

A close-up portrait of a smiling man with short dark hair, wearing a red t-shirt. The t-shirt features a white lion silhouette and the text 'EWASO LIONS'. The background is a blurred green landscape.

20 24

ANNUAL
REPORT

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

We see a secure future for lions in a dynamic, cultural landscape, achieved through community-led conservation.

Ewaso Lions is an independent 100% Kenyan wildlife conservation organisation which engages and builds the capacity of key demographic groups (warriors, women, elders and children) by developing approaches to reduce human carnivore conflict. Our conservation landscape includes; three protected areas (Samburu, Buffalo Springs and Shaba National Reserves) and eleven Community Conservancies in northern Kenya. We raise awareness of ecological problems to spur solutions from within our communities, and conduct research and educational initiatives that 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 fewer 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, disease 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 the 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 communities live.

*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

JENERIA LEKILELEI
Director of Community Conservation

TOBY OTIENO
Director of Impact & Operations

ARZINA BHANJEE
Finance Director

FRANCIS LENDOROP
Community Liaison Manager

EVANSON KARIUKI
Education Manager

EVELYN ODUOR
Operations & People's Manager

MUNTELI LALPARASAROI
Mama Simba Manager

MATTHEW WACHIRA
Research Manager

ELIJAH LENGAINA
Camp Manager

LAIKOS LETUPUKWA
Lion Manager

YEAR OF TRIUMPH FOR EWASO LIONS

Thanks to you, in 2024, we saved lions, supported our community and inspired new generations to protect wildlife.

15

CUBS BORN

With a flurry of births in the last few months of 2024, we counted 15 cubs in the area. This is a remarkable number which speaks to the stability of the lion population.

92

LION SIGHTINGS

We recorded 92 lion sightings across our conservation landscape, showcasing the thriving lion population and success of our conservation efforts.

1460

ANIMALS PROTECTED

We administered vaccinations to 1460 domestic animals, protecting them against rabies and distemper, ensuring their health and safety as well as slowing the spread of disease to wild populations.

5

LION KIDS CAMPS HOSTED

Organised 5 Lion Kids Camps, hosting 121 children from neighbouring Conservancies, teaching them about core conservation values and instilling in them a passion for wildlife.

42

LIVESTOCK COMPENSATION CLAIMS SUPPORTED

We assisted community members in filing 42 livestock compensation claims with the Kenya Wildlife Service, providing transport to affected livestock owners—alleviating hardships caused by carnivore predation.

88

LION HABITAT RECOVERY DAYS

This year, the Mama Simba programme oversaw and orchestrated 88 habitat recovery days, attending to grass enclosures and promoting indigenous tree recovery.

48

WARRIORS ENGAGED WITH

48 warriors attended 2 Warrior Camps, learning about the best ways they can serve their community and conserve their heritage.

311

ANIMALS TREATED

We treated 269 domesticated animals for injuries and illness. We treated a further 42 for emergency treatments.

7

COMMUNITY TRIPS

With 7 different trips, we took a total of 171 members of the community on safaris into Samburu National Reserve, showing them a new perspective on the wildlife they live alongside.

3

LIONS COLLARED

We collared 3 lions within our conservation landscape to help mitigate conflict and to keep them safe.



YEAR IN FOCUS: HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR TEAM



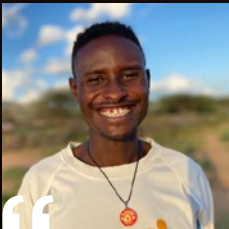
SHIVANI

After months of preparation, it was wonderful to welcome conservationists from around the world to our Community-Led Conservation Workshop in Samburu. The discussions were deeply inspiring, and it was an absolute honour to showcase the breathtaking landscapes of Samburu and the extraordinary spirit of its communities.”



ARZINA

This year just flew by. It was a flurry of nonstop activities. The biggest highlight was the successful implementation of the Community-Led Conservation Workshop and ensuring that all flowed smoothly behind the scenes. We are still continuing to work on improvements of efficiencies - step by step - and getting better as we evolve.”



NICHOLAS

One of the notable achievements was the significant reduction in rabies cases, reflecting the positive outcomes of our initiatives. Additionally, the community has shown immense appreciation for our work in helping both dogs and other domestic animals. Their feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, affirming the value of our efforts and the difference we are making in their lives.”



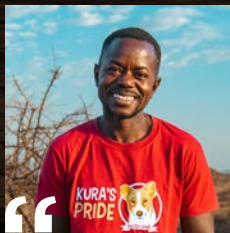
REBECCA

We are really happy that we managed to create safer areas for lions. We're also really happy about the area's lions. Recently, we saw 7 cubs were born and this is good news.”



JENERIA

For me there are many highlights. Firstly, I am so happy to see Nanai's legacy continue with the birth of 7 little cubs to two of her daughters. We have to credit our Counties and National Reserves' efforts for improving park management. Such efforts have played a big role in keeping lion populations healthy. Outside the Reserves, our dedicated team of warriors, Mama Simbas, support team, researchers, and everyone in the community have allowed lions to roam freely. As a result, we have more lions in Conservancies than ever before and, for the first time in my lifetime, we are seeing lions group together in prides.”



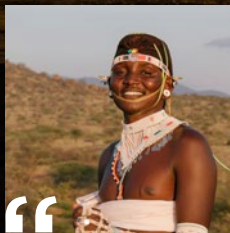
TOBY

A standout moment for me this year was attending the International Desert Conservation Summit in Palm Springs, where I connected with global conservationists, shared insights from northern Kenya, and received the Conservation Hero Award. Another highlight was starting my PhD at the University of York, researching how infrastructure impacts lion movement and pastoralist livelihoods. Despite a packed year, our team's resilience shone through as we supported each other like family. I am deeply grateful for these experiences and really excited for the journey ahead.”



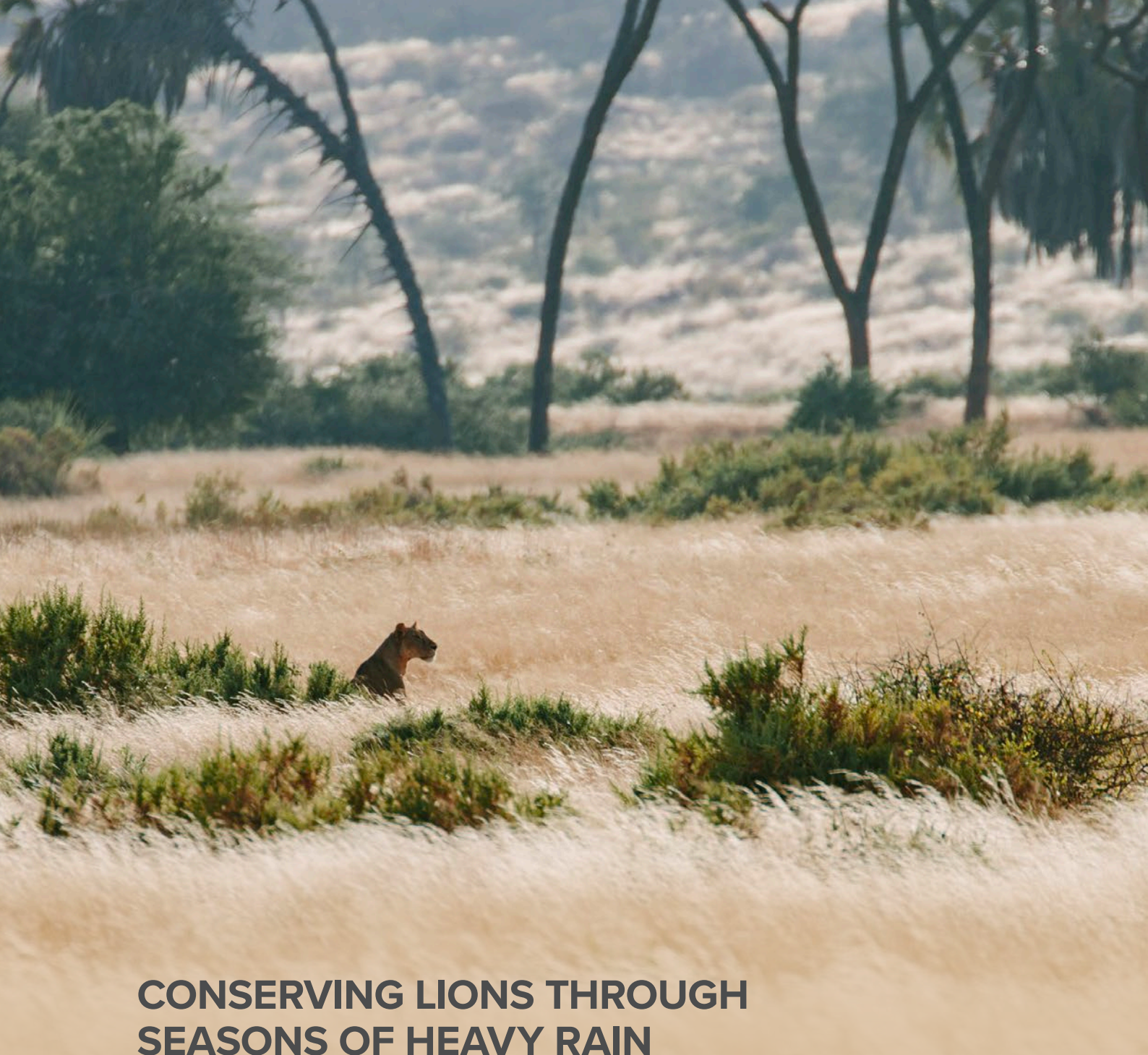
JISANA

One of my best experiences is when Ldere and Lolkiripa [two of the lions in the area] were making loud roars next to the village. There was no conflict and instead it became an interesting moment for the community because in Maa culture, hearing a lion's roar is a sign of hope. Every time I see lions live in prides in our landscape I feel so happy because lions grouping in prides has historically not been a common behaviour in northern Kenya.”



LKASIAN

This year has been good for Ewaso Lions, both in the National Reserves and in community lands. Because of how closely we've been monitoring them this year, we have managed to reduce the challenges they have been facing. Also, their population is thriving; we have seen many cubs born this year. To me, it looks like the lion population in northern Kenya will rise and I am proud of our efforts in this. If we have anything to say about it, the future of lions is secured in northern Kenya.”



CONSERVING LIONS THROUGH SEASONS OF HEAVY RAIN

After years of what was, at times, seemingly unrelenting drought conditions, in 2024, the heavens finally opened.

To the relief of our neighbouring communities and the wildlife they live alongside, the riverbeds ran full again and heavy rain battered roof and treetops.

The changes were quickly felt. The grazing animals that had survived the drought were finally able to slake their thirst and eat their fill. A sense of relief settled on the pastoralist communities, many members of which had lost livelihoods and more to the dry conditions that had lasted nearly three years.

For years, with their water sources and prey localised to the few riverbeds winding through the area, it had been easier to locate and monitor the area's lions. After the April and May rains, however, the prey had scattered, drinking from ponds and puddles wherever they could find them. As a result, the lions ventured far and wide in search of prey. To make matters more difficult, following the tracks they had left often led us into boggy impassable terrain. Conditions were much changed and made for a novel challenge for the Ewaso Lions team. Despite this, we still had an encouraging 92 lion sightings over the course of the year.

15 CUBS BORN: A REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT IN 2024

One of the most obvious successes we have seen conserving lions this year has been in the fact that 15 cubs were born.

Mbeneiyo, Najungu, Nakokiyo, Neiyo and one other lioness all gave birth to healthy cubs this year. Seven of those cubs were born to the same pride, with the others born to different groups of lions.

The last three of the new mothers named above gave birth to their litters in the final few months of the year. And, so far, with our teams employed regularly in monitoring them all, they have all remained healthy. This is clear indication that our conservation efforts are yielding very positive results.

Another element of this story that is particularly heart-warming is the fact that Nakokiyo and Najungu are Nanai's daughters. Nanai's importance to the lion populations of this ecosystem is continuously showcased in her important legacy.





WARRIORS AND LION GOVERNORS

Grappling with new challenges

This year, our Lion Governors and Warrior Watch teams faced a new and growing challenge.

Following the extended drought conditions of previous years, many herders have shifted away from cattle ownership, favouring hardy and more drought-resistant camels instead.

Camels are now widespread in communities that have no previous experience of herding and husbanding them. This has posed novel challenges. Camels don't respond to the environment in the same way cattle do. They are more prone to breaking the barriers of their bomas (night-time enclosures made of thorny branches) and leaving herders in the day in order to wander alone.

With their numbers augmented, the lions of the area have begun to target them. Instances of lion attacks on lost camels have soared. This has caused consternation amongst the herders.

With this novel problem growing, our Warrior Watch and Lion Governors teams sought solutions. This year, we launched a new camel husbandry programme. It is still in its early stages but, following a reconnaissance trip to areas in which camel husbandry is better known and working with communities who know camels best, the programme has yielded some encouraging insights that our Warrior Watch and Lion Governors teams have been sharing with the community.

MAMA SIMBA

Expansion and planning for the future

With the rains offering respite and reducing the pinch points between the community and the wildlife that are often in competition for the same resources, the Mama Simba ladies recognised this period of lessened tension for an opportunity that could not be missed.

Rather than rest easy in the comfort of the area's then-current state of welcome weather, the Mama Simba ladies spent much of this year using the rains to safeguard against future droughts. In the 88 days they spent in active lion habitat recovery work, the Mama Simba ladies maintained two lokeres (grass enclosures covering just over 7 acres) that will be used for harvesting grass to plant and were a demonstration in grassland rehabilitation. They could also be used for the grazing of animals if the rains are to fail again. In addition to this, they oversaw the planting of 24 indigenous trees.

All the while, they ensured that frequent wildlife safari trips, school sessions and idea-sharing community meetings were planned. They did all of this whilst also often being called on to patrol the local area and monitor lions.

HIGHLIGHTS THIS YEAR INCLUDE:

4 NEW MAMA SIMBAS

The Mama Simba programme welcomed 4 new additions in the early part of this year. These 4 new additions, from a younger generation of community ladies, brings new perspective and energy to the group. It also ensures that the good work and experience gained by more established members will continue to be of benefit to Ewaso Lions and the area.

171 WOMEN ATTENDED SAMBURU NATIONAL RESERVE SAFARIS

The safaris into the Reserve were a clear favourite with community members this year. Mama Simba oversaw the planning and execution of safaris that saw 171 women given access to this incredible experience that, in the past, often seemed the preserve of tourists.





LION KIDS CAMPS

Continuing our commitment to inspiring a new generation of community leaders in conservation

In June of this year, we hosted the fifth Lion Kids Camp of 2024 and the 43rd Camp of all time. We continue to provide this immersive experience to inspire children who live alongside wildlife.

These Camps offer children the chance to learn about conservation, threats to wildlife and strategies for continued coexistence in a fun and engaging way. All of the children who attend are mostly from herding families. These community groups are intrinsically tied to conservation and wildlife and that is part of why we are so happy with the results we saw during the June Camp.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JUNE CAMP INCLUDE:

5.3

From pre- to post-camp, the number of threats to wildlife that attendees could identify rose from 1.7 to 5.3.

88%

Following the June Camp, 88% of attendees were able to successfully identify carnivore tracks. Pre-camp, that number was 39%.

50%

Pre-camp, 13% 'strongly agreed' that it was "possible for their community to live alongside carnivores peacefully". That number rose to 50% post-camp.

63%

Pre-camp, 25% of children considered themselves responsible for conserving carnivores. Post camp, 63% thought so.

JUNIOR'S JOURNEY

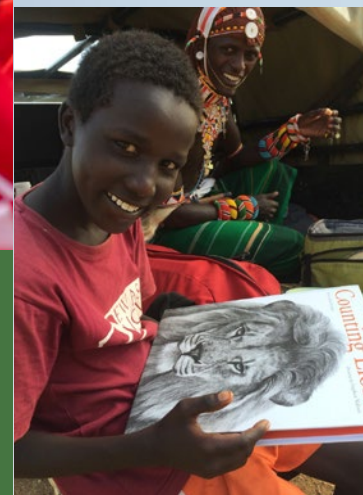
Junior's story is a heart-warming account of dedication and impassioned commitment to a clear goal. His is a great example for anyone looking to follow their dreams and apply themselves to a good cause.

Junior was initially introduced to Ewaso Lions as a 9-year-old boy at our first Lion Kids Camp back in 2013. After the Camp had ended, however, it was clear that Junior's fix for wildlife - and lions in particular - conservation and Ewaso Lions was far from sated. Ever since that first encounter with our work, Junior has hardly left our side.



Junior was so often around - and known to block roads in order to jump in one of our lion monitoring cars - that Jeneria took to affectionately calling him 'Traffic'. Junior's constant presence was driven by his clear desire to join in our work and help conserve northern Kenya's lions. Thanks to some friends of Ewaso Lions, and facilitated by the Jeremy Lucas Education Fund, we managed to secure funds for Junior's education. During school breaks he always returned to help out with the Lion Kids Camps and, over the years, he grew into a conscientious young man.

This year, Junior passed an incredible milestone. In April, he left us to journey to Naivasha where he is studying for a certificate in Nature Interpretation and Tour Administration. We are sure Junior will be back at Ewaso Lions' Camp sometime in the not too distant future but, in the meantime, we are so proud of the things this young man has achieved. While he is away studying, we will remember him fondly, not least because of the amazing artwork that his talented hands have left behind.



KURA'S PRIDE

Productive partnerships continue to yield results

Together with our partners in the Community Animal Health Initiative, Ewaso Lions has continued to provide emergency and essential treatments to the animals owned by our communities.

Preventative treatment - most obviously through the application of vaccines - continues to be the best tool in our arsenal as we seek to halt the spread of disease between domestic animals and wildlife. This year, largely thanks to a mammoth 4-day vaccination drive in August, we managed to vaccinate 1,460 dogs and cats. Most of these were vaccinations against rabies and distemper. This incredible work, conducted in partnership with VetinWild, Animal Care Centre, Foundation for International Aid to Animals and the Samburu County Department of Veterinary Services is so important and we are glad to play our part in these vaccination drives each year.

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS THIS YEAR INCLUDE:

42

Animals were treated for emergencies (mainly wildlife attacks on livestock).

37

Animals received population services (spaying and neutering).

1809

Animals were attended to in total.



FRANCIS' FAREWELL

Saying goodbye, and good luck, to a committed conservationist

In December, with heavy hearts and warm wishes for the future, we said goodbye to a pivotal member of the Ewaso Lions team.

Francis started at Ewaso Lions all the way back in 2008. He was part of the very early contingent and joined alongside Jeneria and Jeremiah. When Francis first started, we were a tiny operation and his initial title was as Lion Scout. Francis worked diligently, enthusiastically and, above all, always with integrity. He worked his way up through the operation as Security Manager. By the time he retired, he held the position of Community Liaison Manager.

In December, as we prepared for Francis's retirement, the team looked back at shared memories between themselves and Francis and two things most obviously came to the fore:

Firstly, Francis always did whatever was asked of him with an unwavering commitment to it being done the right way. He built a reputation of doing things well and properly.

And, secondly, Francis always did everything with a smile.

So, after the best part of two decades conserving lions and smoothing away conflict, Francis has chosen to retire. We wish Francis all the best in his future endeavours!



COMMUNITY-LED CONSERVATION WORKSHOP

An idea years in the making was finally brought to life

Born from an inspiring idea that first came to light in the foothills of the Kyrgyz mountains of Ala Archa, the Ewaso Lions-hosted Community-Led Conservation Workshop finally came together in November of this year.

After months of preparation and countless emails, 18 different conservationists, representing 11 organisations from 8 countries joined us in Westgate Conservancy to share ideas, learn from one another and discuss community-led conservation strategies the world over.



“
To be able to work with the community,
you must take time and listen to the
community and see what they want to do.”

Munteli Lalparasaroi, Ewaso Lions



“
Success in conservation means: hand in
hand, people and nature. It means people
falling back in love with nature... When
there is recognition and respect between
people - of all kinds, of all sectors - and
nature, we have success in conservation.”

Rodrigo Medellin, Professor of Ecology
from the University of Mexico



The interplay of ideas: how the whole thing came together.

With such a diverse group of people gathered, certain logistical and linguistic roadblocks needed overcoming before this much dreamed-of interplay of ideas could come together. With real-time translators and each of us mic'd up and wearing headphones, conversations conducted in Samburu, English, Portuguese and Spanish brought each of us closer to understanding the variable peculiarities that impacted our work on different continents.

The workshop was a truly amazing event to be a part of. Each of us, representing so variably motivated organisations, came with our own unique thoughts as to which were the greatest successes and threats that faced conservation and community involvement in it.

We were also incredibly happy to showcase - through the workshop activities and guided tours led by Mama Simba and our Warrior Watch teams - how actively and intimately community members lead and shape the Ewaso Lions project.

These different viewpoints combined to create something truly amazing and, from the conversations we had in November, we hope someday conservation organisations will draw inspiration and insight.

“
If people are not meeting their
basic needs, they are not going
to worry about conservation.”

Rosamira Guillen, from Proyecto Titi – a project protecting the Cotton-Top Tamarin of Colombia



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 2024, 94% of the funds raised supported our conservation and research programmes, 3% went to administration and 3% went to fundraising.

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

Kenya Wildlife Service

Wildlife Research Training Institute

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

World Women Work

Whitley Fund for Nature

Houston Zoo

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance

Samburu County Department
of Veterinary Services

Grevy’s Zebra Trust

Save the Elephants

Northern Rangelands Trust

VetinWild

Animal Care Centre

Foundation for International Aid to Animals

All Ewaso Forum Members

Conserveability Pathways

Zoological Society of London

Community-Led Conservation Framework:

All sponsors, partners and supporting projects

Photo: Our Ewaso Lions team. © Alfred Simatwa, Jillian Knox & Si Cave



OUR CONSERVATION LANDSCAPE

- Ewaso Lions Camp
- Ewaso Nyiro River
- Community Conservancies
- Area of Operation
- National Reserves
- Forest



Conservation
landscape coverage
4530km²



Ewaso Lions

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San Francisco, CA 94107.

Make cheques out to Wildlife Conservation Network with a note indicating Ewaso Lions. Please include your address for the mailing of tax information. WCN gives 100% of your donation directly to Ewaso Lions.