



# HELP SAVE the Ethiopian Wolf

Endemic to the Ethiopian highlands, Ethiopian wolves are the most endangered carnivores in Africa and the world's rarest canid. These beautiful animals have a distinctive red coat, long legs and a bushy tail. As part of the canid family they are closely related to wolves, coyotes, foxes and domestic dogs.





## **Sadly, fewer than 500 adults remain in the world, living in fragmented locations across the rugged terrain of the Ethiopian highlands.**

The Ethiopian wolves' last remaining stronghold is in the Bale Mountains National Park, home to over half the global population, and where the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme (EWCP) focus their work to monitor and protect the species. At 3,500m above sea level, the temperatures range from freezing -15°C nights to hot 25°C days.

The land in the highlands is very fertile and good for growing crops and raising livestock, so many of Ethiopia's farmers live in this part of the country. However, farming exerts huge pressures on the environment. Habitat degradation and loss from agriculture threaten the Ethiopian wolves and their rodent prey.

Pastoralists bring their cattle to graze on the highlands, and with them come domestic dogs and the diseases they carry. The outbreak of lethal diseases is the most immediate threat to the wolves as it can quickly wipe out populations.

EWCP works with local communities and government agencies to increase the number of protected areas for the Ethiopian wolves, and to reduce the risk of rabies and canine distemper from domestic dogs. With these collaborations, EWCP aims to prevent any further wolf populations from going extinct and to promote human-wolf co-existence by helping local people establish sustainable farming practices and livelihoods.

EWCP's wide range of work ensures the Ethiopian wolves have the best chance of survival. Born Free has funded and supported EWCP's vital work since 1995.

### **EWCP'S WORK**

EWCP monitors the wolves and protects their Afroalpine habitat by collecting data from the field. Information is collected by teams camping out in the field for a few days, or by local Wolf Ambassadors living in designated areas.

Team members get to know the packs and their families and report on any new pups or problems. It has been known for wolves to be poisoned or their dens blocked up to prevent the pups from surviving. By employing Ethiopian nationals, EWCP not only generates employment but also gains the goodwill of the local communities.

Regular pre-emptive vaccination programmes are vital to help prevent the outbreak of fatal diseases. Domestic dogs in the local communities are vaccinated by injection, while wolves receive oral vaccinations hidden in bait to minimise human contact. Vaccinating and reducing the number of outbreaks not only benefits the wolves, but also the dog owners and their livestock.

EWCP headquarters are based in the Web Valley of the Bale Mountains National Park, and every year EWCP hold a special wolf education day where local people come together to play games, enjoy songs and dancing, and learn why the wolves are so precious. Education is important as it promotes positive attitudes towards the wolves and establishes a good relationship for humans and wildlife to co-exist successfully.

Teaching people how to keep bees, weave guassa grass or set up their own business, is another way to provide local employment and sustainable livelihoods. It also benefits the wolves if the land is being looked after. Looking to the future, there may be an opportunity to develop eco-tourism in the region, bringing in further job opportunities and creating a greater interest in protecting the wolves and their environment.

EWCP's long-term goal is for the Bale Mountains and the wolves to become less reliant on external funding and management, and eventually become self-sufficient. A secured population, genetically diverse and no longer at risk of immediate extinction, is the vision for the species. EWCP aims to have all stakeholders involved and committed to the conservation of Ethiopian wolves and the sustainable use of the Afroalpine ecosystem, on which present and future generations of Ethiopians also depend.





## ETHIOPIAN WOLF BEHAVIOUR

Ethiopian wolves live in large close-knit family packs, giving them safety in numbers and the ability to defend good home ranges to breed successfully. A dominant alpha male and female head up each pack. Wolves generally hunt alone or in pairs for mole rats and grass rats, which make up the majority of their diet. These rodents spend very little time above ground, so to catch them the wolves use their long legs to pounce, break through the earth and dig up their prey. In the early mornings and evenings the pack will patrol, mark territories and chase away neighbours to keep the best area for themselves.

Like most canids, the Ethiopian wolves breed once a year. In each pack, only the alpha female will have a litter of up to seven pups, but all members of the pack will assist in caring for them, by helping to feed and protect them. Sometimes another female, such as an auntie or older sister, may become a second mum by producing milk and suckling the pups, even though she didn't give birth to them. At six months old, the juveniles will begin to hunt for themselves – this is a particularly crucial time in their lives as not all of them will survive into adulthood.

Male wolves rarely leave their natal pack, but some young females may leave to look for breeding opportunities elsewhere. In 2020, new packs were seen in the Bale Mountains and an astonishing 48 puppies



were born. This was particularly welcome news as the baby boom came after Bale's core populations were hit hard with outbreaks of both rabies and distemper, in which up to 88 wolves were lost from 18 packs.

In previous years it was only possible to vaccinate wolves against rabies in response to outbreaks. Now, with an oral vaccine, wolves can be protected in advance. In 2020, 17 packs were orally vaccinated (up from seven the previous year), and four packs against canine distemper.

It is hoped that the new packs seen in Bale and beyond will persist and expand. Preventative vaccination campaigns will soon be extended outside of the Bale Mountains, giving more packs the protection against disease they desperately need, and taking a step closer to securing a future for the Ethiopian wolf.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**Supporting efforts to protect the Ethiopian wolves in the highlands of Ethiopia will provide invaluable assistance to a unique project, funded by Born Free since 1995. You will help:**

- Monitor, protect and survey the world's rarest canid
- Protect their habitat and resolve conflict with people
- Develop community education projects.

**\$100/£75** provides a pair of boots for a ranger.

**\$270/£200** provides a camera trap to record and monitor the wolves.

**\$670/£500** funds vaccination of 100 domestic dogs against rabies.

**\$20,000/£15,000** funds wolf monitoring by one team for a year: three wolf monitors fully equipped, with horses and community associated costs.

**You can also adopt The Ethiopian Wolf Family and help protect this rare species, of which, fewer than 500 remain.**

You'll receive an exclusive adoption pack and our *Adopt* magazine twice a year.



Visit [www.bornfree.org.uk/adopt-a-wolf](http://www.bornfree.org.uk/adopt-a-wolf)

**Born Free works tirelessly to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. As a leading wildlife charity, we oppose the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaign to keep them where they belong – in the wild.**

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