



# Securing the Future of the Painted Wolf

## THIS REPORT PROVIDES

An insight into the current painted wolf conservation landscape

An analysis of the gaps in, and constraints on, current painted wolf conservation

A theory of change for the species to recover

Details on the new Painted Wolf Fund

Suggested projects and initiatives that will have an impact

A directory of all painted wolf conservation organisations in the field



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Diane has 15 years' experience in African wildlife conservation, working to conserve chimpanzees, rhinos, elephants and other charismatic megafauna. With expertise in international policy, community conservation, and NGO management, Diane is currently focusing on the painted wolf. A founding Trustee of the Painted Wolf Foundation, she now serves as its Executive Director.

The Painted Wolf Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Network wish to acknowledge and thank the many individuals who contributed to making this document possible.

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## Disclaimer:

The consultative process provided important inputs to the Painted Wolf Foundation's analysis. However, the analytical sections of this report represent the opinions of the Painted Wolf Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Network alone, and not those of the individual organisations profiled in Section 7. The information in Chapters 2 and 7 was gathered in 2020 and 2021 and may have been subject to change since.



[www.wildnet.org](http://www.wildnet.org)



[www.paintedwolf.org](http://www.paintedwolf.org)

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	10
<b>1 The Background</b> Explains the background to this initiative.	14
<b>2 The Conservation Landscape</b> Identifies the scope of our consultation, the threats that the painted wolf faces and the mitigation measures that are being undertaken by conservation organisations in the field.	20
<b>3 Theory of Change</b> Identifies Conservation Gaps and Embedded Constraints and develops a theory of change to overcome them.	30
<b>4 The Painted Wolf Fund</b> Provides details on the new Fund developed by the Painted Wolf Foundation in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Network, designed to secure the future of the painted wolf.	38
<b>5 Investment Focus</b> Outlines examples of Projects and Initiatives that will be considered to implement the Painted Wolf Fund's strategy.	46
<b>6 The Invitation</b> Invites to partners to help make this vision a reality.	54
<b>7 The Organisations</b> Provides information on the individual organisations directly involved in conservation of the painted wolf.	58



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## Painted Wolf Foundation

The aim of the Painted Wolf Foundation is to secure the future of the painted wolf (*Lycaon pictus*). The Painted Wolf Foundation has three primary objectives: to raise awareness and funds for this relatively unknown creature; to support painted wolf conservation organisations in the field; and to encourage and facilitate collaborations between organisations to achieve better results through knowledge sharing and maximising the impact of funding.

Painted Wolf Foundation is a UK registered charity, founded in 2018 by Peter Blinston, Executive Director of Painted Dog Conservation, Nicholas Dyer, an award-winning wildlife photographer and entrepreneur and Diane Skinner, megafauna specialist and pioneering community conservationist.



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## Wildlife Conservation Network

The Wildlife Conservation Network's (WCN) mission is to protect endangered species and preserve their natural habitats by supporting entrepreneurial conservationists who pursue innovative strategies for people and wildlife to co-exist and thrive.

WCN invests technically and financially in a select network of conservation partners to ensure their mission success, and creates large-scale, range-wide Wildlife Funds (including the Lion Recovery Fund, the Elephant Crisis Fund, the Pangolin Crisis Fund and most recently the Rhino Recovery Fund) to support the best ideas to end extinction crises and bring wildlife back from the brink.





*The painted wolf (*Lycaon pictus*) is also variously known in English as the African wild dog, painted dog, Cape hunting dog and African hunting dog*

# FOREWORD

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*The painted wolf is among Africa's most enigmatic creatures. Yet, as a wide-ranging African predator, it is leading the race to extinction.*

If you are reading this then you are most likely involved in saving the painted wolf (*Lycaon pictus*) or are interested in trying to do so. So let's start by asking a question. Is the painted wolf worth saving?

With only an estimated 6,600 left in the wild, the last century has seen a catastrophic decline in the painted wolf population, some suggest by over 95%. Their numbers compare with an estimated 20,000 lion, 25,000 rhino and 450,000 elephant. Yet the painted wolf receives only a fraction of the support and attention that these other megafauna are able to attract.

This is not to suggest that conservation support should be directly correlated to population size. Each creature has different conservation needs and thankfully the painted wolf is not threatened by the illegal international wildlife trade.

However, they are an important indicator species for a healthy ecosystem as well as a valuable gauge of a community's tolerance towards "destructive" wildlife and, for this alone, they are deserving of greater attention. We can also add that as we humans have treated them abysmally, subjecting them to a century of our most destructive tendencies, out of guilt alone we may be prompted to act. And from an economic perspective, an increasing number of people find them very endearing and will travel to see them, adding a source of revenue to the wildlife economy.

Any of the above supports the case for deservedly placing them on the top table of conservation, enabling them to attract greater support than they currently receive. Instead, the sad reality is that they are mostly left with conservation's table scraps, with projects underfunded while attention is diverted to more popular causes.

There are 23 organisations doing painted wolf fieldwork across 12 countries and Diane Skinner's consultation process involved them all. Some are large established organisations with a successful conservation track record. Others are nascent organisations or only have the conservation of the

painted wolf in their periphery. Some are well funded, while many are struggling for funds to the point that their future existence is far from assured.

The common denominator across all these organisations is the depth of conservation expertise and the passion they possess to understand and protect their local painted wolf populations in the face of innumerable and varied challenges.

Yet it shocked us to find that, despite these valiant efforts, when looking at the species across the continent, the best that can be said is that the numbers are stable. In many areas, local populations continue to decline and, furthermore, there are considerable knowledge gaps surrounding their status, mainly due to their tendency to roam widely and move well beyond protected area boundaries.

This leads us to a second question; what else can be done to save the painted wolf? In this report, our analysis has identified two broad areas which need urgent attention. These we describe as *Conservation Gaps* and *Embedded Constraints*.

*Conservation Gaps* occur in areas where painted wolf populations exist, but tried and tested conservation

measures are not being deployed either due to a lack of funding, knowledge or expertise. *Embedded Constraints* are factors present in the conservation "industry" that act as headwinds to any long-term recovery in species numbers.

These gaps and constraints should not be too difficult to overcome; the collective know-how of the painted wolf conservationists is there. What is lacking is a well-funded species-wide initiative focused on the painted wolf.

And indeed, funding is the crux of the issue. Many organisations have told us that they simply do not have the funds to implement or expand tried and tested conservation solutions. In addition, there are significant painted wolf populations where little is known, and the conservation presence is limited or non-existent. All organisations believe they can improve outcomes with additional funding.

Our rough estimate of the amount of money being invested directly into painted wolf conservation is less than US\$2.5 million; a fraction of Africa's conservation budget. We would suggest that even a small increase in funding, if strategically invested, could have a significant impact on the species.



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This is the *raison d'être* for the Painted Wolf Fund, a new concept in development by the Painted Wolf Foundation and the Wildlife Conservation Network. The ambition is to double the number of painted wolves in Africa within the next three decades. This is not a number plucked out of the air. We believe we can do this through three strategies.

1. Improve and support existing painted wolf conservation, through increased funding and shared best practice.
2. Recover former territory where painted wolf populations have been extirpated so that they can sustainably be reintroduced.
3. Encourage, fund and support collaborations between painted wolf conservationists and other entities so that the principle of 2+2=5 can be amplified.

Interwoven within each of these strategic pillars is the need to secure and protect their existing and potential rangelands, as well as invest in strategies that enable the painted wolf to thrive alongside all Africa's people.

The benefits from this approach will be felt far beyond the painted wolf. It will support the rehabilitation and maintenance of well-balanced ecosystems where all animals, both predators and herbivores, as well as humans, can coexist together.

So while the Fund's focus will undoubtedly be on the painted wolf, we will be able to exploit synergies with other organisations to support African wildlife conservation as a whole.

Aligned with Wildlife Conservation Network's range of highly effective Wildlife Funds (which includes the Elephant Crisis Fund, the Lion Recovery Fund, the Rhino Recovery Fund and the Pangolin Crisis Fund), the Painted Wolf Fund will become a potent force for conservation across Africa.

The Painted Wolf Foundation will morph into the Painted Wolf Initiative and will become responsible for helping to implement species-wide initiatives that support the painted wolf and those that conserve them.

Underpinning this initiative will be the input from all painted wolf conservationists in the field who will be informing us of their needs, so that we can build a "bottom-up" approach to our strategies and provide them with the necessary support to achieve our collective ambition.

We would like to express our gratitude to Diane Skinner who led the consultation process and used her considerable experience in species-wide conservation to make this report a reality.

In the following pages we describe in detail the pressures that the painted wolf is under and the current conservation measures that mitigate against them. Further analysis identifies what else is needed which we develop into a theory of change to alter the trajectory of this threatened predator so as to double the population within the next 30 years.

The Painted Wolf Fund is the mechanism to implement this theory of change and our ask to you is to support this new entity to help us make it a reality. Together, we can secure the future of the painted wolf.

**Nicholas Dyer**  
Chair, Painted Wolf Foundation

### A note on the name

Last and by *all* means least, is the name. As the Painted Wolf Foundation, we have referred to *Lycaon pictus* as the painted wolf except where individual organisations specifically asked us to refer to the creature by one of its different names. Strong and worthy arguments have been put forward in defence of the name African wild dog, painted dog and painted wolf. In our opinion, most of these arguments have merit and, while they may contradict, few exclude the value of the others. A pleasant surprise has been that the vast majority of participants saw it as a non-issue, an opinion we share. It would be sad if a *dogmatic* stance towards the preference of a particular English name, detracted from doing what is really necessary to save this species.

