

COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Working with local communities to protect
threatened species in the wild



**Born Free Foundation Conservation Report
2019–2021**



Contents

Introduction.....	3
BIG CATS & CANIDS	4
LIONS	5
Pride of Meru - Tier 1.....	5
Pride of Amboseli – Tier 1	7
Northern lion programme – Tier 2.....	8
TIGERS	9
Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership – Tier 1	9
Freeland Tigers – Tier 2	12
JAGUARS.....	13
Jaguars in the Fringe – Tier 2.....	13
WOLVES.....	15
Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme – Tier 1	15
PEOPLE & GIANTS	17
SAVANNAH ELEPHANTS.....	18
Amboseli Trust for Elephants - Tier 2	18
FOREST ELEPHANTS	20
Elephant Research and Conservation – Tier 2	20
RHINOS.....	21
Meru rhinos – Tier 2	21
GIRAFFES.....	22
Giraffe Conservation Foundation – Tier 2.....	22
FORESTS & TRADE	23
GORILLAS.....	24
Gorilla Monitoring Project – Tier 2.....	24
CHIMPANZEES	26
Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project – Tier 2	26
ORANGUTANS.....	28
Orangutan Foundation – Tier 2.....	28
AFRICAN ENDANGERED SPECIES	30
Last Great Ape Organisation – Tier 2.....	30
Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement, EAGLE – Tier 2	31
PANGOLINS	32
Wildlife Protection Society of India – Tier 2.....	32
Looking ahead	34

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the programmes and projects supported by Born Free, compiled from partner and staff reports, for the purpose of informing the wider Born Free team, our collaborators and associates about our investment and impacts in conservation.

The report details Born Free's conservation projects from April 2019 to March 2021, and is divided into three sections: Big Cats & Canids, People & Giants, and Forests & Trade. Our Tier 1 programmes are managed directly by our international wildlife charity, while Tier 2 projects are those supported financially and technically, but managed by partner organisations.

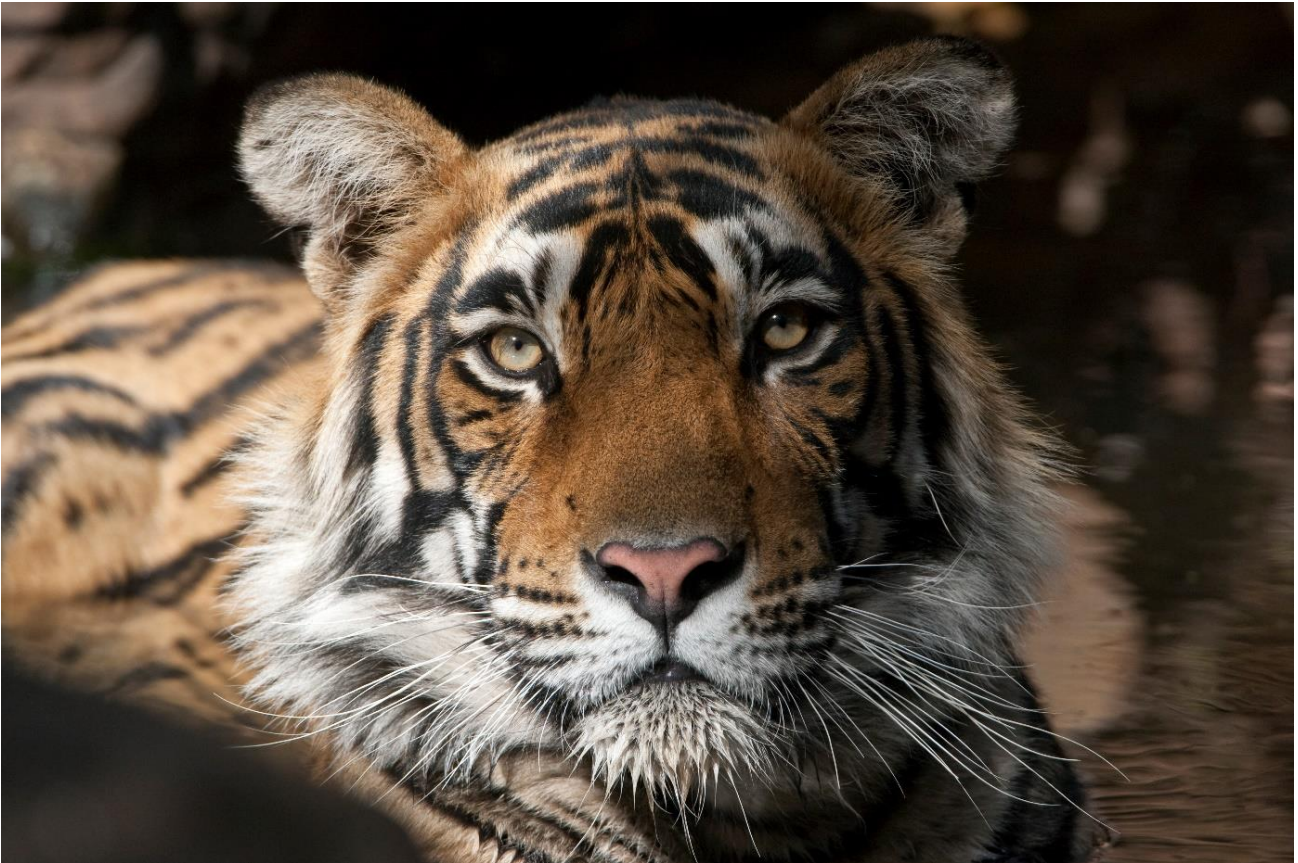
COVID-19 has of course had a big impact during a large proportion of this period, as detailed below in some updates. In other cases, although no specific mention is made, all work and successes have been achieved against a backdrop of delays, obstacles, additional protocols and limitations. But, despite the challenges, our field teams and partners have been immensely resilient, battling against the odds to achieve fantastic results and helping us to Keep Wildlife in the Wild!



©Amboseli Trust for Elephants

BIG CATS & CANIDS

Born Free cares for carnivores across continents and protects a range of big cats and rare canids from Africa, Asia and South America.



©tigersintheforest.co.uk

How many lions?

- 1921: one million, 2021: <20,000
- 90% population decline in 100 years
- IUCN* status: Vulnerable
- Kenya population: 2,589 lions
- >12% of Africa's lions in Kenya
- Circa 80 adult lions in Meru

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

LIONS

Pride of Meru - Tier 1 Meru Conservation Area, Kenya



“One of the greatest privileges of working in Africa’s savannah is spending long periods in the field. My passion is to understand how effective large carnivore conservation can be achieved, by championing human-wildlife coexistence. Relying on cutting-edge research, we work side by side with our partners to keep lions safe.”

Dr Caroline Ng’weno
Born Free Foundation

The Meru Conservation Area is a 4,000-km² wilderness, Kenya’s second largest protected area, comprising Meru and Kora National Parks, and Bisanadi and Mwingi National Reserves. Inspired by the story of Elsa the lioness, successfully returned to the wild in Meru in 1958, Born Free launched a lion monitoring programme in 2014 to help secure a viable population in Meru as a stronghold for Kenya’s lions.

The team actively monitors individuals through opportunistic sightings, tracking spoor and using innovative methodology, gathering essential data for effective conservation. In 2016, Born Free and Kenya Wildlife Service’s first ever lion census estimated 60 lions.



©Blake McGrow

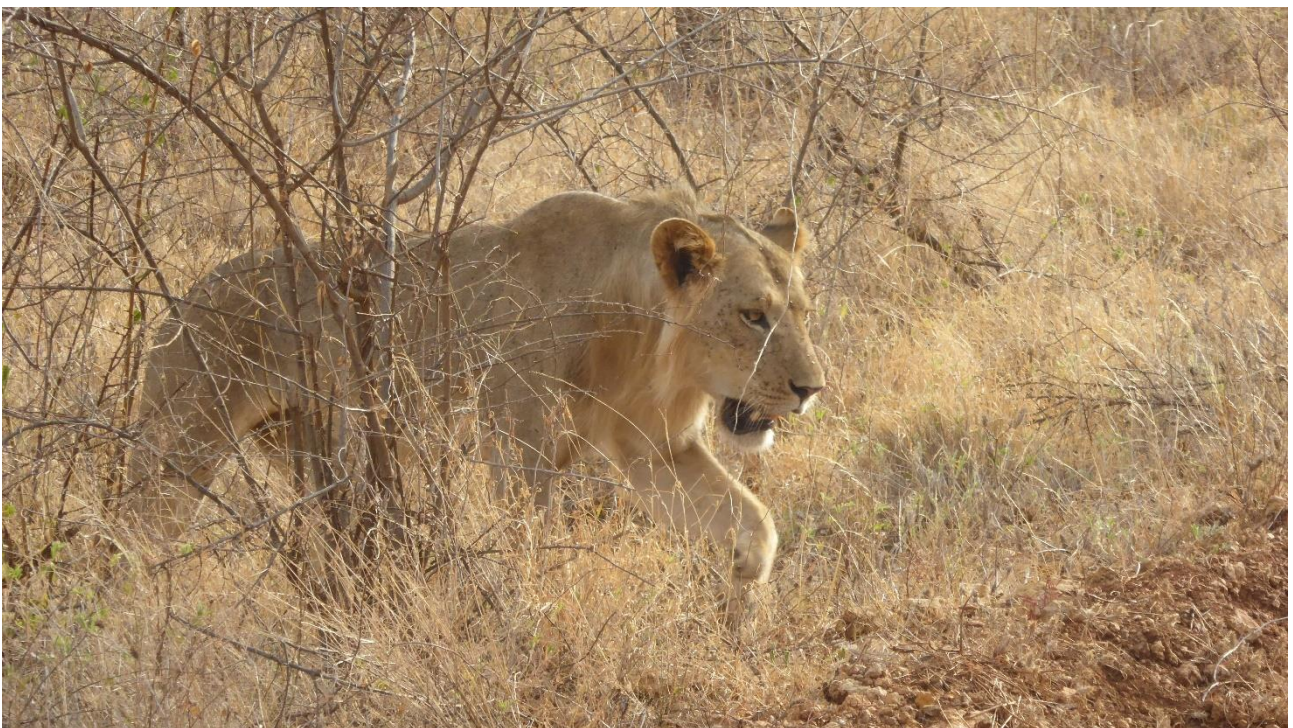
Today, this population comprises four prides – the Mulika, Elsa, Virginia and Bisanadi prides – and five additional groups, including bachelor males, coalitions, nomadic individuals and a group whose cohesion as a pride is being monitored.

Lions are identified by whisker spot patterns, ear tears, large scars and mane development in males. In the last two years, our team identified and named 30 more lions for our ID catalogue, taking the total to 66 adults.

In two years, our team covered 17,000 miles in vehicles and spent 1,924 hours in the field (50 working weeks) as they tracked lions, recorded any carcasses and monitored illegal activities, such as wire snares. Details on social composition and behaviour of lions were recorded, as well as 256 sightings of other carnivores including black backed jackals, leopards, hyenas and cheetahs.

In November 2020 our Meru team collaborated with Kenya Wildlife Service to conduct an aerial census of large mammal populations. Results, to be published later this year, will be invaluable to conservation efforts.

After 1,924 hours in the field, covering 17,000 miles, our team has monitored 66 individually identified lions.



©Will Travers

Pride of Amboseli – Tier 1 Amboseli Ecosystem, Kenya



In 2010, Born Free launched our Pride of Amboseli programme to address human-lion conflict in and around Amboseli National Park. The programme aims to safeguard lions by changing negative perceptions of carnivores and promoting coexistence with people. The key objective is to eliminate conflict through the construction of predator-proof bomas.

In the last two years, we have fortified 64 traditional bomas, safeguarding 19,300 livestock and livelihoods of over 1,250 people.

These bomas are more robust than traditional designs, using two-metre high chain-link fencing, together with 'smart' components including solar lighting units, energy-saving stoves and water harvesting structures. Communities contribute towards material costs and help with construction. These reinforced bomas are cost-effective, compatible to traditional ways of life and improve the wellbeing of community members.

In the last two years, 64 traditional livestock corrals have been fortified, protecting 19,300 livestock and safeguarding the livelihoods of over 1,250 people from pastoralist families. Each 'smart' boma comes with 10 jikos (energy-saving stoves) – reducing smoke-related health conditions and need for firewood. We also distributed 64 solar light units and 32 water storage tanks, as well as 430 jikos to other local households. Since our boma work began, over 330 bomas have been reinforced, benefitting some 7,000 people and 97,000 sheep, goats and cattle.

Northern lion programme – Tier 2
Alatash National Park, Ethiopia
Dinder National Park, Sudan

“Every lion counts, maybe even more so in northern Africa where small populations hang on. I am honoured to help Born Free raise awareness about these unique lions, the ecosystems they live in, and the people that live with them.”

Hans Bauer
Wildlife Conservation Research Unit,
Oxford University

Lion populations are declining across Africa, but threats are highest in West, Central and the Horn of Africa where a separate subspecies (*Panthera leo leo*) is found in a few remaining ecosystems. This programme is one of the few with a focus on the region, in a combination of science and practice.

In 2019 and 2020 Born Free supported lion collaring and surveys in Ethiopia’s Alatash National Park where lions are under threat from livestock encroachment, poaching and habitat loss. However, due to insecurity in the region, actions on the ground were limited. Dinder NP, Sudan, a forgotten corner of rich African savannah transboundary with Ethiopia, has close to 150 lions. In 2020, the team carried out 150 miles of transects on foot to count all larger mammals. However, the serious challenges to working in this region means such efforts need a lot of support to build a conservation sector almost from scratch.

In 2019, two lions dispersed over 186 miles, arriving in Mpem and Djim National Park in central Cameroon. This is an area of forest-savannah mosaic, with rainforest species like chimpanzee and pangolin. Born Free funded a pioneer mission to establish the lions were really there and several partners are now collaboratively working towards a management plan.

TIGERS

Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership – Tier 1 Satpuda forests, Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra, India

“The dense forests, pristine river valleys and rugged Satpuda Hills, home to a quarter of India’s tiger population, are spread across central India’s incredible wilderness. I feel privileged to be a part of this vibrant network, striving to protect India’s tigers.”

Kedar Gore

The Corbett Foundation



©Sanjay Karkare

How many tigers?

- >4,000
- IUCN* status: Endangered
- 96% of tigers lost in 100 years
- 60% wild tigers live in India
- India population: circa 3,000 = >100% increase since 2006

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

The Satpuda forests of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra states offer perhaps the best hope for India's remaining 2,000 Endangered Bengal tigers. Here in Central India there is a population of some 600–700 tigers. With several reserves connected by forest corridors, this is India's largest block of tiger habitat.

Tigers are threatened by habitat loss, road and railway development, and retaliatory killing due to conflict and prey depletion. This network, developed by Born Free and Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Oxford University, brings together Indian conservationists and organisations to address conflict, invest in conservation education and work on policy issues.

Born Free funds the partnership, with quarterly partner meetings and an annual seminar with the Forest Department and other government institutions.

Mobile Health Unit

During 2019–2021, 499 Nature Conservation Society Amravati medical camps treated 20,910 patients in local villages and supported communities with water conservation, garbage disposal, forest fire-fighting, reduced fuel wood collection and reduced grazing. The unit also treated some 1,930 forest employees.

In the past two years, 20,910 local villages and 1,930 forest employees have received medical treatment.

Interviews with 210 villagers who lost livestock or sustained an injury in carnivore attacks revealed 95% were happy with forest staff's grievance redressal system. This is reflected in decreasing retaliatory tiger killings in the region: in 2016 – seven, 2017 – six, 2018 – four, 2019 – two and 2020 – 0. Unfortunately, one tiger was killed in March 2021, but the unit is clearly increasing local tolerance towards tigers.



Forest Guard Mr Patil receives medical treatment.

©Nature Conservation Society Anvrati

Landscape Monitoring Unit

The Satpuda Foundation supports government policy-decision making affecting tigers by attending meetings, online seminars, conferences, workshops and site visits. The team suggests mitigation measures or works to avert development projects. Camera trap pictures and pugmarks show tigers using underpasses on major roads, with reduced tiger (and leopard) deaths and a radio telemetry study showing their increased dispersal across the landscape due to this assured connectivity.

School Education Programme

Bombay Natural History Society conducted 69 nature camps in schools involving 2,454 students and 156 teachers, and helped ten model 'Green Schools' develop their own conservation curriculum. Tiger information posters featuring relevant local reserves were presented in each school together with a lecture. To adapt to the challenges of national lockdown, the team set up a WhatsApp group and arranged online activities for students, continuing their important conservation outreach even under these difficult circumstances.

Tiger Ambassadors

Nawegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve is home to some 11 adult tigers including three breeding females and is an important dispersal point to satellite protected areas. Tiger Research and Conservation Trust works with local communities in 45 buffer villages on a Tiger Ambassador programme and conducted workshops with 45 teams, training an additional 70 new Tiger Ambassadors in 10 new villages in the last two years. Since its inception, the programme has trained 385 local people who conduct fortnightly surveys on wildlife presence and human-wildlife conflict. Data indicates that there has been no increase in conflict in these villages during a two-year period.

The team has expanded this successful programme into a new wildlife sanctuary in Central India – Ghodajhari, which connects Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve to Umred Karandla and Pench Tiger Reserves, and supports a population of more than 45 tigers and many leopards, but is rife with conflict and tiger killing. The team carried out awareness meetings in 10 villages, trained 70 new Tiger Ambassadors and distributed mitigation manuals.

The programme distributes 'living with tigers' manuals and has trained 385 local people who carry out fortnightly surveys.

Freeland Tigers – Tier 2 Key forest complexes, Thailand

In Thailand, Freeland focuses on conservation at the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai World Heritage site, specifically the Indochinese tiger. Freeland's Surviving Together programme, in partnership with government and civil society, builds capacity and awareness to protect wildlife and habitats.

There are estimated to be just 350 of the Indochinese tiger subspecies, but Freeland is determined to ensure their conservation.

Freeland have deployed 40 additional camera traps in the last year to survey for tigers across Thailand. Able to capture night-time images, they improve individual tiger identification and help monitor tiger health and population dynamics. In the last year, thanks to camera trap ecological surveys (the equivalent of an extraordinary 26,187 nights), Freeland has detected 16 tigers, including one new individual.

Throughout the pandemic, Freeland has invested in rangers, with 78 taking part in enforcement training and 58 taught survey techniques. The team also reached 2,330 students, delivering conservation awareness workshops at 26 schools and championing local village teachers and community leaders. Through plays, music, and fun-filled games, students learn critical messages, with teachers taking an active role, supported by a Teachers for Forests manual. This manual includes engaging, local curriculum guidance on topics such as ecology, ecosystems and ecosystem services, protected species and biodiversity. Freeland also conducted community awareness activities in five villages, reaching 218 villagers.



©Freeland Foundation

JAGUARS

Jaguars in the Fringe – Tier 2 Yungas Forest, Argentina

“In the southernmost fringes of their distribution, jaguars are endangered and elusive. So, I'm over the moon every time I see them in a camera or pick up their footprints, especially when we find jaguars close to local ranchers and herds, but receive no reports of livestock losses. Coexistence and tolerance are key to successful jaguar conservation.”

Dr Juani Reppucci
Jaguars in the Fringe

This project aims to secure the survival of the southernmost jaguar population in the Argentine Yungas and promote expansion, by reducing habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation and enabling recovery of jaguars' prey base. The team's 70-line transect survey, searching for jaguars and other mammals, will provide fine scale information of jaguar distribution and factors affecting it.

The team also conducted a camera trapping survey in the Argentina-Bolivia border, a potential corridor between Baritú National Park (Argentina) and Reserva de Flora y Fauna de Tariquía (Bolivia). They installed 45 camera traps (10 in Argentina and 35 in Bolivia), active for 12 months before retrieval and are now sifting through images. Additionally, the team carried out 56 interviews gathering data on land use, local knowledge of jaguars and opinions on current conservation strategies.

In collaboration with other organisations the team organised a 'Monitoring techniques and strategies for jaguar coexistence and conservation' workshop, training 450 participants in jaguar conservation – including park rangers, students, protected area owners and government agencies – within the three regions jaguars are found in Argentina (Yungas, Chaco and Atlantic forest).

The team also had three formal meetings with Tinkunaku, a local community including several villages in an important jaguar habitat range adjacent to Isla de Cañas. Participants were told of cattle breeder association plans, innovative husbandry practices and actions to reduce conflict with jaguars.

The team is in the final stages of developing a deterrent collar for cattle, to be attached to some animals in each herd and emitting sounds of people talking, and lights during the night, to deter jaguars. It is hoped that reduced livestock losses will positively influence local community attitudes, leading to fewer retaliatory jaguar killings by disgruntled ranchers.



Installing a camera trap near Isla de Cañas.

©Silvina Enrietti

How many jaguar?

- Global population: Circa 15,000
- Argentina: Circa 250 adults
- IUCN* status: Near threatened

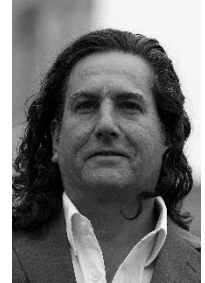
*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

WOLVES

Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme – Tier 1 Bale Mountains, Ethiopia

“The most clear danger to Ethiopian wolves, Africa’s most threatened carnivores, comes from domestic dogs. They compete for food, transmit rabies and canine distemper and even hybridise with them. Our One Health approach benefits wolves, but in doing so also protects dogs and livestock and improves peoples’ livelihoods.”

**Prof Claudio Sillero, Born Free’s Chief Scientist
Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, Oxford University**



The Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme provides an ideal platform to address the conservation of this endemic wolf, the world’s rarest canid. Their mission is to secure viable, ecologically functioning Ethiopian wolf populations and habitats, emphasising the wolf’s role as a flagship for conservation and sustainable use of the Afroalpine ecosystem, on which present and future generations of Ethiopians also depend.

The programme monitored 92 wolf packs in 2019, and 72 in 2020, across six wolf populations in 28 sites, with more than 7,700 sightings. The team was delighted to discover a wolf family has recolonised Delanta in the northern highlands. The wolf population had previously been wiped out by an epizootic in 2016 and there had been little hope they would return.

In 2020, disease awareness campaigns reached 22 communities in and around Bale Mountains National Park, home to the largest remaining population of Ethiopian wolves. As part of a holistic plan, the team vaccinated 2,413 dogs (94% coverage) and 19 wolf packs against rabies over a six-month period – a disease that can be fatal to this vulnerable animal and poses a huge threat to the species’ survival. The team also set up three ‘Disease Alert Networks’ in Bale and West-Arsi, with local people reporting dangerous disease outbreaks.

Also in the last year, a wolf was rescued in Simien Mountains National Park, and treated for life-threatening gunshot wounds. Against all odds, the wolf survived and successfully radio-tracked for eight months. Over the last year, 45 litters were observed totaling 93 puppies across five populations. The monitoring teams confirmed breeding in more packs than ever before, including in previously little-known packs.



©Martin Harvey

How many Ethiopian wolves?

- Around 500
- 122 packs in six populations
- IUCN* status: Endangered

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

PEOPLE & GIANTS

Born Free promotes peaceful coexistence with African large herbivores in people-dominated landscapes and develops humane, practical solutions to conflict.



SAVANNAH ELEPHANTS

Amboseli Trust for Elephants - Tier 2 Amboseli Ecosystem, Kenya

The Amboseli Elephant Research Project is the world's longest-running study of wild African elephants. For over 46 years, the Amboseli Trust for Elephants has worked in the Amboseli Ecosystem (including Amboseli National Park and surrounding conservancies) to document life histories of 3,428 elephants. There were only 12 births in 2019; however, in the next year, with good rainfall, elephants thrived and a huge baby boom was documented in the first part of 2020: 165 births in 48 families.

Born Free has helped keep elephants safe in Amboseli since 1992.

Two sets of twins were seen, doubling the total known twins in this study population since 1972. Little is known about twinning rates in wild elephants, since it seems to be rare for both to survive. Sadly, the oldest elephant in the study population, Barbara, died at the age of 72 earlier in 2020. In 2021, the study population numbers 1,828 animals, ranging in age from newborn to 57 years old. The team deployed eight GSM satellite collars, tracking young male elephants in the most human-dominated areas of the ecosystem.



**Edwina,
January
2019.**

©Amboseli Trust
for Elephants

“To sit in the quiet of an Amboseli day with elephants is a great privilege. To know them, their lives and families, is a beautiful thing. Although the landscape is changing, there is a community of people whose hearts and souls lie in fighting for a future that lets people and wildlife thrive together.”

Dr Vicki Fishlock

Amboseli Trust for Elephants

How many African elephants?

- 415,000 (in 2016)
- IUCN* status: Savannah – Endangered, Forest – Critically Endangered
- 60% savannah decline since 1971, 86% forest decline in three generations
- Kenya good news – 100% population increase (16,000 1989, 34,800 today)
- Kenya good news – 96% elephant poaching decrease (386 killed 2013, 11 killed 2020)



Forest elephants. ©Elephant Research and Conservation

FOREST ELEPHANTS

Elephant Research and Conservation – Tier 2 Guinea Forests, Liberia

“Starting work in Liberia in 2010 I was overwhelmed by West Africa’s rich biodiversity. One animal fascinated me most: the forest elephant. The way they move through the forest, making themselves almost invisible. My husband and I are investigating where and how they live and helping solve conflict with people.”

Dr Tina Vogt

Elephant Research and Conservation

Elephant Research and Conservation works towards the conservation of forest elephants in Liberia. In the last two years, the entire northwestern forest block of Liberia has been surveyed for forest elephants (comprising 28 different field sites and 19 community surveys). It is estimated there are seven subpopulations, with a total population of 350–450 elephants in this area, with 1,000 elephants likely present in the country as a whole, a much larger population than previously estimated and an important stronghold in the region.

The survey enabled the team to identify 11 major human-elephant conflict hotspots, where elephants raid crops and destroy people’s livelihoods. In the last two years, 25 local community members have received human-elephant conflict mitigation training and tools including active farm guarding using flashlights, making noise, fire, chilli bricks, chilli fences. They have been introduced to elephant behaviour and human behaviour guidelines when elephants are around – all cheap, simple and instantly applicable.

Also, 25 Forestry Department rangers and 16 students have been trained in biodiversity and wildlife conservation, with a focus on forest elephants. Twelve communities have taken part in awareness events, with local people eager to learn about forest elephant conservation.

It is estimated there are 350–450 elephants in this area, with 1,000 elephants present in the country as a whole

In early September of 2020, two habituated male elephants, known from a long-term monitoring programme in Guinea, crossed into northeast Liberia until mid of December, when they went back to Guinea. Relevant Liberian institutions, including Elephant Research and Conservation, set up an Elephant Emergency Committee to mobilise funds for safeguarding the elephants, creating awareness and taking risk prevention measures to protect local people and their farms.

RHINOS

Meru rhinos – Tier 2 Meru Conservation Area, Kenya

Rhino populations across Africa and Asia have plummeted in recent decades, mainly driven by poaching for the illegal trade in rhino horns – used in traditional medicines and tonics in parts of Asia and as a high-end gift and investment. Born Free supports Kenya Wildlife Service rangers who patrol the Rhino Sanctuary in Meru National Park, Kenya, who risk their lives to protect rhinos and other wildlife from poachers. With our support, no rhinos have been poached in Meru National Park for the last two years. Under the rangers' careful watch, rhinos are thriving and, since January 2020, Meru has recorded 10 new births.



©Kenya Wildlife Service

How many rhino?

- Black 5,495, white 18,067
- IUCN* status: Black Critically Endangered, white Near Threatened

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

GIRAFFES

Giraffe Conservation Foundation – Tier 2 Giraffe Zone, Niger

Once distributed across west and central Africa, there are now some 600 West African giraffe, making them the rarest subspecies. The population lives close to the capital of Niger, their environment dominated by agriculture and settlements. With Born Free support, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation has surveyed giraffes for several years, with the most recent estimates showing 664 individuals. New giraffes, previously unseen in surveys, were added to the GiraffeSpotter photo-identification database.

In August 2020, a devastating terrorist attack resulted in the death of Niger's President of the Association for the Development of Ecotourism, as well as foreign internationals in the Giraffe Zone, leading to its temporary closure. However, a new monitoring programme was developed with the Association and crucial work began in January 2021.

After the reintroduction of giraffes to the Gadabedji Biosphere Reserve in 2018, individuals were tracked – the eight giraffes forming two herds and in good health. The team also ran awareness campaigns with local communities around the reserve to increase understanding and the need to protect the species.



©Giraffe Conservation Foundation

How many giraffes?

- Eight subspecies total 110,000
- IUCN* status: Vulnerable
- 30% population decline in past 40 years

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

FORESTS & TRADE

Born Free protects great apes, pangolins and other endangered species within threatened tropical forest ecosystems and combats their exploitation.



GORILLAS

Gorilla Monitoring Project – Tier 2 Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo

Kahuzi-Biega National Park, a UNESCO* World Heritage site in the South Kivu Province of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), supports a significant population of eastern lowland or Grauer's gorilla. From an estimated 17,000 in 1998, it is thought the population declined by 80–90% to just 3,800 individuals, making it Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.

The Rwandan genocide in 1994 sparked a mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Hutu refugees into DRC, leading to civil wars and a chronic state of instability. Later, in the 1990s, a boom in coltan mining in the region, including into protected areas such as Kahuzi-Biega National Park, led to the loss of a significant proportion of the park's gorillas. Eastern lowland gorilla are still threatened by civil unrest, habitat loss, artisanal mining, poaching for the bushmeat trade and disease.

Through close daily monitoring of groups in the park's relatively safe Tshivanga highlands sector, information on the number and composition of gorilla families, their distribution, ranging patterns and ecology have been collected by teams employed by the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation. Daily monitoring and eco-tourism have safeguarded this sub-population to date. Born Free financially supports daily monitoring and health surveying of 13 gorilla families in this area.

Over the last two years, this support was used to carry out 40 trips, including 25 for close monitoring, nine for gorilla identification and six for health monitoring, including collection of biological samples to analyse the gorillas' health. In addition, these trips collected ecological data related to distribution of gorillas and other wildlife species. By close of 2020, the population consisted of 168 individuals in 13 families and one solitary male gorilla, continuing a steady increase over the years.

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation



©Institut Congolese pour le Conservation de la Nature

How many eastern lowland gorillas?

- <4,000
- IUCN* status: Critically endangered

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

CHIMPANZEES

Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project – Tier 2 Hoima District, Uganda

A grassroots non-profit organisation, the Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project protects an important population of 300 chimpanzees who cling to survival in an unprotected, deforested habitat in Uganda's 'Budongo–Bugoma corridor' – a human-dominated agricultural landscape covering some 745 mile² between Budongo and Bugoma Forest Reserves. The project supports local households who share their environment with chimpanzees through livelihood alternatives to deforestation, investing in children's education, and improving quality of life – not least through provision of boreholes and energy stoves).

Since 2019, the project has expanded their tree planting initiative with our support, distributing over 2.4 million tree seedlings to thousands of registered farmers. These indigenous trees help restore forest habitat, with faster growing varieties to provide alternative non-forest wood and income sources for the community, helping reduce unsustainable pressure on chimpanzee habitat.

Since 2019, the Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project has distributed over 640 energy-saving stoves for forest-adjacent households, reducing household fuel consumption and therefore pressure on remaining forest fragments. They have also helped hundreds of children from villages within the chimpanzees' range in participate in their school education programme and conservation clubs. Schoolchildren from forest-owning households that own critical patches of natural forest used by chimpanzees are supported via their schoolchild sponsor scheme.

Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic halted school activities in 2020, the team continued to support families with children by sponsoring alternative household projects. The team also continue to monitor four resident chimpanzee groups, which not only helps to grow knowledge and understanding of this population but, through capacity building, gives employment and critical skills to local monitors from communities within the home range of each chimpanzee group.

“Chimpanzees are endlessly fascinating. Spending time in their company is just as exciting as my first encounter 15 years ago. I’ve always focused on chimps living outside protected areas. Their future is ultimately in the hands of local people, so we find ways to help them accommodate chimpanzees in their environment.”

Dr Matt McLennan

Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project



©Bulindi Chimpanzee & Community Project

How many chimpanzees?

- 1921: 1.5 million, 2021: <340,000
- 77% population decline in 100 years
- IUCN* status: Of three sub-species eastern, central & Nigeria-Cameroon = Endangered, western = Critically endangered

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

ORANGUTANS

Orangutan Foundation – Tier 2 Lamandau Wildlife Reserve, Borneo, Indonesia



“To see an orangutan move through her forest home is life affirming – the most amazing yet enigmatic species. Their intelligence there for all to see, they are gentle, observing us as we observe them. Our critical work continues to meet the challenges facing the critically endangered orangutan.”

Ashley Leiman
Orangutan Foundation

The Orangutan Foundation has been working in Indonesia for 30 years to protect orangutans and their tropical forest habitats. Long-term programmes include habitat protection and restoration, rescue and reintroduction, conservation outside conservation areas, conservation education, awareness raising and research.

The Orangutan Foundation operates a successful orangutan reintroduction programmes in Lamandau Wildlife Reserve, creating a viable population of more than 600 individuals with more than 80 infants born in the wild to reintroduced mothers. Key to protecting habitat, forest guard posts prevent illegal activities, including wildlife crimes and the degradation, encroachment, or loss of habitat.

Born Free continued to support young, orphaned orangutans in Lamandau’s soft-release site, Camp JL. There are currently five orangutans being cared – Mona, Nyunyu, Timtom, Boy and Adib, all handed over after being kept as pets by villagers in the Central Kalimantan area. The youngsters need to develop skills to survive in the wild – a process taking several years. They develop climbing and nest-making skills, whilst trying out new forest foods.

Over the last two years, the Orangutan Foundation has also monitored orangutans reintroduced to the wild, providing supplementary fruit when necessary. Additionally, the Born Free-supported patrol team – who monitor access into Lamandau reserve – prevented several incidents of illegal activity, helping protect habitat. However, climate-change related extreme weather has proved a significant challenge, with the dry season and unprecedented flooding between June-September 2020 was greatly challenging.



©Orangutan Foundation

How many orangutans?

- Bornean 57,400
- Sumatran 13,000
- Tapanuli 800
- IUCN* status: Critically endangered

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

AFRICAN ENDANGERED SPECIES

Last Great Ape Organisation – Tier 2 Cameroon

The Last Great Ape Organisation is an innovative, award-winning organisation with a unique approach to wildlife law enforcement in Cameroon. The organisation fights to improve the implementation of national and international environmental legislation through a programme of activism. With the involvement of the wildlife authority, the network drives the direction of investigations, arrests and prosecutions and generates much-needed publicity through radio, local newspapers and social media.

The Last Great Ape Organisation has had tangible achievements in collaboration with Cameroon's ministry in charge of wildlife in investigation, arrest, prosecution, media exposure, government relations and international activities. The team focuses on a fight against corruption and illegal wildlife trade, principally targeting traffickers in pangolin scales, ivory and leopard skins, in spite of challenges. In the past year, 20 traffickers were arrested with 70% staying in detention from the moment of arrest. Several corruption attempts and or consequences were observed and challenged including weak court rulings and attempts at stopping prosecution.

A total of 360 investigations missions were carried out by the team's investigation unit in six regions of the country during this period. Operations were carried out in five regions arresting 59 major traffickers resulting in 60 court cases, 60 new cases brought to court, 27 court judgements and 57 traffickers guilty. A total of 684 media pieces were produced leading to numerous articles.



An ivory tusk, a leopard skin, lion skulls seized from a senior police constable.

©LAGA

Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement, EAGLE – Tier 2 Central Africa

Eco Activists for Governance and Law Enforcement is a network for wildlife law enforcement and active in nine countries – the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Togo, Benin, Senegal, Uganda, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso. The network keeps expanding – collaborating with governments and civil society to improve application of national and international environmental legislation, through a program of investigations, arrests, prosecutions and publicity. The network is a strong deterrent against illegal trade in wildlife and timber, and related criminal activities, including corruption.

Although the pandemic introduced numerous challenges and obstacles, the network had many tangible successes in this period. A total of 309 significant wildlife traffickers and other criminals have been arrested in 10 countries. Specific cases included the arrest of five ivory traffickers including a son of former Minister of Finance in Cameroon and a total of 195 ivory traffickers arrested with more than 2,100 kg of ivory including hundreds of tusks and carved pieces.

In 2019, three great ape traffickers were arrested and two live chimpanzees and one mandrill were rescued in Cameroon and Congo, while in 2020, six primate traffickers arrested, one baby chimp and three live mandrills rescued. In 2019, 15 pangolin scale traffickers were arrested in Cameroon in a series of five operations, crushing organized international gangs of traffickers. More than 1.8 tons of pangolin scales were seized. In 2020, eight pangolin scales traffickers arrested in three operations in Cameroon, more than 530kg of scales were seized. Over 5,000 media pieces on arrests and prosecutions were published in national media in nine countries and 27 international media pieces were published.



Four ivory traffickers arrested with elephant tusks and a leopard skin.

©EAGLE

PANGOLINS

Wildlife Protection Society of India – Tier 2 Odisha forests, India

"These shy nocturnal animals mean no harm to anyone – except the ants and termites they feast on! Yet these wondrous scaly mammals are hunted mercilessly, and pointlessly – their much-in-demand keratin scales are just like our fingernails! We are now doing our utmost to save eastern India's last viable populations."

Belinda Wright OBE
Wildlife Protection Society of India

The Wildlife Protection Society of India gathers intelligence to monitor the trade in pangolins and their products across India. Seizures of live pangolins jumped from one to four per year between 2009 to 2017 to 25 in 2018, and over 40 each year in 2019 and 2020.

To counter the growing threat, the team directly assists regional authorities in Odisha to strengthen pangolin-specific enforcement measures by gathering local information on smuggling and trade, using a dedicated voluntary informer network to gather leads from areas where the threat is most potent, and by influencing local support for pangolin conservation.

In addition, to raise awareness among local people regarding the plight of the pangolin, over the last two years, the team has put up 65 colourful wall paintings, held 20 village level meetings, and distributed 1,250 billboards and over 4,500 printed cards in remote villages fringing the dense forested habitats of wild pangolins. The team observed that local communities are increasingly reaching out with information on injured or stranded pangolins that were found in human habitations.

These efforts contributed to the success of enforcement officials in Odisha in seizing a total of 15 live pangolins and arrested over 45 poachers and traders related to these cases. In addition to confiscations, during the project period, the Forest Department of Odisha also rescued 17 pangolins that had wandered into human villages or settlements, of which at least 12 are confirmed to have been returned to the wild, and the team continues to work with the authorities to ensure the release of the remaining individuals.

The WPSI team also conducts pangolin habitat analyses, in order to further understanding of the availability of suitable habitats for pangolins, and to identify villages or nomadic and tribal camps that are potential hotspots for poaching. By mapping these habitat and threat zones, and overlaying data on pangolin presence and pangolin seizures, intelligent patrolling and planning targeted enforcement is facilitated.



©Dr Sanjay Kumar Shukla

How many pangolins?

- Unknown but, all eight species declining
- IUCN* status: Four African species = Vulnerable, two Asian species = Endangered, two Asian species = Critically Endangered

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Looking ahead

Born Free is very excited to be able to announce the development of a new Field Conservation Tier 1 programme, one which will become established as part of its overarching Meru programme in Kenya. 'Saving Meru's Giants' (as coined by a recent public vote on social media) launches in the second half of 2021 and aims to protect the elephants and giraffes of the landscape via a holistic suite of activities, ranging from close community engagement and involvement in conservation to widescale preservation of suitable habitat for Africa's large mammals, via the removal of poachers' snares. Keep an eye on our website and social media channels for updates on the launch and roll out of this exciting programme!



Thank you!