



LION
GUARDIANS



2019 IMPACT REPORT

A photograph of two women walking through a grassy savanna at sunset. The woman on the left is wearing a black long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, smiling and looking towards the other woman. The woman on the right is wearing a pink long-sleeved shirt and dark jeans, looking down with a somber expression. The background features a bright sun in the upper left corner and silhouettes of acacia trees on the horizon. A large, expressive orange brushstroke is painted across the upper right portion of the image, serving as a background for the title text.

Meibooroyu inkibelekennyat

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE

CHANGING CONTEXTS

Letter from the Founders

Change is one of the few constants on Earth, from the cyclical nature of the seasons to the powerful shifts brought on by human influence. It is easy for conservationists to be disheartened by this relentlessness, because it can make our work seem never-ending and our goals unattainable. But change can also spark revolutionary success. More than a decade ago, changing contexts inspired the formation of our organization and ushered in a new model for community-based conservation, which has since been adopted and adapted across Africa and elsewhere. The resulting paradigm shift has empowered communities and transformed the trajectory for lions in our ecosystem and beyond.

When we first began working in the Amboseli-Tsavo area, lions were scarce. On the rare occasions when we caught a glimpse of one, it took days or even weeks to get a photograph, since the lions crept through the landscape, fearing persecution. But today, lions bask in the sunlit Amboseli dust and cavort on roadsides. The lion population is booming, which is enabling lions to disperse into other areas, some of which have not seen these carnivores for almost an entire human generation.

But we find ourselves at a crossroads once again, because with success have come new challenges. More lions are now living alongside more people, and as a growing and emboldened population of predators comes into ever-closer contact with a growing human population, conflict is increasingly inevitable. Additionally, cultural, political, and climatic changes are further straining the delicate relationship between people and wildlife.

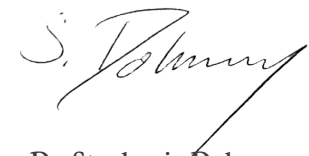
At times, the sheer force of these challenges and the lack of easy answers can seem daunting, but this is a familiar position for Lion Guardians. Over the years, our organization has morphed again and again as our landscape changed, as we saw ways to increase our impacts, and as we developed new methods to help more communities while saving more lions. We have learned to embrace change as an opportunity to transform our approach and the conservation space as a whole. Our track record in innovation, rigorous research agenda, tight-knit relationship with communities, and network of incredible collaborators give us the strong foundation and the experience we need to address the uncertainty we are facing alongside communities and wildlife.

We are committed to tackling these challenges head-on with the same passion, dedication, and vision that has guided our journey so far, and we continue to thank you for your integral role in helping us conserve lions and preserve cultures.

Ashe Olong,



Dr. Leela Hazzah
Executive Director



Dr. Stephanie Dolrenry
Director of Science



OUR APPROACH

At the heart of Lion Guardians' work is the development and implementation of conservation efforts that drive behavior change. Our multi-faceted approach includes working with local communities to actively participate in wildlife conservation, ideating and testing new conservation approaches through rigorous research, and scaling our impacts beyond lions, beyond Amboseli, and beyond Africa.



Lion Guardians Amboseli

This is the flagship component of Lion Guardians. It is where we work alongside communities and other stakeholders to blend traditional and modern knowledge, implement new approaches to conservation, and improve outcomes for communities and lions.



Science and Research

These are at the foundation of our conservation model. By investing in a rigorous research agenda, we develop and test innovative, evidence-based solutions to human-wildlife conflict, as well as inform carnivore and community conservation at the broadest scale.



Impact Scaling

This is how we share and adapt our model to amplify our efforts. We believe that our experience and lessons learned are among our biggest assets, and that sharing knowledge with others in the conservation sphere - and beyond - is critical to conserving species around the world.

Underpinning these program areas is the soul of the Lion Guardians organization: our team. We are deeply committed to developing the capabilities of our team members to ensure that not only is our organization strong and effective, but that each individual is able to reach their leadership and conservation potential.

The following pages detail the activities and outcomes in each of these areas that your support made possible in 2019.



LION GUARDIANS AMBOSELI

Building tolerance and improving livelihoods

Because the growth of the local lion population has led to more intense conflict, in 2019 we emphasized community work and proactive conflict prevention to build communities' tolerance of lions, trust in our organization, and interest in conservation. As a result of increased effort on the ground, Guardians located a record number of lost livestock and reinforced more bomas than in any previous year. We also continued to assist communities in diverse ways, from helping locate lost people to providing medical care for livestock injured by lions.

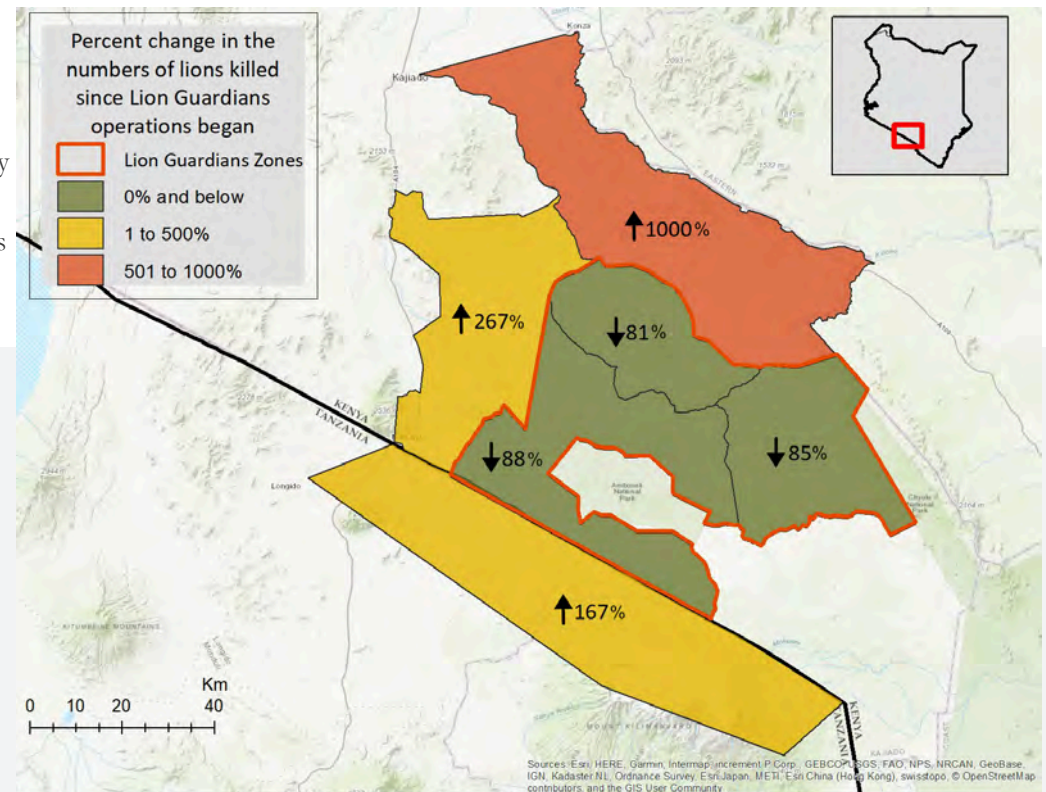
Alongside our partners in the ecosystem, in 2019 we began piloting the Problem Animal Control protocols, which outline the actions that should be taken in situations where wildlife is particularly difficult, destructive, or dangerous. Since instituting these protocols, which Lion Guardians helped develop, we have observed notable shifts

in communities' perceptions of stakeholders and their feelings toward conservation.

We have observed a quantifiable increase in community tolerance of lions in our area of operation since our work began more than a decade ago. In each of the three group ranches in our operating area, we have seen the number of lions killed by community members decrease by more than 80% compared to the number killed before Lion Guardians was founded.

“ Things are different now. Wildlife stakeholders are now here for us too, not just the wildlife. ”

- COMMUNITY MEMBER





29,408 lost livestock found
by Guardians, >93% of those
reported lost, over four times more
than in 2018



13 lost people found
by Guardians



\$4,656,650 in livestock
recovered by Guardians



1,040 bomas reinforced
by Guardians, a 328% increase
from 2018

Lost Child

A five-year-old girl - the first-born child of a young family - was lost, leaving her mother distraught and her father frantic. Our team responded and Guardian Kuyan led the search, since he is an excellent tracker with the best knowledge of the area. For two long, hot days, the search yielded no fruit, but then the team found the footprints of the young girl, right alongside the tracks of a group of lions. Many community members believed that the child must have been killed by the lions, but that possibility made it all the more important for us to continue the search. However, with sunset minutes away, we had to stop with no news to take home. It felt like the longest night ever.

On the third day, the sun was scorching. Guardian Kuyan led the search teams, and our vehicle patrolled and supplied water to keep the teams strong. For much of the day, there were no signs of hope, and the teams decided to re-strategize. Suddenly, in the midst of the meeting, Kuyan stood. In the distance, he had spotted something under a tree, and he ran toward it; it was the lost child! The mother couldn't believe her eyes, and the father

couldn't hide his joy. The community was so thankful that we had helped save a life that otherwise might have been lost.

A few days later, a pride of lions broke into a boma and killed three cows, which coincidentally belonged to the family of the lost child. Since taking three cows from a boma is a serious offense, the community gathered together to retaliate. But the cows' owner cooled them down, reminding them that Lion Guardians played a pivotal role in helping the community locate his child. His daughter, he said, was far more precious than the killed cows.

- Jackson Kikardi, Lion Guardians
Assistant Manager

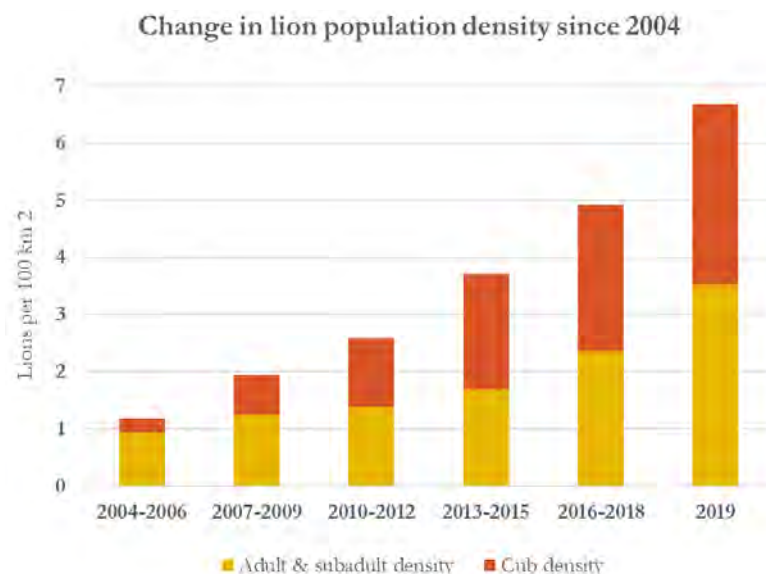




Conserving lions

Our intense efforts to monitor and conserve lions on the ground in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem continued in 2019. Guardians walked over 170,000 kilometers - the equivalent of nearly four and a half times around the world - as they monitored more than 250 lions.

We continue to see indicators that the local lion population is thriving. We estimated the lion density in 2019 to be more than six lions per 100 sq km, a small increase over 2018 and more than seven times higher than in 2004 before we launched Lion Guardians.



We have also seen the population stabilize after two high-conflict age categories (subadults and old adults) peaked in the past two years. In 2019, age classes were more balanced; however, since 29% of individuals were young cubs, conflict may rise again in 2021 when these youngsters become subadults.

In 2019, we saw a surge in conflict between people and lions due to changing ecological, political, and sociological contexts. Despite heroic efforts by Guardians and our conflict team, we lost nine lions at the hands of community members in areas where we operate; an additional 13 lions were lost beyond our borders. Although we never want to lose lions to conflict, we are comforted by the fact that our long-term success in reducing lion killing and building tolerance has helped build a resilient and viable lion population that can weather occasional losses.

To minimize future losses even as contexts change, we have expanded our efforts to mitigate and prevent conflict. We formalized and piloted an urgent response procedure that includes quick prioritization, all-night patrols, and mock hunts of lions where conflict is particularly intense. These approaches are having notable impacts, including forcing lions out of high-conflict areas and increasing communities' tolerance levels.



13 hunts stopped

8 of these in collaboration
with Big Life Foundation and
Kenya Wildlife Service



172,476 km walked by Guardians

a 40% increase from 2018



6.84 lions per 100 sq km

more than seven times higher
than when we first started
monitoring lions in 2004



252 lions monitored

a 10% increase from 2018

We Turned The Tide

At the end of the year, lions began killing livestock inside bomas (livestock corrals) below the Chyulu Hills almost every night. The tension was so high that our team wasn't sure that we should approach the community. But we needed to do something, so I took the initiative to go to the area and try to restore the peace.

Tracking lions and keeping them out of bomas became the order of my days and my nights. We formed a temporary team that remained vigilant around the clock for two weeks to ensure that the levels of conflict were brought down.

Our dedication turned the tide, as the lions stopped killing livestock. The warriors and elders could again sleep at night and enjoy peaceful moments with their families, and attitudes in the community changed from being angry to appreciative. Our team started getting invitations for tea and milk in local homes every day, and we were eventually given shukas (maasai blankets) as a token of appreciation. Today, the team continues to work hard in this area to make sure the tide stays turned.

- Jeremiah Purka, Lion Guardians Assistant Biologist





SCIENCE & RESEARCH

Our research agenda prioritizes understanding the issues facing carnivores and the people who live among them so that we can develop and implement novel solutions that are appropriate, effective, and sustainable.

Lost Livestock

“Lost” livestock left out in the bush is tightly linked to depredation and retaliation, and we have observed a worrying increase in the number of livestock lost locally. During 2019, we continued surveying community members and found that this increase is being fueled by declining herder skill and dedication.

To address these changes, we have begun working with communities to help reestablish some of the excellent herding practices ingrained in traditional Maasai husbandry.

Mock hunts

We have found that a “mock hunt” - a carefully-executed sequence that mimics a Maasai hunt but does not harm the lion - can deter problem lions from attacking livestock, and therefore protect both local livelihoods and lions’ lives. We have been gathering data on the outcomes of our mock hunts and are working toward understanding how to use mock hunts most effectively and how to scale and share this methodology.

We also continue to address larger-scale questions in order to establish more comprehensive and effective region-wide conservation strategies.

Lion Identification Network of Collaborators

After winning Microsoft’s AI for Earth Innovation grant, we developed new artificial intelligence-based tools for LINC, our collaborative, open-source lion identification platform. LINC has since grown in leaps and bounds with regard to the number of organizations on board, the number of lions in the system, and the platform’s capacity for identifying, monitoring, and tracking lions across vast distances.





**18 lost livestock
surveys conducted**
bringing the total to 119



25 mock hunts
performed by Guardians
and members
of the monitoring team



15 organizations
currently using
the LINC platform



465 lions'
information uploaded
onto the LINC platform



New Landmarks for LINC

After many emails and crackly video calls, it was the first time in four years that Justin Downs, LINC's technical director, came to Amboseli. I was nervous, since lion researchers and software developers speak very different languages and we had just a few days to translate our visions. With no time to spare and a lot of ground to cover, we scooped him up and began the long dusty journey to camp, diving straight into discussion about how we see LINC changing the world of lion conservation. The rest of his trip continued in a similar fashion, as we showed him the challenges on the ground and listened to his ideas on how we can achieve our combined visions.

In 2019 we also grew our LINC family exponentially by flying around the country for meetings and training sessions with organizations who have joined LINC, and by emailing with people excited about coming on board. We piloted our first citizen scientists drive, launched a successful social media fundraising campaign, and made exciting advances on the LINC software. And at the end of the year, we presented our progress to 120 international carnivore experts at the KWS Carnivore Conference. All in all, 2019 was a landmark year for LINC.

- Nadia de Souza, Lion Guardians Research Scientist



IMPACT SCALING

In 2019, we expanded the number and range of our knowledge sharing activities and developed new partnerships in order to broaden our impact.

We have been assisting the **South Rift Association of Land Owners** in planning a “corridor of tolerance” to enable lions to disperse from our now-source population in the Amboseli region to the Shompole area. This passageway will increase genetic viability for lions and provide critical habitat for a range of large animals.

In July, we held a learning exchange with team members from South America-based **Tompkins Conservation** and **Conservation Land Trust**. Through in-depth discussions and field visits, they learned about our approach to community-led conservation and shared best practices from their work navigating human-carnivore conflict in Chile and Argentina.

We helped the **Honeyguide Foundation** survey communities in the Wakame Wildlife Management Area to understand local experiences with and attitudes toward predators. Our recommendations of next steps, which include monitoring lion behavior and conflict, will pave the way for implementing appropriate conservation strategies in northern Tanzania.

We continue to be a key player in the **National Lion Survey**, which aims to better understand the Kenyan lion population and build evidence-based conservation strategies. We have trained survey teams in searching for elusive lions, participated in nationwide censusing efforts, and assisted in analyzing the data collected.



8 tactical engagements
with nearly 400 participants, increasing the reach and impacts of our efforts



6 knowledge sharing services
that built up the capabilities of more than 80 conservationists beyond Africa and beyond lions



6 ongoing national and international collaborations
where Lion Guardians has contributed key knowledge and experience

“Lion Guardians was the project with the strongest cultural component that we saw on our trip. I really respect this project and its incredible achievements, and we look forward to implementing these ideas in our efforts.”

-SEBASTIAN DI MARTINO, CONSERVATION LAND TRUST REWILDING COORDINATOR

Think Like a Lion


We spent several weeks in 2019 traveling throughout Tsavo East and West and the greater Laikipia ecosystem for the National Lion Survey. We were involved in training more than twenty participating teams in how to find secretive lions - this is one of the skill sets that truly sets us apart and which we are most proud of at Lion Guardians.

We believe in the art of listening to and reading the earth for signs of lion, building a mental map of every minute detail. We think like a lion and treat them like long lost friends by giving them the time to tell us their story. Essentially, with this approach, they “allow” us to find them. Combining Maasai ecological knowledge, expert spoor tracking, and a toolbox of technology - all delivered with a never-give-up attitude - gives Lion Guardians the results we are renowned for. To have the chance to share this finely honed art with other conservation teams - and continue to improve upon it ourselves - is always one of our most rewarding types of knowledge sharing.

Philip Briggs, Lion Guardians Lion Monitoring Manager







“ The community hugely appreciated our effort, and said we are an organization that keeps its word. They saw us moving around all the bomas and chasing the lions tirelessly till dawn, and made it clear that ‘if it was not for the respect they had for Lion Guardians’ then they would have gone to hunt on Monday morning. ”

- JOHN MERISHI, LION GUARDIANS OFFICE MANAGER

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

Since Lion Guardians' success in achieving our vision lies in the hands of our team, in 2019 we increased our investment in helping each individual reach their potential, with the goal of becoming a more effective and sustainable organization.

We promoted two more of our local Maasai team members - Jeremiah Purka and Maria Saruni - to our senior management team. Building a group that is diverse yet deeply grounded in Maasai culture and tradition allows Lion Guardians to execute its mission in a way that is compassionate, effective, and forward-looking. Additionally, we created and filled a new position called the "Head of Wellbeing." Our new hire, Carole Irungu, is helping senior personnel hone their leadership skills and prepare

for further roles within the organization. We also built the team's skills and confidence with numerous internal training sessions, including workshops on facilitation and communications.

During 2019, three senior management team members embarked on conservation-related Masters' programs: Salisha Chandra at the University of Cambridge, Luke Mamaai at the University of Kent, and Pauline Kamau at African Leadership University. Stephanie Dolrenry participated in the 2019 cohort of Homeward Bound, a year-long women's leadership program culminating in a three-week trip to Antarctica. Each of these endeavors is bringing new breadth, depth, and perspectives to our team.

Onwards And Upwards

I was the first Maasai woman to be employed by Lion Guardians almost 15 years ago. When I first got employed as a cook, I didn't know much about the job. I didn't know how to use a computer. I was so shy to speak English because I speak my Maasai language at home. And I had never been to a meeting with more than five people, let alone lead a meeting, because in Maasai culture, it is taboo for a woman to take the lead while men are present.

But since I joined Lion Guardians, things have been different. I have visited several camps and lodges to improve my cooking. I now use a computer for all sorts of things. I got an opportunity to fly to London to speak about Lion Guardians.

And I recently joined the Lion Guardians senior management team, which I never expected to be able to do. The first meeting I attended, I was so nervous and uncomfortable, I could not speak - it felt like my tongue was stuck. But now I can confidently raise my voice to share my ideas.

I am proud of what I can do, and it feels good to share my story and inspire other women to take on new roles and responsibilities. I love my job and enjoy supporting Lion Guardians, as it has supported me in changing my life and helping me become a new, modern Maasai woman.

- Maria Saruni, Lion Guardians Camp Manager





3 senior staff
currently undertaking Master's
degrees in conservation and business



3 trainings conducted
for building the leadership
skills of the Lion Guardians'
management team



**90% Kenyan-born staff
members**
on Lion Guardians' senior
management team



86% local Maasai
community members run the Lion
Guardians Amboseli program



1 certificate course
in leadership and management



FINANCIALS

As Lion Guardians looks toward the future, we are concentrating on increasing our long-term financial sustainability to help weather the many changes inherent to the environmental space. A few years ago, we established our impact scaling program to help generate profit and diversify our fundraising. Now, we are building an endowment that will serve as a permanent source of income and further bolster our financial position. We are piloting various ways to build this fund, such as an emphasis on legacy gifts, and we will continue to share our ideas in the coming months.

Here, we detail the revenue earmarked for Lion Guardians that has come through our fiscal sponsor, Lion Guardians U.S., as well as our expenditures broken down by program area. Please note that these financials reflect what it takes to run our field operations in Kenya.

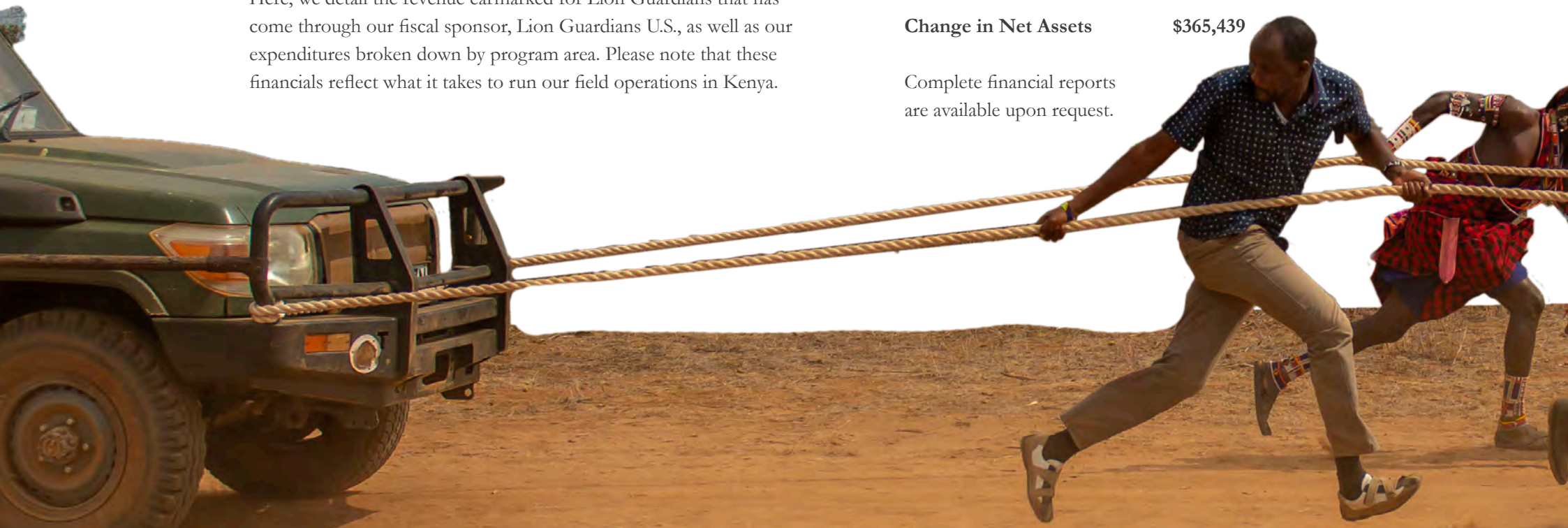
In addition, we incur costs for our fiscal sponsor, Lion Guardians U.S., which supports community-based conservation initiatives in Africa. In total, for both these entities, we need to raise over \$1,000,000 per year to operate effectively and sustainably.

Total Revenue	\$1,119,204
Restricted	\$565,612
Unrestricted	\$553,592

Total Expenditure	\$753,765
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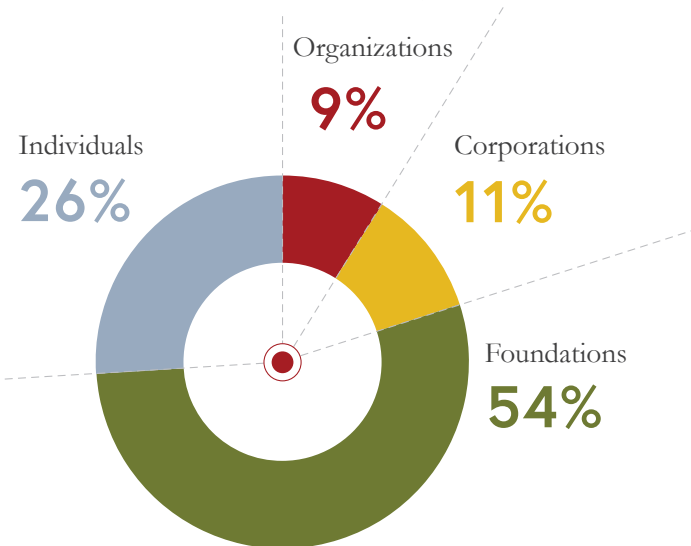
Change in Net Assets	\$365,439
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Complete financial reports are available upon request.



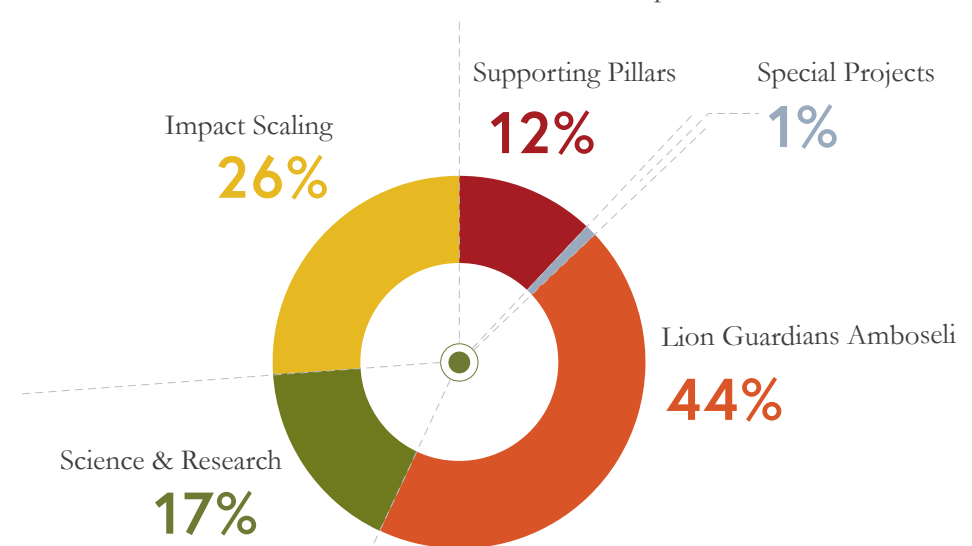
Revenue sources

Total Revenue: \$1,119,204



Expenditures by Program Area

Total Expenditures: \$753,765



LOOKING AHEAD

Lion Guardians achieved critical impacts in 2019, and we will continue to build on these successes. But we also came face-to-face with obstacles that will challenge us over the coming years, including increasing conflict brought on by a highly crowded landscape, a shifting land tenure system, complex political dynamics, an evolving culture, and a changing climate.

Yet rather than discouraging us, these challenges have emboldened us, because we now know that lions and humans can share the landscape even as their populations increase. As we seek out new ways to tackle increasing conflict head-on, we are further pushing the boundaries of innovation, both in our program areas and within our organization itself. Our vision for the future of Lion Guardians remains bold - we will continue to be a leading light in the field of carnivore conservation, paving the way for communities and wildlife to coexist across the globe - and we have ambitious plans to achieve that vision.

- Our primary focus will be conflict. Over the past several years, we have found a number of “balms” that have enabled lions and people to successfully cohabit our core area while the local lion population has boomed. But today, we are at a critical point and are committed to focusing with passion and intent on morphing, once again, to deliver new conservation solutions that are effective and sustainable in the face of changing local contexts.
- Since collaboration and partnership are key to conservation success, we plan to build on our engagement in large-scale efforts where our unique knowledge and experience is integral, such as the PRIDE Lion Conservation Alliance and the proposed national Problem Animal Control policy.
- We are transitioning Guardians and monitoring team members to digital data collection, which will require innovative solutions because of the unique cultural and logistical circumstances where we work. This effort will save time and increase data integrity, as well as create a data-collecting tool that could be useful elsewhere under similarly challenging field situations.
- Because we know that women are an integral but often ignored part of conservation solutions, we are increasing our commitment to equip and recruit more women for conservation leadership. By partnering with Women for the Environment (WE Africa), a continent-wide initiative supported by Margaret Kenyatta and other leaders, we are investing in the future of women and the future of our planet.





Eerr enkiti naiguane esapuk

A SMALL YET WELL-EQUIPPED AND KNOWLEDGEABLE TEAM
CAN OVERCOME THE GREATEST OF CHALLENGES



Generosity and Gratitude

For many years, we have held the Lion Guardians Games, where Guardians join together to compete in various events. In 2019, we decided to hold a celebration that specifically emphasized togetherness and teamwork, and we called it Naboishu, meaning “unity of purpose.”

During the first annual Naboishu, the Guardians and our close allies, the Ilchokuti from Tanzania, came together in Amboseli and engaged in team-building events like tug-of-war, a blindfolded obstacle course, and a hula hoop race. The winners were given an opportunity of a lifetime: a helicopter flight courtesy of our partners at Kenya Wildlife Trust. And it was here that Guardian Olubi Lairumbe displayed the kind of teamwork that we are so proud of. Olubi, who was on the winning team, gave his only chance to fly to another Guardian. Everyone present felt enormous gratitude, and it was a moment that we will all remember.

At Lion Guardians, we celebrate each and every generous act, from the donation of a helicopter ride to a selfless decision by a Guardian, because they impact us all for the better.

- Eric Ole Kesoi, Lion Guardians Community Manager



THANK YOU!

It takes a community to conserve lions and preserve cultures, because this work truly is a monumental task that no individual or organization could do alone. We are deeply grateful to the dedicated Guardians that work tirelessly day in and day out, to the communities that embrace lions as assets, to our many collaborators and partners that rise to the daily challenges of conservation, and to our generous and passionate supporters, who enable all our work.



THE BROMLEY CHARITABLE TRUST

GANESH RAMANI

THE BLUE FOUNDATION

AI FOR EARTH GRANT

PRISCILLA BOSWORTH

CARLA AND DAVID CRANE FOUNDATION

ROSENTHAL FAMILY FOUNDATION

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