



IUCN/SSC Canid Specialist Group

Wild canids range in size from the tiny fennec fox to the mighty grey wolf, and occur in every continent except Antarctica. Canids are special because they have, as perceived friend or foe, preoccupied the imaginations of mankind for millennia; because the breadth of their adaptations makes them enthralling to science; and because the contradictory facets of their relations with people perplex the conservationist. Increasing human population, development, exploitation of previously little-disturbed wild lands, disease and direct persecution are threatening some of these canids with extinction. That is the chief reason for the 100+ members of the Canid Specialist Group (CSG), from more than 32 countries and organized in seven regional sections and 10 working groups, to be active worldwide.

Major Outputs

The CSG has seen major developments in the last four years, culminating with the recent publication of an action plan for canid conservation into the 21st century. In September 2001 the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at Oxford University hosted the first international *Canid Biology & Conservation Conference*, which provided an opportunity for many CSG members to get together. In that occasion the first draft of the action plan was crafted in a series of workshops. The new plan synthesizes the current knowledge of all canid species, and outlines the conservation actions and projects needed to secure their long-term survival. It discusses major issues in canid conservation, namely systematics, canid society, conservation genetics, assessing and managing diseases, management of canids near people, impact of exploitation and trade, survey and census techniques, captive conservation, reintroduction and meta-population management, conservation education, setting priorities and measuring success. The detailed action section is the result of extremely wide consultation, and represents the views of the many experts around the world who suggested them and who debated them in our workshops. In parallel, we prepared an edited monograph entitled *The Biology and Conservation of Wild Canids* (Oxford University Press, 2004) which contains comprehensive reviews of the science underpinning this action plan, together with 14 case studies of wild canid biology.

Canid Red List

Nine of the 36 canid taxa are threatened (3 Critically Endangered, 3 Endangered and 3 Vulnerable), and one is considered Near Threatened. Six species (17%) were listed as Data Deficient, and 20 (56%) species as Least Concern. The threatened canids are:

- Darwin's fox (CR). Until recently, known only from the Chiloé Island in southern Chile, until rediscovered 600km away in the coastal mountains, where domestic dogs threaten them with disease or direct attack.

- Red wolf (CR). Currently the subject of taxonomic debate, red wolves were declared Extinct in the Wild by 1980, but have been reintroduced into eastern North Carolina, where they are now locally common. Hybridization with coyotes is the primary threat.
- Island fox (CR). Restricted to the six largest of the eight California Channel Islands, each island population is considered a separate subspecies, and four have declined precipitously. Threats include hyperpredation by golden eagles and the introduction of canine diseases.
- Ethiopian wolf (EN). Less than 500 individuals remain, confined to eight locations in the Ethiopian Highlands. Previously listed as Critically Endangered, continuous loss of habitat due to high-altitude subsistence agriculture remains the major threat, along with disease (particularly rabies).
- African wild dog (EN). Formerly distributed throughout sub-Saharan Africa, excluding rainforests, wild dogs have disappeared from 25 of the former 39 range states. More than half of the mortality recorded among adults is caused directly by human activity.
- Dhole (EN). Formerly distributed across Asia, dholes have undergone widespread decline and are threatened by depletion of their prey base, habitat loss, persecution, competition and disease.
- Dingo (VU). Austronesian people transported the dingo from Asia to Australia and other islands in between 1,000 and 5,000 years ago. Pure dingoes occur only as remnant populations in central and northern Australia and in Thailand, and they are threatened by cross-breeding with domestic dogs.
- Bush dog (VU). Despite a supposedly widespread distribution in South American forests, this species is perceived as rare, and threatened by habitat conversion and human encroachment.
- Blanford's fox (VU). Present in arid mountainous regions of the Middle East and north-eastern Egypt eastwards to Afghanistan, where human development could pose a threat.

www.canids.org

The activities of the CSG center around our website, which contains relevant information on membership and *modus operandi*, action plans, species accounts, bibliographies, bulletins, short news and announcements. Other CSG resources also hosted at the site include:

Canid News Online, an electronic, peer-reviewed, scientific journal devoted to the dissemination of current research on all species of the Canidae, targeting all those concerned with the study, conservation and welfare of wild canids. Canid News includes high quality articles that not only convey the excitement of canid biology, but also inform upon conservation problems, and hopefully contribute towards their resolution.

Canid Project Database (CPD), an online information resource for canid conservation, providing information of planned, on-going, or recently completed projects concerned with any aspect of canid biology and/or conservation. The CPD will be instrumental to the implementation of the new action plan, by seeking to facilitate exchange of information between field projects, and develop contacts with potential sponsors and collaborators. This resource will soon be expanded to provide a searchable database of canid conservation practitioners.

Canids-L, a moderated mailing list providing a forum for discussion of emerging conservation topics. It is open to anybody actively involved in canid conservation and

research as well as other wild canid enthusiasts. News items include reports of discoveries and rare events, comparison of experiences, discussion of methodologies and research equipment, inquiries regarding management and conservation strategies, abstracts of recent publications and news of forthcoming meetings.

The Canid Specialist Group has now celebrated its 23rd birthday. It has always sought to be innovative in the quest to advance the conservation of wild canids. This year, seeing the publication of both the new *Action Plan* and *The biology and conservation of wild canids*, has been a milestone in the CSG's development, and now we look forward to implementing the ideas developed in these two publications.

David W. Macdonald, Chair

Claudio Sillero-Zubiri, Deputy Chair

References

Macdonald, D.W. and C. Sillero-Zubiri (Eds.). 2004. *The biology and conservation of wild canids*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Sillero-Zubiri, C., M. Hoffmann and D.W. Macdonald (Eds.). 2004. *Canids: foxes, wolves, jackals and dogs: status survey and conservation action plan*, second edition. IUCN Canid Specialist Group, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK.