



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

2nd Six Month Progress Report: OCTOBER 2018 TO MARCH 2019

Executive Summary

Our broad focus is to respond to Human Lion Conflict (HLC) incidents in the Kunene Region, reduce livestock losses and increase tolerance and understanding amongst local farmers and residents. It is particularly important to foster relationships with farmers, conservancies and stakeholders such as the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Traditional Authorities and Tourism industry operators. During this six month period our priorities were to build relations with farmers and communities, establish and prove our credibility and reduce livestock losses where possible. The Team really excelled, and this was achieved by tirelessly responding to incidents, call-outs and information sourced from the Early Warning System (EWS).

It also became increasingly apparent that successful Lion Conservation in the Kunene Region is not just about lions. Rather, it encompasses a holistic approach to communities and their perceptions and needs. For example, in response to localized rain in an area just north of Anabeb, a herd of elephants moved in and remained in this area for several weeks. Children trying to walk some ten kilometers to school were chased on several occasions by these elephants. For several weeks, one of our Team transported children back to their village on Friday afternoons and returned them to school on Sunday evening. Helping farmers herd their livestock to safety when lions were around was a critical contribution to limiting losses. These were great public relations exercises and firmly cemented our credibility and reputation locally.

It was an extremely busy, exhausting, but successful six months.



RRT assisting farmers retrieving livestock from imminent lion conflict, Elephant-song, Sesfontein area

Conservation Metrics	
Area, square kilometers covered	40 000 square kilometers
Increase in area due to LRF funding	Increased by some 12 000 square kilometers (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 kilometers estimate remains at 120 to 150 above the age of 1 year old. The current estimate is closer to 120.
Insight into population size	It appears as if the persistent drought conditions have caused prides or groupings of lions to either shift or enlarge their normal ranges. This is in line with the decline of prey species as a result of 5 years of drought. We are witnessing lions being extremely mobile on a daily basis in order to find prey. An example is a pride of 4 females who include Wereldsend in their territory and who have been seen near Hunkab, some hundred kilometers north. We have received reports of increases in the prides using the Ugab and lower Huab rivers. This still needs to be verified.
Insight into prey numbers	<p>The persistent drought has caused a dramatic decline in wildlife populations in north west Namibia. The following three species that are very important to lions clearly illustrate this. These estimates are from the annual fixed route game count and are published on the NACSO website. Oryx; 2014 estimate 17,627, 2018 estimate 5,900. Springbok; 2014 estimate 79,364, 2018 estimate 59,750. Hartmanns zebra; 2014 20,133, 2018 estimate 15,260.</p> <p>Thus far, the 2018/19 rain season has not been good and is certainly below average. Rains have been sporadic and localized.</p>
Livestock killed	<p>1st 6 months end 09/2018. Cattle 39, Goats 75, Sheep 6, Donkeys 6, horses 2, Total 128</p> <p>2nd six months end 03/2019. Cattle 46, Goats 26, Sheep 0, Donkeys 7, horses 1, Total 80</p> <p>Please see tables and extract from the Response Team coordinator below.</p>
Number of community members employed to tackle lion conflict issues	A total of 11 lion rangers in 3 different conservancies (Sesfontein, Puros and Anabeb). Lion Ranger training hosted at Wereldsend in February 2019 included lion rangers from Khoadi Hoas, Tsiseb, Ehrovipika, Omatendeka, Doro Nawas and AfriCat. A total of 30 participants at this training.
Number of innovative measures	The priorities identified in the North West Human Lion Conflict Management Plan remain, Response, Kraals and livestock husbandry, Community Rangers and the Early Warning System. Focus on building relationships with residents and farmers is a priorities. On two occasions, our Response Team assisted farmers in moving (with their livestock) away from high risk areas.
Number of conflict incidents responded to	39 incidents in total. 6 were actual current incidents and 33 were potential (EWS call ins) or reported incidents. In 26 incidents, loss or further loss of livestock was prevented by our interventions. The Team responded to elephant/human incidents.
Insight into changes in community attitudes	The Teams have poured a lot of time and energy into this aspect. On two separate occasions local farmers were taken to witness the darting and translocation of lions. Several farmers who were extremely difficult and anti-lions and our initial efforts have publically expressed their gratitude and welcomed our Teams to their areas
Number of times lion killing by people averted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> October 2018, Ugab river. Assisted and lions translocated out March 2019, Sesfontein conservancy, lions translocated out
Number of lions collared	23 lions are now fitted with the new Early warning system collars. Two Early Warning Towers have been erected at Driefontein and Mbakondja. These have proved successful and provided warning on several occasions.
Number of call ups undertaken	39
Number of lions individually recognized	Our Teams are familiar with at least 8 prides consisting of some 27 individuals. These are the lions most frequently causing problems and conflict

Number of lions killed snares, gin traps, shot	Two shot
Number of lions poisoned	One definite
Number of lions trophy hunted	0

“Livestock losses to lions, in the lion focal conservancies, Kunene north

Table 1: shows the number of livestock losses to lions from October 2018 to March 2019. The table shows the number and species lost in each conservancy as recorded by RRT during responses. Despite the fact that RRT is more active in Anabeb, Purros and Sesfontein conservancy, it does respond and assist farmers with regard to HLC in Omatendeka and Ehi-rovipuka conservancy.

	Purros	Sesfontein	Anabeb	Omatendeka	Ehi-rovipuka	Total
Cattle	0	0	1	7	38	46
Goats	0	0	21	5	0	26
Donkeys	0	2	2	2	1	7
Horse	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total	0	2	25	14	39	80

As indicated in the table, in total 80 livestock have been killed in the last 6 months, of the 80 livestock reported lost to lions; 56% (38 cattle, 7 donkeys and 1 horse) of the livestock losses happened in the kraals. Over 66% of the livestock losses, were reported in Ehi-rovipuka and Omatendeka conservancy. These losses were caused by lions from Etosha NP, Hobatere concession and Etendeka mountains. Only 8% of the total livestock losses were caused by the desert lions in Anabeb and Sesfontein conservancy. The 26% of the livestock losses although happened in Anabeb conservancy, they were killed by lions from Etendeka/Palmwag concession. These high number of livestock losses to Etosha lions is due to lack of monitoring of the Etosha lions and the poor management of livestock by farmers on the borders of the park.

Table 2: Information in the table shows that most livestock losses happened between January to March. The table below indicates the number and species of livestock losses in relation to the month, as recorded by the RRT in Ehi-rovipuka, Omatendeka, Anabeb, Sesfontein and Purros conservancy, from October 2018 to March 2019.

	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total
Cattle	5	3	2	10	17	9	46
Goats	23	0	0	0	3	0	26
Donkey	0	0	1	0	2	4	7
Horse	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	28	3	3	10	23	13	80

The number of livestock losses to lions as indicated in the table shows an increase on the livestock losses in the beginning of 2019 compared to the end of 2018. This most likely to be as the results of

a few rains experienced at the beginning of the year. In search for better grazing livestock dispersed uncontrollably, and the same thing happened to wildlife, increasing home ranges between livestock and wildlife.”

The above extract from Cliff Tjikundi’s report is revealing. Cliff also reports that in 2018 a total of 13 lions were killed. Of these, 9 originated from Etosha National Park or Hobatere and were killed in the Ehirovipuka and Orupupa Conservancies. The drought and the poor state of the Etosha boundary fence are the primary causes of this difficult situation. Our Tem member based in this area is extremely busy.

There are peripheral benefits to our Teams operating in the field. While tracking lions in the Torra conservancy in February, our Team, together with Lion Rangers apprehended a group of three poachers and dogs who had just poached a kudu calf. The Namibian Police were fetched and took the case further. One of the suspects was out on bail for a previous poaching incidence involving rhino.



RRT and police officers investigating kudu poaching



Water tank damaged by an elephant in Anabeb



RRT patrols along Etosha fence, Ehi-rovipuka



A bull carcass just killed by lions, Oromauua, Ehi-rovipuka

Challenges and focus for the next six months

- Drought remains a significant factor exacerbating human wildlife conflict in general
- Livestock losses are still unacceptably high. Focus will be on reducing this through moving, kraaling, Early warning and improved animal husbandry
- Efforts will be made to assist and encourage Conservancies to deal with the back-log of compensation claims
- The roll-out of the Early Warning System will continue
- Relationship building at all levels remains a priority.



RRT assisting with lion collaring, Torra conservancy



RRT erecting EW tower at Okaturua, Anabeb



RRT facilitating lion ranger training at Wêreldsend