

Ethiopia park tries to relocate settlers to protect wolves

April 9 2017, by Michael Atsbeha

Thousands of Ethiopian wolves once roamed much of this country's mountainous north but their number has fallen dramatically as farmers encroach on their habitat and introduce domestic dogs that carry rabies.

Only 120 wolves are estimated to remain in this [national park](#) and they are elusive, usually seen shortly after sunrise or just before sunset.

"They are almost at the brink of extinction. So my vision is to increase their number significantly," said Getachew Assefam, coordinator of the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Program.

The movement of people move in search of fertile land in the highlands has put pressure on the [park](#). Across the country less than 500 Ethiopian wolves remain in a few mountain enclaves, the Britain-based Born Free Foundation says.

Efforts are underway to move most of the settlers out of this national park in the hope of saving the remaining [wolves](#). The [local community](#) currently uses more than two-thirds of the park's area for grazing, agriculture and settlement, according to the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority.

The wildlife authority said 38 villages with a total of 3,000 people are living within the park's boundaries.

Gichi village in the heart of the park had more than 418 households

before the resettlement program began three years ago. Now there are none. Now the government is focusing on settlers in other areas.

The relocated settlers "are all now living in a better condition," said the park's chief warden, Maru Biadgelegn.

But some farmers said the compensation they received for the move is not enough.

Requests by The Associated Press to gain access to the resettlement area were denied. In a recent meeting, residents rejected the government's compensation offer to resettle the remaining farmers.

"I believe we can come to an agreement on this in the future," said one park resident, Zezo Adugna.

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Citation: Ethiopia park tries to relocate settlers to protect wolves (2017, April 9) retrieved 21 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-04-ethiopia-relocate-settlers-wolves.html>

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