



Kunene Lion Support Programme

In collaboration with Kunene and Erongo communal conservancies, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Namibia Nature Foundation, Desert Lion Conservation and NACSO

Six Month Progress Report: 09 September 2018

Executive Summary

The thrust of IRDNC's effort is to respond to escalating Human Lion Conflict (HLC) in the short-term whilst simultaneously developing long-term mitigating measures as well as exploring incentives for communities living with lion. This pressing need grows out of increasing human-lion conflict (HLC) in Kunene stemming from the success of Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) in conserving the region's unique desert-adapted lion population. Increasing HLC is an urgent and immediate threat to Kunene's lions and farmers' livelihoods. We feel the Kunene Lion Support Programme can address these problems sustainably. It has been a very busy six months and this report illustrates this.



Progress

IRDNC Team's footprint has expanded substantially with response to incidents and patrolling being executed in Ehirovipuka Conservancy and in Tsiseb Conservancy (Uis/Brandberg area). Work in the Eherivopuka area has included response to incidents, regular patrolling, meeting with farmers and on occasion assisting with maintaining the boundary fence of Etosha to stop lions from entering the community farming areas. Our facilitator based in this area is playing an important and leading role in the formation process of the Proposed Kunene People's Park. This Park will provide an additional 10 000 hectares of secure and safe habitat for lions (and other species).

Tsiseb Conservancy resorts under the Namibia Nature Foundation (NNF) as a support organization. However, NNF do not have the field capacity to deal with Human Lion Conflict and thus requested the involvement of our Team. Our Team responded to several calls in the Brandberg area and then assisted the Desert Lion Project and Ministry of Environment and Tourism in monitoring and ultimately relocating several problem lions. These have been translocated to a private property. Negotiations led to agreement that these can be returned to the area once certain mitigation measures are in place and when game/prey numbers have increased.

The 2017/18 rain season produced generally average widespread rains, although the western areas still have little new growth. The 2018 annual fixed route counts data has not yet been released, however, we can state that game/prey numbers are still low. This to be expected after 4 years of drought. Discussions with field staff indicate more calves and foals being seen and we expect a positive change in the 2019 count. The distribution of prey species has also changed somewhat with concentrations occurring in areas where the first good rains fell. There has been a distinct move or shift in the lions' distribution as well, this corresponding to the prey species. Some prides of lions are compensating for the lack of local pray by covering enormous distances. An example is the group of four females who include part of the Springbok River in their territory. In early September, they were found, two new Early Warning collars fitted a hundred kilometers north west of the Springbok River.



Rapid response, Lion rangers and DLC planning on patrolling and monitoring schedule

The Rapid Response Team is now at full strength with its third and last member being appointed in June. The third facilitator is currently driving an old and unreliable vehicle. However, we have sourced funding for a new vehicle and this should be obtained in October/November. Basic equipment, binoculars, spotlights, GPS, headlight, bedroll, tent, chair, 12v fridge have been purchased and will make a huge difference to operational efficiency. Teams will now be able to spend longer extended time in the bush.

There has been extensive training of the Team and associated rangers at every opportunity. Most of this has been done on site at actual scenarios. This includes response situations, patrolling, immobilizing and working with lions and meeting with stakeholders. This ongoing training is seen as a high priority.

Community Game Guards and/or Lion Rangers accompany every patrol. This for training purposes and giving local conservancies “ownership” of the program.

As on 09 October 2018, some twenty of the new Early Warning System collars have been fitted to lions. Our Teams assisted with half of these events. This is an ongoing priority and the systems’ expected efficiency depends on at least another 30 collars being fitted. In the next month a new Early Warning Tower is scheduled to be erected at Mbakondja in Anabeb Conservancy.

So far this year, IRDNC has been responsible for the construction of five new predator proof kraals. These situated in the hotspot areas of Torra and Anabeb Conservancies.

In July in Anabeb Conservancy, we had an incident of lions killing some 18 goats in a kraal. Our Teams were deployed at other problems and could not respond immediately. The MET field staff were also not able to respond. The farmers, two men involved, put poison out in a carcass and a lioness, hyena and several jackals were killed. Our discussions with a top independent Investigative Consultant with Nampol and MET led to a thorough investigation of the incident. Two men were arrested, charged and appeared in court. They pleaded guilty and the case has been postponed for sentencing. This is a highly significant land mark case and is, to my knowledge, the first time a person has been charged after poisoning lions or predators. This has sent a clear message out to all that this is unacceptable and that there will be consequences.

One male lion moved from the Oruwau area (Sesfontein Conservancy) through the Hoanib River, Ganamub area, Puros and went all the way north to just west of Orupembe. He then returned to the Puros area where he finally disappeared, we suspect killed and buried. Our Teams spent much time monitoring his movements and actions and communicating with local farmers. Unfortunately, prey species were few and far between and this lion lived largely off livestock. It appears as if this male’s movements were in response to other dominant males in the area and, in conjunction with Desert Lion Conservation, it was decided not to translocate this male. It was almost certain that this would precipitate other problems.

During the period under review there have been three meetings of the North West Lion Working Group, all conducted timeously and very useful indeed. Issues discussed relate to response protocols, Early Warning Systems and their implementation, community attitudes strategies for surveying areas not currently being researched and protocols surrounding the dissemination of sensitive information (particularly “live” information on lions whereabouts.

Conservation Metrics	
Area, square kilometers covered	40 000 square kilometers
Increase in area due to LRF funding	Increased by some 12 000 square km (Palmwag & Etendeka Concessions and Ehrovipuka, Tsiseb and Omatendeka Conservancies)
Approximate number of lions at project start	West of the escarpment in an area of ca 32 000 square km estimate remains at 120 to 150 above the age of 1 year old.
Insight into population size	Several new litters of cubs recorded as well, but still very young. Data for eastern area and intermediate Escarpment area not good enough at this point for an acceptable estimate. Surveys are planned for the next year in these areas. If we had to hazard a guess for the whole of Kunene it would be around 200 plus or minus 30
Insight into prey numbers	The 2017/18 rain season produced generally average widespread rains, although the western areas still have little new growth. The 2018 annual fixed route counts data has not yet been released, however, we can state that game/prey numbers are still low. This to be expected after 4 years of drought. Discussions with field staff indicate more calves and foals being seen and we expect a positive change in the 2019 count. The distribution of prey species has also changed somewhat with concentrations occurring in areas where the first good rains fell.
Livestock killed	Cattle 39, Goats 75, Sheep 6, Donkeys 6, horses 2
Number of community members employed to tackle lion conflict issues	A total of 11 lion rangers in 3 different conservancies
Number of innovative measures	Focus is on the Response Team, Early warning system, Predator proof kraals and the establishment and use of community Lion Rangers.
Number of conflict incidents responded to	29 incidents in total
Insight into changes in community attitudes	The basis of our Teams work revolves around community involvement and informing the conservancies and their members of what is happening. The number of call-outs for responses indicates a really healthy relationship and expectation from communities
Number of times lion killing by people averted	Two definite incidents where our actions prevented the shooting/killing of lions
Number of lions collared	20 lions fitted with the new Early warning system collars
Number of call ups undertaken	
Number of lions individually recognized	18 from four different prides
Number of lions killed in snares, gin traps	0
Number of lions poisoned	One definite
Number of lions trophy hunted	0

Challenges

The vast area we operate in remains a major challenge. This demands an enormous amount of mileage monthly and long dedicated time in the field. Some equipment still needs to be sourced, this includes sat phone, cameras and a mobile small projector for giving presentations to communities. More funding required to jump-start the lion rangers and provide impetus to this

line of mitigation.

Training and Outreach

As mentioned previously, this aspect is pivotal in our approach to the project. Staff are acutely aware of this and every opportunity is used to talk to and involve community.



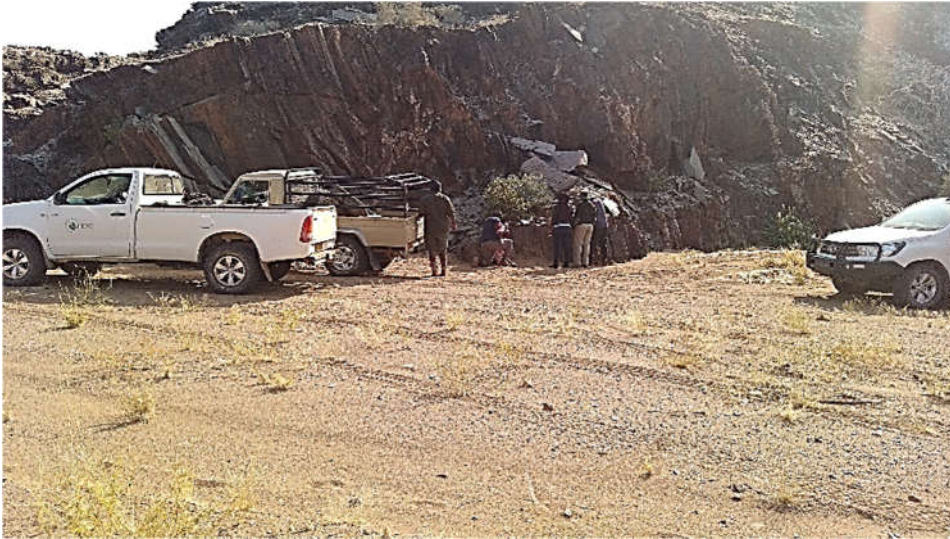
Rapid Response & Lion Rangers; standing at a carcass of a donkey killed by lion, in the Hoarusib river



Lionesses at Okongue waterhole

Recommendations

Tremendous headway has been made and we need to keep this going. Continuity is critical to the success of this program.



Rapid Response team & MET official setting up a bait, in Tsiseb conservancy



Rapid response assisting with collaring

Planned targets for next six-month period

The next year must focus on consolidating our efforts and providing consistency throughout. The Early Warning System is important, and we hope to have at least 6 towers at selected villages and at least another 20 lions collared. Between IRDNC and our partners we are hoping for at least another 6 predator proof kraals to be constructed. We have developed new data collection forms which we started using in July. These will be entered into a data base and provide useful information for reporting as well as evidence-based decisions around lion management and HLC mitigation. These three forms capture information on

- Tracking/sightings
- Communication
- Response

By July 2019 we should be able to start making constructive use of this information.

The Lion Ranger program remains important and we plan to have at least one training session in the next six months.

Continued frequent and good communication between all stakeholders remains an ongoing priority



Attendance at the Kunene People`s Park reporting and planning meeting, in Ehi-rovipuka conservancy



Vehicle and foot patrol, rapid response team and rhino rangers

Metrics and Incident notes

Please see the below extract from the HLC Team Coordinators report.

Conservancy	Incidents/ lion visits	Livestock lost	Lions involved	Collar / No collar	Lions lost (retaliation)	Location (kraal, Field)	Patrols/ monitoring/ response	Known/ not hot spots
Orupembe/Sani tata	3	1 donkey	2 lions	1 male collar, 1 female no collar	None	Field (1)	4 (2 responses/ monitoring, 2 patrols)	Orupembe
Purros	4	1 donkey	3 groups (1 male, 1 male, 2 females)	1 male no collar, others collar	1, collared male missing	Field (1)	6 (4 responses/ monitoring, 3 patrols)	Purros (seasonal farms)
Sesfontein	2	5 cows	1 male	No collar	None	Field (5)	4 (1 response & monitoring, 3 patrols)	Khanamub
Anabeb	2	39 goats	6 lions	No collar	1 lioness poisoned	No kraal, but settlement (18), Kraal (11)	8 (2 responses & monitoring, 6 patrols)	Otjomenje, Otjizeka
Torra	1	1 cow bull	2 lions	No collar	None	Field (1)	1 response	
Tsiseb	2	19 goats, 2 donkeys, 1 cow	1 male, 2 females	Collar	None	Field (3) Kraal (19)	2 response	Brandberg, Tsiseb
Omatendeka	1	2 cow, 1 cow injured, 1 donkey	4 lions 4 lions	No collar	None	Field (3 + 1 injured)	2 responses & monitoring, 5 patrols	Okondjou, Okavare
Ehi-rovipuka	14	22 cows (+9 calves), 17 goats, 6 sheep 2 horses 1 donkey	4 lions, 2 lions 2 lions 3 lions 3 lions 9 lions	No collar	None	Field (25) Kraal (23)	14 responses & monitoring,	Arizona, Oromauua, Ohanjuna, Ondundu- ombapa

Conservancy	Incidents/ lion visits	Livestock lost	Lions involved	Collar / No collar	Lions lost (retaliation)	Location (kraal, Field)	Patrols/ monitoring/ response	Known/ not hot spots
			2 lions					
Total	27	121	51 lions 18prides	3collars 15 no collars	1 poisoned 1 missing	Field (39) Kraal (60)	Response (26) Patrols (19)	All are known hot spots