

DOG TAILS

2014



Welcome to Dog Tails from Painted Dog Research Trust.

The New Year brought enormous changes, experiences and directions for Dr. Greg Rasmussen. Greg who 25 years ago started researching Painted Dogs that led to the foundation of Painted Dog Conservation, now has left PDC and has established Painted Dog Research Trust. This move facilitates meaningful opportunities for Dr. Greg and his students to concentrate on better science and to focus on Zimbabwe's largest painted dog populations residing along the Zambezi river from Kazungula to Kanyemba (see map). This change also offers the exciting chance to pursue his dream of constructing a conservation ecology centre to further the progress of young Zimbabweans as well as international students with the intention of inspiring them to be future conservationists.



February was a month of negotiations with the Rural District Council and Village of Sizinda on the perimeter of Victoria Falls, to secure a piece of property for Greg's new base of operations and Centre. The Painted Dog Research Trust was legally formed with noted Board Members: Dr. Chris Magadza, Nobel Laureate, University of Zimbabwe, Margie Gibson (Greg's post-crash physiotherapist), and Dave Gardner from Harare. MK will continue to assist Dr. Greg and a large contingent of his students have opted to continue their studies with him at the Sizinda base of operations. Hearteningly they also are helping with construction of the new site.

March was a month of travel for Dr. Greg, returning to the US starting with a visit to Dr. Richard Bergl and Corinne Kendall at the North Carolina Zoo to set custom made cyber-tracking parameters for collection of sightings and fecal samples using tablets. Then onto a plane to Sea World Orlando, Florida to network with Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leader (EWCL) Brandon Davis for an update on the protective collar initiative for which Dr. Greg is principal investigator. Then over to Sea World Tampa, Florida for a lovely dinner with Amber Wisler and Rob Yordy. Another hop to Houston Zoo to see Brandon Paterson who is currently working on a new prototype collar to be field-tested by the Working Dogs for Conservation Group. While in Houston, at the behest of PDRT supporter Elizabeth Cosgrove, Rene Bumpus arranged for Greg to make a presentation at West University Elementary School in Houston to a very inspired class. Another flight to the West Coast took Greg to San Jose, California to finalize the electronic components for the new-collar design. Then a quick hop up to San Francisco to discuss with Wildlife Conservation Network the establishment of PDRT and future collaboration efforts with WCN. Next was a red-eye flight to St. Louis, Missouri where an ardent supporter happily met him at the airport at 4:00 a.m. Regina Mosotti arranged for Greg's presentation to the Endangered Wolf Center group. He also linked-up with Cheryl Asa's research team

at St. Louis Zoo that studied stress and reproductive hormones. Back to the East Coast for prawns and crabs at Captain White's Fish Market in Washington DC and a presentation to Africa Wildlife Foundation on the current trans-boundary and corridor work being undertaken. This was followed by an always enjoyable visit for updates with Nina Fascione and team at Defenders of Wildlife.

Next on the rigorous itinerary was across the Atlantic for a short stop in England where Greg met with Jerry Ranger at Power Traveller to discuss solar power for a new protective collar that will reduce overall weight and extend life expectancy.

Back on another plane to The Netherlands where Greg was keynote speaker at the three-day 1st European Painted Dog Workshop. Then over to Belgium for a visit to the Veterinary Department at University of Ghent to establish collaborative efforts for research of painted dog anatomy and physiology. Back to Artis Zoo in The Netherlands to consult on a den box design.

Three continents and four countries later, returning to Zimbabwe in **April** to start construction of the key buildings for PDRT. Greg's students are on-site to learn efficient and conservation minded construction methods and practices, one being to incorporate a lizard habitat in the form of an intricate rockery. Not to mention drilling in holes in bedrock rock to provide for both a water cistern that will form part of a water reclamation scheme, and provide rock for building.



April 25th was yet another flight from Zimbabwe to the US to be keynote speaker at the four-day 2nd Annual Painted Dog Conference held at Brookfield Zoo, Chicago. Here Greg met with Dara Kelly, staff member from Brookfield Zoo, who kindly set up and is managing the Painted Dog Research Trust Facebook page. Here much of the day to day progress can be followed on the various building projects as well as Painted dog news.

May continued with great progress in building construction with a mid-month break for Greg and graduate students who presented papers at the AHEAD Trans-boundary Workshop held in Hwange. Greg's presentation was his current work on satellite imagery; Tendai Nekatambe, working on her Masters, presented her work on footprint recognition through computer analysis; and Tafadzwa Shumba spoke on painted dog dynamics in Hwange and Mana Pools National Parks. Mary Wasserman rejoined the team to help organize Greg and arrived with designs for the student study/sleep rondavels and ancillary buildings architecturally prepared by Magnolia Jao, ready to build.



Graduate student Tendai assisting with a collaring exercise

June was time for Greg and MK to head to Mana Pools for the start of denning season, they located the Vundu packs but found they were 9 dogs short. The big question remains. WHERE have they gone?? Answering where dispersing painted dogs disappear to is going to be one of the major foci for the study. Tragically, the last time dogs dispersed from the Vundu pack (a satellite collar making it possible to track) it was found they only survived a few weeks as they dispersed into Mozambique and were snared. On a happier note, Tait, Alpha female of the Vundu pack was seen well and heavily pregnant with about 9 days to go. Also on the trip, Greg co-hosting with Steve Leonard, were avid painted dog supporters from the UK and US on a tour organized by Liz Drake of Spencer Scott. After a lot of dog talk Steve kindly went through Greg's darting box with Greg, MK and the group providing valuable information on how to manage severely injured dogs and particularly those in shock from being hit by cars. Also joining Greg and MK was great friend and supporter of Painted dogs, Ron Van der A, chairman of the foundation "Stichting Painted Dog Conservation" from Netherlands, which is dedicated to supporting the conservation of Painted Dogs.



Pregnant Tait with a few days to go

Wanting to assist international as well as Zimbabwean graduates, **July** brought intern Sarah Bonnar from UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine; she spent a month with Greg and the team working on construction projects and a hands-on experience collaring a female of a new pack (Umgwazu) discovered in the Matetsi area. The dog was named Nomandla (loosely translated as a powerful female), with Tendai and MK giving their first injections of supportive drugs. Sarah was a great asset, not hesitating to help with any task presented and sharing latest veterinary practice thoughts. She also wrote an article on her time.

<http://www.thevetgazette.com/main/2014/10/14/the-painted-dogs-of-africa.html>



Needing to get infrastructure up on a house, work focused on layout and rough-in of electrical devices and conduit runs. At the same time a group of local women were employed cutting grass for the thatched roof to be. Also put up was a summer house so as to have some shade from the heat.



August was a busy month of visitors, travel, and student activity, and more painted dogs collared. Three dogs in the Mopane-Ngoma pack in the Matetsi hunting safari area were successfully captured, processed and released with two receiving radio collars. More importantly, we were accompanied by the community scouts who later served as great ambassadors for the dogs, as well as fed back valuable information.

Visitors to the Sizinda homestead and future site for Greg's conservation ecology centre were Dr Malgosia Nowak-Kemp, curator of Zoological Collections at Oxford University Museum of Natural History who remembered Greg from his Oxford days, and went to great lengths to track him down in Zimbabwe. She was with her and husband Tom, retired curator and Oxford lecturer. Hope is that such visiting lecturers will be able to run ecology courses at Sizinda. With Oxford in focus, graduate student Tafadzwa Shumba returned to site after a few months of independent studying in Bulawayo bringing news he has been accepted to the postgraduate diploma programme at Oxford University. So congratulations, Tafadzwa!

Masters student Tendai Nekatambe, along with MK as guide and tracker spent a week in the field in Hwange and Matetsi gathering samples for her thesis project to develop a footprint recognition computer programme.

Construction continued on the house with MK and his team installing zinc sheets around the structure's perimeter, the sheets act as formwork for the interior plaster application to come. A temporary centre support system was erected to enable installation of the wood roof poles. On the 15th two University of Zimbabwe undergraduate students joined the team for a one year attachment, Terence Magqina with a focus on ecology and Tadiwa Mutizwa with an interest in parasitology. It was baptism by fire as the men were



immediately put to work helping install support for the brick water tank floor. The plan is to harvest large amounts of rainwater and thus demonstrate the value of water harvesting but also to save US\$12,000, which would be the cost for a borehole, not to mention the continual maintenance cost.

August 21st Greg and MK headed to Mana Pools for denning season to determine pups survival and pups born. Camera traps were set and the Nyakasanga pack was located with 15 pups all doing well. Worrying was that the data continue to point at long-term negative effects on painted dogs' survival at dens where tourists continually visit. Basically the dogs end up with short legs as adults and have lower survival as pups due to the fact that they are not well provisioned as pups. This is because the adults do not visit the den as frequently when humans are there and



so the pups do not get as much as they need at that critical time of life.

Work on the property continued ardently during their absence in August and **September** with scaffold erected using abandoned water pipe and wired tree branch platforms to build the water tower higher. The water tower is actually a storeroom on the bottom an incinerator and hot water system on the side and a 30,000 litre water tank on the top. Currently it is at the 10,000 litre level and will be finished early next year. In readiness the water main trench was dug from the water tower out to the new house and pipes laid. Rock removal and stone chipping operations at the site for the cistern continued in preparation for another blast. Gravel was spread for the driveway and car park, and excavation of a mechanic's pit was done. Not to mention installation of an incredible rockery habitat for the myriad reptiles and insects, adjacent to the house veranda, a simple project but good for the local wildlife and conservation.

Highlights for the rest of September included completion of the house zinc sheeting formwork, main roof poles framed, drilling continued for cistern dynamite charges, MK was granted a travel visa to the U.S. where he will engage two weeks of intensive Veterinary technician training and to better assist with field anaesthesia.

On returning Greg was contacted with second hand information, to say that Painted dogs had killed a cow near the main road, and the villagers were up in arms. Greg immediately followed up and found the person that saw the dogs, only to find out that the dogs had NOT killed a cow, but had been seen NEAR a herd of cows. As for the community they were not up in arms at all and the only person that knew about it was the person who saw them. Says a lot for the importance of "ground truthing."

October saw a push to get the house roof ready for the thatching crew and to complete other construction projects before the onset of the planting rains season anticipated early November. The loft area scenic window was installed, kitchen/pantry/bathroom extension roof panels were designed and templates formed in order to fabricate panels for an exact fit along the curved wall of the main house, workshop wire walls were attached to the columns.

As part of his commitment to training and raising capacity in Zimbabwean students Greg is now a part time lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ). Here he will be predominantly training in situ in the field. Hence in October Greg, accompanied by Terence, Tadiwa, and Tafadzwa, went to Hwange National Park, to co-lectured with Professor Magadza from UZ, to the masters Tropical Resource Ecology Programme students. Here he shared some of the many facets of Hwange's ecology as well as the impact of the waterholes, that has resulted in 20 times the number of elephants than there used to be.





A milestone was met when the thatcher's arrived early on the 26th and a magnificent roof completed by noon on the 29th...beating the rainy season! Plaster went on the walls and the tin shuttering removed.

November started with a ferocious four hour nighttime lightning and thunderstorm that toppled the toilets, and flooded tents until Greg braved the torrents and dropped everyone's outside flaps. The storm filled the unfinished water cistern with an estimated 150,000 liters of rainwater

collected which in turn provided for water hungry concrete floor slabs laid throughout the house, veranda, and workshop.

It was then time to store tents, tools and equipment as the students depart for the holidays and Greg will start hopping across Europe and the U.S. fund raising, working with various zoos, finalizing a new anti-snare collar design, holding seminars until his return in mid-February. The local Sizinda crew will continue to dig the water cistern ready for another blast next year.

Excitingly, PDRT welcomes Carrie Culp Executive director Painted Dog Research Trust USA, who is moving mountains to promote and raise funding for Painted Dog Research Trust.

Thank you for your continuing support as without it we cannot make a conservation difference, and hope you are looking forward to the next issue of Dog Tails.

Dr. Greg will start 2015 with presentation fundraisers in the USA in January as follows:

Seattle 8th <https://wildnet.secure.force.com/events/CnP_PaaS_EVT_ExternalRegistrationPage?event_id=a19i0000001vQ2FAAU>
Portland 13th <<http://www.azumanotravel.com/mangoevent.html>>
San Francisco. 17th Invite attached at bottom of Dogtails 2014

In addition to those named in the Newsletter we wish to acknowledge those that have kindly made donations or have helped with good friendship and support and over the year. THANK YOU.

Our mailing address is:

Painted Dog Research Trust

P. O. Box 285 Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Email: dogtails@painteddog.org

<https://www.facebook.com/painteddogresearchtrust>

<http://www.spanglefish.com/painteddogresearch/> Donations, which must be designated as being for Painted Dog Research, can be made via:

Europe: Stichting Painted Dog Conservation < <mailto:rgvda@tiscali.nl> >

USA : Africa Environment US < <mailto:elainejolson@gmail.com> >

Wildlife Conservation Network < elaine@wildnet.org >

Australasia: Painted Dog Conservation Inc AUSTRALIA < <mailto:lemonj@osemail.com.au> >



Linda DuPuis-Rosen, artist

***A NEW PACK IS FORMING IN THE BAY AREA
COME JOIN US!***

DATE: Saturday, January 17, 2015

TIME: 2:00 – 5:00 pm

WHERE: In Portola Valley; directions will be sent upon your RSVP

WHAT: An afternoon of exciting news, nice nibbles, interesting people

WHO: You and, hopefully, your friends

COST: Literally a *free for all*, but please do bring your check book or credit card (cash, even!)

COME MEET DR. GREG RASMUSSEN AND MR. MK MOYO (aka, hero) tell us about their new venture. Dr. Rasmussen will tell us about his continuing research on the amazing Painted Dogs of Africa. Also hear about his efforts to provide real field study experience for Zimbabwean university graduate students. This educational opportunity is so vital for Zimbabwe – a country that has seen so many of its educated, white collar citizens emigrate to other countries. And come learn why MK is a hero – you know you're curious!

Please mark your calendar to come join us in our first annual event on behalf of the Painted Dog Research Trust, and do feel free to invite friends/strangers/whomever you think would be interested in learning about and supporting an exciting new scientific and community service venture in Zimbabwe.

RSVP: lindapdrt@gmail.com by January 10, 2015

IMPORTANT NOTE: If you can't make it to this event, but would like to hear about future happenings, please send a note to the RSVP address, and you'll be added to our database.