

# COEXISTENCE PROJECT

Linking together all of our donations to support work with communities and the local people to promote coexistence with wild lions.

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**Safina Lion Conservation Fund** - Registered Charity in England and Wales 1172709



## Our Objectives

The Safina Lion Conservation Fund is a UK charity founded in April 2017 by a small group of people interested in lions and dedicated to aiding conservation efforts to save them in the wild. The charity is run entirely by volunteers and 100% of all funds that reach us go towards our charitable objectives and do not cover administration costs.

Like any other charitable organisation we have a set of objectives that all of the work we carry out must link to. Here at the Safina Lion Conservation Fund we go by the following:

**1) To promote for the benefit of the public the conservation and protection of lions by:**

**A) Supporting conservation projects in such ways that are charitable. B) Conserving and protecting the natural habitat of lions. C) Supporting and publishing research into the conservation and husbandry of lions**

**2) To advance the education of the public in lion and wildlife conservation by such means as the trustees decide including through the support and publishing of research.**

## Our Conservation Strategy

In 2018 trustees wrote and approved a conservation strategy 'Fighting For Their Future'. This strategy was to become the framework for all conservation work carried out by the charity and three main areas of interest were selected to be the focus of our conservation support. These were:

**Young Dispersing Male Lions | Lions Outside Protected Areas | Involving Local Communities**

## Fitting in to our Conservation Strategy Review

In 2021 we reviewed the work that we had done in the first three years since the writing of our conservation strategy and analysed the level of support towards each of our focus areas. In the period between 2017-2021 58% of donations had gone towards the focus area of Young Dispersing Male Lions and only 42% had gone towards the support of projects working in the focus areas of Involving Local Communities and Lions Outside of Protected Areas. These two areas are tied together because of the overlap within both areas in terms of the project work that we have been supporting. It was decided within this review that we would continue our sponsorship of a Lion Guardian and support a new community based project from either an existing or a new conservation partner to help balance up the support more equally between the community based focus areas and the Future Kings Project which has been previously launched as our flagship project for our key area to protect and monitor young dispersing male lions.

## Focussing on Coexistence

Wild lions require huge landscapes to thrive but due to habitat fragmentation caused by growing agricultural practices, changes of land use, hunting and poaching causing their populations to dwindle to small isolated pockets spread widely with only a handful of strongholds left standing. Their complex social structure requires a lot of space with lions needing the space to disperse. In these last strongholds, these lion populations are often surrounded by community areas, making it harder for lions to leave. This can affect the genetic health of the lion population but it can also increase tensions and conflict as lions and people are pushed closer and closer together. Where lions and people overlap, lions impose significant costs for communities, mainly through attacks on livestock which are vital economic and cultural assets for the local people. Constant attacks and issues can cause retaliation to occur which can ultimately lead to the death of lions and other apex predators through poisoning and hunting.



**Figure 1** – Local herder with cattle, Olare Motogori Conservancy, Maasai Mara Ecosystem, Kenya - September 2020

A lot of conservation initiatives now have a strong emphasis on minimising these potential risks and giving more of an economic and cultural benefit to the presence of these lions rather than being seen simply as a persistent problem causing personal and community wide losses. Loss caused by retaliatory killings has grown in recent years as the pressures between rapidly growing human populations has met with lion populations struggling to stay within the set park boundaries and often a loss of wild prey species. Trying to increase the tolerance of local people is key to the long term survival of lions in the wild. This can be achieved through prevention and benefit schemes as well as employment opportunities.

## Our Support So Far

Since December 2017 we have sponsored the salary of a Lion Guardian annually at \$1500 a year. Based outside the Amboseli National Park these Guardians are responsible for monitoring the lions in their areas and mitigating conflicts with the local communities. In our first year we sponsored Guardian Longoi Ole Parsitau and from 2019 onwards we have sponsored Guardian Kuya Kipampa who is pictured below. We have also sponsored the strengthening of a boma through Kope Lion, to keep cattle safer at night.

## How Will The Project Work?

The project will combine and expand our support for our conservation strategy focus areas to Involve Local Communities and to protect Lions Outside of Protected Areas, these go hand in hand as the lions that live in these areas will likely come across the resident human populations. We will support organisations that work to employ the local population as part of their lion conservation work, run schemes that benefit both the wildlife and people, work to increase tolerance and to reduce conflict between lions and people. We will sponsor salaries, training programmes or pieces of equipment or anything else that works towards the aim to promote coexistence between lions and people. A prime example of this is the sponsoring of Lion Guardian Kuya Kipampa, pictured right (photo credit: John Merishi).



## Project Launch

To celebrate the launch of our Coexistence Project in July 2022, \$500 was sent to cover the cost of two camera traps as part of the community camera trap programme run by Lion Landscapes. This programme aims to unlock the value of the and other carnivores in community areas by directly linking their presence on village land to community benefits that are tangible. These villagers monitor their own wildlife populations through camera traps and villages with the most wildlife receive the most additional benefits.

Instead of their researchers setting out camera traps themselves on village land, Lion Landscapes have started to train and employ local communities to do it - and the images they collect translate into benefits for the community, with each animal captured on camera generating a certain number of points. Villages are organised into groups of four and compete against each other on a quarterly basis. The winning village in each quarter then receives the greatest share of community benefits (currently split equally between healthcare, veterinary medicines and education) followed by a lesser amount rolled down to the second, third and then the fourth village.



**Figure 3** – Collared Male Lion pictured in Kitisi Village Area



**Figure 4** - Community members setting up a camera trap.

## Planning For The Future

Working in line with the Conservation Strategy Review we will continue to sponsor the salary of a Lion Guardian annually and we will continue to support the community camera trap programme via Lion Landscapes. We will also continue to investigate supporting further community based initiatives through our existing conservation partners that will work to involve local communities in lion conservation and work to provide a benefit to local communities by having to live close to these iconic apex predators.

*All information correct as of January 2023 - Please check website for more up to date information.*