities, and we were discussing the way forward when the acting Minister arrived to close the workshop. Ms Agnes Poni Lukudu had to go to Khartoum and was represented by Prof Philip Yona Jambi, Minister of Cooperation and Rural Development. We had prepared a certificate and a CD with all presentations, a copy of the regional strategy and photos documenting the workshop – only two participants had a camera. The CDs and certificates were awarded to each participant by the acting Minister at the end. They were all delighted with this gesture of appreciation for their hard work during the past four days. In the evening we were invited by the Ministry for dinner.



Prof Jambi handing over the certificate to Gerardo Wol



Dinner at the Da Vinci.

### **Acknowledgements**

The workshop was generously supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Zoological Society of London, Panthera, Saint Louis Zoo's WildCare Foundation and the Howard G. Buffet Foundation. The WCS southern Sudan office provided important logistical support during the workshop, and WildCRU facilitated Amy's attendance at the workshop. We are particularly grateful to the support of our co-organiser, Martin Ring, who not only ensured the attendance of so many key participants, but also looked after us during our stay in Juba.

SATURDAY 4 APRIL 2009

Martin R. Malek picked us up at 9 to bring us to the airport. He made a detour for us across Juba so we could see again a few more areas of the town. Here some impressions:



THE FACILITY: Oasis Camp

When we looked into possible facilities for this workshop, we were confronted with the incredible price level of Juba. The first two possibilities offered to us were in the range of 180-350 \$/person per day, completely out of our budget line. Amy did a lot of searching on the internet and found the Juba forum, where NGOs list the facilities they recommend with price ranges. Everybody made a clear statement about not staying in town, but rather along the Nile because of noise, security and temperature reasons. The high temperatures and humidity in Juba, meant that air conditioning was necessary if we were to ensure that participants were able to maintain their energy and motivation throughout this workshop, which reduced our list of options. The explanation for the high prices was that everything has to be imported from Kenya and there are a lot of international NGOs in Juba that can pay high prices. We then found out that food and some of the water comes from Uganda, the border is about 160 km south of Juba, and construction material comes from China. They had just put in new furniture to many of the rooms at Oasis camp that was imported from China. All goods from outside Africa are imported through Mombasa in Kenya, and are then driven into southern Sudan by lorry across the rough and potholed roads crossing Kenya.

Amy wrote to several camps ahead of the workshop, and obtained the best offer from the Oasis Camp including the meeting facility. Most other offers were similar in price to that of the Oasis, only slightly more expensive, although a couple of the other offers were more than double the price, and substantially more than our budget. We ended up paying 100\$ per day and person. A double room was charged at 200\$ even if only one person was staying there. For people not staying at the camp we had to pay additionally 20\$ per meal. They charged us 250\$ per day for the conference room, which included tea and coffee and one bottle of water per participant, but no snacks during the breaks. For snacks during the afternoon break we had to pay 7\$ per person. At lunch and dinner, very good food was served. There was always a variety of vegetables and meat, as well as salad and dessert.

The rooms are simple but practical, nothing is missing. All rooms have a little bath room with a shower. They come and pick up laundry every day and return it in the afternoon. We never had a power problem. Laundry and internet both were free. Here are some pictures:





The camp is in the midst of a Mango forest. One day we had quite a strong wind and heavy clouds. Instead of water it was raining mangos. On the huts with iron roofs, this made quite a noise. The mangos tasted so good. All the staff of the Camp was very busy collecting the fruits.

The Oasis Camp is a safe place. We were told not to go out late at night on our own, there is a curfew. The camp is quite far away from the main road and so we only got a glimpse at Juba during driving in and out of camp.



After a mango rain...

