

# 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 is funded by the Darwin Initiative Scheme of the UK government, with additional support from 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 its global importance for carnivore conservation, 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 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 photographs are used to identify



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Mark Johnstad

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 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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the 17th lowest per capita GDP in 2002. 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. The Programme promotes its activities and encourages interest in carnivore conservation 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.habari.co.tz/carnivores](http://www.habari.co.tz/carnivores), 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 Programme's work is ultimately dependent on the goodwill and support of people within Tanzania, especially regarding voluntary contributions of photos and data, and so a two-way flow of information is vital to sustain local support.

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

## Planning for the Future



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*The programme brings in outside expertise to train Tanzanian nationals, such as the IUCN Otter Specialist Group for the programme's Otter Survey Workshop.*

In 2005 the Programme aims to develop a conservation action plan for the carnivores of Tanzania. This will provide a framework for conservation action across the country, prioritizing species and identifying data-deficient areas. Such frameworks are key to guiding conservation activities in the future, and for leveraging new conservation initiatives. The plan will involve all the key stakeholders in Tanzania as well as recognized scientific experts.

**Donors:** The Darwin Initiative.

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

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**Have you seen me?**  
**Please let us know!**

The Cheetah Watch Campaign is a joint effort between ZSL and the Tanzanian Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI).

Cheetah Watch Campaign



Conservation Programmes