

LEARN ABOUT LIONS

The African Lion is in trouble, please become a part of our *Learn About Lions* project and help us spread the word about this iconic species to make people aware of the plight these lions face in the wild.



Lions are the worlds only **social living cat**. Living in groups means that they can live very differently to other cat species. They work together to defend their territory and with the help of each other they can hunt much larger prey. The females live in a group called a **pride**. A pride is made up of related females and their cubs.

Even though they live in a group the lionesses may spend a lot of their time separately or in smaller sub groups only coming together as the whole pride every now and then. As a pride becomes bigger it is more likely that these smaller sub

groups may permanently split from the others and become their own pride. Lionesses are incredibly defensive and protective of their home territory and they will fight with other prides if they enter their land. The males will leave their birth pride at around 2 years old and generally form a group with other males of the same age known as a **coalition**. These groups of males will fight against each other over territories that contain a pride of females. The more males you have, the more likely you are to control more than one pride. Once in control while patrolling their territory the males may visit the females and can be very tolerant around their cubs. On average a male lion coalition will rule a pride for about 2-3 years, this gives their cubs enough time to reach maturity before new males take over, this is very important as new male lions will kill all cubs under a year old.

Due to their complex social dynamics lions need a lot of space in the wild to behave naturally. This can lead to many problems with the humans that live around them.

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www.safinalionconservation.org



SAFINA LION CONSERVATION FUND

QUICK FACTS

DID YOU KNOW THAT..

- The lion was once one of the most widespread large land mammals on the planet.
- Between 1993-2014 the African lion has declined in the wild by 42%.
- The most recent population estimate leads us to believe that the wild lion population could be as low as 23,000.
- Botswana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Tanzania and South Africa are thought to be the only countries to hold more than 1,000 lions.
- The African lion is currently listed by the IUCN as **vulnerable** with the west African lion currently listed as **critically endangered** with an estimated population of only 404.

Lions like most animals suffer from **loss of habitat**. In Africa more and more areas are now being used for commercial farming. Not only does this mean that lions have less places to live, it also restricts their movement. Many areas close to existing lion populations are now being **over grazed by cattle**. Cattle can have a massive impact on an eco-system and by over grazing certain landscapes they can cause lion prey species to leave an area.

With their **habitat becoming fragmented** and also shrinking lions are now at a much higher risk of **inbreeding** which could lead to reproductive problems and problems with immunity and **diseases** over time.

When prey species are scarce lions may face **conflict with the local community** and may attack and eat cows and other livestock. Unfortunately cows are very valuable and are hugely important to the way of life to many people in Africa. Because of this lions

are often killed by farmers when cattle are stolen or killed. Sadly because of the level of human encroachment this particular threat is one of the most common causes of lion deaths. Poison is the most common weapon used but this can be devastating not only to lions but to other predators and scavengers too. **Bushmeat** and **poaching** also threaten lions as their bones and body parts are used for local medicines or to become part of the illegal wildlife trade.

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