
WATERBERG WILD DOG INITIATIVE

2021
ANNUAL REPORT



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The Waterberg Wild Dog Initiative (WWDI) was founded in August 2020 as a community-based initiative to assist and promote the conservation of the unique, free-roaming African Wild Dog population in the Waterberg, Limpopo. This report was compiled in December 2021 as the first, annual report for WWDI and it details words from our Chairman and Project Coordinator, our operational structure, successes and challenges during 2021, our finances and donation sources, our needs going forward, and aims for 2022.

Words from the **CHAIRMAN**

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It has been a while since key role players initiated conversations about creating a community-driven organisation based in the Waterberg. And, most importantly, an organisation with the best interests of the farmers, from all walks of life, conservationists, and the highly endangered painted dogs of the Waterberg, at heart.

The dreams, ideas and hopes of the Waterberg community finally came to fruition in August 2020, when various community members came together and the Waterberg Wild Dog Initiative was born. Here we are, just over a year down the road, and our idea is very much alive as a recognised organisation endeavouring to aid in the conservation of the unique Waterberg Wild Dog population.



The Waterberg Wild Dog Initiative, or WWDI as it now affectionately known, has grown from strength to strength; and, through the support from individuals, communities and corporates throughout the world, I have no doubt will continue to do so.

WWDI is made up of a dynamic team of individuals, professionals competent in their chosen fields of expertise. Spearheaded by our passionate and dedicated project coordinator, Reilly Mooney, in the protection of our unique Waterberg Wild Dog population, along with our vision for the farming community and these Wild Dogs to co-exist, we have achieved numerous successes in a short space of time. This has been accomplished through educational campaigns and various measures put in place to monitor and protect the beautiful Wild Dogs of the Waterberg.

We, as a non-profit organisation, rely solely on the goodwill of fellow conservationists and corporates to monitor, research and, ultimately, protect these unique animals; and to find innovative ways to mitigate the ongoing conflict between man and predator. As Chairman of the WWDI, I would like to take this opportunity to thank every single contributor for your support and belief in what we are doing.

Due the relentless COVID-19 virus, we as a global community have been forced to change how we interact with one another and nature. However, with this new-normal and a so-called reset, I think I can safely say that we, as the apex species, have realised that nature will continue on, unhindered by a virus, and will always reclaim its rightful place in the world we seem unable to look after.

Nature will always be there as a reminder to us all of how great God is and how, if we just slow down and reflect on life, nature and all it encompasses will always put a smile on our faces. It serves as a reminder that nothing is permanent, nothing is impossible and if you keep on pushing to survive, you will make it and find your rightful place in this fragile ecosystem we call Earth. We have to live for now, as it is all we, as a species, have.

**DO NOT WORRY ABOUT
TOMORROW, FOR
TOMORROW WILL
WORRY ABOUT ITSELF.**

As dedicated conservationists, and the custodians of the Earth, we must ensure that we all fight for the ones that cannot fight for themselves, namely every species we know of and will yet discover. Let us all stand together to defend and protect one of the most endangered predators in the world, the African Wild Dog.

Together, let us make the Waterberg Wild Dog survival story a huge success for generations to come.



Michael Embleton
WWDI Chairman
December 2021



MESSAGE FROM THE PROJECT COORDINATOR

2021 saw WWDI complete its first, full calendar year of operations. It was a year of growth, of learning, and of trial, error, and adjustment. It saw WWDI solidify its operations in the community and become a significant role player in African Wild Dog conservation. In perhaps one of the worst possible times to start up a non-profit, under the restrictions and limitations of the COVID pandemic, WWDI has found its feet and is ready to run.

Upon constant reflection of our strategy and operations, there are a few characteristics of WWDI that have allowed it to gain traction as quickly as it did. First and foremost, it is a community-based initiative. 'Helping our neighbor' and being a dependable community resource is at the forefront of our objectives. Secondly, it is humble, but informative. We understand that each situation is unique and, while we use a fact-based approach, we do not assume to know everything there is to know about African Wild Dogs and, more specifically, about the Waterberg Wild Dogs. If there is anything that the last year has taught us, there's still a lot to understand about the Waterberg Wild Dog population. Lastly, WWDI does not operate in isolation. We encourage citizen science of the Waterberg community to learn new information about the dogs. We team up with other organizations and projects when we can benefit from working together, but use our unique skillset and niche to ensure efforts aren't duplicated. We seek the expertise and advisement of African Wild Dog professionals and form the communication bridge between the Waterberg community and those making management decisions. These traits come from a pure, altruistic desire to conserve the Waterberg Wild Dog population and help the community, and I believe it is why WWDI has received the support and gained the traction that it has.

To our donors and sponsors – THANK YOU for your belief in our mission and your support of our efforts. Without you, WWDI would have remained a concept and would never have reached the levels of success we're currently seeing.

To the Waterberg community, thank you for your acceptance, interest, and willingness to work together towards achieving a common goal. Thank you for your continued patience with me as I struggle to pronounce your Afrikaans names and farm names and thank you for the many laughs we have shared as you try to correct me. Most of all, thank you for welcoming me as part of the community. Although we may not always agree, we must never forget that we all live in the Waterberg for one reason – a love of nature. Any one of us could pack up and move to the city. We'd probably have less stress and maybe even earn a little more money! But we stay in the Waterberg because of our love for its community and environment. I look forward to continuing to work with you and support you in 2022.

Looking ahead, 2022 will be the year to expand our efforts to reach new communities within the Waterberg. It will, again, be a year of growth, learning, trial, error, and adjustment. It will be a year of exciting new projects and undertakings that shake the status quo. WWDI has found its feet and we're ready to run.

Reilly Mooney
WWDI Project Coordinator
December 2021

WHO WE ARE

The Waterberg Wild Dog Initiative (WWDI) is a community-based, non-profit initiative dedicated to the conservation of the Waterberg Wild Dog population. The WWDI functions as a community resource, helping provide information, answer questions, raise awareness, address concerns, and promote the ecotourism potential of the Waterberg Wild Dogs.

As a free-roaming population, the Waterberg Wild Dogs are not confined by the borders of any reserve. This free-roaming nature makes them important, however, it presents unique challenges to their conservation in a human-dominated landscape.

The WWDI is inspiring a passion for the Waterberg Wild Dogs by working alongside the community and instilling a sense of community ownership and responsibility for the free-roaming wild dogs.

Our purpose is simple - conserve the Waterberg Wild Dog population.

OUR PURPOSE IS SIMPLE -

**CONSERVE THE
WATERBERG
WILD DOG
POPULATION.**



The Waterberg, Limpopo lies north of Johannesburg, spanning the mountainous area between Bela-Bela, Thabazimbi, Modimolle, Melkriver, Marken, Lephalale, and Steenbokpan. Vaalwater, Limpopo marks the centre of the Waterberg region. The Waterberg is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve, marking it an area of significant conservation importance due to its high levels of biodiversity and relatively intact natural environment. This designation promotes the sustainable development of the area by placing restrictions on land uses in the area to conserve biological diversity, protect cultural heritage, and maintain a healthy ecosystem. Main land uses in the Waterberg include conservation, ecotourism, hunting, livestock farming, and small-scale agriculture.

MISSION

We are dedicated to working alongside the community to enhance understanding and promote the conservation of African Wild Dogs within the Waterberg.

VISION

Conserving the Waterberg Wild Dogs.



COLLECTING INFORMATION
on the Waterberg Wild Dogs.

**RAISING AWARENESS and
PROVIDING EDUCATION**
about the Waterberg Wild Dogs.

Understanding
the extent of and mitigating
HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT
where possible.

Promoting the
ECOTOURISM POTENTIAL
of the Waterberg Wild Dogs.

COLLABORATING
with governmental and non-
governmental organisations.

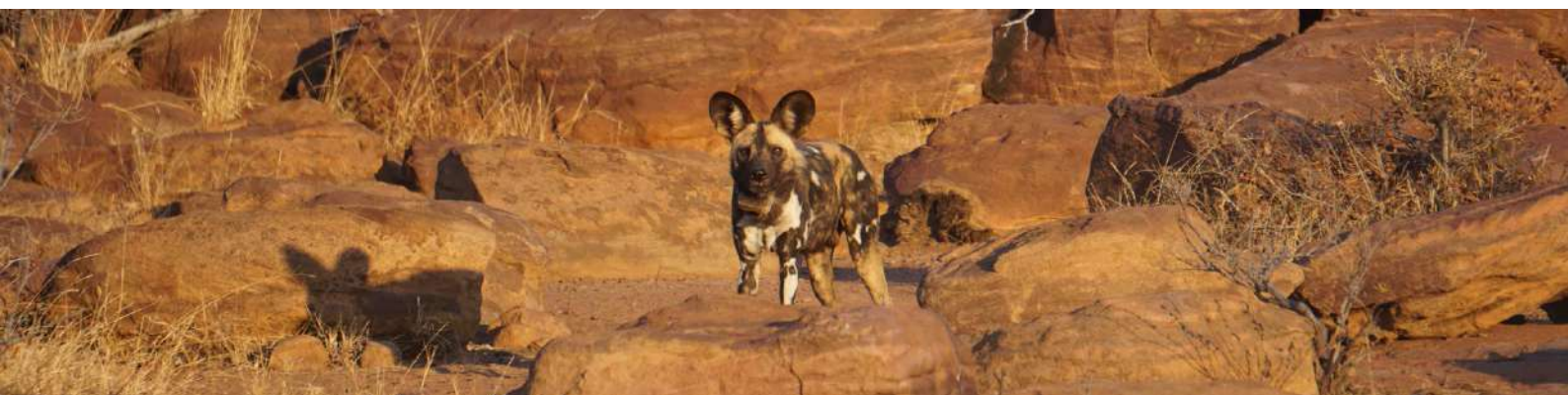


GOVERNANCE

The WWDI is managed by a dedicated Project Coordinator and overseen by a Steering Committee consisting of community members and stakeholders with varying interests in African Wild Dog conservation. Committee members volunteer their time, skills, and expertise and are not remunerated for assisting WWDI's efforts. Peet Hennig, farm manager of Tswana Game Farm in northern Waterberg was brought onto the Steering Committee in 2021. Reinhard Heuser of Nyati Wilderness in the northeastern part of the Waterberg resigned from the committee in September 2021.

The WWDI Steering Committee meets regularly throughout the year and on an ad-hoc basis, when immediate attention is required for urgent matters. The WWDI Steering Committee met 9 times in 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and ease of online meetings, most meetings were held on virtual platforms. One in-person Steering Committee meeting was held on 02 Oct 2021.

Name	21 Jan 2021	16 Feb 2021	15 April 2021	22 April 2021	28 May 2021	03 July 2021	02 Sept 2021	02 Oct 2021	09 Dec 2021
Reilly Mooney	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Michael Embleton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
André Burger	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Peet Hennig	N/A	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Hermann Müller	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Derek van der Merwe	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Reinhard Heuser	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	RESIGNED	



The WWDI is the first conservation initiative to operate underneath Waterberg Tourism NPC, a registered non-profit company (2018/539160/08) and public benefit organisation (PBO #930064611) seeking to leverage the tourism potential of the Waterberg to uplift the development of the safety, skills, business, health, farming, infrastructure, and conservation sectors.



WATERBERG WILD DOG REPORT

currently
23
confirmed dogs

The WWDI is working to gain an accurate sense of the numbers of African Wild Dogs living in the Waterberg. Currently, there are 23 confirmed wild dogs, divided amongst 4 different packs in 4 different communities, including Lephalale, Rooiberg, Bulgerivier, and Melkrivier.

BREEDING PACK

The largest pack is the pack ranging south of Lephalale, near the R33. This pack contains 14 dogs, including 1 adult female, 2 adult males, 4 females born in 2020, and 7 new pups born during the 2021 denning season. At the end of 2021, there has been a 100% survival rate in the pups born during this year.

The breeding pack was fitted with two more GPS tracking collars by the WWDI team in 2021. These collars allow WWDI to accurately monitor the movements of the pack and create an early-warning system to mitigate potential conflict as they move through private lands. So far, the pack has utilised approximately 50,000ha and over 45 different private properties in 2021.

ROOIBERG MALES

The WWDI became aware of two wild dogs in the Melkrivier area in June 2021. Despite extensive efforts, the dogs could not be found. In July, two wild dogs were seen on Mabula Game Reserve in Rooiberg. By comparing pictures, the WWDI was able to determine that these two dogs were the same two dogs seen in Melkrivier in June 2021. After further investigation, it was discovered that the two males dispersed from a free-roaming pack in the Tuli Block area of northern Limpopo earlier in the year. They travelled over 330km before reaching the Mabula Game Reserve.

The two males were fitted with a GPS tracking collar in July 2021 to allow the WWDI to monitor their movements. So far, the two boys have been enjoying their time on the 8500ha of Mabula Game Reserve.



BULGERIVIER & MELKRIVIER

The WWDI has received confirmed reports of African Wild Dogs in the Melkrivier and Bulgerivier areas of the Waterberg. The WWDI is working to gain more information on these dogs and their movements, with the hope to place GPS tracking collars on the pack to be able to reliably monitor them and work with the communities in the areas.

The WWDI's work to fit tracking collars to the Waterberg Wild Dogs was supported by The Aspinall Foundation and the Rory Hensman Conservation & Research Unit in 2021.

3
GPS tracking
collars fitted

CURRENT NUMBERS

7
adult females

5
adult males

4
unknown adults

7
new pups

SUCCESSES

CONFLICT MITIGATION ASSISTANCE

As a free-roaming population, the Waterberg Wild Dogs come into conflict with farmers when they are suspected to have preyed upon financially valuable stock. The WWDI works to understand the conflict and help implement mitigation measures where possible.

During 2021, the WWDI continued to use community WhatsApp groups to provide an early-warning system for community members as the breeding pack moved through private lands. The GPS collars fitted to the pack enable this system. This early-warning allows farmers to take steps to proactively mitigate conflict when they know the wild dog pack is close. The WWDI also works one-on-one with landowners to address concerns about the Waterberg Wild Dogs and recommend deterrents.

The WWDI also implemented innovative measures to mitigate conflict during periods of high localised impact in 2021, including an ecotourism project and the use of lion scat as a deterrent.

LION SCAT DETERRENT

During the early part of 2021, the breeding pack constricted its home range size for an unknown reason, causing increased conflict amongst the private properties involved. The WWDI studied the wild dogs' movements and strategically placed lion scat at targeted places in the environment to simulate the presence of free-roaming lions, African Wild Dogs' natural enemy. The smell of the lion scat was enough to encourage the pack to leave the area, reducing conflict for the properties.

over
300
early-warning
alerts

provided to
86
community
members

representing
50
different
properties

ECOTOURISM PROJECT

The only known breeding pack of Waterberg Wild Dogs successfully reared seven new pups during the 2021 Denning Season. During the denning season, wild dogs remain stationary around a den site for approximately 10 weeks. This stationary behavior creates the potential for high, localized impact on private properties and resulting potential for conflict. During this time, WWDI coordinated a wild dog based ecotourism operation that generated funds from visitors paying to see the wild dog pack and distributed the funds back to the landowners impacted by the pack denning on their property and the surrounding properties. This period also provided an opportunity to increase awareness and appreciation for the Waterberg Wild Dogs and to learn new information about them that can be shared with the local community and interested researchers.

OVER 6.5 WEEKS, 144 GUESTS
DONATED TO VIEW THE PACK,
RAISING APPROXIMATELY R137,400
IN MONETARY AND CARCASS
DONATIONS TO ASSIST THE
LANDOWNERS DURING THIS TIME.

144 GUESTS
R137,400

SUCCESSES

RAISING AWARENESS & PROVIDING EDUCATION

The WWDI attended 8 community meetings held by the Waterberg Nature Conservancy, Waterberg Tourism, Waterberg Conservation, and the Tamboti-Overysel Community Group. These meetings were great opportunities to connect with the Waterberg community and provide information about the Waterberg Wild Dogs in an informal setting.

The WWDI ran a social media campaign on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to raise awareness and provide information about threats facing the Waterberg Wild Dogs. Responses from the community about this campaign were very positive and prompted constructive, educational discussions.

The WWDI also attended community markets in Vaalwater and Modimolle to provide education, answer questions, raise awareness, and fundraise.

Reilly gave 5 formal presentations about WWDI and the Waterberg Wild Dogs in 2021.

attended

3

community markets

gave

5

presentations

attended

8

community meetings

Presentations

Shining the Light on the Elusive Waterberg Wild Dogs
March 2021 for The Highveld Society

TOOG/Witkop Area Community Wild Dog Meeting
May 2021 for the TOOG & Baviaans Communities

Protecting the Most Important Pack of Waterberg Wild Dogs
September 2021 for the Waterberg Nature Conservancy

WWDI - A Year in Review
September 2021 for Waterberg Conservation

Myth-Busting the Waterberg Wild Dogs
October 2021 for the Waterberg Academy

SOCIAL MEDIA



1448 LIKES



778 FOLLOWERS

18 SUBSCRIBERS
*NEW PAGE!

CHALLENGES

2021 saw the WWDI achieve incredible successes, however, many challenges and obstacles were also overcome. Heavy rainfall and flooding in the early part of 2021 created difficulties in mitigating conflict due to an inability to access the area where the breeding pack was ranging.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the ecotourism project undertaken during the denning season. Less than two weeks after announcing the opportunity to view the pack, South Africa was placed in a Level 3 lockdown and visitors from Gauteng were not allowed into Limpopo. This resulted in a string of cancelled bookings and loss of potential income. As restrictions began easing, civil unrest throughout the country and the threat of a fuel shortage further reduced bookings for the ecotourism project.

Fundraising for WWDI's operational expenses proved a challenge in 2021. As a result, the WWDI was required to restrict aspects of its operations due to a shortage of funds. These are challenging times and the WWDI could not be more grateful for the financial support it received in 2021.

NEEDS

The WWDI has highlighted a few needs going into 2022. First and foremost, consistent funding to cover the WWDI's operations is needed to ensure sustainability and continuity in the community. Operating month-to-month made it challenging from a planning and operational point of view for the team.

The WWDI is in need of consistent funding as well as equipment including, but not limited to, a laptop, printer, GPS units, and VHF antennas and receivers, all of which will aid in increasing the WWDI's efficiency and effectiveness.

Additional tracking collars are needed to maintain consistent, reliable tracking on the breeding pack and to begin tracking other Waterberg Wild Dog packs and groups. At least four GPS tracking collars will be needed for the WWDI's work in 2022.

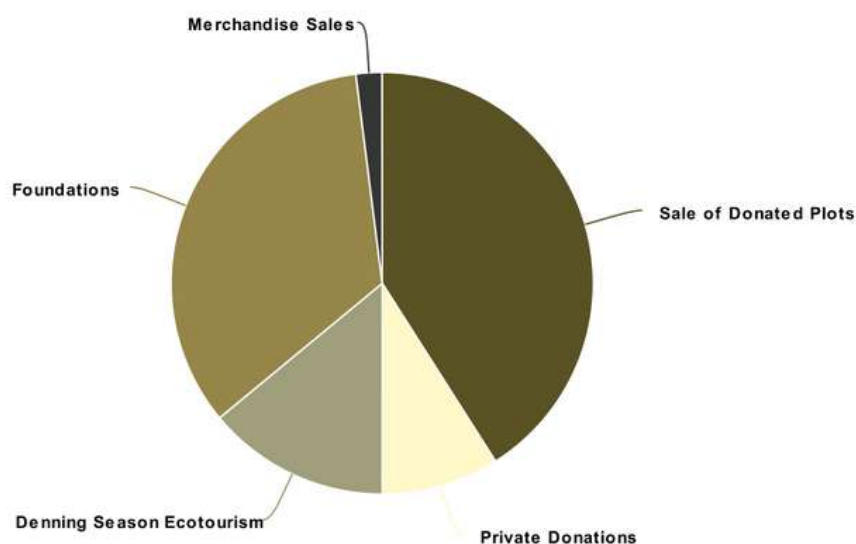


FINANCES

R375,566.98

TOTAL INCOME

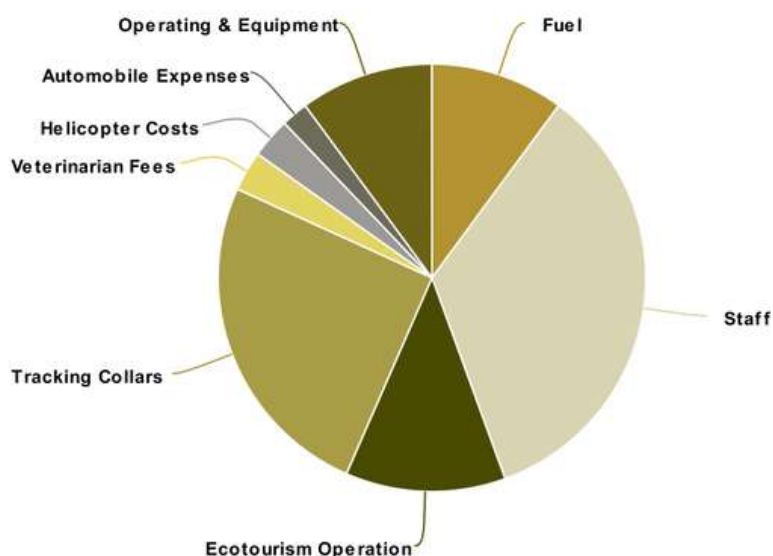
Income for the WWDI in 2021 was largely received from the sale of donated plots of land in the town of Vaalwater, through support from foundations, the denning season ecotourism project, and private donations. Funding received from foundations helped the WWDI place three tracking collars on wild dogs in 2021. The ecotourism project funds were used to mitigate potential conflict during the denning season. Funding for the WWDI's operations in 2021 largely came from the sale of two residential plots in Vaalwater that were donated by a private citizen and from other private donations received via EFT, PayFast, or cash.



R356,403.86

TOTAL EXPENSES

As a new initiative, the WWDI is still assessing the costs and expenses to run the initiative. 2021 expenses consisted primarily of staff costs, fuel, tracking collars, the ecotourism project, and operating and equipment costs. Tracking collars and the fees associated with placing the collars (helicopter and veterinarian fees) will continue to be a large expense for the WWDI in 2022. Fuel expenses are expected to increase for 2022, with a rise in fuel prices and the WWDI's increasing work in other Waterberg communities.



DONORS & SUPPORTERS

The WWDI would like to thank its generous donors and supporters for helping make 2021 an outstanding year for the Waterberg Wild Dogs. As a small, community-based initiative, the WWDI relies heavily on the support of those that value Waterberg Wild Dog conservation in order to achieve its goals. Every donation, no matter how big or how small, is appreciated by the WWDI team and helps further our goals. THANK YOU for believing in the WWDI and for supporting its work.

The Aspinall Foundation
Anonymous Donor - Vaalwater Residential Plots
Africa's Wild Dog Survival Fund
Anonymous Donor - 2011 Toyota Hilux
The Rory Hensman Conservation & Research Unit
Dune Offroad
Maxxis Tyres South Africa
ImageBuild

**THANK
YOU!**

TO THE WATERBERG COMMUNITY...

The WWDI would like to thank the Waterberg community for welcoming the WWDI's efforts and participating with the initiative. The outpouring of support from the community has allowed the WWDI to gain traction in the area and has helped uncover new information about the dogs and support the members of the Waterberg community that are experiencing conflict. The WWDI team may be a small team, but a lot can be achieved through the support of the community. To everyone that has helped track the wild dogs, place camera traps, reached out with questions or concerns, participated in the ecotourism project, shared our social media posts, and been a part of the initiative in any way - THANK YOU!



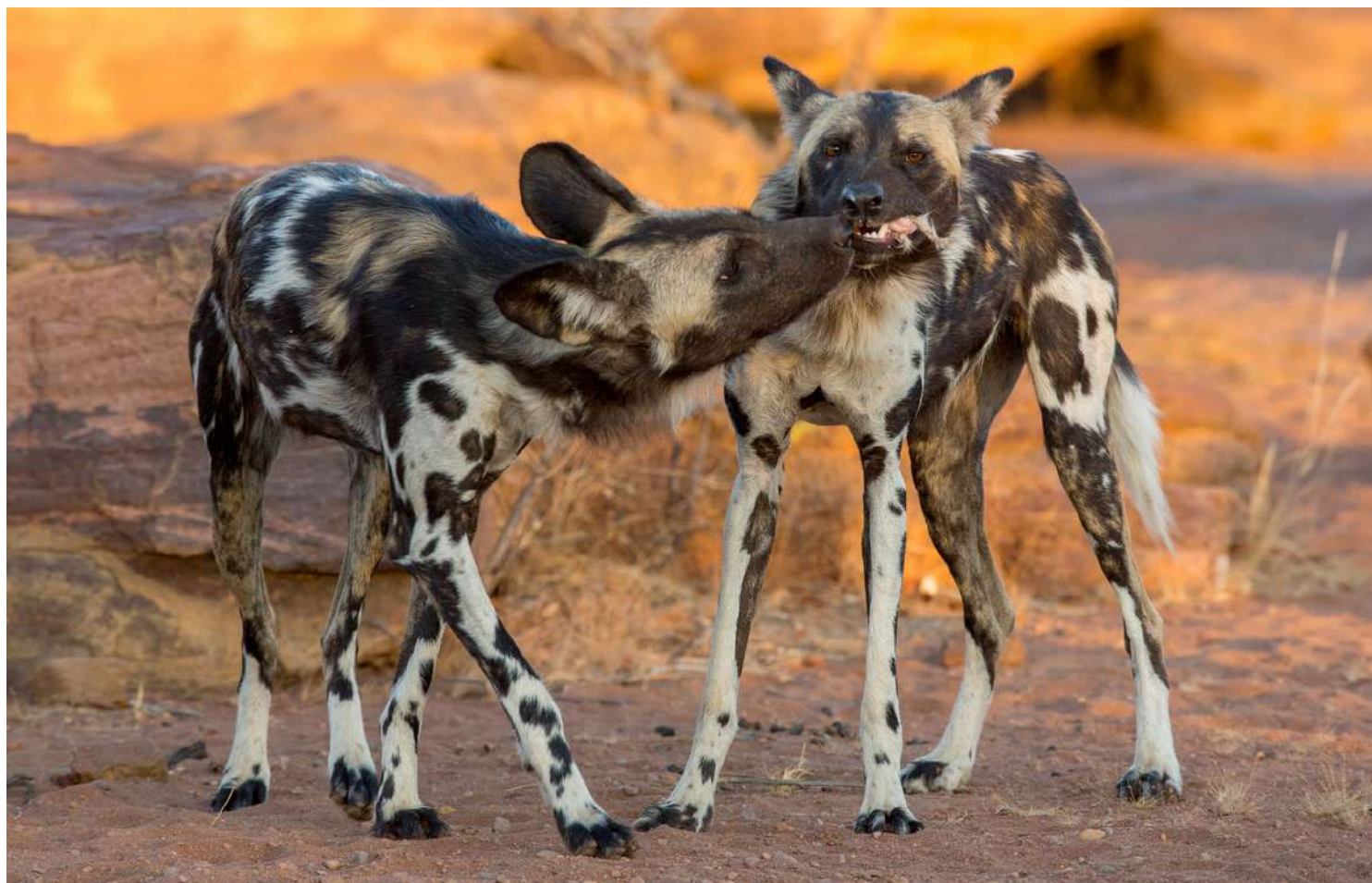
FOCUSING ON 2022

2022 is poised to be a very exciting year for the WWDI and for Waterberg Wild Dog conservation. The WWDI will be focusing on expanding its reach into other Waterberg communities, ensuring information about the Waterberg Wild Dogs and conflict mitigation strategies reaches more farmers. As the WWDI's reach grows, more reports of sightings, reports of conflicts, concerns, and questions are received.

The WWDI will also be looking to place GPS tracking collars on the pack of Waterberg Wild Dogs that is occasionally seen in the Melkrivier area. Reliably tracking this pack will allow the WWDI to begin its early-warning alert mechanism in another community, protecting both the wild dogs and the farmers' livelihoods.

The first-ever WWDI website will be launched in early 2022 and will contain information about the Waterberg Wild Dogs, WWDI's efforts, and resources for the Waterberg community.

The WWDI also has a few projects lined up for 2022 that will assist conflict mitigation efforts, decrease the threats to the Waterberg Wild Dogs, and raise awareness. More information will be announced on our social media platforms about these exciting projects as they develop.



CONTACT US

REILLY MOONEY - PROJECT COORDINATOR



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FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA



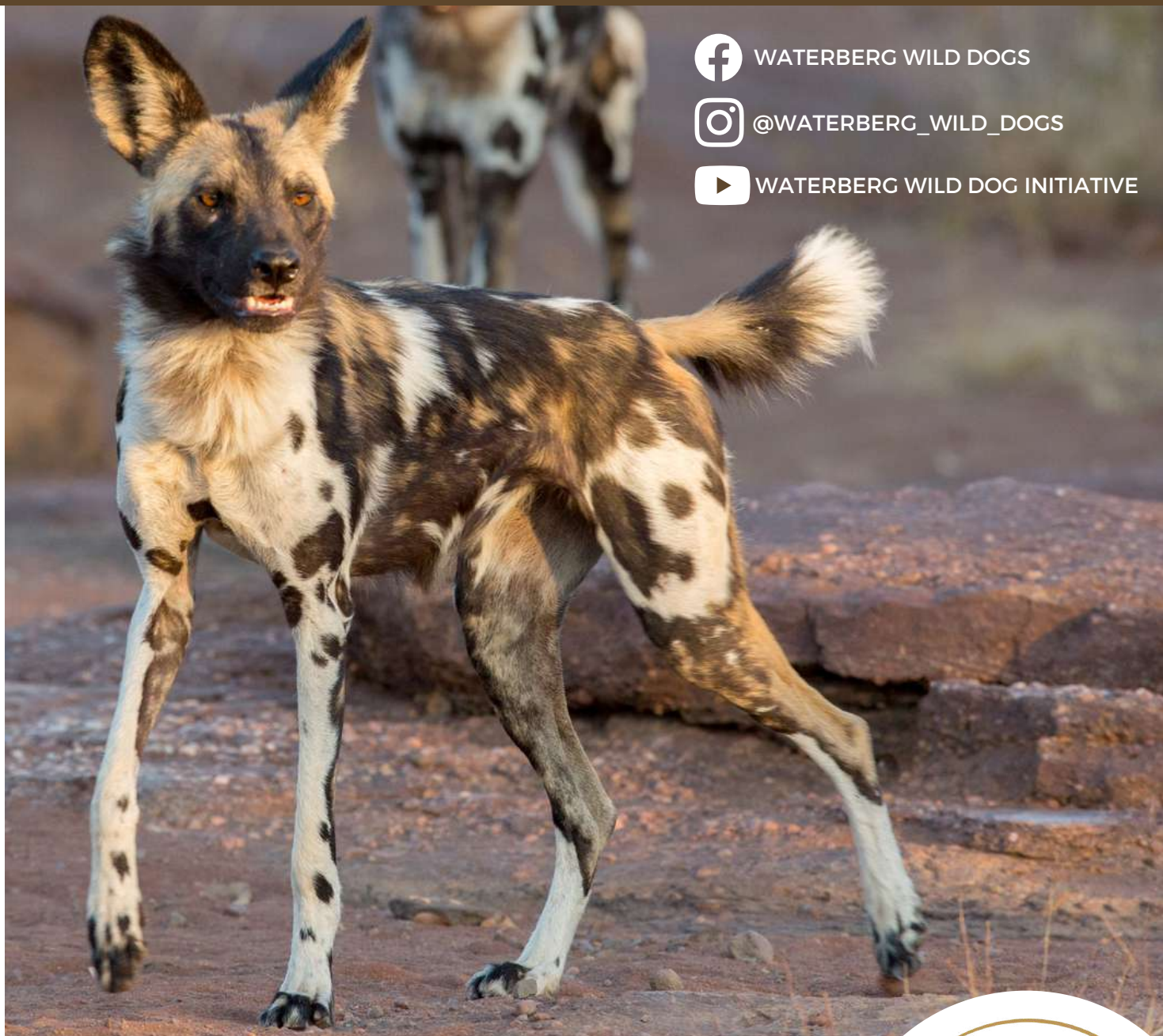
WATERBERG WILD DOGS



@WATERBERG_WILD_DOGS



WATERBERG WILD DOG INITIATIVE



DONATE

WATERBERG WILD DOG INITIATIVE
FIRST NATIONAL BANK
ACCOUNT - 629 0401 0270
BRANCH - 201554
TYPE - SAVINGS
SWIFT - FIRZAJJ
REFERENCE - WILD DOGS

WWDI OPERATES UNDERNEATH
WATERBERG TOURISM NPC
(2018/539160/08), A REGISTERED PUBLIC
BENEFIT ORGANISATION (930064611).
DONATIONS MADE TO WWDI ARE ELIGIBLE
FOR TAX DEDUCTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA.

