

# LION RECOVERY FUND

AUGUST 2022  
PROGRESS REPORT





# NEW LION RECOVERY POTENTIAL IN AFRICA'S REMOTE REGIONS

**T**his year is flying by. As the chaos of the COVID pandemic has receded, the pace of conservation has become frantic with groups playing catch up after two years of restricted field activities. The LRF's work has similarly hit full steam. A key part of my role as the LRF Director is to make field visits to ensure that the projects we support are of sufficient quality to merit LRF investment and that our funding is having the highest impact for conservation. In 2022, I traveled to some of the most exciting and remote parts of Africa. These trips highlighted just how possible it is to turn things around for lions, even in the most neglected places, when the right support is provided to the most effective conservation actors.

One such trip was to Senegal, which feels like a million miles from my home

in Zimbabwe. Panthera's work in Niokolo-Koba National Park was the first project that the LRF ever funded, and it was exciting to see the incredible progress that has been made over these past five years. Senegal's last lions are roaring back from near-extinction and are now on the road to recovery thanks to the efforts of Panthera and the Senegalese authorities.

A second major trip I took was to the Central African Republic (CAR) in the geographic heart of the continent. CAR is arguably the wildest country in Africa due to vast areas of largely unpopulated land. In spite of that wildness, wildlife in the country has had a difficult time in recent decades from the impacts of civil war and limited rule of law. These factors resulted in widespread collapses of wildlife populations. However, lions are again making a strik-

ing recovery in the Chinko landscape in eastern CAR, thanks to the efforts of African Parks.

Both of these major investment sites for the LRF emphasize the potential that Africa's extensive wild landscapes have for recovering lions, and highlight the importance of investing in the effective management of neglected wildlands before it is too late. We intend to deepen and broaden such investments on the road ahead. You can learn more about the LRF's investments and how lion conservation is advancing in this latest LRF Progress Report. All of the work showcased, every success and milestone, is only possible because of your support.

*- Dr. Peter Lindsey, Director of the Lion Recovery Fund*

# SAVING SENEGAL'S LAST LIONS

*To the right: A male lion photographed at night in Niokolo-Koba National Park, Senegal.*

**T**he West African group of northern lions is Critically Endangered, with just four populations remaining in the region. One of these scarce populations is found in Senegal's Niokolo-Koba National Park. Unfortunately, the park was under-managed and wildlife, including lions, had become highly susceptible to poaching. In the late 2000s, *Panthera* completed a survey of the carnivores in Senegal and found that the lion population had been reduced to just 10-15 individuals in Niokolo-Koba, meaning the species was on the very brink of extinction in the country.

Given that the lion is featured in Senegal's coat of arms and the esteemed national football team is called the Lions of Teranga, this is a very serious issue with cultural signif-

icance. After noting the perilous status of lions in the park during their survey, *Panthera* had the vision and expertise to help turn things around in Niokolo-Koba, so they approached the Senegalese government with a proposal to support the management of the park. The first LRF grant ever issued was in support of this project in 2017, and now five years later, the project is beginning to bear fruit.

By developing three well-trained and equipped mobile anti-poaching teams tackling poaching in the park, lion numbers have grown to 30-40 individuals. During this reporting period, the LRF provided an additional grant that will enable *Panthera* to deploy two additional teams. This will go a long way toward securing Senegal's last lions. As ever, landscape level conservation

efforts do not just benefit lions. The park also includes a variety of other key species, including the Critically Endangered West African Lord Derby eland, western hartebeest, western crocodile, chimpanzees, West Africa's only population of wild dogs (and the only population of wild dogs for at least 1,800 miles), and West Africa's largest population of leopards.

Niokolo-Koba is West Africa's second largest protected area and its wide range of habitats—from wetlands to dry savanna woodlands—can be a place where wildlife can thrive. The LRF has seen exceptional promise over our five years investing in *Panthera*'s park management and we will continue our support to create a stronghold for West Africa's lions.



**LRF funding has played a key role in saving the last lions in Senegal and a key population of the Critically Endangered West African lion.**

# MARKING 5 YEARS OF PROTECTING LIONS

**T**he LRF is celebrating our fifth year finding and funding the most effective projects to help save Africa's lions. Through the support of our generous donors we have funded exceptional projects that have reestablished lions in areas where they had become extinct, recovered populations in countries where lions teetered on the edge of disappearing, and tackled threats throughout 43% of lion range in Africa. **In total we have issued 200 grants to 68 organizations working across 23 countries.** We are proud of what we have accomplished so far and confident that the next five years will be even more impactful, bringing us ever closer to recovering Africa's emblematic and majestic lions.

## Grantees Supported Since March 2022:

Conservation Lower Zambezi  
Conserve Global  
Frankfurt Zoological Society  
Game Rangers International  
KopeLion  
PAMS Foundation  
Panthera  
Musekese Conservation  
Niassa Carnivore Project

**The LRF is  
investing in grants  
that encompass  
43% of lion range.**

# LONG TERM INVESTMENTS, GREATER IMPACTS

To have the biggest impact for conservation, the LRF provides ongoing funding to many of our grantees. Issuing multiple grants over time ensures effective projects can continue uninterrupted and that grantees can focus more on saving lions than on fundraising.



**\$26M**  
GRANTED



**23**  
COUNTRIES



**200**  
PROJECTS

## Promoting Coexistence Between People and Lions in Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area

Tanzania's Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) is a critical site for lion conservation. However, as a multi-use protected area, the NCA is also home to almost 100,000 people, most of whom are traditional pastoralists who rely almost exclusively on livestock for their livelihood. As a result of human-lion conflict and associated retaliatory killing of lions, lions have disappeared from much of their historical range within the NCA. Since 2011, KopeLion has worked to mitigate Ngorongoro's human-lion conflict. With LRF support, **KopeLion** is complementing their existing work by establishing a lion conservation incentive payment program. The LRF has also provided funding to strengthen their management team to help increase their capacity to raise funds and effectively implement field conservation. KopeLion's work has resulted in more lions settling in areas where there are people and livestock, and a subsequent LRF grant will co-fund efforts to strengthen human-lion coexistence—keeping people and livestock safer, and therefore

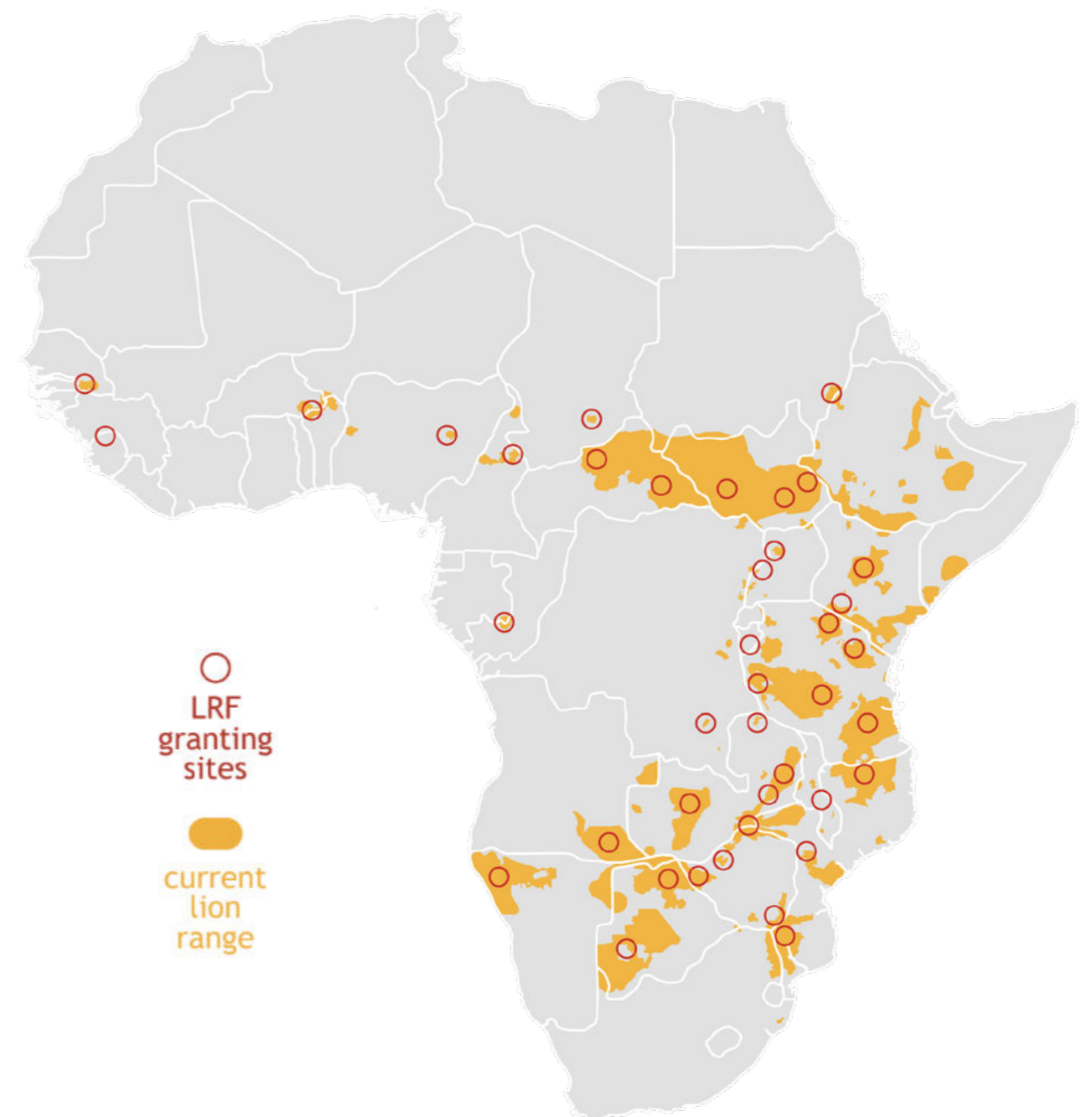
lions safer.

## Securing the Most Vulnerable of Africa's Protected Areas Through a Record Sized Grant

In previous reports, we have emphasized the threat posed by the under-funding and under-management of a high proportion of Africa's massive protected area estate. This is especially true in the vast landscapes that were set aside as hunting blocks, totaling in approximately 540,500 sq. miles of land—an area about twice the size of Texas. However, as the hunting industry has started to recede, a growing number of these blocks are falling vacant, rendering them vulnerable to human pressures such as poaching and encroachment. The LRF issued a record grant of \$1 million to the emergent NGO **Conserve Global** to engage in partnerships with African governments to start bringing hunting blocks under conservation management. If Conserve is able to scale rapidly, it can secure large portions of Africa's most vulnerable protected areas for lion conservation and avoid catastrophic further losses in lion range and numbers.

Though lions are our focus, the LRF is really about protecting entire savanna landscapes.

To the right: Rangers help Conserve Global protect hunting blocks for lions and other wildlife in places like Tondwa Game Management Area, Zambia.



## The LRF recently issued its 200th grant to Honey Guide for supporting community-based conservation in Tanzania's Wildlife Management Areas.

### Restoring Lions to Zambia's Far North

There is a large complex of protected areas in northern Zambia alongside the spectacular Lake Tanganyika. Over the years, lack of funding has rendered these protected areas vulnerable to human pressures, including intense bushmeat poaching. Lions are very sensitive to both reductions in prey densities and also to being caught in bushmeat snares. These pressures took their toll, and lions disappeared sometime in the 2010s. One of the LRF's first investments was to support efforts by The **Frankfurt Zoological Society** in partnership with the **Zambian Wildlife Authority**, to strengthen management of Zambia's Nsumbu National Park. Five years on, poaching in Nsumbu is firmly under control and wildlife is recovering rapidly. The LRF gave further funding to support the reintroduction of key prey species, including buffaloes and zebras, and

recently issued an additional grant to develop a plan for reintroducing lions into the park over the next three years. This is an exciting project with enormous lion recovery potential, and it also demonstrates how investing in lion conservation can benefit landscapes and all of the species that live within them.

### Protecting Lions in Southeast Zimbabwe

A key focus of LRF investments is supporting the management of conservation lands. This often involves supporting an array of activities that are not directly lion focused, but that end up benefiting lions by protecting them, their prey, and their habitats. Sometimes, however, lion-specific interventions are needed to effectively protect the species when lions are being directly targeted. In southeast Zimbabwe, the **Gonarezhou Conservation Trust (GCT)**, a part-

nership between the **Frankfurt Zoological Society** and the **Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority**, has brought about an incredible recovery in wildlife populations. However, lion numbers remain stubbornly low, possibly due to targeted poaching of lions for their body parts. The LRF supported GCT to closely monitor the lions in the park and use lion locations to guide anti-poaching patrols. These efforts will significantly help prevent the poaching of lions and help their population recover.

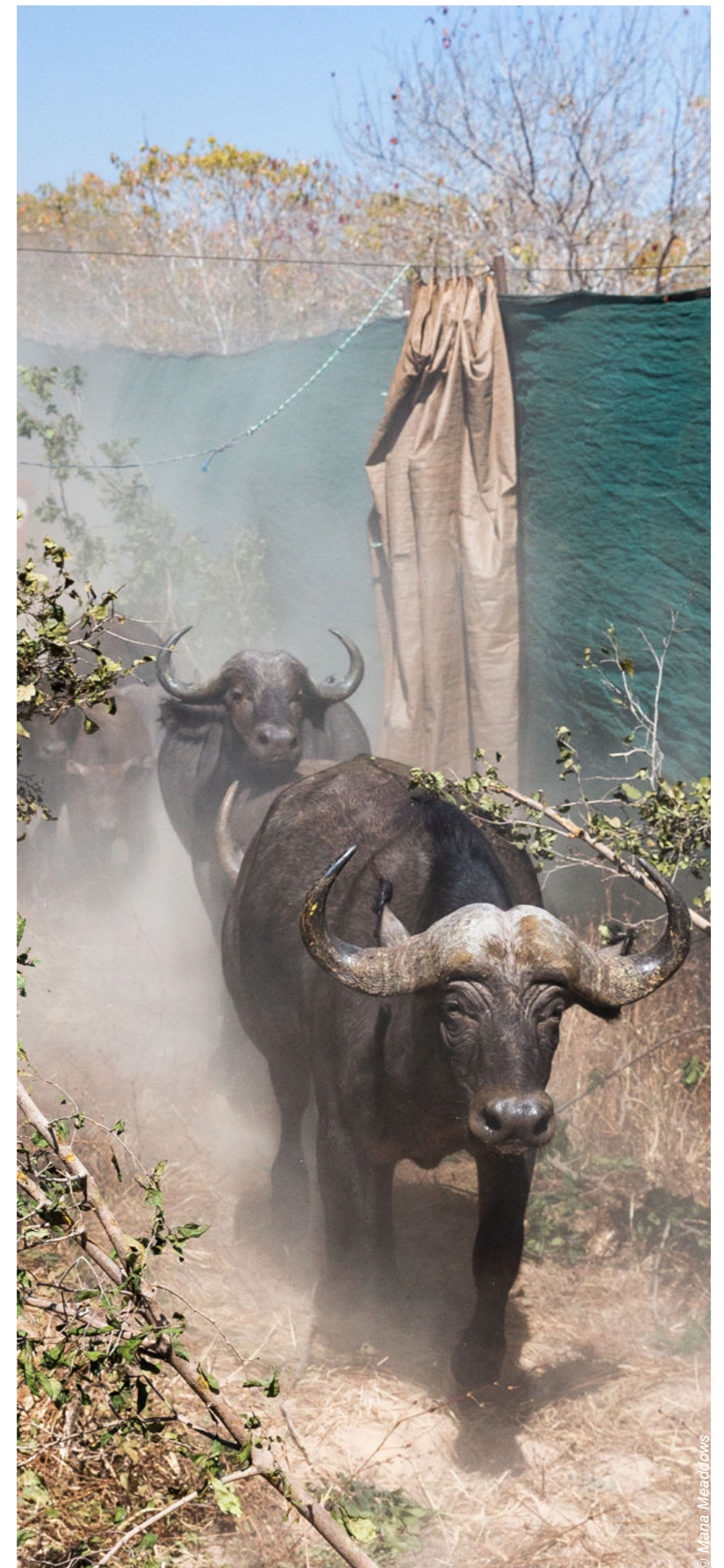
### Securing Mozambique's Largest Lion Population

Mozambique is home to a number of important lion populations, with the largest population in the **Niassa Special Reserve (NSR)**. The LRF has been supporting the **Niassa Carnivore Project** to help strengthen the management units (areas of land leased to private companies or NGOs) that occur within the 16,000 sq. mile NSR. Building upon previous grants for NSR, the LRF recently invested an additional \$145,000 to support the management of the 2,300 sq. mile community-owned **Chipanje Chetu** block, which is directly adjacent to Niassa. This vast stretch of land, if properly secured, has potential to contribute significantly to lion conservation in Mozambique and is another example of the LRF helping to bolster management in under-funded and neglected landscapes before we lose them.



From left to right: Training rangers in law enforcement monitoring, Chipanje Chetu, Mozambique.

Buffaloes being reintroduced to Nsumbu National Park, Zambia, in an effort to restock key lion prey species.



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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

**S**o far, 2022 has been a busy year for the LRF, and we are only just getting started. Invariably, granting picks up pace as the end of the year approaches, and we have some major investments to look forward to. Now in our fifth year of operation, we continue to find ways to advance lion conservation and improve our efforts. This year we implemented more flexible funding and easier grant applications to make LRF funding more impactful dollar-for-dollar. Feedback from grantees has already shown these improvements make LRF funding worth several times that of typical multi- or bilateral institutional funding. Our innovative

grantmaking and our careful due diligence, plus our 100% model—where every dollar donated goes directly to the field—makes the LRF one of the most impactful avenues for helping secure the future of lions, their landscapes, and all the biodiversity contained therein.

The achievements the LRF has made over these past five years, including our most recent accomplishments outlined in this report, are only possible thanks to your generous support. Thank you for being our partner in protecting Africa's lions, we are truly grateful.

**100% of funds  
donated to the LRF  
are channeled to  
the best projects  
for conserving  
lions, their  
prey, and their  
landscapes.**



[lionrecoveryfund.org](https://lionrecoveryfund.org)



WCN

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