

AFRICAN WILD DOGS

LYCAON PICTUS

DESCRIPTION

African wild dogs are medium sized (18-34 kg) dogs, with large black ears, and dark muzzles. Their short, wiry coat is coloured in blotches of yellow, grey, black and white and gave rise to the African wild dog's scientific name of *Lycaon pictus*, meaning 'painted wolf-like animal' in Greek.



Individual African wild dogs can be identified by their unique coat pattern. Unlike the other canid species there are only four, rather than five, toes on the front feet.

IUCN STATUS

Endangered.

POPULATION STATUS

Decreasing.

THREATS

The main threat to African wild dogs is habitat fragmentation, which increases their contact with people and domestic animals, resulting in human-wildlife conflict and transmission of infectious disease.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Wild dogs were historically distributed all over sub-Saharan Africa, but their range has decreased and become fragmented over recent decades. From the thirty-four sub-Saharan countries in which they used to exist, a handful of countries are now thought to hold potentially viable populations. The Republic of South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Ethiopia are all estimated to hold populations of 400 dogs or over, while the largest remaining populations reside in Botswana and Tanzania, estimated at 800 and 1800 dogs respectively.

HABITAT

African wild dogs are generalist predators and can occupy a range of habitats from montane forest to semi-desert and were formerly distributed throughout sub-Saharan Africa, absent only from the lowland forests of the Congo basin. It appears that their current distribution is limited

primarily by human activities and the availability of prey, rather than by the loss of a specific habitat type.

DIET

African wild dogs mostly hunt medium-sized antelope. Whereas they weigh 20–30 kg, their prey average around 50 kg, and may be as large as 200 kg. Packs set out to hunt in the cool of dawn and dusk, avoiding other predators such as lions. The victim is pulled to the ground and the group descends to feed; pups in the pack are allowed to eat first. In most areas their principal prey are impala (*Aepyceros melampus*), greater kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*), Thomson's gazelle (*Eudorcas thomsonii*) and common wildebeest (*Connochaetes taurinus*). They will give chase of larger species, such as common eland (*Tragelaphus oryx*) and African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), but rarely kill such prey. Small antelope, such as dik-dik (*Madoqua* spp.), steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*) and duiker (tribe *Cephalophini*) are important in some areas, and warthogs (*Phacochoerus* spp.) are also taken in some populations. African wild dogs also take very small prey such as hares, lizards and even eggs, but these make a very small contribution to their diet.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

African wild dogs are highly sociable and packs are comprised of between 3 and 27 individuals. Within their packs, dogs of the same sex are closely related to each other but not to individuals of the opposite sex.

Outside of the breeding season, African wild dogs are nomadic and hunt their prey by cooperating closely in a group which enables them to hunt prey comprising antelope and ungulates much larger than themselves as well as ensuring their hunting success is much higher than that of other large carnivorous species.

The African wild dog has been classified among the most social of all canids and its vocal repertoire is one of the most complex in Canidae, with some sounds unique to the species. Preceding a hunt, pack members often rally in a greeting ceremony which included lip licking and biting, which appears to be a symbolic solicitation for food. Greeting behaviour in adults might have developed from infantile begging. During the ceremony many different kinds of sounds can be heard including whines, whimpers, squeals, and high-pitched bird-like sounds called "twitters."

REPRODUCTION

Only the dominant male and female will breed, and although births are more common between March and June, they may take place throughout the year. Litter size is the largest of any canid, averaging ten pups; these are born within dens where they remain for around three months. Initially the mother will stay with her pups and when members of the pack return from hunting they regurgitate food for her. As the pups get older however, all pack members help with feeding and 'baby sitting' of the young dogs. Juveniles are fully independent at 16 to 24 months but remain with their pack, females are more likely to disperse, usually leaving in a sub-group with their sisters once they reach two years old.

SPOTTED HYAENA

Crocuta crocuta

DESCRIPTION

Similar to that of a large, well-built dog with light brown fur, each individual has their own unique pattern of dark spots. The head is massive with large, rounded ears. This is supported by a heavily built neck and fore legs,

which are longer than the hind legs giving the animal a sloped look. The fur is short and the tail is bushy with a distinctive black tip. Females are generally larger than males. Weight 56-63kg; height 79-86cm in males. Weight 67-75kg; height 84-89cm in females. Three other hyaena species can be found in Africa but the spotted is the largest and would be difficult to mistake for any other.



IUCN STATUS

Least concern.

In Malawi the status of spotted hyaenas is fairly stable, especially within protected areas. However, they are often persecuted by farmers due to the threat they pose to livestock, and hunted in cities as they can pose of threat to people. In Liwonde, they are rarely targeted by poachers although some fall victim to snares and gin traps that are meant for other species.

POPULATION STATUS

Decreasing.

THREATS

Spotted hyaenas are subject to human persecution outside of protected areas through culling, trapping and poisoning. Such activities can occur within protected areas mainly due to wire snares intended for wild herbivores for bush meat. Authorities may order the killing of hyaenas within protected areas if they believe they are a threat to other species or to livestock. They are also killed, in some areas, for food, medicine or witchcraft. A further threat is posed by habitat loss caused by increased human settlement.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Relatively widely distributed across most of Africa. As a rule they are found south of the Sahara and outside of the Rainforest. Distribution is patchy however, with populations often

concentrated in protected areas, especially in Western and Central Africa. Continuous populations persist over large areas in several countries, including Chad, Kenya, Tanzania and Botswana. In all they are permanent residents in 38 African countries.

HABITAT

Present in almost all habitats including semi-desert, savannah, dense dry woodland, montane habitats and open woodland. They are usually absent from desert and rainforest.

DIET

Generally spotted hyaenas' diet mainly consists of medium to large sized ungulates, such as impala, zebra and blue wildebeest. They will also take smaller mammals, birds, eggs, invertebrates, reptiles and even garbage. Although capable hunters, spotted hyaenas are efficient scavengers, using up to 40% more of an ungulate carcass than other carnivores, eating everything but rumen contents and horn bosses of larger antelope. However, deity and scavenging preferences are dependent on habitat and food availability.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Live in large clans which will defend territories at a high density, depending on the presence of other clans and carnivore species. Despite this though, clan members compete more and cooperate less than most social carnivores. Another difference they have with other social carnivores is the fact that females are bigger and more dominate than males. However, female will compete with each other for rank and food. Females will lead pack hunts, boundary patrols and into combat against potential threats. Female dominance over males is best seen at a kill site, where the males are usually the last to feed.

In large clans members will rarely meet in one assembly point, but up to 10 females will share a communal den with their offspring. Each clan member knows its place in the hierarchy and behaves accordingly. Dominant females will tend to be the largest individuals with swollen udders.

REPRODUCTION

The spotted hyaena is a non-seasonal breeder, generally producing 2 young litter after a gestation period of 4 months. Adulthood is usually reached at around 3 years but is slightly later in females. Offspring will inherit the mother's dominance level, and so there is usually conflict between cubs of the same gender, particularly females, which may result in mortality. Females often remain with their natal clan, whilst males will disperse after about 2 years. The sons of high ranking females will often become the breeding males of the clans they join, due to their large size and confidence gained from birth right.

Reproduction can be difficult for the male as they may fear the more dominate female. However, after impregnation the males have no further parental role. Cubs are raised in communal dens but are seldom provisioned or guarded by clan members. Due to the competitiveness between females it is rare to see the cross-suckling of offspring, even in close relatives.

SIDE-STRIPED JACKAL

CANIS ADUSTUS

DESCRIPTION

Jackal with a blunt snout and smaller, rounder ears than other jackals. Light grey to tan in colour, with a strip on its side. The tail is dark with a white tip. Although there are other members of the *Canis* family in Africa, the most similar would be the black-backed jackal. However, these are rarely found in the same range as the side-striped. The side stripes weighs 16-26kg and is up to 38cm in



IUCN STATUS

Least Concern.

POPULATION STATUS

Stable.

THREATS

Side-striped jackals are persecuted for their role in rabies transmission and their supposed part in livestock killings. Although this is unlikely to have an overall effect on the population, indiscriminate culling through poisoning and snaring can affect local abundance.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Found over much of sub-Saharan Africa. Mainly in broad-leaved woodlands of the Northern and Southern Savannah.

HABITAT

They can occupy a range of habitats including game areas, farmland and towns within the broadleaved savannah zone. The species tends to avoid open savannah as this presents too much competition with other jackal species and so sticks to habitats with denser vegetation.

DIET

The side-striped jackal's diet contains a combination of mice, rats, hares, invertebrates, fruit, seeds, birds as large as Guinea fowl, reptiles and carrion. They may also eat small quantities of green grass to aid digestion.

BEHAVIOUR

This jackal is known to occur in pairs and in family units of up to 6 individuals. Around a feeding site, gatherings of several jackals can occur. At present very little of the side-striped's social system has been studied.

REPRODUCTION

Breeding happens seasonally just before or during the rains. After a gestation period of 57-70 days a litter of 3-6 cubs are born. The preferred den sites are termite mound, aardvark holes and hillsides but mothers will tend to use pre-existing dens.

Young are trained to be independent after a few weeks, usually being lured of the den, rather than carried, with the promise of the mother's milk. Pups are usually quite independent after 4 months, already foraging by themselves, learning to hunt and finding the limits of its territory. By 6 months they are proficient hunters but will still receive food and grooming from sibling and parents. Between 6-8 months the pups will reach adult hood and will leave to establish their own territories.

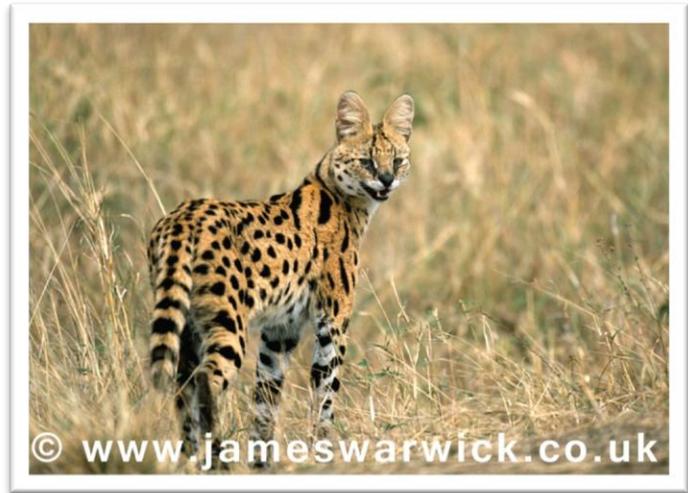
SERVAL

LEPTAILURUS SERVAL

DESCRIPTION

A slender, lightly build cat with long legs and neck. Their colour varies from white to a golden yellow, which is littered with black bands and spots. The head is

small despite its large ears, which are black on the back with white patches. The tail is short, reaching only the hocks of its hind legs. Similar species include the caracal, African wildcat and small spotted cat. Weight is 10-kg in males and 8.7-12.5 in females; height is 67-100cm.



IUCN STATUS

Least Concern.

POPULATION STATUS

Stable.

THREATS

The major threat to Serval is the loss and degradation of wetland habitat which it relies on for food. The burning of grassland for livestock is also a big issue, as it lowers small mammal populations. They are hunted for their skins, which are valuable in many countries and often used for traditional cultural practices. Unjustified persecution for livestock loss is another reason for them to be hunted in many rural areas.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Occurs widely in sub-Saharan Africa, with the exception of rainforest and desert areas.

HABITAT

The Serval is quite habitat specific, having a dependency for water sources. They are found in well-watered savannah environments and are often associated with reed beds.

DIET

Diet is mainly made up of rodents. May also feed on birds, reptiles, insects and amphibians.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Servals are a solitary species. They have exclusive core territories with larger home ranges which are shared with other individuals, allowing for a mate to be found. Females will usually tolerate the presence of another female, but males will try to force other males away.

REPRODUCTION

They are likely to be annual breeders, producing 1-5 cubs after 65-75 days of gestation. The breeding pair will hunt and rest together while the female is in heat. The male will have no influence on parental care. The female will move the cubs between hiding spots and bring them food, as well as suckling them.

SMALL SPOTTED GENET

GENETTA GENETTA

DESCRIPTION

Also known as the common genet, this species is very similar to the large-spotted genet but the spots are significantly smaller and has black bars on the top of its shoulders. A strip of long black fur along its mid-back can be erected into a crest. It has a ringed tail with a white tip. The muzzle is long and pointed, with black on the sides and white patches near the tip. White patches can also be seen under the eyes with stripes running to the forehead from the inner corners of the eyes. The ears are large with rounded tips. Generally less than 2kg in weight and around 94cm in length.



IUCN STATUS

Least Concern

POPULATION STATUS

Stable.

THREATS

There are no major threats. Occasionally eaten by people and parts are used for medicine, while skins may be used for the manufacture of karosses in southern Africa. It is also hunted for its fur in North Africa. In some areas, urbanisation threatens to cause extirpation.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Widespread across the Northern Saharan fringe, and in open, dry zones in sub-Saharan Africa. Can also be found in Portugal, France and Spain, as well as Balearic Islands.

HABITAT

Can be found in woodland, scrub and fynbos. Can occur in arid areas and enters deserts via rivers. Sometimes nests in roofs of buildings.

DIET

Feeds on invertebrates, small rodents, birds, eggs, fruit, reptiles, crabs and even lesser bush babies.

HONEY BADGER

MELLIVORA CAPENSIS

DESCRIPTION

Also known as a Ratel, the Honey badger is a well-built animal.

White or pale grey on the back of the head, the back and the top of the tail, while the remainder is

black. A white line separates these two colours. The eyes and ears are small, as are its legs and tail. The forefeet have long, sharp claws, while the hind feet have claws which lie flat underneath. Typically they are around 95cm long, about 27cm high at the shoulders and weigh roughly 12kg.



IUCN STATUS

Least Concern.

Little is known about the honey badger's status in Malawi due to lack of research, although it is thought to be fairly stable.

POPULATION STATUS

Decreasing.

THREATS

Directly persecuted by apiculturists and livestock farmers, and indirectly killed by non-selective programmes which target other species. There is evidence to believe they have gone locally extinct in many areas. Many of its body parts are used in traditional medicine due their reputation as fearless animals. In some areas, honey badgers are hunted for bush meat due to the decline of other bush meat species.

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Historically, the honey badger's range stretched all over sub-Saharan Africa. Stretching from the Western Cape to Southern Morocco. Its range even stretches through Arabia into western Asia, as far as the Indian peninsula.

HABITAT

Lives in a variety of habitats although it will avoid deserts and lowland rainforest.

DIET

Will eat a wide range of small mammals, as well as scorpions, spiders, lizards and snakes. May also take larger mammals, grubs and bee larvae.

SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

The social behaviour is relatively unstudied. Sightings of adults in pairs and the similarity of the sexes suggests that it lives in monogamous pairs. Sightings of single individuals are most common, although they can be seen in pairs or trios. It is unknown if they are territorial.

REPRODUCTION

Again, little is known about the Honey badger's reproduction. Gestation is estimated to be around 6-7 months, much longer than many mustelids. Around 1 to 4 young are born in a grass/leave lined nest. It is estimated to be an unusually long lived animal as captive individuals have lived up to 26 years.