



## 2017 Annual Report

**10**

YEARS

CELEBRATING  
**10 YEARS**  
OF LION CONSERVATION



## ABOUT LIONS

The African lion population has declined by 43% in the last 20 years and lions now occupy only 8% of their historical range in Africa\*. The estimated number of lions across Africa is approximately 20,000. In Kenya, the national population now numbers less than 2,000 individuals.

At current rates of decline, the species could become extinct here within the next two decades. This reduction in lion numbers is primarily due to habitat loss and conflict with humans, typically when lions kill people's livestock. Lions and other large carnivores are wide-ranging species and designated protected areas are often not large enough to ensure their long-term survival. Therefore, it is crucial that conservation of these species, as well as their prey, is addressed throughout the landscape, which not only incorporates protected areas but also the surrounding areas where local people live.

(\*Beyond Cecil: Africa's Lions in Crisis Report produced by Panthera, WildAid and WildCru, 2016)

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

### **Shivani Bhalla**

FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

### **Resson Kantai Duff**

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

### **Jeneria Lekilelei**

FIELD OPERATIONS & COMMUNITY MANAGER

### **Heather Gurd**

CONSERVATION MANAGER

### **Tobias Otieno**

RESEARCH MANAGER

### **Arzina Bhanjee**

FINANCE MANAGER

### **Francis Lendorop**

SECURITY MANAGER

## OUR MISSION

Ewaso Lions is dedicated to conserving lions and other large carnivores by promoting co-existence between people and wildlife.

We work hand-in-hand with local communities to provide education, training and improved conservation practices that help people and wildlife. We use sound science to help guide the long-term conservation of lions across community conservancies and protected areas in northern Kenya.

Photography credits: Anthony Allport, Robbie Labanowski, Tyrel Bernardini, Anastasia Cronin, Andrew Wegst, James Warwick, Jillian Knox and the Ewaso Lions team.

Cover photo: Letoiye and Lpuresi. Above photo: Nanai



# LETTER FROM THE FOUNDER



I sometimes have to pinch myself when I realise that Ewaso Lions is now 10 years old. Starting off with almost nothing, we lived out of my Suzuki, 'Gypsy' and spent years driving around, looking for lions with our small team - Jeneria, Jeremiah and Francis. We eventually set up a small "temporary" base... and stayed there for 7 years! We now live in a permanent home on top of a hill, working with a team of 58 people.

It has been a remarkable 10 years. Our team has not only grown in size, but also strength; taking full ownership of the lions and the landscape. This is not just a job for us - it is a way of life and I am incredibly proud to be a part of it. As a result of our work, lions have made a comeback to community areas and we have now recorded more lions in these landscapes than ever before.

Despite the growth and successes, this year has been our hardest yet. The threats to lion conservation are increasing. Samburu has been my home now for over 15 years and the increasing pressures on lion habitat sometimes overwhelm me. We sadly lost 5 lions this year to human-lion conflict - the most we have ever lost in a year. It is a clear indication to me that though there are successes to celebrate, we are not out of the woods. We must persevere to achieve co-existence within the landscape.

On a personal note - I graduated from Oxford this year and received my PhD - this was a long journey (and struggle!) but I was so pleased to have my family and Jeneria with me in Oxford on my graduation day.

Looking back at all we've been able to accomplish, and looking forward at all that remains to be done and all that we hope for, we cannot thank our friends and supporters enough. You have stood with us, even in our most difficult year, and with you, we have the courage to walk boldly into the next 10 years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shivani Bhalla".

**Dr. Shivani Bhalla**  
FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Jeneria



Lerimara



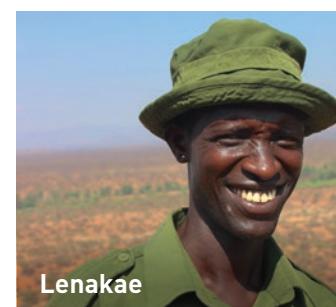
Mparasaroii



Letoiye, Lpuresi, Yesalai



Apese



Lenakae



Peter

# THE PRIDE OF EWASO LIONS: NARAMAT'S STORY

To the casual eye, a lion that has bred three times in community areas is just another happy tale, but to us Naramat's story is the story of Ewaso Lions. Not only does she give us better insights into the secret lives of solitary mothers with their cubs, and what they have to do to live in community lands; she has given us continued reassurance that building tolerance of lions in communities is working. She is hope for a brighter ten years ahead.

Naramat, whose name means 'the caring one', was born in 2008 in Samburu National Reserve to Samburu's famed lioness - Nashipai. We monitored her for years until, in 2011, she disappeared into thick bush, hidden from view despite our ceaseless searching. Finally in August 2013 she resurfaced, but she was not alone - with her was a young male cub. Naramat joined the ranks of the few lions we had seen successfully breeding in community areas at that time. We named the male - Lentim, meaning 'emerged from the bush'.

Her second litter of three - Naterenkwe, Lenkiyok, Lndikir - were born in 2015 on the border of Westgate and Namunyak Community Conservancies, north of the hills in Naisunyai. To our utter thrill, she relocated these cubs along the Ewaso Nyiro river - right near our camp.

All the while, Naramat was carving a space for herself and her kin in the hearts of the community. People would enquire about her in the same way they would ask after children or livestock. She became part of their story.

Triumph for lions and people came again in 2017, when she surpassed our expectations with four more cubs - all born in community lands. These cubs were continued living proof that co-existence is possible.

Naramat remains undiminished. She still traverses several community conservancies, and over the years, more lions have followed in her footsteps, feeling safer in community lands, and making permanent dwelling in areas where lions were a distant memory. All this gives us hope in our work, that what we do is not in vain.



**"I was so proud to see Naramat and her cubs in the Conservation Area\* a few months ago whilst I was doing my research transect. It made me realize that this area is a very peaceful place for lions to stay."**

**Laikos Letupukwa, Research Officer**

\*Conservation Area: this is an area set aside by the community for wildlife within a human-occupied landscape.

# THE BEST OF 2017



## 14 LIONS

Living permanently in the community lands where we work



## \$3,500 INCOME

346 beaded lions made by Mama Simba ladies, equating to almost \$3,500 in supplementary income



## 8 NEW STAFF

Came on board to strengthen Ewaso Lions' capacity to save lions



## 55 TIMES

Warriors responded to incidents of human-lion conflict



## 11 STUDENTS

Being sponsored by the Education Fund for primary, secondary, tertiary education



## 15,193 KM

Of foot patrols conducted by warriors and scouts for wildlife monitoring and protection



## 27 CHILDREN

Actively engaged in December Lion Kids Camp



## 1 SUZUKI

4WD to do more research and engage more Samburu women in conservation



## 15 TIMES

Warriors saved lions from the imminent threat of death

# WARRIOR WATCH

## EVERY DAY SAVING LIONS

A lioness has killed a cow. Tempers flare and poison, spears and guns are unearthed; they must kill it immediately. Jeneria, his fellow Warrior, Yesalai and others in the Warrior Watch team head for the far away village. When they arrive, Jeneria tries to reason with them, but vengeful shouts fill the arid landscape. Calmly, Ewaso Lions' Warriors listen for hours to the villagers' story. The lion has taken a prime cow: money in the bank to her owner. As the sun rises high, the conversation shifts to talk about how culturally, one cow is not reason enough to kill a lion, their lion. Before long, they begin to cool down. The lioness lives.

It is 2017, and this is a snapshot of our work. Our Warriors have honed their skills in responding to such incidents - stopping lions from the imminent threat of being killed 15 times - and the community now has much stronger ownership over the lions, who have become their pride. But it has not been easy going this year. In fact, it has been our worst year on record for lion killings. In 2017, we lost 5 lions. With the land thirsty for rains that failed, tension and insecurity were at an all-time high. Talks with the community were particularly difficult, as many were losing their livelihood day by day to the scorching scourge of drought.

A year like this one makes us reflect on the future. With ever-advancing climate change, and land degradation all too prevalent across our vistas, we know that there is a lot to do if the communities we live and work amongst are to build resilience against the impending storm. Though weary, we cannot afford the time to grieve these losses that have made 2017 so painful. The real work of resolving these challenges through engaging and empowering communities, enhancing sustainable growth in the lion population and ensuring safe habitat and connectivity has just begun. Onward!

**"I have realized there are such few lions left... Lions are important culturally and if there are lots of lions, the health of the place is good. We are lucky to have them in these areas."**

Yesalai Lemachokoti, Field Officer



Yesalai and Letoie

## MAMA SIMBA

Mama Simba is empowering women to speak up for lions and providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to reduce their environmental impact, improve livelihoods, and help conserve and co-exist with wildlife.

### IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Keys in the ignition, a woman dressed in her every-day traditional necklaces starts the car. The engine purrs, and she puts the car in reverse. She smiles at her passengers as she manoeuvres out of the parking banda. Munteli is going to school, and she is taking a car full of women with her. Munteli became the driving force behind Mama Simba in more than just a metaphorical sense, when she passed her driving test in 2017 - a very rare achievement for a traditional Samburu woman. And thanks to generous support, we were able to purchase a new Suzuki 4WD for the ladies. With transport having been a major constraint to growth, Munteli and Mparasaro can empower more Samburu women across the region to become conservation ambassadors in their communities! This year, the core group of 19 women attended literacy classes, reported lion sightings and conflict incidents, spread conservation awareness in their communities, and made a record number of beaded lions. We can't wait to see what happens down the road!

**"We saw that as women we were not recognized as important or powerful people. We saw Ewaso Lions as our vehicle to have more of a voice. Not for an animal like a dikdik, but a scary animal like a lion. If we can be a voice for a strong animal like a lion, we will be recognized."**

Mparasaro Lemantaan, Mama Simba Coordinator



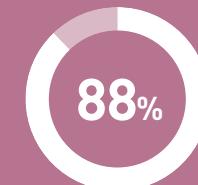
# EDUCATING YOUTH

Ewaso Lions recognises the critical link between education and conservation. Tomorrow's wildlife leaders must be equipped with a solid education today, empowering them to make informed choices to tackle the challenges facing Africa's wildlife and people.

## LION KIDS CAMPS

Our Lion Kids Camp (LKC) programme is designed to educate and inspire a new generation of wildlife conservationists in Kenya. Each 5-day camp follows a carefully designed curriculum that teaches children vital conservation skills. To date, we have run nine LKCs engaging over 240 children from across four Counties in this fully immersive wildlife experience. Our latest was a camp with students from Remot Primary School in December 2017. The results tabulated show how well it is working.

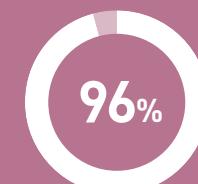
Our focus in 2017 was the recruitment and training of new team members, including our LKC & Youth Coordinator, Bush Bus Driver and Conservation Programmes Assistant - all of whom now play a critical role in the scale-up, management and delivery of the LKC programme.



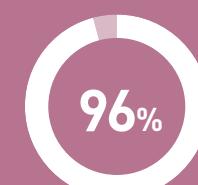
88% of children thoroughly enjoyed attending the Lion Kids Camp and would attend another if given the opportunity.



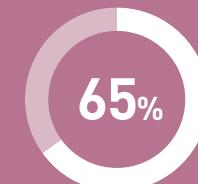
100% of children, following the Lion Kids Camp, said they wanted the number of lions in their home area to 'increase' or 'increase a lot', compared to just 46% of children pre-camp.



96% of the children attending Lion Kids Camp felt that lions were facing threats in Kenya, compared to 30% pre-camp.



96% of children 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' that it's acceptable to kill a wild animal if kills their family's livestock, compared to 50% pre-camp.



65% more children identified themselves as a group responsible for conserving wildlife/natural resources, and specifically carnivores, compared to pre-camp scores.



Rumani



## JEREMY LUCAS EDUCATION FUND

Set up in January 2017, the Jeremy Lucas Education Fund (JLEF) enables young teenagers in Samburu and Isiolo to have a secondary and tertiary education. It takes the place of the Ewaso Lions Scholarship Programme.

Each year many of the children who complete primary education cannot afford secondary school fees and all the associated costs, such as school books and stationery, uniforms and transport to and from school. Donations raised through this fund will now give these young people a chance to further their education.

Educating young people - the custodians of this wildlife - is a crucial part of Ewaso Lions' work. Enabling the youth of today to be empowered, inspired and nurtured means they in turn can make informed, educated choices that will benefit them, their families and the wildlife that they live beside.

**"It always warms my heart seeing JLEF give children from my community an opportunity to go school - something they would not otherwise have been able to do. With JLEF, these kids have a chance in determining their future and ensuring a voice in conservation, as they will always relate their education to conservation."**

Peter Lenasalia, LKC & Youth Coordinator



## MEET PAINOTI

Painoti Letabare looks up from her book to face the peering eyes of almost a dozen women. Today, she is not a student far away from home as she has been for months, she is here to look in on her former students: the famous Mama Simba ladies. Painoti grew up with her extended pastoralist family in Westgate Community Conservancy. After completing her primary school exams, the idea of having a secondary education let alone fulfilling her ambitions of becoming a teacher were a distant dream - Painoti's family could not afford the fees for secondary school. But, thanks to a scholarship from Ewaso Lions, Painoti was able to join Kisima Girls High School where she excelled. Following secondary school she spent two years as an intern teaching the Mama Simba ladies to read and write in English. Her passion for teaching shone through, and in 2017 Painoti enrolled at Teacher Training College, fully funded by the Education Fund. Today, Painoti is a wonderful role model and an inspiration to the younger students being supported by JLEF.



## RESEARCH

Science is a critical tool in saving northern Kenya's lions. Ewaso Lions' research goal is to use science and research to inform and guide conservation programmes geared towards promoting co-existence between people and lions within their range.

### 10 YEARS OF LION RESEARCH

Shivani's PhD thesis has provided important information about lions in community areas, including vital insight into what lions living in human-occupied landscapes need in order to survive.

#### Key highlights from her thesis:

##### **First lion numbers**

Her study was the first lion demographic study in northern Kenya. When she began only 11 lions were known, all confined to protected areas. Now the ecosystem boasts over 50 lions.

##### **Lions live alone**

In Samburu and Isiolo, lion prides are few and far between. This unexpected phenomenon of lionesses living solitary lifestyles absent of pride males is now the norm.

##### **Best places to safeguard lions**

Habitat suitability modelling showed that prime areas for lions exist outside protected areas within community conservancies in the form of Conservation Areas.

##### **Conflict is still occurring**

Despite presence of highly suitable habitat, human-lion conflict was a common occurrence in these areas because of increasing land pressure and reduction of ample prey.

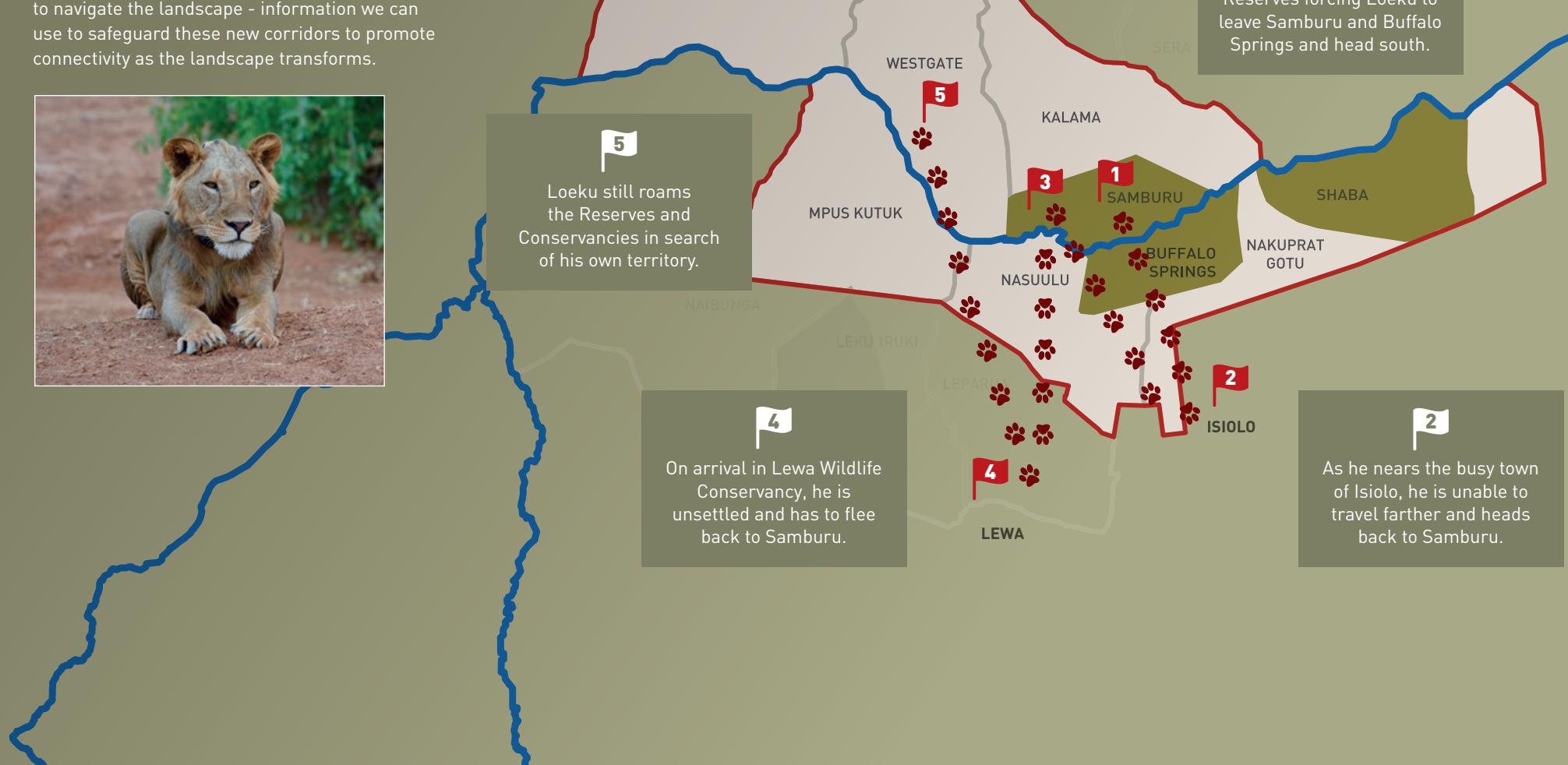
##### **Lions move freely**

Protected areas are not large enough to sustain the lion population, highlighting the need to do lion conservation in dispersal or community areas.

# LOEKU'S TRACKS

For many years, when young males left their maternal prides we would lose track of them. In light of new infrastructure development, we felt an even stronger need to identify important lion routes. In February 2017, Ewaso Lions in partnership with Lion Landscapes collared a young male lion named Loeku in Samburu National Reserve. The information he brought us has been insightful and surprising.

Tracking Loeku has provided extraordinary information about how young male lions learn to navigate the landscape - information we can use to safeguard these new corridors to promote connectivity as the landscape transforms.



# TEAM HIGHLIGHTS OF 2017



## SPACE FOR LIONS

"This year, we were able to show that a large portion of the landscape is suitable for use by lions through exciting dispersal discoveries. To me, this is an indication that co-existence between people and lions in their natural habitat is a possibility."

**Tobias Otieno**, Research Manager

## PERMANENT LION PRESENCE

"There are now 14 lions living permanently in community areas, more lions than ever before. Remembering our belief that lions are sacred animals to the Samburu people has helped in reducing conflict and helping the lions feel safe once again."

**Francis Lendorop**, Security Manager



## NEW MALES, NEW GENES

"I worried about having the same two male lions for eight years as dominant. But 2017 brought four new males. When they first arrived I was so happy because now we have new genes in the Samburu lion population – it's a real boost!"

**Jeneria Lekilelei**,  
Field Operations & Community Manager



## CLIMBING MT. KENYA FOR LIONS

"To us, Mt Kenya is the mount of the cattle of our ancestors. We scaled to the top, beheld the shining glaciers, and heard the voices of our ancestors, a mighty sound which trembled the world telling us to protect and take care of nature!"

**Thomas Ekiru**, Eastern Regional Coordinator

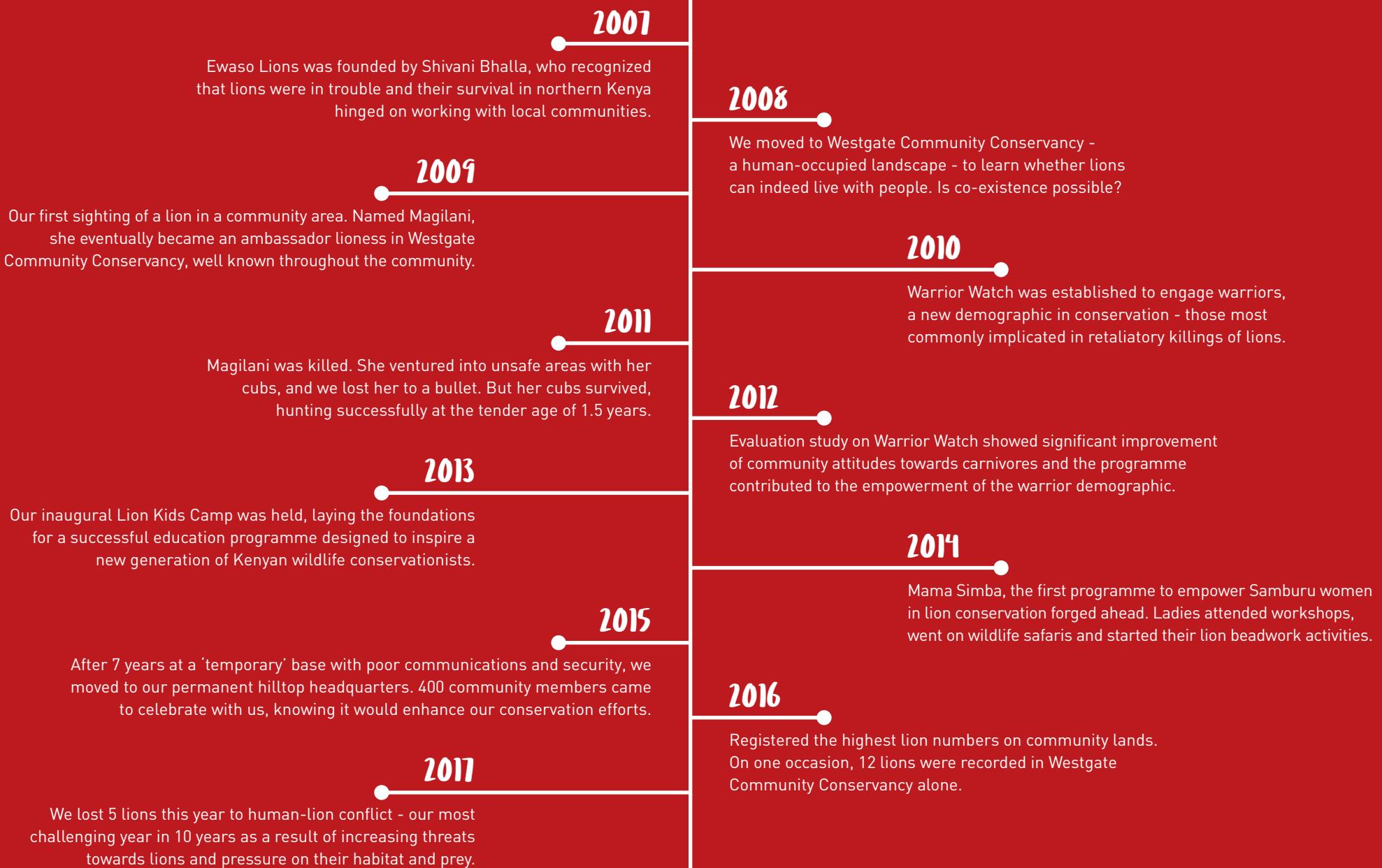
## NEW BUS FOR COMMUNITY WILDLIFE SAFARIS

"Our amazing new bus is so much more than just a mode of transport - it is a means to educate and inspire communities. Thanks to far-seeing donors, the bus will help us scale-up our conservation education activities - including our Lion Kids Camps -helping us bring to life a world that for many has previously been intangible."

**Heather Gurd**, Conservation Manager



# 10 YEARS OF EWASO LIONS



# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT - ASHE OLENG

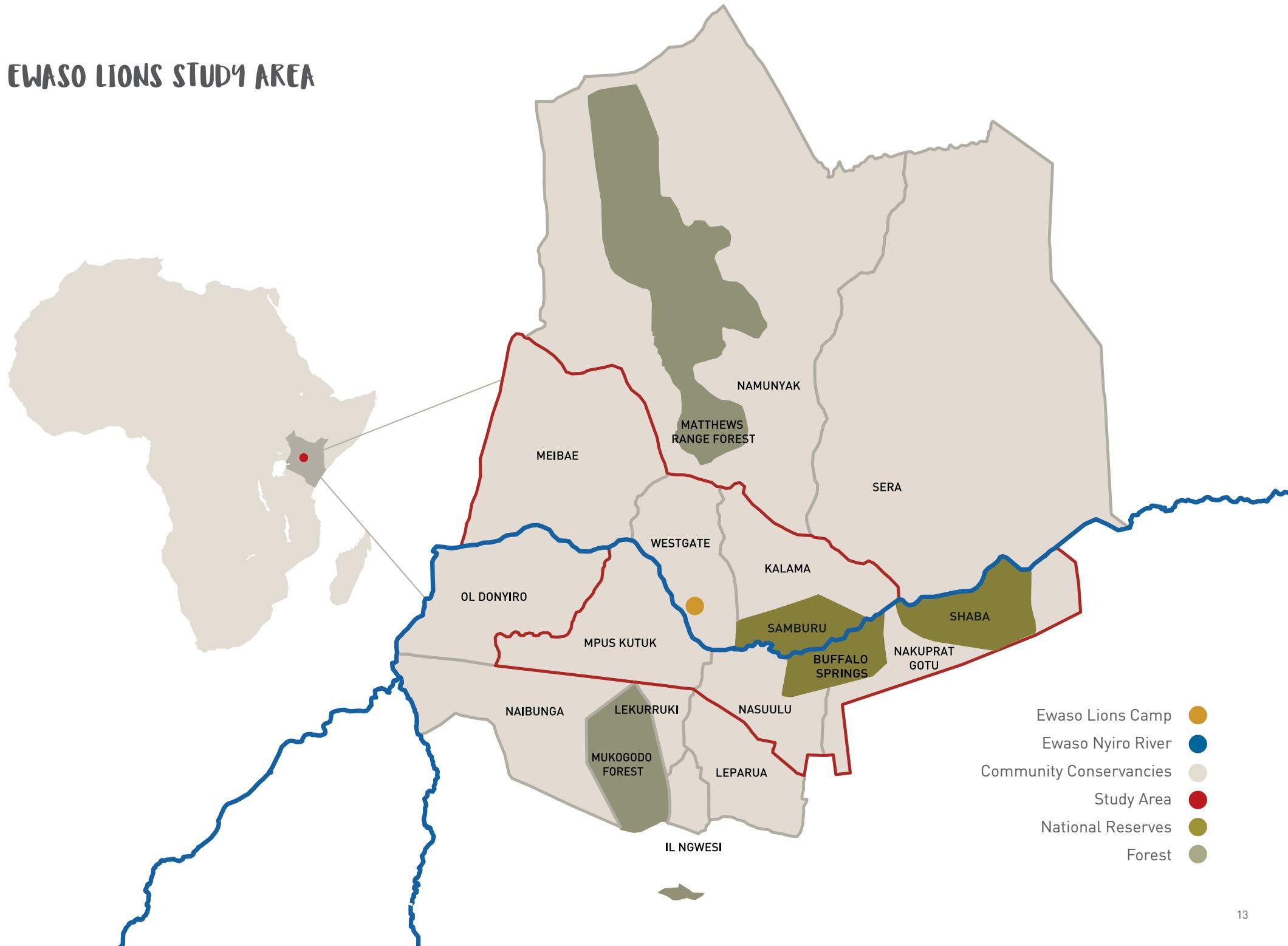
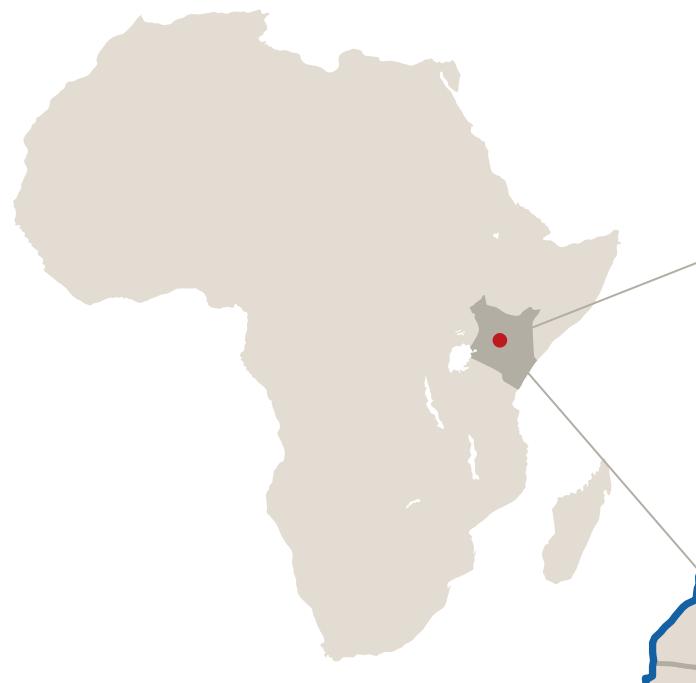
Ewaso Lions is an independent non-profit organisation and relies on donations and grants to run our programmes and operations.

In 2017, 94% of the funds raised supported our Conservation and Research Programmes, 3% went to administration and 3% went to fundraising.

We are so grateful to all our donors - individuals and organisations - who support Ewaso Lions. Thank you.



# EWASO LIONS STUDY AREA



**Ewaso Lions**

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