

VOLCANOES



S A F A R I S

Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust Launches Lion and Carnivore Monitoring Project in the Queen Elizabeth Conservation Area



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Kampala, Uganda (14 August 2023): Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust (VSPT) is pleased to announce the launch of a lion and large carnivore monitoring project based at Kyambura Gorge Lodge in Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda. In partnership with the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), the project will establish an annual carnivore survey and create a shared research database. A key focus will be to keep a pulse on the population status of the country's iconic tree-climbing lions through the use of the latest spatially explicit capture-recapture methods. These findings will also provide an understanding of how lions are faring in the park over time, as well as insights into particular individuals, their space use, and sex ratios.

Evidence from 2018 and 2022 shows that lions in the park are currently under a state of stress with the population estimated to have declined from approximately 72 individuals to 39 lions in under 5 years (a near 50% decline). Scientific monitoring of African lion populations is a fundamental first step in tracking the responses of conservation initiatives and developing a benchmark for future efforts. UWA staff and young Ugandans will be trained in scientific monitoring techniques. The project will also focus on community conservation education and livelihood development activities in local communities.

“We fully support this critical work surveying threatened species. As VSPT celebrates 15 years of active conservation in the Albertine Rift, we know that collaboration is key. We’re fortunate to have incredible support from the Uganda Wildlife Authority which for decades has sustained conservation work in these challenging environments,” shares Kevin James, Trustee of Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust”.

Leading the project is Scientific Director, Dr Aleksander Braczkowski, while the field team is led by Bosco Atukwatse and Orin Cornille, two young scientists who have undertaken additional surveys with UWA in Murchison, Kidepo, and Toro Semliki. The 2023 survey will collect data on African lions, leopards, and spotted hyenas over a 3-month period using remote camera traps and a network of field teams searching for lions using a search encounter technique.

Dr Aleksander Braczkowski shares, “It is exciting to have a strong, science-based program for lion monitoring in Queen Elizabeth National Park which has the support of the Uganda Wildlife Authority. Our work focuses on educating the next generation of conservationists. We have over eight Uganda lion survey scouts gathering data. Our work is a tangible example of Uganda's science capacity building in action. The monitoring of large carnivores in Uganda is essential for future generations and there is no better way to do this than through a collaborative program led by Ugandan researchers, rangers, scientists, and students”.

The Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust (VSPT), which was established in 2009, is a non-profit organization that supports and funds long-term, self-sustaining projects that enrich the livelihoods of local communities, promote the conservation of the great apes, restore natural habitats, and work with communities and institutions to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Private donations, as well as a \$50 per person per night community fee for guests staying at any of Volcanoes Safaris’ five lodges, fund the various projects throughout Uganda and Rwanda.

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About Volcanoes Safaris:

Volcanoes Safaris is recognized as the leader in great ape ecotourism specializing in mountain gorilla and chimpanzee trekking in Rwanda and Uganda since 1997. With four boutique safari lodges and a fifth opening in early 2024, guests can enjoy all the highlights of Uganda and Rwanda in comfort and style while primate trekking through Africa. Guests can also experience and take part in the eco-tourism and conservation efforts designed around and with the local communities, developed by the Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust (VSPT).

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About Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust:

Volcanoes Safaris Partnership Trust (VSPT) is a non-profit organization in Uganda that connects Volcanoes Safaris lodges to the neighboring communities and conservation activities. VSPT receives funding through Volcanoes Safaris and their guests, as well as private donations. VSPT aims to enrich the livelihoods of local communities, promote the conservation of the great apes, restore natural habitats and

work with communities and stakeholders to reduce human-wildlife conflict. In partnership with Empowers Africa as a fiscal sponsor, contributions from US residents to VSPT are tax-deductible.

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