



**A CASE STUDY ON PROVIDING MULTIPLE SPACES FOR A
MIXED GENDER GROUP OF AFRICAN LIONS
AT KNOWSLEY SAFARI**



Based on work carried out during 2017/18 and information from a presentation given at the ABWAK 2018 Big Cat Keepers Workshop at Marwell Wildlife Park.



Overview

In 2017 a pride of 2.4 African lions were housed in a paddock area as part of a drive past area within the main safari reserves at Knowsley Safari. Initially the first two paddocks were given in the first six months, after moving the tigers into a new enclosure a third paddock was available and given over to the pride. This new paddock effectively doubled the space that was on offer to the lions.

- The three paddocks seen below were the following approximate sizes with a total size of **1.4 acre**.
Paddock 1 - 0.2 acre.
Paddock 2 - 0.5 acre.
Paddock 3 - 0.7 acre.
- The paddocks were aligned in a semi circle shape with the house at one end. Each of the paddocks were accessed by one tunnel each with two fence lines in between each of the paddocks.

From 2020 this pride of lions no longer lives at Knowsley.



Paddock 1

These pictures and the two on the previous page show Paddock 1. Below you can see Paddock 3 in the background and below that you can see where it is linked to paddock 2. This paddock as the smallest available to the lions and contained a sand bed and several large fallen logs.





Paddock 2

These pictures show paddock 2 known as the middle paddock, it is the longest paddock and consisted of several smaller trees, several fallen logs, a pond area and a large three levelled platform/shelter. Above you can see the link to Paddock 1 and the house in the background.

Paddock 3

These pictures show paddock 3, the largest paddock available to the lions. This area is on a slope, getting higher towards the back. It consisted of two maturing areas of young trees providing ample shade for the lions as well as a large platform/shelter. This was the enclosure favoured mostly by the pride who enjoyed the vantage points from the top of the enclosure as well as the natural cover from the trees.



Why are multiple spaces important?

- Well known for being group living cats, lions in the wild live in a fission-fusion society. Prides may grow to be 20 plus strong but it is rare for all of these individuals to be together all of the time. Sub groups will often be formed with some individuals even spending time alone on occasions. This is particularly true for males, especially when females are not in season the males.
- The multiple paddocks give the lions freedom to spend time in spaces that are obviously different. The males would often be seen resting in another paddock away from the females when girls were not in season.
- If aggressive altercations did happen within the group these would often be dispersed as the individual/s affected moved into a different paddock, given time to calm down naturally once ready the individual could then integrate back into the group.
- The lions were given the freedom to choose where they wanted to rest and interact over a wide area available to them 24/7. This gave the individuals the opportunity to be together only when they want to be, this helped to lower tensions within the group.

