Wild dogs complete 2,485-mile Zambia trek

LEVEL B2


Photo: Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. What long journeys by animals have you heard about?
2. How does building roads or towns affect wildlife near you?
3. When have you used a map or GPS to plan a route?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

dispersal
a one-way journey to leave a group and find a mate or new territory

obstacle
something that blocks your way and makes movement difficult

snare
a hidden wire trap used for catching animals

predator
an animal that hunts and eats other animals

corridor
a strip of land that connects two wildlife areas

collar
a device worn around an animal's neck, often with a GPS tracker

conservationist
a person who works to protect nature and wildlife

industrial
relating to factories or heavy development

III. READING

Three African wild dog brothers have completed a record dispersal across Zambia, travelling 2,485 miles (4,000km) while searching for a mate. The dogs zigzagged between wildlife strongholds and navigated obstacle after obstacle, skirting the capital, Lusaka, and other industrial areas.

Other dogs in the study, tracked with GPS on a collar, died in illegal snare traps, showing the risks. Three sisters almost matched the brothers' epic route but stopped when one was caught; two of the three females died. Only about 6,000 wild dogs remain, making this predator one of Africa's rarest.

Researchers describe the trek as dispersal, which is different from migration: it is a one-way search for breeding partners. The straight-line distance was about 260 miles over eight months, but detours made it nearly ten times longer.

The study, led by Professor Scott Creel and published in Ecology, suggests wild dog populations may still be connected. Conservationists wish wildlife corridor networks outside parks would expand to link areas divided by roads, towns and farms.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News**: *"Wild dogs record 2,500-mile trek across Zambia...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How far did the three brothers travel in total?
2. Where did their record trek take place?
3. What danger killed some other tracked wild dogs?
4. How is dispersal different from migration in this report?
5. What solution do conservationists hope for to link separated habitats?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should governments fund more wildlife corridors? Why or why not?
2. What human obstacles most endanger roaming animals near you?
3. How can GPS collars help conservation, and where are the limits?
4. Does this story make you more optimistic about conservation?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Wish / if only

Use wish/if only to talk about regrets or things you want to change. For present or future annoyances use wish + would; for present unreal situations use wish + past simple; for past regrets use wish + past perfect.

"Conservationists **wish wildlife corridor networks outside parks would expand***."*

"I **wish I had visited** *Zambia to see the wild dogs."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. If only the sisters (see) ___ the snares before one was caught. _____
2. Many people wish there (be) ___ more wild dogs today. _____
3. Locals wish someone (build) ___ a wildlife corridor years ago. _____
4. Rangers wish they (know) ___ where every snare is now. _____
5. Wildlife charities wish they (have) ___ more GPS collars now. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 8–10 minutes grammar, 10–12 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach challenging items from the vocabulary (dispersal, snare, corridor, industrial) and check students know Zambia, Lusaka and Ecology are proper nouns.
- Run a first silent read for gist, then a second for details. The story mentions animal deaths and illegal poaching, so start discussion in pairs and allow students to comment about the news rather than personal experiences.
- Differentiate by task: stronger learners explain dispersal vs migration with examples; others match key details (distance, time, places) to prompts before tackling open questions.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Take a quick show of hands, then pair students with different views to compare reasons.
2. Elicit a list on the board (roads, farms, cities), then have groups rank the top three with reasons.
3. Have pairs list two benefits and two risks of tracking; prompt ethics and data limits if needed.
4. Ask students to cite one detail from the text that supports their feeling, then challenge for a counterpoint.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In two teams, argue for corridors versus fencing; each side gives 2-minute opening and rebuttal.

Writing: Write a 90-word news brief updating readers on the sisters' failed journey and its lessons.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Wish / if only

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

TEACHERS ONLY

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. How far did the three brothers travel in total?
   2,485 miles (4,000km).
2. Where did their record trek take place?
   Across Zambia.
3. What danger killed some other tracked wild dogs?
   Illegal snare traps.
4. How is dispersal different from migration in this report?
   It is a one-way search for breeding partners.
5. What solution do conservationists hope for to link separated habitats?
   Expanding wildlife corridor networks outside parks to link areas.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. If only the sisters ___ the snares before one was caught. **had seen**
2. Many people wish there ___ more wild dogs today. **were**
3. Locals wish someone ___ a wildlife corridor years ago. **had built**
4. Rangers wish they ___ where every snare is now. **knew**
5. Wildlife charities wish they ___ more GPS collars now. **had**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use wish/if only to talk about regrets or things you want to change. For present or future annoyances use wish + would; for present unreal situations use wish + past simple; for past regrets use wish + past perfect. (Example 2 constructed.)

"Conservationists **wish wildlife corridor networks outside parks would expand***."*

"I **wish I had visited** *Zambia to see the wild dogs."*