

AFRICAN WILDLIFE FOUNDATION

PROTECTING AFRICAN LIONS

The African Wildlife Foundation's (AWF) mission is to ensure that wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa. One of the ways AWF works to realize this mission is through the conservation of viable and ecologically functional populations of large carnivores in their natural environments. As keystone species and indicators of healthy ecosystems, large carnivores are critical to the long-term sustainability of wild lands. AWF established the Large Carnivore Fund to respond to a variety of threats that these iconic species face across the continent. Over the years, AWF has supported large carnivore projects across Africa in landscapes including Simien Mountains, Samburu, Maasai Mara, Ruaha, Hwange, Serengeti Maasai Mara, Maasai Steppe, Limpopo, Niassa and more.

Lions in Africa

The lion (*Panthera Leo*), Africa's largest big cat can be found in savannahs, plains, grasslands, dense bush and woodland habitats. Males are unique among the cat species for their thick mane of brown or black hair encircling their head and neck. The mane darkens with age, and the thicker and darker a mane is the healthier the cat. Both males and females roar — a sound heard as far as eight kilometers away. Protecting habitat for lions, ensures the protection of vital ecosystem services. For example, the lion range in Africa provides around 7% of Africa's water ecosystem services, with significant inputs in key basins such as the Nile and the Zambezi. Likewise, the lion range provides 11% of Africa's potential disaster risk reduction services, including erosion control, coastal protection, flood mitigation and flow regulation, on 6.7% of the continent's area.

Status of Lions in Africa

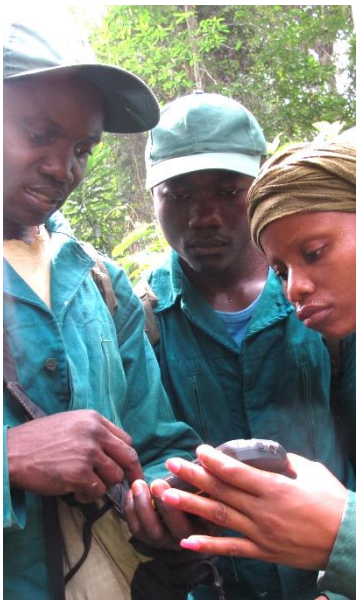
Over the last quarter-century, Africa has lost half of its lion population. In just two decades, populations decreased by 43%, and it's estimated that as few as 23,000 remain in the wild today. One of the main causes of their decline is habitat loss due to expanding human populations and the resulting growth of agriculture, settlements and roads. The survival of lion populations is also threatened by poaching, disease, retaliatory killings by livestock owners, and reduction in the numbers of their natural prey. Extinct in North Africa and severely depleted in West and Central Africa, the remaining populations could face a similar fate by 2050.

43%
Population decreased by 43% in 21 years

1996
Declared Vulnerable in 1996 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)



15
Regionally extinct in 15 African countries

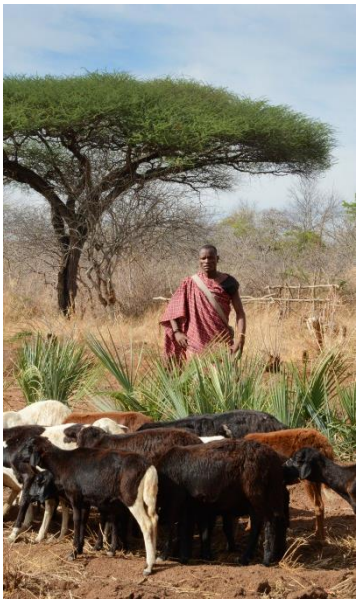


Utilizing Technology and Data to Protect Lions

In response to the myriad threats faced by lions and other large carnivores, AWF helps to implement patrol strategies to verify, combat, and eradicate illegal activities occurring across key landscapes. Equipping wildlife authorities with emerging technology like the Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) software, AWF enables rangers to concentrate their patrol efforts to more effectively monitor and protect lions while combating illegal activities.

To collect critical information for adaptive lion conservation strategies, AWF has, for example, collared lions in Manyara Ranch in Tanzania to track the movement of big cats and the extent of their home range. With improved facilities to monitor disease, habitat use, and predator-prey interaction, conservationists can better estimate wildlife populations and protect species from further loss.

AWF also conducts research to improve understanding of the behavior and population of large carnivores to inform national and landscape level conservation strategic plans. Data collection on illegal activities across AWF landscapes also helps to identify at-risk locations and mitigate poaching. This has been crucial in helping to address the rapid evolution of threats faced by large carnivores.



Mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflict

Human-wildlife conflict is an ongoing and persistent threat in many landscapes. Unfortunately, it is intensified by inadequate enforcement of policies and by-laws intended to govern agricultural expansion, livestock over-population and poaching. Unplanned agricultural expansion leads to habitat loss for large carnivores which in turn leads to reduced prey populations for lions; in the absence of their preferred prey, lions are forced to consume livestock. Likewise, when livestock outcompete prey species for land and overgrazing occurs, this also contributes to the reduction in prey populations. Given the high economic value of cattle, depredation of livestock can lead to retaliatory killings of lions.

One of the ways AWF works to mitigate this issue involves conducting community education and awareness programs to help communities realize the value lion populations can bring and raise awareness about wildlife laws. Likewise, AWF helps communities to identify how they can protect their families and livestock from the large carnivores by developing early warning systems to monitor the movement of lions and introducing improved livestock husbandry practices and predator-proof bomas to protect livestock.

To further deter wildlife killing, AWF proactively works to secure habitats that are critical for lion conservation and advocates for the implementation and enforcement of policies that protect large carnivores.

"Investing in lion conservation is not simply a charitable act that might protect populations of one particular species, however important. It also protects the many commercial and subsistence values that rely on lions directly, or that rely on the landscapes where lions live, and come as a no-cost extra to conservation."

~ Kaddu Kiwe Sebunya
Chief Executive Officer, African Wildlife Foundation

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