

Project Update: June 2002

6 weeks in to the project and we have made a positive start. The first couple of weeks were spent setting up camp, planning our fieldwork and discussing the project with local parties, namely staff of the reserves upon which the hyena are found.

Primary den on Mlawula Nature Reserve. Not currently active but signs of much past activity.

We are working on 3 neighbouring reserves: Mlawula Nature Reserve (where we are based), Mbuluzi Nature Reserve and Hlane Royal Game Reserve, as there is a good history of spotted hyena sightings in each.

As no other sightings have been made of hyena anywhere else in Swaziland over the last several years, it is widely believed that the individuals in this area make up the only spotted hyena population in the country.

The male hyena relocated from Mkhaya to Hlane. Taken just before he 'came to' from the anaesthetic.

This is with one exception however - a single animal on Mkhaya Nature Reserve, 50km to the south, which was first sighted approximately 6 months ago and has been causing problems on local farmland. This individual, along with a second (which has just this week been relocated back to the reserves), is believed to have travelled down from Hlane and will also hopefully be relocated back here within the next few weeks.

Should this not happen, local landowners are likely to kill the hyena, even though they are protected under Swazi law as 'Royal Game' and the penalties would be severe. Fortunately, the area we are working in appears to be large enough to create a buffer zone between the hyena and farmland and thus there have been no known complaints from local farmers for several years.