

Zoo curator has passion for savannah dogs



Mr Lemon helps to free a painted dog caught in a snare in Africa.

John Lemon's love of the African painted dog meant he would return to Namibia, despite losing his passports, money and camera equipment to thieves on his last trip.

As vice-chairman of Painted Dog Conservation Incorporated (PDC), Mr Lemon works extensively to protect the endangered painted dog, also known as the African wild dog, which is threatened by man's expansion into previously uninhabited areas.

A resident of Canning Vale and curator at Perth Zoo, he has travelled to Africa repeatedly to aid in conservation efforts.

On his latest trip to Namibia in July, he spent the entire time trailing a single pack of the painted dogs with native trackers and another member of PDC.

"The dogs have the largest home range of any land animal - 3200 kilometres per pack," he said.

"We were just following footprints mainly, days on days on days, from 4.30 in the morning until sundown.

"We drove to all the rural villages asking if they've seen dogs, how long ago, how

many and what direction, and we finally zoned in on a pack."

They then darted and attached a radio collar to one of the young males, which allowed them to track the pack electronically.

"It was the fourth dog in 10 years to be collared, and the second pack in history," he said.

The painted dog is arguably Africa's most persecuted carnivore, according to Mr Lemon.

"Numbers these days range between 2500 to 3000.

"They're persecuted by humans, especially farmers, as they're seen as a threat to livestock."

Mr Lemon said one of the aims of PDC was to raise awareness of the painted dog.

"You only conserve what you love, and you only love what you understand."

The conservation group will hold an African night fundraising dinner on September 21 at the East Fremantle Yacht Club.

Email pdinc@inet.net.au for more details.

in brief

Support for dads

Child Protection Minister Sue Ellery launched the Dads in the Early Years Project, which recognises the importance of good fathering and the valuable contribution fathers make to children and communities.

"The Dads in the Early Years Project has been developed by Meerilinga Young Children's Services Inc, and offers resources, training and services to men with young families," Ms Ellery said.

Key initiatives include a comprehensive website dedicated to issues affecting fathers in the early years and providing interactive sites and useful links.

A directory of services will provide contact information for men as fathers to services including counselling, health, men's issues, legal issues, disabilities, accommodation, crisis, Aboriginal resources, cultural resources and domestic violence.

"As children grow, the need for guidance and support for fathers remains.

For more information on Dads in the Early Years contact the Program Leader on (08) 9309-2377 or e-mail dads@meerilinga.org.au.

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