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Last year gave us renewed hope, believing that South Africa’s commercial captive lion breeding and keeping industry could be phased out. This year built on that belief and 2022 solidly focussed on providing the government with more reasons to follow through on their promises. Our year-long #CancelCaptivity campaign focussed on welfare challenges associated with lions in captivity, busting the myths spread by the captive lion industry, and the legal live international trade in lions and other large felids.

The Youth For Lions campaign has come of age in the last few years and has taken on its own purpose and identity. The #CancelCaptivity theme was still the main focal point for Youth For Lions as well, but the campaign messages were delivered in a more youthful and interactive fashion.

The Youth Ambassadors programme with its recently implemented Tier System is very effective and four of the five Ambassadors have now reached the Silver level. Our longest standing supporter and Ambassador, Stephanie Klarmann, reached Gold level in June. Congratulations to you all and thank you for your steady belief in our cause.

Our scientific research continues to focus on closing knowledge gaps around the wider commercial lion industry and has led to the publication of four peer-reviewed papers in 2022, which is more than many academics publish in one year! We are immensely grateful to the various organisations for their contributions, expertise and support in making this level of research possible. In particular a huge thank you to the World Animal Protection International research unit – you guys are amazing.

The road ahead to enable a responsible and successful phase-out of this industry will be a long and bumpy one. However, the thought of having a South Africa without a commercial captive lion industry, and hopefully without other captive big cats, gives me the goosebumps just writing this down. This is what keeps us going on a daily basis.

Our profound gratitude goes to all our donors and in particular our longstanding donors - the Marchig Animal Welfare Trust and the World Animal Protection. Without your generous and continued support we would not be able to achieve any of the milestones featured in this annual report. A huge thank also to all our loyal supporters around the world.

Last but not least, our small but dedicated team of incredible people, you are one of a kind. Thank you does not start to express my appreciation for your passion, spirit, competency, and of course friendship.

Dr Louise de Waal  
Campaign Manager and Director
It is difficult to believe that we have yet another year under our belts, especially another year with such positive achievements for both Blood Lions and Youth For Lions.

With an intense focus on reporting our scientific research published throughout the year, Blood Lions has been able to play a vital role in the process to phase out the commercial captive lion breeding industry in South Africa.

We are pleased that our very own campaign manager, Louise, was offered a position on the newly formed Ministerial Task Team appointed to identify, implement and monitor potential voluntary exit options and pathways from the captive lion industry. The formation of this Task Team along with the legislative progress made by the draft White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable use of South Africa’s Biodiversity are most certainly positive steps in the right direction, and we are hopeful that this trajectory will continue into 2023.

Looking back on these accomplishments of 2022 (and the many others over the last few years) brings feelings of pride, but also of nostalgia. Change inevitably comes with every new year and this year, change has sadly taken the form of me leaving Blood Lions as campaign coordinator.

These last four years with Blood Lions and Youth For Lions have been nothing short of inspirational, educational, impactful and (at times) emotional. Thank you to my incredible team and our amazing partners for allowing me to grow within this organisation. I am extremely proud to have been part of such a fantastic team working for such a wonderful cause. Blood Lions holds such a powerful space in my heart and I will always be a part of this movement to ensure the safety and survival of our lions in the wild, where they belong.

Cath Jakins
Youth For Lions Coordinator
Policy reform and lobbying remains one of Blood Lions main objectives to achieve lasting legislative change within South Africa’s commercial captive predator breeding and keeping industry.

In 2022, we continued to support Minister Creecy of the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) in her promises to close the captive lion industry following her announcement on the 2nd May 2021. However, the wheels of government are slow and thus a fine balance between support and pressure has been our approach to enable the government to fulfil their intentions of adopting the High Level Panel (HLP) majority recommendations for African lion.

Our stakeholder engagements have focused mostly on DFFE, the Minister of DFFE, and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), as well as on strengthening our relationships with like-minded NGOs to facilitate a united lobbying voice from the animal welfare and conservation sector.
For strategic reasons, the Minister of DFFE published the **White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa’s Biodiversity** before finalising the draft Policy Position on the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of elephant, lion, leopard and rhinoceros. The White Paper was approved by the Ministers and Members of Executive Councils Meeting (MINMEC) in early 2022 and was gazetted for the first round of public participation on the 8th July, followed by a second draft which was released for public comment on the 28th October 2022.

Although highly ambitious, the first draft was an overall progressive, aspirational and holistic document enabling the protection of South Africa’s rich biodiversity heritage. Not only did it recognise the intrinsic and existence value of wildlife and biodiversity, it also acknowledged the importance of well-being of individual animals and proposed the adoption of One Health - One Welfare approach. Although in the revised draft, the principle of “people first” had been substantially reduced, it was replaced by a stronger focus on sustainable utilisation and thus remained strongly anthropocentric. We were extremely concerned to notice that two key definitions and tenets, the intrinsic and existence values of the environment and its components, were effectively removed and animal well-being and sentience had taken a substantial step backwards with no mention of One Health - One Welfare.

Blood Lions submitted extensive comments to DFFE on both versions of the draft White Paper highlighting both the positive aspects as well as our concerns that were clearly explained in conjunction with suggested solutions.
On 18 July 2022, shortly after the first draft White Paper was gazetted, the draft Game Meat Strategy was also gazetted for public comment. While the draft White Paper was overall welcomed by professionals in various conservation and welfare sectors, the Game Meat Strategy came as a complete shock.

The Game Meat Strategy vision is purely to intensify, commercialise, formalise and transform the game meat industry in South Africa without giving due consideration to the progressive draft White Paper principles.

Blood Lions put together a submission on the draft Game Meat Strategy highlighting the documents many shortcomings and voicing our grave concerns.
Following her announcement in May 2021, Minister Creecy alluded to the formation of a **Ministerial Task Team** (MTT) to identify, implement and monitor potential voluntary exit options and pathways from the captive lion industry. A call for nominations to this Ministerial Task Team was released on 12th August and Blood Lions submitted nominations for a number of respected professionals in the fields of conservation, research and animal welfare.

Louise was nominated to be a part of this panel by multiple organisations and on the 23rd November 2022 she received an invitation to serve as a member on the MTT. The Task Team consists of eight members including the chairperson (Mr Kamalasen Chetty), Ms Pricilla Stiglingh (NSPCA), Dr Peter Caldwell (specialist wildlife vet), Dr Kelly Marnewick (Tshwane University), Mr Obeid Katumba (EWT), Ms Carla van der Vyver (ex-SAPA), and Adv Justice Mnisi (labour lawyer).

The main objective of the MTT is to identify and recommend voluntary exit options and pathways for the captive lion industry. The work commenced in December 2022 and will need to be completed by June 2023.

The establishment of a **Wildlife Welfare Forum** was instigated by the Minister and DFFE and the first couple of virtual meetings were attended by Blood Lions. Unfortunately, little consensus was reached around the Terms of Reference and the Code of Conduct between DFFE and the attending organisations. Subsequently, Louise took the initiative to mobilise some of the attending welfare organisations to discuss the two documents and submit collective comments to DFFE on behalf of 18 NGOs.

However, the Minister decided to postpone the establishment of this Wildlife Welfare Forum until 2023.

DALRRD is developing a **new Animal Welfare Bill** to replace the existing Animals Protection Act. As the mandate for the welfare and well-being of captive wild animals straddles DFFE and DALRRD, a joint Portfolio Committee meeting was held in February, to update the members of the PCFFE on progress on this bill. The drafting of the bill has so far been a DALRRD internal process without external involvement. However, we believe that DFFE and DARLLD have now signed a MOU to start engagement on its overlapping mandate.

The new Animal Welfare Bill is believed to be presented to parliament sometime during the 2023-24 financial year.
Raising awareness and educating the public on issues relating to South Africa’s commercial captive predator industry remains a priority objective for both the Blood Lions and Youth For Lions campaigns.

During 2022, our public facing campaigns focused predominantly around the concept of #CancelCaptivity in line with the promises Minister Creecy made in May 2021. We launched a welfare campaign on the back of the publication of a peer-reviewed paper looking at welfare concerns associated with captive lions, a campaign highlighting the significance of the live international trade of predators, and we celebrated the launch of WildChoices.org, a platform giving visitors guidance on captive wildlife facilities in South Africa, by implementing the SATSA guidelines and decision-making tool that were launched in 2019.

Much of this work has been made possible through the generous support of the Marchig Animal Welfare Trust and the World Animal Protection, for which we are extremely grateful.
In a joint scientific study, Blood Lions and World Animal Protection identified a major research gap that exposed the lack of welfare studies focusing on captive lions housed on commercial farms in South Africa. The welfare challenges identified in our research were all associated with captive lions in facilities such as zoos, wildlife parks and sanctuaries across the globe.

Our researchers reviewed more than 90 peer-reviewed scientific papers and identified over 170 physical and psychological conditions associated with captive lions. With between 8,000-10,000 lions in captivity in South Africa and in the absence of national welfare norms and standards as well as scientific welfare studies on the industry, we are completely in the dark in terms of the extent of some of the welfare issues we are dealing with.

We unpacked our research findings in a very successful #CancelCaptivity welfare campaign highlighting the welfare challenges faced by lions and other big cats in captivity and the implications for the commercial lion industry in South Africa.

Youth For Lions designed an equally strong, but more age-appropriate welfare campaign.
When it comes to discussing income generating spin-off activities from the commercial captive lion industry in South Africa, the focus is generally on cub petting, voluntourism, canned hunting and the lion bone trade.

The global live wildlife trade is often overlooked, even though large numbers of wild animals, including big cats, are legally exported on a daily basis from South Africa under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) system.

This campaign interrogated the live export of indigenous felid species (lions, leopards, cheetahs, caracals and servals) as well as exotic big cat species (tigers, jaguars and pumas), bred prolifically in South Africa’s commercial captive wildlife industry to supply international demand. There is currently little legislation protecting the captive breeding and keeping of exotic big cats adding a layer of complexity to the already unregulated nature of the commercial captive lion industry.

Between 2010 and 2020, South Africa exported under CITES a total of 4,888 live indigenous felids and 457 exotic big cats. The vast majority (91.1%) were bought by zoos, commercial ventures and captive breeding facilities by countries like China, Thailand, Pakistan and Vietnam. This means that many of South Africa’s captive-bred felids go from commercial breeding farms without much consideration for their welfare and well-being into even more miserable captive conditions in Southeast Asia.
We honoured World Lion Day on the 10th August by going back to basics and highlighting the cub petting stage in the exploitative cycle of captive predators. This is where thousands of unsuspecting tourists and volunteers are made to believe that their money paid to play with, bottle feed and hand-raise cubs will contribute to the conservation of wild lions and that the cubs they interact with will be returned to the wild.

What would our children say if they knew the truth?

The video we created emphasised the innocence of children, unknowingly contributing to this industry through cub petting activities. The production was more conceptual and very different to what we have done in the past, but turned out to be very successful. The video has been viewed over 56,000 times on Facebook, had 4,000+ views on Instagram and 700+ times on YouTube, as well as over 2,000 reactions, comments and shares on both Blood Lions and Youth For Lions platforms.
WildChoices recently launched an independent website to assist the tourism industry and visitors alike to make more informed and ethical choices about captive wildlife tourism facilities in South Africa. The WildChoices team applied the SATSA Captive Wildlife Attractions & Activities Guidelines and Decision-Making Tool to assess 220+ captive wildlife tourism facilities in South Africa, based on publicly available information. The assessment results fall into three categories: Support, Support with Caution and Avoid.

This social media campaign unpacked the WildChoices assessment results, unpacking both the national and provincial statistics.

As part of our #CancelCaptivity campaign, we launched a Myth Busting mini-campaign on both the Blood Lions and Youth For Lions platforms to draw attention to the misinformation or ‘Myths’ spread by the captive lion industry. We picked eight myths based on the many questions we receive from the public and debunked them using scientific evidence and knowledge on lion conservation. This mini-campaign turned out to be popular by our followers, receiving nearly 10,000 reactions, comments and shares.
It was our intention for 2022 to give the Youth For Lions campaign its own unique personality with more youth-specific content that has a different look-and-feel from the Blood Lions campaigns.

Although the overall theme this year for both Blood Lions and Youth For Lions was #CancelCaptivity, we gave the Youth #CancelCaptivity campaign a fresh aesthetic with brighter graphics and different calls to action for our younger followers. To make the campaign more interesting for young people, we used visual aids (graphics and videos) to unpack the research and related it to the industries that the youth are most likely to contribute to, namely captive wildlife tourist attractions and interactions like cub petting.

Interactive Tourism Campaign
As the primary educational focus of the Youth For Lions campaign, we spent some time this year exploring the interactive tourism and voluntourism industries in South Africa. The main aim was to educate our followers about how interactive tourism and unethical, hands-on volunteering opportunities contribute to the exploitation of wildlife in captivity.

Our Interactive Tourism campaign asked the public to look inward and ask themselves WHY they feel the need to interact with wild animals in captivity. We explored the reasons why people would feel this need, and debunked theories about the educational value of the industry, which is often used an excuse by wildlife owners and tourists alike to justify these interactive activities.

This campaign flowed quite organically into a short campaign on Voluntourism in South Africa, highlighting the differences between ethical and unethical volunteering opportunities on offer. The team conducted some desktop research which looked at key online search terms and interviewed volunteers at ethical volunteering projects, such as true sanctuaries and endangered wild species monitors. The volunteers were asked to share their experiences and the processes they went through to ensure the facilities and/or organisations they chose to support were ethical to help prospective volunteers make the right decisions.
**Presentations**

**WTM Africa 2022**
For the first time since the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, Blood Lions attended WTM Africa in Cape Town in April 2022, to engage with the tourism industry and encouraging tour operators to sign the Born to Live Wild pledge. We were also given the opportunity to hold a screening and make a presentation on “The Commercial Captive Lion Breeding Industry in South Africa – What you should know”, covering the industry in the past, present and future and motivated.

**Blood Lions film in Japan**
One of our long-term supporters, Ms Emiko Tokai, helped to translate the Blood Lions film and add Japanese subtitles. Subsequently, she organised several virtual screenings of the Blood Lions film in Japan, reaching more than 130 people. We are extremely grateful to Emiko, as she has reached an audience that we wouldn’t have been able to reach through our own channels.

**Lion$, Bone$ & Bullet$**
In December 2022, we hosted a free in-person and virtual screenings of the newly released ‘Lions, Bones & Bullets’ documentary, in partnership with Panthera Africa and Humane Society International-Africa. The screening was followed by an informative in-person panel discussion that was live-streamed to Facebook. The discussion focused on updating the audience on progress made since Minister Creecy’s announcement in May 2021 in terms of phasing-out the captive lion industry in South Africa.

**Youth For Lions presentations**
Our Youth Ambassadors were also able to do more in-person presentations this year and together with Cath, our Youth For Lions Coordinator, seven presentations were carried out across the country reaching 212 learners and students. Youth For Lions further hosted two Instagram Live sessions and these more informal discussions reached another approximately 280 people across the world.
Panel Discussion
Lion$, Bone$ & Bullet$

World Tourism Day
What would our children think?

World Lion Day
What would our children think?
Online & Print Media
ZAR 3,2 million Advertising Value Equivalent
53 million circulation
View our media in Redbook HERE

Video Clips
308,967 views

We reached 9.2 million* people globally in 2022
A 15% increase since 2021

Social Media Followers*
Facebook: 12% increase to 152,290
Instagram: 14% increase to 5,277
Twitter: 5% increase to 9,702

* Blood Lions & Youth For Lions followers combined
In 2022, scientific research into knowledge gaps relating to South Africa’s commercial captive lion industry again played a significant role in our work not only to underpin our campaigns, but also to lobby government. In collaboration with researchers from the World Animal Protection, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Oxford Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU) and Monitor Conservation Research Society, we published four peer-reviewed papers:


**Free State case study paper:** Heinrich S, Gomez L, Green J, de Waal L, Jakins C & D’Cruze N (2022) The extent and nature of the commercial captive lion industry in the Free State province, South Africa. *Nature Conservation 50*: 203-225. [https://doi.org/10.3897/natureconservation.50.85292](https://doi.org/10.3897/natureconservation.50.85292)
Blood Lions endeavours to spend the vast majority of its funding granted on the intended project objectives and activities, by keeping its overheads as low as possible.

For example, we don’t have dedicated office space and don’t pay Director’s fees. As such our core cost for admin and overheads is only around 10%.

A 2022 financial statement can be obtained upon request.

Contact info@bloodlions.org