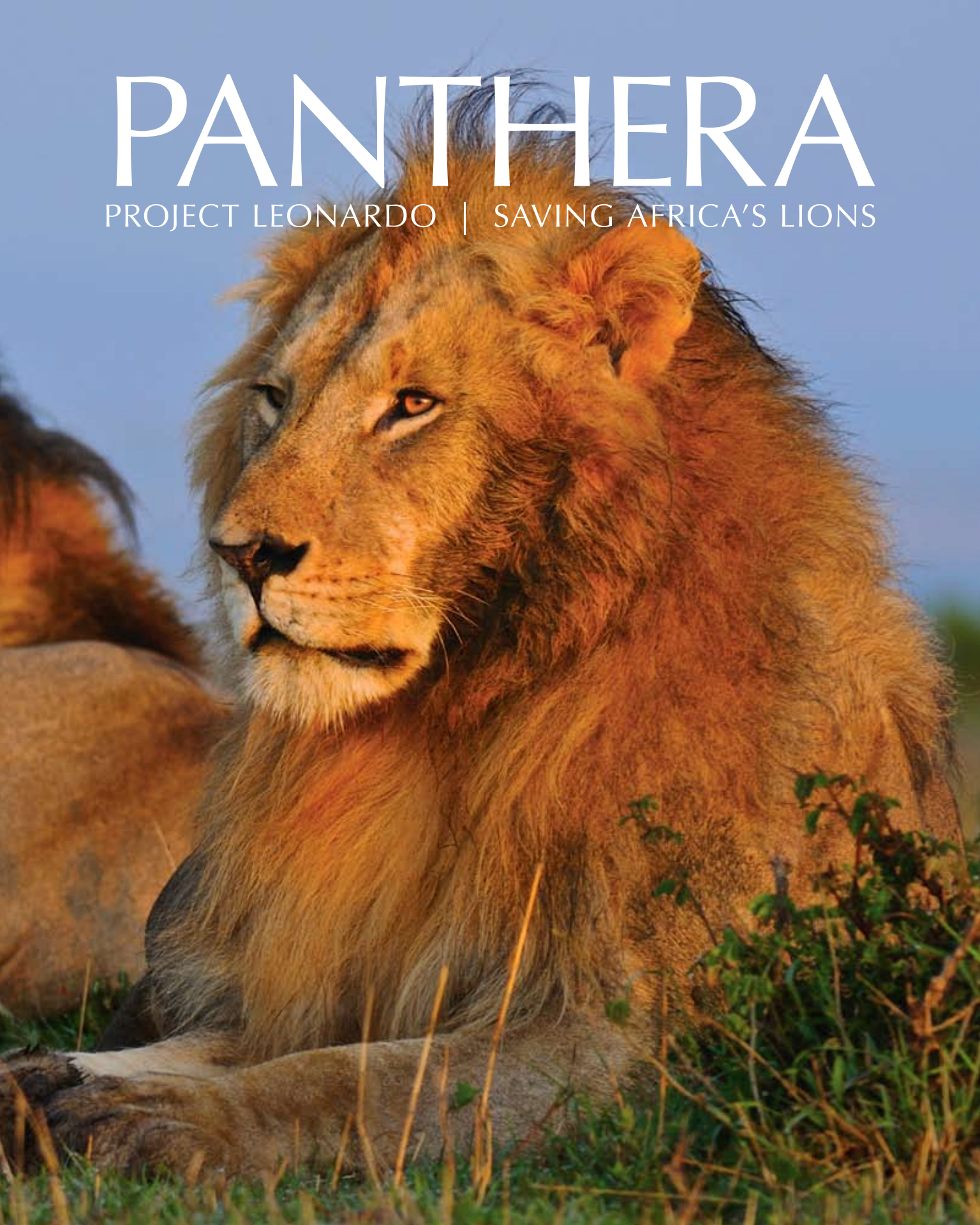


# PANTHERA

PROJECT LEONARDO | SAVING AFRICA'S LIONS





Panthera's Project Leonardo is the grand vision needed to protect one of the world's most iconic species from becoming extinct in the wild.



**Front Cover:** A male lion, one of two brothers, rests in the Maasai Mara Game Reserve in Kenya. **Above from top:** A local Maasai warrior holds the paw of an anesthetized lion; a male lion sits gracefully in a tree in Phinda, Northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

## THE VISION

For people around the world, the lion is synonymous with wild Africa. Like other large carnivores, lions need vast tracts of habitat and connected landscapes, an abundance of wild prey on which to feed, and for humans to tolerate their existence. Africa's world class system of parks protects an essential network of core lion populations. However, as Africa moves into the twenty-first century with the fastest growing human population on any continent, the pressure on reserves and the space that connects them is intense. With over 65% of lion range outside of formal protection, a grand vision is needed to protect this iconic species long into the future.

Panthera's Project Leonardo seeks to ensure the long-term survival of lions across the African continent by targeting the areas where lions are most imperiled. Our objective is to conserve the African lion in key landscapes by mitigating human-lion conflict, and building or restoring connectivity between landscapes that are critical for the lion's survival. Conserving lions range-wide will have far-reaching impacts. In targeting vast landscapes where the threats are greatest, we also maintain ecosystem functions. By focusing on the majestic African lion, Panthera's work will also protect many other irreplaceable species of flora and fauna on the African continent. And finally, because our work addresses the reasons that people are negatively impacted by the presence of lions, our strategy is uniquely geared to safeguarding human livelihoods and human health.





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## THE PROBLEM

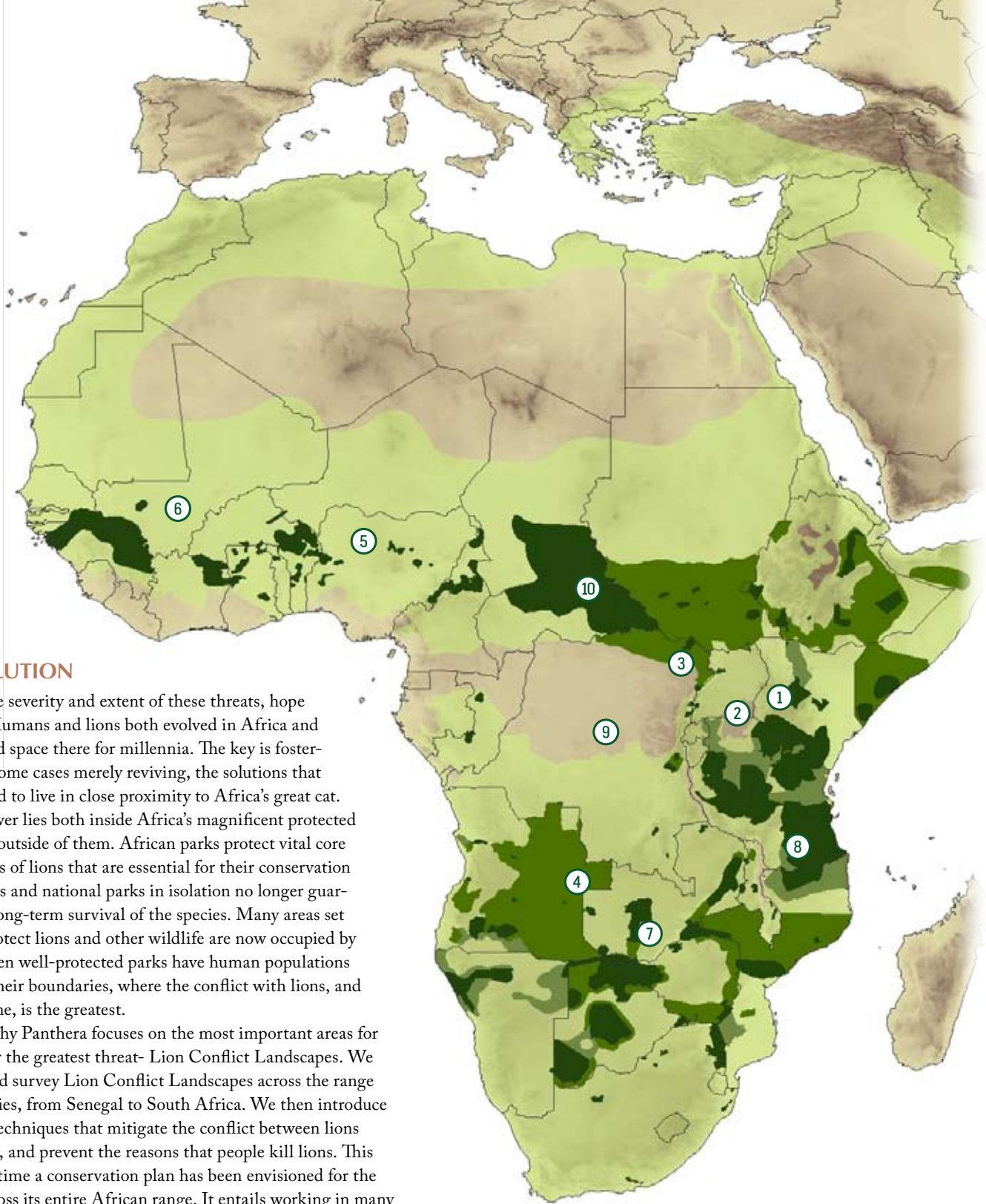
Although the lion is one of Africa's most iconic animals, few people are aware of the species' catastrophic decline. Only a century ago, there were as many as 200,000 wild lions in Africa. Today, the latest surveys estimate that there are fewer than 30,000. Lions are currently classified as globally "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. In West and Central Africa, the lion is now "Endangered." Africa's lions face a three-fold threat:

- Persecution by herders and farmers. Lions and people are on a collision course as natural habitat is converted for human use, and livestock replaces natural prey. This fuels intense conflict situations where lions are speared, shot or poisoned.
  - Kenya alone loses at least 100 of its 2,000 wild lions every year due to killing by people. At this rate, there will be no more wild lions in Kenya by 2030.
- Dramatic loss and fragmentation of habitat due to an ever-expanding agricultural frontier. Lions have vanished from over 80% of their historical range in Africa.
  - Lions are now extinct in 26 countries.
  - Only 7 countries- Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe- are thought to each protect more than 1,000 lions.
- A sharp decline in natural prey due to overhunting by humans. This establishes a vicious cycle in which lions are forced to prey on livestock, driving further conflict with humans in which the lion is always the loser.



**Above from Top:** A young male lion rests in a tree in Ishasha, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Uganda; local Maasai warriors perform a ceremonial dance in Mbirikani, Kenya; lion habitat in the Okavango Delta, Botswana.





## THE SOLUTION

Despite the severity and extent of these threats, hope remains. Humans and lions both evolved in Africa and have shared space there for millennia. The key is fostering, or in some cases merely reviving, the solutions that people need to live in close proximity to Africa's great cat.

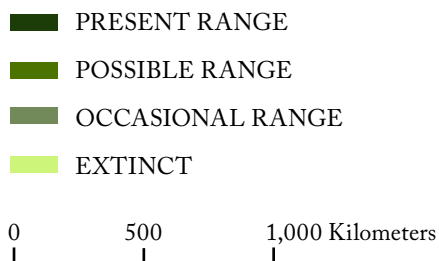
The answer lies both inside Africa's magnificent protected areas, and outside of them. African parks protect vital core populations of lions that are essential for their conservation but reserves and national parks in isolation no longer guarantee the long-term survival of the species. Many areas set aside to protect lions and other wildlife are now occupied by people. Even well-protected parks have human populations living on their boundaries, where the conflict with lions, and their decline, is the greatest.

This is why Panthera focuses on the most important areas for lions under the greatest threat- Lion Conflict Landscapes. We identify and survey Lion Conflict Landscapes across the range of the species, from Senegal to South Africa. We then introduce tools and techniques that mitigate the conflict between lions and people, and prevent the reasons that people kill lions. This is the first time a conservation plan has been envisioned for the species across its entire African range. It entails working in many of the most difficult and dangerous parts of Africa, as well as in areas that have historically been off the conservation radar. Our vision entails keeping lions in areas where they are most rapidly declining, and building or shoring up corridors to guarantee safe passage between key lion populations.

## PANTHERA'S LION FOOTPRINT

Panthera's task in Africa is enormous. The wild lion cannot be preserved if it is consigned to a few sharply delineated game parks. This is why we are committed to protecting a great crescent from West Africa, through the Sahel, into Eastern Africa, and down to the lion's range in Southern Africa. Some highlights include:

- 1 KENYA** With our Kenyan partners, Living With Lions, we have created the unique Lion Guardians Program to address retaliatory and traditional spearing of lions by Maasai warriors. The program recruits young Maasai warriors to respond to conflict situations; they become the front line in reducing human-lion conflicts by informing herders of areas occupied by lions, helping farmers improve their cattle husbandry and track down lost livestock, and by discouraging other Maasai warriors from hunting lions in the future.
- 2 TANZANIA** We are developing novel methods for surveying lions. While lions in protected areas are easy to study, lions outside of these landscapes are more heavily persecuted and shy because of it. Panthera is driving the development of new methods to monitor lion populations, including the largest-ever attempt to calibrate camera-trapping to a known lion population in the Serengeti with the Serengeti Lion Project. This is the first rigorous attempt to assess whether camera-trapping will be an effective method to estimate lion numbers.
- 3 UGANDA** We advised the Ugandan Wildlife Authority in developing a National Strategy Plan for the Lion. As one of its top priorities, we are now working with WCS-Uganda to understand the conflict between traditional fishing communities and lions inside protected areas in Uganda, and to develop the techniques to solve their problems.
- 4 ZAMBIA** At 2.25 million hectares, Zambia's Kafue National Park is one of Africa's largest and wildest areas, and potentially a regional stronghold for lions. The Kafue Lion Project aims to determine the status of the park's lion population, as well as identify conservation issues faced by lions in this magnificent wilderness.
- 5 NIGERIA** In cooperation with the Nigeria National Parks Service and Wildlife Conservation Society, we inaugurated the Nigerian National Lion Survey to establish the status of the species across the country, where it is now critically endangered. With the lion definitely present in only two areas, we are now focusing on the issue of lion-killing by nomadic herders; how do we prevent conflict when the herd is vast and mobile?
- 6 WEST AFRICA** We are surveying the last remaining areas in West Africa that might still hold lions. Sadly, most of our efforts to date reveal that lions are in far worse shape than we realized, raising the prospects that lions are now extinct or verging on extinction in Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Gabon and the Congo. We are more hopeful of their prospects in Senegal and Benin.
- 7 ZIMBABWE** With our partners at Oxford University-WildCRU, we are assisting a long-term study to examine the impacts of trophy-hunting on lions in areas adjacent to a national park, Hwange. We are now helping WildCRU build a lion 5,000 km<sup>2</sup> corridor from northern Hwange to the Zambezi River on the border with Zambia.
- 8 MOZAMBIQUE** With lion researchers Colleen and Keith Begg, we are working to help the communities living inside the vast and remote Niassa Game Reserve, and who share space with lions. The key is building barriers or 'living fences' to prevent warthogs and bushpigs- lion prey- from entering crops. Lions follow them and kill both people and their stock.
- 9 DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO** We are surveying the only possible strongholds of the lion in the savanna areas of the troubled DRC. The evidence for lions in the country is unfortunately very slim but we are continuing to target the most recent reports in the hope we can confirm that the Congo lions still exist.
- 10 AFRICA-WIDE** We have provided scholarships and research support to 12 graduate students working on lions in 9 countries.







## PANTHERA'S EXPERTISE AND APPROACH

Panthera is the world's leading wild cat conservation group and a pioneer in range-wide initiatives. We are committed to conserving the lion at a scale that has not yet been attempted, and we are uniquely positioned to do so with our far-reaching network of on-the-ground experts and decades of expertise. In the late 1960's, Panthera's Dr. George Schaller conducted the first intensive, ecological study of wild lions. His seminal work on lion ecology, *The Serengeti Lion: A Study of Predator-Prey Relations*, was published in 1972 and still stands as the most comprehensive title on the species.

Today, Dr. Schaller and Dr. Luke Hunter, Panthera's Vice Presidents, lead a first-class team of the world's lion experts including Drs. Laurence Frank, Guy Balme and Phil Henschel that work in the field where lion conservation is most urgent. They are at the forefront of surveying lion and prey populations, training field personnel and government staff, turning science into effective conservation action and, most critically, bridging the human-lion divide.

Panthera works from both directions: bottom-up with local communities, local governments, park guards, and teachers, and top-down with policy-makers, heads of wildlife and environment agencies, presidents and prime ministers. We are teaming up with local partners and providing them with the training and the assistance they need to effect conservation in their own countries, a vital component of any long-term conservation strategy.

**Above from Top:** A mother and her two young cubs drink from a water-hole in Phinda Game Reserve in South Africa; Panthera's Vice President Dr. Luke Hunter with Joel Ziwa and Mustapha Nsubuga replace a radio collar on a lioness named Masika; a gorgeous lioness basks in the setting sun; Maasai warriors turned Lion Guardians monitor the locations of radio-collared lions in Kenya.





## LIONS NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Panthera's Project Leonardo is a plan born out of hope and optimism, but rooted in science and expertise. Cognizant of the perils of waiting until the very last hour to act, Project Leonardo's aim is to forestall the precipitous decline of the African lion by securing core populations and maintaining connectivity between lion populations throughout Africa. Panthera is making this grand vision a reality. But in order to take it to scale and deliver the impact that is required to truly save lions, we need your help.

Join us in securing these linkages and alleviating the lion's critical threats, so they can continue to live in the wild today, tomorrow, and long into the future.

Panthera is a U.S.-based, 501(c)3 public charity. Donations, of any denomination, are tax deductible. Making your gift online is an efficient way to support Panthera's Project Leonardo. 100% of your donation will go directly to the field, where your contribution matters most and has the greatest impact.

To support our work, please visit us at [www.panthera.org](http://www.panthera.org). To inquire about other ways to donate, or how you might be able to help, please contact us at [info@panthera.org](mailto:info@panthera.org) or +1 (646) 786-0400. We would love to hear from you.

**Above from top:** A male lion looks curiously out from the grass; two young cubs on the move look inquisitively into a digital camera trap in the Maasai Mara Game Reserve; a stand-off between a young lion and a much larger rhino.







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