

COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Working with local communities to protect
threatened species in the wild



©Penny Banham

**Born Free Foundation Conservation Report
2021–2022**



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Introduction

This report provides an overview of the programmes and projects conducted and supported by Born Free to protect threatened species. It is compiled from staff and partner reports to inform the wider Born Free team, our collaborators and associates, and the wider public about our investment and impacts in conservation.

The report details Born Free's conservation work from April 2021 to March 2022 and is divided into four sections according to our geographic scope: East Africa, Central and West Africa, Southeast Asia and South America. Within each section our work is presented by wild animal taxa or species of interest.

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 third-party partner organisations.

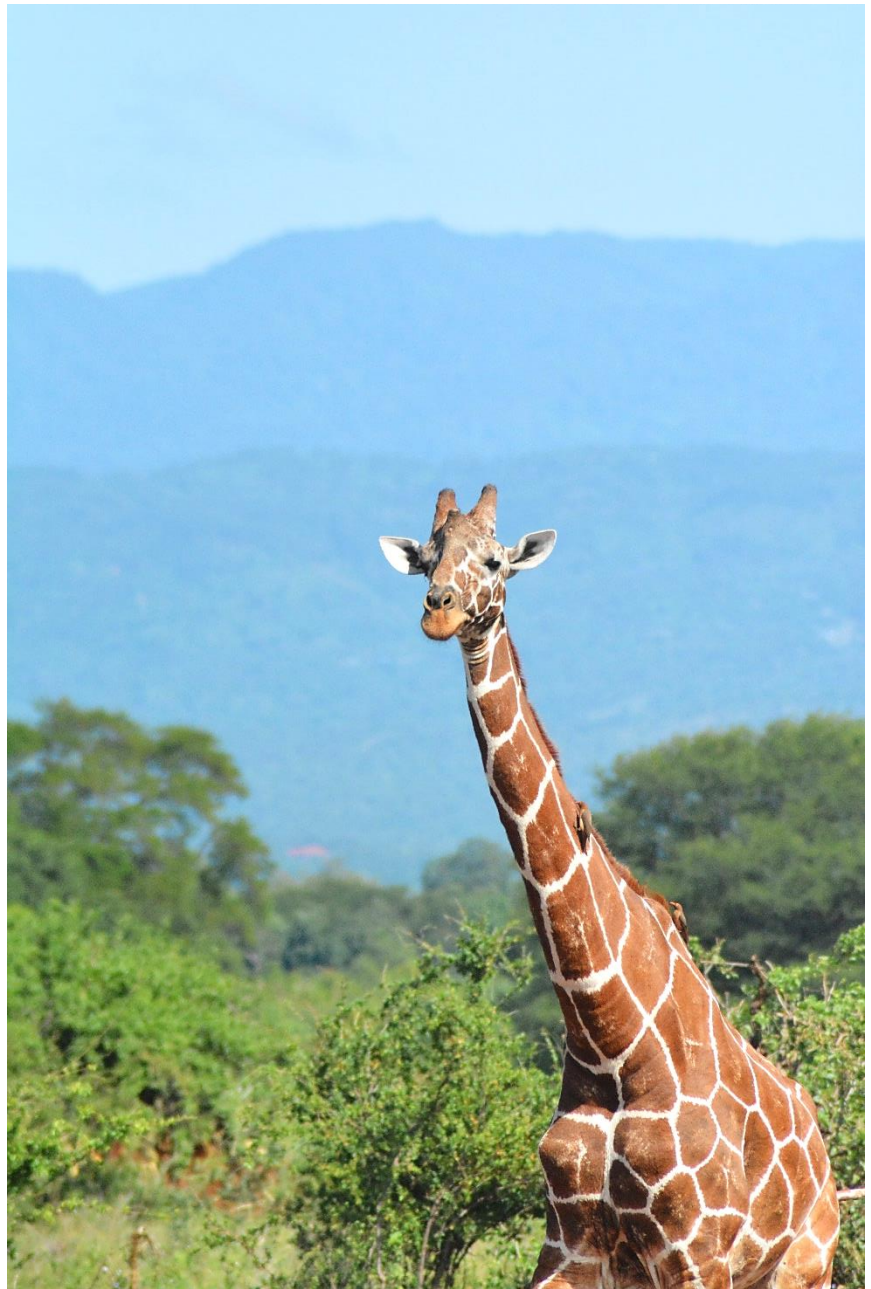


Chimpanzee in Dja Biosphere Reserve, Cameroon, caught on camera trap

©Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology / Pan African chimpanzee project (Panaf)

EAST AFRICA

Born Free runs three of our own flagship programmes in East Africa, investing in the long-term protection of lions, elephants, giraffes, rhinos and Ethiopian wolves, using a suite of conservation approaches.



Reticulated giraffe in Meru National Park

©Penny Banham

LIONS

Pride of Meru – Tier 1 Meru Conservation Area, Kenya

The Meru Conservation Area is a 1,500-mile² (4,000-km²) wilderness and Kenya's second largest protected area, comprising Meru and Kora National Parks, and Bisanadi and Mwingi National Reserves. Inspired by the true 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 spoors and using innovative methodology such as camera traps, gathering essential data for effective conservation. In 2016, Born Free and Kenya Wildlife Service's first ever lion census estimated 60 lions.



Members of Elsa's pride cooling off in the shade, Meru National Park

©Born Free Kenya

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 year, our team identified and named 13 more lions for our ID catalogue, taking the total to 65 identified individuals. Following the birth of 10 cubs, along with the introduction of two translocated lions, the total lion population is currently at least 73 adult lions.

In the past year, our team covered 10,250 miles (16,500 km) in vehicles as they tracked lions, recorded any deaths and monitored illegal activities, such as wire snares. During this period, our team recorded 79 lion sightings. Details on social composition and behaviour of lions were recorded, as well as 123 sightings of other carnivores including black backed jackals, leopards, hyenas and cheetahs.

- We identify individual lions using whisker spots, scars and marks.
- The whisker spot pattern is different on each side of the face and is unique to each lion.
- Other characteristics, such as scars and marks, may change throughout a lion's life, but whisker spot patterns stay the same.



One of our identified lions in Elsa's pride, Meru National Park

©Born Free Kenya

How many lions?

- 1922: one million, 2022: <20,000
- 90% population decline in 100 years
- IUCN* status: Vulnerable
- Kenya population: 2,589** lions
- >12% of Africa's lions in Kenya
- Circa 73 adult lions in Meru

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

**An 25% increase since 2010, the year Born Free's specific lion conservation work began in Kenya

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 local people. The key objective is to eliminate conflict through the construction of predator-proof bomas.

“The lions and hyenas have taken my livestock for many years, and they don’t say thank you! Me, I want to say thank you to Born Free for accepting to upgrade by predator-proof boma!”

Moko Kupere

Maasai pastoralist, Olgulului Group Ranch

These reinforced bomas are more robust than traditional designs, using two-metre-high chain-link fencing, together with ‘smart’ components including solar lighting units, energy-saving jiko 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. To date the team has constructed 361 predator-proof bomas (PPBs).

In the last year, 24 traditional livestock corrals have been fortified (21 new and three repaired). Each ‘smart’ boma comes with 10 jikos (energy-saving stoves) – reducing smoke-related health conditions and need for firewood. We also distributed 46 solar light units and 23 water storage tanks, as well as 370 jikos to 23 other local households to help reduce inhouse pollution. To date, the team has distributed a whopping 225 water storage structures, 329 solar light units and 4,985 jikos!

The team built what might be the world’s biggest boma, housing 297 people and 563 domestic animals!

Among the 24 fortified bomas was a ‘mega boma’, almost 500m in circumference, housing 297 people (44 women, 33 men and 220 children) and 563 domestic animals (380 cattle, 170 shoats, five donkeys and eight dogs)!

In addition, the team has been checking on the status of older PPBs, especially those with wooden posts, and encouraging boma owners to invest in repairs and upgrades. A total of 78 PPBs with wooden posts remain in the landscape.



Community construction power of predator proof bomas in the Amboseli Ecosystem

©Born Free Kenya



Northern lion programme – Tier 2 Ethiopia, Sudan, Cameroon, Benin

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 northern lion subspecies is declining at a rate of 68% per 21 years. This programme is one of the few with a focus on the region, aiming to increase awareness and engagement internally about northern lions, to strengthen protected area management, and to promote human–lion coexistence, using a combination of science and practice.

Unfortunately, efforts to establish Lion Guards in Ethiopia’s Alatash National Park where lions are under threat from livestock encroachment, poaching and habitat loss, remain thwarted, due to volatility in the region. However, Lion Guard programmes set up in Benin and Cameroon partly supported by the Born Free grant, are advancing well. In addition, prey surveys carried out in Dinder NP, Sudan, a forgotten corner of rich African savannah transboundary with Ethiopia, where there are close to 150 lions, have been completed and results published. Additional large carnivore surveys are now underway in Maze and Omo, Ethiopia.

In our 2019-2021 report, we mentioned two lions who had dispersed over 186 miles, arriving in Mpem and Djim National Park (MDNP) in central Cameroon in 2019, a forest–savannah mosaic where chimpanzees and pangolins live. Over the last year, the two lions have been regularly observed inside MDNP, and the occasional conflict with livestock that has occurred on the periphery of the park has been locally manageable.



Camera trap surveys to identify individual lions

ELEPHANTS AND GIRAFFES

Saving Meru's Giants – Tier 1 Meru Conservation Area, Kenya



“Coexistence between people and wildlife is not simple. But I draw my inspiration here – we must find a balance between conserving these elephant and giraffe populations, while at the same time allowing people to thrive.”

Newton Simiyu
Saving Meru's Giants Manager

Saving Meru's Giants, launched in October 2021, aims to promote coexistence between people and large herbivores, namely African savannah elephants and reticulated giraffes. This Born Free-run programme seeks to monitor and identify individuals of the populations, whilst implementing nature-based and community-led solutions to prevent conflict between elephants and people, and halt illegal activity in protected areas. This work goes hand-in-hand with our efforts to increase community awareness and capacity to mitigate conflict and reduce the reliance on natural resources through workshops and the creation of locally appointed teams, known as the Elephant Guardians and the Twiga Team ('Twiga' is giraffe in Swahili) who are working within their communities to implement effective and simple measures to help foster true coexistence.

Since the programme launched, the team have already identified 46 elephants and 45 giraffes, creating unique ID cards for each. Identifying giraffes from their coat pattern is a difficult task, but the team have utilised AI technology (<https://www.wildid.app>) which finds common patterns in giraffe coats to, more accurately than ever before, ID individuals and create the most comprehensive database of the Meru giraffes. Of the 46 elephants identified, the team have observed 4 key family groups, called the 'Acacia' family, the 'First Ladies', the 'Rivers' and the 'Grass' family.

Working with the community is vital to the success of Saving Meru's Giants. The team have recruited the entire Twiga Team, consisting of five members from the local communities. From February to April 2022, the Twiga Team received intensive training with the Kenya Wildlife Service to prepare them for de-snaring operations in Meru National Park, which commenced in May 2022. Similarly, five 'Elephant Guardians' are poised to start their duties collecting vital information about elephants and crop raiding events in their respective communities.



The Acacia family enjoying the shade in Meru National Park

©Born Free Kenya

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 – 100% population increase (16,000 1989**; 34,800 today)
- Kenya – 96% elephant poaching decrease (386 killed 2013, 11 killed 2020)

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

**The year Born Free's elephant conservation work began

How many giraffes?

- Eight subspecies total >70,000 adults
- IUCN* status: Vulnerable
- 30% population decline in past 40 years

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature



A reticulated giraffe in Meru National Park

©Born Free Kenya

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 49 years, the Amboseli Trust for Elephants has worked in the Amboseli Ecosystem (including Amboseli National Park and surrounding conservancies) to document life histories of 3,840 elephants. With the second year of good rainfall in a row, 2021 saw the birth of 92 calves, including 42 males and 44 females (and six of unknown sex). This contributes to an already thriving population in Amboseli with 662 females of a reproductive age (over the age of nine) and approximately 300 independent mature males (over the age of 15).

The team have now begun to collect data on the ranging behaviour of the eight young males given GSM collars in 2021, with a further two females being added in October 2021 during the Kenya Wildlife Service Elephant Naming Event. This data will provide insights into the resilience of elephants in the most human-dominated areas of the ecosystem.



African savannah elephants moving through Amboseli National Park

©Amboseli Trust for Elephants

RHINOS

Kenya Wildlife Service Rhino Sanctuary – 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.

In Meru National Park there are two species of rhinos, the white and the black and each is distinct in its way. Very few rhinos survive outside protected areas due to persistent poaching and habitat loss over many decades, hence Meru National Park established and provided rhinos with a sanctuary to ensure these critically endangered species are protected.

The sanctuary continues to report zero incidences of poaching, and the rhino population continues to grow. For example, Tana is a white rhino born in 2003 and translocated from Lake Nakuru National Park in 2006, identified by her ear notches. By bringing six calves into the world, Tana has made a significant contribution to this growing population. Tana currently stays with her smallest calf, who was born in 2021, and an adult male Gakuya within the Mururi swamp area.



One of the threatened white rhinos having a rest in Meru National Park, Kenya



Tana, a white rhino, with her calf, in Meru National Park, Kenya

©Kenya Wildlife Service

How many rhino?

- 583 eastern black rhinos, 10,080 adult white rhinos
- IUCN* status: black Critically Endangered, white Near Threatened

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

WOLVES

Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme – Tier 1 Bale Mountains, Ethiopia

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.

Due to disruptions brought about by covid, the team's Wolf Monitors were not able to spend as much time as usual in the mountains. Despite this, the team are delighted to report that an incredible 94 wolf pups across 26 families were recorded in the last year, from four populations of the Ethiopian wolf – Bale, Menz, Delanta and the Simien mountains. A total of 53 of the 94 pups were spotted in the Bale Mountains National Park, the Ethiopian wolf's main stronghold, helping the population here recover after the rabies outbreaks of 2021.

Their newest project 'Living with Wolves' was unfortunately delayed due to the pandemic, but now the team hopes to push forward with this project. The aim is to facilitate coexistence between humans and Ethiopian wolves, by promoting behavioural changes to address issues such as littering by drivers and reducing pressure on the dens of the wolves through educating shepherds and tour guides.



Ethiopian wolf

©Martin Harvey

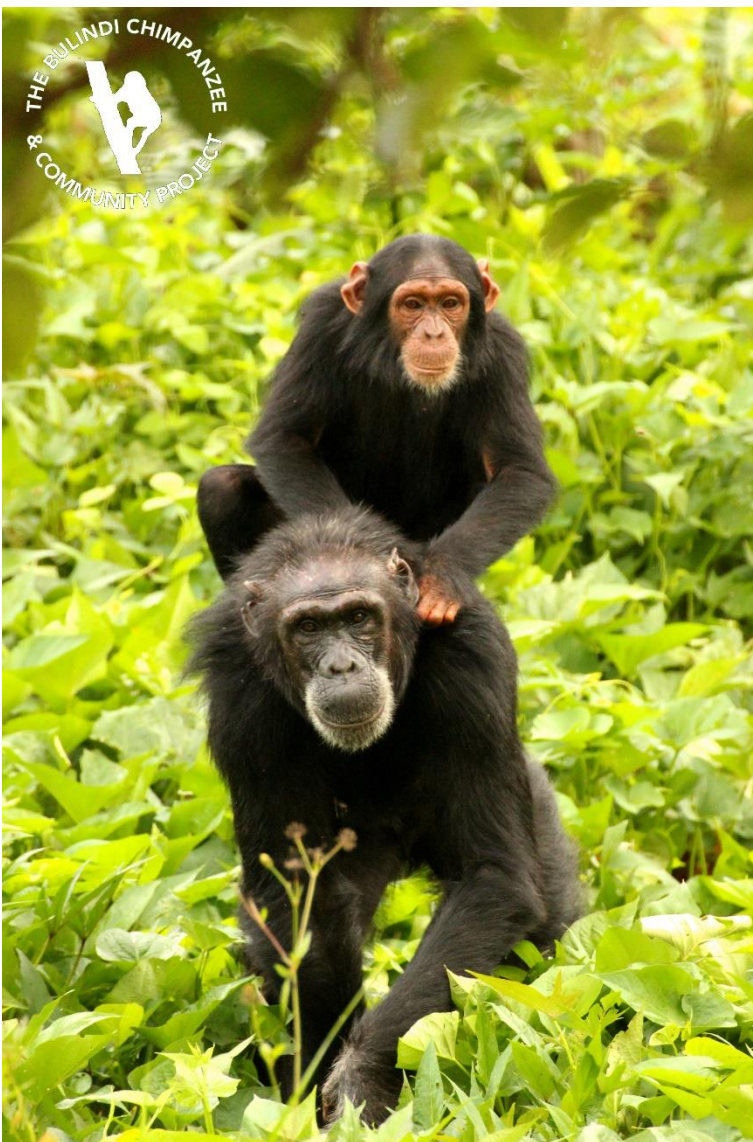
How many Ethiopian wolves?

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

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

CENTRAL & WEST AFRICA

Born Free protects chimpanzees, gorillas, forest elephants and many other endangered species within threatened tropical forest ecosystems of Central & West Africa, by investing in community engagement.



A chimpanzee and offspring in Uganda

©Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project

FOREST ELEPHANTS

Elephant Research and Conservation – Tier 2 Northwestern Liberia

Elephant Research and Conservation (ELRECO) works towards the conservation of critically endangered forest elephants in Liberia. After spending two years carrying out surveys in the entire northwestern forest block of Liberia and estimating there are likely to be 1,000 elephants in the country (consolidation of these results still ongoing with genetic analyses, etc), ELRECO's team has spent the last year focussing efforts on training communities and Forestry Development Authority (FDA) staff about how to avoid and mitigate human–elephant conflict.

A total of 175 farmers of 12 communities from 4 human-elephant conflict (HEC) hotspots received thorough practical and theoretical training, and ten previously trained ten communities have been repeatedly followed up and received kits to help prevent elephant crop raiding – including megaphones, vuvzela horns, spotlights and hundreds of kilos of crushed chilli!

ELRECO has also identified a number of pilot sites among HEC hotspots to be used for testing, demonstration and practical training of HEC mitigation measures – 13 demonstration farms were set up in 11 communities. Key community members have been recruited into this work; 11 focal people trained. From the end of 2021, various HEC mitigation methods were tested including noise, flashlights (not a success as it made elephant furious!), pepper bricks (found to be most effective), smoky fire, scarecrows, etc. They also set up camera traps on these demonstration farms showing elephants were deterred – but this was only temporary.

The team also established a HEC rapid response fund – funded by found donors – and addressed six HEC related cases during the year: four were reports about elephant crop foraging from villagers not yet included in the training scheme – the rapid response team were able to provide crash course training and materials. The other two related to an elephant poaching event – the rapid response team helped ensure appropriate actions were taken by FDA; and the final case involved the rescue of an orphaned baby elephant, just four-five months old. The orphaned calf is in the care of the FDA, whilst a long-term solution is found for her rehabilitation.

Forest elephants are now officially recognised as separate and Critically Endangered species by the IUCN.

The team also protected two migrating elephants who had travelled long distance from Guinea – so that they weren't persecuted by scared farmers, etc, before they moved off again.



West African forest elephant, Liberia

@ELRECO

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, 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 Democratic Republic of Congo, 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, consisting of 173 individuals, in this area.

Over the last year, this support was used to carry out 40 reconnaissance trips, including seven for close monitoring of the habituated groups and ten trips to make contact with as yet unhabituated groups. The more gorillas the team can habituate, the more they can monitor and protect them from threats. At the end of 2021, 35 new (is that right?) individuals had been identified, by distinctive characteristics and unique noses prints, in three gorilla groups: Chimanuka's family is fully identified, comprising 20 individuals, his son Bonane's family now has eight out of 10 individuals identified, and among Mpungwe's family of 22, seven have been identified. Sadly, the old solitary silverback who the team had also been monitoring, Mugaruka, died in October 2021.

*United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

**International Union for the Conservation of Nature



One of the resident gorillas living in Kahuzi Biega National Park, protected by Born Free-supported rangers

©Institut Congolaise 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 overall goals of the project are to ensure the long-term persistence of this unique chimpanzee population, by enhancing people's capacity to preserve natural habitat and accommodate the chimpanzees, and to improve understanding of laws and policies regarding the protection of chimpanzees.

As of 2022, the Bulindi team works in over 200 villages that lie within the ranges of at least eight of the resident chimpanzee groups, covering almost the entire corridor. In the last year, three chimpanzee groups were monitored almost daily, being carefully checked for signs of covid-19, as other great apes are very susceptible to human respiratory diseases. Although some symptoms were observed in both chimpanzees and people in the region over the year, it was not confirmed as covid-19. In the last year, the team recorded seven births (three in Bulindi group, two in Mairirwe, one in Kyamuchumba and one in Wagaisa).

In the last year, the team carried out regular training for 'Chimp Monitors', including use of camera traps and data collection techniques. The team also initiated the monitoring of a new chimpanzee group: the Kihomboza community, and a new Chimp Monitor has been recruited and trained to lead the monitoring.

Together with support from other donors, the team has also continued with its schoolchild sponsorship scheme, which enables children to attend school while the family's privately owned forest land is preserved for chimpanzees. Other projects included a tree planting programme, which trained over 1,000 villagers this year and distributed more than one million seedlings, as well as a comprehensive community outreach programme involving all local stakeholders, the distribution of energy-efficient stoves, the installation of 19 village wells and boreholes to ensure safe drinking water, the introduction of village loan associations, to assist local small business ventures, and a chimpanzee football league for village teams to engage youth.



An infant chimpanzee of one of the known resident groups in the Budongo-Bugoma corridor

©Bulindi Chimpanzee and Community Project

How many chimpanzees?

- 1922: 1.5 million, 2022: <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

AFRICAN ENDANGERED SPECIES

Last Great Ape Organisation – Tier 2 Cameroon

“The effect of wildlife trafficking on extinction is very real for us at the forefront. In the fight against wildlife crime our battles are won every week, but we are far from winning the war; much more is needed to change the tide of law enforcement and corruption.”

Ofir Drori
Founding Director

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 considerable challenges.

Over the last year, there were 19 operations (arrests) in five regions of the country, 177 investigations in seven regions, 13 new legal cases, 14 court judgements passed, 19 traffickers found guilty and sanctioned, 117 follow up missions and 352 media

Significant achievements were obtained in the fields of investigations, arrest operations, prosecutions, media exposure and government relations, with focus on the fight against the trafficking in live primates, pangolin scales, leopard skins and parrots.

Overall, in the year, 35 traffickers were arrested with 58% staying in detention from the moment of arrest. A couple of corruption attempts were observed as attempts were made to stop prosecution procedures, but these were quickly shut down. Trafficking in primates and pangolin scales drew much of the media attention.

A major trafficker was arrested with 331kg of pangolin scales.



A baby chimp rescued from traffickers by the Last Great Ape Organisation in 2021

©Last Great Ape Organisation

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 collaborates 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.

Over the last year, the EAGLE network influenced the arrest of 151 significant wildlife traffickers and other criminals in eight countries. Among these, 76 ivory traffickers were arrested with close to 400g of ivory, which is the equivalent of over 118 tusks, 15 primate traffickers were arrested resulting in the rescue of four baby chimpanzees, three mandrills and one drill, and 12 parrot traffickers were intercepted who were attempted to transport a cargo of 94 African grey parrots from Congo. Horrifically, 10 human bone traffickers were also arrested in Congo in December, with a human skull found among their stash. While on trial, 88% of the arrested traffickers remained behind bars.

Through the year, a total of 2,345 investigative missions were carried out in nine countries, 69 arrest operations took place in eight countries and 2,070 national media pieces were produced in eight countries. Amazingly, three of the EAGLE network countries averaged one arrest every week and a half throughout the period.



Ivory seized from the illegal wildlife trade

SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Born Free has a varied impact in south-east Asia, promoting peaceful coexistence with Bengal and Indochinese tigers in India and Thailand, helping to curb the illegal trade in Indian pangolins, and rescuing and rehabilitating Bornean orangutans in Indonesia.



Okto, an orphaned orangutan cared for by the Orangutan Foundation and supported by Born Free

©Orangutan Foundation

TIGERS

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

“One need not be a scientist or a biologist to be a saviour of wildlife or the environment – it only needs the will and the passion to do it.”

Poonam Dhanwatey
Tiger Research and Conservation Trust



Tiger ambassador attending a community meeting

©Tiger Research and Conservation Trust / Born Free Foundation

How many tigers?

- Bengal tiger >4,000; Indochinese tiger 421
- 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

**Born Free's tiger conservation work began in India in 2004

The Satpuda forests of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra states offer perhaps the best hope for India's remaining 3,000 Endangered Bengal tigers. In Central India, there is a population of some 600–700 tigers living across about 7,000km² of protected areas and Tiger Reserves. 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 eight Indian organisations working across this vast landscape 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. As of the end of 2021–2022, Born Free also funds a consultant position, based in Nagpur, which will assist the network in its communications, monitoring and evaluation, and by providing network support.

Mobile Health Unit

Started in 2004, the concept of 'Saving Tigers through Public Health' is a unique trust building initiative that provides medical assistance in more than 100 buffer villages of six Tiger Reserves in Central India. The initiative offers not only healthcare, but provides an opportunity to discuss local development issues, and encouraging communities to undertake certain environmental activities such as water conservation, garbage disposal, forest firefighting, reduced fuel wood collection and reduced grazing.

In the last year, Nature Conservation Society Amravati conducted 186 medical camps, treating 9,354 patients in local villages. Since 2005, Satpuda Foundation and Nature Conservation Society Amravati, have worked together in more than 150 villages, treating more than 185,000 patients, building invaluable goodwill with villagers, helping save many human lives and motivating villagers to assist in conservation of forests and wildlife

As of March 2022, the Mobile Health Unit, supported by Born Free, has treated over 185,000 patients across the region.

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.

The Landscape Monitoring Team has finalised several 'mitigation structures' on transport links that pass through Tadoba landscape (measures to reduce accidental death of wildlife on roads). These include Tuljapur Highway that passes through

tiger corridors of Tipeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, the Gosekhurd canal, a high-speed railway project in Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, and Samruddhi expressway which passes through the 'Eco-Sensitive Areas' of three protected areas and tiger corridors. The team has been asked to carry out mitigation measures on the Nagpur-Nagbhid railway line and has also advised on a redesign of the alignment of the proposed Gadchiroli-Wadsa railway line and the accommodation of site-specific mitigation measures.

Camera trap pictures have shown that tigers and wild animals have started using mitigation structures, such as underpasses, prepared on NH7, as well as Gosikhurd canal. A radio telemetry study also has shown the tiger dispersal from source to some protected areas, such as like Dnyanganga Wildlife Sanctuary in Buldhana district towards west of Satpuda Landscape.

School Education Programme

Bombay Natural History Society focusses on school education programmes to raise awareness about the peripheral forest, wildlife threats, and, most importantly, the reliance on natural resources and coexistence. Through its interventions, the programme addresses human–animal coexistence.

In the last year, the education team organised 356 school programmes across seven tiger reserve buffer landscapes, thus engaging 6,346 students in 97 'fringe schools' (situated on the edges of tiger reserves, where nature is prolific and conflict a real threat). The ongoing covid-19 pandemic meant some schools remained closed throughout the year, and others only opened in July.

This year's most notable activity was learning about new technology in wildlife conservation. Students got a better understanding of camera traps and their importance in wildlife conservation, and camera trap photographs were later exhibited. In 33 days, the education team also arranged 33 nature camps with 1,301 students from Chandrapur district participating.

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. The local communities living along the forest periphery and sharing natural resources with wild animals are vulnerable to attacks from large carnivores and their awareness about this vulnerability needs to be addressed with understanding.

There are now over 450 community tiger ambassadors across the landscape, working in 65 villages.

Since 2014, the Tiger Research and Conservation Trust has been working with local communities in tiger reserve buffer villages on a 'Tiger Ambassador' programme, training community members how to mitigate conflict. Over the last year, the team

expanded its programme into an additional ten villages, bringing the total number involved to 65. Recruitment has provided 455 youth with opportunities to understand conflict and share their understanding with their communities.

The team has expanded this successful programme into a new wildlife sanctuary in Central India. Ghodajhari 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. Awareness meetings were carried out every six months in ten villages within the programme. They particularly encouraged women and children to become involved – some of the most vulnerable sections of the community to conflict – and conducted one-day workshops specifically for women. One-day workshops were held for the 70 Tiger Ambassadors (seven from each village), including joint workshops in September 2021 for Tiger Ambassadors and cattle herders – the most vulnerable people to conflict attacks.

Cattle Fodder Feeding Programme – new for Born Free!

In a new project, the Corbett Foundation aimed to mitigate conflict in the buffer zone of a tiger reserve by reducing cattle depredation by tigers through stall feeding cattle on fodder grown on community lands. This also encouraged an alternative source of income for local people, to further promote coexistence with nature.

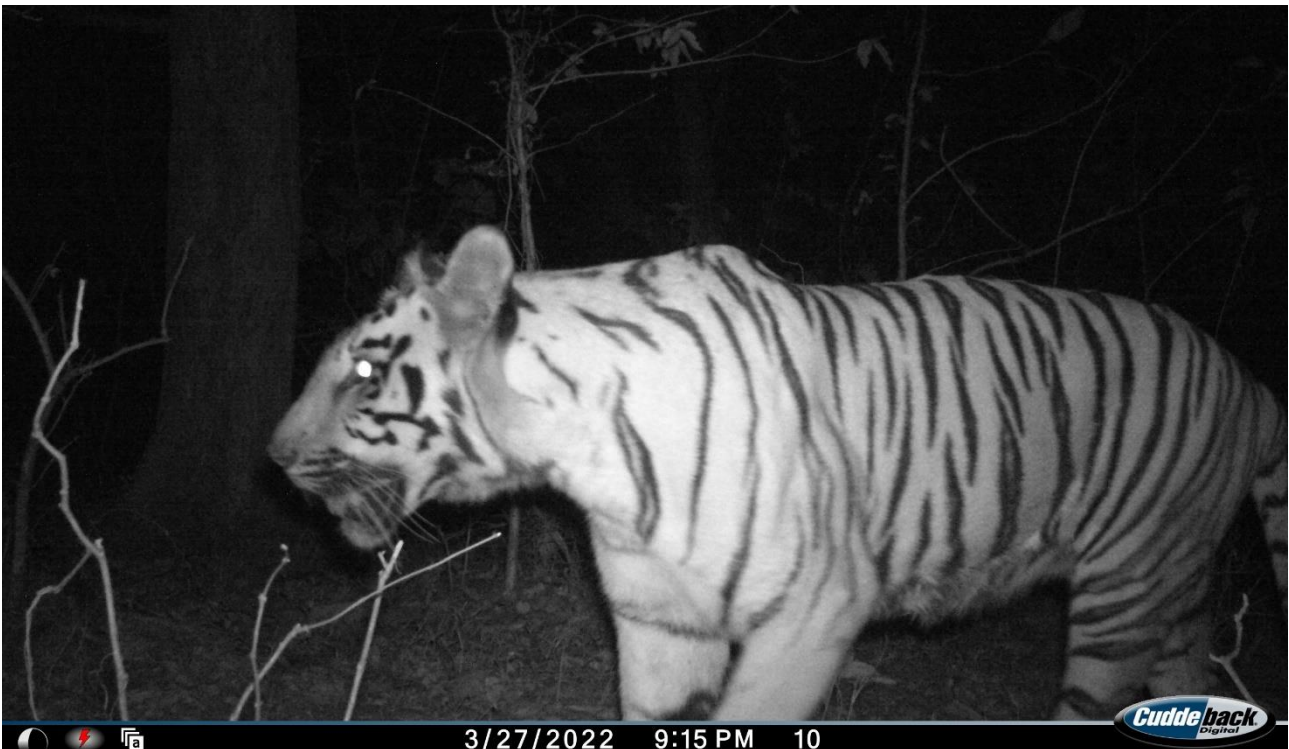
The team selected a target community for this innovative project and a ten-acre patch of community land where they sowed maize in early 2021 – nutritious for cattle and buffaloes. The villagers harvested 1,061kg of maize, processing stalks using a chaffing machine, which cuts the stalk into small pieces known as green fodder, which can be fed to livestock. Corn kernels are removed and dried, and can be pressed into powder, which can be dissolved in water and fed to livestock. A total of 35 households benefiting from accessing this fodder, and their 95 heads of livestock, were fed this way.

Policy Advocacy

The Conservation Action Trust team delivers better protection of tigers and their habitats in India by advocacy and by making use of the legal provisions available – implementing activities that reduce people's reliance on forests and thus also reducing human-wildlife conflict. The team raises awareness among forest officers and locals about existing tiger protection laws, and identifies obstacles to effective enforcement of the laws, strengthening them where necessary.

The team advises on various expert committees and ministries and provides technical and legal expertise to forest officers. Throughout this work, the Conservation Action Trust team highlights the importance of wildlife corridors, as well as advocating for protection of existing protected areas.

Over the last year, the team has continued to advise on a number of large national infrastructure projects, such as the Bunder diamond mining project proposed in the Buxwaha protected forests, the Ken Betwa River linking project, and the Nagpur Mumbai expressway – a 435-mile (700km) road that will cut through numerous wildlife corridors. We have also advised on the state wildlife action plan of Maharashtra and inputting into a consultation paper on proposed amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act 1980. We have also been submitting comments for the draft notifications of Eco Sensitive Zones, an important way of preserving habitat during development.



Bengal tiger moving along a path in the Satpuda Landscape captured on a camera trap at night

©Bombay Natural History Society

Freeland Foundation – Tier 2 Key forest complexes, Thailand

“Conserving wildlife requires vision and a sound strategy, there's rarely a quick fix for the challenges nature is facing. Rarely are there successes in conservation and so every win deserves celebration.”

Tim Redford
Director, Freeland Foundation

In Thailand, Freeland focuses on conservation of the Indochinese tiger at the Dong Phrayayen-Khao Yai World Heritage site. Tigers have increased in number from only three in 2008, to 15 at the close of 2021. Overall, with 250

Indochinese tigers, Thailand probably holds the last remaining viable populations of the subspecies. Freeland’s Surviving Together programme, in partnership with government and civil society, builds capacity and awareness to protect wildlife and habitats.

In the last year, Freeland has delivered community support to ten schools around the park to improve tiger and ecology related awareness, despite sporadic school closures due to covid-19, and has distributed a ‘Teachers for Forests’ manual that teachers will be encouraged to use once schools are fully open again. The team visited six villages at high risk from conflict with tigers and where poaching is rife, to start discussing natural resource use and nature conservation.

There are estimated to be just 250 of the Indochinese tiger subspecies in Thailand, and Freeland is determined to ensure their conservation.

Also in the last year, the Freeland team continued to mentor the Hasadin park rangers that make up the ‘Rapid Response Unit’ for responding to incidents of conflict or poaching. Despite frequent covid-19 outbreaks, the team succeeded in delivering an eight-day refresher training course for 41 rangers. The team has also ensured a good level of patrolling of key protected areas, providing food and expendables for patrol teams, and accompanying them when possible. In being part of these operations, the team has access to important SMART datasets.

With Born Free support, the Freeland team purchased 20 brand new cameras to improve tiger monitoring and identification within the park. Using this top of the range equipment, with all-important ‘white flash’ to improve night-time photography, the team will be able to continue to study the population dynamics of this tiny, yet critical, population and monitor its health.



A rare Indochinese tiger photo captured on a camera trap

©Freeland Foundation / Department of National Parks

PANGOLINS

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

The state of Odisha in India had become a hotspot for poaching Indian pangolins, so the Wildlife Protection Society of India stepped in to carry out active campaigning and implement a voluntary informer network for pangolin protection among communities.

With support from Born Free, the team has been gathering locally sourced intelligence on poaching and live pangolin trade to enhance enforcement action and encourage the active engagement of local communities in regional pangolin protection efforts. In the last ten months, the team has engaged 20 local forest protection groups and produced 25 beautiful pangolin wall paintings in strategic locations, to help raise awareness in this little-known species.

The team also assisted the enforcement authorities of Odisha to conduct two live pangolin seizures. In both cases, once assured to be in good health, the pangolins were released back into the wild. The team also took part in three pangolin scales seizures, which totalled 8.4kg and led to the arrest of ten wildlife criminals. The team has expanded its efforts, having an influence on five additional districts of Odisha and recruiting two new Field Investigators from these communities. Now four investigators are carrying out regular ground surveys across all the project areas.

The team has been developing a 'pangolin threat zone' map of Odisha, which overlays location data of hunter-gatherer settlements and local villages, with the recorded locations of where pangolin seizures and arrests took place. In the past ten months, the team added 179 poaching villages and 51 nomadic settlements to the map, which will facilitate patrolling of the area.



A live pangolin rescued in November 2021 from poachers by the Wildlife Protection Society of India team

©Wildlife Protection Society of India

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

ORANGUTANS

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

The Orangutan Foundation has been working in Indonesia for 30 years to protect Bornean 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 programme 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'. 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. In the past year, Orangutan Foundation have fully released three previously captive orangutans from their soft-release programme.

Over the last year, the Orangutan Foundation has operated a guard post with two rangers on the eastern side of the reserve. The rangers have carried out a crucial role in preventing unauthorized access to the reserve, preventing the use of the forest as an entry and exit location for illegal logging and hunting. The rangers have also conducted weekly patrols in a three-mile (5km) radius around the guard post, as well as joining together with rangers from adjacent guard posts to monitor the forest on the eastern side of the reserve for illegal activities, before they become a significant threat, using a combination of foot and river patrols.

The Orangutan Foundation team has also conducted joint forest patrols with the forest and wildlife authorities and carried out regular maintenance of the guard post, and their boats and equipment. The team has also carried out regular remote sensing of the reserve to help detect signs of illegal forest clearance and have engaged with local communities for greater awareness of forestry regulations.



Timtom, the orangutan is one of the orphaned orangutans looked after by the Orangutan Foundation in the Lamandau Reserve, Indonesia

©Orangutan Foundation

How many orangutans?

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

*International Union for the Conservation of Nature

SOUTH AMERICA

Born Free protects jaguars in the Argentinian highlands of the Yungas.



Juan Reppucci - *Jaguares en el Limite*

A jaguar pictured passing through the undergrowth at night

©Juan Reppucci, Jaguars in the Fringe

JAGUARS

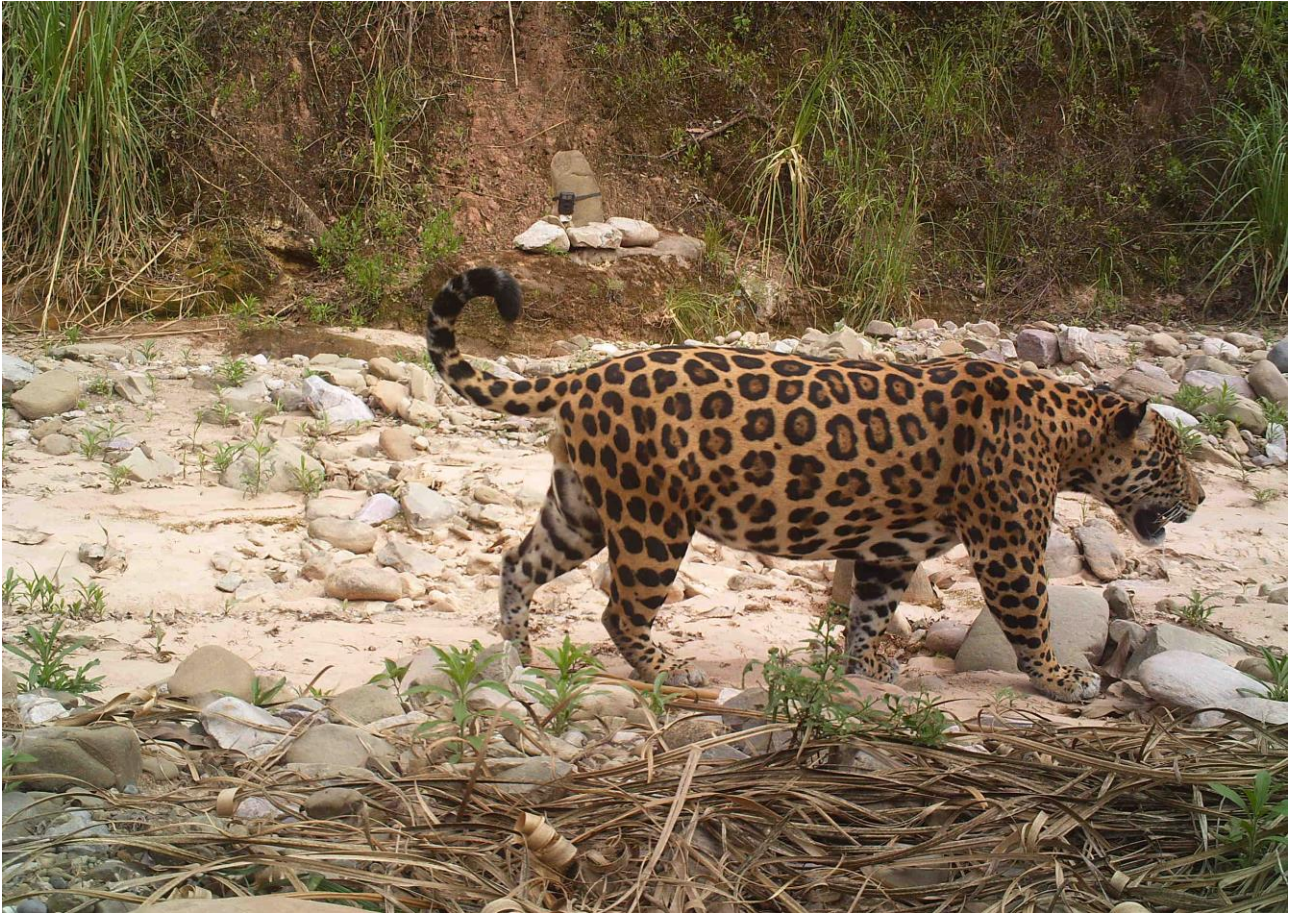
Jaguars in the Fringe – Tier 2 Yungas Forest, Argentina

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 deployed 28 camera traps in burned and non-burned areas in Calilegua National Park, to study the effect of wildfires on jaguars and other mammals. The team were forced to battle with the elements, as they carried out fieldwork towards the end of the rainy season, at one point forced to evacuate the area because of a storm, leaving their vehicle behind because they could not cross the overflowed rivers.

The camera traps have revealed several jaguars and lots of other mammals, such as giant anteater (listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List), margays (Vulnerable), tapirs (Vulnerable), and many others frequently using the burned forest areas. One exciting finding is the presence of white-lipped peccary in this part of the park – this bird is endangered in Argentina and classified as Vulnerable internationally.

As a result of the team's collaboration last year with the local community of Tinkunaku, including several villages in an important jaguar habitat range adjacent to Isla de Cañas, a new local non-governmental organisation has been created comprising 42 rancher Fancher families. Also, because of improvements in husbandry practices proposed by the team last year and subsequently employed by the community, livestock depredation decreased by about 50% to only seven incidents. The 'Jaguars on the Fringe' team have recruited two local people to work as Community Ambassadors for jaguar conservation to assist with camera trapping, conflict reduction and record keeping on livestock depredation events.



A passing jaguar, caught on a camera trap.

©Jaguars in the Fringe

How many jaguar?

- Global population: circa 15,000
- Argentina: circa 250 adults
- IUCN* status: Near Threatened

*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, launching in the beginning of 2022–2023 to protect chimpanzees and gorillas of Dja Biosphere Reserve in Cameroon. The programme will entail a suite of activities, mostly at community level and ultimately aiming to encourage and enable villagers to turn their traditional livelihood practices, such as cocoa farming, into a sustainable and profitable trade. Keep an eye on our website and social media channels for updates on the launch and the roll out of this exciting new programme!



Cocoa harvested from the rural communities of the Dja Biosphere Reserve

©Association de la Protection de Grands Singes

Thank you!