



Annual Report

Prepared by Claudio Sillero, Jorgelina Marino, Girma Eshete, Sandra Lai and EWCP Team

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▶ © Will Burrard-Lucas

*Securing a future for Ethiopian wolves and the Afroalpine ecosystem
for everyone and for generations to come*



Our vision is to secure Ethiopian wolf populations and habitats across their present distribution, and to extend the species range, stressing its role as a flagship for the conservation of the Afroalpine ecosystem on which present and future generations of Ethiopians also depend.



© Bart Dahneke

 <p>Only 7 isolated wolf populations survive in Ethiopia's highest mountains.</p>	 <p>Fewer than 500 individual wolves remain in around 100 packs.</p>	 <p>They are endemic to Afroalpine heath and grassland in the highlands.</p>	 <p>Active by day, they are highly social, but hunt alone for small mammals.</p>
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LOOKING BACK AND TO THE FUTURE

Time is like a flowing river, always moving, ever changing. Yet, milestones must not be ignored.

Forty years ago, I graduated as a zoologist from the Universidad Nacional de La Plata in Argentina, and soon after I was on my way to Kenya in pursuit of my growing obsession for African carnivores. Astonishingly, next year we will celebrate EWCP's 30th Anniversary - how that time has flown by! Be on the lookout for some celebrations to come as we commemorate three decades of this crazy and ambitious undertaking that continues to play a vital role in the protection of Ethiopia's endangered wildlife.

It all began in Dinsho in the early 1990s, during conversations with Karen Laurenson and Edriss Ebu. We were concerned about recurrent rabies outbreaks affecting the wolves, and convinced that they needed more focussed conservation efforts. Our hopes quickly materialised after meeting with Alison Hood from the Born Free Foundation, whose small grant enabled us to get EWCP on the road. We always refer to the need to take 'the long view' in conservation, and we are extremely fortunate that Born Free shared this vision. Adhering to their motto of 'keeping wildlife in the wild' they pledged their long-term support for Ethiopian wolves, and, after 29 years of funding and support, they have been our longest-serving and most generous supporter.

Although we move forward this year no longer in a partnership, we continue to closely follow their work at Ensessa Kotteh (their animal sanctuary in Addis Ababa), and support each other's conservation efforts in the Horn of Africa. A big thank you to all at Born Free, and especially to Virginia McKenna. Your support has had a hand in so many of EWCP's successes.

We are now taking another set of courageous footsteps. Firstly, we are adapting to operate with a renewed community of donors and grant-giving organisations. At the same time, our partnership has grown to incorporate Dinkenesh Ethiopia - a new NGO run by our good friend and colleague Dr Girma Eshete and supported by an amazing board of Ethiopia academics and conservationists. With our new partners, there is a real sense of renovation and excitement in the air!

We hope you enjoy reading about some of the highlights of last year. A profound thank you to all of you that continue to support our work, and inspire our love for the wolves and admiration for the people that share the Ethiopian highlands with their unique wildlife.

Prof Claudio Sillero
Founder and Director



► Claudio with Virginia McKenna in the EWCP Land Rover. © George Logan

The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) is a partnership between the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU), Dinkenesh Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), in collaboration with the Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise (OFWE) and Amhara's Environment, Forest and Wildlife Protection and Development Authority (EFWPDA), and with the support and cooperation of local authorities across Ethiopia.



MONITORING & RESEARCH

Understanding animal behaviour and what makes populations tick is a cornerstone for the successful conservation of endangered species

THIS YEAR:

53 wolf packs monitored; over **1,100** man-days observing wolves across **6** wolf populations in **15** sites; more than **6342** sightings of wolves or groups of wolves; **73** records of threats (fire, new crops, new settlements, harvesting, livestock predation)



TEAM:

Simien Team Leader: **Getachew Assefa**
 Monitoring Team Leader: **Dessiew Gelaw**
 Monitoring Officer: **Abdi Samune**
14 Monitors and **16** Wolf Ambassadors deployed across Ethiopia;
 Amhara Coordinator: **Girma Eshete**

THE BIG PICTURE: WOLF NEWS FROM ACROSS THEIR RANGE

Throughout the last year, EWCP teams monitored the status of 53 Ethiopian wolf packs in six populations across Ethiopia. Overall, breeding has been relatively low this season throughout their range. In Ethiopian wolves, mating is locally synchronised, meaning that all females in an area become receptive around the same time. Mating typically commences in August, pups are born two months later, and first emerge from their den around December.

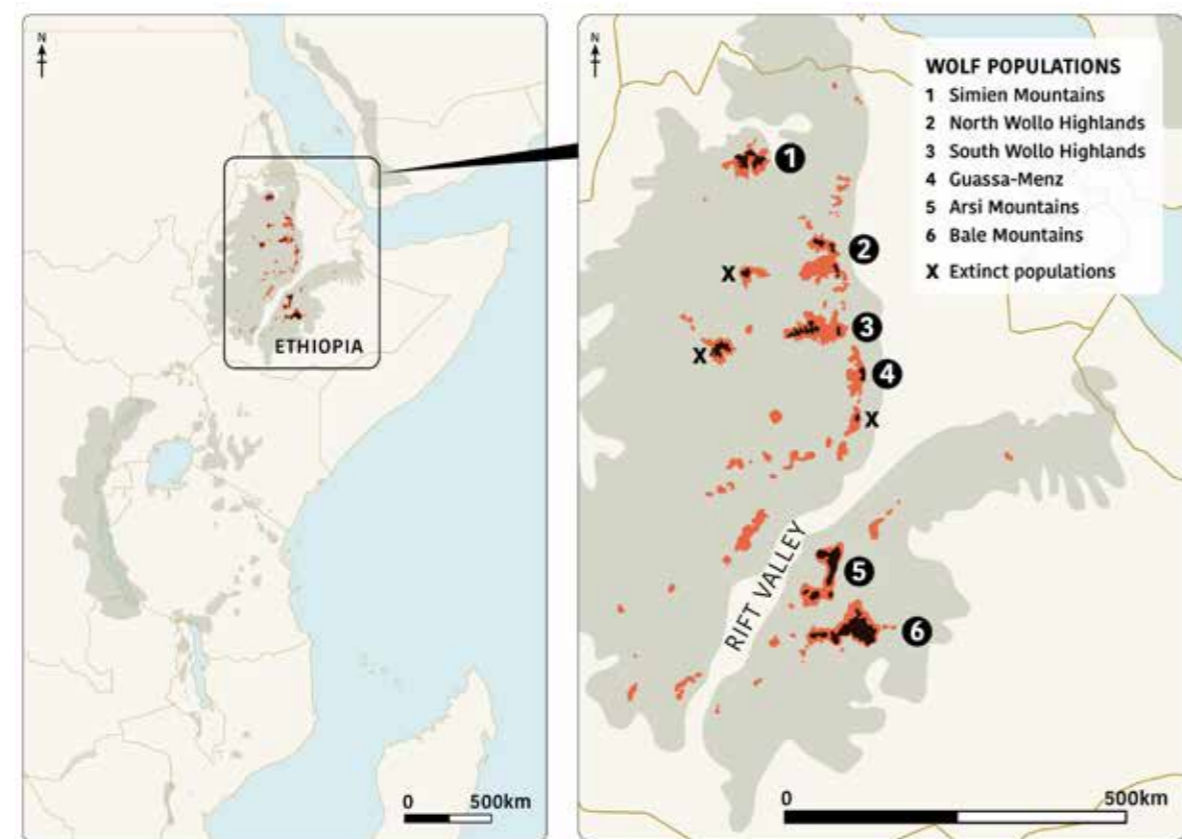
In the Bale Mountains National Park, the wolf packs of the Web Valley generally begin breeding a month earlier than those of the Sanetti Plateau. However, this year, we observed a continuation of a recent trend of delayed breeding, perhaps related to prolonged heavy rains in the post-summer period. Mating signs were observed only in late September and continued into mid-December, with litters of pups appearing as late as the end of March.

Five of the seven focal packs in the Web Valley successfully bred, although the litter sizes were small. Of those five, only three packs still had at least one surviving pup by the end of April. On the Sanetti Plateau, all five focal packs raised pups throughout the breeding season. In northern Ethiopia, whilst no litters were observed in Simien Mountains, eight litters were found in North Wollo and Menz-Guassa. More good news came from Delanta, where a pair from the Addis Tesfa pack - meaning “new hope” in Amharic - split off

on their own to form a new breeding unit, marking a positive step for the recolonisation of the area.

Ethiopian wolves continue to face numerous threats in their fragile highland home. In December 2023, an outbreak of canine distemper virus (CDV) hit the Web Valley. Several domestic dogs contracted the disease in a village bordering the main wolf population, some of them fatally. Four wolf packs - Bowman, Meggity, Alandu, and Hangafo - are currently affected. Unlike rabies, CDV is not always fatal, but it can persist in the environment for a long time. Outbreaks, therefore, can last even longer. EWCP vets focused their efforts on vaccinating domestic dogs rather than the wolves directly. This decision was made due to the high risks associated with capturing lactating females and disturbing packs during the breeding season. We are closely monitoring the progression of CDV and rabies in the wolf population.

In addition to disease outbreaks, the wolves face threats from leopards and spotted hyenas. Two packs have lost pups to these predators this year, one in Northern Ethiopia and one in the Bale Mountains. The combination of these varied and changing threats highlights the continued vulnerability of Ethiopian wolf populations and reinforces the need for ongoing conservation efforts to ensure the long-term survival of the species.



► Current and extinct Ethiopian wolf populations. The grey areas show the [Eastern Afrotropical biodiversity hotspot](#); red denotes historical Afroalpine habitat; black denotes remaining Afroalpine habitat.



► Two Ethiopian wolf pups sitting outside the den. © Adrien Lesaffre



► An Ethiopian wolf feeds on the nectar of the Ethiopian red hot poker flower (*Kniphofia foliosa*). © Carine Lavril

THE WOLVES AND THE BLOOMS

When we think of pollinators, we often picture flying creatures, such as bees, butterflies, birds or even bats. We don't often think of large carnivores in such ecological roles. In the Ethiopian highlands, the sunset-coloured inflorescences of the Ethiopian red hot poker, *Kniphofia foliosa*, bloom profusely from the end of May to October. Coming back to life after the dry season, vast fields of parched *Kniphofia foliosa* change quickly from dusty yellow withered stems to green clusters of arched leaves boasting striking, torch-like flower spikes. These flowers emerge as clusters of tubular blooms, starting as fiery red buds that gradually transition to a bright, sunny yellow as they mature.

These little flowers produce copious amounts of nectar attracting a wide variety of different pollinators. The sweet nectar coupled with the vibrant colours and unique flower structures create an irresistible

combination for insects, birds, and even mammals. Every year, during the peak of the blooming season, a remarkable sight unfolds as Ethiopian wolves, typically known for their carnivorous rodent diet, are also drawn to the nectar of the *Kniphofia foliosa*.

Last year, we followed several wolves feeding on the Ethiopian red hot poker flowers and discovered that some individuals could go to as many as 20 to 30 stalks during one single visit! As they forage among the flowers, their muzzles become completely covered with pollen. This nectar-feeding behaviour not only provides the wolves with a supplementary source of nutrition, but also positions them as inadvertent pollinators. This unusual interaction represents a rare case of plant pollination involving a large carnivore, and highlights the intricate and often-surprising relationships between the different species of this unique Afroalpine ecosystem.

HYBRIDISATION THREATS TO ETHIOPIAN WOLVES

With increasing human activities in wolf habitat, contact between domestic dogs and Ethiopian wolves is also on the rise. Dogs often accompany shepherds and livestock in the mountains, roaming freely during the day. This year, wolf monitors reported multiple instances of interactions between wolves and domestic dogs in Web Valley. In addition to their aggressive behaviours and causing disturbance at dens, dogs have also been observed following and trying to mate with female wolves from two different packs. Even more unusually, an African wolf has been seen accompanying a pair of Ethiopian wolves on the Sanetti Plateau, and male African wolves will also sometimes attempt to mate with female Ethiopian wolves.

Hybridisation is an ongoing and serious threat to Ethiopian wolves, first reported in 1988. It dilutes their genetic integrity, which can undermine their

unique adaptations to high-altitude environments. Dog-wolf hybrids have been observed before in Web Valley, as well as in Menz-Guassa where EWCP wolf ambassadors have alerted us about four individuals that appear to be hybrids.

Managing hybridisation in the wild is a challenging issue - both practically and in terms of conservation consensus. Even experts in conservation genetics often disagree on the appropriate strategies. However, considering the small size of Ethiopian wolf populations, recent scientific insight would recommend the removal or restriction of hybrids, something that would need to be considered with all relevant stakeholders. Whilst EWCP is closely monitoring the situation in all wolf populations, greater awareness is needed to decrease the number of domestic dogs in the high mountains and prevent further risks of hybridisation.



► African wolf threatening a male Ethiopian wolf in an attempt to mate with a female. Web Valley, Bale Mountains National Park. © Carine Lavril

The EWCP 2024 Monitoring Report is available [here](#)

ONE HEALTH

Managing diseases, with benefits for people, domestic animals and wildlife

THIS YEAR:

16 permanent villages and **16** Bale Mountains National Park settlements were reached with domestic dog vaccination campaigns, where **3444** dogs were vaccinated. **45** government veterinarians were trained in wildlife post-mortem sampling methods in Dinsho, Adaba, and Goba Woredas. **1** top-level workshop was organised with **35** participants. **5375** people were reached during awareness community outreach.

TEAM:

Vet Team Leader:
Muktar Abute
Vet Team Officers:
Haji Usman & Usman Aliko
Community Team Leader:
Mustafa Dule
Vet Assistants:
Kebede Wolde, Kassim Kedir, Nuru Burka, Mama Abdi & Burka Kedir



► A dog nervously awaits a visit from the vet. © Rory Matthews

► Muktar prepares a rabies vaccine for a local dog in the Adaba community near Ethiopian wolf habitat. © Rory Matthews

DISEASE CONTROL WORKSHOP IN SOUTH AFRICA

Earlier in 2024, EWCP staff Dr Jorgelina Marino and Dr Girma Eshete, together with Dr Fekede Regassa, Director of Ecosystem Monitoring and Research for the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), travelled to South Africa to participate in a workshop on canid disease management. The event was hosted by the IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group's African Wild Dog Working Group at Kruger National Park, with 16 participants from six countries represented, and was organised to support the development of guidelines for managing the risk of disease in free-ranging African wild Dogs. Diseases like rabies and CDV are an ongoing challenge to numerous populations of wild canids throughout Africa, and we are proud to be collaborating on an international scale to build better systems to combat these conservation concerns. Many of the issues and topics arising, including tests of new vaccines, will have positive impacts on EWCP's work in Ethiopia also.



► An African wild dog on the track in the Lapalala Game Reserve, South Africa. © Jorgelina Marino



Dinkenesh Ethiopia
Protecting Ethiopia's unique wildlife

THE WORK NOW BEGINS: DINKENESH ETHIOPIA JOINS EWCP AS PARTNER

This year, EWCP was delighted to welcome Dinkenesh Ethiopia as its partner, alongside the University of Oxford and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority. With strategic support from EWCP, Dinkenesh Ethiopia was recently established as an indigenous NGO with closely aligning objectives. They are the primary local partner for two of EWCP's core projects - One Health and Biodiversity Friendly Futures.

Translated as "Unique Ethiopia", the organization's mission is to safeguard the country's unique wildlife for the benefit of current and future generations. They aim to promote a better understanding of Ethiopia's unique natural riches and to implement conservation activities that reduce threats to the survival of endemic species and boost their long-term persistence. The Ethiopian wolf, at the heart of its logo, is central to this vision.

The Oxford University team will continue to support Dinkenesh with guidance on project management,

fundraising, reporting, and measuring conservation impacts. Their approaches include monitoring and research, as well as fostering community involvement in conservation, and incorporating traditional knowledge and alternative livelihoods. We hope that this collaboration will enable Dinkenesh to become a strong conservation leader in their country.

Whilst it may be a new organization, its personnel are experienced conservationists. Executive Director Dr Girma Eshete has worked for EWCP since 2010, most recently as Amhara Region Manager, and is well-poised to lead Dinkenesh to every success in this new chapter. He will be supported by a board chaired by Dr Zelealem Tefera, one of Ethiopia's most distinguished conservationists.

Another long-time EWCP staff-member, Vet Team Leader Muktar Abute, will continue his work with the One Health project - managing diseases for the benefit of local communities, domestic wildlife, and the Ethiopian wolves.

BIODIVERSITY FRIENDLY FUTURES

Fostering coexistence of wolves and people, and mechanisms to fairly share the costs and benefits of conservation

THIS YEAR:

259 households benefitted financially from alternative livelihoods and reduced pressure on natural resources; “Highland Honey”: **96** producers made **521kg** of honey, **51kg** was used for household consumption, **470kg** was sold for **242,192 ETB**; “Guassa Gardens”: **163** households harvested **562** grass donkey-bundles, **103** donkey-bundles were used, **459** donkey-bundles were sold for **229,450 ETB**; **4** new colonies and **1315** human-bundles of local grass (grown mixed with the Guassa) worth an estimated **131,500 ETB** were harvested for livestock feed.

TEAM:

Project Co-ordinator:
Girma Eshete
Community Conservation Leader:
Fekadu Lema
Livelihoods Leader:
Misrak Seyoum



► Livelihoods leader Misrak Seyoum with the Tenta Woreda honey expert, and a honey producer holding a traditional smoker.
© Misrak Seyoum



► Guassa grass harvested in Angot Woreda. © Misrak Seyoum



► Jorgelina and Girma enjoying a brew during a break. © EWCP

SUPPORTING HIGHLAND HONEY PRODUCERS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

EWCP supports ‘highland honey’ producers throughout Delanta-Gubalaftu, North and South Wollo. They not only receive beehives and training about honey production and harvesting, but also ongoing assistance with equipment and any issues they might encounter. The existing 85 beneficiaries in North and South Wollo are organised into 13 small groups called ‘budin’. These collectives help to share the costs and benefits of the group, sharing tasks between them such as night watch, overseeing patches of *Erica*, and fencing hive locations. These tasks are particularly necessary during the period from August to December, when the *Erica* forest is in flower, and all the hives require the collective efforts of several households in the community.

These groups are not without difficulties, not least the ongoing conflict in the region which has resulted in many grassroots administrative structures ceasing to function. Also, encroachment of livestock inside the Borena Worehimenu National Park, South Wollo, and landslides caused by heavy rains have presented new and ongoing challenges to the budins. Even against this backdrop, EWCP-supported initiatives and rural communities are working hard to protect the Afroalpine ecosystem and its natural resources, with huge benefits - not only for sustainable livelihoods, but also for the endemic wildlife. This year, sales of 470kg of honey produced an additional income of over 240,000 ETB (nearly 2300 USD), demonstrating the underlying ethos of the Biodiversity Friendly Futures project - creating opportunities that allow both people and wildlife to thrive.

BIOFF PROJECT LEADERS SHORTLISTED FOR OXFORD UNIVERSITY VICE CHANCELLOR’S AWARD

EWCP staff members, Science Director Jorgelina Marino and Dinkenes Ethiopia Executive Director Girma Eshete, were shortlisted for the Environmental Sustainability Award category of the University of Oxford’s Vice-Chancellor’s Awards, 2024. The awards are a celebration of the outstanding people, researchers, and projects being undertaken at the university, with over 1500 individuals being included in the nominations.

Jorgelina and Girma were shortlisted for inspiring levels of commitment and dedication in their leadership of EWCP’s Biodiversity Friendly Futures project - promoting sustainable livelihoods among communities sharing land with endemic highland species like the Ethiopian wolf. The project has supported community-based conservation in spite of huge social and political unrest in the Amhara Region. Its success is also testament to the strong team of local leaders with a broad range of skills and experience that have been assembled during the past few years. Community Conservation Leader Fekadu Lema and Livelihoods Leader Misrak Seyoum have been crucial in forging partnerships across civil and government bodies, including grassroots institutions that are becoming the foundation of this project.

Girma and Jorgelina have brought international interest and funding to this project, recently securing a new grant from the UK Darwin Initiative. The project is the ultimate example of an inclusive and collaborative culture - a holistic conservation project based on the hard work and learning experiences of a diversity of partners from the Global South.



LIVING WITH WOLVES

Building a future where wolves and people in the Afroalpine highlands coexist



TEAM:

Chief Naturalist: **Alo Hussein**. Community Team Leader: **Mustafa Dule**. 16 Wolf Ambassadors



▶ Two Ethiopian wolf pups and their mother sit outside the den. © Rebecca Jackrel



▶ The blocked den of the Bowman Pack discovered and cleared by EWCP monitors in early January, 2024. © EWCP

SAFEGUARDING WOLF DENS FROM INTERFERENCE

Most canids use dens during the breeding season to protect their pups from predators and other threats. Ethiopian wolf females will usually dig a new den each year. Their locations are then carefully tracked down and recorded by EWCP wolf monitors.

At the beginning of the 2023-2024 breeding season, the Bowman pack was one of the largest in the Web Valley, Bale Mountains National Park. It was composed of a dozen wolves and led by a well-known, experienced dominant pair (BOW25 and BOW34). Unfortunately, this pack has faced some major difficulties this year, highlighting both the vulnerability of Ethiopian wolves and the continued importance of EWCP's conservation initiatives.

The first challenge was canine distemper virus, which was recorded in the region in December. Transmitted from domestic dogs in the neighbouring communities, the Bowman pack lost four individuals to the disease by February this year.

The second challenge, however, concerned human interference with their breeding den. The pack's dominant female, BOW34, gave birth in early December, 2023. When the EWCP wolf monitoring team went to check on her in early January, they saw

that the entrance of her den had been blocked with large rocks. Some of the wolves, including the mother, were still around the den, indicating that the one-month-old pups were trapped inside alone. It was unclear how long the rocks had been there, and whether the cubs were still alive. The wolf monitors cleared the den entrance and continued to monitor it daily, hoping that they had discovered the interference in time. A few days later, they observed three pups playing outside the den, and a camera trap installed at the den's entrance later confirmed that all six pups were alive and well.

EWCP has been operating in Bale Mountains National Park for over 30 years, actively promoting local awareness and coexistence with the wolves. As this incident shows us, although rare, the blocking of breeding dens still occurs in Web Valley. It is an indication of remaining human-wildlife conflicts in the area, as well as of some enduring negative perceptions of Ethiopian wolves by people. The successful rescue of the trapped pups is a testament to the dedication of our wolf monitors, yet it also serves as a reminder of the vulnerabilities faced by these endangered animals. Fostering coexistence strategies and educating both locals and tourists about the importance of maintaining a disturbance-free environment are essential to mitigate these challenges.

REDUCING WOLF DISTURBANCE FROM TOURISM

Dens with pups also attract many tourists, especially wildlife photographers, who are eager to see and photograph young Ethiopian wolves. For now, Bale Mountains National Park does not have guidelines restricting access to den sites, but ensuring both safety and quiet at the dens is crucial for the wolves. Disturbance can lead a female to move her pups to another den, which can greatly increase their vulnerability to a wide range of threats, like predation. Tour guides use 4x4 vehicles to bring wildlife photographers closer to wolves, as they react less to cars than people on foot. While tour operators usually keep a safe distance, disturbance can still be significant since dens are often visited with two or three vehicles at dawn and dusk several days in a row. Off-road cars remain conspicuous in the open Afroalpine landscape. While it is not uncommon for wolves to change dens, wolf monitors reported that some packs moved their pups following tourist visits. Notably, the Meggity pack, which started the breeding season in a den located in the middle of a flat plain moved their single pup to a rocky escarpment following human disturbance.

Nature-based tourism not only raises awareness about the value and vulnerability of Ethiopian wolves but also supports local economies. As tourism is likely to increase following the listing of Bale Mountains National Park as UNESCO World Heritage Site, more specific protections to minimise all forms of human disturbance, particularly at this critical and fragile time of the wolves' life cycle, is vital for the successful conservation of the species.

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT ROAD KILLS

The increasing amount of vehicle traffic on mountain roads represents a growing hazard for Ethiopian wolves throughout their range. This past year, there were two separate reports of wolves killed on the road. On December 22nd, 2023, EWCP received news from local farmers in Menz-Guassa, Amhara, that a wolf had been killed in an accident close to Mehal Meda. The following day, members of the EWCP Menz team went



▶ Two Ethiopian wolf pups at play. Rebecca participated in one of EWCP's first mountain trekking tours and left a beautiful photograph legacy © Rebecca Jackrel



▶ A wolf runs along a road cutting through the mountains. © Rebecca Jackrel

to investigate and found that an adult male had been hit by a Sino truck, perhaps part of the nearby Sefed-Meda pack. A few months later, in mid-April, a second report was received that a sub-adult wolf from the BBC pack had been hit and killed on the Sanetti Plateau in the Bale Mountains. As a result, EWCP has circulated reports on these fatalities to local authorities to raise awareness and work to prevent future accidents.

► The view from the roof of Africa: Giant lobelia stand on the summit of Tullu Deemtu (4370m above sea-level), the highest mountain in southern Ethiopia. © Will Burrard-Lucas



CONSERVATION TRANSLOCATIONS

Assisting movement of wolves to boost declining populations and recreate old ones

TRANSLOCATING CANIDS: VISITING THE WILD DOG RANGE EXPANSION PROJECT IN SOUTH AFRICA



► The EWT's African wild dog holding facility. Two adjacent enclosures allow for the gradual socialisation of unrelated animals to form a stable social unit for re-release. © J. Marino

As part of their WCN-funded trip to South Africa, Jorgelina, Girma, and Fekede visited the Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) African wild dog range expansion project. The project, part of the EWT's carnivore conservation programme, has a lot of overlap with EWCP's conservation translocations project - exploring the expansion of wild canid ranges through the reintroduction of new packs in suitable habitats. The EWT 'holding facility' is central to the project's operations - a model facility for the socialisation of unrelated dogs to form new stable social units - and paramount to the success of any reintroduction projects. The animals are separated by mesh fences and allowed to slowly develop social bonds without any danger to each other.

They also visited an African wild dog monitoring group in Hoedspruit, responsible for tracking individuals outside of reserve boundaries, and working to prevent and mitigate conflicts with farmers. With other EWT staff members, they entered Lapalala Game Reserve to track a wild dog group that was reintroduced there, and were thrilled to witness some exciting group hunting behaviours.

The trip produced some important information and conclusions for EWCP's own translocations plans. The active management of endangered animals is an increasingly common tool in conservation, and has produced some very good results with other canid species. However, whilst pre-release socialisation is absolutely pivotal for the population management of released wild dog packs, it might be unnecessary for Ethiopian wolves. This would reduce the requirement for a complex and costly portion of the process. From a genetic point of view, and behaviourally, we think that the active intervention to form social groups from unrelated animals might not be required with the wolves. There are some good examples of both single animals (Terefe) and pairs (Delanta) starting new family groups in empty patches, or where other family packs are already established.

They were also valuable opportunities to view the types of equipment and methods used to transport wild dogs - from the cages to the fact that wild dogs are transported without anaesthesia! There were also useful discussions about the decision-making processes surrounding human interventions with injured wild animals, and the EWT shared a decision tree that they had developed for this purpose. Overall, it was a highly successful and informative trip, highlighting the value of collaboration and helping pave the way to future Ethiopian wolf translocations.



► (R to L) Girma Eshete and Fekede Regassa, Director of Ecosystem Monitoring and Research for the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), with Eugene Greyling, Field Officer with the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Programme, at their holding facility. © Jorgelina Marino

ewcpc NEWS & OUTPUTS

WILDCRU INCLUSIVITY ACCELERATOR AWARDS: RECOGNITION FOR EWCP STAFF MEMBERS

The WildCRU Inclusivity Accelerator Awards are a recognition presented by the Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at the University of Oxford. Supported by the Robertson Foundation, these awards acknowledge the expertise of field conservationists working across research and conservation projects around the world, and celebrate exceptional efforts made within the field of wildlife conservation. Recipients of the WildCRU Inclusivity Accelerator awards have demonstrated an irreplaceable commitment to the conservation projects they belong to.

EWCP is proud that Alo Hussein, Fekadu Lema and Abdi Samune, recently received a WildCRU Inclusivity Accelerator award.

Alo Hussein was the EWCP monitoring team leader for Bale Mountains for many years, and is now chief naturalist. Alo has been present since the very beginning of EWCP more than three decades ago. He is extremely devoted to the conservation of Ethiopian wolves and highland wildlife in general. All year long, he coordinates and takes part in the wolf monitoring in Bale Mountains. Over the years, he has extended the Bale study areas to include wolf packs from East

and West Morabawa, has been trapping wolves during most vaccination interventions, and has trained almost all the new wolf monitors.

Fekadu Lema has been working with EWCP since the onset, first in the Bale Mountains where he grew up, and now in the Amhara region. Fekadu is the Amhara project manager and community team leader, overseeing education and outreach in local communities and alternative livelihood community projects, such as Highland Honey. Fekadu is an excellent communicator and works very closely with local community members. His social skills and ability to connect with people has definitely benefited EWCP's projects and contributed to their success.

Abdi Samune joined EWCP 15 years ago, first as a guard and camp attendant, then as a wolf monitor in Bale Mountains. Despite being one of the youngest wolf monitors, his knowledge about the wolves, garnered from many years spent in the field, is outstanding. Very active on his social media, Abdi is committed to raising awareness about wolves and the continued work of the EWCP team towards their conservation.

By honouring the unwavering work of our staff members on the ground, the WildCRU Inclusivity Awards aim to inspire a more diverse and equitable future for wildlife conservation, recognizing that inclusive practices are crucial for the effectiveness and sustainability of conservation efforts worldwide.



► A younger Alo Hussein.



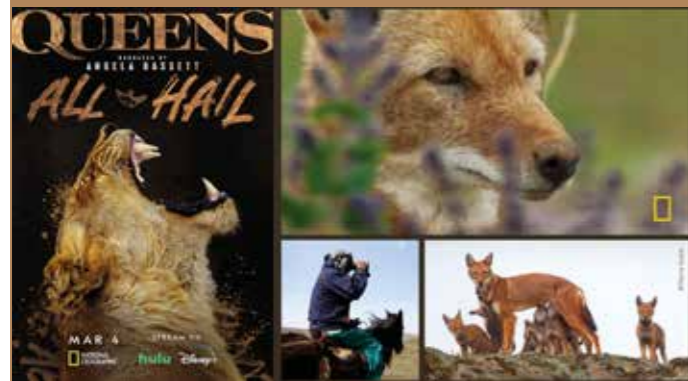
► Fekadu Lema promoting EWCP.



► Abdi Samune hard at work.

HIGHLAND QUEENS

“We don’t call her Mother Nature for nothing”. Queens, filmed by WildstarFilms and produced by National Geographic and Disney+, premiered in March 2024. It explores how matriarchs of nature survive and thrive. Claudio and Alo worked with filmmaker Sophie Darlington on the Mountain Queens episode featuring Tar (aka Tar02), long reigning Queen of the Tarura pack.



► Monitoring Officer Abdi Samune demonstrates monitoring techniques to EWCP Wildlife Monitoring Training Interns, 2024. © Abdi Samune

SUCCESS OF THE WILDLIFE MONITORING INTERNSHIP

Following on from our capacity building programme, and with funding from the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) internship fund, EWCP recently completed a highly successful wildlife monitoring internship. Ten local young people in two cohorts learned essential conservation principles and wildlife monitoring techniques under the supervision of our experienced wolf monitors and vet team. The trainees camped in the highlands - a first for some of them - and learned about Ethiopian wolf ecology and conservation challenges through hands-on fieldwork and visits to villages.

PAW PATROL: WOLF MONITORING TEAM LEADER DESSIEW GELAW

EWCP Monitoring Team Leader Dessiew Gelaw was [profiled in Selamta](#), the Ethiopian Airlines in-flight magazine. The article documents his amazing work and dedication to the Ethiopian wolves, monitoring three packs in the Abuna Yodef massif, northern Ethiopia.

NEW COLLABORATIONS AT RENOVATED DINSHO HEADQUARTERS

At our Dinsho headquarters, recent renovations supported by the Dry Creek Foundation through the WCN have continued the immense improvements to our facilities over the past few years. In addition to the new roof, updated stores, fresh kitchen, replumbed restrooms and showers, and newly designed offices for staff and senior management, there is also a more comfortable staff room complete with cozy sofas, whilst the former office has been transformed into a spacious meeting room. Staff

members have shared positive feedback, including Wegayehu Worku, a long-time team member, who said: *“These changes have made my job easier and more enjoyable, allowing for relaxed conversations with my colleagues over traditional coffee.”*

A recent meeting with Bale Mountains National Park officers, held at our new meeting room, sparked ideas for closer collaboration. Capacity-building, funding needs, and enhanced coordination of awareness and community engagement work were identified as key areas for joint efforts. Additionally, support will be provided to park scientists for data analysis related to wildlife monitoring.

EWCP WINS OROMIA’S BEST CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

In recognition of EWCP’s long-term commitment to the conservation of Ethiopian wolves, the Oromia Tourism Commission granted EWCP the “Best Conservationist” award during their 2023 Tourism Week. Edriss Ebu, who has worked for EWCP for over 30 years, was honoured to accept this award on behalf of the EWCP team at the ceremony in Addis Ababa on 27th September 2023.

The Bale Mountains are one of the most beautiful and important biodiversity areas of the Oromia region, not only rich with incredible landscapes, but also providing vital water for the surrounding area and beyond. It is also home to the largest population of Ethiopian wolves and has become a destination for tourists and photographers alike who wish to capture a glimpse of the world’s most endangered canid. The EWCP believes that the conservation of these stunning and iconic species must also go hand-in-hand with the support and improvement of local community livelihoods.

At the heart of the EWCP family are a devoted team of over fifty enthusiastic Ethiopian staff who work tirelessly to protect the wolves from the multiple threats they face. This work is done in collaboration with many local communities across the country,



► Edriss, Muktar, and Fekadu with the ‘best conservationist’ award. © EWCP

and with support from Federal, Regional, Zonal, Woreda, and Kebele governments. By protecting the Ethiopian wolves, we are protecting unique biodiversity and precious highlands that sustain local livelihoods and provide water to millions of people in East Africa.

EWCP is extremely proud to receive this award. It is a wonderful recognition of the hard work undertaken by all the team members over many years for the protection of the Ethiopian wolf and its Afroalpine habitat. We are also extremely thankful to all the people and organisations all over the world who continue to care deeply about the Ethiopian wolf, and we are very grateful for their support of EWCP in the ongoing fight to protect this amazing species from extinction. Congratulations!

BALE MOUNTAINS GIVEN UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

On 18 September 2023, during its 45th session, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) registered Bale Mountains National Park as a World Heritage Site. It is the second natural heritage site in Ethiopia to receive this prestigious designation, long after the inscription of Simien Mountains National Park back in 1978!

Bale Mountains National Park, established in late 1969, is located in Ethiopia's southern highlands, 400km southeast of the capital Addis Ababa. This new status is a recognition of the park's extraordinary natural beauty and the outstanding 'universal value' of its biological diversity for in-situ wildlife conservation. Indeed, the Bale Mountains are home to a wide array of iconic species, many of which are found nowhere else in the world. Not only are many of these species endemic to Ethiopia, but for some, like the Ethiopian wolf and mountain nyala, over 50% of their entire global population resides inside the park's boundaries. Several wildlife authorities and conservationists have stated that more mammals would go extinct if the Bale Mountains habitats were to disappear than any other area of equivalent size on the planet.

Despite already being formally protected by the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, threats to its integrity are ever-present, such as the heavy use of roads crossing through its plateau and forests, expanding small settlements and villages, and increasing use of the resources within the park for agriculture and livestock grazing. This new World Heritage status highlights the ever-pressing need to promote more sustainable local livelihood schemes that align with the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem services within the park.

EWCP has been conducting research, monitoring and conservation of Ethiopian wolves in the Bale Mountains for more than 30 years, safeguarding the wolf population through vaccination campaigns and by raising awareness within the local communities. Protecting the Ethiopian wolf - and by extension its Afroalpine habitats, wildlife and ecological processes - is now more important than ever.



“ I've been privileged to live and work in the Bale Mountains for many years. What a dazzling place. The diversity of life and landscapes you encounter on the Roof of Africa are a source of wonder. Receiving the status of UNESCO World Heritage Site is a major recognition of Bale's natural beauty and its exceptional value as a biodiversity hotspot. ”

Claudio Sillero
EWCP Founder & Executive Director

► Keyrensa Valley: gateway to the Central Peaks of the Bale Mountains National Park @ Rebecca Jackrel



Popular articles & news

[WCN blog, July 2023. Guardians of the Simien wolves](#)

[Geographical, Oct 2023. Saving the elusive and endangered Ethiopian wolf](#)

[WCN blog, April 2024. One wolf's lasting legacy](#)



Research Collaborations

Addis Ababa University – Ecology and conservation of Afroalpine natural resources

Addis Ababa University – Genetics and carnivore interspecific competition

Animal & Plant Health Agency – GOV.UK - Immune response to CDV vaccine

Ethiopian Public Health Institute - Rabies diagnostics in wolves and dogs

Hawassa University – Ecosystem engineers and carbon sequestration

Mekelle University - Large Carnivore Survey of Ethiopia

Oslo University/Jimma University - African wolf ecology and competition

Phillip University Marburg, Germany - Climate monitoring in the Bale Mountains

Rollins College, USA - Measuring cortisol in claws and hair to assess stress in wolves

Royal Veterinary College, UK – Disease dynamics and vaccine testing

University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic - Giant molerat physiology and ecology

Scientific Publications

Abebe, B., Ashagrie, M., and Eshete, G. 2024. Effects of livestock grazing on herbaceous species composition and biomass in the Simien Mountains National Park, Ethiopia. *Israel Journal of Ecology and Evolution*, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22244662-bja10087>

Lai, S., Léandri-Breton, D.-J., Lesaffre, A., Samune, A., Marino, J. and Sillero-Zubiri, C. 2024. *Canids as pollinators?* Nectar foraging by Ethiopian wolves may contribute to the pollination of *Kniphofia foliosa*. *Ecology*, in press

Marino, J., Lai, S., Eshete, G., Sillero-Zubiri, C. 2024. Conservation with hard borders: Ethiopian wolves are threatened by fragmentation and isolation. *Wildlife Biology* (Special Issue Wolves Across Borders), in press

Sandoval-Serés, E., Foley, J., Preston, E., Ebu, E. and Marino, J., 2023. Time allocation to balance group living trade-offs in Ethiopian wolves. *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, 77(11), p.122. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00265-023-03398-4>

Other relevant publications

Asefa, A., Reuber, V.M., Miehe, G., Wraase, L., Wube, T., Farwig, N. and Schabo, D.G. 2024. Giant root-rat engineering and livestock grazing activities regulate plant functional trait diversity of an Afroalpine vegetation community in the Bale Mountains, Ethiopia. *Oecologia*, 205, 281–293. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00442-024-05563-6>

Martínez-Navarro, B., Gossa, T., Carotenuto, F., Bartolini-Lucenti, S., Palmqvist, P., Asrat, A., Figueirido, B., Rook, L., Niespolo, E.M., Renne, P.R. and Herzlinger, G. 2023. The earliest Ethiopian wolf: implications for the species evolution and its future survival. *Communications biology*, 6(1), p.530. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s42003-023-04908-w>

Mekonnen, A., Fashing, P. J., Chapman, C. A., Worku, E. A., Fetene, B., Fekadu, M., Guadie, A., Stenseth, N. C. and Venkataraman, V. V. (2024). The Ethiopian wolf can act as a flagship and umbrella species to protect the Afroalpine ecosystem and foster sustainable development. *Environmental Conservation*, 51(1), 45–54. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0376892923000309>



► A male Tacazze sunbird (*Nectarinia tacazze*) feeding on *Kniphofia foliosa* nectar. © Bart Dahneke

Thesis

Gebremeskel Gizaw Kassa 2024. Ecosystem engineering and habitat selection of giant mole rat (*Tachyoryctes macrocephalus*, Rüppell, 1842) in Sanetti Plateau of Bale Mountains National Park, southeastern Ethiopia. MSc thesis. Hawassa university, Hawassa, Ethiopia.

Conferences

British Ecological Society (BES) Annual Meeting in Belfast, Ireland. December 2023

Global Cheetah Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. January 2024

International Bio-Logging Science Symposium (BLS8) in Tokyo, Japan. March 2024

Managing disease risks to free-ranging African wild dogs – IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group/African Wild Dog Working Groups, Kruger National Park, South Africa. April 2024

National rabies control and elimination strategy revision – Minister of Agriculture, Adama, Ethiopia. July 2024

Lifetime Donations

THANK YOU

EWCP is deeply grateful for the support it has received over the programme's lifetime. We are thankful for every gift, since each contributes to the future of the Ethiopian wolf.

Here we list our major donors:

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We thank all our anonymous donors, and those that gave up to \$500 and are too numerous to list here.

Other donors that have given generously in the past include:

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Living with Wolves Team

Mustafa Dule, Community Team Leader
Alo Hussein, Chief Naturalist
16 Wolf Ambassadors

Wolf Ambassadors

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Adam Gudeta, Arsi
Ahmed Hussein, Arsi
Asrat Asefa, Simien
Endris Ahimiye, South Wollo
Esubalew Milashu, North Wollo
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Mudesir Tikse, Arsi
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Help EWCP

The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme is a WildCRU (University of Oxford) endeavour to help protect these endangered wolves and the Afroalpine habitats they inhabit. It works under an agreement with Ethiopia's Wildlife Conservation Authority and Regional Governments, with the aegis of the IUCN SSC Canid Specialist Group and Wildlife Health Working Group. In 2023 the local NGO Dinkenes Ethiopia joined the EWCP partnership, and will be formally implementing components of EWCP's conservation work from April 2024.

Ethiopian wolves are only found in a handful of scattered mountains in Ethiopia and are threatened by loss of highland habitats, disease and persecution. The most threatened carnivore in Africa, and the world's rarest canid, these long-legged charismatic animals need your help.

Informed by sound research, the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme targets the greatest threats to the survival of Ethiopian wolves and their Afroalpine habitat. We promote this charismatic species as a flagship, thereby protecting many of the Ethiopia's highland endemics and natural resources. If you or your organisation is interested in helping to fund our activities, contact us. You can donate to EWCP specifically through the following organisations:

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“ *The wolf is my life. For me, the wolf is Ethiopia.* ”

Dessiew Gelaw in Paw Patrol, written by Stuart Butler



▶ © Al Harrington

