

Naturalist's Niche Natuurhoekie



WILD DOGS

Sharing the good life in homes across South Africa are many thousands of domesticated dogs, enjoying the benefits of modern living, balanced diets, regular exercise, beauty care, tubal ligation and freedom from internal and external parasites.

Their cousins, never dependent on man for their survival, are near the end of the road - a dying breed, one of three ENDANGERED species in the *South African Red Data Book* for mammals. Is extinction the price to pay for being a WILD DOG? The second part of the name *Lycaon pictus* refers to the black, white and yellow blotches and streaks, a picture painted by some celestial artist who made no two Wild Dogs identical. In life they are intelligent, alert, ruthless, restless, cunning and yet caring - all the characteristics that are admired in the various breeds of domesticated dogs are rolled together in this hand-painted hound, which so often ends up as a DEAD DOG.

In days of old, Wild Dogs lived in packs of up to 60 animals, with a remarkable degree of social organisation. Young animals were favoured by the pack, and obviously hungry adults that had successfully run down

John Ledger

and killed their prey would stand aside and let the pups eat first. Hunting took place in early morning or late afternoon - after loping casually up to a herd of antelope or wildebeest, the pack would turn and make a serious rush, sending the animals off at a run. The leading dog (usually the dominant male) picked an individual and then relentlessly pursued the luckless beast, closely followed by the disciplined pack. As the chase progressed and the quarry tired, the dogs overtook their dinner and started tearing at the flailing limbs, then the soft underbelly, finally overwhelming their prey with a sustained onslaught - small in size, but strong in stamina and determination.

But the Day of the Wild Dog in modern South Africa is past: in 1773 they were recorded near Saldanha Bay - today you might be lucky enough to see a few in the Kruger National Park. Wild Dogs cannot distinguish cattle from fair game, and have incurred the wrath and indignation of ranchers for their misdemeanours against livestock. They are 'Problem Animals' in the true sense, and conservationists are powerless to supply the real needs of these demanding dogs - large WILD PLACES.

E.E. WITH A DIFFERENCE!

In terms of the Bophuthatswana National Parks Act No 24/1987 Section 36(1)(c) any person who wilfully or negligently kills or injures a Black Rhinoceros "shall be guilty of an offence and liable, in the case of a first conviction, to a fine not exceeding one hundred thousand Rand or imprisonment for a period not exceeding ten years, or, in the case of a second or subsequent conviction, to imprisonment without the option of a fine not exceeding fifteen years". The comparative penalties in the case of White Rhino and Elephant are ten thousand Rand and five years.

Tydskrif Nr. 8 sal 'n spesiale uitgawe met betrekking tot 'Museums en Omgewingsopvoeding' wees.



Tydskrif Nr. 9 sal op 'Omgewingsopvoeding, Diere- en Botaniese-tuine en Akwariums' fokus. Sluitingsdatum vir bydraes is 30 Augustus 1988.

Artikels wat betrekking het hiermee of oor ENIGE ander aspek van omgewingsopvoeding word verwelkom.

Stuur aan: Die Eeredakteur, Posbus 972, GRAHAMSTOWN 6140.