

Carnivore Surveys in Kasungu and Nyika National Park and how you can help!



Wild dogs in Malawi

Over the past few years wild dogs (*Lycaon pictus*) have increasingly been sighted in Kasungu National Park and Nyika National Park. As an endangered species this previously undiscovered population is a real cause for optimism for the future of African wild dogs in Malawi.



The presence of a hitherto unknown breeding population of wild dogs, low densities of competing predators, and the potential to link this population with the high numbers found in Zambia, make the Malawi dog population particularly important. With nothing known about the Malawi dogs, research is urgently needed to assess the status and distribution of the population.

Carnivore Research Malawi

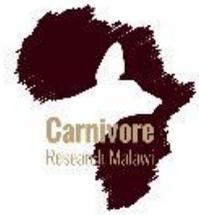


Carnivore Research Malawi (CRM) (www.carnivoreresearchmalawi.org) is a collaborative project coordinated by Dr Emma Stone of the University of Bristol under the UK charity **Conservation Research Africa**. CRM is working in partnership with The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Malawi and Lilongwe Wildlife Trust.

Working in Kasungu and Nyika National Parks CRM is conducting the first assessment of African wild dogs and the only long-term wild dog ecological study, threat assessment and conservation programme in Malawi. As well as working with wild dogs CRM also assesses the abundance and distribution of competing carnivores including hyaena, leopard and lion.

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Over the next few years CRM will produce the first status assessment and management plan for Malawi to inform wild dog conservation management. In order to do this we will be using a range of survey methods, including; camera trapping, audio call ins, large mammal transects and spotlight surveys.



How you can help

Carnivore sightings are often rare so any information that can be passed on including wild dogs of course, is a great help in mapping their distribution and numbers. If you are lucky enough to see carnivores whilst in the park there are several things you can do which would help us improve our understanding of the populations in Malawi.

Sighting sheets

In the lodge you will find a folder with recording sheets inside, if you see any carnivores in the park please fill in one of these sheets with the following information and give it to your guide:

1. **Species:** leopard, hyaena, wild dog, caracal, jackal, serval etc we are interested in **all** carnivore sightings in the park. This will help us to map their distribution and numbers in the park.
2. **Date, time and location.** if you don't have a GPS then it is important the location is described specifically, i.e. use known obvious features to describe the location e.g. near the junction of two roads and then find the site on the map when returning to the lodge and put the grid reference on the sighting sheet.
3. **Habitat type.** No need for a degree in botany – just a general habitat is needed and not the specific trees in the area.
4. **Total number of animals and No. of adults and pups/cubs.** Make sure your count is accurate and double check your count to ensure you have the right number. If the sighting is brief then simply record the maximum number you saw at one time and make a note that this was an estimate.
5. **Were the animals on a kill?** If you are lucky enough to see this please record the prey species and sex if possible.





6. **Competing predators present.** If hyaena, lions or any other competing predators are present at the same time please record the number seen and if possible the outcome of any encounter between these predators (e.g. hyaenas chased leopard off a kill).
7. **Additional notes.** Any extra information on the animals is extremely useful. Notes on the condition e.g. any injuries, signs of disease or just any interesting behaviours observed would all be of interest.
8. **Were any pictures/videos taken?** Pictures of the dogs are greatly appreciated. Please fill in your name(s) and email address and if possible before you leave try and copy the pictures onto a computer at the lodge and make a note of it on the sheet. If you cannot copy the pictures over then please ensure you leave an email address.

email your information to

sightings@carnivoreresearchmalawi.org

Or hand your sighting sheets into the lodge/camp front desk

If you wish you can request to be added to our newsletter list and we can keep you updated as to project progress, the number of carnivores identified and their locations in the park.

Pictures

We can use pictures to identify individual carnivores through their coat patterns. However, to do this pictures must be taken correctly. When you are taking photos there are a few important things to consider:

1. Take shots of each side (left and right) of each animal. Both sides are different and will be added to our ID database.
2. Take pictures of the front of each animal; this is because each side of a carnivore is different so it can be hard to match up the two sides of each animal without a front shot. Where possible try to get front shots at an angle to show the link to each different coat side – so one picture of the front which shows the left side pattern, and one front shot which shows the right side pattern (see below for examples of good pictures).
3. Take pictures of any recognisable features for example scars, ear notches, tears, injuries etc.



Left Side Coat Pattern



Right Side Coat Pattern



Front shot/right side coat



Front shot / left side coat

Note:

When taking front shots its good if possible to get the front of the animal at and angle with each different side showing – so one front shot with right side coat and one front shot with left side coat.

When recording any of the above information please remember that accuracy is of great importance to us! If you are unsure of anything it is better to put nothing than to guess – no data is better than wrong data! If you are estimating anything (such as group size) please state that your numbers are estimated.

Of course if you see wild dogs please phone us!

The chance to see wild dogs and observe them is a great opportunity for us to get good identifications and track their movements. If you have a mobile phone with you (and signal!!!) then please try and call us letting us know whereabouts the dogs are and which park you are in (Kasungu / Nyika). Please call +265(0)994206849 when you are with the dogs or at the first opportunity you get.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND ENJOY YOUR TIME IN THE NATIONAL PARK!

Visit us at www.carnivoreresearchmalawi.org

