



EWASO  
LIONS

**2020**  
ANNUAL REPORT

# EWASO LIONS IS DEDICATED TO CONSERVING LIONS AND OTHER LARGE CARNIVORES BY PROMOTING COEXISTENCE BETWEEN PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE.

We are an independent 100% African conservation organisation based in Samburu, Isiolo and Nairobi which engages and builds the capacity of key demographic groups (elders, warriors, women, and children) by developing approaches to reduce human-carnivore conflict. We conduct applied research and work with our communities to address ecological problems. We carry out educational initiatives to reinforce traditionally held beliefs and the evolving culture of wildlife conservation across the landscape.

## ABOUT LIONS

The African lion population has disappeared from 92% of their historical range\*. It is estimated that there are between 20,000 to 30,000 lions remaining across the continent - down from perhaps 200,000 lions a hundred years ago.

In Kenya, the national population now numbers less than 2,500 individuals. The reduction in lion numbers in Kenya is primarily due to habitat loss and conflict with humans, typically when lions kill people's livestock. More recent threats now include the development of large scale infrastructure projects, and climate change leading to loss of prey. 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 this, the sense of ownership over wildlife and their story and place within our landscape as Africans must be reclaimed.

\*Stolton, S. and Dudley, N. 2019. The New Lion Economy. Unlocking the value of lions and their landscapes, Equilibrium Research, Bristol, UK

## LEADERSHIP TEAM

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

**Resson Kantai Duff**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

**Jeneria Lekilelei**  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY CONSERVATION

**Arzina Bhanjee**  
FINANCE DIRECTOR

**Tobias Otieno**  
RESEARCH MANAGER

**Francis Lendorop**  
SECURITY MANAGER



Cover photo: Francis sits at the deck watching the sunset. 2020 was a year of great pause and reflection for the world, and for us as a team © Jacques van der Westhuizen

Above photo: Nanai stares into the distance along the banks of the Ewaso Nyiro River © Michael Laubscher (Wild Eye)

## LETTERS FROM DIRECTORS



*I was recently asked to state 3 words that describe me well nowadays. I didn't have a lot of time to think and the words that came to mind quickly were an "Introverted Anxious Dog-Lover."*

This has definitely been an anxious year for me - starting off with the locust invasions, followed soon after with Covid. We were able to respond quickly and over the year take time to reflect and respond to whatever was thrown at us. The resilience I see in the team gives me much strength and hope and I realise through all this, that even I am resilient and bounce back from each challenge with renewed energy. I have been relieved not to have to travel for work and am grateful for every day that I have been able to live and work from home - at our camp in Samburu, with Kura and Nanyori staying close by at all times. I see my team all become strong leaders in their own right - it inspires me and makes me so proud every single day.

Dr. Shivani Bhalla



*My biggest lesson from 2020 is that lions don't know Corona. But as a result of Corona we were faced with a new challenge we have never had to deal with before!*

How to deal with conflict whilst social distancing and without bringing groups of people together. Although it was hard, the team managed this work and I am so proud of them. I have also been happy to see the communities we work with continue as they normally do - going about their pastoral way of life as usual. And they have appreciated the support that they get from our team in stopping conflict, rescuing livestock and keeping lions safe as well. This year has highlighted the resilience of our communities - who are able to carry on with or without tourism, with or without Corona. The pastoral way of life is a lesson for the future. I am so thankful to my community, the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Reserves, the County Governments and all the Conservancies we work in.

Jeneria Lekilelei



*Instead of screaming at the darkness, light a candle. This was the lesson the team taught me through the year 2020.*

Having sat at home feeling isolated and retrogressing, the Mama Simba ladies physically expanded their classroom and demanded to return to school under Covid-safe conditions. Meanwhile the Conservation Programmes team put hundreds of people on our airy Safari bus as they conducted Covid-safe safaris to energise and inspire the community towards the end of a tough year. The team's courage to bear new threats, surface novel ideas and advance conservation was astounding. It inspired us to start thinking differently. Crisis proved that conservation leadership must adapt. And the brave conversations that have ensued through Beyond Boundaries KE will reintroduce the world to inclusive conservation that values diversity, innovation and compassionate leadership. This candle can only burn brighter.

Resson Kantai Duff



*2020 was a year filled with uncertainty and challenges in all respects.*

As I stepped into the role of Finance Director at the initial stages of the pandemic, our Management team went back to the drawing board and reviewed our financial positions. The biggest priority for our leadership team was to ensure that no staff salaries or positions were cut no matter what it took. We redid our entire budget, cut and/or deferred our expenses for the year, increased our focus on improving processes to reduce our costs. Our operations continued in a very prudent manner while ensuring safety of our team. I am also pleased and grateful to share that despite our very bleak income forecasts for a huge drop in donations, we experienced a smaller than expected reduction. This is a big achievement and has given the team great confidence in our donor support while continuing to put best efforts in conservation.

However, this could not have happened without the amazing support, reassuring words of encouragement, and guidance from our conservation partners and donors. On behalf of Ewaso Lions, I am truly humbled and immensely grateful to the partners and donors for their support. We will continue to do our best in our endeavours and are optimistic that 2021 will be a better year for everyone.

Arzina Bhanjee



## 2020 PEAKS IN THE TIME OF CoRoNA



**11**

CUBS WERE BORN IN THE LANDSCAPE AND SURVIVED THROUGH THE YEAR



**2000**

MASKS DISTRIBUTED TO COMMUNITIES FOR COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS



**2642**

DOMESTIC ANIMAL VACCINATIONS CONDUCTED WITH PARTNERS



**3**

ALL OF NARAMAT'S 3 CUBS SURVIVED AND RETURNED HOME TO WESTGATE



**256**

LIVESTOCK RESCUED FROM PREDATION SAVING THE COMMUNITY MORE THAN KSH 2.5M (OR \$25,000)



**2**

LIONS COLLARED TO HELP ALERT COMMUNITIES OF LION PRESENCE AND KEEP LIVESTOCK AND LIONS SAFE



**80**

STUDENTS ATTENDED OUR 5-DAY VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY SYMPOSIUM



**1**

NEW PROGRAMME LAUNCHED – BEYOND BOUNDARIES KE



**489**

INDIVIDUALS RECEIVED EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES (THROUGH LION KIDS CAMP, LITERACY SCHOOLS, ONLINE LEARNING AND SPONSORED STUDENTS)



**121**

ANIMAL-ROAD INTERACTION REPORTS RECEIVED THROUGH A CITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT WITH PARTNERS TO INFORM HIGHWAY MITIGATION EFFORTS

## THE EWASO LIONS: HIGHS AND LOWS

### Lions return to the north

In the rugged mountains of Namunyak, something or someone slips through the nearly impenetrable bush. A lion and four cubs move silently past. But their presence has not gone unnoticed. Lions have not been seen here for thirty years! After a call from our friends in Namunyak Conservancy and Sarara Camp, Jeneria led our team in one of the most challenging collaring exercises we have ever conducted. Working with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), we are tracking a new collared lion as she reveals new corridors and safe habitat in the north. Her name is Sarara.

Photo: Collaring Sarara © Ewaso Lions



### Three little pretty girls

These are the words Jeneria used to describe Naramat's cubs. But "little" is no longer accurate. These sub-adults and their caring mother now make a formidable pride of lionesses. In the arid landscape of solitary lions, it has been wonderful to watch these lions work together to hunt, climb trees and traverse hundreds of kilometres back and forth between Il Ngwesi and Westgate as a small family. The GPS collar fitted on Naramat has been particularly helpful in keeping livestock away from the lions as much as possible in our efforts to reduce conflict.

6 Photo: Naramat's tree climbing cubs © Ewaso Lions



### A pleasant surprise

After a long day out searching for elusive lions in vain, the team was feeling discouraged. They were pleasantly surprised when they stumbled upon Nanai and her cubs on their way back to camp. Nanai had disappeared for months in early 2020 so they were delighted to see her in Buffalo Springs in April with all 3 cubs, alive and well! Later, Nanai was seen gallantly carrying a baboon she had hunted with her cubs near the river bank, showing how lions in our landscape have adapted to their environment. This is the second time in a year we have seen Nanai prey on baboons!

Photo: Nanai and her cubs © Michael Laubscher (Wild Eye)



### Losing lions

The hardest thing for our team is to say goodbye to lions we loved, named and followed. In 2020 tears were shed and days of reflection followed the loss of two lions. One was the first lion we have recorded as lost to conflict in over 20 months. Ldarlei was named for his light coloured mane at the Lion Naming Ceremony held in 2019. Sadly, he was shot after killing a camel. We are grateful to our resident KWS vet for arriving at the scene very soon after it happened to make the assessment and ease his suffering. While we mourn him, we still celebrate that retaliatory killing has been reducing over the years although becoming increasingly difficult. We also give a final salute to an old rugged matriarch - Korti, a resident lion of Buffalo Springs who passed on through natural causes in August after a full life of 16 years.

Photo: Ldarlei - the lion we lost © Andrew Beck (Wild Eye)



## WARRIOR TRANSITIONS: INTRODUCING THE NEW GENERATION

**Cheering. Singing. Splashes of colour. Adolescent boys paste red ochre on their heads and shoot arrows away from their mothers' houses. The Lmuget ceremony is underway.**

In April and May, we witnessed dozens of boys that had attended our Lion Kids Camps join hundreds more as they all become warriors. Junior and Lkasian were among them. Junior had constantly told us how he couldn't wait for the day he would become a warrior just like Jeneria. For him this wasn't just about becoming a man. This fantastic young wildlife artist is also a passionate and dedicated lion conservationist. And through this initiation into manhood, he feels ready to take on more.

Lkasian too is ready for new and greater challenges. The boy who changed his name just so he could attend another Lion Kids Camp is now a young man who is training to be Jeneria's new lion spotter. After weeks of ceremonies and special moments the young men were adorned with new colourful regalia that marked their entrance into the world as warriors. We cannot wait to see what the future unfolds for the new lion warriors in Samburu and other incoming warriors who will join the Warrior Watch programme in 2021.

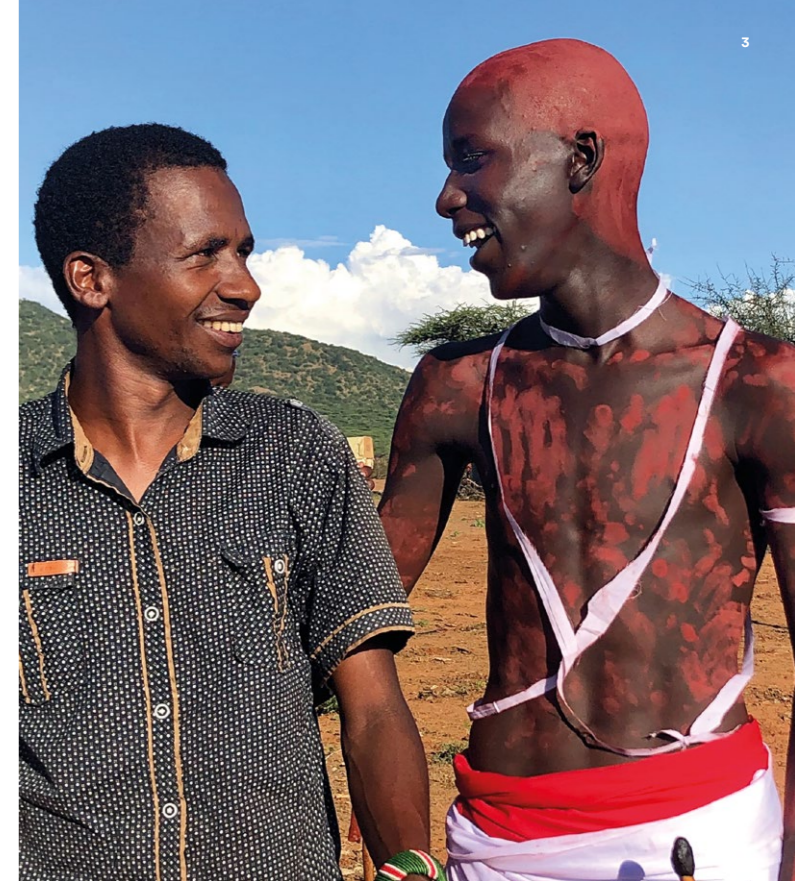


Photo 1: Lkasian dons full warrior regalia for the first time © Ewaso Lions.  
Photos 2 & 3: Junior and Jeneria then and now © Kris Norvig & © Ewaso Lions.  
Photo 4: New warriors decorate themselves with red ochre for the first time © Ewaso Lions

## ELDER TRANSITIONS: INTRODUCING LION GOVERNORS

After years of tracking lions, saving livestock and stopping conflict, all the men in our Warrior Watch programme have transitioned to eldership. They are no longer bare-backed and adorned with feathers and beads. With shaved heads and a new, quiet dignity, they are now taking their place as decision makers in their community. And they have chosen a name for themselves: **Lion Governors**.

It is a deeply significant moment for Ewaso Lions. In 2020 we came full circle: boys trained in Lion Kids Camp have become warriors in Warrior Watch, and warriors who tracked lions are now sitting at the highest level of society to defend lions, wildlife and their way of life. In this spirit, the Lion Governors have already started to mentor the new generation of warriors into conservation, a crucial role at a time when the culture is rapidly changing.

*"We joined Ewaso Lions as warriors. I am now a junior elder and a Lion Governor. Now when I speak to my community about lions and conservation, I feel more respected and my thoughts and ideas matter."*

Lolpetai Ntarapan, Naapo Conservancy



# STRATEGIC PLAN MILESTONES

In 2018 we launched our 3-year Strategic Plan in a beautiful ceremony at our Ewaso Lions camp. Our whole team poured their hopes and dreams for the future into the crucial process. Three years have flown by, and we have much to celebrate as we look back on what we set out to do. Here we share a few of our key milestones and what we've achieved under each theme.

## EDUCATION



- A new adult literacy programme was launched attracting learners from 3 conservancies.
- Lion Kids camp grew from strength to strength, completing 8 camps with 187 children in 3 years.

## PARTNERSHIPS



- We began a formal partnership with the Grevy's Zebra Trust on Biodiversity and Infrastructure, and strengthened our collaboration and friendship.
- We partnered with multiple organisations on Kura's Pride vaccinations, university symposia on conservation and new conservancies on lion conservation.

## KNOW YOUR LIONS



- Ewaso Lions spearheaded the northern leg of the KWS National Large Carnivore Survey.
- 27 cubs were born in the last 3 years with 89% surviving.

## PROCESSES



- We diversified funding sources, and were able to weather the Covid-19 storm with new and sustained giving from wonderful supporters.
- We developed and implemented simple Standard Operating Procedures to keep our work running smoothly.

## EMPOWERMENT



- Over 400 community members went on exposure tours, including Mama Simba ladies visiting the Maasai Mara.
- Ewaso Lions remained rooted in culture. We transitioned 7 warriors into eldership in conservation, inaugurating the Lion Governors.

## BEHAVIOUR CHANGE



- We began to have brave conversations through panels, writing articles and introducing events on our social media about changing the conservation narrative and embracing compassionate conservation leadership.





# CONSERVATION: A KENYAN STORY INTRODUCING BEYOND BOUNDARIES KE

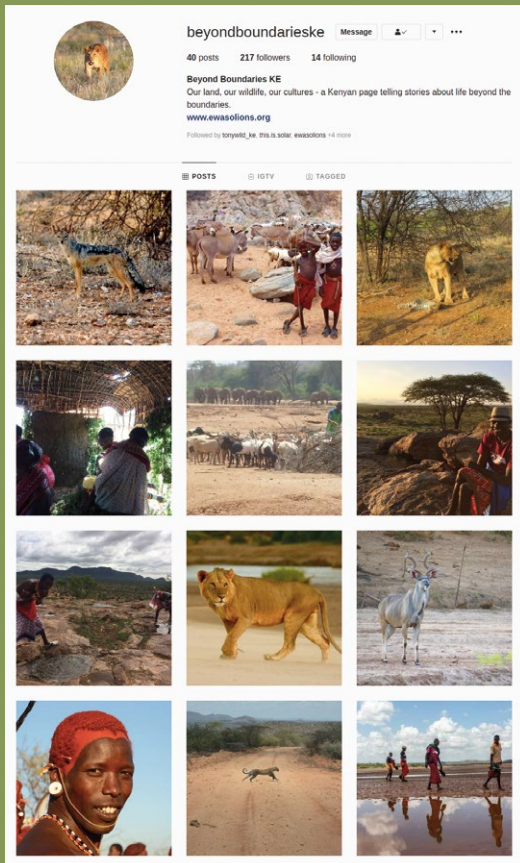
There is no word for “conservation” in any Kenyan language. Why? Because wildlife has been part of everything we are. It’s time for that to be true again. It’s time for conservation to expand again, and incorporate our cultures, our innovation and everything we want it to be part of.

So in the midst of crises, we launched a new programme - Beyond Boundaries KE. Our mission: to craft a new decolonised conservation space. We want to target different sectors of society with the message that we can define conservation for ourselves and Kenyans and Africans must be the centre of this story.

## Instagram:



Here, we tell our stories of life beyond the boundaries of protected areas; life that has always included wildlife, alongside daily ups and downs, traditional beliefs and memories of days gone by.



## Symposia:

A safe space for students to question and ruminate, become inspired by the stories of our guests, and get more passionate and strategic about a new inclusive and diverse form of conservation. In 2020, we held a 5-day virtual symposium, and brought together students from a dozen universities and guests from the music, entrepreneurial, tourism and conservation sectors. It was intergenerational leadership and mentorship at its best.



## Brave conversations:

Taking on tough topics like Race, Privilege and Power in conservation has to be done sensitively. Our promise is to always offer a road to recovery. In 2020, we had a panel discussion at the Pathways conference inviting friends of all colours who wrestled courageously with both personal responsibility and systemic reform. In November, over 20 women from 12 countries in Africa came together to write an important article in Mongabay titled: *Building a road to recovery for subtle racism in conservation*. It was viewed over 30,000 times, and has become required reading in some institutions.





## CRISIS AND COMMUNITY

**It is January. We watch as an ominous cloud races towards the hill where our camp is built. It is not a cloud. Billions of locusts soon pelt down at every surface in the camp and across the landscape for miles around. An apocalyptic start to the year.**

The rumours of Covid-19 become a reality for us soon after, and the whole world plunges into uncertainty. And in the midst of it all, a dry spell creates the perfect storm for conflict in September. Lions kill cows and camels, and our team fears the worst for lions that had been viewed favourably for so long by the community.

Despite the fear, fatigue and constant emergencies that plagued 2020, the team rallied, responding to each crisis with courage and efficiency. We fended off numerous locust invasions with everything from brooms to fire extinguishers. We found comfort and strength in the partnership with the Grevy's Zebra Trust, and worked with Communities Health Africa Trust to deliver masks and build hand washing stations to prepare the community for Covid-19.

And we put our backs into solving conflict, and supported the pastoral economy by rescuing lost livestock when communities needed it the most.

We have many reasons to celebrate. As a grassroots organisation, we have watched the vistas empty of international tourists and staff. The community have looked around and seen that at this crucial moment, we are not going anywhere. We are here to stay and the fact that we are locally led and driven from the ground, means that no matter what crisis is thrown our way, we are able to adapt and be creative in our approach and move forward.

**Onward.**

## COLLABORATIONS IN CONSERVATION KURA'S PRIDE



If 2020 has taught us anything, it is that disease outbreaks are a great threat to human, domestic animals and wildlife populations. In our landscape, they are a new threat that Ewaso Lions is currently tackling through our Kura's Pride programme which was launched in 2019.

Despite floods, locust invasions and Covid-19, we managed to accomplish a huge amount as a result of the partnerships formed and support received. We received tremendous on the ground support from numerous organisations and conservancies to cover a huge landscape with everyone contributing time, effort and funds towards this endeavour.

*"The vaccinations have prevented diseases such as rabies and have reduced spread of rabies from dog to dog and to carnivores like hyaenas that cause so many deaths due to biting people all over."*

Letoole, Westgate

And the results were fantastic. Over 10 months, under the leadership of the Samburu County Department of Veterinary Services and our close partners, we achieved:

**2642**

Domestic animals vaccinated

**23**

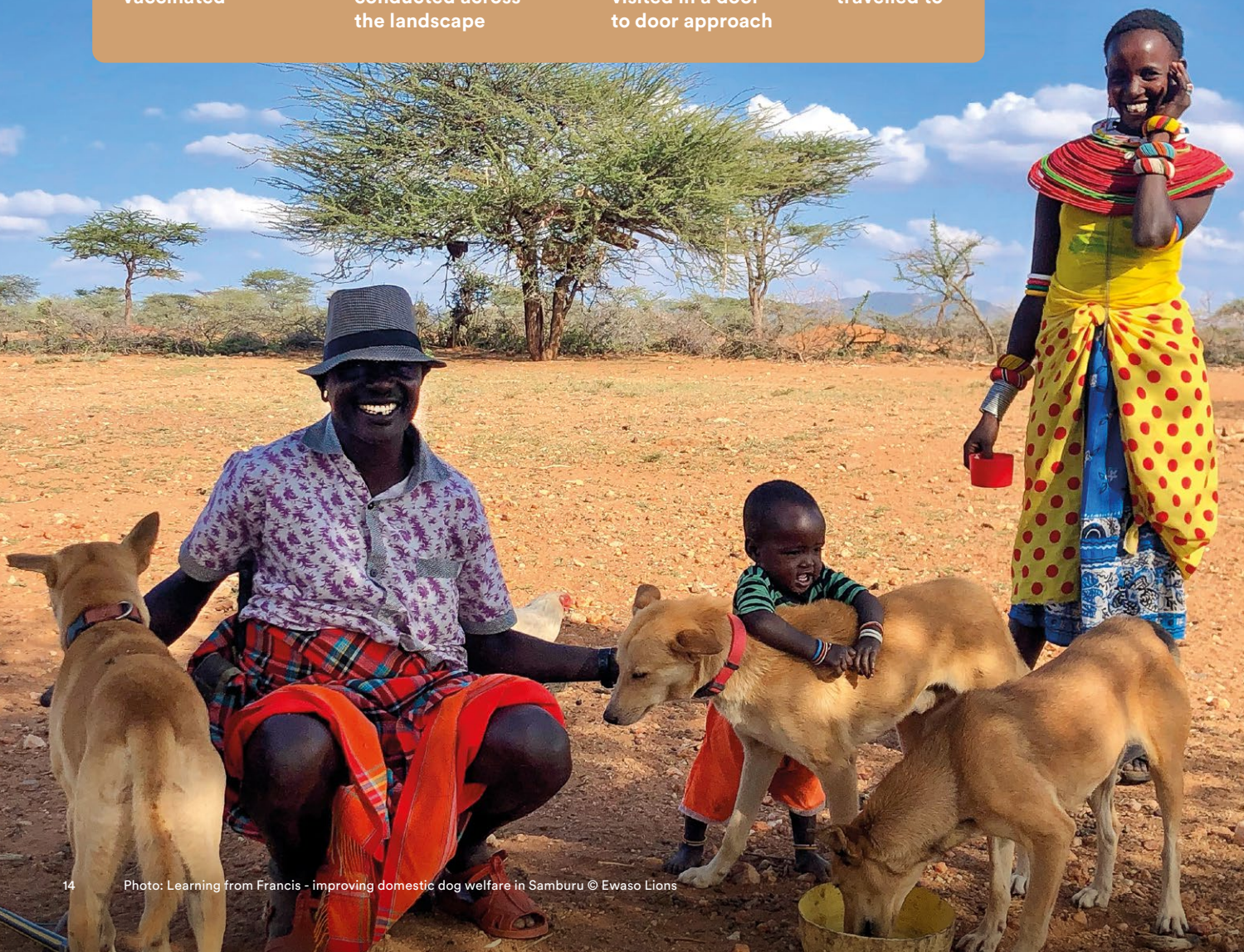
Days of vaccinations conducted across the landscape

**1210**

Households visited in a door to door approach

**48**

Settlements travelled to



## COLLABORATIONS IN CONSERVATION BIO INFRASTRUCTURE – A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EWASO LIONS AND THE GREVY'S ZEBRA TRUST

**Our approach from the inception of the Biodiversity and Infrastructure Programme has been to build bridges between conservation and infrastructure institutions.**

Ewaso Lions, the Grevy's Zebra Trust and partners have aimed to develop solutions for ecologically-sensitive infrastructure design as a community of practice and in good time to mainstream mitigation measures early on in the design process.

For our collaborative efforts, we were pleased to receive news from highway planners that our joint recommendations with partners for wildlife crossings are being considered for the proposed highway development between Isiolo and Lokichar.

### In 2020, we continued to see results:

- We held a conference with our partners, bringing together 70 participants from conservation organisations, infrastructure agencies and finance institutions to discuss how to design linear infrastructure for sustainable outcomes.
- We interacted with 147 attendees of skills strengthening events co-hosted with partners.
- We received 121 animal-road interaction reports through a citizen science project with partners to inform mitigation efforts on a major highway in northern Kenya.
- We trained 80 students on the basics of infrastructure mitigation processes.
- We were involved in 4 national, regional and global forums for the promotion of best practice and improved policy in Kenya.



## 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 2020, 93% of the funds raised supported our conservation and research programmes, 3% went to administration and 4% went to fundraising.

Thank you so much to all our partners who enable us to make a conservation impact in Kenya:

Kenya Wildlife Service

Samburu, Isiolo and Laikipia  
County Governments

Samburu, Buffalo Springs  
and Shaba National  
Reserves Managements

Community Conservancies  
(Westgate, Kalama, Nasuulu,  
Nakuprat-Gotu, Naapo,  
Nanapisho, Meibae, Leparua, Il  
Ngwesi, Lekurukki, Namunyak)

Wildlife Conservation Network

Whitley Fund for Nature

National Geographic

Houston Zoo

World Women Work

Grevy's Zebra Trust

Save the Elephants

Communities Health Africa Trust

Action for Cheetahs

Daktari Wildlife Foundation

Pride Lion Conservation Alliance

Africa Educational Trust

Northern Rangelands Trust

Kenya Wildlife Trust

Uvumbuzi Africa

All Ewaso Forum Members

Endangered Wildlife Trust

African Conservation Centre

Twiga Walinzi

Centre for Large Landscape  
Conservation

Foundation for International  
Aid to Animals

Animal Care Centre

Peregrine Fund

Sarara Camp and  
Sarara Foundation

Chiromo Environmental  
Awareness Club

Muthoni Music  
Entertainment Limited

National Museums of Kenya

Sustainable Travel and  
Tourism Agenda

Oi Malo

Samburu Trust

Milgis Trust

Zoonotic Disease Unit

Kenya Veterinary Association



# EWASO LIONS CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

- Ewaso Lions Camp ●
- Ewaso Nyiro River —
- Community Conservancies —
- Study Area —
- National Reserves —
- Forest —





### **Ewaso Lions**

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### **To donate in Kenya:**

LIPA na M-PESA (Paybill)

Ewaso Conservation Company

Business number: **579793**

Account number: **Your email address**

Cheque Payable to:

Ewaso Conservation Company Limited.

Email: [accounts@ewasolions.org](mailto:accounts@ewasolions.org)

for further information