

# THE TANZANIA CARNIVORE PROGRAMME

Tanzania is vitally important for African carnivores, being home to 35 species. In an exciting new initiative to coordinate carnivore conservation at a national level, ZSL and TAWIRI (the Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute, which oversees wildlife research and informs conservation policy) have established the Tanzania Carnivore Programme. Based at TAWIRI Headquarters in Arusha, the Programme employs three full-time scientific staff and provides both training facilities and a central focus for carnivore research and conservation. The Programme was established through a grant from the Darwin Initiative Scheme of the UK government, and is now funded through the international partnership between the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL).

## Carnivore Monitoring

Tanzania is a recognised hotspot for African carnivores, holding nearly half of the continent's species. It also has key populations of threatened species including one third of the world's wild dogs and important populations of cheetahs and lions. However, despite this global significance, Tanzania lacks information on the status and distribution of its carnivore species.

The Tanzania Carnivore Programme is gathering information on carnivores across the country through field surveys and a network of volunteer contributors. Participants are from both government and private sectors and include tourists, tour companies, researchers, wildlife professionals and interested amateur naturalists. Contributors send in locations of carnivore sightings from all across Tanzania to the Carnivore Atlas Project, as well as photographs of cheetahs and wild dogs for use in the Cheetah Watch and Wild Dog Watch Campaigns.

The Tanzania Carnivore Centre established at TAWIRI provides offices, internet access and a large meeting room for scientific staff and visitors, and is a national focus for carnivore conservation and research.



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Mark Johnstad

The photographs are used to identify individual cheetahs and wild dogs – both species can be distinguished by their markings – and hence to monitor individual animals across the country. All information goes into a national GIS database, which is used to assess the impact of human activity on carnivore distribution.

*Tanzania is home to the world's largest surviving single population of wild dogs, in the Selous Game Reserve.*

## Capacity building

Tanzania is committed to biodiversity conservation and has gazetted a large proportion of the country into a





protected area network, ensuring that today Tanzania has the largest total area under protection in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, it remains one of the poorest countries of the world, with the 14th lowest per capita GDP in 2003. Hence, despite its high biodiversity and the economic importance of wildlife tourism to the country, few wildlife professionals yet have the skills necessary for monitoring and conserving carnivores.

Carnivores are well camouflaged and secretive, making estimation of distribution and abundance problematic. The Tanzania Carnivore Programme therefore trains wildlife professionals in appropriate scientific methods, bringing in external expertise where necessary.

## Engaging the Public

Carnivore conservation depends on people, and the Programme promotes its activities and encourages interest through an extensive public relations programme. Public, stakeholders and contributors alike are kept informed through a quarterly newsletter – Carnivore News Bites - which is also available on the Programme's web site [www.tanzaniacarnivores.org](http://www.tanzaniacarnivores.org), together with regularly updated maps of the latest data for all the carnivore species in Tanzania.

In addition the Programme has produced posters and stickers, placed articles in magazines and newspapers, and been featured on national TV and radio. The work is ultimately dependent on the goodwill and support of people within Tanzania, especially

*Outreach materials such as this Cheetah Watch sticker promote carnivore conservation and encourage people to send in photos and information.*

regarding voluntary contributions of photos and data, and so a two-way flow of information is vital to sustain local support.

## Conservation Planning



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*The programme makes use of hidden camera traps to survey carnivores across the country, such as these Cape Clawless otters, documented for the first time by the programme in Mahale National Park.*

The Programme has worked with the wildlife authorities of Tanzania to develop a conservation action plan for the carnivores of Tanzania. This provides a framework for action across the country, prioritising species and identifying data-deficient areas. Such frameworks are key to guiding conservation activities in the future, and for leveraging new initiatives. Over the coming years the Programme will oversee the implementation of this plan, ensuring that conservation and research priorities are met.

**Donors:** The Darwin Initiative, St. Louis Zoo, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

**Partners:** Tanzania Cheetah Conservation Programme, Tanzania National Parks, Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), Wildlife Division, Tarangire Elephant Project, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS).

[www.habari.co.tz/carnivores](http://www.habari.co.tz/carnivores)

**Have you seen me?**

**Please let us know!**

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Cheetah Watch Campaign



Conservation Programmes

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