

# **REPORT OF THE LION ALLIANCE FOR QENP CONSULTATIVE MEETING HELD 5<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018 AT KASENYI SAFARI LODGE**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Lion Alliance for Queen Elizabeth National Park (QENP) Consultative Meeting was organised by Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) in response to the dire state of lion conservation in QENP and the increasing threats from humans. Prominent among the cases of HWC is the recent killing of lions in the Kasenyi area early this year. The purpose of the meeting was to develop a collaborative process for tackling carnivore-human conflict inside and around Queen Elizabeth Protected Area (QEPA).

### ***Specific Objectives***

1. identify key partners “champions” that should spearhead the development of the carnivore-human conflict mitigation measures
2. Review the lion monitoring progress and how it can be used in the design and implementation of the Carnivore–human conflict mitigation measures

### ***Discussion issues***

1. Agree on a mechanism for collaboration
2. Constitute a team to provide strategic guidance to the QEPA carnivore Alliance
3. Constitute a rapid response unit to carnivore attacks on livestock
4. Develop ideas on how to meaningfully engage other key stakeholders
5. Agree on how lion monitoring and research data can meaningfully contribute to improved carnivore conservation
6. Agree on the communication strategy and data sharing among partners

## **PROCEEDINGS**

### ***Introductory and opening remarks***

The meeting was opened by the Engineer Lubega who represented the Conservation Area Manager of QECA. This was followed by opening remarks from Dr Simon Nampindo, the WCS Uganda Country Director. In his remarks, Simon reiterated the purpose and objectives of the meeting (outlined above) and stressed the need for coordinated efforts to save the lions of QECA. He mentioned that once organised, the alliance could tap into existing funding opportunities to support lion conservation. He gave an example of the Oakland Zoo managed by the Conservation Society of California (CSC), a non-profit organization that made a decision to make the QENP one of their 2019 funding priorities, setting aside about \$20,000 for lion conservation beginning October 2019. In addition, he also hinted that the Wildlife Conservation Network/Lion Recovery Fund was also interested in supporting this collaborative arrangement.

Dr Simon also presented the proposals made by the Lion Guardians after their visit to QENP. The purpose of this visit was to do an initial sight assessment with the aim of designing a long-term

community based lion conservation/threat mitigation effort. The recommendations from Lion Guardians' report included the following:

1. Articulate the objectives of the community-based carnivore conflict management program in the area with defined key measurable.
2. Establish the motivations behind lion killing.
3. Develop base-line metrics and protocols to measure impact.
4. Tailor an effective conflict mitigation intervention based on understanding of motivations.
5. Develop and maintain other initiatives to increase community participation in environmental issues as well as continue to build trust with the communities.
6. Recruit an Advisory Council that includes influential people (this would come from the responses of the questionnaire above) - five influencers who the community respects and listens to.

### ***Presentation on Status of Lion Conservation in QENP***

Dr Margaret Driciru, the Senior Monitoring and Research Warden of QECA presented the status of and threats to lion conservation in and around QENP. Among the key treats highlighted in her presentation were the following:

- Lion-livestock conflict which was named as the major cause of lion deaths
- Easy access to Carbofurans (Furadan) that are used in retaliatory killing of lions
- Wide spread snaring in the protected area which is responsible for 2-3 lion deaths annually
- Dispersal related killing responsible for death of 2-3 young male lions attempting to disperse annually.

Dr Driciru noted that the lion population in the QENP would begin to steadily decline once the rate of killing reaches 10% of the total lion population annually. She added that presence of research teams in the field contributed to reduction of illegal activities in the park. Geo-political factors related to settlements in fishing villages were also said to exacerbate the human-lion conflict. Other factors contributing to the worsening lion conservation situation around QENP cited by participants include rapid/high human population growth, leaders failing to lead by example and limited engagement of local people in tourism activities among others.

### ***Experiences of tour operators and other stakeholders***

Tour operators and other stakeholders were given an opportunity to share their experiences. The overarching observation from these presentations was that tourists are never satisfied if they fail to see lions on their tour. Tour operators reiterated that lion encounters have drastically declined in the recent years and that the unique experiences that many had when they had just established their lodges around QENP are no more.

Philipo Ormoriji from the Tanzanian Lion Illumination Project (TLIP) presented an innovative method of keeping lions away from the cattle kraals using solar powered flickering lights which have been successfully been used to around Ngorongoro Crater to prevent depredation (see <http://www.tanzlight.org/home.html> for details).

### **Proposals for action**

A number of suggestions to address the threats facing lions in QENP. Stakeholders called for an urgent solution that involves local communities, local leaders and government besides the lodge

owners, NGOs and researchers represented in this meeting. Other emerging proposals for consideration included the following:

- a) Government to consider banning or imposing stricter regulations of the use of carbofunans and other poisons meant for agricultural use and pest control
- b) Engage local communities in tourism activities for them to appreciate the benefits of conservation
- c) Encourage adoption better husbandry practices such as zero grazing and construction of lion-proof kraals
- d) Do research on increasing prey populations and variety
- e) Encourage use of proven lion proof technologies (e.g. lion lights) but strictly follow recommended methods of use
- f) Invest in community education and sensitisation (involving both local people and their leaders)
- g) Consider the pros and cons of compensation for livestock loss and design the best scheme

## **WAY FORWARD**

The following were proposed as action points going forward:

1. A smaller team to be formed to synthesize the issues, develop a priority list of interventions, draft an action plan and share with the rest before the next meeting in October. The members co-opted to this team were WCS, UCP, UWA and three representatives of the eco-lodge owners (i.e. Wild Frontiers and Enjojo lodge from the southern sector, and Volcanoes, and Kasenyi Safari Camp)
2. Conduct monthly meetings, initially to ground the ideas and maintain the momentum, and later get to meet on a quarterly basis
3. Bring other partners like Uganda Tourism Board, opinion leaders from Ishasha and Kasenyi, and community representatives on board
4. Next meeting to be held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2018 in the southern sector of QENP. The host was to be confirmed in due course but WCS offered to cater for the lunch and teas.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This meeting was made possible through the generous funding support of the Lion Recovery Fund through WCS. Our sincere appreciation to the fund. Thanks also go to Kasenyi Safari Lodge that offered space for the meeting.