

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS:

Alicia Falsetto
650-949-3533
Alicia@wildnet.org

Stacey Iverson
650-949-3533
Stacey@wildnet.org

Zimbabwe's African Wild Dog Project Joins Forces With Wildlife Conservation Network

*WCN welcomes Greg Rasmussen, Director of the Painted Dog
Conservation project as its newest partner*

Los Altos, California, May 20, 2004— Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) a nonprofit organization focused on funding community-based wildlife conservationists, today announced the addition of the Painted Dog Conservation (PDC) project to its portfolio of conservation entrepreneurs. Providing a combination of fundraising, administrative and planning support, WCN will help project Director Greg Rasmussen implement community-based conservation programs so he can continue his success with the wild dog project.

The current African wild dog population has declined from 500,000 dogs in 39 countries to 3,000 dogs in only 4 countries: Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa. Hwange National Park is home to 17% of the total wild dog population, and serves as a keystone population for dispersing wild dogs into other regions. The major threats to wild dogs include snares, shooting (for traditional medicine and fear of livestock predation) and road kills.

Painted dogs, also known as African wild dogs, are now the number one animal that tourists most want to see, surpassing lions, elephants, rhinos and leopards. Once considered a pest, the wild dog has become a symbol of national pride in Zimbabwe.

Since the inception of the Painted Dog Conservation (PDC) project, led by Greg Rasmussen and based in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe's wild dog population has increased from 400 to 700 animals.

PDC has developed several conservation strategies to improve the status of the endangered wild dog:

- Anti-poaching patrols carry out daily patrols throughout the region. Over 15,000 snares have been collected. The snare wire is then used to make handicrafts to be sold to visitors as an alternative source of income for local communities.
- Road signs have been erected and reflective collars fitted on many of the dogs. Road kills have been reduced by 50%. Anti-snare plates have also been fitted in the collars.

- PDC monitors dog packs with radio collars, gathering valuable information on their movements, hunting success and causes of mortality. Their breakthrough work with translocation and integration of dogs and new non-invasive capture techniques is offering new hope for wild dogs to expand their range into predator-friendly areas.
- Gaining the trust and respect of local people is an on-going process, and has helped to reform many poachers into advocates for the wild dog and participants in the project.
- A rehabilitation facility cares for injured dogs until re-release.

Although British-born, Rasmussen spent much of his childhood in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia). After college, he worked his way into a job on a wild dog project in Hwange National Park, sold all his belongings and moved permanently to Zimbabwe to live and work for the protection of the wild dog. Greg has been described by his peers as “the worlds most enthusiastic and dedicated wild dog conservationist.” “His dedication to PDC and success with the project is outstanding.”

For more information on Painted Dog Conservation, please visit their web site at: <http://www.painteddogconservation.iinet.net.au/Index.html>

Wildlife Conservation Network annually reviews applications for support from many different conservation projects throughout the world. Applicants are carefully screened and projects are evaluated based on the community-based conservation model that WCN follows. The selection process is difficult, with very critical and worthy projects being presented. Ultimately WCN can choose only one or two new projects each year, and this rigorous selection process ensures that the project chosen is an efficient, effective and exemplary conservation program.

WCN is the liaison between US funding and international projects. When a donor designates their dollars to the Painted Dog Conservation or other WCN projects, 100% of that gift goes to that project in the field.

About Wildlife Conservation Network

WCN (www.WildNet.org) was founded in 2002 to fund and develop conservation entrepreneurs focused on implementing community-based conservation programs in developing countries. WCN provides back office support—fundraising, marketing, administrative and technical expertise—to conservationists, enabling them to work more effectively and spend more time in the field. WCN uses a “Venture Conservationism” fundraising model based on the relationships that have evolved between high-technology entrepreneurs, investors and venture capital (VC) firms. Acting as a very efficient VC, WCN identifies high-potential conservation entrepreneurs and projects, ensuring due diligence is completed up-front, providing ongoing advisory services, and forging alliances between donor-"investors" and conservation entrepreneurs. WCN is the first to use this approach to fund and support worldwide conservation efforts.