

Makalali Game Reserve joins Wild Dog Range Expansion Project

The Makalali Game Reserve has become the newest addition to the Wild Dog Range Expansion Project, coordinated by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and the Wild Dog Advisory Group of South Africa (WAG SA) as part of ongoing efforts to save the species from extinction.



The ultimate goal is to reverse the decline of wild dogs globally, by actively increasing their populations and range throughout southern Africa. This is achieved this by establishing, maintaining and expanding safe space for wild dogs; reducing threats to their survival; ensuring positive changes in human-based values to wild dogs; and supporting laws to better protect them. Despite this, wild dogs are still among the most threatened animals in Africa, under severe threat from snaring, poaching, disease, roadkill, and habitat loss. In southern Africa, the EWT is helping reverse this continent-wide trend, and the population has stabilised at around 500 individuals.

The most recent relocation to the Makalali Game Reserve was made possible thanks to a group effort by aha Hotels & Lodges, the EWT, WAG SA, the owners of Makalali Game Reserve in Limpopo, and Rob Panos, the Makalali reserve manager.

The reserve is currently 26,000ha and recently obtained National Private Nature Reserve status. Due to its size, ecology and the efforts made by management to keep the area protected, Makalali was identified as an ideal site to introduce a pack of wild dogs.

Permanent pack presence

While wild dogs have passed through Makalali before, the introduction of this new, young pack of four is aimed at making the species a permanent fixture in the reserve. The two young males, nicknamed “Nyezi” and “Mkhovu”, were born in 2016 and are the ideal age to start their own pack. The females, “Zeyheri” and “Pacman”, were born in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

The pack was successfully relocated to Makalali on 9 June 2019, thanks to the EWT Carnivore Conservation Programme's Cole du Plessis and Grant Beverley, and is currently being held in a 100x100m section of the predator boma on the premises. In a few months they will be fully released into the wild.



aha Hotels & Lodges and Makalali contributed much-needed funds towards making the pack's introduction to Makalali possible. aha CEO, Graeme Edmond was also on site to lend a hand to the EWT team and Dr Joel Alves from Wildlife Vets SA by taking samples, fitting a GPS collar to one of the males, and loading the dogs into the custom-designed crates for the long drive from KZN to Limpopo.

Edmond, who has taken a very personal interest in the process, says, "This project is something that's very close to my heart and I'm over the moon that I could get aha Hotels & Lodges involved in finding a new home for these endangered animals. We'll be paying close attention to their progress in Makalali and will continue to support the process in any way we can."

EWT CEO Yolan Friedmann added, "The EWT is very excited to partner with organisations like aha Hotels & Lodges and Makalali private game reserve to relocate these endangered carnivores to new areas. Without their support and vision, relocations such as this would not be possible. The EWT encourages tourists from all over the world to view animals in their wild and free habitats in places such as Makalali."

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