

Knowledge hub launched to help save African Lion

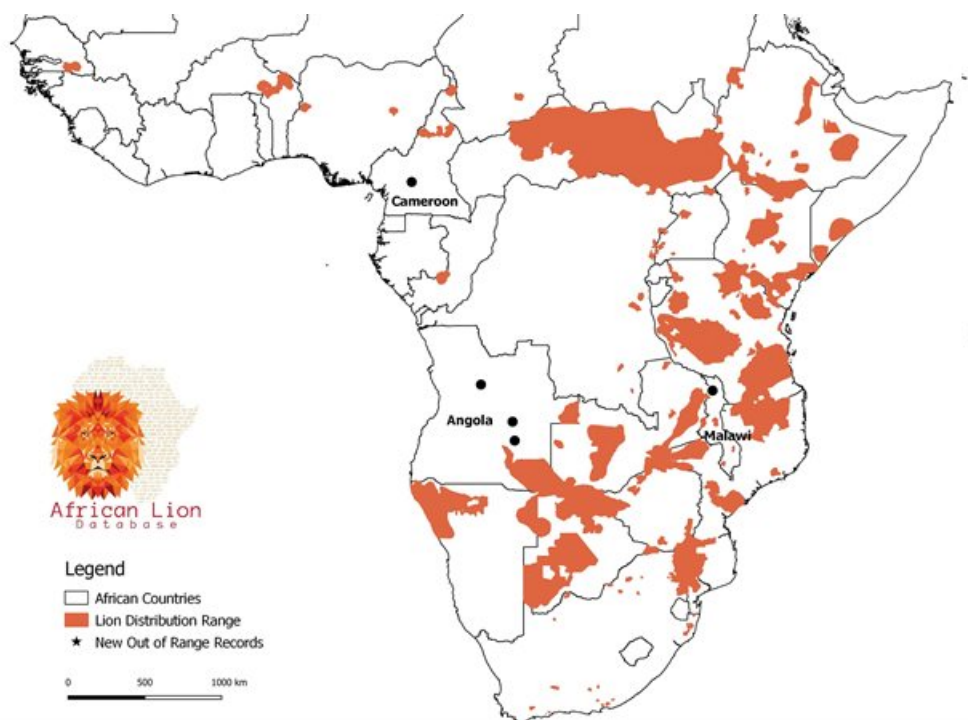
In the last 25 years alone, Africa has lost half its wild lion population, pushing the species closer to extinction. In order to accurately quantify the numbers and population trends of the African Lion, and document its presence or absence across its range, a new knowledge hub has been launched by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), under the auspices of the Cat Specialist Group (CSG) of the IUCN's Species Survival Commission.



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Although the African Lion is one of the best-studied big cats, there is still uncertainty as to how many remain and where they occur across the continent. Existing information tends to be dispersed among various institutions, preventing optimal conservation impact for the species as a whole. In October 2018, the EWT and CSG embarked on a new project to address this issue and develop the African Lion Database, a platform to consolidate critical data on the species.

The database is hosted by the EWT on behalf of the broader conservation community and will be used to compile, analyse, and store data on African Lion distribution, abundance, and population trends, and support the continuous assessment of the status of lions across the continent. This information will be used to better protect the species, guiding conservation action and directing funding resources to where they are most needed.



New insights

This project has been collating existing data from reserve management, researchers, existing data platforms, and from governments for the last six months and recently shared some new insights into the distribution of lions in Africa. For example, the presence of a resident male lion in Nyika National Park, Malawi, was recently confirmed by Central African Wilderness Safaris. Months after the initial report, the EWT received photos to confirm his presence. Another exciting record comes from Angola, where a sighting of a male and female with their two cubs was recorded in Luando Special Reserve. These are the first female and cubs to be seen in more than a decade in this area and this new information offers hope that lions may be re-establishing a presence where they were thought to have disappeared. A recent Born Free expedition recorded a small pride of lions for the first time at Mpem and Djim National Park in southern Cameroon – again, in an area where lions were considered to be locally extinct.

The project is made possible with the financial support of the Lion Recovery Fund and National Geographic Society.

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