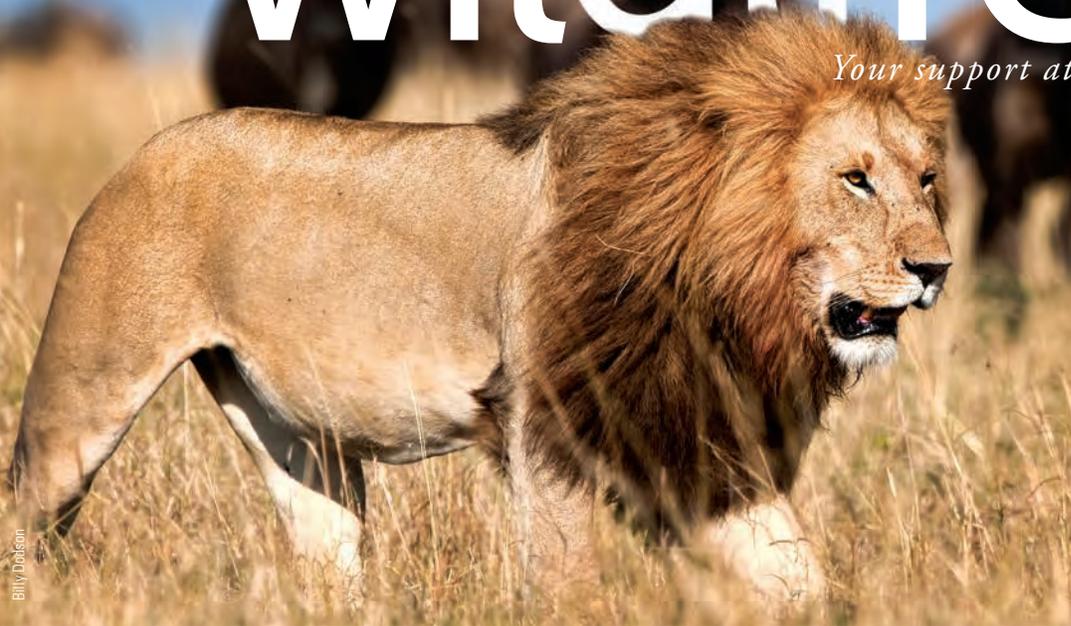


African Wildlife NEWS

Your support at work in Africa's landscapes



LEFT: The number of lions in the wild in Africa is steadily decreasing, due to habitat loss and human-lion conflict.

Kings of Africa No More?

Once deemed the kings of the jungle, Africa's lions and other carnivores are facing continued threats to their long-term survival

It used to be that a good head of hair and nice teeth—not to mention a strong, muscled body and athletic prowess—gave you some status in the world.

But, as the African lion is finding out, the world is changing. And these days, the “king of the jungle” is falling prey to threats that even its predator reputation and carnivorous appetite can't protect.

Outliving the king

About 500,000 to 600,000 lions were believed to have lived in Africa at the turn of the 20th century. Their numbers have rapidly dwindled since then. In the last 20 years, the lion population has declined by 30 percent, with only about 23,000 surviving today, according to the Cat Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission.

“The threat of extinction is very real for African lions,” says AWF Senior Director of Conservation Science Philip Muruthi, noting that lions are extinct in North Africa, severely depleted across West and Central Africa and

now losing ground in their strongholds of East and Southern Africa.

As human population has grown and more people have converged upon rural areas, all carnivores have lost significant habitat, or their habitat has become fragmented. The trend is particularly problematic for lions, which need vast spaces to survive. A single lion pride's territory can be as large as 100 sq. mi.

But it seems that the greatest contributors to lions' decline are indeed their reputations and diets. “Lions in particular are dying at the hands of humans, who are killing in retaliation,” Muruthi says, referring to situations where lions, cheetahs and other carnivores opportunistically hunt livestock rather than wild game and are, in turn, speared or poisoned by pastoralists angry about their livestock losses. “Other times, people may preemptively kill a lion to protect their families and livestock.”

Ecological significance

Tourism is a significant economic engine for sub-Saharan Africa, bringing in more

Continued on page 6

Lions get a hand from the U.S.

Lions are getting a bit of extra protection, thanks to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In October, the agency announced it will list the African lion as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. This would place certain restrictions on the import of lion trophies. While AWF has recommended that all trophy hunting of lions be suspended until their populations begin to climb again, the action is a welcomed first step toward the “king of the jungle” again ruling its domain.

Once foe, now friend

Maasai warriors, who once killed lions to show their bravery and strength, are finding a new outlet. *Page 7*



The African Wildlife Foundation, together with the people of Africa, works to ensure the wildlife and wild lands of Africa will endure forever.

AWF Senior Staff

Patrick Bergin
CEO

Jeff Chrisfield
COO

Charly Facheux
Vice president for
conservation projects

Kathleen Fitzgerald
Vice president for
conservation strategy

Tyrene Haralson
Vice president for
finance & administration

Craig Sholley
Vice president for
philanthropy & marketing

Daudi Sumba
Vice president for program
design & government relations

Editorial Staff

John Butler
Director of marketing and membership

Mayu Mishina
Senior communications and marketing manager

Kathleen Garrigan
Senior communications and media relations officer

Grant Wheeler
Graphic designer

Amy Barriale
Membership and production manager

Contributors:
William H. Funk, Gayane Margaryan

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African Wildlife Foundation

Washington, DC

1400 16th Street, NW
Suite 120
Washington, DC 20036
Toll Free +1 888 494 5354
Phone +1 202 939 3333
Fax +1 202 939 3332

AWF Conservation Centre

Ngong Road, Karen
P.O. Box 310, 00502
Nairobi, Kenya
Phone +254 20 2765000
Fax +254 20 2765030

email: africanwildlife@awf.org



A Diversity of Work for a Diverse Continent



Craig R. Sholley

For many of us, the word “Africa” conjures images of elephants lumbering across a vast grassland or a lion stalking a nervous zebra. Wildlife filmmakers and photographers have been filling our TV screens and magazines for decades with these familiar scenes from the savanna.

But we have to work hard to make sure these quintessential savanna images remain a reality. As our cover story explains, seemingly benign threats such as habitat loss are having a less-than-benign impact on Africa’s lion population, which has plummeted over the past few decades. With your support, however, and through strategic efforts in critical carnivore habitats, AWF is working to shore up lion numbers across Africa’s savannas.

With World Forestry Day coming up on March 21, it’s a good time to remind us all that Africa is, however, more than its savannas. More than 20 percent of the continent, in fact, is covered in forest. In addition to boasting hundreds of plant species and acting as a critical carbon sink for the world, these forests—located primarily in Central and West Africa—serve as habitat for a diverse array of wildlife, including four of the world’s six great ape species.

AWF is undertaking a number of efforts to protect these great apes. We are, for example, providing people in the Congo linkages to urban markets that reduce their reliance on bushmeat hunting (see opposite as well as online, at: awf.org/drc-incomes) and supporting locals’ efforts in Senegal to conduct ecological monitoring of chimp populations (see page 5). And, we are raising awareness about an emerging threat: ape trafficking. You can read more about that issue on page 4.

As you can see, AWF’s reach is as wide and diverse as the continent itself—and we have you to thank for that. Your continued support is ensuring that we can protect Africa’s wildlife and wild lands—not just in the savannas but in the forests, mountains and elsewhere across the continent. As always, I am grateful for your support and what we continue to accomplish together on the African continent.

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

RIGHT: To protect a diverse Africa, we need a diverse group of Africans. The third and newest class of AWF’s Conservation Management Training Program (CMT), AWF’s rigorous 24-month mentoring program for qualified Africans, started in July 2014. Pictured are (back row, l-r) Sarah Chiles from South Africa and Edwin Tambara from Zimbabwe, both members of the 2nd CMT class, plus Elizabeth Babalola from Nigeria and Eric Reson from Kenya. In the front are (l-r) Robina Abuya and Sylvia Wasige from Kenya, and Henriatha Che from Cameroon. Not pictured is Muyang Achah, also from Cameroon.



Peter Chira

AWF roundup

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Number of scouts and rangers AWF is supporting—not including ranger support given through our African Apes Initiative or Urgent Response Fund



Paul Thomson

Critical connection to the city

Two years ago, our Congo Shipping Project was carrying about 400 tons of crops downriver from the Congo landscape into Kinshasa—connecting rural farmers to urban markets and helping to provide income not associated with bushmeat hunting. These days, the “AWF barge” has become a tugboat pulling three barges, all filled to capacity—carrying nearly 650 tons of crops grown in the landscape.



Wanted: Poachers

Coinciding with the Tanzanian government's hosting of a regional summit on wildlife trafficking in November, AWF—in partnership with Tanzanian authorities—posted several “Wanted” billboards on the highways outside of Arusha. These billboards urge those with knowledge of elephant poaching incidents to call the Tanzanian National Parks Authority with their tips.

John Sabelle

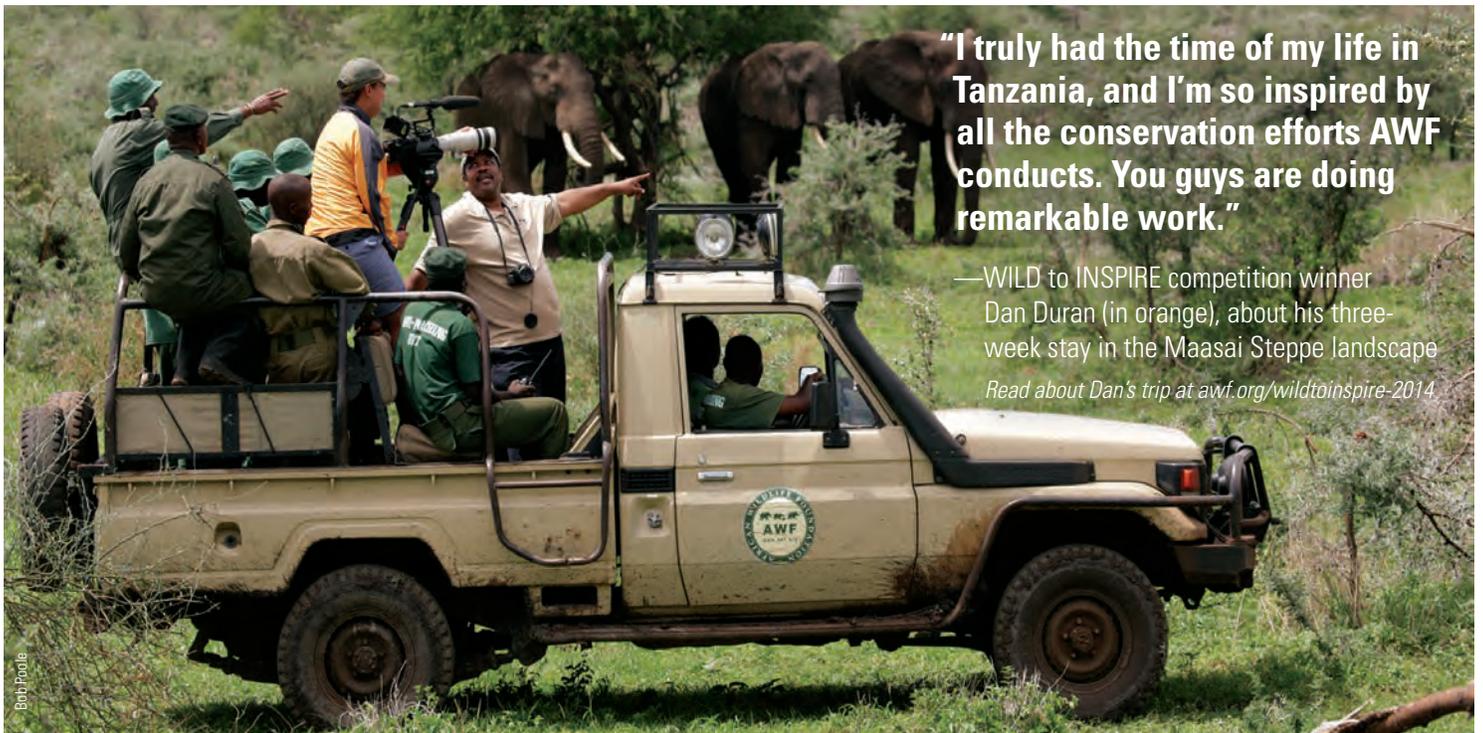
Zambian ivory trafficker arrested

Zambian authorities in December arrested alleged ivory trafficker Ben Simasiku, one of nine wildlife criminals wanted by INTERPOL's Operation Infra Terra. He was captured by the Zambia Wildlife Authority's (ZAWA's) Intelligence and Investigations Unit, which is supported by AWF.

AWF has been providing equipment and supplies to ZAWA and more recently is supporting elephant protection in and

around Zambia's Kafue National Park through an Urgent Response Fund grant to Game Rangers International, a local NGO that also supports ZAWA.

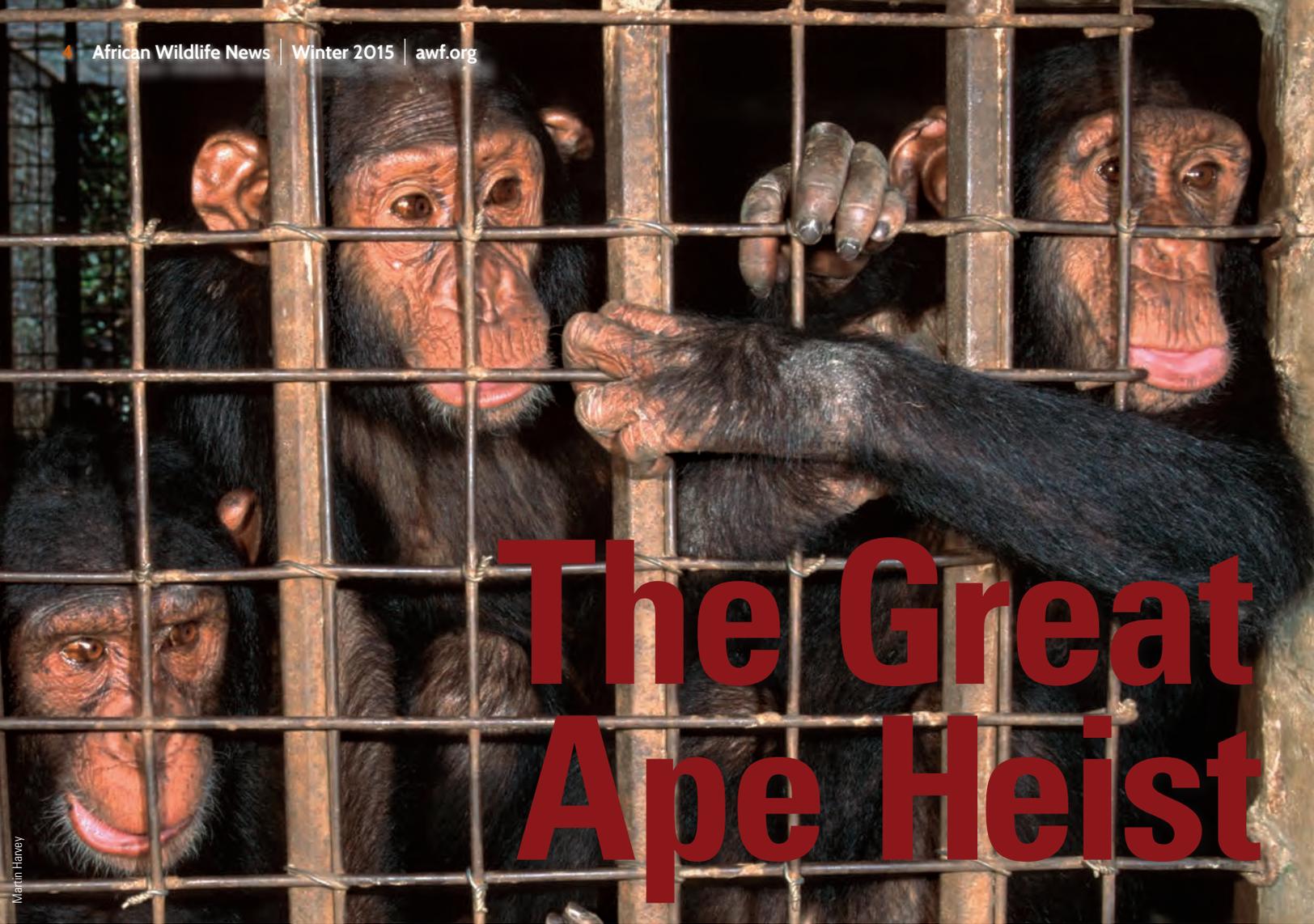
“Wildlife authorities in many African countries are underfunded,” says Nathan Gichohi, AWF's senior program officer for species protection. “This is a clear case of how effective agencies can be when they receive sufficient funding, training and equipment.”



“I truly had the time of my life in Tanzania, and I'm so inspired by all the conservation efforts AWF conducts. You guys are doing remarkable work.”

—WILD to INSPIRE competition winner Dan Duran (in orange), about his three-week stay in the Maasai Steppe landscape
Read about Dan's trip at awf.org/wildtoinspire-2014

Bob Proffe



The Great Ape Heist

Corruption, chaos and weak law enforcement aid a brutal trade

December 2005: An infant bonobo is discovered in the handbag of a traveler en route from the Democratic Republic of Congo to Russia. Between 2007 and 2010: One hundred chimpanzees and 10 gorillas were exported from Guinea to China. October 2014: An infant chimpanzee is rescued from bushmeat traffickers in Cameroon.

“Capturing great apes from the wild and selling them on the black market is a brutal business that is growing in scale,” says Jef Dupain, director of AWF’s great apes program. “Only a fraction of trafficked apes are ever rescued, and too many either reach their destinations undetected or die en route.”

In October 2014, Dupain testified before the White House Advisory Council on Wildlife Trafficking about the growing threat of the illegal live ape trade in Africa and its impact on wild populations of chimpanzees, gorillas and bonobos.

“We need more visibility—similar to that received by the ivory and rhino horn trade—around the ape trade,” explains Dupain.

Supply and demand

Africa is home to four of the world’s six great apes. The bonobo, chimpanzee, eastern gorilla and western gorilla largely inhabit the forests, swamps and woodland areas sweeping through the middle of the continent. All of Africa’s great apes and their subspecies are either endangered or critically endangered, and, with the exception of the mountain gorilla, all are declining.

While habitat loss and the bushmeat trade are the primary drivers behind the decline in great ape populations, the demand for live apes is widespread and growing, further threatening already vulnerable wild populations. It’s estimated that 90 percent of great ape habitat will be disturbed in some way by human activity by the year 2030, bringing humans and non-human great apes into closer proximity.

“Great apes used to be well-insulated from humans because they lived in very remote forests and landscapes,” says Dupain. “That is all changing with the growth in human population and the global hunt for natural resources. Unfortunately, many of Africa’s chimpanzees and gorillas live in the midst of those resources.”

For many years, the trade in African great apes was considered a by-product of the bushmeat trade, wherein infants orphaned during poaching raids were opportunistically sold into the pet trade. Now, however, a systematic illegal trade has emerged.

While the actual scale and scope of the overall great ape trade is unknown, in 2013 the Great Apes Survival Partnership (GRASP) published a report, “Stolen Apes,” which estimated that 3,000 great apes are captured, confiscated, lost or killed as a result of the illegal trade each year. Trafficked apes are not the only victims. As many as 10 adults of an ape species might be killed during a raid to capture one infant.

According to Doug Cress, program coordinator for GRASP and a co-author of the 2013 report, the ape trade and its impact on wild

LEFT: Chimpanzees and other great apes are increasingly falling prey to the live pet trade, which captures or kills upwards of 3,000 great apes each year.

ape populations are likely much bigger in scale than what current numbers suggest.

“The figures we used for ‘Stolen Apes’ were extremely conservative, for a variety of reasons,” explains Cress. “Since the data cited in the report came from confiscation records and arrival rates at sanctuaries in Africa and rehabilitation centers in Asia—and that only included 11 countries in total—we had no way of calculating the trade in a number of other African countries,” including many believed to have a thriving illicit trade, such as Liberia, Cote d’Ivoire and the Central African Republic.

Today’s demand stems largely from markets in Asia and the Middle East, where great apes are highly desirable as exotic pets or to provide entertainment at zoos, amusement parks and as part of traveling circuses. Eastern Europe, too, has emerged as an important transit point. Corruption along the entire supply chain, weak enforcement of existing wildlife laws and a general unawareness about the problem all grease the wheels of the trade.

“We found that illegal traders work best in chaos, when law enforcement is usually preoccupied and the chances of getting caught diminish,” Cress adds. “We began to see more reports on illegal activity with apes in Syria and Libya, Kurdistan and Egypt. Now the traffic is beginning to activate again in the Ebola countries of West Africa.”

Cress emphasizes that none of this activity would exist if not for a market ready to pay high prices for apes: “Asia’s appetite for apes is insatiable, spurred by the same booming middle class that has fueled the ivory trade in recent years,” he contends.

Action for apes

When he spoke before the Advisory Council at the U.S. Department of the Interior last year, AWF’s Dupain outlined a number of recommendations for combating the illegal ape trade.

“The first step is acknowledging the problem,” says Dupain. “For many years, this trade was under the radar, which meant there wasn’t a sense of urgency to address it. That is changing now.”

Acknowledging the scale of the problem begins with quantifying it accurately.

“There currently exists no ape-specific trade database like that which tracks ivory or rhino horn,” GRASP’s Cress says, explaining that a new illegal great apes trade database to be launched in 2015 will aggregate information from a variety of parties, including national governments, conservation organizations like AWF, research institutions, private companies and UN agencies. This, in turn, will give a more complete picture of the trade and allow authorities and monitoring agencies to more quickly assess and close it down.

But ultimately, stronger enforcement of international trade laws and national wildlife laws are needed, says Dupain. AWF has been facilitating workshops for members of the law enforcement community in a number of countries to sensitize them to the issue of the illegal wildlife trade and to enable better coordination between different branches of government in bringing wildlife criminals to justice.

“Generally, most great ape range countries have strong laws to protect great apes from this trade,” Dupain says. “What is lacking is the will and the motivation to enforce those laws. We need to change that.”

—Kathleen Garrigan

“Illegal traders work best in chaos, when law enforcement is preoccupied and the chances of getting caught diminish”

—Doug Cress, program coordinator, Great Apes Survival Partnership



Surveying chimps to save them

Through our African Apes Initiative, AWF continues to undertake a variety of efforts to protect great apes in the wild. In late 2014, for example, AWF helped kicked off a large-scale survey of the chimpanzees living outside of protected areas in Senegal. After a workshop where stakeholders determined how the survey would be conducted and a test run in Dindefelo Nature Reserve (pictured), the survey will be concluding this month, with results to be used at a national chimpanzee conservation planning workshop. At the same time, AWF is helping to implement the use of CyberTracker-based ecological monitoring within Dindefelo, which will allow for the systematic recording and tracking of ecological data inside the community reserve.



Ruaha Carnivore Project / Lorenzo Rossi

ABOVE LEFT: An assessment of the largest carnivore species in Africa found that lions, despite being one of the most closely monitored and researched carnivores, were still among those species in greatest need of intervention.



Christina van Winkle

ABOVE RIGHT: Helping pastoralists make their livestock enclosures predator proof, by reinforcing the acacia construction with chainlink fencing, is one way in which AWF and its partners are helping to minimize human-lion conflict.

Continued from page 1

than US\$36 billion for the region in 2012, according to a World Bank report. In 2011, one in 20 jobs in sub-Saharan Africa was directly or indirectly tied to tourism.

From that perspective, a healthy big cat presence in Africa is a positive thing, attracting visitors seeking a full African safari experience. As Bernard Kissui, director of the School for Field Studies' Center for Wildlife Management Studies and a former AWF lion researcher, observes: "Large carnivores like lions define the wilderness of Africa."

But lions are just as, if not more, important from an ecological sense, given their roles as keystone species in the ecosystem. "They influence the ecosystem by preying on other wildlife," explains Kissui, "thus regulating the dynamics of wildlife populations." A lack of lion presence can significantly disrupt the ecosystem—something Kissui is already starting to see in some landscapes.

'Most intrinsically vulnerable'

To address the issue, AWF assessed 20 of the largest species of carnivores according to their biological vulnerability, threats and extent of human knowledge about them. Strikingly, lions repeatedly ranked amongst the top carnivores in greatest need of intervention.

"Lions, together with the African wild dog, cheetah and Ethiopian wolf, were the most intrinsically vulnerable and most impacted

by external threats—while at the same time being among the most closely monitored and researched," Muruthi explains.

A lack of lion presence can significantly disrupt the ecosystem

AWF is focusing its lion conservation efforts on five populations, including those in the Selous and Ruaha landscapes of southern Tanzania, the Mara–Serengeti ecosystem in Kenya, and the Kazungula and Limpopo landscapes in Southern Africa. These populations make up well in excess of 60 percent—if not more—of the world's in situ lion population.

Efforts will include eliminating human-lion conflict, securing expansive and intact lion habitats and building capacity for appropriate carnivore management, among other actions. Some of this work will be done directly within the context of AWF's landscape programs. Others will be done by AWF partners, such as Kissui, who is showing Maasai pastoralists in the Maasai Steppe landscape how to make their *bomas*, or livestock enclosures, lion proof by reinforcing the acacia construction with chain-link fencing. AWF recently provided an Urgent Response Fund grant to support his efforts.

Similarly, outside of Masai Mara National Reserve, AWF is supporting the Mara Lion Project, a lion research camp that works to reduce human-carnivore conflict. Efforts include lion monitoring and identification in the greater Mara—in the past year, 506 individual lions have been catalogued—and operating a livestock deprecation program, where pastoralists who lose their livestock to lions receive payment. The project also conducts school outreach, with a community officer visiting eight area schools to conduct classes on conservation and the value of wildlife, particularly lions.

In southern Tanzania, the Ruaha Carnivore Project, which AWF also supports, has provided camera traps to eight local villages to place in areas frequently used by carnivores. Once a month, camera trap images are downloaded and shown to each village at a DVD night, with points given out based on the number of carnivore photos captured on camera. Every three months, those villages with the most points receive benefits such as schoolbooks and access to high-quality veterinary medicines to treat their livestock.

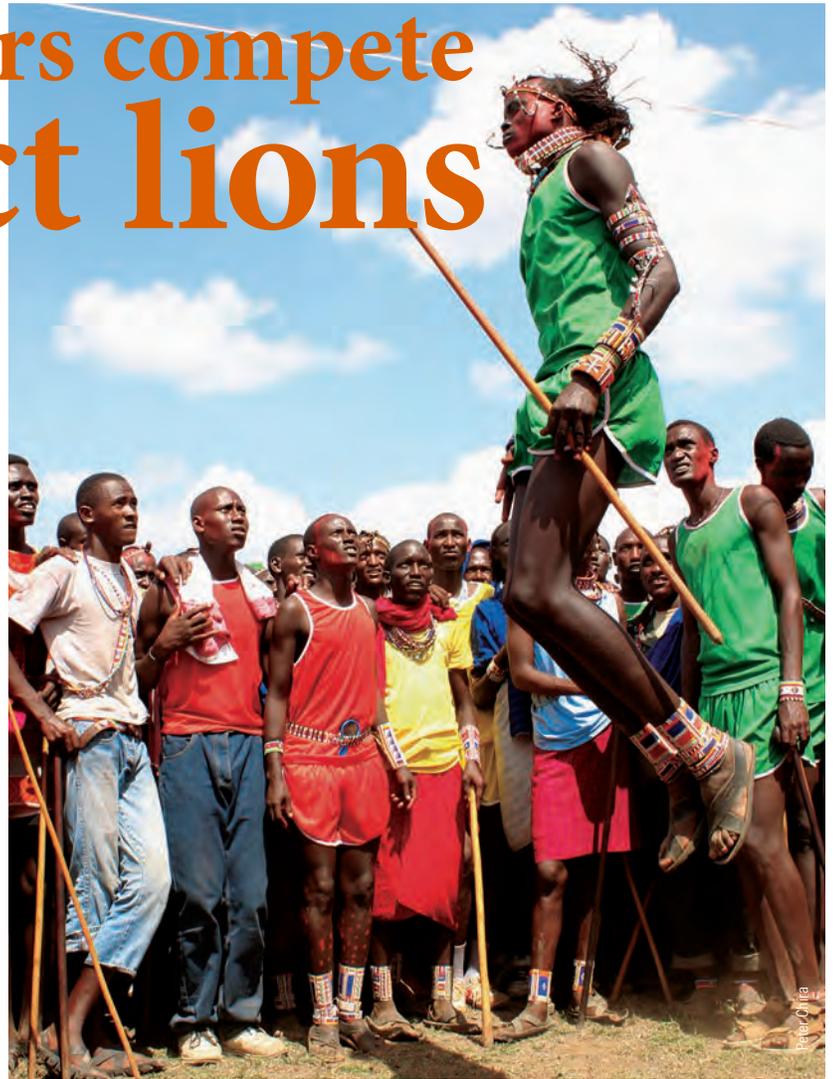
Not surprisingly, many of our carnivore conservation activities target the primary cause of carnivore population decline: humans. It is this type of effort, after all, that will over time bolster the populations of these once-feared predators—so they'll again be kings of all they survey. ■

Maasai warriors compete to protect lions

One of the most colorful examples of engaging local people in protecting lion populations is the Maasai Olympics. The biennial event gives Maasai *morans*, or warriors, in the Kilimanjaro landscape an avenue to demonstrate their physical prowess through sport rather than a traditional lion hunt. The most recent Maasai Olympics, of which AWF was a co-sponsor, took place in December. Warriors from four villages competed in six events: 200-, 800- and 5,000-m foot races; spear throwing; *rungu* (or wooden club) throwing, in which participants were judged for accuracy; and a Maasai-style high jump. Maasai girls competed in two events, a 100-m race and a 1,500-m race.

In addition to bragging rights, winning athletes received student scholarships and cash prizes. Two race winners also earned a sponsored trip to compete in the 2015 New York Marathon.

"The Maasai Olympics is more than just a colorful, one-day event," says Samar Ntalamia, program manager for the Big Life Foundation, which organized the event. "It is a year-long education program that provides us with a platform to engage young men about conservation issues. These warriors can fulfill their traditional role as protectors of livestock and their communities but with an understanding of the importance of predators and conservation in general."



Other carnivores in trouble

Lions aren't the only species suffering. Africa's other carnivores aren't faring much better. Over the past 50 years,

the cheetah has become extinct in more than 10 range states. Both the populations of the cheetah and the wild dog number fewer than 10,000. The

Ethiopian wolf is only about 450 individuals strong. In conjunction with our lion conservation work, AWF is working to protect important targeted populations of the African wild dog, cheetah and Ethiopian wolf.



Cautious comeback for wild dog

African wild dogs are a genuine anomaly among Africa's large predators. For one thing, they're canids—a doggy minority in a landscape dominated by large cats and hyenas. They hunt in packs like wolves but aren't closely related to them, being the only species of the genus *Lycaon*. Instead of undulating howls, they communicate in a chorus of quiet chirps. And, they show greater cooperation than almost any other social mammal, a kindness bordering on altruism. Today fewer than 7,000 painted dogs roam the dwindling African bushveldt, but this is still a welcome increase from the low of 4,000 to 5,000 in the 1990s.

What has caused this upturn? Dr. Gregory Rasmussen, research director with the Painted Dog Research Trust of Zimbabwe, believes one reason might be more aggressive campaigns against wild dog persecution, which can include the use of ingenious anti-snare collars to protect the dogs from deadly wire traps. Whatever the causes, this initial resurgence of the African wild dog is a welcome yelp of good news in a land that sorely needs it. —William H. Funk



wildlife WATCH *Thor's Hero Shrew*



When it comes to finding food, the Thor's hero shrew (*Scutisorex thori*) really puts its back into it. This shrew is said to have a spine about four times stronger than a human's, relative to its size—a feature that scientists speculate may be used to dig under logs for worms or tear away at the hardened base of palm leaves to get to the larva underneath.

No one has actually seen the Thor's hero shrew engage in this activity—but then again, the Thor's hero shrew is a new species of the hero shrew (*Scutisorex somereni*), first described in 2013 as a distinct species from the Democratic Republic of Congo. It measures about 1 ft. and has a pointy snout, pronounced ear conch, small eyes and short legs. The Thor's hero shrew typically sports a coat of black and grey hairs.

The Thor's hero shrew has eight interlocking vertebrae—fewer than the 10 to 11 of the hero shrew—which are the key to the hero shrew's back strength. Each vertebrae has bony projections that interlock to form a strong, flexible backbone. According to lore, a grown man stood on a hero shrew's back for five minutes before the shrew walked away unscathed. The Thor's hero shrew is thought to boast similar back strength—hence it taking its name from the Norse god of strength.

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Li Bingbing stars as hunted elephant

AWF, WildAid and Save The Elephants have released a new public service announcement (PSA) in which Chinese actress Li Bingbing and her "children" are shown running for their lives across the African savanna. As a poacher's bullet pierces her skin, Li transforms into a fatally wounded African elephant before falling to the ground, surrounded by her elephant children.

In coordination with the PSA launch, Li urged her countrymen and women to go ivory-free through billboards and signs exhibited at 107 locations at airports in Beijing and Shanghai. It'll provide tremendous exposure: The Beijing Capital International Airport receives 278,000 visitors per day, while the two airports in Shanghai receive a combined 226,000 visitors per day. The PSA will air on televisions, airport and train station screens and street-level electronic billboards in addition to movie theaters.

To view the film, visit: awf.org/hunted-psa



Academy Award-winning Director Kathryn Bigelow has released a much-touted three-minute film, called "Last Days," which examines the link between elephant poaching and terrorism. Bigelow's film links the ivory consumer in China with elephant poaching in Africa and the 2013 terrorist attack on Kenya's Westgate Mall. Groups such as the Somali-based Al-Shabaab and Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army are alleged to fund some of their operations through the illegal ivory trade and have been implicated in a number of elephant poaching incidences.

To view the film, visit: lastdaysofivory.com

BLOG

Get the inside scoop



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