

# African Wildlife News

Billy Dodson

1961-2011

YOUR SUPPORT AT WORK IN THE AFRICAN HEARTLANDS



Home to elephants, rhinos and more, **African Heartlands** are conservation landscapes large enough to sustain a diversity of species for centuries to come. In these landscapes—places like Kilimanjaro and Samburu—AWF and its partners are pioneering lasting conservation strategies that benefit wildlife and people alike.

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**The Indianapolis Zoo supports Africa's lions.**



Peter Delaney/Nature's Best Awards 2010

# Saving the Rhino

“It is a devastating and unsustainable situation for any of the affected populations,” says Philip Muruthi, Director of Conservation Science at AWF.

“I didn’t think we would see these kinds of numbers ever again.” Muruthi is referring to the surge in illegal rhino killings that is occurring in southern and parts of East Africa. In 2010, more than 300 rhinos were poached in South Africa alone. Across the continent and over the past five years, the number rises to 600, a statistic that reflects a new and worrisome increase in an old hunger.

Rhinos have been hunted for thousands of years for their horn, which in some cultures is believed—incorrectly—to have medicinal value. In Africa, poaching gangs may get \$200 or \$300 for each horn, a fraction of the tens of thousands of dollars a single horn can fetch on the black market when it’s been ground up and mixed with other materials. It is demand in countries like Vietnam and China that is fueling the illegal rhino slayings in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and other African countries.

This resurgence in poaching could be the tipping point in the long battle to save rhinos. Africa’s population of the two species has shrunk 92 percent since the 1960s, and for the continent’s estimated 4,275 black rhinos in particular, the current spate of poaching could mean that they disappear from the wild in a matter of years. The gains made by conservationists in recent times are suddenly being overturned. After decades of hard work and dedicated effort, the decline in the black rhino population was finally beginning to reverse, and by 2009 the species’ numbers had risen markedly from a low of 2,140 in 1995.

*(continued on page 6)*



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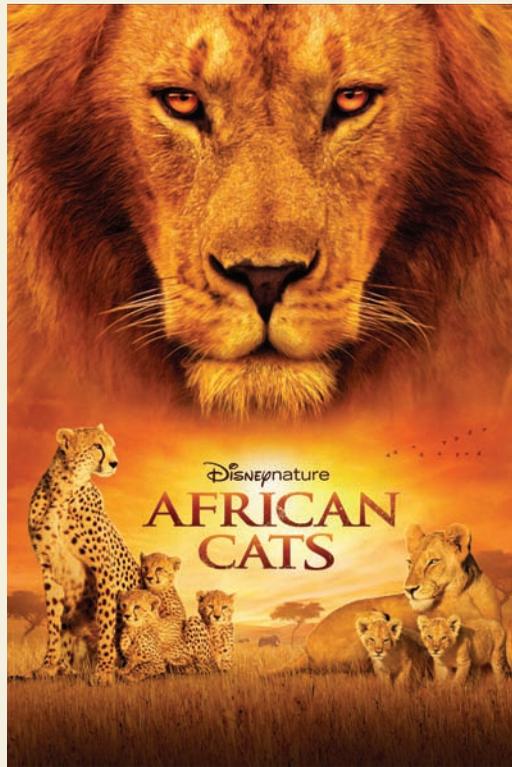
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## A Whirlwind Week

I want to thank everyone who took their family and friends to see “African Cats,” the latest Disney Nature film in a stunning lineup about the natural world that has included “Earth” and “Oceans.” Through a creative partnership titled, “See ‘African Cats,’ Save the Savanna,” Disney Nature made a donation to AWF on behalf of the millions of moviegoers who saw the film during opening week, April 22-28. (For those who missed opening week, visit [awf.org/africancats](http://awf.org/africancats) to learn more about the film and how you can help Africa’s great cats). The funds are supporting AWF’s critically important work to create and protect the Amboseli Wildlife Corridor in southern Kenya.

As AWF’s CEO, I spend a lot of time thinking about the threats facing Africa’s wildlife, so it was great to spend an afternoon with friends seeing “African Cats,” a terrific story about two lion prides and a cheetah family in the Masai Mara — all while still benefiting our cause. I guarantee this terrific movie will both inspire and move you.

The AWF-Disney Nature partnership has understandably generated a lot of buzz; but there are other equally exciting developments unfolding across the Heartlands. AWF is proud to be among the conservation organizations that for 50 years has worked to protect the rhino, a species urgently in crisis, with hundreds of rhinos killed in the past year. This simply cannot continue. I hope the cover article in this issue of *African Wildlife*

Visit  
[awf.org/africancats](http://awf.org/africancats)  
to learn more about  
“See ‘African Cats,’  
Save the Savanna”  
and how you can help  
conserve the Amboseli  
Wildlife Corridor.

*News* will not only inform but encourage you to act. Only with your support can AWF ensure the recent success in pulling the black rhino back from the brink of extinction will not be overturned.



Thadeus Muliengeki Bhamungu

In this issue we also profile a partnership with the Indianapolis Zoo that is benefiting Africa’s lions and promoting conservation more broadly. And I think you’ll enjoy the center spread, which features a selection of winners in the African Wildlife category of the prestigious Nature’s Best Photography Windland Smith Rice International Awards. AWF is the proud sponsor of this new Nature’s Best category, which is designed to generate awareness and support for conservation in Africa.

Enjoy all the great articles and photos in this issue — they are a reflection of the important work you are doing through AWF.

Thank you for staying committed to our mission.

Patrick J. Bergin, Ph.D.  
Chief Executive Officer



www.awf.org

ic Wildlife News

Elliott Neep/Nature's Best Awards 2010

# A ROAD NOT YET TAKEN?

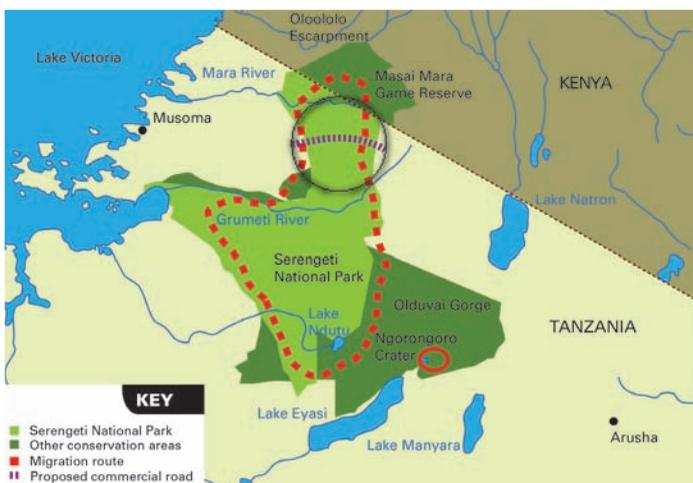
## *The Call to Save the Serengeti May Still Be Heard, But Time Is Running Out*

What began with science-based opposition by AWF and other conservation groups has grown into a grassroots movement playing out across social media outlets and echoed by global influencers such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and most recently, the Government of Germany. This diverse coalition of scientists and conservationists, economists and development experts has coalesced around a singular message: the construction of a road through Serengeti National Park would gravely threaten the last great migration of hundreds of thousands of wildebeest and erode one of the most pristine landscapes on earth. It would also establish a damaging precedent that Africa's ecological and wildlife assets hold little long-term economic value.

### Migration Detour

Learning of the road proposal last June, AWF issued a formal letter of opposition to Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete, setting forth a scientifically and commercially sound alternative plan. Although a small minority of commentators has argued that the ecological significance of the Serengeti ecosystem is being overstated, such statements have been easily refuted. Supporting over 2 million large ungulates, Serengeti National Park contains one of the last intact refuges for migratory wildlife on the planet and is home to one of the world's largest lion populations. By some estimates, more than \$500 million in tourism revenue and 200,000 jobs would be lost if the road is built through the park.

Claims that the environmental impact of the road would be minimal have also been disproved. Indeed, an environmental impact assessment released by Tanzanian officials in February 2011 cites the increased risk of pollution from the effects of fuel, oil, and asphalt; greater likelihood of vehicular accidents and wildlife poaching, especially of the mostly sedentary and endangered rhino; and issues of water scarcity related to the road's construction.



The proposed commercial road would cut through the northern part of the park. View alternative routes proposed by AWF at [awf.org/serengeti](http://awf.org/serengeti).

Traffic volume estimates have also alarmed conservationists: by 2015 more than 800 vehicles a day would travel the Serengeti route; by 2035, that number would be 3,000 vehicles a day. The effects of the road could also reach far beyond the park's borders. "A reduction in the migration in the Serengeti would lead to impacts on the Masai Mara and bordering wildlife areas, with consequent impacts on tourism and the Kenyan economy," the report states.

"If you consider the sheer volume of traffic alone—separate from the effects of construction activity and barriers like rails and markers—it is impossible to conclude that there would be no deleterious effects on the ecosystem, the wildlife, and the people who rely on tourism for their livelihoods," says AWF's Director of Land Conservation, Kathleen Fitzgerald.

In addition to pollution, habitat fragmentation, and the introduction of invasive plants and disease vectors, vehicular collisions and increased poaching would likely rout wildlife populations. Research and experience have also shown that the physical barrier of roads and the added traffic and human intrusion they support inevitably put an end to large-scale wildlife migrations.

### A Dead End?

Insistence by the Tanzanian government that the road be built has left some observers perplexed. Proposed alternative routes that circumvent the park would connect major cities, a goal touted by Tanzanian officials, without carrying environmental risk. And while construction of one of the alternative roads would be more expensive, the World Bank and others have offered to help finance an alternative southern route that would circumvent the park.

Despite the global call to abandon the Serengeti road proposal, the Tanzanian government has shown no signs of retreating from the planned route. If the road moves forward it could cost Tanzania dearly both in terms of lost economic revenue from tourism and damage to its reputation as a world leader in conservation.

In terms of potential environmental deterioration, the damage to the park by the north road could be severe enough to endanger the site's World Heritage status, says UNESCO in its official statement on the Serengeti Road proposal.

Although events of the past several months have left most conservationists discouraged, AWF believes the call to save the Serengeti may still be heard. "The fact that prominent global development agencies are willing to step up, and that people all over the world have opposed this intrusion into a pristine wildlife area, leaves room for optimism, not only for the Serengeti but for the other great landscapes AWF and others seek to protect," says AWF President, Helen Gichohi. "AWF supporters can be assured that we will continue to urge the Tanzanian government to reverse their decision." ■



Tell us what you think at [awf.org/facebook](http://awf.org/facebook)



# Nature's Best African Wildlife

**P**art of AWF's mission is to raise awareness and educate people about the magnificent wildlife and wild lands found across Africa. That's why we are proud to sponsor a new African Wildlife category in the prestigious Nature's Best Photography Windland Smith Rice International Awards. Through stunning, award-winning photos, people who may never get to Africa can experience the uniqueness of the wildlife with which we share our planet.

Here we feature the winning photo from the 2010 African Wildlife category, along with a selection of the highly honored entries. The winners and several highly honored entries will be featured in a special exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History from April through September 2011. Visit [awf.org/naturesbest](http://awf.org/naturesbest) to learn more about the winners and their amazing subjects.

## Hippopotamus

Chobe National Park, Botswana

*By Lou Coetzer  
Johannesburg, South Africa*

"While traveling in a boat custom-built for photography, we could really get close to a large group of hippos. Young calves played nearby as the bulls sized each other up, and this particular confrontation between two males turned violent."



## Lion Cub

South Luangwa National Park, Zambia

*By Patrick Bentley  
Lusaka, Zambia*

"A three-month-old lion cub steps cautiously out into the open. Her two siblings are suckling from their mother nearby. After a few seconds, which gave me ample time to photograph her, hunger overcame her wariness and she raced out to join her family."





## African Elephant

Tsavo East National Park, Kenya

By Ingrid Vekemans

Haacht, Vlaams-Brabant, Belgium

Fascinated by Africa, Ingrid Vekemans first set foot there in 1994. She has since returned many times to record the wild, natural beauty of the continent. Vekemans patiently watches and photographs specific animals over time and plans to continue to develop her photography following the philosophy of “capturing the moment.”

“While observing elephants in Tsavo, I was focused on an older female—the matriarch of the group. Her raised head and spread ears show that she was alert and watchful. The photographic challenge here was to capture the moment of eye contact in a sharp close-up before she moved on. Because her skin was so dark, I turned the ISO up to increase the shutter speed. This portrait symbolizes the elephant’s strength and the solidarity of the clan.”



## Black-Backed Jackal and Cape Turtle Doves

Etosha National Park, Namibia

By Johan J. Botha

Featherbrooke, South Africa

“If you spend enough time studying animals and their habits while sitting patiently at a waterhole at Etosha, you are almost guaranteed to take a good action photo. Each morning, thousands of doves arrive for a drink and perhaps a bath. This jackal followed their routine and caught one or two birds every day, but there were also many unsuccessful attempts, as captured in this image.”



## Cheetahs and Springbok Fawn

Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, South Africa

By Bridgena Barnard

Cape Town, South Africa

“In 2009 my family had a different kind of Christmas holiday: We went on a camping trip and hoped to see something spectacular. From a high dune overlooking a riverbed, we spotted cheetahs. The next moment a troop of springbok came straight toward them. When the cheetahs saw this fawn, a wild chase ensued.”

## Saving the Rhino *(Cont'd from cover)*

Now, no matter how well rhinos are guarded, they are still under threat and not even dehorning can protect them. This expensive and controversial practice, which entails surgically removing the horn (it does eventually grow back), has little effect as a deterrent: poachers, angered by the worthless prize, kill the animal anyway.

The key to winning the battle is to change human hearts and minds—to ensure that people in areas where rhinos occur have other means to make a living, and that consumers on other continents give up their superstitious convictions that fuel the insatiable demand for a substance little different from human hair.

“People need to give up long-held but false beliefs about the medicinal powers of the horn, and trade needs to be curbed,” says Muruthi. “Meanwhile, in situ efforts must be expanded to stop the killing before it happens.”

AWF has long led such efforts, partnering with other conservation groups, park authorities, communities, and government agencies in the countries where it works. Today, while threats to rhinos dominate the news—and justifiably so—there are successes to report, too (see box).

It may seem as if rhino poaching will cease only when all the rhinos in Africa are gone. But Muruthi is more optimistic than that. Having served on Kenya’s national rhino management committee for 10 years and led AWF’s rhino operations for



Sepo (meaning “hope” in the Toka Ieyá language of Zambia), with mother Jessie.

even longer, he has seen what can be achieved if the will to enact change is strong. “I believe that the conservation community and country authorities will act more urgently and effectively now that the extent of the crisis is clear,” he says. “The good news is that rhino populations have been shown to recover when conservation efforts are well targeted. AWF and others simply cannot relent.”

## A Member Invitation



### What:

A special 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary barbecue at the Brookfield Zoo, held in honor of the wonderful AWF supporters who make our work possible. The event is free for all members!

### When:

July 23, please see enclosed invitation

### Where:

Brookfield Zoo, located just outside Chicago

### RSVP:

Register online at [awf.org/brookfieldzoo](http://awf.org/brookfieldzoo)

Your host, Dennis Keller

*Dennis Keller*

## RHINO ROUNDUP



### **A sampling of recent rhino projects AWF is pursuing in and around the Heartlands**

#### **Chyulu Hills National Park, Kenya**

Extending to the north of Tsavo West National Park, Chyulu Hills is a vital part of the Tsavo ecosystem. Here, a long-term stakeholder partnership between the Mbirikani Group Ranch, the Kenya Wildlife Service, and a coalition of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including AWF, is actively protecting 13 eastern black rhinos, one of only two natural populations left (all others are reintroduced).

#### **Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe**

In the early 2000s, the unstable political environment, economic decline, and a lack of financial support made comprehensive protection of this area’s rhinos almost impossible. AWF supported the recruitment of 11 new rangers and equipped them with everything from binoculars to GPS units and camping gear. With ongoing AWF backing, the results were initially remarkable: No rhino poaching was reported in the period 2006–08 and the population grew by about two percent. With a resurgence of political and economic tension, however, the rhinos again became targets. Once numbering 54, a level maintained for several years, the black rhino population of the Sinamatella IPZ has fallen to 21. The rhinos will remain under threat until the political and economic situation stabilizes.

#### **Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania**

A small remnant population of eastern black rhinos (estimated at fewer than 20) requires constant monitoring in the Ngorongoro Crater and adjacent lands, and AWF is providing surveillance equipment, support to local monitors and trackers, and funding for patrol vehicle operations. The organization is also working with the authorities to develop a rhino conservation and management plan for the crater.

#### **Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, Zambia**

With support from AWF, the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) successfully reintroduced four southern white rhinos to Mosi-oa-Tunya from the Kruger National Park in South Africa. This marked an important step in ZAWA’s efforts to re-establish white rhinos in Zambia after its population had been virtually wiped out by heavy poaching. The four newcomers have thrived, and two cows have recently given birth (see adjacent photo).

#### **Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary, Kenya**

Established in Tsavo West National Park in 1985 with three rhinos in a one-square-kilometer area, Ngulia is today home to 66 individuals. AWF has supported the sanctuary from the beginning, providing training, staff housing (complete with plumbing), and fencing and its maintenance, as well as monitoring equipment comprising binoculars, night-vision scopes, radios, and vehicles. In 2007, the organization helped expand Ngulia from 62 to 103 square kilometers, and in the removal of more than 250 elephants to prevent overcrowding and conserve rhino habitat. Most recently it assisted in the release of 10 rhinos from the fenced sanctuary into the Tsavo West IPZ (see below).

#### **Tsavo West National Park IPZ, Kenya**

The Tsavo ecosystem comprises the single largest expanse of protected black rhino habitat in Kenya. In 2007–08 AWF supported the release of 14 rhinos from Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary into the Tsavo West IPZ. One animal has since died of natural causes and two have returned to the sanctuary of their own accord. The Tsavo population is expected to increase as other rhinos are released from Ngulia and breeding efforts gain ground. ■

# Students in the Virungas

**The following blog excerpt is from Anna Behm Masozera, communications officer for the International Gorilla Conservation Programme (a coalition of AWF, Fauna & Flora International, and World Wide Fund for Nature). IGCP recently facilitated bringing over 100 Rwandan secondary school students and their teachers and headmasters into Volcanoes National Park to trek mountain gorillas. Anna joined the students on multiple days.**

The students who came to trek mountain gorillas were in stark contrast to the well-equipped tourists coming from Europe and the United States. They were prepared to confront the elements as they do every day—in sandals and pullovers—without backpacks or water bottles and only one camera among them.



A group of students hosted by IGCP pose before heading out to trek the gorillas.

All of the students and teachers that trekked mountain gorillas benefited from a grant from the Annenberg Foundation's explore.org, which funded the \$35 it costs for Rwandan nationals to visit the gorillas. For them, this was their first time to set foot in a park which they have lived next to all their lives. Students that were granted this opportunity were chosen to participate in this trek based on their involvement with environmental clubs and having top academic standing.

For the park guides, it was their first time to give the briefing in Kinyarwanda, the common language of all Rwandans. As I listened along with the group from Butete Secondary School, one phrase I did

manage to pick up was repeated over and over—*pariki yacu*, or “our park.”

We all fully experienced our park that day. We slogged through the sticky mud and climbed and climbed through stinging nettles and forest until we got to the bamboo patch in which the Sabyinyo Group was busy feasting on bamboo shoots. For the most part the students and teachers were pretty quiet, with the occasional laugh at the collective huffing and struggle with the climb.



IGCP/Anna Behm Masozera

Watch a video taken while the students trek gorillas at [www.awf.org/studenttrek](http://www.awf.org/studenttrek)

Despite the briefing and the walk and the final preparations and instructions, none of us were fully prepared to finally encounter a mountain gorilla. We could smell the musky smell before we saw our first gorilla, a young male seated and eating bamboo shoots several meters to our left.

It became immediately apparent that the bamboo habitat we were sharing with the Sabyinyo Group was going to be difficult for our group of eight to navigate in. We couldn't see a gorilla until we were already in close proximity. It made for a tense few moments when the enormous silverback, Guhonda, made a sudden appearance and walked right in front of us.

For the remainder of the hour we were surrounded by mountain gorillas—around us and above us. The younger, and therefore lighter mountain gorillas were moving and playing within the bamboo. Some who thought they were light enough to travel through the bamboo, but in reality were not, crashed down around us. ■

 Read Anna's full blog and view video clips of the students at [igcp.org](http://igcp.org).

## Rwanda Welcomes Gorilla Additions

Three mountain gorillas were recently born over a two-day period in Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, including twins born to the Hirwa Family Group. According to park officials, only four other sets of twin births have been recorded in the park in more than 40 years of gorilla monitoring in Rwanda (and only one other pair is known to have survived).

Both twins are doing well and are being well cared for by their mother, who is supported by the entire mountain gorilla family. IGCP Director Eugene Rutagarama visited the Hirwa Family Group soon after their birth, and while the twins were perched in a nest in a tree with their mother and therefore difficult to see, their cries to their mother could be heard throughout the visit. We are all wishing both twins and their mother well in these tenuous first months of life.

A baby was also born in the Amahoro Family Group. All three mountain gorilla babies will be named in an annual ceremony, Kwita Izina, which will be held at Volcanoes National Park in Rwanda this June. ■



Kabatwa lounges with her newly born twins.

J. Damascene HAKIZIMANA



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are interested in leaving a bequest in your Will or making AWF a beneficiary of your life insurance policy, there are many ways to make a legacy gift and ensure your support for Africa's wildlife and wild lands extends beyond your lifetime. Visit [awf.org/legacy](http://awf.org/legacy) or call Kathleen Graham at 202-939-3326.

# Profiles in Partnership: The Indianapolis Zoo



***The Indianapolis Zoo is bridging the gap between people and wildlife — both at home and through its support to organizations like AWF.***



To break the cycle of lion killings, Kissui helps livestock owners reinforce their “bomas” (thorn-bush enclosures where the livestock are kept when no one is tending them) with chain-link fencing. This straightforward solution is keeping both livestock and lions safe.

**T**o the average zoogoer in the United States, the connection between a visit to the zoo and conservation in Africa may not be obvious. But in fact, the mission of zoos, in particular the Indianapolis Zoo, is very much about expanding habitat and protecting wildlife.

“Conservation is part and parcel of everything we do,” says Norah Fletchall, Vice President of Conservation at the Indianapolis Zoo. “The Indianapolis Zoo aims to empower people and communities, both locally and globally, to advance animal conservation.”

Carrying forth that mission, the Indianapolis Zoo is supporting AWF’s Maasai Steppe Lion Project, which, led by scientist Bernard Kissui, tracks lions in a 2,000-square-kilometer area in and around Tarangire National Park in Tanzania (famous also for its large number of elephants and baobab trees). Kissui tracks and analyzes the yearlong movements of about 134 lions (nine prides), information used by wildlife authorities as well as Kissui and the AWF team to protect lions and other wildlife.

After years of study, Kissui has a keen understanding of where Tarangire’s lions go. Of the 134 lions he tracks, about 100 move outside the park across community-owned lands at various points of the year. Some wander east of the



Dr. Bernard Kissui leads AWF’s Maasai Steppe Lion Project, supported by the Indianapolis Zoo.

park to the Simanjiro Plains, and others north, as far as the AWF-managed Manyara Ranch and west to the Lake Burunge area.

Inside the park the lions are secure; outside the park, their predatory natures make them less so. Although lions rarely attack humans, these great cats often see untended livestock as easy prey. Angered by livestock mortalities (and injuries), livestock owners retaliate by spearing even innocent lions or lacing meat or carcasses with poison.

Along with trophy hunting, habitat loss, and human encroachment, the retaliatory killings of lions has pushed this majestic species closer and closer to extinction. Twenty years ago, there were some 200,000 lions in Africa. Today, there are about 23,000, and the numbers are dropping.

To break the cycle of lion killings, Kissui helps livestock owners reinforce their “bomas” with chain-link fencing. This straightforward solution is keeping both livestock and lions safe. With support from the Indianapolis Zoo, Kissui has helped villagers construct 76 such bomas. Kissui is also educating people about both the habits and importance of lions.

The Indianapolis Zoo especially values projects like Kissui’s because it addresses the needs of people who share land with lions.

The lions at the Indianapolis Zoo, in turn, inspire people who have never been to Africa to value these amazing animals.

**“Seeing a lion close up, being able to hear and smell the animal—this establishes a powerful connection. The animals you see in zoos are ambassadors for their counterparts in the wild.”**

— Norah Fletchall, Vice President of Conservation, Indianapolis Zoo

“It isn’t enough to see these great cats in movies like *The Lion King* or on the Internet,” says Fletchall. “Seeing a lion close up, being able to hear and smell the animal—this establishes a powerful connection. The animals you see in zoos are ambassadors for their counterparts in the wild.” ■