



LION GUARDIANS ANNUAL REPORT 2010

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Photo by S. MacLennan

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1. Executive Summary

The past year has been the most difficult, yet most rewarding year for the Lion Guardians program since its inception in January 2007. Recovering from one of the worst droughts in history, Maasai lost more than 65% of their livestock, and lion attacks on livestock increased eight-fold. As a result, lion hunting attempts increased dramatically and the Lion Guardians found themselves between the spears of their angry brothers and the remaining lions. The Lion Guardians' unwavering dedication, along with that of the other stakeholders in the ecosystem, ensured the continued survival of over 40 lions (more than half of the remaining population) that were hunted by Maasai in the Amboseli region. Unfortunately, during the same time in an area adjacent to the Tanzania border (without a Lion Guardians program), at least 18 lions were killed by both spears and poison. After lengthy meetings with communities and leaders, we expanded the Lion Guardians project to this high conflict region in September 2010. From inception to date, we are thrilled to report that there has not been a single lion killed in the new expansion site.

Currently there are 29 Lion Guardians protecting 3,500km² of vital lion habitat and attenuating conflict between their communities' livestock and predators. The Lion Guardians have proven to be a critical part of the solution to eliminating retaliatory lion killings and providing a platform for Maasai warriors to apply their traditional knowledge and bush skills to big cat conservation. Our success is evident in the data. In 2010 alone, Lion Guardians stopped 44 lion hunting



Stephanie and some of the Guardians with Selenkay. Photo by P. Briggs

parties by either dissuading angry warriors or by requesting further assistance from the local game scouts or the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). Since the start of the program in 2007, there have been over 58 lions killed in neighbouring areas where there was no active Lion Guardian program, while only two lions were killed (for local political reasons) in Lion Guardian areas during the same period.

Our New Year's resolution for 2011 is to continue our commitment to saving Africa's remaining lions by assisting other research projects and rural communities in creating practical conflict mitigation and lion monitoring systems that are both culturally appropriate and empowering to future generations.

Summary of Lion Guardians Measures of Success - 2010

Minimum no. of lion hunts stopped by Lion Guardians*	44
No. of adult lions monitored by Lion Guardians	55
Percentage of found vs. lost livestock	88% = 5874/6708
No. of <i>bomas</i> reinforced by Lion Guardians	296

*KWS and Maasailand Preservation Trust assisted us in preventing many hunts



2. Background

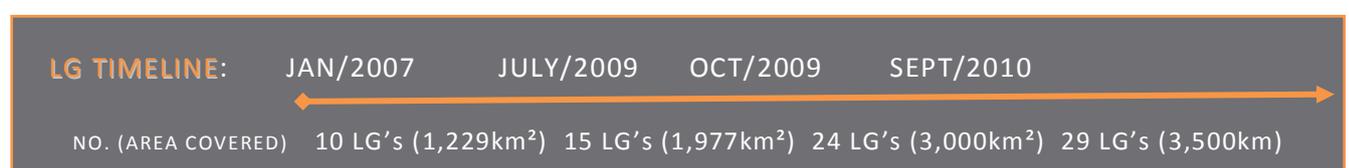
For centuries, Maasai warriors have hunted and revered the lions which roam the rangelands of East Africa and stalk beloved Maasai cattle. In recent times due to a multitude of factors, the lion populations of Kenya are nearing extirpation. Immediate action was needed to not only protect the remaining lions, but to also bring benefits to those who live amongst them. The Lion Guardians program was initiated in early 2007 under the umbrella of the Living With Lions project, to give the Maasai people, particularly the warrior age set, benefits from sharing their land with lions. Lion Guardians, traditional Maasai warriors (*murrans*) who in the past killed lions to protect their community, are now working to conserve them. Lion Guardians work on three group ranches (Mbirikani, Eselenkei and Olgulului) in the heart of the Amboseli ecosystem where people and livestock live alongside wildlife, and conflict is inevitable. The Lion Guardians project, in collaboration with several other organizations, is working towards a shared goal of coexistence between lions and local communities.

Across the Amboseli ecosystem there are a myriad of different conservation actions to attempt to halt lion killing and subsequently increase the remaining lion population. In 2003 the Maasailand Preservation Trust (MPT) initiated the Predator Compensation Fund (PCF) on Mbirikani Group Ranch, to increase local tolerance to livestock kills by predators. This was then expanded to Olgulului in August 2008. As well as predator compensation, MPT runs education and healthcare programs, employs community game scouts to combat game meat poaching and resolve human wildlife conflict, and are monitoring the highly endangered black rhino. MPT also contributes a token amount to the Mbirikani Lion Guardian salaries.

On Eselenkei Group Ranch, Porini Ecotourism has a wildlife conservancy (Selenkay Conservancy) staffed with a warden and game scouts, and has aided the community through numerous employment opportunities and other benefits. Since its inception over 10 years ago, the Selenkay Conservancy has offered a safe haven for wildlife, which has resulted in increased populations of herbivores, and has also seen the return of species, including elephants, which had previously been absent for over 20 years. Porini, working in conjunction with the community, are helping to preserve biodiversity in this area. Porini is also covering the salary of one Lion Guardian to monitor the conservancy.

In Southern Olgulului, we are collaborating closely with Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT), a group of safari operators in Kenya, raising funds through tourism which are then applied directly to conservation projects. KWT's focus is on helping the community, and they have done this by building a local school and reinforcing Maasai homesteads to predator proof levels. KWT has generously invited us to share their base camp south of Amboseli Park and are covering the salaries of five Lion Guardians in this region.

Today, all of these conservation efforts, including Lion Guardians, are working together to conserve lions and other key wildlife species and habitats across the ecosystem. Our joint effort and close collaboration will enable us to truly reach our conservation goals.





3. The Lion Guardians Mission

Mission: To promote and sustain coexistence between people & wildlife through ecological monitoring and local capacity building

Objective 1 - To conserve carnivores by using local people

<i>Aims</i>	<i>Methods (current and future)</i>	<i>Measures of Success</i>
<p>To stop lion killing, specifically targeting three types of killing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Olkiyioi</i> - retaliatory killings • <i>Olamayio</i> – traditional rite of passage killings • Age-set protest killings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lion Guardians attend all warrior meetings and ceremonies where lion killing may be discussed. They convince other warriors that lion killing is no longer a viable option • Lion Guardians are trained in community negotiations through role play • Lion Guardians are well known and respected in their communities so can dissuade other warriors from lion killing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of lions killed (our target is 0) • Number of lion hunts stopped
<p>To understand the movements and population change of carnivores in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • predict and mitigate conflict • enhance ongoing research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of data forms, traditional tracking and telemetry of collared lions • Collection of GPS data, and lion hair and scat for DNA analysis • Spoor counts twice a week using two different routes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlation between Lion Guardians’ lion reports and spoor counts against GPS lion collar and known lion population data in order to verify accuracy • Calculate a measure of Lion Guardian reporting accuracy
<p>Mitigate conflict and increase local tolerance (prevention strategies)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforcing bad <i>bomas</i> to safeguard livestock, with the help of a <i>boma</i> member • Select hostile <i>bomas</i> – those with a higher propensity to kill carnivores or retaliate after an attack • Lion Guardians find and return lost livestock to owners • Informing herders of nearby carnivores • Lion Guardians name local lions in their areas, which provides a sense of ownership and increased tolerance by the local communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depredation rates at <i>bomas</i> that were reinforced (our target is 0 hits) • High ratio of livestock found to livestock lost, high number of <i>bomas</i> reinforced and herders informed • Number of lions killed (our target is 0)

Objective 2 - Build up capacity for future conservationists to conserve carnivores



<i>Aims</i>	<i>Methods (current and future)</i>	<i>Measures of Success</i>
<p>To ensure the sustainability of the Lion Guardians project and wildlife conservation in Kenya in the long term</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal and blog writing by local coordinators to ensure financial sustainability • Workshops and training sessions run by coordinators for Lion Guardians on wildlife conservation • Lectures and film showings by coordinators on wildlife, conservation and ecology for communities • Exchange of Lion Guardians and coordinators between similar projects in East Africa • Providing training and support for higher educational opportunities for coordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local staff are able to secure funds for the project through blog, grants and media opportunities • Increased capacity of Maasai to run conservation projects • Long term tolerance of wildlife by impacted Maasai communities • Increased educational opportunities and attendance of national and international meetings and workshops by Lion Guardians staff

4. Expansion to Southern Olgulului

In September the Lion Guardians project expanded from Mbirikani (1,229 km²), Eselenkei (748 km²), and Northern Olgulului (1,102 km²), to include Southern Olgulului (495 km²), a vitally important area for lion movement between Amboseli National Park and Tanzania (see Figure 1). In the initial 8 months of the year a minimum of 18 lions were killed in Southern Olgulului, and we received substantial requests from the community and stakeholders to expand the Lion Guardians program to this high-conflict region. Since the start of the program in September, there have been no lions killed in Southern Olgulului.

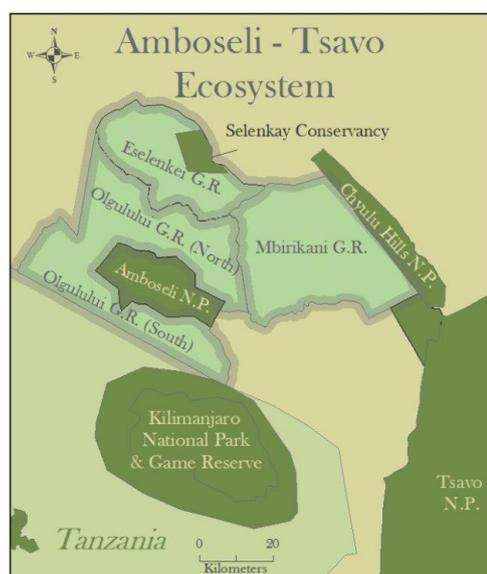


Figure 1. Map of the AT ecosystem



We selected our Lion Guardians in a completely transparent manner. We held meetings in the new areas and gave our phone number to all the interested *murrans* so they could report lion tracks to us. This volunteer period allowed qualified candidates to demonstrate their tracking skills, enthusiasm, and dedication to the job. This meant we were able to choose the most hardworking and deserving *murrans*, bypassing the politics that often gets in the way of hiring the best candidates. The new recruits have all been well trained and issued with the necessary equipment to track and record lions in their respective zones. Steven Ekwanga, who has been working for the Living With Lion's Laikipia Predator Project for 14 years, greatly assisted in this expansion working closely with Eric Ole Kesoi. During the first four months of the program, Steven and the new Guardians found 39 lions; they have detected several snares set by bush meat poachers and also reported elephant poachers, which has resulted in the successful intervention by KWS. This group of warriors is a vital addition to the team and to the protection of lions in the ecosystem.



Eric holds a community meeting in Southern Olgulului. Photo by S. Ekwanga

This expansion was only possible with the generous support of many players; Panthera, Flora Foundation, Defenders of Wildlife, Rufford Small Grants, and the Kenya Wildlife Trust. Our goal is to continue close collaboration with existing conservation partners in the new areas so as to combine our efforts to preserve the remaining lions in the ecosystem.



5. The Lion Guardians

In the past two years we have tripled both the area we are covering and the number of Lion Guardians employed. We hired two new Lion Guardians in Eselenkei: Kuyan and Leparaku to cover the Selenkay Conservancy and a high conflict area bordering Olgulului Group Ranch. With the expansion onto Southern Olgulului, we now have 29 Lion Guardians collecting key ecological data, and most importantly, mitigating conflict in their communities and protecting lions (see Figure 2). We would like to welcome the new Southern Olgulului Lion Guardians to our team: Jackson, N’gaida, Maen, Metito, and Perkepu.

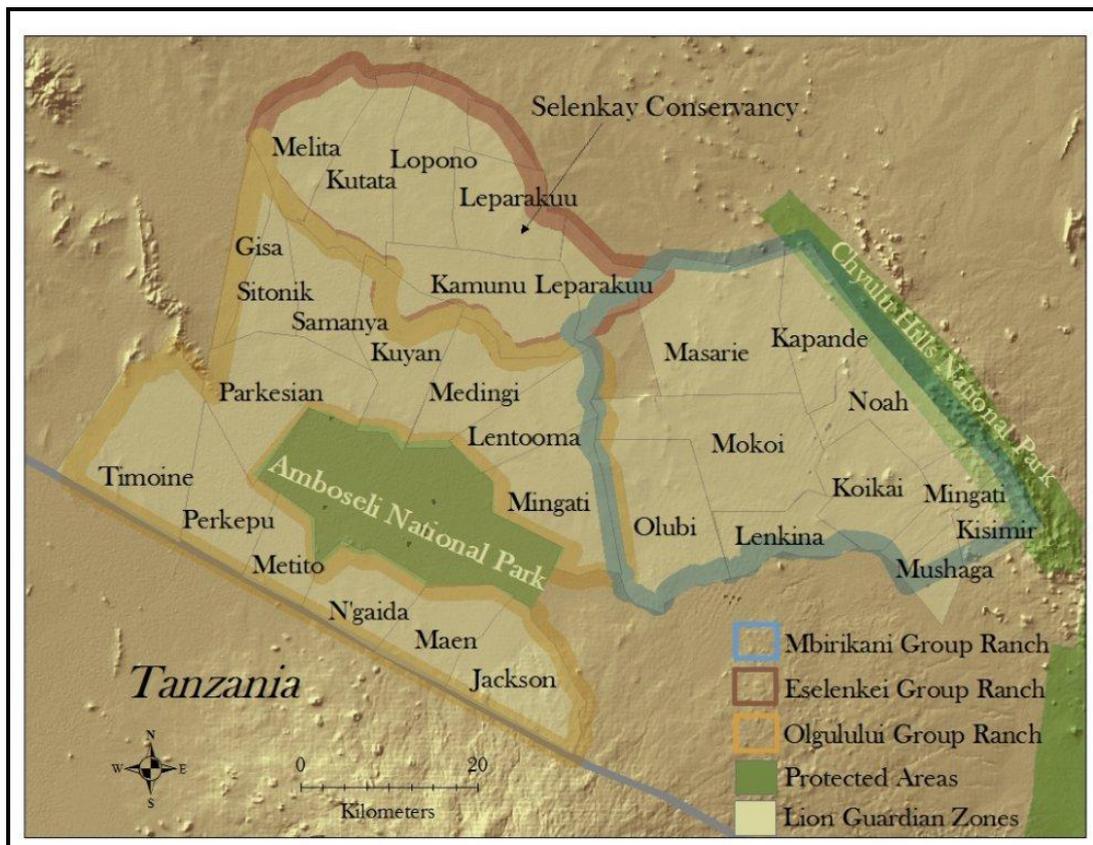


Figure 2. Map of Lion Guardian zones within the Amboseli Ecosystem

Following the expansion of the program, we have restructured our management team. Elizabeth Carabine provided essential management oversight and aided in the initial expansion into Southern Olgulului during her eight month stay last year, before starting a PhD program in England. Luke Mamaai joined the Lion Guardians team as our Head Coordinator. Luke worked as a research assistant for the Living With Lions project for two years and has a certificate in Natural Resource Management from Nairobi College. Luke’s main duties include: Lion Guardian literacy and GPS training, data entry and monthly reporting, paying all Lion Guardians’ salaries, and monthly maintenance of all equipment and motorbikes. Luke plays an invaluable role in the Lion Guardians program due to his incredible work ethic and organizational skills. In the future Luke plans to continue his education and obtain a higher degree in Wildlife Conservation.

Eric Ole Kesoi is the Lion Guardians Community Liaison Officer; attenuating any conflicts within the Maasai community or with other stakeholders in the ecosystem. Eric has played a critical role in facilitating every Lion Guardians expansion. With a college diploma in Conflict Mitigation and



Development, and a plethora of leadership experience, Eric knows the ins and outs of community conservation. He is a born leader and avid writer and is responsible for writing the Lion Guardian blogs and quarterly newsletters.

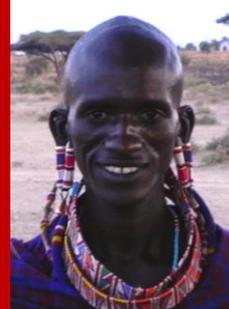
Last year Antony Kasanga returned from Oxford with a diploma in Wildlife Conservation and a vision to influence conservation through politics. Antony was very fortunate to secure a position with our collaborators MPT, who offered him an opportunity to indirectly reduce poaching by studying the judicial system in Kenya and educating game scouts.

This year at the request of the Lion Guardians, each of the group ranches elected one or two Lion Guardian representatives to attend important meetings within their group ranch and the larger ecosystem. For example, if a community, government agency or other stakeholders conduct a meeting regarding lion/predator conflict or general conservation topics, then the elected Lion Guardian leader would attend and later provide feedback to the rest of the team. The following Guardians were elected: Olubi and Koikai (Mbirikani), Mingati and Gisa (Olgulului), and Kamunu (Eselenkei). This leadership role provides immense prestige and devolves additional decision making power to the Guardians. Annual elections will be held to appoint new leaders.

In Southern Olgulului, an area with a history of lion killing, we decided to hire a very influential past lion killer who is respected by all his warrior age-mates, Metito Rikoyian. Every year we like to highlight exceptional stories from the field. Metito's unwavering determination and enthusiasm is a perfect example of what it takes to be a Lion Guardian (see Box 1).

One aim of the Lion Guardians project is to improve capacity and increase educational development of local staff. In conjunction with this aim, local project staff have attended and presented at the following meetings and events; Human-lion conflict meeting in Dar es Salaam (a three day workshop), Kenya Wildlife Service Carnivore Conference, Amboseli Ecosystem Management meeting, and for a Defenders of Wildlife group in Amboseli.

BOX 1 – METITO RIKOYIAN



Metito proved beyond a doubt his determination to be a Lion Guardian... even before he was hired.

Metito: "When I first heard about the Lion Guardians I knew that this was a perfect job for me. No other murrans in this area understands lions like I do. I have killed many in the past and know exactly where they like to hide."

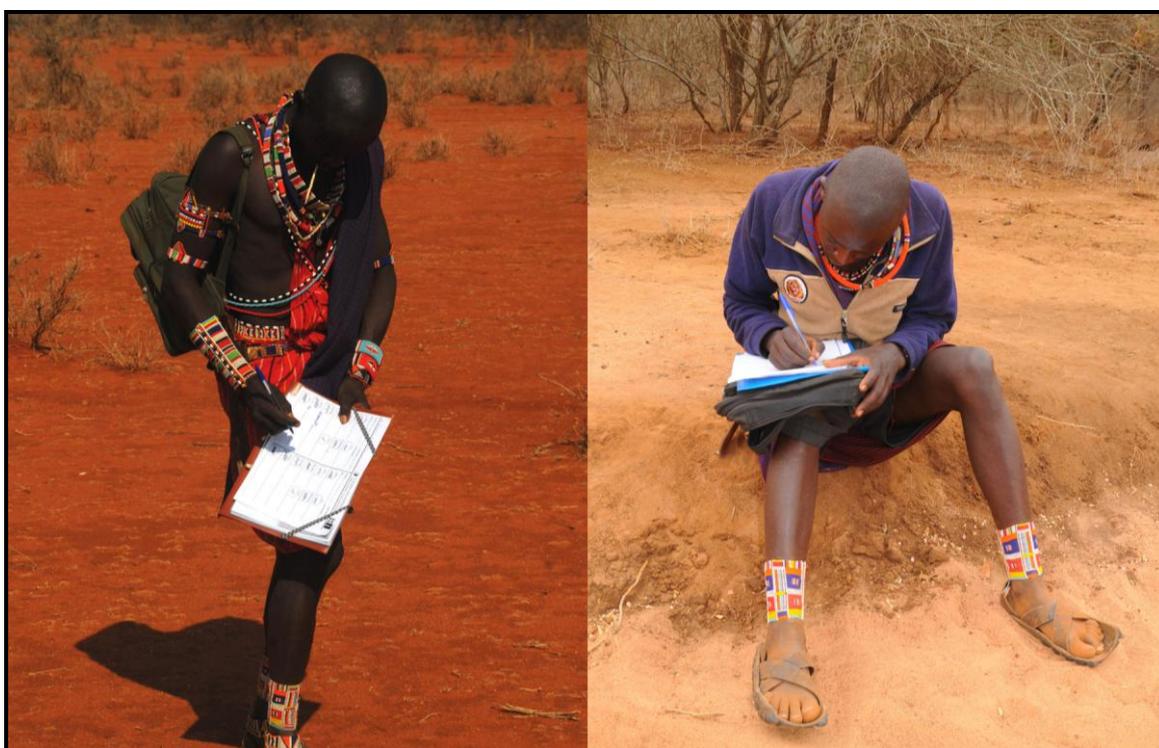
"Last Sunday morning before sunrise, when I was still volunteering hoping to be hired as a Lion Guardian something very unfortunate happened. A male lion jumped into my boma and attacked a cow and a donkey. My brother was awake and speared the lion in his hind leg so he wouldn't eat our livestock. Usually as murrans we would have followed the injured lion but I convinced the others to wait and informed KWS and the Lion Guardian project"

Eric : "Metito relayed the information to us and we met KWS there. But as we were looking for the exact location of the lion, it injured two people in quick succession and the situation went out of control. Many people ran toward the lion with spear in hand. We didn't want any more injuries and so we tried to push back the community. To my surprise, Metito was standing right next to me also trying to calm the angry crowd. I was amazed at his impressive show of maturity and determination. People were yelling at him to move out of the way and swinging spears at him. Never once did he back down. We knew right then and there that he passed the most difficult test of a Lion Guardian with flying colors. We are truly honored to have Metito join the Lion Guardian team".



6. Scientific Data Collection

From the program's inception, the Guardians have always been closely linked with the research conducted by the Living With Lion's Kilimanjaro Lion Conservation Project (KLCP). In 2009, the Lion Guardians began weekly spoor counts along predetermined routes. These counts provide the relative densities of lions, other carnivores and the major prey species across all group ranches. As well as intensive spoor counting, the Lion Guardians began systematically reporting and following all fresh lion spoor. These spoor are reported immediately to LG base camp. The majority of these reports are responded to by KLCP biologists who, working side by side with the Guardians, follow the spoor until visuals are obtained of the lion.



Lion Guardians completing spoor counts. Photos by P. Briggs

7. Monitoring Lions

Lion Guardians monitor lions, both by traditional tracking methods and by using radio telemetry to locate collared lions. They mark all lion tracks and sightings with a GPS point or a track log, and report any evidence to the research camps, whether it is roaring they heard in the night or a direct sighting. We use these reports to monitor lion movements, which over time will allow us to map and identify trends in lion prey choice, lion attacks on homesteads as well as use of habitat by both the lions and other major carnivore species.

When the Lion Guardians call in a report of fresh lion spoor, a KLCP biologist responds, and together they track the lions. This response accomplishes several things: (1) verification of the Lion Guardians' reports to get a measure of accuracy; (2) identification of individual lions within each LG zone - when sightings of the lions are obtained, the lions are identified using unique characteristics such as whisker spots, thus



contributing to our knowledge of the lion population, range, associations, relatedness, etc.; (3) the biologist response also allows the Guardians to spend hours observing the lions from a safe location. These observations have led the Guardians to become very familiar with the lions as unique individuals, each with a different “personality” and habits. The Guardians give each lion a Maasai name based on its unique characteristics, and they can then introduce the lion to their communities with stories from their work. The communities are now referring to the lions by name and re-telling the stories about the lion that has a big nose, or the one that does not prey on livestock (a favorite lioness named Nimaoi).

Some of the lions have been fitted with GPS collars, which have enabled us to see the truly vast area they roam. Lions move from one side of the ecosystem to the other in a very short time, and frequently move beyond the borders of Lion Guardian zones. One lion, Sikiria (meaning “*he of the donkey*”—because he likes to eat donkeys!), continues to amaze us with his travels. He has moved throughout the ecosystem and beyond its boundaries, with a home-range of 5,626km² in one year (Figure 3). These travels have taken him through 23 of the 29 Lion Guardians’ zones! Seeing how these lions move across the entire ecosystem emphasizes how important it is to have Lion Guardians across all the group ranches.



Figure 3. Sikiria’s movements in 2010



Working closely with the Lion Guardians to obtain visuals of lions across the ecosystem has allowed us to know nearly the entire lion population. Below is a table of the lion sightings obtained with the Guardians during the expansion into Eselenkei and Northern Olgulului. These findings were initiated by a Guardian's report of 'unknown' lions, and were followed up by a biologist who photographed and identified them. This has allowed KLCP to obtain very detailed information on individuals, survival, group composition, etc. These data have led to the repeated sightings of 'known' individuals across the 3500 km² Lion Guardians area. From these, KLCP biologists have obtained a concise count of the population of lions.

As you can clearly see from Figure 4, we were no longer finding 'new' individuals. In fact, only a few 'new' lions have been seen in over a one year period, even though several reports are verified each week. The same lions are being seen over and over again across a vast area. This allows for a unique opportunity to compare the estimates of the lion population obtained from Lion Guardian spoor counts with the population count obtained from repeated sightings of individuals.

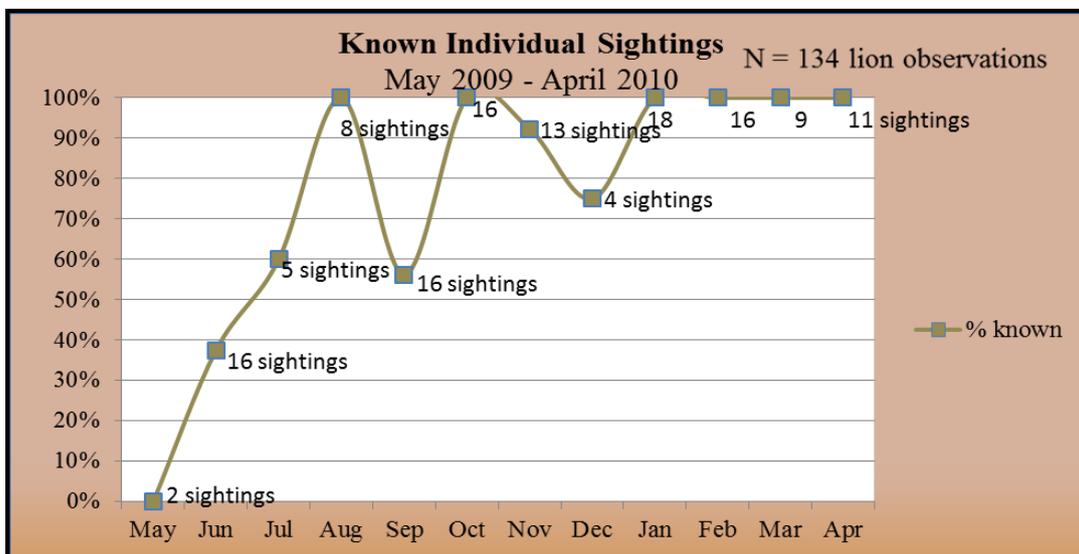


Figure 4. Lion Guardian lion reports and known individuals

One of our main aims is to determine the accuracy of Lion Guardian reports. When a report is made to camp, the biologist fills out a form which records the number, age, and sex of lions reported, as well as the individual the Guardians believe it to be. Upon responding to the report, we verify and record the above categories to get a measure of accuracy. We are very pleased to announce that the Guardians are, on average, 83% accurate in their overall reporting. Verification of their reports is enabling KLCP biologists to gain detailed information on a population of lions living in human and livestock dominated areas, while the biologists' response is empowering the Lion Guardians to truly know their lion neighbours.

During this past year we have had several people facilitating the KLCP biologist's work and joint monitoring efforts with the Lion Guardians. Kylie McQualter worked with the Mbirikani Lion Guardians to monitor lions from June 2009-October 2010. Kylie has greatly contributed to the lion photo ID database and overall lion monitoring in the Mbirikani region. Philip Briggs transitioned from Lion Guardians project manager to KLCP biologist, continuing to work closely with the Lion Guardians, following up on their reports and identifying the individual lions across LG areas. Due to his superb photography, Swahili and tracking abilities as well as his very likeable character, he continues to be an immense asset to the



project. He has been able to monitor the lions and work very closely with the Lion Guardians, responding to their daily reports, tracking lion spoor, photographing individual lions when visuals are obtained and using these photographs to compile an online database of all the lions the Lion Guardians monitor. We hope to have this database officially launched and accessible via our website in the upcoming months.



Eric trains Lion Guardians on conflict resolution. Photo by P. Briggs

Lenkai Nkiinti continues to assist on all aspects of Lion Guardians and lion monitoring work across all of Eselenkei, Northern Olgulului and Mbirikani. Lenkai joined our team in May of 2009 and has proven to be an essential part of the vital relationship between KLCP lion monitoring and the Lion Guardians lion reports. When Lenkai joined the team he did not speak Swahili, nor could he write his name. He is now fluent in Swahili and is writing down daily lion reports. As the years go by, the KLCP and Lion Guardians are working hand in hand, blending traditional ecological knowledge with western based science to discover the fascinating lives of persecuted lions living among Maasai communities.

8. Conflict, Community and Coexistence

Last year was one of the most difficult for the Lion Guardians, with overwhelming challenges brought about by the prolonged drought of 2009. The drought caused an imbalance between plains game and predators, and during the beginning of the year the Lion Guardians were tested to the limit, as lions attacked livestock, and the Maasai communities struggled to protect their few remaining cattle.

In 2010 we documented 21 lions killed within the ecosystem and another five lions that died for other reasons (i.e. disease, natural causes, problem animal control). The great majority of the 21 lions killed by people were speared and poisoned in Southern Olgulului—in retaliation for depredation by lions prior to the start of the Lion Guardians program, and another two female lions were killed as a result of political incitement on Mbirikani.



Photo by P. Briggs



The total number of lions killed in the ecosystem could have been significantly higher if it were not for the hard work and dedication of the Lion Guardians and our collaborators (notably KWS, MPT and Porini game scouts). The Lion Guardians were key players in stopping a minimum of 44 lion hunts in 2010. Because Lion Guardians live and work full time in their home area, they are aware of every depredation event and attempted lion hunt that takes place before any other conservation group. When a hunting party is too large for one or two Lion Guardians to stop, they then request assistance from KWS and the game scout teams.

Conflict between lions and livestock increased exponentially at the onset of the short rains around Christmas 2009; and depredation attributed to lions increased exponentially, especially at Maasai *bomas*. Attacks at *bomas* used to be rare, but with over 80% of wild prey dying in the 2009 drought, starving lions started attacking *bomas* regularly in early 2010.

In an effort to reduce this conflict in communities, Lion Guardians reinforced 297 *bomas* that experienced lion incursions in the past year. Due to the high conflict, Lion Guardians reinforced an additional 55 *bomas* in 2010 than in the previous year. We held mitigation meetings within the communities to find out which *bomas* experienced the highest conflict with carnivores. This list was given to the Lion Guardian in each community and he worked to enforce those *bomas*, together with the *boma* owners, to ensure that the community is actively participating in mitigating conflict. Community leaders say that one of the most valuable aspects of the Lion Guardians is that they warn herders to avoid areas where lions are present. Having radio-collars on lions allows the Guardians to pre-empt conflict by using tracking equipment to know the exact location of the lions. This direct conflict mitigation has increased community tolerance and, in turn, reduced the likelihood of retaliatory killings.

Due to the immense decline of cattle after the 2009 drought, many warriors left Maasailand to find work in cities, leaving the herding to be done by inexperienced children. This has resulted in an increase in the number of livestock lost in the bush at night, where they are vulnerable to predators. In 2010 the Lion Guardians searched for at least 6,708 lost livestock, and successfully found 5,874 of these, an 88% success rate; the majority of these would have been killed by predators if not found. Lion Guardians have improved their success rate by over 5% from 2009.

The Lion Guardians also help their communities with other issues when called upon to do so (see Box 2). In March 2010 five Lion Guardians from Eselenkei spent two days searching for a missing boy, and they were rewarded with a goat feast in their honor when they returned the unharmed boy to his father. Community members openly acknowledge that the job of a Lion Guardian is to not only protect lions but to also ensure the safety of the community—the traditional role of Maasai warrior.

BOX 2 – Mingati & Lentooma find lost child



Late last August, a small girl followed her unknowing mother out of their boma to collect her daily firewood. As her mother strode ahead, the girl found she could not keep up and got lost in the thick bush.

When the girl's mother returned home she realized that the girl was missing and immediately called for the help of her local Lion Guardians, Mingati and Lentooma. After an extensive search of the bush, which lasted long after dark, Mingati and Lentooma finally found the girl hiding under a tree. It was past midnight and the Lion Guardians were shocked to see fresh track of hyenas nearby. This was a very lucky escape, which was highly appreciated by the girl's family.



9. Lion Guardian Games and Awards

To encourage greater collaboration among the Lion Guardians across the ecosystem, we held the first ever Lion Guardian Games in July 2010. Apart from providing them with an opportunity to compete against each other (something warriors love to do), most importantly the Games provided the Lion Guardians with the opportunity to form the bonds that hold warriors together. As many of our lions traverse the zones of many Lion Guardians (see Sikiria's map!), they had the opportunity to swap stories about their favorite lions, and establish vital communications that will help to monitor these lions in the future, over a greater distance.

The Guardians competed in spear throwing (both for accuracy and distance), stick throwing, singing, and football. It was a successful event that was praised not just by the Guardians themselves but also by the wider community. We have developed a short video of the Games; please follow this link to watch the Lion Guardians in action:

<http://lionguardians.wildlifedirect.org/2010/11/15/lion-guardian-games-video/>

Prizes were awarded to the winners of the events as well as to those who performed over and beyond their expected duties as Lion Guardians. Here are the winners of the Awards for 2010.

Most improved Lion Guardian: Awarded to Kamunu from Eselenkei & Kapande from Mbirikani

Most reliable and hardworking Lion Guardian: Awarded to Mokoï from Mbirikani

Biggest impact on the Lion Guardians project: Awarded to Mingati from Olgulului





10. The Changing of the Guard(ians)..

The Iltuati are newly circumcised boys who are transiting into adulthood. They are anxiously waiting for the time when the community will pass them the baton to become real fully-fledged warriors. A traditional blessing ceremony for the Iltuati age-group was held at the end of September at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. This ceremony, which follows last year's circumcision ceremonies, marks the beginning of this age-set's participation in the institution of 'murranism' or warriorhood. They will first enter the class of junior warriors, and once all the transitional training and procedures are completed, these new warriors will take on full responsibility for protecting their communities.



Photo by A. Howard

Murrans from every corner of the constituency were present at this ceremony; they came in big numbers and were dressed in splendid beads of different colours, complete with their traditional red ochre. The ceremony was also attended by the area's political leaders, the potential aspiring candidates, the traditional and provincial administration chiefs as well as by the local Member of Parliament. As is traditional, the current senior *murrans* could only come as spectators and were not invited into the special blessing enclosure. From now on almost all senior *murrans* will be required to get married and start their own families and pave the way for the new junior *murrans*, who will soon be taking over their roles as warriors. This transition will likely take place within the next year, and soon the current Lion Guardians will have to teach the new warriors the important duties and responsibilities of a Lion Guardian, before officially passing on the baton.

11. Lion Guardians Blog and Media

This year the Lion Guardians blog has gone from strength to strength, with fantastic posts written by Eric Ole Kesoi. His creative writing style has given readers a real insight into the project, and has encouraged over \$10,000 in donations through the blog. We were very grateful to Panthera for taking over from WildlifeDirect as the blog donation facilitators, meaning that the Lion Guardians receive 100%

The Lion Guardians blog: <http://lionguardians.wildlifedirect.org>



of the money donated to us through the blog. The Lion Guardians have an active and growing online Facebook community, and are also reaching a new audience of supporters through Twitter.

The Lion Guardians have featured in a number of publications this year, including National Geographic Magazine's June edition (US), National Geographic Kids Magazine in May, and the East African Wildlife Society Magazine (SWARA) in their Oct-Dec issue. Last year Leela gave a talk at Defenders of Wildlife in Washington D.C., and at the US Trust/Bank of America Luncheon series in New York. We would like to send our thanks to Panthera and WildlifeDirect, and everyone who is part of our online community and has donated to us. Your support helps makes this project possible.

12. Looking Ahead...

We will continue to improve the Lion Guardians model in the Amboseli region by designing and testing new monitoring and conflict mitigation techniques. Our success in the past year has proven that not only can Lion Guardians conserve lions by reducing conflict and effectively monitor lions on communal lands, but that this model is finally ready to be expanded and tested in other areas where lions are highly persecuted by people.

In 2011, partnering with Panthera, we will expand the Lion Guardians model into Tanzania and around Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Ruaha Game Reserve. We will work closely with two already established research projects in these areas—the Serengeti Lion project and the Ruaha Carnivore project. The Lion Guardians team will help provide on-the-ground training for the new Tanzania Lion Guardian recruits. We have

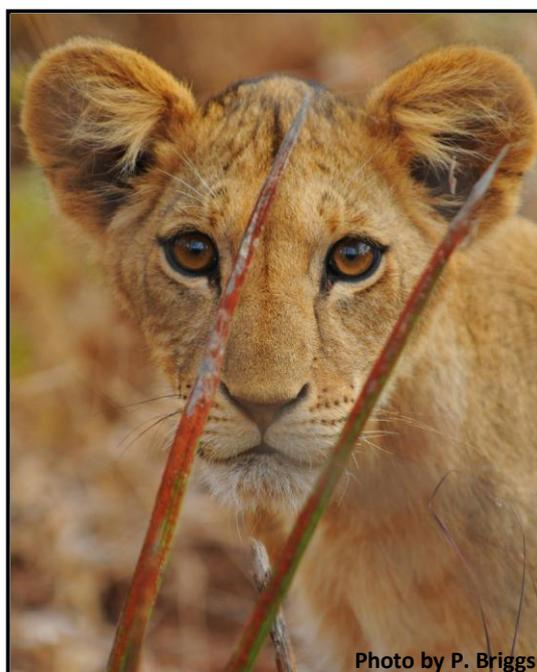


Photo by P. Briggs

discovered over the years that the most efficient and successful way of training new Lion Guardians is by having tenured Guardians carry out the training sessions. Our hope is that this experience will provide our current Amboseli Lion Guardians with a sense of pride in their achievements and importance in their work.

We expect to have at least two different Lion Guardian papers published this year; one focusing on the effect of Lion Guardians on reducing lion killing and the other on measuring the accuracy of Lion Guardian monitoring techniques. We hope to present these papers at the annual Society of Conservation Biology Conference in New Zealand at the end of the year. Leela will give a talk about Lion Guardians at the Vail Symposium in Colorado on March 10, 2011 and both Stephanie and Leela will give a joint lecture at the Explorers Club in New York on April 18, 2011.



13. Acknowledgements

The Maasailand Preservation Trust, Porini Ecotourism, Kenya Wildlife Trust and the Kenya Wildlife Service have provided invaluable collaboration and support. Ol Donyo Wuas Lodge, Porini Amboseli Camp, Ker and Downey, and Tortillas have been incredibly helpful by providing logistical assistance.

We would also like to thank our donors. Lion Guardians owes a great deal of gratitude to Panthera for their unwavering support throughout the years. We are very excited to work more closely with them in 2011. We owe a great deal of thanks to the Flora Foundation, D. Margulies, Rufford Small Grants, Defenders of Wildlife and Kenya Wildlife Trust for their quick response and support that made the Southern Olgulului expansion possible in a short time. We would also like to acknowledge our private friends and donors who responded to our June appeal for expansion funds. And finally, we also would like to thank our faithful blog readers and Facebook fans for their meaningful support.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2011!

The Lion Guardians Team

