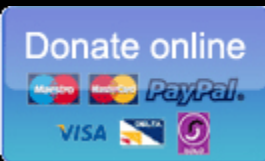




March 2011



## *Panthera leo*; a global cultural icon

This image is taken from the banks of Lake Starnberg in southern Germany (credit C. Eder)



find your pride @ [www.lionalert.org](http://www.lionalert.org)



## ***Lion Country Series 2 – don't miss episodes 5 & 6; 15<sup>th</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> March 8pm - ITV1 & ITV1 HD...***

**Don't forget to tune in for the series finales, here's a sneak preview of what to look out for!**

Episode 5 – 15<sup>th</sup> March: Take your front row seats for the Ngamo pride release as the seven females settle into their new semi-wild environment and learn to live alongside pride male, Milo.

Not to be overshadowed, the stage one lions at Antelope Park get in on the action with the young 3C litter going on their first exploration outside of the enclosure. Meanwhile, Kutanga from the 3K walking group puts all the hunting skills she's learnt on her daily walks to devastating use!

Episode 6 – 22<sup>nd</sup> March: We check in with the Ngamo pride as Kwali and Phyre team up on a herd of zebra, and Athena struggles to keep pace with the pride.

One final stop at the Livingstone project we catch up with the 3Rs as they bear down on an unsuspecting troop of baboon, while Bemba and Bisa take a dip in the Zambezi River. At the Dambwa site we see how the pride have settled into their new home; and join Zulu, Rundi, Rusha, Temi and Tswana for an early morning encounter – but who will catch breakfast for the group?

## **Stage one news:**

### **Thulani, Tsavo & Tanaka:**



The 3Ts of Tsavo, Thulani and Tanaka continue to do well in the Night Encounter program at Antelope Park. With Tanaka making her first kill at the end of December she and brother Tsavo each caught a wildebeest on the 6<sup>th</sup> February.

### **Paka:**



Five-year old Paka gave birth to two healthy cubs on the 24<sup>th</sup> February at Antelope Park's breeding program.

Mother and cubs are doing well, and Paka is showing herself to be an attentive mother. The cubs will remain with her until three-weeks old.

## Nyika's anatomy...

How's this for an internship placement? Emma Townson, an Animal Management intern at the Livingstone project, was asked by wildlife vets Drs Ian and Nolleen Parsons to assist on emergency surgery on one of the program's breeding lions, five-year old Nyika.

A piece of bone had ruptured Nyika's intestine causing life threatening injuries. A make-shift operating theatre was set up in the enclosure early morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> March, while Nyika's companion, Subi, looked on with no small amount of concern for what was going on from their management enclosure. After being darted with a sedative by Dr Ian Parsons, Nyika was moved to the operating table and the surgery team scrubbed up.



Emma moves Nyika's tongue to ensure her breathing is not obstructed while sedated

The operation took a little over two hours with Dr Nolleen Parsons leading the procedure, repairing several tears to the gut and of course removing the source of the problem. Dr Ian Parsons and Emma assisted.



After the operation was completed, Emma said: **"It's the kind of operation I've assisted on many times during my career as a veterinary nurse, but of course on domestic animals, like dogs and cats. While the principles are still the same, there were a couple of occasions during the operation when I looked up and almost did a double take that this was an adult African lion on the operating table in front of me."**

Emma remained with Nyika for the rest of the day to closely monitor her post-op recovery.

The next morning Emma was back to check up on Nyika's progress overnight and to provide medication in mincemeat, which will help lessen the strain on her wounds and developing scar tissue. Nyika will remain on a carefully controlled diet for the foreseeable future while she continues to heal.

But that morning, Nyika was up and walking around, and took her medication like a good patient. She even tried to greet Subi through the fence line.

It's still a long road to full recovery for Nyika, but all the early signs are tentatively encouraging.

Thankfully, such occurrences are rare. So while you may not find yourself assisting in surgery on an African lion, our intern program can offer many unique and challenging experiences.

If you are interested in applying for a placement in any of the areas listed at the bottom of this page, please send your CV and a covering letter to [intern@lionalert.org](mailto:intern@lionalert.org) Or download a copy of the information brochure [here](#).

**project management animal management community work**  
**fundraising marketing research hospitality teaching**  
**medical construction chef & kitchen accountancy**

## (New) Life in the Pride...

**After months of torrential downpours, roads turning to sludge** and many hours spent stuck in the mud, the rains are easing up; and the Ngamo release site is becoming increasingly accessible. Of course, the main priority at the start of February was to determine the presence of cubs whilst still giving any nursing mothers the peace they need during these early days.

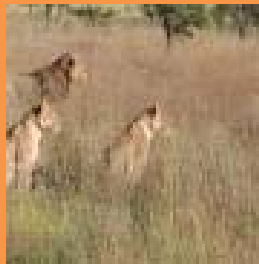
The morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> February found Milo and Ashanti together. Having mated previously over September and December, reports earlier that morning suggested Ashanti may have come back into oestrus as she was witnessed displaying to Milo; so they were the first port of call.

Long hours passed, but neither of them seemed interested in anything other than sleeping, and so it was on to find the rest of the pride.



Telemetry indicated Phyre and Kenge were near Leopard Tree; an area from which the strongest signals for Athena had come from prior to the 31<sup>st</sup> January when she made a rare appearance. After failing to locate the rest of the pride, the team headed back to Milo and Ashanti's last known location, but came across Ashanti heading along the road alone. She began to gently call, presumably to the other females, having had enough of Milo's company.

## Where is your pride?



Please help us to fund the Ngamo pride, so that we can continue to bring you these updates. Find out how by clicking [here](#)

The 4<sup>th</sup> got off to an eventful start; a small herd of impala was seen when entering Ngamo followed by a brief visual of Nala trotting intently into cover - was the hunt on? Phyre and Narnia appeared from a thicket shortly after in a playful mood, leaping and bounding upon one another before also disappearing from sight. Signals indicated the rest of the girls (except the elusive Athena) were also close by. But a thorough search of the area yielded no further sightings; perhaps Milo would prove more compliant.

The grass has soaked up every drop of rain these last few weeks creating a tall, golden sea across the release site... which, while pleasant on the eye, doesn't help when trying to find lions. Driving back and forth trying to see Milo, the black fur of his mane finally gave his exact location away. Judging by the amount of flattened grass, he had been enjoying a long siesta, and just as the team was about to let him get back to this most noble of activities, he scrambled 10ft up a tree! With the sun beginning to set Milo posed for some fantastic photos - yet his descent was not such an awe-inspiring scene. Growling with frustration while trying to get his balance, he finally threw himself to the ground. Obviously embarrassed by the whole incident, Milo re-asserted his prowess by scent marking every available bush before walking away with his deflated ego.



On the 6th the grass continued to hamper lion-spotting efforts. Full signals from the telemetry set indicated the females to be inches away from the vehicle, but three sets of eyes and two pairs of binoculars just could not pick them out. Patience was rewarded though when, in the midday sun, Phyre and Kwali emerged. Both were seen acting somewhat suspiciously around a bush, sniffing intently. Once they had moved off the source of their interest was found; a well-chewed but discarded ex tortoise.

It appears Athena is something of a night owl as the weekly after-dark session produced the first sighting of her for days socializing with the gang. A glimpse of her stomach showed elongated teats and browning fur; typical of a mother suckling cubs - things were looking promising!

Next morning, the females were basking in the first rays of the rising sun, Athena still amongst them.

Not much movement occurred throughout the day except to investigate a nearby fleeing duiker.



*Above: Milo tells Kenge to take a hike*

When mating, the courting couple will often distance themselves from the pride, or the rest of the pride will grant the pair some privacy! And Milo was straight on the case sending the other females on their way - growling and chasing everyone who dared approach Phyre!

Mating continued on the 9th and the team decided to leave the lovers to it and catch up with everyone else. But once again efforts were confounded by the towering grass. After waiting for any indication of a feline anywhere in the vicinity, Kenge appeared and marched intently along the road. Reversing quickly out of her way, the team slowly followed her from a distance after she had passed the vehicle to see where she was heading. Kenge and Milo mated in early November, and therefore she was due to cub-down very soon – was this Kenge’s move to leave the pride? She plodded slowly along the boundary until some impala drew her attention near waterhole three. As she darted downwind and out of sight, we watched expectantly to see if the game would head towards the woodland, too - but unfortunately they began to approach the road to graze in the safer open area. After some time Kenge reappeared and also headed towards the road. She soon spotted the herd, but with such a seemingly heavy stomach she didn’t seem inclined to give them anymore of her time or effort.

With Athena’s continued absences, the research team was confident that she was nursing; and on the 21<sup>st</sup> February confirmation was finally received. With the previous days’ difficulty to spot pride members in the tall grass in the Serengeti area of the site, the team took a direct approach and headed off-road to find them.



*Right: the pride welcome  
Athena back*

Given the amount of time Phyre had been spending with the pride lately, it was looking more and more likely that she had lost her cubs; although there was no way to be entirely sure, but the 8<sup>th</sup> offered even more evidence that this was the case.

Six members of the pride were utilising the shade in a large thicket - Athena and Kwali being the absentees. Then suddenly Phyre and Milo began to display and court one another - and eventually mated. Often when a female loses her cubs she will shortly come back into oestrous and mate again. We can therefore be almost certain Phyre has no cubs at present, but the mating that followed over the next two days could mean a new litter in three to four months’ time.



One of Kenge, and Ngamo's, new cubs

Following a signal for Athena, Kwali and Phyre along Route 66, the search came to a halt when the trio's signal lead the team to a thicket some 20 metres into the tall grass. With binos at the ready all eyes were on the thicket until finally two golden ears were spotted. Preparing to settle in and record the data for what they thought would be a lazy social session, the team were about to get a big surprise. Athena was not her usual placid self and turned to face the vehicle, crouching with teeth bared. It then became very apparent why she was so aggressive; a small, chubby bundle of golden fur was seen clambering upon her hindquarters - Ngamo's first cub!

Athena has made it clear that our presence is not wanted at this time; caring for her first ever cub and introducing it to her pride members is stressful enough without a vehicle invading her privacy, so we will all have to wait for the first photos of Athena's young charge.

Radio collar signals on the 22<sup>nd</sup> indicated Athena, Phyre and Kwali were all still located within the thicket. We suspect that perhaps Athena has begun to allow her pride members to meet her new little one. If our due dates were correct, the cub could be as old as five weeks, around the age when a mother will bring her cubs back to the pride for the first time.

As the session progressed though, Phyre and Kwali joined the other pride members and Athena moved off some 400m to another thicket along Route 66.

By the 24<sup>th</sup> Athena had moved again, presumably with her cub(s), nearer to Waterhole Two and took up residence in another thicket. Kenge, who had not been seen for several days was assumed to have denned too.

As for Phyre, well she was still busy with Milo on the 23<sup>rd</sup> as their mating continued.

The 25<sup>th</sup> started off calmly enough with Kenge and Athena still holed up out of sight while the rest of the pride relaxed close by. During the mid-morning session, signals for the two absentees were still coming from Waterhole One, but so too were signals for all other pride members.

Inching closer to the social gathering the team was greeted by the sight of a small cub scrambling around in the tall grass about half a metre from Kenge. A few moments later and the soft calling of a second cub was heard and Kenge repositioned herself to groom her cubs and allow them to suckle.

The rest of the pride were all close by; Milo himself was just three metres from the latest additions to his family; although was too preoccupied with his daily rest regime to be that bothered. But Kenge appeared very content to nurse with the rest of the pride scattered around her.

After all the excitement of the last few days, things started to calm down; with Athena and Kenge remaining mostly hidden from view – although Kenge was slightly higher profile – and Milo continuing to mate with Phyre. But things never stay quiet for long.

New mum Athena had shown herself to be fiercely protective of her cub, but she gave some cause for concern on the 27<sup>th</sup> and for the next few days. Leaving her den site for several days and becoming increasingly restless, worries started to creep in that perhaps all wasn't well with her own cub.



Thankfully, by the start of March all seemed to be well with Athena returning to her own den site on a more regular occurrence.

Having spent a couple of dedicated weeks with her cubs, Kenge decided on the 4<sup>th</sup> that this new mother needed a bit of pampering. That morning she was found with the other females in Etosha getting a good grooming from old pal, Phyre. A quick check over showed her to be in top condition, but her days of rest with the cubs had clearly left her with some stored up energy and before too long she led her pride to the Amboseli area of the site. Athena's signal throughout the day suggested she was still at Waterhole Two; her den site.

After a lazy few days for the pride the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> March started off with a bang.

Kenge's signal suggested she was nursing, whilst Athena once more appeared to be mobile. Heading to Serengeti East the telemetry picked up more signals in this area; Phyre suddenly burst out from the tall grass with the rest of the pride hot on her tail. The reason for this pursuit was immediately evident as Phyre had a male steenbok clamped firmly between her jaws. Phyre is not known for her hunting prowess so whether she caught or stole it remains to be seen. But either way, she used her size and aggressive nature to hold on to her breakfast; whilst the rest of the pride – even Milo – salivated from a respectful distance.

If Phyre isn't known for her hunting abilities, lions in general aren't known for their table manners and Ashanti was the first to get bored of watching Phyre stuffing her face and lunged; managing to rip away half of the kill for herself. What one gets, others soon want and seeing their chance Nala and Narnia then managed to grab a scrap or two from the melee, with Narnia rather macabrely strolling away with the scalp and horns! But steenbok isn't exactly a meal fit for a king being a small antelope, and before long the entire carcass was gone.

With Athena and Kenge's cubs joining their pride, it would seem these new additions have helped the rest of the pride channel their inner cubs, as on the 5<sup>th</sup> they went, for want of a better word, bonkers.

Ashanti started off the infectious shenanigans by attempting to climb a tree, falling and sprinting to a nearby termite mound. She waited in ambush for her pride mates to pass before launching after Nala at a full sprint; Phyre then tested her climbing skills but soon grew bored and clambered down before Nala ascended.

All the commotion eventually drew Athena from her den and she arrived just as playtime ended and settled amongst the other lionesses for a power catnap. Her current behaviour of leaving her den during the day, but returning towards dusk seems to indicate her cub is developing well and needs feeding less frequently. With Kenge's cubs being just a few weeks younger than Athena's, we expect that Kenge too will soon fall into this routine too.

After a few hours' rest, the pride headed towards the Valley area of Ngamo, while Athena went to a nearby gully to quench her thirst before settling down to continue sleeping. Kenge was unseen throughout the day, but once more her signal was picked up close to Waterhole Two suggesting she'd drawn babysitting duty for the day.

## Former Antelope Park and Livingstone lion volunteer Peter

Flawn has sponsored the drilling of a borehole at Mkoba 4 Primary School. The school has been a part of Antelope Park's volunteer teaching project the last year and a number of infrastructure targets were identified at the outset of the project, including:

- Borehole drilling, so that the school can plot and maintain vegetable gardens, generating funds for other school projects
- Furniture repairs
- Sourcing adequate stationary stocks for classes
- Window pane replacement
- Interior classroom painting
- Security fence construction and repairs
- Sports equipment and uniforms.

With the borehole being sponsored by Peter, community volunteers have turned their attentions to reviving the schools vegetable plots and restoring the school's early development centre bringing early education to those under school age.

Volunteers have also been working on the outreach project at Somabhula Primary assisting in repainting classrooms and gardening.

Gweru's medical program at Mkoba Poly Clinic has also been making big strides towards achieving some of the program's initial aims. Volunteer project fees have enabled the program to purchase new mattresses for clinic's wards and new tiles have been ordered.

Meanwhile, the volunteers' efforts lately have drastically improved the functionality of the clinic with assistance to:

- Fix faulty plumbing in the clinic
- Replacing broken window panes
- Fitting locks to supply rooms
- Installing new sinks on wards
- Re-painted 90% of the clinic
- Maintenance of the clinic's garden.

If you'd like to get involved continuing this vital work and volunteer on either the teaching or medical assistance programs at Antelope Park visit our volunteer page [here](#):

## We've made some changes to our Sponsor a Lion program.

**Option one:** You can sponsor the lions within stage one of the program. This includes the adult lions at the breeding program and the cubs up to two and a half years old that are undertaking daily walks, as well as day and night encounters. You'll receive access to a monthly online blog packed with all the information from the stage one lions at Antelope Park, Victoria Falls and Livingstone. The blog is updated regularly with all the latest news and photos from across stage one.

**Option two:** You can sponsor any of the lions released into stage two of the program; from the Ngamo pride in Zimbabwe, and soon Zambia's Dambwa pride. You'll also receive access to an online blog of your sponsored lion or lions, containing a full biography, photos and regular updates of their progress through stage two.

The funds raised from sponsorships will greatly assist us in achieving the following:

- Sourcing and securing release areas for future stages two, three and four;
- Expanding and maintaining current release areas.
- Stocking release sites with appropriate prey species
- Disease testing and vaccinations
- Radio tracking equipment and other post-release monitoring tools.

No. of lions	Example	Monthly	Quarterly	Bi-annual	Annual
N/A	Stage one sponsorship	£5.00	£15.00	£30.00	£60.00
1	Milo	£10.00	£30.00	£60.00	£120.00
2	Athena & Kenge	£15.00	£45.00	£90.00	£180.00
3	Phyre, Nala & Narnia	£17.50	£52.50	£105.00	£210.00
4	Milo, Kwali, Kenge, Ashanti	£20.00	£60.00	£120.00	£240.00
5	Nala, Milo, Kenge, Kwali & Phyre	£22.50	£67.50	£135.00	£270.00

For more than five lions, take the costs for five lions and add £2.50 per lion for monthly payments, £7.50 a months for quarterly payments per lion, £15.00 per lion for biannual payments and £30.00 per lion on annual payments.