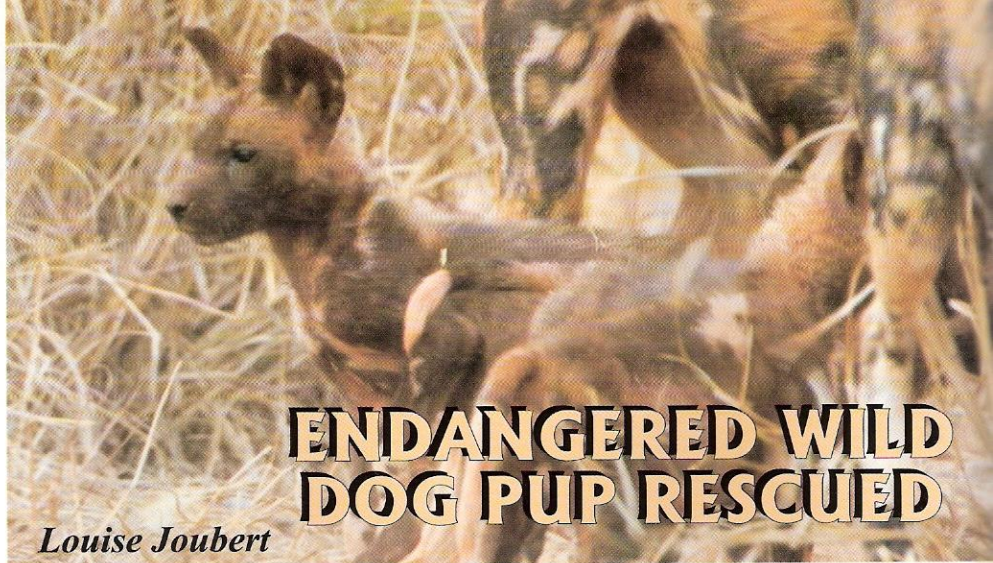


It was a hectic morning as normal at the emergency call centre for the *SanWild Wildlife Trust Wildlife SOS* team. Although the team responds to all calls for help, they realised on this particular morning that the rescue of an injured wild dog pup would prove to be unique and difficult.

A farmer had spotted a pack of wild dogs on his farm about three months ago. Fortunately for the dogs, they had chosen their temporary home well this farmer actually liked wild dogs and for now the pack was safe. Some days later the farmer realised that the pack had set up a den site on his land and he enjoyed his afternoon visits to the den site to check up on the progress of the pack and the pups in particular. His regular visits to the den site had accustomed



ENDANGERED WILD DOG PUP RESCUED

Louise Joubert



the animals to the presence of his vehicle and they eventually accepted his presence reluctantly.

When the pups were about three months old, the farmer one afternoon observed that one of the pups had a serious injury to its side. He called *SanWild* for help and e-mailed some digital photographs soon afterwards so that the team could evaluate the pup's injury and formalise a strategy and plan to try and help the young animal.

Darting or trapping the young animal would pose a major challenge as the pack members remained just outside of the target range of a dart gun. The only thing in favour of the situation was that the animals had been habituated to people and were still remaining at the den site most of the time. Soon the pups would be old enough to move off with the pack and they would extend their hunting ground and move off.

After serious consideration a bold decision was made to provide food for the dogs to see if they could be habituated sufficiently to allow the pup to be darted. Time was truly of the

essence; the pup's injuries were serious and unless it received veterinary treatment soon it would succumb as a result of the gaping wound on its side.

After two days of providing the dogs with food it became clear that a darting attempt would fail miserably. The pack members and the injured pup were happy to take the food provided, but moved off the moment people approached. Louise Joubert, founder trustee of the *SanWild Wildlife Trust* changed the team's strategy and decided to set down at the den site on her own to try and win the trust of the dogs; hoping that the pup would get near enough to be darted with a blow pipe. (Despite all the rescue work done by the Trust, their dart gun was stolen recently and they have not yet managed to raise the £2500.00 necessary to purchase a new one.)

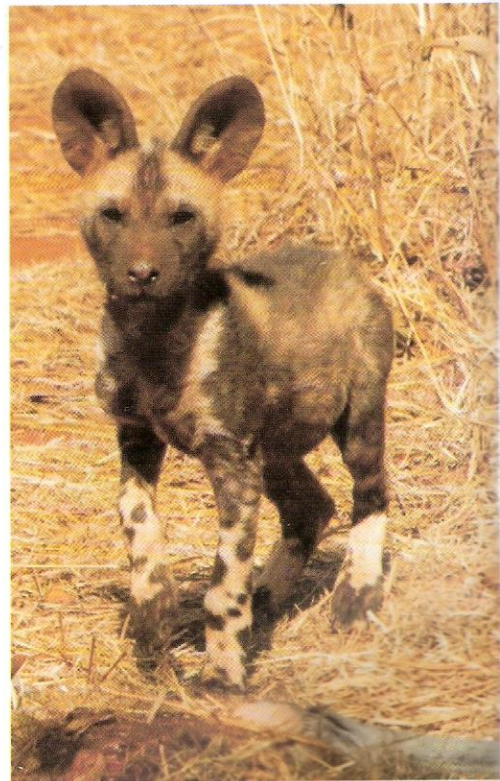
All attempts to dart the pup failed and Louise called in the help of the rescue team again. It was decided to set up a game capture net at the den site and try and chase the injured pup into the net and capture it by hand. This was a risky operation that could result in all sorts of problems should some of the adult dogs be trapped in the net.

The team's gamble to capture the injured pup worked and despite its severe injury, the young animal remained almost motionless after its head had been covered while it was removed from the net. It was a little male and he was placed inside a transport

container to be taken to the veterinary clinic in Phalaborwa where a wildlife veterinarian was on standby to operate the moment the team arrived.

The operation to repair the damage to the wild dog pup's side lasted just over 30 minutes and soon the *SanWild* vehicle was on its way back to the reserve. The young pup named "Boesman" spent his first night in captivity in a holding box at Louise's house where he was monitored throughout the night. There was however no need to be too worried and young Boesman soon recovered from the anaesthetic. He was terribly scared and remained crouched down inside the box. To the staff's absolute amazement he did not once try to snap at any human hands carefully touching him to clean the wound and give him antibiotic injections over the next 2 days. His eerie whooping calls from the 2nd night reverberated through the house the moment darkness fell and it became quiet. Boesman wanted his family and his whole being called out for them to come to his assistance. For the moment however, he would need to be patient.

On the third day the pup was returned to the den site where his family eagerly greeted him on their return after another successful hunt. Initially the pup remained in a large leopard trap cage at the den site so that he could continue to receive the course of antibiotics that would ensure his complete



recovery and to ensure that he would not be rejected by the pack. On the fifth day after the operation the trap cage was opened and young Boesman returned to his pack. This young dog made a full recovery.