

## Nature Artist's Expedition Draws Attention to Endangered Species

*Alison Nicholls Wins Six-week Conservation Fellowship to Zimbabwe to Paint the African Wild Dog*

**Ottawa, Ontario, CANADA -- (February 14, 2007)**— The Worldwide Nature Artists Group (WNAG) is pleased to announce its fifth fellowship involving a grant of \$5,000 US, under the WNAG Flag Expeditions Program, awarded to watercolor wildlife artist Alison Nicholls of New York.

In late August 2007, Nicholls will embark on a six-week expedition to Hwange National Park in northwestern Zimbabwe to locate Painted Dogs and create a detailed artistic field study of the dogs and their natural habitat. The name Painted Dog is derived from the Latin name for the species *Lycaon pictus*. African Wild Dog is the more commonly used name, but this has a negative connotation and gives the impression of a feral species, failing to recognize the unique and ancient ancestry of the animal.

Jeffrey Whiting, President and Founder of the Worldwide Nature Artists Group is pleased with the artist's choice for her wildlife art. "Painted Dogs have long been a misunderstood and persecuted species. Recently, through projects such as the Painted Dog Conservation Project and the new exhibit at the WCS Bronx Zoo, the public has gained a better appreciation of and support for this very threatened species."

Painted Dogs are a highly nomadic species that, like many top predators, have been regarded as vermin and eradicated accordingly. Their numbers have dropped dramatically from over 300,000 in 1900 to approximately 3,000 today. They have vanished from 25 of the 39 countries forming their historical range and are on the International Union for Conservation of Nature & Natural Resources (IUCN) list of endangered species. Zimbabwe contains one of the last viable dog populations and the main threats to their survival today are snares intended for other species, disease, and road traffic accidents.

Painted Dogs are also highly social. They are cooperative hunters and the loss of even one pack member can have a devastating effect on the entire pack. Every member of the pack is involved in caring for pups once they leave the den and even sick and injured pack members are fed and cared for by their companions.

"As a watercolor wildlife artist I find the African bush provides endless inspiration. I only paint the African wildlife species that I have sketched in their natural habitat and my aim is not to paint photographically, but to catch an impression of a scene, an effect of the light and a glimpse of the wildlife. Dawn and dusk are the times of most activity in a Painted Dog pack and this suits my slightly impressionistic painting style which combines atmospheric washes and dusky silhouettes," says Nicholls.

Nicholls will base herself at the Painted Dog Conservation project (PDC) in Hwange National Park where she will sketch the dogs and other species in the area. She will accompany PDC staff tracking the dogs and will also learn about the community projects and educational programs which are an important aspect of the PDC operation. Painting the Painted Dogs – an artistic study of an endangered hunter, will provide an opportunity for Nicholls to continue to exercise her creative talents and support a much-maligned species.

**About the Worldwide Nature Artists Group:** The Worldwide Nature Artists Group (WNAG) is the world's foremost international organization of nature artists, dedicated to the celebration and preservation of our natural heritage. Membership is by invitation-only, and is limited to 500 artists worldwide. It reads like a "Who's Who" of nature art, and includes the top names in the field, such as Robert Bateman, John Banovich, Guy Coheleach, Gamini Ratnavira, and David Shepherd. For more information about the WNAG's innovative initiatives, visit [www.natureartists.com](http://www.natureartists.com).

**About the Flag Expeditions Program:** The objective of the Flag Expeditions Program is to make possible the field study and artistic rendering of endangered species or habitats deserving of greater public attention with strong emphasis on the study of unique and threatened habitats and rare or endangered species in remote parts of the world. For more information on the WNAG Flag Expeditions Program, or sponsorship opportunities, please visit the Expedition Web site at [www.natureartists.com/flagexpeditions/](http://www.natureartists.com/flagexpeditions/).

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