

A close-up, front-facing portrait of a lioness. The lioness has light brown fur with darker stripes on its face and ears. Its eyes are a golden-brown color, and it has a serious expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus warm tone.

LION RECOVERY FUND

FEBRUARY 2021
PROGRESS REPORT



THE LION RECOVERY FUND HAS SUPPORTED
145 LION CONSERVATION PROJECTS IN AFRICA,
INVESTING \$18 MILLION IN THESE PROJECTS
SINCE LAUNCHING IN 2017.



AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

2020 was a rollercoaster of a year for the Lion Recovery Fund (LRF), and an extremely challenging one for conservation in Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic created a perfect storm of reduced funding for conservation and increased threats, particularly elevated bushmeat poaching. Revenue for conservation overall declined for a variety of reasons, including stock market volatility, economic downturns, lockdowns, and the dramatic halt of tourism. These challenges have severely reduced the operational budgets of many African wildlife authorities and pose a risk of operations being scaled back or rangers being laid off.

Against these odds, 2020 was a record year for the LRF as our donors stayed with us, and **we awarded \$9.7 million directly into lion conservation efforts**, more than in the last three years combined. During 2020, the LRF issued over \$2 million in COVID emergency grants that are designed to ensure that essential conservation services continue, like keeping rangers employed and active in the field. In addition, we invested \$1.5 million in catalytic grants designed to kickstart new conservation initiatives, including the founding of a new innovative organization, Conserve, with potential to have transformational impact for lion conservation. We also made deeper investments than ever before in landscapes with great potential for lion conservation, such as the Chinko Nature Reserve in the Central African Republic.

We hope you are satisfied to see the progress of the LRF and our partners on the ground, despite the backdrop of such a challenging year for everyone. We are eternally grateful for all of our donors who have shown tremendous support amidst such hard times. In this report, we provide insights into some of the many projects you helped support in this most notable year.



THE LION RECOVERY FUND HAS HELPED
REMOVE **43,354 SNARES** FROM CRITICAL
LION HABITAT AND CONFISCATED **95,000**
POUNDS OF ILLEGAL BUSHMEAT.



HIGHLIGHTS

STRENGTHENING WILDLIFE AUTHORITIES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Many of the projects the LRF supports are partnerships between NGOs and wildlife authorities aimed at improving the management of protected areas. In 2020, the LRF provided significant support to the Mozambique Wildlife Alliance (MWA), who works in partnership with the National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC), the local wildlife authority. This grant will significantly boost the capacity of ANAC to treat wounded animals, translocate wildlife, tackle human-wildlife conflict, and combat the illegal wildlife trade. MWA is a start-up NGO and the LRF's early investment will help mobilize their ability to attract other funding.



SPARKING CONSERVATION ACTION IN NEGLECTED LANDSCAPES

A key part of the LRF strategy is to kickstart conservation action in the vast landscapes that receive little or no investment and management. These landscapes, which make up the majority of Africa's protected areas, are at a very high risk of being lost due to human encroachment and illegal activities. The LRF provided over \$1 million to start a new conservation NGO called Conserve, which will transform former sport hunting areas into conservation landscapes. In addition, we supported two major conservation efforts in neglected landscapes in the Central African Republic, and provided one of our largest grants ever to introduce conservation management to neglected sections of Mozambique's Niassa Special Reserve.



INCENTIVIZING COMMUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN CONSERVATION

The LRF is supporting a growing portfolio of 'performance payment' projects, where communities are rewarded for successfully conserving wildlife on their land. These projects effectively hire communities as custodians over nature. Performance payment projects incentivize conservation, create employment, help tackle poverty, and depart from traditional—and often ineffective—development initiatives by hiring communities to deliver conservation services, rather than providing charity. To date, the LRF has supported performance payment projects in Namibia, Botswana, Mozambique, and Tanzania.



PARTNERS SUPPORTED SINCE AUGUST 2020

African Parks, African People & Wildlife, Bhejane Trust, BioCarbon Partners Trust, Cheetah Conservation Botswana, CLAWS Conservancy, Conservation and Wildlife Fund, Conservation Lower Zambezi, Conserve, Flying for Wildlife, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Kalahari Wildlands Trust, Kalahari Research and Conservation, KopeLion, Landscape and Conservation Mentors Organization, Mozambique Wildlife Alliance, Niassa Carnivore Project, PAMS Foundation, Panthera, Save Valley Conservancy, Saving the Survivors, Uganda Conservation Foundation, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Crime Prevention, Community Conservation Fund of Namibia, Zambezi Society, Zambian Carnivore Programme, Zoological Society of London.

To see all the latest LRF grants please visit
lionrecoveryfund.org/projects



PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

PROTECTING CORE AREAS FOR LIONS

The protected areas (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.

HUMAN WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE

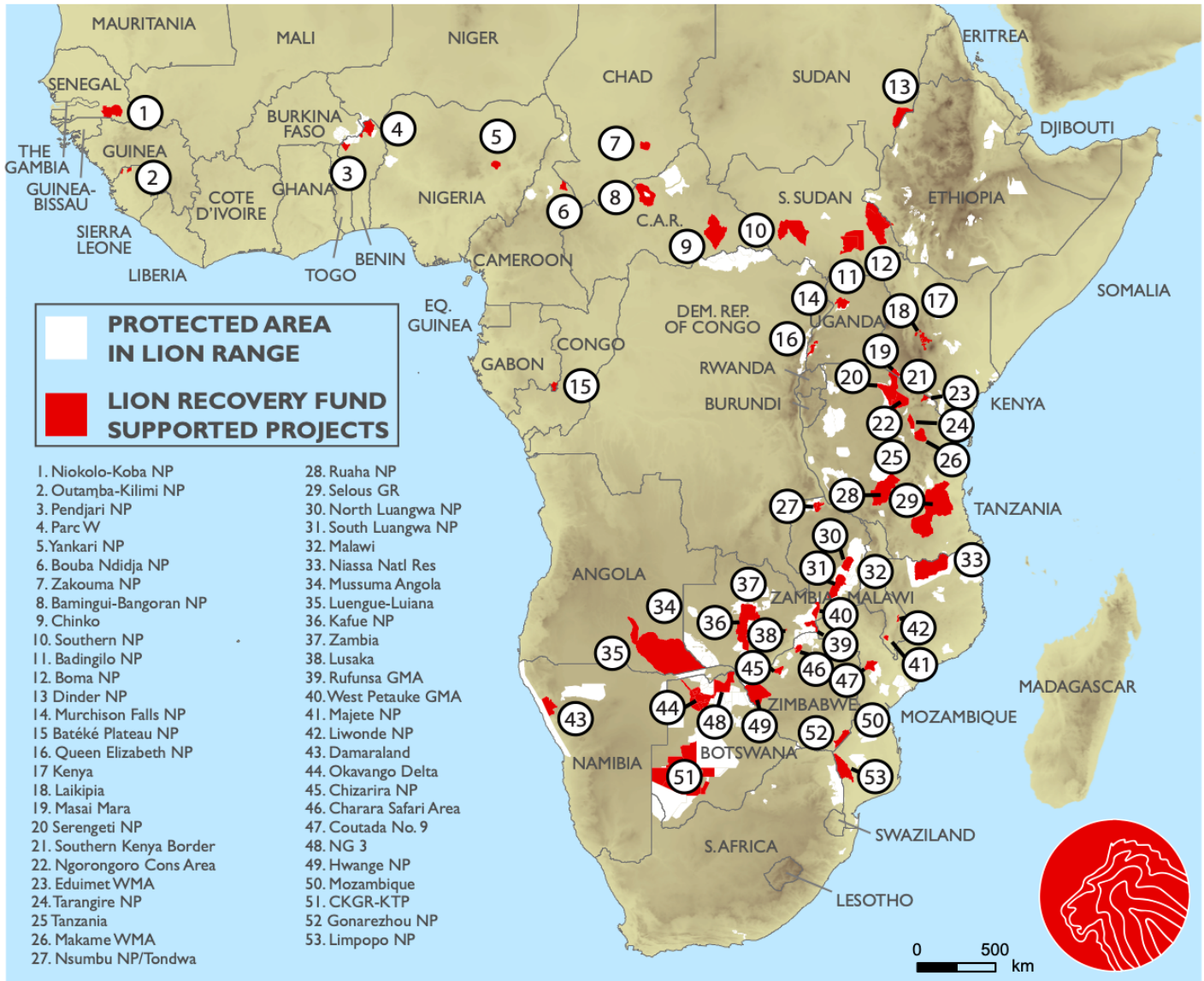
The community lands that occur around and between protected areas have a critically important role as buffers and for connectivity and represent important habitat in their own right. The LRF supports a number of projects designed to promote coexistence between people and wildlife, involving approaches 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.

THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

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

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

PROTECTING CORE AREAS FOR LIONS

The LRF invested a record grant of \$840,000 to support the work of [African Parks](#) in the vast Chinko wilderness of Eastern Central African Republic (CAR). CAR has enormous potential for lion conservation because it has large, unpopulated wilderness areas. In addition to incredible potential for lion recovery, the savanna-forest mosaic in Chinko is hyper-biodiverse. This means the LRF grant will help conserve many other species, including bongo antelope, Lord Derby eland, yellow-backed duiker, African golden cats, African wild dogs, and chimpanzees.



The Serengeti possibly contains the largest lion population on Earth. Despite being one of the world's most iconic parks, the Serengeti is under major pressure from a variety of human threats, including bushmeat snaring and illegal livestock as well as a reduced income due to the loss of tourism. During 2020, the LRF granted a total of \$485,000 to [Frankfurt Zoological Society's](#) (FZS) work in Serengeti National Park to support de-snaring as well as teams that are designed to tackle illegal livestock grazing in the park. Since LRF started supporting this project 2 years ago, thousands of snares have been removed and hundreds of livestock found grazing illegally have been confiscated.



Selous Game Reserve is one of the largest protected areas in Africa. The Tanzanian authorities are suffering from reduced income due to COVID-19's impact on tourism. The LRF provided \$415,000 in funding to support [Frankfurt Zoological Society's](#) efforts of facilitating the conservation work of the Tanzanian authorities. This funding helps ensure that essential conservation services continue, and that threats like bushmeat poaching and illegal livestock incursions continue to be controlled.



Lion numbers in Central Africa have declined steeply in recent years, yet Bouba Ndjida National Park contains a significant population of 80-100 lions. [Wildlife Conservation Society](#) works with Cameroonian authorities to support the management of the park and its surrounding buffer areas. This grant will tackle key threats to lions, including bushmeat poaching, illegal livestock incursions from nomadic herders, and human-lion conflict. In addition, the grant will support systematic monitoring of the lion population via camera-trapping, which will help WCS measure the impact of conservation efforts. Lions and other wildlife populations are under significant pressure in Cameroon and this grant will significantly bolster efforts to secure this important piece of lion country.



Niassa Special Reserve is a massive protected area of 16,216 sq. miles in northern Mozambique that houses Mozambique's largest lion population, over 800 individuals. However, lions are now declining due to a swathe of human pressures, such as the poaching of lions and their prey, and illegal wildlife trade. The LRF provided a record grant to [Niassa Carnivore Project](#) (NCP) of over \$850,000, over the course of three years, for a collaborative project to strengthen anti-poaching efforts and monitoring while incentivizing community engagement across 50% of the reserve to help stem the decline in lion numbers. NCP works in partnership with the Government of Mozambique and Niassa Special Reserve's management authority.

PROJECTS SUPPORTED

HUMAN WILDLIFE COEXISTENCE

CLAWS Conservancy works with local people to reduce human-lion conflict and improve livestock management and associated livelihoods through communal herding in the northern Okavango Delta in Botswana. Their work with communities has drastically reduced retaliatory poisoning of lions in response to human-lion conflict. However, CLAWS has reached the stage where it needs to strengthen its human resources and develop a strategy to ensure sustainability and scaling of impact. The LRF provided CLAWS with a grant of \$80,000 to help with strategic planning and to build its local leadership capacity.



The LRF issued several grants, collectively worth \$300,000, to Cheetah Conservation Botswana and Kalahari Research and Conservation in the Wildlife Management Areas adjacent to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park and Central Kalahari Game Reserve in Botswana. These grants will support the development of performance payments programs, whereby local communities are rewarded for effective wildlife conservation and for observing agreed upon rules related to the management and distribution of wildlife. These programs build on local communities' desire to pursue wildlife-based livelihoods and help to position local people as wildlife custodians.



Similar to the performance payments grants in Botswana, the LRF issued a grant of \$200,000 to the Community Conservation Fund of Namibia (CCFN) to develop a wildlife credits program. Wildlife credits reward communities for the documented presence of wildlife on their lands through collared lions, thus creating strong incentives for conservation. The credits—which are paid for by international conservation investors—are dispersed to local communities to offset the costs they incur from living with wildlife. To aid sustainability, CCFN, with the World Wildlife Fund in Namibia as their partner, is developing an endowment that will yield annual returns to help cover the wildlife credits payments.



THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

The bushmeat trade is the single greatest threat to wildlife in Zambia. The LRF issued a grant of \$104,000 to Wildlife Crime Prevention to help them establish a focused anti-bushmeat program. This grant will be used to tackle the bushmeat trade in three ways: first, through intelligence-led law enforcement to help tackle the crime rings engaged in commercialized bushmeat trade; second, by providing judiciary support to promote consistent sentencing in line with the law; third, to encourage behavior change by increasing awareness among the general public of the dangers associated with consuming bushmeat.



The Mozambique Wildlife Alliance (MWA) has developed a partnership with the National Administration of Conservation Areas (ANAC) to deliver a variety of wildlife-related services in Mozambique, a country that suffers severe funding shortages for conservation. The LRF provided Saving the Survivors—a partner of MWA—an initial grant of \$115,000. Since June, MWA saved seven lions from snares, translocated three lions to safety from dangerous environments, and collared 22 lions for close monitoring and protection. Due to such success, the LRF issued a grant of \$300,000 to allow for significant strengthening of MWA as an entity, and to enable them to deliver veterinary interventions, reducing human-wildlife conflict, and tackling the illegal wildlife trade.



LRF IMPACT TO DATE



\$18M

GRANTED



145

PROJECTS



43,354

SNARES
REMOVED



21

COUNTRIES

YOUR SUPPORT SAVES LIONS

All of us at WCN would like to express our deepest and warmest gratitude to every single person, foundation, zoo, and company that has supported the Lion Recovery Fund. We guarantee that every single cent given goes directly to the field, with zero overhead taken.

While we are thrilled that the LRF had such a tremendous impact in 2020, we are acutely aware that the situation in 2021 is likely to be tougher still. Tourism has not yet recovered, and revenues are unlikely to resemble anything near normal levels. This means that our partners will continue facing budget shortfalls, creating a real risk that conservation operations will have to be scaled back, leaving wildlife exposed. The LRF will continue to do all we can to support our partners and to address lion conservation needs even during the most difficult times.

Thank you again for your support. If you ever have any questions about how the LRF works, or how your contributions are making a difference for lions, do not hesitate to reach out to us. Rest assured, the gifts you provided in 2020 are having real impact at keeping lions, their prey, and their habitats safe.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

We would love to know what you thought of this report. We hope you will take a very short, anonymous [3 question survey](#) to help us improve how we share news from the LRF. We also welcome questions, ideas, or feedback anytime—feel free to email us at info@lionrecoveryfund.org



lionrecoveryfund.org

