



AUGUST 2020
PROGRESS REPORT

LION RECOVERY FUND





THE LION RECOVERY FUND HAS OFFICIALLY
SUPPORTED OVER 100 LION CONSERVATION PROJECTS
IN AFRICA, INVESTING \$11 MILLION IN THESE PROJECTS
SINCE LAUNCHING IN 2017.

SUPPORTING LION CONSERVATION THROUGH THE STORM

Welcome to our August 2020 report highlighting the projects supported by the Lion Recovery Fund (LRF). This month, the LRF turns three years old. In that time, the LRF has become the largest funder of lion-specific conservation work in the world. In 2019, the LRF granted \$5 million to 46 projects, up from \$1.1 million in our first year. Over the past six months, the LRF supported 24 projects that are working relentlessly to tackle threats and to ensure field programs have the resources they need to bring lions roaring back across Africa.

Since writing our last progress report in February 2020, the world has been turned on its head in a way that was impossible to foresee. The COVID-19 crisis has had profound impacts on conservation in Africa: a perfect storm of funding crashes, increased threats, and global uncertainty. Funding has been affected drastically due to economic downturns, stock market volatility, zoos closing, and most significantly, the almost complete cessation of the tourism industry. At the same time, the operations of conservation groups have been disrupted by lockdown regulations, hampering their ability to protect wildlife and to engage with communities. Concurrently, threats to wildlife have grown due to job losses, the return of migrant workers to rural areas, and increased poverty—all of which have resulted in increased poaching and other illegal activities.

Thanks to the unwavering generosity of our donors, the LRF has been in the fortunate position to step in and provide emergency support to conservation actors struggling under the weight of these changes. Staying flexible, we adapted the LRF investment strategy in light of the new reality in Africa, and the LRF has provided emergency funding to ensure that conservationists are kept in the field to safeguard lions and other wildlife during this critical time. We have already provided \$1.2 million in emergency grants, providing essential support for ranger salaries and operational costs to ensure that critical conservation services continue and that job losses are minimized.

Through this report, we hope you will gain insight into how the LRF is issuing critical emergency support, while continuing to allow projects to expand and deepen their impact.





HIGHLIGHTS



3 YEARS, 100 PROJECTS, AND \$11 MILLION INVESTED

The Lion Recovery Fund has officially supported over 100 lion conservation projects in Africa, investing \$11 million dollars in these projects since launching in 2017. In just three short years, the LRF has helped conservationists reintroduce lions into areas where they were previously extinct, remove thousands of snares, arrest hundreds of poachers, develop innovative ways for communities to coexist peacefully with lions, and so much more.



THE PERFECT STORM FOR CONSERVATION IN AFRICA

During this reporting period, LRF Director, Dr. Peter Lindsey, led the [publication of a paper in the journal *Nature Ecology and Evolution*](#) on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on conservation in Africa. That paper highlights 'the perfect storm' that the pandemic is creating for conservation in Africa, by reducing funding for conservation, restricting the operations of conservation practitioners due to lockdowns, and elevating threats to conservation—particularly via increased bushmeat poaching. The hope is that this paper will raise awareness among the international donor community of the need to elevate funding for conservation during this critical time. The COVID-19 crisis is serious for lion conservation and the LRF is adapting our approach to help mitigate the effects.



THE LRF OFFERS SUPPORT DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

With economic volatility and a large reduction in funding, primarily from the almost total cessation of tourism in Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a major challenge for conservation. During this reporting period, the LRF has issued 11 emergency grants to conservation groups facing critical budget shortfalls as a result of the pandemic. These grants comprised \$1.2 million dollars and will help ensure that critical conservation services continue and will help to minimize job losses in the conservation sector, thus helping to keep boots on the ground during this global crisis.



PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

HUMAN-WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE

Community conservation areas around Protected Areas (PAs) play a critical role in creating a buffer between parks and reserves and areas used for non-conservation land uses, such as agriculture. They are also important for connectivity among different PAs and they represent important habitat in their own right. To help ensure both wildlife and people can thrive on these community lands, the LRF supports a number of projects designed to promote coexistence between people and wildlife, involving approaches such as: tackling human-lion conflict; creating incentives to encourage people to live with and protect wildlife; supporting communities to establish, manage, and govern community conservation areas. The LRF's support in this context recognizes the critical role that communities play as custodians over wildlife.

TACKLING THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Lions are affected by the illegal wildlife trade through both the trade in lion body parts and the trade in bushmeat. The LRF supports efforts to disrupt the illegal trade in these products through projects and campaigns focused on anti-poaching, anti-trafficking, and demand reduction.

PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

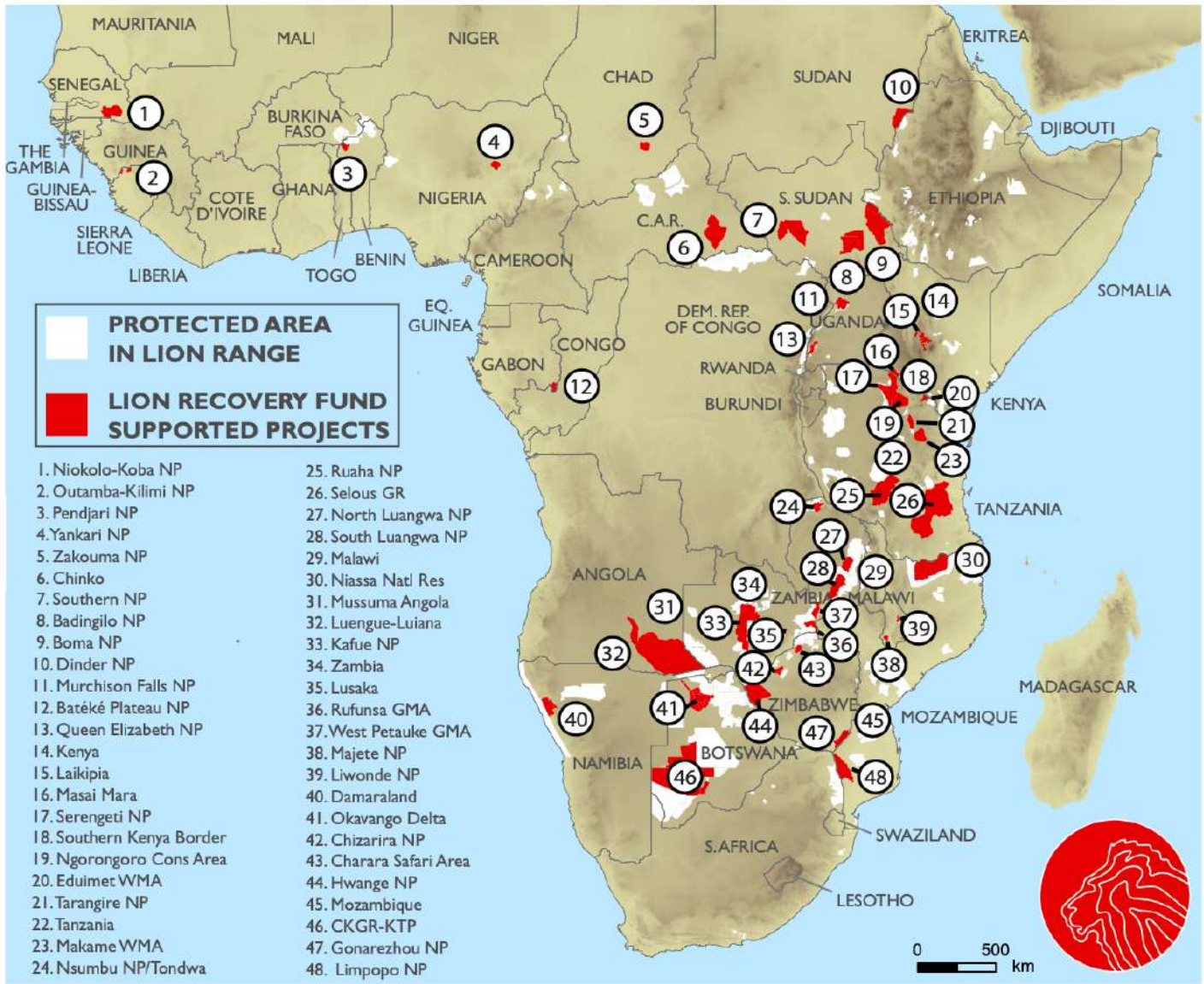
The PAs in Africa where lions occur face recurrent funding shortages totalling around \$1 billion per year. Funding shortages make PAs vulnerable to human pressures, therefore many of them are becoming gradually depleted of wildlife, including lions. Recent research suggests that if Africa's PAs were optimally managed, they could support three to four times the current number of lions remaining in the wild. Public-private partnerships between NGOs and state wildlife authorities offer significant potential to improve the effectiveness of management in Africa's protected areas. The LRF supports a wide range of such projects.

CAMPAIGNS

The LRF supports campaigns designed to build public, philanthropic, and political will for conservation. In addition, we support campaigns designed to increase public awareness around issues that are pertinent to lion conservation.

WHERE WE OPERATE

Lions once roamed from Europe to the southern tip of Africa, and from West Africa all the way to India. Today, that distribution has been dramatically reduced to just 8% of their historic range. Populations are now restricted to pockets of sub-Saharan Africa (and a small population in northern India).



PROJECTS SUPPORTED SINCE FEBRUARY 2020

HUMAN-WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE

- The **Zambezi region** in **Namibia** is critically important for lion conservation as it connects populations in Botswana with those in Angola and Zambia. At present, lions are often killed in the community areas of the Zambezi region in response to livestock predation. These retaliatory killings are threatening the connectivity in this area. To mitigate the conflict, the LRF supported the Kwando Carnivore Project to offer local communities training in improved livestock husbandry such as strengthening cattle corrals.
- Landscape and Conservation Mentors Organization (LCMO) is a small, grassroots organization that runs the WASIMA campaign: a multi-pronged campaign that engages local communities to stop illegal lion killings in southwestern **Tanzania**. A key element of this campaign is establishing village by-laws to outlaw the ritual hunting of lions by young Sukuma men, the largest nomadic agro-pastoral ethnic group in Tanzania. The LRF provided LCMO with funding to establish by-laws in more villages and to continue educating local people about protecting lions.
- Community-owned conservancies around the **Maasai Mara National Reserve** in **Kenya** effectively doubles the conservation area and provides critical space for migratory wildlife to make seasonal movements into. However, these community conservancies are facing a crisis due to the loss of tourism income during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tourism companies pay communities to lease their land and in return, the communities get paid to keep their land uncultivated and without fences. The Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) is raising emergency funding to continue this lease payment program and to help cover the operational costs for community conservancies. The LRF contributed to this, supporting the payment of rangers' salaries in the community conservancies, keeping them paid so they can continue protecting the lion population.



Olderkesi Conservancy and MMWCA

RANGERS IN OLDERKESI CONSERVANCY IN KENYA: A CONSERVANCY WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF FEMALE RANGERS IN THE ECOSYSTEM.

- The **Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem** (GMME) in **Kenya** is home to about 500 lions. Wildlife in the GMME is subject to a number of key threats, such as human-wildlife conflict. High densities of people live adjacent to the GMME, resulting in lions frequently coming in contact with livestock. Tackling human-lion conflict is critical to ensure continued local support for conservation

efforts and prevent retaliatory killings – particularly the kind that involves poisoning. The LRF supported Kenya Wildlife Trust to address human-lion conflict through the deployment of community 'Lion Ambassadors' who respond to conflict, warn communities of approaching lions, and teach livestock husbandry techniques that can minimize conflict.



Mara Predator Conservation Programme

A LION AMBASSADOR HOLDS A MEETING WITH THE YOUTH OF THE OLOISUKUT AREA TO CHAMPION SUPPORT FOR LION CONSERVATION IN KENYA'S MAASAI MARA REGION.

- The **Chobe enclave** is an area of community land surrounded by protected areas in **Botswana**, and it borders the Zambezi region of Namibia. This area is subject to intense human-lion conflict and is potentially dangerous for lions in adjacent protected areas. The LRF issued a grant to WildCru to help them tackle this conflict by employing 'community guardians,' reinforcing cattle bomas, and implementing performance payments with the locals.

- **Damaraland** in **Namibia** is a rare success story for lions. The desert lion population there went locally extinct in the 1990s, but has gradually recovered to about 120 individuals. However, with greater lion numbers came more human-lion conflict, made worse by a scarcity of prey due to severe drought. IRDNC has been given three LRF grants to help them allay this conflict by deploying 'Rapid Response' teams, strengthening corrals, and developing early warning systems for communities.
- Human-lion conflict has emerged as a serious issue in **Laikipia, Kenya**, putting both lions and human livelihoods at risk. In response, Lion Landscapes created a Lion Ranger Program to train selected National Police Reserves to address conflict rapidly, as well as a Community Coexistence Training to prevent livestock predation. The LRF has awarded Lion Landscapes three grants, with the most recent being emergency funding to sustain work from previous grants and help critical operations continue during the COVID-19 crisis.
- The LRF's third grant to SORALO provides emergency support to their work in the **Maasai Mara** and **Amboseli** ecosystems in **Kenya** during the COVID-19 crisis. With this emergency aid, SORALO has two key aims: to keep communities engaged in lion conservation and to enhance the protection of lions, their prey, and their habitat during this pandemic. By training and employing more scouts, as well as establishing a new model for community engagement, SORALO hopes to achieve both objectives.

TACKLING THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

- The LRF provided a grant to Wildlife Crime Prevention (WCP) to work with regional peer organizations to better understand the emerging lion body part trade in **Africa** using covert investigations. They will identify the source of demand, key actors involved, which body parts are most in demand, and the weak points in the trade chain. WCP will design a plan to tackle the trade in conjunction with authorities.
- The LRF is working with the Natural Resource Conservation Network (NRCN) in **Uganda** to help tackle the commercialized trade of bushmeat in the country. The LRF's funding will be used by NRCN to detect, arrest, and prosecute commercial bushmeat poachers. This funding will also support external training and mentoring for Ugandan law enforcement for the investigation and prosecution of organized wildlife crime, and will help fight corruption in wildlife crime law enforcement.

PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

- At 30,115 square miles, **Luengue-Luiana** in **Angola** is one of the world's largest protected areas. It is severely depleted of wildlife, but the park has enormous potential for lion recovery. The LRF has provided two grants to **Panthera** for law enforcement work, and recently provided a third grant to help **Panthera** overcome a major logistical bottleneck: delivery of goods to the field. This grant allows for the purchase of a 4x4

vehicle that will enable **Panthera** to bring in supplies for their work with communities and the wildlife authority.



Don Jooste

COMMUNITY GAME GUARDS IN MBAMBAMGANDO INTENSIVE PROTECTION ZONE REVIEWING ILLEGAL GIN TRAPS RECOVERED FROM POACHERS WITHIN THE INTENSIVE PROTECTION ZONE.

- Game Rangers International (GRI) provides support to law enforcement in the Game Management Areas (GMAs) east of **Kafue National Park, Zimbabwe**. The Kafue ecosystem is severely impacted by bushmeat poaching and lions are far below their potential numbers in the area. The LRF provided a grant to GRI to deploy a team of rangers in the Nkala GMA to help tackle bushmeat poaching and to keep both lions and their prey safe from snares.
- African Parks manages an area 16 times the size of Yellowstone National Park, and they have worked hard to increase their operational revenue from tourism. However, this year's tourism revenue has ceased completely due to the COVID-19 crisis. The LRF provided African Parks with a grant to ease their budget deficit and support the protection of lions across four national parks

– **Liuwa Plains** in **Zambia**, **Liwonde** and **Majete** in **Malawi**, and **Akagera** in **Rwanda**.



Drew Bantlin

A PRIDE OF LIONS FEASTING ON A HIPPO CARCASS IN RWANDA'S AKAGERA NATIONAL PARK, AN AREA SUPPORTED BY THE LRF GRANT TO AFRICAN PARKS.

- The Niassa Conservation Alliance (NCA) is a partnership among three conservation organizations in the Niassa National Reserve in **Mozambique**. Niassa is facing a major budgetary shortfall this year due to the reduction in tourism revenues. Bushmeat poaching and targeted poaching of lion body parts is also a concern. The LRF's grant will support the necessary anti-poaching work for the large, though declining, population of lions in this landscape.
- **Serengeti National Park** contains one of the largest lion populations on Earth. However, the population is threatened by snaring, and human-wildlife conflict. The status of lions in **Tanzania's Selous Game Reserve/Nyerere National Park** is unknown, but Selous is one of Africa's largest protected areas and contains a significant population. Both areas are gravely threatened by budget cuts arising from the collapse of tourism due to
- **Chizarira National Park** and the adjacent **Chirisa Safari Area** are two of the most neglected protected areas in **Zimbabwe**. National Park Rescue (NPR) is supporting the efforts of the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to manage Chizarira. The area has a substantial founder population that can provide the basis for significant recovery. The LRF supported NPR with funds to purchase a new vehicle to assist with ranger patrols, and a second grant to provide budgetary support during the COVID-19 crisis.
- The COVID-19 crisis caused a dramatic loss of income for Conservation South Luangwa, in **Zambia**, who raises a significant portion of their funding from tourism. The LRF provided an emergency grant to aid the continuation of anti-snaring and de-snaring efforts, reduction of human-wildlife conflict, and the creation of a program to hire furloughed tourism staff to deliver essential conservation services.
- Musekese Conservation (MC) has constructed a strategic anti-poaching base and recruited, trained, and outfitted two additional anti-poaching teams thanks to LRF funding. This third grant to MC will further their anti-poaching work through the addition of an aircraft for aerial patrolling and the training of more wildlife police officers under **Zambia's** Department of National Parks and Wildlife.

- The Lower Zambezi Valley constitutes over 19,300 square miles of wilderness, spanning Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mozambique. Zambezi Society is working with the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority to secure the Charara Safari Area and address bushmeat poaching and deforestation. In early 2020, the LRF issued a second grant to Zambezi Society as emergency support to the Zimbabwe Parks Authority, which faced a budgetary crisis during the COVID-19 crisis.

- Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) previously received two grants from the LRF to provide law enforcement and de-snaring support to Zambia's Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DNPW). They also helped with the translocation of lion prey species. While North Luangwa already holds a large lion population, the species has all but disappeared from Nsumbu. The partnership between FZS and DNPW offers hope that the landscape will one day be home to a large lion population once more. The LRF provided emergency funding to maintain FZS's critical operations during the COVID-19 crisis.

CAMPAIGNS

- The LRF has provided two grants to WildAid to launch and sustain a communications campaign in Tanzania aimed at raising public awareness around the conservation of lions and threats facing the species. The campaign

works to encourage behavioral change that would alleviate threats to lions and other wildlife, and raises awareness of how valuable wildlife is to Tanzania, currently and for generations to come.

- Until recently, lions were at a real risk of going extinct in Malawi. In 2019, Lilongwe Wildlife Trust received an LRF grant to embark upon a social and behavioral change communications campaign to reframe the lion as an asset for Malawi, as well as raise awareness about the threats lions face. A second grant was issued in 2020 to provide anti-trafficking support, to disrupt the commercial trade in bushmeat, and to engage with authorities on bushmeat poaching.



Credit: Lilongwe Wildlife Trust

REPRESENTATIVES FROM MALAWI'S MINISTRY OF HEALTH, MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AND THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE HELD A PANEL DISCUSSION ABOUT A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO END EATING BUSHMEAT.

LRF IMPACT TO DATE:



\$11
Million
Granted



39,914
Snares
Removed



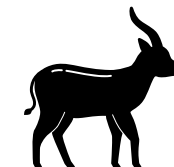
1,821
Poachers
Arrested



967
People
Employed by
Help from LRF
Funding



52%
of Lion
Population
Affected by
Grants



64,160
Pounds of
Bushmeat
Confiscated



107
PROJECTS



21
COUNTRIES



44
GRANTEES



WE ARE HERE FOR LIONS AND FOR YOU

We cannot fully express the awe and gratitude we have for the support of our donors and friends. Because you generously stepped up to support conservation during these uncertain times, the LRF has been able to support dozens of conservation organizations and hundreds of team members so they can continue the important fight for lion recovery.

This year has been tough, and unfortunately, the consistent message coming from the field is that the situation will likely get worse before getting better. We are already looking ahead to 2021, anticipating that threats will remain high and funds will become critically short as funding reserves are depleted. As always, we do not shrink from a challenge and instead, we are adapting and preparing to ensure lions are protected through these difficult circumstances. While emergency relief funding is going to remain a key focus of the LRF, we are also identifying a number of sites of particular potential for lion conservation, where we will invest more deeply than ever before.

Thank you again to our loyal supporters. We know everyone is facing their own challenges so please let us know if there is anything we can do for you; we are always here to answer your questions and to keep you connected to the critical work that you are supporting. If it were not for you, the LRF would simply not be able to have the impact it is having at keeping lions, their habitats, and their prey safe.



lionrecoveryfund.org

