

WILD DOG IN THE ORANGE FREE STATE

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In extracting records of wild animals from historic writings, the problem of misidentification is often present, due to the colloquial and sometimes even scientific names given to such animals. This is certainly so for the Wild dog (Wildehond), *Lycaon pictus* or Cape hunting dog as it is also known.



Wild dog – Once an inhabitant of the OFS.
(photo. Gert Lamprecht)

The Wild dog's earlier scientific names of *Hyaena picta* and *Hyaena venatica* and also the fact that domestic dogs sometimes became feral, often led to it being confused, in the literature, with the Spotted hyaena or domestic dog.

It is for these reasons and therefore not surprising that records of Wild dog in historic times are fragmentary, frequently unreliable and largely undocumented in mammalian reference works. This is at least so of its presence in the Orange Free State.

The historical records (in Smithers 1986) indicate Wild dog to have been widespread in South Africa. For example packs occurred in the Cape in 1684, near Saldanha Bay in 1773, in Namaqualand and the northern and north-eastern Cape Province in c. 1830, in Addo in 1906 and in the Albany and Bedford districts as recently as 1925. However, no reference, other than general statements such as: "they are

extinct today in the OFS", are made to them as having occurred in the Orange Free State.



Fourteen of a litter of sixteen wild dog pups.
(from: H. & J. van Lawick-Goodall 1970)

Wild dog rely on sight rather than smell in hunting and it is, therefore, to its advantage to utilise open country (Smithers 1983). Therefore the contention that this gregarious canid, which occurs in packs of 10-15, must surely have been associated with the open plains of the Orange Free State, seems very probable. But as far as can be ascertained this has never been substantiated in recent and even earlier mammalian accounts. It was thus of great interest when the following unambiguous account of its occurrence in the Bloemfontein district in c. 1850 was found in Van der Bank (1984):

"Wild dogs, which ran in numbers, were a terrible curse to the farmer. A troop of wild dogs would get amongst a herd of sheep, and before the herd or farmer could get near enough to interfere, twenty to forty sheep were torn up. On what is now Fritz Salzmänn's farm, half an hour from Bloemfontein, a Mr. James had his two imported rams, the only imported animals he had, torn up by these beasts.

The farmers made up hunting parties against wolves, wild dogs and occasionally lions. But what removed the worst plague, the wild dogs, was that the distemper which at one time was very bad amongst the house

dogs got amongst the wild dogs and cleared them pretty well out. Some may think now that the tame dogs got wild. This would be an error. They were a species of wild animal, never were tame and I fancy could never be tamed".

Such an authentic record now makes other records, which have been questionable until now, such as Collins' (1907) reference to the eleven Wild dogs which were killed during a hunt at "Bains Vley" in the Bloemfontein district in June 1862, much more acceptable.

Although it is pleasing to have once more "discovered" the Wild dog and to know that it did in fact once inhabit the plains of the Orange Free State, it is saddening to, at the same time, have to report that presently the Wild dog is one of three mammals in South Africa which is in danger of extinction. Accordingly it has been listed in the *South African Red Data Book* as ENDANGERED. Stable populations occur only in the Kruger National Park, eastern Transvaal and in adjacent private reserves (Smithers 1986).



Wild dog playing.

(from: H. & J. van Lawick-Goodall 1970)

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KULTUURAAND



Op die foto is van links na regs: mev. Nienaber, dr. C.M. Engelbrecht (direkteur van die Nasionale Museum), prof. P.G. Nel en mev. M. Schoch, wat 'n voorlesing uit RAKA van N.P. van Wyk Louw gedoen het. Die aand is afgesluit met 'n rolprentvertoning oor Suid-Afrikaanse Argitektuur en ligte verversings.

(foto: Die Volksblad)

Op Donderdagaand 28 Januarie 1988 is 'n Kultuuraand in die auditorium van die Nasionale Museum gehou. Die funksie is deur die S.A. Vereniging vir Kultuurgeskiedenis in samewerking met die Nasionale Museum gereël. Die doel met die funksie was hoofsaaklik om belangstellendes meer van die doel en werksaamhede van die S.A. Vereniging vir Kultuurgeskiedenis te vertel. Hierdie vereniging is in 1982 gestig en wil graag meer Vrystaatse lede werf, ten einde 'n Vrystaatse streektak te stig.

Die gasspreker van die aand was prof. P.G. Nel, hoof van die Departement Afrikaanse en Nederlandse Kultuurgeskiedenis van die Universiteit van Pretoria en tans voorsitter van die S.A. Vereniging vir Kultuurgeskiedenis. By hierdie geleentheid is die ere-lidmaatskap van die Vereniging aan prof. P.J. Nienaber, voormalige direkteur van die Vrystaatse Museumdiens, toegeken. Aangesien prof. Nienaber in die hospitaal was, het sy vrou, mev. M.M. Nienaber, die sertifikaat van ere-lidmaatskap namens hom ontvang.