#### **BORN FREE'S SUPPORTER MAGAZINE**





# We're wild about cats!

#### **Dear Family and Friends**

In this issue of Wild Life we are celebrating, championing, roaring, and purring for big cats, going all the way back to Elsa and the making of the film Born Free (see a rather special interview with my mum, Virginia).

We explore why:

- These amazing apex predators are such a vital part of the web of life
- We are calling for a Roar Free UK and an end to zoo exploitation (some captive big cats are kept in an area tens of thousands of times smaller than their natural range)
- The brutal business of trophy hunting must come to an end (we must invest in alternatives to benefit local communities, wildlife and wild habitats).

I take my hat off to a remarkably brave humane being, brilliant photographer and filmmaker, Aaron Gekoski. His undercover exploits have blown the lid off some of the most brutal forms of captive wildlife exploitation around the world.

Plus, with your help, our Save Cheetahs this Christmas appeal (and you can't deny they are mighty appealing!) is raising funds to help care for rescued cheetahs like Blue, at Ensessa Kotteh - our one-of-a-kind wildlife centre in Ethiopia. You could give her the future she deserves (find out more page 14). You'll also help fight the cheetah pet trade - as many as 400 cubs are stolen from the wild annually to be smuggled to the Middle East.

I could go on - but, better still, settle back with your copy of Wild Life and be inspired. You are family!



**Will Travers OBE Executive President** will@bornfree.org.uk @willtravers





I'm the world's smallest cat, but what am I? Find out inside!



#### **COVER STORY**

#### Save Cheetahs this Christmas! Are you their only hope?

Every single cheetah is precious but, to save them, we need your help. Please donate today to help look after our orphan cheetahs in Ethiopia, including Blue (see cover letter), and young brother and sister Ramadan and Fasika, pictured here. See pages 14-18 to find out more and visit bornfree.org.uk/save-cheetahs to donate.

#### **GO GREEN**

Now you can take your Wild Life magazine everywhere you go. Perfect for any device, our online mag is no print, no post, low carbon, low cost and max support for wild animals in need! To go green and go digital email info@bornfree.org.uk or call 01403 240170.



## In this issue



Have you heard the latest wild news?



Words of wisdom from Dame Virginia



Shooting animals for fun? We say no!



Why big cats should be wild and free



All about cheetahs: how YOU can help

Baby cheetah Menelik was tied on a rope in a café in Ethiopia, when we helped rescue him. Sickly and starving, he needed intensive care for pneumonia, diarrhoea and dehydration. A founding member of our Cheetah Family, he taught us so much about how to save a young cub's life.

Cheetah cubs are very playful and, once he'd recovered, Menelik was no exception. So, it was a horrible shock when he suddenly died of liver problems, connected to his terrible start to life. We'll never forget dear Menelik. In his memory, our vital rescue work continues. But, we need YOU.



Pullout poster: our 12 days of Christmas



If we protect cats, we protect the planet



Meet brave photographer Aaron Gekoski



Caring for cats and why each one counts



One last thing: cheetah hero Bereket

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The views expressed in *Wild Life* are not necessarily those of Born Free. If you have any comments or issues you would like to raise, please write to the Managing Editor.

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## HEARD?

## All the latest from Born Free



#### Congratulations Hailu!

We're delighted that Hailu
Dagnachew, part of our Ethiopia
team, has received a Bachelor
degree in Veterinary Science
(BVSc). "Hailu oversees the care
of all the rescued animals at
our wildlife centre," explains our
Head of Rescue & Care, Maggie
Balaskas. "This new qualification
makes a big difference as, along
with Dr Sisay Guta, he helps ensure
the wellbeing of more than 160
individuals, from cheetahs and
lions, to geladas and tortoises."

#### Human animal

To help launch our Clawing at the Cages appeal and report in September, Patrons including Amanda Holden, Kirsty Gallacher, Jenny Seagrove, and Ritchi Edwards were confined to a cage in London's Leicester Square. Making national headlines, the protest shone a spotlight on the plight of big cats in zoos. To date, 6,800 of you have signed our petition calling for a Roar-Free UK, while our campaign appeal has raised over £47,000. Thank you!

#### Drawn from the Heart

A star-studded private view, hosted by our Patron Rula Lenska at London's Mall Galleries, launched a major exhibition by acclaimed pencil artist Gary Hodges in October. Guests including Michaela Strachan, Sally Gunnell OBE, Dame Maureen Lipman and Hayley Mills, gathered to enjoy Gary's exquisite drawings, then be inspired by our Co-Founders, Dame Virginia McKenna and Will Travers OBE.

"On the walls of this gallery is the result of two intense years, a labour of love to celebrate the animals I adore, and the charity I love," said Gary. "Without Born Free, our world would be a far harsher place." The dazzling event included a live performance by talented soprano Katie Marshall and auction led by wonderful James Lewis. The exhibition raised over £100,000 – thank you Gary!



#### **Snared lion drama**

A wild lion with a wire snare around his neck was spotted by a tour guide in Meru National Park, in Kenya. It was General, seven-year-old leader of our adopted family, Elsa's Pride. "Snares set illegally to trap wildlife can cause appalling injuries and slow deaths," said Michael Mugo from our Kenya team. "It was a race against time but, with our Kenya Wildlife Service partners, we sedated General and removed the snare. Our work continues to remove snares and protect Meru's lions."

#### **Compassion at Christmas**

We don't need to tell you that reindeer shouldn't be exploited for seasonal UK events, but we do need you to take action. "With your help, our joint campaign to end the cruel use of reindeer at yuletide events in 2023 had a big impact," said Chris Lewis from our Policy team, "so, let's do the same this year!" Find out more at bornfree.org.uk/news-updates



#### Help people, save lions

What is a predator-proof boma and why have we built over 400 in Kenya? Our team attended a key international conference in Nairobi to explain how reinforcing traditional enclosures with chain-link fencing protects livestock AND lions. To find out more about our innovative solutions, enjoy an interview with newly-promoted Head of Kenya Conservation Dr David Manoa at bornfree.org.uk/news-updates





#### **Cardiac activity**

To support the care of wild animal casualties, Born Free gives small grants to rescue centres across the UK. "We recently gave £954 to help Folly Wildlife Rescue in Kent buy vital vet equipment," explains Tarnya Knight from our Rescue & Care team. "To keep a close eye (and ear!) on patients, their new ultrasonic 'doppler' helps monitor an animal's blood flow and heart rate under anaesthetic."

#### Political animals

More than 8,000 of you, including Chris Packham CBE and Nicky Campbell OBE, signed our letter to Prime Minister Keir Starmer, calling on the UK government to fulfil promises to protect wild animals. With our allies, we held vital events at political party conferences and spoke up for badgers at a peaceful protest in London. Presenting a 100,000+ strong petition, we called on MPs to end the UK's barbaric badger cull – since 2013, over 230,000 of these remarkable, ancient beings have been shot.



Our Youth Ambassador Hector Bateman with naturalist Chris Packham

#### Fake animal rescues

Born Free has helped launch a new report revealing the appalling rise of 'fake animal rescue' videos online. With our Social Media Animal Cruelty Coalition colleagues – 29 well-known animal organisations – we are calling on social media companies to take action to stamp out this cruel content. Videos feature animals, including monkeys and reptiles, deliberately placed in dangerous situations so they can 'be rescued'.



#### Roar of thanks

Supporters worldwide, including over 500 in Kenya, took a Walk on the Wild Side in August to raise funds and awareness for lions. You each prowled 23,000 steps - one for every lion in the wild - and raised a lion-sized £21,000. Special mention to 15-year-old Tom Finch who, in his own 900-mile challenge, ran and cycled from John O'Groats to Land's End. Inspired? To fundraise for wildlife visit bornfree.org.uk/fundraising



#### Upcoming events 2025

Footsteps to Freedom Ball 20th March 2025, The Royal Lancaster, London

Join Born Free, our Patrons and friends for an inspirational evening showcasing the best of Born Free, and including fine food and wine, dancing and entertainment.

Find out more at bornfree.org.uk/events

#### **Deck-building**

With the help of kind supporters, our sanctuary team at Shamwari Private Game Reserve in South Africa has created new viewing decks for our rescued lions. "Big cats love a good view of their surroundings," explains our Animal Care Manager, Glen Vena. "In the wild, they seek elevated vantage points, such as trees, termite mounds, and fallen logs. So, these structures provide visual stimulation and contribute to our rescued cats' well-being."



#### **Pollyanna Pickering exhibition**

A gorgeous collection of artwork by acclaimed artist, the late Pollyanna Pickering, curated by her daughter Anna-Louise, was held at her gallery near Matlock, Derbyshire. Pollyanna had been a muchloved Patron and the special exhibition, which included never before seen sketches from her expeditions to Born Free projects, as well as pieces inspired by Elsa the lioness, helped celebrate our 40th and raise over £7,000.

#### **Chimp champs**

Remember Mary Beauty and Simao the orphan chimpanzees? You helped give them new lives with our friends at Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue and Protection, and now their true stories are inspiring a generation of wildlife artists with Drawing for the Planet. Our joint exhibition of over 500 children's Biro drawings of rescued chimps, in Northumberland, is raising awareness of these rare apes, supported by our new primary school resources.



#### **HAVE YOU HEARD?**

#### Four cats, four lives transformed

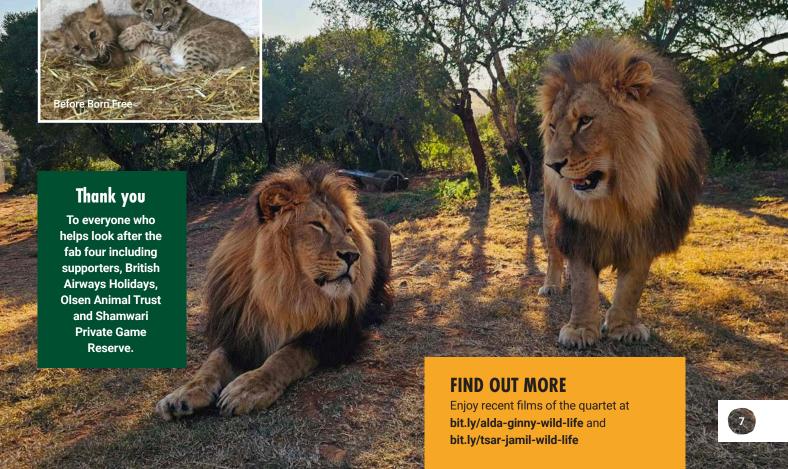
How are the fab four doing?! Earlier this year, we welcomed two lions and two leopards to our sanctuary at Shamwari Private Game Reserve, South Africa.

"Tsar and Jamil are thriving — as if they've been here for years. I watch as they play, so agile as they jump over each other. After exploring their 2.5-acre home, the brothers sit and watch their leopard neighbours Alda and Ginny. They scent-mark, as lions do in the wild, then join in the dawn and dusk roars with our other rescued lions, echoing across Shamwari's hills and valleys.

"Alda and Ginny are more shy, and find me carrying a big camera a little scary, so I use my mobile camera instead — their well-being comes first. Mum, Ginny, loves rubbing her head on a thornless prickly pear, while her beautiful daughter Alda sits quietly, waving her tail. They have found home here and are loving it, happily 'rasping away' in the evenings — a sign of contentment."

**Glen Vena** Animal Care Manager Shamwari, South Africa







# HOW DOES A LION IN THE WILD COMPARE WITH A LION IN A CAGE?

Will Travers chats to his mother, Dame Virginia McKenna, about her passion for the symbol of Born Free.

#### Why are lions so captivating?

I never thought when I was younger, that my life would involve lions and other wild species. It has been quite a journey. Lions, for me, represent such beauty, power and magnificence. It was quite incredible, working with George Adamson and making the film Born Free with my husband Bill, that we had the enormous privilege to get to know these amazing animals and even to regard some of them as friends.



#### What was your first close encounter with a lion?

Lions are always wild, whether living free or in captivity – that's something George taught us. The first lions I truly encountered were the two, huge ex-circus lions the makers of *Born Free* had decided would be the 'stars' of the film. How wrong they were. Friendship between people and wild animals relies on trust, and these two lionesses had endured a life of domination by humans. They proved to be too dangerous and didn't work with us in the film.

#### What did making Born Free teach you?

That lions should be free. The story of Joy, George and Elsa is all about freedom. I believe we must learn to let lions and other wild animals be themselves. They should never be in zoos. George's most important lesson was to respect lions as individuals – with very clear likes and dislikes. Never ask them to do something they don't want to do. Show some respect.

#### How do free-living lions compare with those in zoos?

Lions in zoos are a shadow of their wild counterparts. Every aspect of their life is controlled. Where they live, who they live with, when they eat, what they eat, who they mate with. Choice is denied. It's like putting a person in prison – except they have committed no crime.

#### How do you feel seeing a lion in a cage?

Angry, sad, ashamed. Every time I see a lion or any animal locked away for our entertainment and so-called education, it make me more determined than ever to hasten the day of change so that, in the future, lions can live wild and free.



## Why does Born Free spend so much time and money rescuing individuals?

Every individual matters. We have always done our best, not only for lions but for many other wild animals that endure lives of captive misery – lions, leopards, tigers, elephants, dolphins, great apes, primates, pangolins, and many more. We can't help every wild animal in need – I wish we could. But if we can help, then, thanks to our amazing supporters, we surely will.



## We have rescued 59 incredible lions to date, have any especially touched your heart?

They all have a special place in my heart. They each have unique stories to tell. But two, in particular, come to mind. There was Bella, the scruffy, one-eyed lioness we took to Malawi. When she came out of her travelling crate after a long and tiring journey, she turned and looked directly at me with her one good eye. We locked on to each other for what seemed like ages. It was a moment of profound understanding.

And then there was Kimba. Rescued many, many years ago from a tiny cage in Italy, she came to the rescue centre we had in the UK at that time. She was in very poor shape. One day, shortly after her arrival, she came out of her warm, straw-lined night house for the first time. She walked slowly onto the grass and lay down in the sunshine. A week later, she died, her body riddled with cancer. But, at least, she had a moment of peace in a place filled with love and compassion.

#### What is your dream for the future of lions?

That we end all captive exploitation and protect the space necessary for them to thrive in the wild as part of functioning ecosystems. A thriving natural world is the answer to so many of the challenges faced by wildlife – and humanity. If we can make space for wild lions, then there will be room for so many other species too – and there will be hope for us all.



Shooting animals for fun to hang their heads on the wall? We say no! Dr Mark Jones brings you the latest, as we battle to end the brutal 'sport' of trophy hunting.

Like so many people, the fact that trophy hunters kill tens of thousands of animals every year fills me with revulsion. Horrifically, this includes many individuals from rare species, some threatened with extinction – not least hundreds of big cats.

#### **Banned in Kenya since 1977**

"I love watching lions in the wild. We gain deeper understanding of their behaviour and their key role in the habitat, which drives our conservation endeavours. It makes me very happy to embrace Kenya's guiding principle: 'Take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footsteps'. We have no room for trophy hunting. We want lions to thrive!"

#### **Michael Mugo**

Pride of Meru Manager, Born Free Kenya

How anyone can wish to kill an animal for 'fun' is beyond me. Yet, in 2022 alone, over 700 lion trophies and almost 500 leopard trophies were reportedly exported, mainly from a handful of southern African countries that allow foreign hunters to pay to shoot their wild animals. Many more big cats, such as mountain lions in North America, are also killed. At least 14 US States and some Canadian provinces permit such hunts, with up to 4,000 of these animals slaughtered each year.

Not surprisingly, trophy hunting sparks controversy and division. Proponents claim it incentivises governments and local people to protect wild animals and their habitats, because they can turn a profit. They claim hunting helps control wildlife populations and 'problem animals' which, in the case of big cats, threaten livestock and occasionally people.

However, historically, sport hunting has led to huge declines in iconic animals. Think of the devastation colonial hunters wreaked on tigers in India, or the now extinct barbary lions of north Africa. Today, hunters threaten many species by targeting the most impressive animals because they make the best trophies. However, these individuals are key to the stability and genetic viability of their families and populations. The disruption caused by hunters can exacerbate conflict between people and wildlife.

Research clearly suggests most of the money generated goes into the pockets of hunting organisations, outfitters organising the hunts, taxidermists, transporters, government agencies, and local officials. At best, a pittance reaches the communities living alongside the wildlife.

While many hunts target free-living wild animals, the majority of lion trophies (more than 500 of 718 reportedly exported in 2022) are

derived from lions bred in South Africa's inhumane breeding centres. As many as 8,000 are held in some 350 captive facilities. Many of these are destined for 'canned hunts' – arguably the cruellest form of hunting. 'Released' into an enclosure, with no means of escape, lions are shot by paying hunters, typically from overseas.

Born Free is at the forefront of efforts to shut this ruthless industry down. Our award-winning *Bitter Bond* animation helped generate a 250,000 name-petition for South African authorities, who acknowledge they must end the industry to salvage their reputation as a responsible tourist destination. However, no deadline has been set and, with little sanctuary space available, the fate of those poor remaining lions is unclear. Meanwhile, the killing continues.

Born Free also campaigns to end the import of repugnant trophies to the

UK and other destinations, urging governments to invest in humane ways to protect wildlife. Thankfully, the UK's new Labour government has committed to banning trophy imports, so we now call on them to make good on their promise.

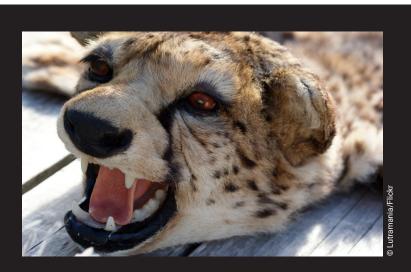
No animal should be killed for sport or pleasure. Your support is critical as we fight to consign this violent form of 'recreation' to history.

#### **Dr Mark Jones**

Head of Policy markj@bornfree.org.uk

#### **FIND OUT MORE**

To help end trophy hunting and for the latest news visit **bornfree.org.uk/trophy-hunting** 



#### A UK trophy import ban is key

"Trophy hunting is an elitist, colonial anachronism. We should strive for ethical ways to deliver effective conservation and sustainable livelihoods for those who live alongside wildlife. I welcome the day when the UK refuses the import of trophies from threatened species and ends the killing of wild animals for 'fun'."

Will Travers OBE, Executive President



There is perhaps no other group of animals who command such awe and respect as big cats. These apex predators are fine-tuned by thousands of years of evolution to top their specific food chains. It's no wonder some people want to get up close.

With many unlikely to see a big cat in the wild, it's perhaps no surprise there are those who seek to exploit such desires for profit. Whether confined in a zoo, exploited in a circus, abused as a photo prop, or kept in unnatural conditions as a 'pet', these amazing creatures suffer in a variety of captive settings due to humans.

#### Status symbol pets

Born Free's 2023 research revealed at least 58 big cats are legally kept in private settings across Britain. Thousands more are kept as exotic pets across the world, not least in countries where legislation is even less restrictive or non-existent. People buy big cats as status symbols, for an adrenaline kick, to gain social media attention, or for even more exploitative purposes.

But, regardless of their owners' motives, the pet trade causes serious suffering. These animals haven't evolved to live in such proximity to humans, particularly when kept in people's homes or backyards. Big cats have complex physiological, psychological, behavioural, and nutritional needs which cannot be met in a private setting.

No wild animal should be kept as a pet. We have much work to do but, for a start, Born Free is urgently calling for the UK government to reform laws relating to exotic pet ownership, including the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.



#### Catastrophic suffering

Released in September 2024, Born Free's hard-hitting Clawing at the Cages report revealed at least 3,000 big cats languish in zoos across Europe. We exposed the complete lack of adequate environments, or opportunities for big cats to perform natural behaviours, all too often manifesting in unnatural stereotypical behaviours and an appalling range of health issues.

Our shocking report also revealed how keeping these amazing creatures captive delivers little to no conservation benefit. Big cats born in zoos, stay in zoos until they die. Newborn cubs attract more visitors and media attention but, grotesquely, due to the lack of space in zoos, healthy cats are often put down to make room for individuals considered more genetically important to the wider zoo population.

With your help, we now call for a Roar-Free UK. We want a country where no big cats are exploited in captivity, where zoos no longer breed or import big cats, but humanely phase-out their keeping.

Sounds impossible? Thanks to Born Free\*, since 2020, no big cats (or any other wild animal) are exploited in circuses across Britain. Thanks to Born Free‡, since 1993, no dolphins are exploited in captivity in Britain. A Roar-Free UK is possible, but we need YOUR invaluable help!

#### **Chris Lewis**

Captivity Research & Policy Manager clewis@bornfree.org.uk

\*Together with our colleagues at the RSPCA, Animal Defenders International and others #With Whale & Dolphin Conservation and like-minded organisations

#### **FIND OUT MORE**

Read our Clawing at the Cages big cats in zoos report at bornfree.org.uk/ clawing





"Perhaps more than any other species, big cats represent all that is wild and free. Life in the wild is tough. The survival challenges are many — but what a life! And how pale and diminished, by comparison, is life in a zoo.

"We have to decide: do we get serious about finding ways for big cats and humanity to co-exist in the landscapes they share? Or do we lamely accept the zoo narrative and ignore the suffering?"

#### Will Travers OBE

**Executive President** 



Species	Total
Serval	53
Savannah cat hybrids	42
Lynx	31
Puma*	18
Cheetah	12
Lion	12
Caracal	7
Jaguarundi	7
Leopard	7
Tiger	7
Asian leopard cat	6
Ocelot	5
Clouded leopard	3
Fishing cat	3
Jungle cat	2
Bengal cat hybrids	1
Jaguar	1
Snow leopard	1
Temminck's golden cat	: 1
Total	219
*Also known as mountain lions	

# Save Cheetahs this Christmas!

### Are you their only hope?

They're known for their sensational speed, but is time running out for the quickest of all cats? Every single cheetah is precious but, to save them, we need your help.

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With their bewitching eyes, elegant limbs, lean bodies and unmistakable markings, there's something entrancing about cheetahs. Famous as the planet's fastest land animal, these elite sprinters are built for super speed, not stamina. But, being so specialised can make them vulnerable.

You've heard about the plight of the tiger and Born Free's passion to protect them. However, you might not realise just how quickly cheetahs are racing towards extinction in the wild. Once found throughout Asia and Africa, in recent decades numbers have plummeted. Tragically, today just a few thousand of these fleet-footed cats remain in the wild. In fact, they are Africa's most endangered big cat.

Illegal trafficking is a huge problem - cubs are stolen from the wild to be exported and sold as 'status symbol pets'. Cheetahs are also under pressure from climate change, habitat loss, conflict with people - even trophy hunting! Urgent action is needed to keep cheetahs safe and stop them sprinting to oblivion.

At Born Free, we're wild about cheetahs. Do you feel the same way? Let's roll up our sleeves, lace up our trainers and act now to save them. Readers, are you their only hope? Your support could give them the future they deserve.

#### **Born Free in action**

Like you, Born Free has a passion for cheetahs. We're devoted to securing their future, but your support is crucial.

#### Cheetah rescue

In Ethiopia, Born Free is one of the first responders to any cheetah emergency. In partnership with the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, we are a lifeline when illegal cheetah trade is reported, or a cheetah is confiscated or rescued. Over the past 16 years, we've become adept at caring for these fragile orphans.

We rescued our very first cheetah in Ethiopia in 2008. Sheba had been seized from an illegal animal trader, but there was nowhere for him to go, so authorities had to keep him in a tiny cage for two years. But then we built our new rescue centre and were able to give him a proper home.



#### Saving lives in Ethiopia

In 2009, Born Free opened our Ensessa Kotteh ('animal footprint') wildlife centre in Ethiopia, just outside the capital Addis Ababa. It's unique, the only rescue facility for wild animals in this huge country:

- ldyllic 190-acre site, partly covered in woodland
- We rescue orphan, injured and confiscated wild animals
- We provide round-the-clock, loving, expert care
- We have a specialist veterinary centre and a consultant vet
- Animals are given care for life in spacious, natural enclosures
- Or rehabilitated and returned to the wild whenever possible
- We look after over 160 animals, including 9 cheetahs
- Plus 7 lions, 6 hyenas, 77 tortoises, 59 primates and more!
- We employ around 60 local people
- We run education outreach for local schools, communities and colleges

Sheba was the founding member of our adopted Cheetah Family and, over the years, we've rescued an incredible 25 cheetahs. We currently care for nine orphans, aged between a few months and 14 years, nearly all victims of the illegal pet trade.

Sadly, it isn't possible for them to return to the wild. Taken from their mothers at a young age, they don't have the skills to survive and often have underlying health conditions due to their treatment pre-rescue. Instead, we give them the space, enrichment, specialist care and specific diet they need.

#### Blue's sad story – please help!

Our team in Ethiopia has just recently rescued a tiny orphan cheetah, called Blue. Tragically, she received lifethreatening injuries in a horrific car accident, which killed her sibling. Your gift today could help give Blue the care she needs. Please donate to our cheetah appeal (see red box).

Right now, our expert vet team is working around the clock to save Blue's life. It's touch and go. But, your donation today could help provide Blue with the vet treatment, loving care, medicines, and nutritious food which could help save her life.

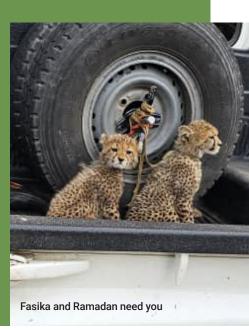


#### Meet Fasika & Ramadan

Saved in the nick of time from the illegal pet trade, there's no doubt these young siblings are little fighters. Just weeks old when stolen from the wild, they should have been safe with mum, but were found tied by a rope in Jijiga, in eastern Ethiopia – sick, hungry and afraid.

Following a treacherous, four-day, 800-mile road trip, Country Director and centre manager, Bereket Girma, and our vet, Dr Sisay Guta, brought the four-month-old cubs to our centre. Underweight, dehydrated and riddled with parasites, they urgently needed specialist care. Incredibly, despite their fragile condition and appalling start

to life, Fasika, the little girl, and Ramadan, her brother, have flourished. Could you help look after them? See red box to donate.



## Save Cheetahs this Christmas! Are you their only hope?

Please donate today to help us look after these orphan cheetahs. Blue is only eight months old, Ramadan and Fasika are just 20 months. But they've already been through so much. Your gift today could help guarantee them the loving, expert care they deserve, look after all our cheetahs in Ethiopia, and protect cheetahs in the wild through conservation and effective wildlife law enforcement.

#### YOU CAN HELP - TO DONATE PLEASE:

- · Visit bornfree.org.uk/save-cheetahs
- Call 01403 240170
- Return the enclosed gift form in the reply envelope
   no stamp needed

"We're devoted to Blue, Fasika,
Ramadan and all our rescued cheetahs
— their well-being means everything
to us. It's hard not to worry about
them all the time and there can be a
lot of heartbreak along the way. It's
incredible how these fragile orphans
can transform thanks to our 24/7
expert loving care but, we can't do
this without YOUR help!"

#### Maggie Balaskas,

Born Free's Head of Rescue & Care



#### **Further action for cheetahs**

#### Tackling trade in Ethiopia

Born Free helps the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority address the problem of cheetah trafficking. Our Border Point Project trained thousands of Ethiopian police and customs officers to improve wildlife law enforcement, reduce wildlife smuggling and confiscate live animals and body parts.

#### Tackling trade globally

Born Free campaigns to stop the global trade in cheetahs and is part of important international coalitions such as the Species Survival Network (www.ssn.org), attending vital meetings with governments to highlight the problems cheetahs face and encourage better ways to protect them. Changing opinions
Education underpins everything we do to protect cheetahs and all wild animals. We work with schools and communities in Ethiopia and neighbouring Kenya to encourage the next generation of decision-makers to value their natural heritage.

#### Peaceful solutions

Born Free is hard at work in Kenya, with communities living near to cheetahs. We support conservation of predators including cheetahs, find humane solutions to conflict (page 24), and empower people to protect their livestock and conserve natural resources – by planting trees and sharing water.

#### Cheetahs under threat

Cheetahs are Africa's rarest big cat, listed as 'facing a high risk of extinction in the wild' in the IUCN\* Red List. There are several reasons why they're so at risk:

#### Illegal trade for pets

International commercial trade in cheetahs is banned by CITES\*\*, but a deadly demand for 'status symbol pets' is a major threat, especially in the Middle East Gulf states. This has a long history, but today is fuelled by online trade and social media. Cheetah cubs are snatched from the wild, driving critically threatened populations towards extinction.

- Living close to illegal trade routes, Ethiopia's cheetahs are in huge danger
- Up to 400 cubs stolen each year from Ethiopia and Horn of Africa

- Conservation status: Vulnerable
- Today as few as 6,500 remain
- Occupy just 9% of historic range
- Less than 500 individuals survive in Ethiopia

As few as 6,500



- Sold to Gulf states as 'status symbol' pets costing up to £22,000 each
- In transit, cubs suffer trauma, malnutrition and dehydration
- The trade has a gruesome toll: 70% of cubs die *en route*
- Cubs who do survive this brutal trade unlikely to live more than two years





#### **Hunted for sport**

Unbelievably, in recent years, hundreds of cheetahs have been legally killed by paying 'sport' hunters. It's grotesque, but several southern African countries have annual 'quotas' to allow cheetah trophy hunting (page 10).

#### **Habitat loss**

Cheetahs need vast territories to hunt, and often live outside protected areas to avoid other predators. But their home range is being destroyed to make way for farmland and infrastructure, with climate change compounding this habitat loss. This results in a decrease in natural prey and an increase in livestock, leading, inevitably, to conflict with people.

#### Conflict with people

As agriculture expands, cheetahs come in closer contact with humans. In search of food, cheetahs resort to preying on livestock. People kill cheetahs in retaliation, or for the perceived threat they pose, especially as they're often seen in daylight. Also, more roads and increased traffic leads to more cheetahs being injured or killed in accidents, like poor Blue.

#### **Designed to hunt**

- Cheetahs stalk prey, aided by amazing eyesight and a camouflage coat
- In just three strides and 21/2 seconds, they can explode from 0-45mph
- At full speed, for just 40 seconds, they top 70mph, with a 7m stride
- Their enlarged nostrils, heart and lungs power their high-speed chase
- A cheetah's claws never fully retract, but grip the ground as they run
- A long tail acts as a rudder to help make ultra sharp turns
- They trip prey up and kill them with suffocating bite to the throat
- On average, every second kill is successful = 50% of hunts

#### Did you know?

A cheetah can run 2½ times faster than 2024 Olympic 100m gold medallist Noah Lyles, his top speed = 27mph!

#### **Fun facts**

- Unlike other big cats, cheetahs can't roar, but can purr (and chirp!)
- Like our fingerprints, no two cheetahs have the same spots
- Black 'tear lines' from eyes to mouth may reduce sun glare
- Unique social structure: males form 'coalitions', females are independent
- Unlike most cats, they hunt during the day, but aren't good climbers
- Up to six cubs born after a 3-month pregnancy = short for a big cat
- With silver-grey fluffy backs, some believe cubs mimic the fierce honey badger to help stay safe!

#### **Keystone species**

As apex predators, cheetahs are vital for a healthy habitat. They help to keep prey in check, so their ecosystem stays in balance. Without them, herbivore numbers would rise, eating more plants and grass, leading to soil erosion and less water. This would affect the entire environment, impacting animals AND people.



#### YOU CAN HELP

All our work to protect and save cheetahs is down to you, our generous donors. Please give all you can to our Save Cheetahs appeal. Your donation could protect and save this exquisite, but vulnerable big cat and look after the individuals in our care.

#### TO DONATE PLEASE:

- Visit bornfree.org.uk/ save-cheetahs
- Call 01403 240170
- Return the enclosed gift form in the reply envelope - no stamp needed



# BORN FREE'S La DAY

As the festive season gets underway, we look back on 2024 – a remarkable year of taking action for wild



#### Thursday 7th March

With special guest author Sir Michael Morpurgo, over 23,000 pupils from 380 UK schools attended our World Book Day *The Butterfly Lion* webinar.



#### Saturday 9th March

The young lion brothers Tsar and Jamil, rescued from Ukraine, safely arrived at our sanctuary in Shamwari, South Africa (page 7).



#### Thursday 21st March

To mark our 40th anniversary, our Footsteps to Freedom Ball in London poignantly celebrated four decades of action for wild animals in need.



#### Thursday 11th July

With our awesome Shamwari partners, our big cat sanctuary became South Africa's first facility accredited by Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.



#### Monday 22nd July

We announced wonderful Ape Action Africa, devoted to gorilla conservation and rescue, as our vital new partner in Cameroon.



#### Friday 26th July

We helped rescue General, a seven-year-old male lion and leader of Elsa's Pride, from a deadly wire noose in Meru, Kenya (page 4).









# Images © georgelogan.co.uk, Matt Crossick/PA, Lyndon Brandt, Ian Bickerstaff/AAA, Whi

# 15 OF Christmas

animals, thanks to your loyal and generous support. Here are 12 precious days we especially remember:



#### Wednesday 20th March

Born Free won gold at London's prestigious Smiley Charity Film Awards for *Enough is Enough*, our Elephant-Free UK animation.



#### Friday 3rd May

We welcomed leopard mother and daughter, Alda and Ginny, to a new life at our sanctuary in South Africa (page 7).



#### Friday 7th June

The UK Born Free team gathered for a picnic in Surrey, to wish our beloved Co-Founder, Dame Virginia McKenna, a Happy Birthday.



#### Saturday 10th August

On World Lion Day, hundreds of people around the world took a Walk on the Wild Side to raise funds and awareness for lions (page 6).



#### Tuesday 10th September

We launched our *Clawing at the Cages* appeal and report calling for an end to big cat exploitation in zoos, and seeking a 'Roar-Free UK' (page 12).



#### Tuesday 1st October

We hosted a private view of acclaimed wildlife artist Gary Hodges' major new solo exhibition in London to raise funds and awareness (page 4).





# CATS ARE INCREDIBLE!

#### **MEET THE FELID FAMILY**

There are 41 cat species found in Africa, Europe, Asia and the Americas. Most big cats can roar but not purr, while smaller cats purr but can't roar.



#### **SUPREME HUNTERS**

Perfectly evolved to stalk and ambush prey – cats have razor-sharp claws and teeth, lightning-fast reactions, lithe bodies, plus superb vision and hearing.



#### **FASTEST LAND ANIMAL**

With long legs, flexible spine and big lungs, cheetahs reach a breathtaking 70mph.

They accelerate, turn, and brake like a sports car to catch nimble, fast prey.





#### THE ONLY TRULY SOCIAL CAT

Large, immensely strong, and living in family prides, lions group together to take down formidable prey, including giraffe, buffalo, and even elephant.



These virtuoso predators prowl the jungle, mountains, deserts and grasslands. Cats can jump higher, climb better, and run faster than any other group of animals on earth.

## COAT OF MANY COLOURS

The most diversely coloured of all predators, cats' fur coats help provide camouflage thanks to spots, stripes,

rosettes and blotches.



#### **TERRITORIAL TIGERS**

To hunt and breed, tigers need a large home range, up to 385 square miles. To warn off rivals, they scent-mark, scratch trees, and loudly roar.





#### **HIGH JUMP ONE**

The long-legged serval can leap 2.7m (3x body length) into the air to grab birds, or pounce on prey. The human high jump world record is 2.45m!



#### **HIGH JUMP TWO**

With eye-catching black ear tufts and a red-brown coat, the caracal can spring up over 3m to catch food – that's the height of a basketball hoop!



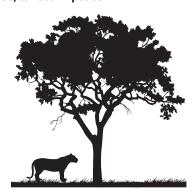


OVER 3M



#### TREE CLIMBER

With a super strong jaw, the powerful yet supple leopard can hoist prey up to 100kg (over 2x body weight) into a tree, to feed in peace.



# WHAT'S A BLACK PANTHER?

With ebony spots on dark fur, melanistic leopards and jaguars are both called 'black panthers'. This includes our shy leopard Mowgli, rescued from a South African zoo in 2021 and cared for by our team at Shamwari.



#### HIGHLAND TIGER

Does a wild cat live on your doorstep? On the brink of extinction in Britain, and the only species that SHOULD live here (page 12), a recovery project is underway to help save the Scottish wildcat.



#### **CALLING ALL PET CAT OWNERS!**

Born Free supports wildlife rescue centres across the UK and, sadly, domestic cats injuring wildlife is a big problem. Please:

- Have your pet cats neutered (and rescue, don't buy)
- Try to keep them inside from dusk till dawn
- To warn birds, give your cat a multi-coloured collar and bell
- Put bird feeders up high and away from bushes (where cats can hide)





BIG CAT LITTLE CAT: The world's largest and smallest species are both found in India!

#### Tiger

- Up to 300kg
- Up to 3m long
- · Hunts deer, boar, water buffalo, monkeys

#### Rusty-spotted cat

- 1-2kg
- Up to 48cm long
- Hunts rodents, birds, lizards, frogs, insects



Cats are one of the most recognisable and widespread groups of mammals on earth but, sadly, many species are under threat. The extinction of cats from their ecosystems would have devastating consequences. Let's protect cats to protect our planet!

Many of us have cats at home as pets, but the domestic cat *Felis catus* is just one member of the large Felidae family. From tigers to lions, leopards to cheetah, lynx, ocelots, servals, cougars and more, there are 41 species of cat living in the wild today.

Although they have a similar shape, cats come in all sizes; from the world's smallest – the minute rusty-spotted cat, to the largest – the awe-inspiring tiger. Both of these live in India, but cats prowl across the globe, from the depths of the Amazon, to the heights of the Himalayas. Adapted to survive in a multitude of habitats from forests to savannahs, wetlands to mountains, these versatile carnivores are crucial to each one of these ecosystems.

Healthy cat populations are an indicator of the overall health of our planet's habitats and biodiversity.

#### **Ecosystem balance**

Cats are excellent hunters, and play an important role in their ecosystems by helping manage prey populations. Larger cat species are often 'apex predators' and, if they are lost from an ecosystem, this can cause a catastrophic chain of events. Known as a 'trophic cascade' – herbivore numbers can explode, leading to overgrazing and habitat degradation, disease and even wildfires. Cats help keep nature in balance!

#### **Shared habitats**

Many cats require vast areas to survive. Protecting their habitats therefore provides a healthy environment for countless other species, which is why cats are known as 'umbrella species'. For example, Born Free works with our partners to secure vast tracts of habitat in India's Satpuda Landscape, primarily for tigers, but in doing so protects pangolins, sloth bears, gaur (Indian bison), and a myriad other species.

#### Fighting climate change

Many cats dwell in forests, which are excellent 'carbon sinks' – absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and 'locking' it in their trunks, branches, roots and leaves. Other cats are found in grasslands, also important for storing carbon. Protecting cat habitat can therefore help combat the climate crisis, one of the greatest global challenges we have ever faced.

#### **Cultural icons**

Human cultures throughout history have ascribed importance to cats. Early civilisations relied on their ability to predate disease-carrying species such as rats and mice. Ancient Egyptians revered cats as symbols of good luck, while art from Greek to Roman, Japanese to Renaissance, featured cats. To this day, cats are integral to many indigenous belief systems. Losing them from the wild would be a great loss to humanity.

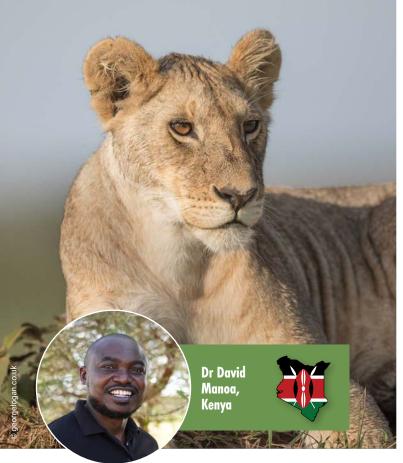
We can't let cats across the planet disappear! Born Free, with Elsa the lioness as our symbol, works tirelessly to protect cats across Africa and Asia. Your support is vital to continue the fight – thanks for all you do.

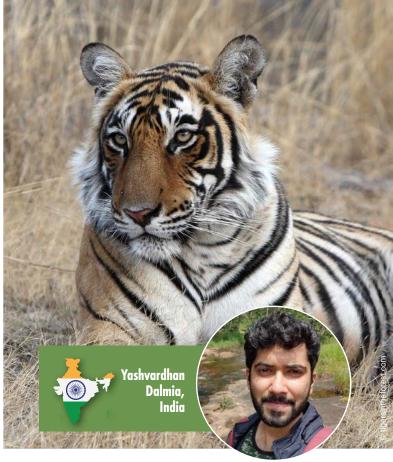
#### Dr Nikki Tagg

Head of Conservation nikkit@bornfree.org.uk

#### FIND OUT MORE

Visit **bornfree.org.uk** to discover our passion for wild cats and support their care and conservation.





# HOW TO GET ON WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS

We ask Dr David Manoa, Head of Kenya Conservation, and Yashvardhan Dalmia, Network Support Officer for India's Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership, how Born Free helps people and wild cats to coexist.

People and wild cats have shared space on our planet for hundreds of thousands of years. But, increasing demand for land for human settlements and farming, plus a changing climate, has reduced essential habitat. How can wild cats and people live safely in close proximity?

#### Is living next door to wild cats hard?

**Manoa:** Due to depletion of wild prey in Kenya, lions and leopards can find it easier to hunt domestic animals. This understandably angers livestock owners, who may retaliate. Unfortunately, wild cats exist in worryingly low populations, so the loss of any individual is significant.

Yashvardhan: Now the most populous country in the world, India has large human populations in 'buffer areas' around tiger reserves and corridors. Local communities collecting firewood and grazing cattle, may interact with tigers, sometimes resulting in conflict when tigers attack livestock, and even people.

#### **How does Born Free help?**

Manoa: We've been directly working with communities in Kenya for 14 years, deploying innovative human-wildlife conflict mitigation measures such as predator-proof bomas\* and flashing deterrent lights. We witness first-hand the benefits these strategies bring to wildlife and people alike.

Yashvardhan: Formed by Born Free, the Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership (SLTP) unites nine grassroots organisations to conserve central India's forests and wildlife. With positive community involvement around tiger reserves, SLTP initiatives share best practices and address common challenges.







#### Has Born Free's work had an impact?

Peter Ndung'u

Manoa: Born Free has helped Amboseli's lions increase from 50 in 2010, to about 140 today, and now helps protect Meru's estimated 90 lions. Country-wide, lions have increased from 2,000 in 2008, to some 2,589. Our strategy helps protect tens of thousands of livestock, securing pastoralist livelihoods, and protecting wild cats from retaliatory killings.

Yashvardhan: STLP education programmes have reached 450,000+ students, and provided sustainable livelihoods to reduce forest dependence. We train youth volunteers and forest guards to manage conflict, and improve conservation policies. Illegal forest product collection has declined and, since 2004, India's tigers have more than doubled to some 3,682.

#### Why are local people key?

Manoa: Working with pastoralist communities in Kenya's grasslands is critical. Parks are not fenced and wild cats can spend much of their time outside, in community lands. So, their safety depends heavily on people – who have shared Kenya's grasslands with wild cats for generations – being tolerant.

Yashvardhan: Local communities are the guardians of India's forests and wildlife. They rely on forests for their livelihoods and face challenges when ecosystems deteriorate – when forests are cut down or developed. It is important to utilise their knowledge to develop conservation plans that benefit everyone.

#### What are your dreams for the future?

**Manoa:** A future where predator populations not only recover but thrive alongside people. A time when communities are empowered and motivated to adopt sustainable practices, thereby reducing conflicts and enhancing their quality of life.

**Yashvardhan:** We must all recognise the importance of wild cats and preserving forests for their biodiversity and to combat climate change. We envision a future where citizens prioritise conservation, lead sustainable lives and elect leaders with a strong environmental vision.

#### Do more wild cats lead to more problems?

Manoa: When successful conservation increases predator populations, this can be a challenge for people. To maintain coexistence, we must continue to engage with the community and invest in innovative conflict mitigation methods.

Yashvardhan: Successful conservation does more than just increase tiger numbers. The goal is to partner with communities, help address their challenges, create a better environment for coexistence, and benefit forests, wildlife and people.

# LEARNING TO LOVE CATS



School visits to our rescue centres in South Africa and Ethiopia are helping students learn to respect and care about leopards, lions, cheetahs and other animals. Vino Ndou reports.

Did you know that our rescued big cats play a vital role in educating the next generation? Alongside our rescue centres in South Africa and Ethiopia (page 30), our associated school programmes bring together a mix of activities – from children visiting the centres, to classroom sessions, tree planting, and even rubbish clean-ups. Whilst, as a charity, we strongly advocate keeping wildlife in the wild, sharing the stories of our rescued cats (and other animals) provides a remarkable, holistic educational opportunity.

Although often filled with tragedy, these life stories promote compassion and respect, showing how the wellbeing of every animal matters. They play a key role in helping students learn to value wildlife and develop a view of wild animals as individuals. This is often the first time these young people have ever seen these big cats, and we help them understand why wild animals belong in the wild. We also share information about the key role these species play in their natural ecosystems.

Azebanati, from Nstika Secondary School, visited our sanctuary here in South Africa for the first time this year. "We had a tour and were told about the animals and how they were brought to the centre. It was so heartwarming to know there are people who care about animals, who want to stop them being abused, and who care about their feelings — I really liked that. It showed me how humanity is still there, it's still a thing in people, for animals."

Rotondwa is the newest member of our South African education team. "My first time seeing the rescued lions and leopards I was amazed, as I'd mostly only seen them in zoos – displayed for monetary gain. I saw how natural their Born Free enclosures are, with space for them to roam. I was saddened by the ordeals they went through, but at the same time

elated they'd been rescued. Lion and leopard populations are under threat in the wild, so the school visits give students an important insight into what is happening. I feel determined to be a voice for big cats and help save them from extinction."

Meanwhile in Ethiopia, our Ensessa Kotteh centre is home to rescued lions and cheetahs, and also hosts school visits. "Animals cannot speak for themselves, so we are speaking for them," explains Education Programme Leader Lemessa Goshu. "When students see this, they become interested in supporting Born Free and want to advocate for the animals themselves." Ayano Urgecha, Education Officer, added: "Students begin to understand how the land is very important for all animals and, in turn, how the animals have a value for our environment."

How wonderful that our rescued lions, leopards and cheetahs can be ambassadors for their species! Thank you for supporting our work to help inspire young people. Together we can encourage a new generation of wild animal champions, each with a personal passion to care for the wild.

#### Vino Ndou

Education Programme Leader South Africa



### The story of Elsa lives on

This school year, we have launched a new teaching resource for UK KS1 pupils (aged five-seven years), all about a very special lioness. Now teachers and parents can bring the amazing true story of *Born Free* to a new generation with our accessible, storybook version of Elsa the lioness and her incredible journey back to the wild. Perfect for guided-reading sessions and promoting reading for fun.



#### **FIND OUT MORE**

You can download a copy, free, from: tes.com/teaching-resources/shop/BornFreeFoundation



# WILD & BRAVE

Hold the front page! We speak to award-winning environmental photojournalist and film-maker, and long-term colleague, Aaron Gekoski, about his work for wildlife.

#### It's an honour to work with you Aaron. What led to your interest in wild animals?

As a child, I was fascinated with animals and wildlife documentaries. So, in my late 20s, I decided to sell my business in the UK and go to Africa to learn to be a wildlife filmmaker. Everyone thought I was mad and would be back a month later!

The original goal was to document the beauty of the natural world and share it with as many people as possible. However, on my travels I learned things were different to how they're portrayed in documentaries. Animals were being killed for their body parts, losing their homes, kept illegally as pets, locked up in zoos, or hunted unsustainably. Nearly 20 years later I'm still covering these stories.

#### What inspired you to catalogue suffering?

In my opinion it's far more interesting – and important – to document these stories, than photograph animals in the wild. These are rich and complex issues that demand our attention, and the images can make a tangible difference. We are in the midst of a sixth mass extinction event, losing species at an unprecedented rate. As storytellers, it's our duty to use our skills for the good of the planet.

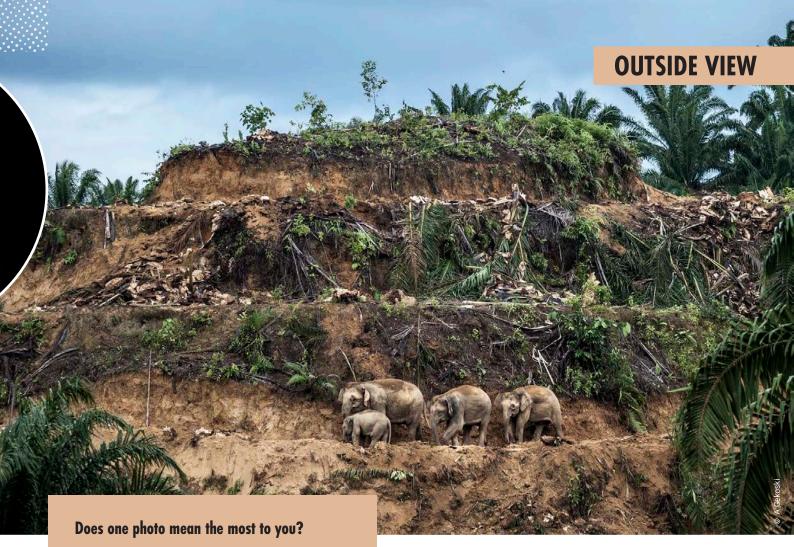
How did your focus on tourism come about?

Living in southeast Asia, I noticed wildlife tourism was rife in the form of terrible zoos and animal shows. So, I went to Thailand and spent a few weeks visiting the worst places. The response to my imagery was incredible and they were plastered all over the global media. This then led to a documentary, Eyes of the Orangutan, and setting up Raise the Red Flag online with Born Free.

#### How do you cope witnessing such cruelty?

Often, it only really hits you when you get home and you process what you've seen. In the moment, you're so focused on the technical aspects and capturing the images, you don't necessary have time to take everything in. There is also an element of desensitisation, having seen so much suffering over so many years. Compassion fatigue, if you will. This career has no doubt taken its toll on my mental and physical health. However, what I go through is nothing compared to what many animals experience at the hands of humans.





An image I took of elephants walking through a palm oil plantation in 2017 went on to be a winner at Wildlife Photographer of the Year. The picture made such an impact, and the publicity helped shine a light on a little-known story. It also helped to further my career, enabling me to work on more assignments, leading to imagery that has had a similar impact.

#### Does your work put you in danger?

Yes, definitely. When your work jeopardises the livelihoods of gangsters and criminals, it can lead to some sticky situations! All you can try and do is try and prepare properly and cover your tracks. And when you end up in dangerous situations, it's amazing what a smile can do!

#### Why do you support Born Free?

Born Free is one of the leading organisations focusing on animals in captivity. With many years' experience working in this field, you are a name people listen to and respect.

#### Any special plans in the pipeline?

Two hardcore jobs at the end of this year. One involving a drought in Africa that could see many elephants dying, and then the largest animal sacrifice on Earth in Nepal. I'll be needing a little break after these two...

#### What are your long-term dreams?

It boggles my mind that in the 21st Century, people are still riding elephants and watching orangutans box each other. Aspects of the tourism industry cause so much unnecessary suffering, which is tantamount to torture. I want to live in a world where animals aren't just seen as commodities to eat, exploit or enjoy.





#### Since we began

With your help, Born Free has rescued and rehomed an incredible 118 big cats and 14 little cats:











4 CARACALS



#### Where do the cats come from?

We transform the lives of vulnerable animals who are:

- Orphaned or injured in the wild
- Victims of the illegal pet trade
- Kept in tiny zoo cages
- **Performing in circuses**
- **Exploited in war-zones**

#### Where do the cats live?

In world-class sanctuaries, we create spacious, natural habitat enclosures:

- Up to three acres in size
- With grassy space to run
- Dense undergrowth to explore
- **Bushes to relax under**
- Trees to scratch and scent-mark



#### What do we do with them?

Our expert Rescue & Care team:

- Helps nurse the cats back to health
- 2. Gives them the best possible care for life
- 3. Provides enrichment to keep cats stimulated and active



"Each individual animal matters deeply, which is why rescue lies at the heart of Born Free's work. Through helping each one, we draw attention to the plight of hundreds of others. Safe at their forever homes, these animals experience as wild a life as possible, free from human exploitation and abuse, lavished with expert loving care.

"These rescues give me and everyone at Born Free the strength to continue. But, I never forget the people who make it possible. You, our kind and generous supporters, to whom we owe so much."

#### 1987: Our first rescue

We rescued six tigers from a squalid 'beast wagon', kept illegally at a circus in Kent. We took them to a large, lush forest sanctuary, in their spiritual home of India.



#### 1995: Our first lions

We rescued Anthea and Raffi from a 3m x 2m cage on the roof of a Tenerife restaurant and took them to a rescue centre in Kent, then in 1997 to our new South African sanctuary.



#### **2007: First Ethiopian lion**

We rescued Dolo from a 1m chain in a wooden hut, moving him to our new centre in 2011. He eventually shared an enclosure with a lioness Safia, also rescued from a chain.



#### 2014: The conflict tiger

Wild-born Gopal came in conflict with people by preying on livestock. He now lives in a forest enclosure at our sanctuary in India, cared for by our Wildlife SOS partners.



#### **2020:** Nervous leopards

Mowgli and Zeiss the leopards were rescued from a failed zoo in South Africa. Now they're becoming more confident in their secluded bush enclosures at Shamwari.



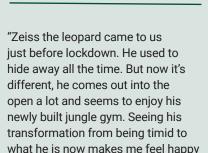
#### 2022: Simba's story

Rescued from illegal trade in Russia. After recovering with Natuurhulpcentrum in Belgium, the young lion now lives at Animanatura Wild Sanctuary, our partners in Italy.



"Our dedication to tigers such as Gopal, reflects our deep love and commitment to these majestic animals. Rescued from dangerous human-wildlife conflict by Wildlife SOS and Born Free, Gopal now thrives in a peaceful, forested enclosure, receiving the best possible care. Protecting these wild cats is our duty and our privilege."

Kartick Satyanarayan Co-Founder & CEO Wildlife SOS



that we are doing something so positive in his life."

Martin Miritiawo Senior Animal Care Assistant Shamwari, South Africa



"Simba the lion is so playful and full of energy, his beautiful mane flowing as he runs. We feel honoured to look after him for Born Free. I can't wait to go to work! Thinking of the difficult lives the cats had and what they experience now, you feel happy inside. We make their lives as perfect as possible, to make up for what was taken from them."

Lisa Russo Lead For Overseas Projects Animanatura Wild Sanctuary, Italy





#### **Born Free today**

Thanks to your support, we currently give loving, lifetime care to 43 rescued wild cats:

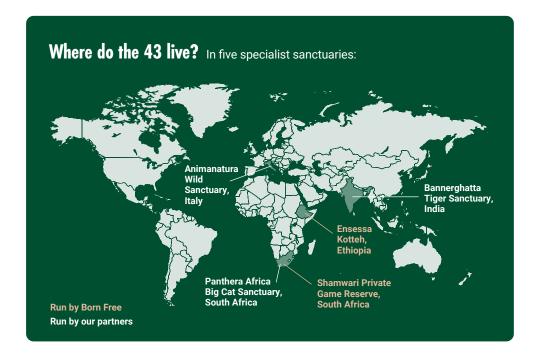












#### How do we enrich their lives?

We provide these complex, apex predators with species-specific enriched care, such as:

- Wooden climbing frames to survey territories
- **Bathing pools for tigers**
- Scent trails with hidden food to explore
- Sacks filled with straw and herbs to play with
- Hanging tubes stuffed with delicious treats
- Meat hidden in straw-filled, tied up boxes
- **Delicious meaty ice-pops** to gnaw
- Boomer balls to chase

#### Who looks after the cats?

Our devoted teams, who provide specialised care and lots of love, include:

- Vets & a vet technician
- Sanctuary & animal care managers
- **Animal carers and** assistants
- **Construction &** maintenance
- Security

#### How much does it cost?

Every year, with your help, Born Free spends over £700,000 caring for cats.



Thank you so much!

#### How do you help?

None of this life-changing work for big cats would be possible without your loyal and generous help. Thank you for:

- Reporting captive suffering to bornfree.org.uk/raise-the-red-flag
- Donating to our appeals eg: bornfree.org.uk/save-cheetahs
- Adopting an individual animal or family: bornfree.org.uk/adopt

"Every animal matters. That is at the heart of our Rescue and Care work. But it is only possible thanks to the dedication and expertise of the sanctuary teams and you - our incredible supporters. You help make a difference to the lives of rescued cats, big and small. Thank you - we can't do it without you!"

Maggie Balaskas Head of Rescue & Care, Born Free





Meet Bereket Girma, Born Free's remarkable Country Director in Ethiopia and manager of our Ensessa Kotteh wildlife centre, which rescues wild animals in need and is the only facility of its kind in the country.

I have been 16 years working for Born Free and I love it. I enjoy all my days – from rescue operations to the daily routine. I have a young family, but most weekdays I am at Ensessa Kotteh from 8.30 in the morning until early evening, although sometimes later.

I used to work for Omo National Park as a construction supervisor, but was the first staff member to be recruited for Born Free in Ethiopia. That was so exciting, and it all started with a lion called Dolo, chained in a tiny room. To rehome him, with the wildlife authorities' help we built Ensessa Kotteh, our beautiful sanctuary for animals rescued from illegal ownership, human-wildlife conflict and wildlife trafficking – which is a big problem.

Ethiopia is landlocked and there is big demand for cheetahs as pets in the Middle East, with illegal traffickers coming from Somalia. They shoot mum and take the cubs. There are also lots of other captive animals in Ethiopia, like primates and tortoises, kept in private properties with little space. We work closely with the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA). They are very strong and our good partner, doing lots of training and awareness creation on law enforcement.

We have over 160 rescued animals at Ensessa Kotteh, from a diverse range of species. We are a genuine sanctuary, so no breeding, no exploitation. We release the animals back to the wild if we can. But most have endured too much to be released and will stay safely in our care for the rest of their lives. They live in big enclosures with natural vegetation, but even this can't compare to their wild habitat, so every day we provide lots of enrichment to keep each species active, and to exercise and play.

It's illegal to keep any wild animal as a pet. So, if one has been reported the EWCA inform us, and we prepare a rescue plan. A rescue can be challenging and dangerous. I can drive for many hours to rescue cheetah cubs from a remote place and often the roads aren't great. Local authorities will also be involved, so we create awareness when we rescue the animal.

I love all the animals at Ensessa Kotteh. Dolo will always be extra precious to me, but I have a special attachment with all the animals. I have been involved in all the rescues. They are like my babies! We need a lot of help to feed and look after them, including veterinary care. So, on behalf of the animals, thank you so much to everyone who supports us. We really appreciate your donations.

I'm so proud of the great team I am working with. I'm really blessed and lucky to work with these people. They respect nature and wildlife, and love what they are doing.

Cheetahs are one of the most highly trafficked animals in East Africa, including here in Ethiopia. We have to stop this illegal trade. We currently look after nine cheetahs at Ensessa Kotteh. By donating to Born Free's cheetah appeal, supporters will not only help us care for them, but also allow us to be ready to jump in and rescue other cheetahs whenever needed.

#### YOU CAN HELP

To support incredible Bereket and help rescue and look after cheetahs, please donate to our Save Cheetahs this Christmas appeal:



- Visit bornfree.org.uk/save-cheetahs
- Call 01403 240170
- Return the enclosed gift form in the reply envelope no stamp needed

# WILDLIFE AND YOUR LEGACY



#### TO FIND OUT MORE

Visit: bornfree.org.uk/leave-a-gift Email: carina@bornfree.org.uk

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