

LION RECOVERY FUND

AUGUST 2021
PROGRESS REPORT





AN UNPRECEDENTED YEAR

So far, 2021 has been a year of intense challenges and great opportunities. The difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic persist, from funding shortages to ongoing bushmeat poaching. But we also see the potential to recover some of Africa's most incredible landscapes for lions and other wildlife. Our top concern now is to close that funding gap so that we have the means to make those opportunities a reality. Your generous support is so critical in helping to get resources to the field and to ensure we keep lions and their landscapes protected during these arduous times.

The Wildlife Conservation Network's Lion Recovery Fund (LRF) continues to support conservation groups with emergency grants in light of the nightmare scenario posed by the pandemic. Africa's tourism industry remains under pressure due to travel restrictions, leaving many conservation groups with loss of revenue. For example, approximately 90% of Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit's (VFAPU) income normally comes from tourism, but this has been reduced to a trickle during the pandemic. There has also been a major uptick in bushmeat snaring in the last year. The LRF stepped in and provided funding to help VFAPU protect 120,000 acres around Victoria Falls and prevent further losses of lions and other species.

The LRF is not just about lions, but landscapes as well. New research, coauthored by LRF Director, Peter Lindsey, shows that just 10% of Africa's protected areas are effectively managed and that more than 80% are in a state of failure or decline. To this end, we are constantly looking for opportunities to help catalyze conservation action in neglected landscapes, such as the support we gave to Fauna and Flora International to re-establish management in South Sudan's vast Southern National Park.

While the neglect of so many of Africa's wild places is a cause for real concern, such areas also pose immense opportunities to achieve conservation gains. Time and time again, we see opportunities in incredible landscapes to protect lions, their prey, and their habitats. Quite simply, the more funds we raise, the more areas we can conserve. The work reported here would not be possible without you, our network of exceptional donors.

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**WE REMAIN DEEPLY GRATEFUL
FOR YOUR SUPPORT.**

THEMES FROM RECENT FUNDING

Catalyzing Action

With human populations growing rapidly, under-managed and neglected protected areas (PAs)—like parks and reserves—quickly succumb to human pressures such as poaching or encroachment by people and livestock. This makes the installation of a conservation management presence into neglected PAs the single most important focus of the LRF.

New Initiatives

Emerging conservation groups often struggle to secure funding as donors can be reluctant to support those without a proven track record. Unlike many other funders, the LRF is willing to take the risks investing in ‘conservation startups’ with big potential, thanks to our strong due diligence and vetting. Key examples in recent months include major investments to kickstart [Conserve Global](#), a new NGO that aims to bring abandoned hunting blocks under conservation management, and the [Mozambique Wildlife Alliance](#), which will act as a service provider for the critically under-resourced Mozambican state wildlife authority.

Emergency Grants

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to place conservation efforts under great strain, including the halt of tourism and elevated pressure on wildlife from bushmeat poaching. These factors mean that fewer resources are available at a time when pressures are greater. The LRF continues to step in when conservation groups experience budgetary crises as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. To date, the LRF has provided \$2.1 million in relief funding in response to the pandemic.

Flexible Funding

The LRF prides itself on being a nimble, flexible, low-administrative, and transparent funder. As we develop trusted relationships with grantees, we are working on issuing less restricted funding and tying it to specific outcomes, rather than tying it to specific budget lines. This will enable grantees to be more adaptable to changing circumstances and help them cover essential items that are difficult to fund. These steps are part of our wider efforts to ensure maximum impact of our funding.





\$19M
GRANTED



21
COUNTRIES



158
PROJECTS





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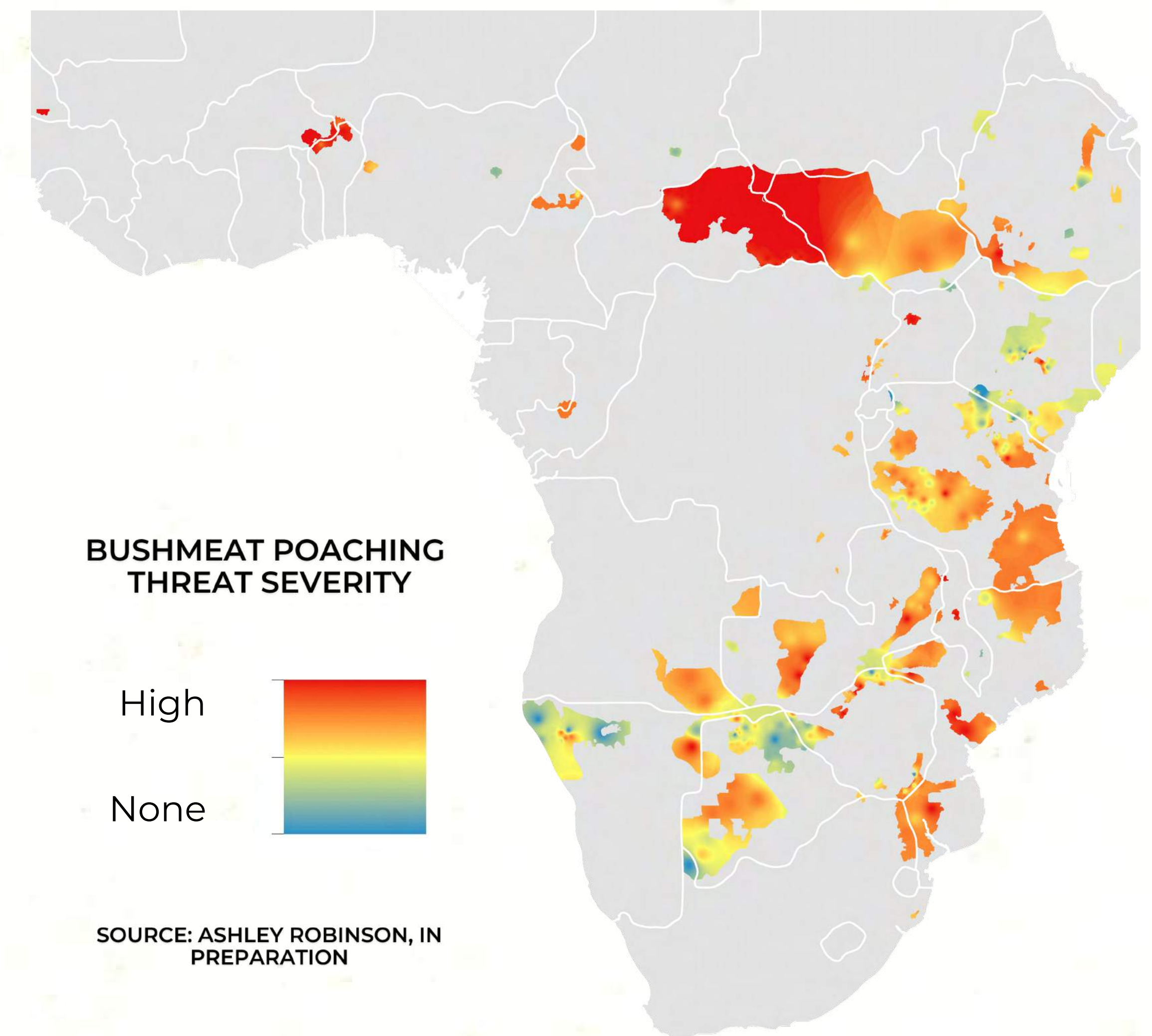


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BUSHMEAT POACHING

BUSHMEAT POACHING IS ONE OF THE MOST SEVERE AND WIDESPREAD THREATS THAT LIONS FACE IN AFRICA.

Where socio-economic and cultural circumstances make people reliant on bushmeat for food and income, lions can suffer through reductions in prey and as unintended victims of snares and traps. Addressing bushmeat poaching is an important aspect of LRF funding; we invest in projects for effective protected area management, community development, and education programs which reduce this threat to lions and other wildlife species.



PHOTOS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: LION PELTS AND OTHER WILDLIFE PARTS IN ANGOLA. A TRAP USED TO KILL WILDLIFE FOR BUSHMEAT.

THE LION RECOVERY FUND HAS HELPED REMOVE
64,801 SNARES FROM CRITICAL LION HABITAT AND
CONFISCATED **102,586 POUNDS OF ILLEGAL BUSHMEAT.**



CATEGORIES OF PROJECTS SUPPORTED SINCE FEBRUARY 2021

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.

Conservation Planning

The LRF supports a range of activities associated with conservation planning that have potential to move the needle for the conservation of lions, lion prey, and lion habitats.

Protected Area Management

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.

PARTNERS SUPPORTED SINCE FEBRUARY 2021

Conservation Lower Zambezi, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Fauna & Flora International, Honeyguide, Kenya Wildlife Trust, Landscape and Conservation Mentors Organization, Leo Foundation, Musekese Conservation, Savé Valley Conservancy, SORALO, Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit.

PHOTO ON RIGHT: MUSEKESE RANGER REMOVING A BUSHMEAT SNARE.





Kenya Wildlife Trust

HUMAN-LION COEXISTENCE

The Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem (GMME) in Kenya is home to about 500 lions and is of critical importance to the conservation of the species. 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 wildlife areas of the GMME, resulting in lions frequently coming into contact with livestock. Tackling human-lion conflict is critical to ensure continued local support for conservation efforts and to prevent retaliatory killings. The LRF supported [Kenya Wildlife Trust](#) to address human-lion conflict through the deployment of community ambassadors that respond to conflict incidences, warn communities of the approach of lions, and raise awareness about livestock husbandry techniques needed to minimize conflict. This project is of critical importance in promoting coexistence between people and lions and helping protect the integrity of Kenya's largest lion population.

Honeyguide

IMPROVING LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Makame Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in northern Tanzania comprises 1406 sq. miles of village land—an area larger than Yosemite National Park. This area retains significant wildlife populations, including a small population of lions, but it currently lacks significant management support. The LRF provided a grant to [Honeyguide](#) to help them improve law enforcement and protection in the area, raise the capacity of communities to manage the WMA, and build the governance capacity of the WMA. By strengthening the community governance and management of the area, it can become self-sustaining in the future.

PHOTOS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: THE MAKAME RANGER TEAM RESPONDING TO AN INCIDENT. PASTORALIST MAASAI COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN TANZANIA.



SORALO

SECURING CONNECTIVITY FOR LIONS

This project is focused on securing and improving connectivity for lions in the rangelands between the Maasai Mara and Amboseli ecosystems in Tanzania. Working with five sub-divided group ranches, [SORALO](#) aims to secure safe spaces and pathways of tolerance for lions by protecting lion habitat and prey populations, monitoring lion movement, responding to and preventing human-lion conflict, and working with local communities to develop conservation and land use plans that facilitate coexistence between wildlife and people. These plans will also help to protect the traditional pastoralist lifestyles of the local Masai people. The LRF has given four grants to support this project's five objectives, the latest will support the project over the next two years. This funding will help to secure existing lion populations in the landscape and create conditions conducive for lion recovery in areas with significant conservation potential. These efforts could help re-establish and protect a lion population that is significant in its own right, and help secure connectivity between the Mara, Amboseli, and northern Tanzania lion populations.

Leo Foundation

ASSESSING THREATS TO LIONS

There have been reports in recent months of major human pressures on Waza National Park in Cameroon, posing existential threats for the lion population there. Through the [Leo Foundation](#), the LRF has invested a small grant to support a team of Cameroonian nationals on a mission to assess the status of wildlife populations and threats affecting the park. This report will then be used to work with the government to develop solutions and attract conservation partners to help protect the park before it is completely overcome by human pressures.

Victoria Falls Anti Poaching Unit

EMERGENCY FUNDING FOR ANTI-POACHING

The [Victoria Falls Anti Poaching Unit](#) (VFAPU) conducts anti-poaching patrols across 212 sq. miles of Zambezi National Park and the adjacent Matetsi Safari Area in Zimbabwe. They are currently facing twin challenges stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic: lack of donations due to the cessation of international travel and a spike in snaring as poverty has increased. This has hit lions hard and has resulted in six individuals being killed in snares in recent months. The LRF stepped in and provided VFAPU with \$45,000 in emergency funding, with an additional \$25,000 match that will be released if they can raise an equivalent amount from other sources. It is hoped that this match will stimulate donations from local businesses. These funds will enable VFAPU to continue operating during this period of crisis.

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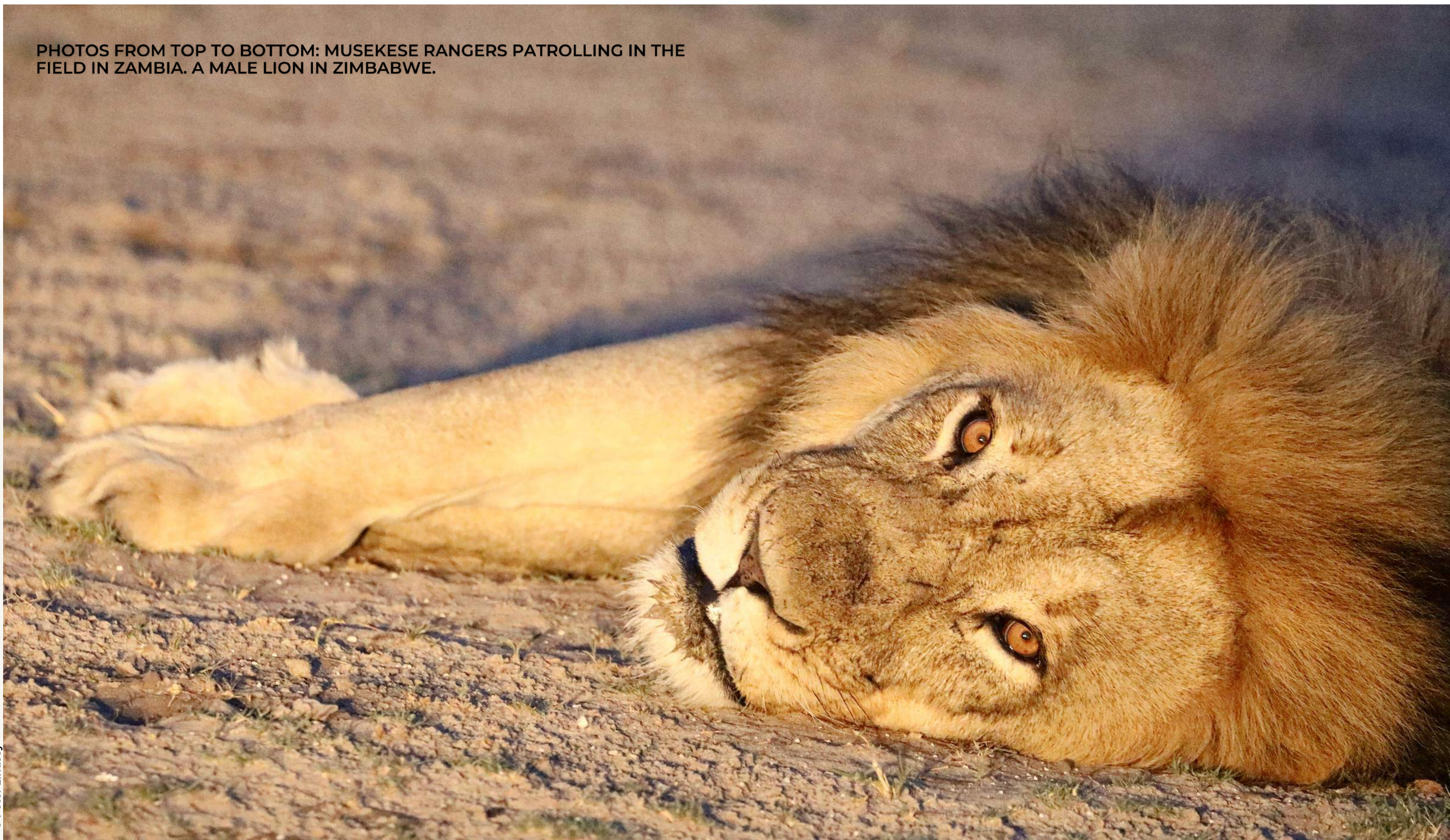
PHOTOS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: MUSEKESE RANGERS PATROLLING IN THE FIELD IN ZAMBIA. A MALE LION IN ZIMBABWE.

Musekese Conservation

TACKLING BUSHMEAT POACHING

[Musekese Conservation](#) is a nonprofit conservation initiative of a small tourism outfit, Jeffrey & McKeith Safaris, based in Kafue National Park in Zambia. They are working with Panthera to set up a second Intensive Protection Zone in northern Kafue to tackle the threat posed by bushmeat poaching. Lions in the area are suppressed by the reduction in prey densities that occurred due to bushmeat poaching. The LRF has provided three grants to Musekese to help them build and strengthen an anti-poaching presence—the most direct way to tackle this threat. With our support, they are now able to deploy three anti-poaching units and an airplane for aerial surveillance, which is critical to help secure the vast landscape from poaching. In early 2021, the LRF provided a fourth grant to Musekese that will enable them to expand their teams to six, providing a heightened level of protection for lions and their prey.

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Conservation Lower Zambezi

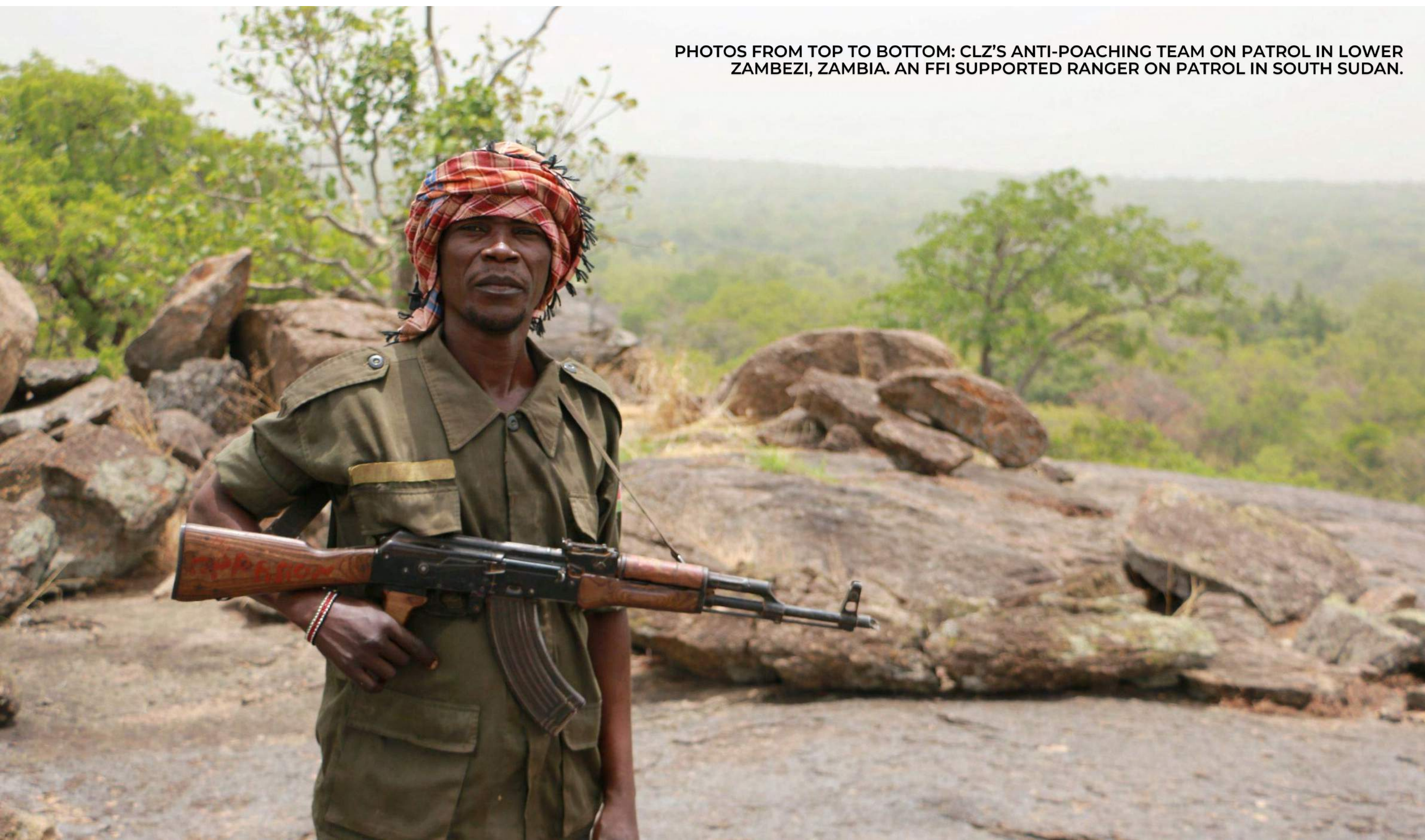
EXPANDING ANTI-POACHING

Due to a shortage of resources, [Conservation Lower Zambezi](#), (CLZ) was not able to provide significant support for the management and protection of the Rufunsa Game Management Area, Zambia. With a grant from the LRF, they will expand their anti-poaching efforts into the Rufunsa area, which is expected to reduce the prevalence of bushmeat poaching and allow prey populations, and ultimately lion populations, to increase. This can also pave the way for the incorporation of an additional 1,158 sq. miles in the project area, with significant potential for lion recovery. In August 2020 and April 2021, the LRF issued emergency grants to help CLZ cope with funding shortfalls from the loss of tourist income due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Endangered Wildlife Trust

TACKLING LION AND BUSHMEAT POACHING

In recent years, the lions of Limpopo National Park in Mozambique have suffered from intense poaching for their body parts. In response to this, the LRF provided [Endangered Wildlife Trust](#) with a grant to monitor lions in Limpopo to guide law enforcement efforts to allow for targeted protection. The landscape has enormous potential for lion recovery, but that will not be possible until both lion and bushmeat poaching are brought under control. This grant will make a significant difference in protecting lions from poaching and laying the foundation for their recovery. It also provides monitoring in the adjacent Kruger National Park in South Africa, which has also been affected by the targeted poaching of lions. A better understanding of the lion population dynamics in Kruger is critical to help guide their management and protection.



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PHOTOS FROM TOP TO BOTTOM: CLZ'S ANTI-POACHING TEAM ON PATROL IN LOWER ZAMBEZI, ZAMBIA. AN FFI SUPPORTED RANGER ON PATROL IN SOUTH SUDAN.

Fauna and Flora International

RE-ESTABLISHING PARK MANAGEMENT

South Sudan's wildlife areas have been decimated by decades of civil war. As the country gradually returns to peace, there is now an opportunity to re-establish effective management in the country's iconic national parks. Southern National Park is South Sudan's largest protected area with massive potential for lion recovery, though the current status of the species in the area is unknown. The LRF granted [Fauna and Flora International](#) to help them work with the South Sudanese authorities to reassert a management presence in the park. In June 2021, the LRF issued a second grant of \$200,000 to support ongoing work in the park. There are few areas in Africa that have greater recovery potential for lions.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY

Our hope is that the COVID-19 pandemic will instill a much greater sense of urgency into global leaders regarding the need to protect lions, their prey, and their habitats. The pandemic has emphasized, in shocking fashion, the price of human abuse of nature. Protecting biodiversity and wild landscapes is of existential importance to us as a global community, and the LRF is working hard to play a key role in that protection.

We cannot emphasize enough that while our focus and passion is for lions, the LRF is about so much more. The majority of our grants are invested in protecting landscapes, promoting coexistence between people and wildlife, and tackling the illegal wildlife trade. These investments benefit all biodiversity, help protect habitats, and secure critical ecosystem services—such as carbon sequestration, protecting watersheds, and bolstering livelihoods.

We would like to express our sincerest thanks to our supporters. Your gifts do make a difference—we use them very efficiently and invest them extremely carefully to ensure maximum conservation impact.



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Recovery
Fund**

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