



Protecting Lions in wild places

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Start

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), South African National Parks (SANParks), National Administration of Conservation Areas in Mozambique (ANAC), Peace Parks Foundation, with funding from the UK Government, through the International Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund, have embarked on an ambitious partnership to understand and protect Africa's most iconic species, the African Lion, within the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area (GLTFCA). Over the last decade, human-wildlife conflict, poisoning, and poaching have increased across this transboundary conservation area. This collaboration will leverage the expertise, institutional knowledge, and professional networks within each organisation to amplify conservation impact within this critical Lion landscape.

Protecting this transboundary Lion population requires a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach. The goal of this project is to understand the threats and drivers of population declines and to increase protection for Lions in the GLTFCA. A key part of the project involves monitoring Lion prides across the landscape using GPS satellite collars. Analysis of movement data will help the EWT to determine which areas are most important to Lions across the landscape. This information will enable anti-poaching rangers from SANParks, ANAC, and Peace Parks to better protect the Lion prides under their care.

The GLTFCA, which includes Kruger National Park (KNP) in South Africa, and Limpopo National Park (LNP) in Mozambique, is one of the ten remaining Lion strongholds in Africa. These strongholds occur in formally protected areas and contain a stable or increasing population of at least 500 Lions. Recently published evidence suggests that the GLTFCA stronghold may be under serious threat. Lions are killed in retaliation for livestock losses, out of fear for human life, and for the illegal wildlife trade in Lion body parts. The data suggest this offtake is unsustainable and has resulted in a severe decline in Lion numbers in LNP. Northern KNP is also feeling the impact of these threats from both Mozambique and the western boundary of Kruger.

Over the last hundred years, Lions have disappeared from 95% of their historic range. Over 200,000 Lions once roamed across Africa's wild places. Now, only an estimated 23,000–39,000 remain. Most Lions are now primarily confined to formally protected areas. Habitat conversion, competition for food, livestock predation, and fear for human life have driven this dramatic decline.

While they are often hated and feared, Lions are somewhat paradoxically, viewed by many cultures as the quintessential symbol of courage and strength. Rather than protecting them, this reverence motivates people to kill them and use their parts to capture the power of the Lion and to cure various ailments. This new endeavour aims to identify, understand, and address the complex economic, social, and cultural drivers of Lion population declines across this landscape.

Through partnerships with the dedicated and passionate people and organisations involved in this project, we will ensure that the roar of the mighty Lion is heard in Africa's wild places for generations to come.

End

About the Endangered Wildlife Trust

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) has worked tirelessly for nearly 50 years to save wildlife and habitats, our vision to promote a healthy planet and an equitable world that values and sustains the diversity of all life. The EWT's team of field-based specialists is spread across southern and East Africa, where committed conservation action is needed the most. Working with our partners, including businesses and governments, the EWT is at the forefront of conducting applied research, supporting community conservation and livelihoods, training and building capacity, addressing human-wildlife conflict, monitoring threatened species, and establishing safe spaces for wildlife range expansion. A beacon of hope for Africa's wildlife, landscapes, and communities, the EWT is protecting forever, together. Find out more at www.ewt.org.za

About Peace Parks Foundation

The Peace Parks dream is to reconnect Africa's wild spaces to create a future for humankind in harmony with nature. In order to achieve this, the Foundation engages with governments and stakeholders to secure protected land, and channel investment into development of transboundary conservation areas. Peace Parks works to renew and preserve these large, cross-border ecosystems through the implementation of innovative strategies that revitalise habitat integrity, restore ecological functionality, and protect biodiversity. The Foundation develops nature-based tourism and enterprise opportunities to ensure the long-term sustainability of the protected areas. At the same time, it focusses on communities living in and around these wild spaces – capacitating them in the sustainable use of natural resources and unlocking opportunities for them to derive equitable benefits from conservation. www.peaceparks.org

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