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Abstract: In early February this year the first eastern Africa conservation planning workshop for cheetahs *Acinonyx jubatus* and wild dogs *Lyacon pictus* was held in Kenya. This workshop is part of a series aimed at developing accurate maps of populations of both species and establishing regional conservation strategies to encompass their entire range.

Range-wide Conservation Planning for Cheetah and Wild Dog

Sarah Durant¹

In early February this year the first eastern Africa conservation planning workshop for cheetahs *Acinonyx jubatus* and wild dogs *Lycan pictus* was held in Kenya. This workshop is part of a series aimed at developing accurate maps of populations of both species and establishing regional conservation strategies to encompass their entire range.

This, the first workshop in the series, covered Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda and was funded by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. Delegates included representatives from the wildlife authorities of each country, species biologists from within the region, and international experts, including chairs of the IUCN cat and canid specialist groups. The workshop was followed by a national conservation action planning workshop to develop a species conservation action plan for Kenya for both species.

Cheetah are classified as *Vulnerable* by IUCN and are thought to be declining across their range. They occur at much lower densities than most of the other large cats, ranging between 10-30 % of the densities of lions, leopards, tigers and jaguars in prime habitat. This means that the areas they need for their conservation are 300-1,000 % the size of the areas of these other large cats. We are used to thinking on a big scale for the conservation needs of all big cats, but for cheetah we need to think even bigger. Most existing protected areas are not large enough to ensure the long term survival of cheetah, and instead their conservation will require a landscape approach of protected and unprotected habitat networks. This requires land use planning on a scale that has rarely been seen before in conservation. Wild dogs, occur at similar densities to cheetah, face similar threats and hence have similar conservation requirements, and so the species were paired to increase leverage and hence the likelihood of implementation of conservation meas-

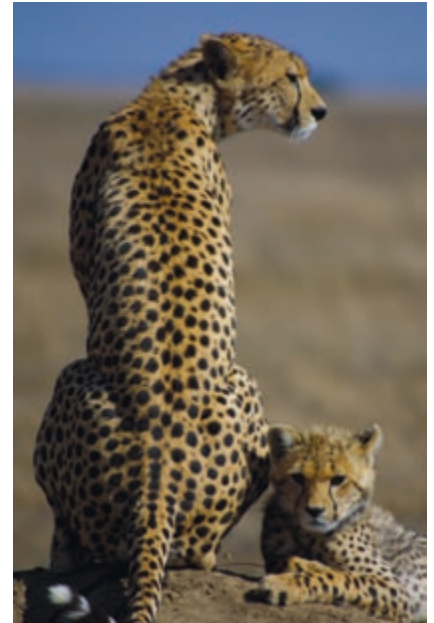
ures to protect both species. The recent workshop meshed together two existing workshop processes – that of the WCS range wide priority setting exercise and that of the IUCN strategic planning process – building on the strengths of both. It had three major outputs:

1. Precise maps of distribution of existing populations, including the classification of resident, possible, connecting and unknown populations and threats to their survival.
2. An eastern African strategic plan for the conservation of cheetah and wild dog.
3. A Kenyan national conservation action plan for cheetah and wild dog.

The strategic plan, which targeted regional objectives, was structured in such a way that it could be easily used in a national planning framework to develop a country specific national plan. This is important as conservation, including policy, legislation and enforcement, all occur at national levels, and hence, national planning and commitment of government is necessary for implementation of the regional strategic plan.

The maps demonstrated what we suspected was the case, cheetah and wild dog populations are very few in number. More optimistically, these populations appear as if they might cover large areas, however in most of these areas connectivity within and between areas is under serious and urgent threat, and many areas are transboundary, necessitating international co-operation for their conservation. Connectivity, if lost, would lead to a fragmentation of existing populations into small isolated populations that are unlikely to be viable in the long term. The mapping process highlighted the importance of land use planning in the conservation of these species, and this information was important in the development of the strategic plan.

The strategic plan was made up of a vision, a goal, a list of objectives (6) to meet the goal, a series of targets to address each objective, and a series of



Cheetah mother with cub in Eastern Africa (Photo S. Durant, WSL & WCS).

activities to meet each target. The objectives fell under 6 main categories, all of which were deemed to be critically important to cheetah and wild dog conservation by the group of experts gathered at the workshop: Monitoring and surveys; Coexistence; National Planning; Capacity development; Policy and legislation; and Advocacy.

The strategic plan worked well within the Kenyan National Workshop, and translated directly into providing a conservation action plan for both species with specific activities, indicators and actors specified for each objective and target. The Kenyan Wildlife Service was very supportive of the process and pledged strong support to ensure the implementation of the plan. The report from the workshop is expected to be finalised in June 2007 and will be made available to the Cat specialist group for posting on the web.

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