DAVID SHEPHERD WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

Activity Workbook

The Web Of Life: Painted Dog Conservation



Image credit: William Fortescue

The Art of Survival: FIGHT • PROTECT • ENGAGE

Image credit: Nicholas Dyer

You are a ranger that works for **Painted Dog Conservation (PDC)** in Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe. Their mission is to increase the number of painted dogs and the number of places where painted dogs live.

What is a painted dog?

A lot of people mistake these animals for hyenas - but they're not. Hyenas are more closely related to cats, painted dogs share a distant common ancestor with jackals, wolves, coyotes, and, as their name suggests, domestic dogs.

Painted dogs are endangered, there are only **6500** remaining in the wild.

They're very social, have strong family bonds, spend most of their time together, and take care of one another's pups. The pups get first feed after a kill, 'aunties' act as pup-sitters for other mothers, and if a painted dog becomes ill or injured, their pack-mates rally round to care for them.

Hwange is a national park in Zimbabwe in Africa. The habitat is mainly Savannah and some teak forest. Painted dogs depend on the smaller antelope for food. They will only survive if the whole ecosystem of animals and plants is healthy.

Changes to the whole ecosystem can quickly shift the numbers of painted dogs. Rangers are always checking for anything which might cause problems for the painted dogs.

One way of checking the park is healthy is to do a survey of the animals that you can see by truck. The more animals of different species there are, the higher the biodiversity and the healthier the park is.



Image credit: Nicholas Dyer

Jealous is going to drive the truck for you. He is the chief tracker and field manager at PDC. You will look out of the window of the truck and record:

1. The name of each animal you see.
2. Whether it is Herbivore, Carnivore, Omnivore or Scavenger.

Then:

3. Tally the numbers animals of each species you can you see.

There are fifteen stops on the survey drive film. We will stop in each place for you to record the information you need, these are your field notes. Jealous has filled in some of the answers for you.

There are rules about taking field notes:

- If you make a mistake - use a thin line to cross it out.
- Never destroy a page.
- Keep all your records.
- Write down the date and time of the survey and your name on the page.

Can you think of a reason there are these rules for recording information?

Definitions

After the class conversation, write down a definition of each of these words.
It will help you with the task ahead.

Producer

Herbivore

Primary Consumer

Carnivore

Secondary Consumer

Scavenger

Field Notebook

Name _____ Date _____ Time _____

Stop	Name of the animal	Herbivore, Carnivore, Omnivore, Scavenger?	Animal Count
1	Vulture	Carnivore, Scavenger	
2		Herbivore	
3	Impala	Herbivore	13
4		Omnivore, occasional scavenger	2
4	Baboon	Omnivore	
4		Herbivore	
5		Herbivore	
6		Herbivore	6
7	Wildebeest	Herbivore	

Name _____ Date _____ Time _____

Stop	Name of the animal	Herbivore, Carnivore, Omnivore, Scavenger?	Animal Count
8	Painted Dog		
9	Elephant	Herbivore	1
10		Carnivore	
11	Baboon	Omnivore	
11		Herbivore	28
11	Crocodile		
12	Kudu	Herbivore	1
13	Hyena	Carnivore, Scavenger	
14		Herbivore	
15			

Let's look at the data you collected.

Now you have collected the data how confident are you that the numbers of animals you recorded is correct? Circle a number based on what you think

1	2	3	4	5
Not Confident				Very Confident

1. Use your tally to record the total numbers for each category below:

Scavenger	Omnivore	Carnivore	Herbivore

2. Calculate the % in each category based on the total number of animals you saw.

Scavenger	Omnivore	Carnivore	Herbivore

Jealous tells us that:

- Leopards and painted dogs tend to hunt the smaller herbivores, where as a pride of lions can go for larger animals if they are very hungry.
- Giraffes will go for the leaves, twigs, and fruits of the trees like Acacia.
- Elephants love eating the bark off trees and in the dry season eat more wood such as branches and sticks.
- Most of the other herbivores eat the savannah grass
- Hyenas tend to scavenge anything they can get.
- Since painted dogs are good at hunting, the lions and hyenas will often chase them off and steal their kill.

Using the animals you have recorded in Hwange National Park make four simple food chains. The producers have been done for you.

	Food Chain 1	Food Chain 2	Food Chain 3	Food Chain 4
Secondary Consumer				
Primary Consumer				
	Producer	Acacia trees	Savannah grass	Teak trees

Secondary consumers in the Savannah often don't just eat one prey animal.
Can you think of a reason why this is a good idea?

Pick one secondary consumer and write down all the animals you think it might eat.

Secondary Consumer: _____

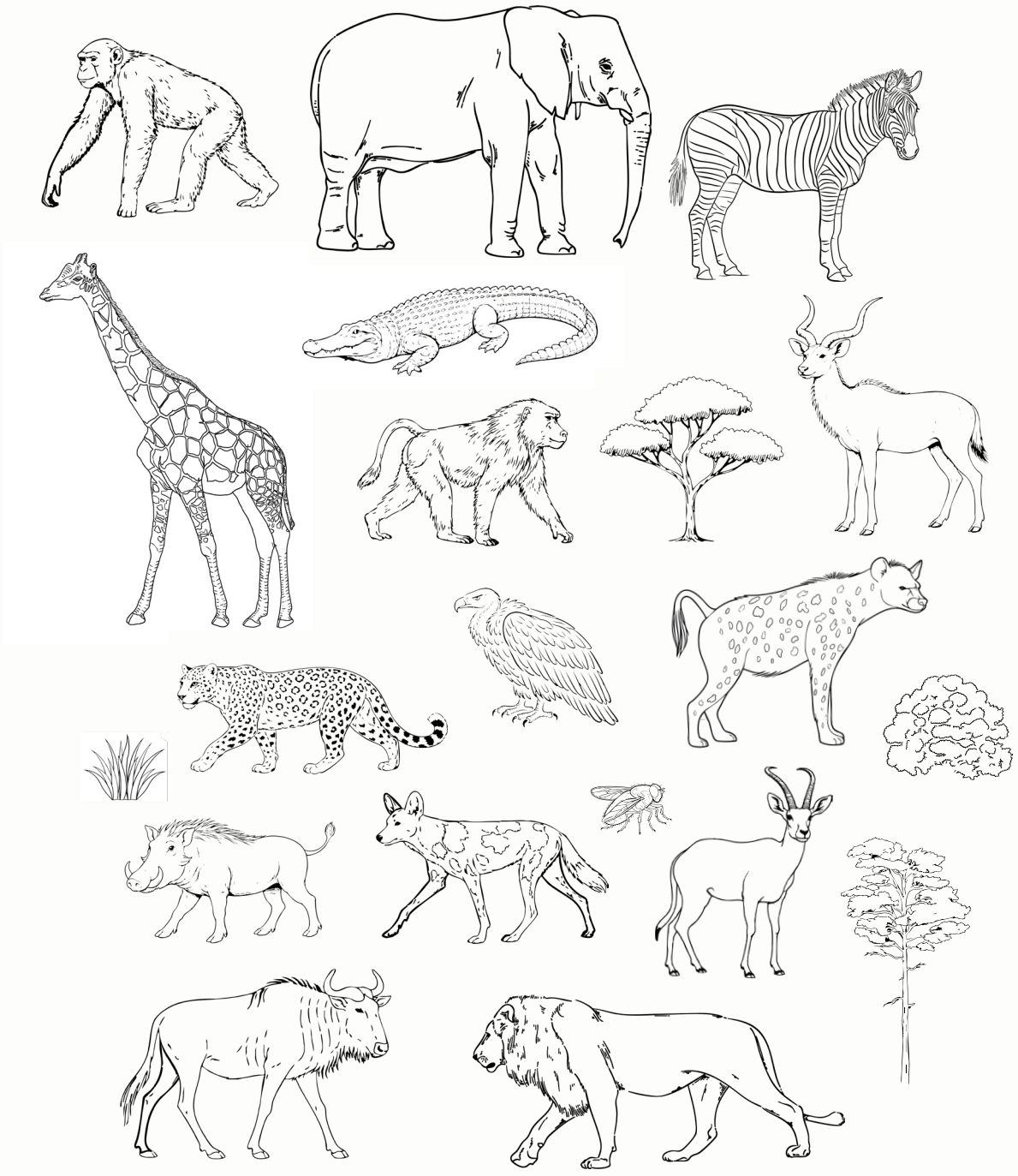
Prey:

Create your own food web

On this page are small pictures of all the animals you saw on the game drive. Your next job is to construct a complete food web for the Savannah and forest habitats.

Print the animals, cut them out and stick them on an A3 piece of paper and add your arrows in pencil. You might want to check them with your teacher before you stick the animals down.

Ask the other rangers in your class for help if you are stuck. Remember, the arrows point from the prey into the mouths of the animal that eats them.



Make your food web here:

Now you have your food web, we will use it to predict what will happen to the numbers of painted dogs if something happens in the park. Your job is to make your best guess based on the information that you have.

If you are stuck and need more information, look at this website: davidshepherd.org/species/painted-dog/

We will check our answers with the experts later. Try to use the other animals in the food web to explain the effect on the painted dogs. You could record your answers on camera or tablet rather than write them down.

What happened	Effect on the Painted Dogs
There is a fire in the park.	Numbers will go up or down (circle):  Because:

What happened	Effect on the Painted Dogs
There is a drought, and many elephants die in the park.	Numbers will go up or down (circle):  Because:

What happened	Effect on the Painted Dogs
Rangers arrest a big poaching gang and destroy hundreds of snares in the National Park.	Numbers will go up or down (circle):  Because:

On the David Shepherd Website you will find short answers to the questions by the PDC staff. Compare your answers to what they say.

How good do you think your answers where? Tell us below.
Circle the response closest to how you feel.

Not good at all **neither good nor bad** **Good** **Excellent**

Answer the question-based on what we did today. If there is one thing we could do to stop the extinction of the painted dogs- what would you do?

Image credit: Nicholas Dyer



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DAVID SHEPHERD WILDLIFE FOUNDATION 2025

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This project was developed and led by David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF), who collated and designed the resources in close collaboration with our field partners to ensure the activity books and teacher's guidance were rooted in real-life conservation challenges. Delivered with the support of the Coastal Schools Partnership and generously funded by the Garfield Weston and Fonthill Foundations, the project brings authentic conservation stories into the classroom in an engaging and accessible way.