



BIG LIFE
FOUNDATION

2023

IMPACT REPORT



OUR MISSION

On the ground in East Africa, partnering with local communities to protect nature for the benefit of all.

OUR VISION

We believe that if conservation supports people, then people will support conservation.

2023 was a year of immense growth for Big Life.

The previous year was defined by a devastating drought that stretched our resources thin as we fought to protect the most vulnerable parts of our ecosystem. We succeeded, thanks to the generous support of our donors.

Since then, we have received good rains, and wildlife populations are recovering. The relief that came with the rains has allowed us to redouble our efforts to protect critical habitat areas. At the request of local communities, we are heavily involved in helping to develop land use plans that protect the overall health of the ecosystem. We are also actively working to secure the most heavily-used wildlife migration corridors, protecting them from development via conservation leases. This includes the Nairrabala corridor north of Amboseli National Park, as well as areas in Mbirikani, Kimana and Eselengei.

In the meantime, our ranger teams are expanding and focusing on keeping wildlife and wild lands safe from illegal activity. This includes mitigating human-wildlife conflict, preventing poaching, arresting traffickers, and supporting wildlife rescues. It also means preventing illegal land development and habitat destruction. As always, our rangers are stepping up to the challenges that a changing landscape is handing to us.

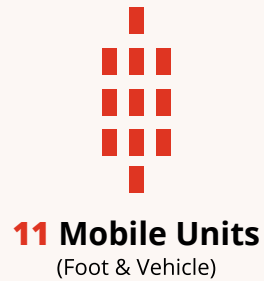
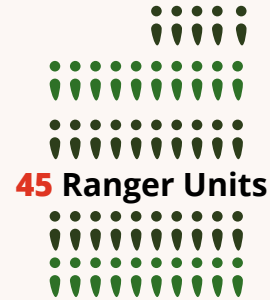
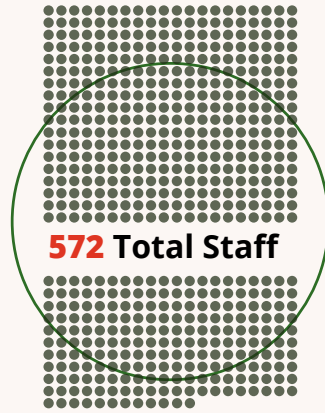
In some cases, our success creates new challenges. A thriving lion population is testing the boundaries of our predator protection programs, and despite any setbacks we experienced in 2023, we have come out the other side stronger with renewed commitments from the community for lion conservation. The lion population now numbers more than 250, a dramatic improvement from when we started our Predator Compensation Fund 20 years ago, when there were as few as 20 lions in the ecosystem.

None of our work protecting the Greater Amboseli ecosystem is possible without you, our donors. Thank for you for helping to keep our boots on the ground and eyes on the horizon.

Sincerely,

Richard Bonham, Co-Founder and Executive Chairman
Benson Leyian, Chief Executive Officer
Craig Millar, Chief Operating Officer
Big Life Kenya

2023
Year in Review

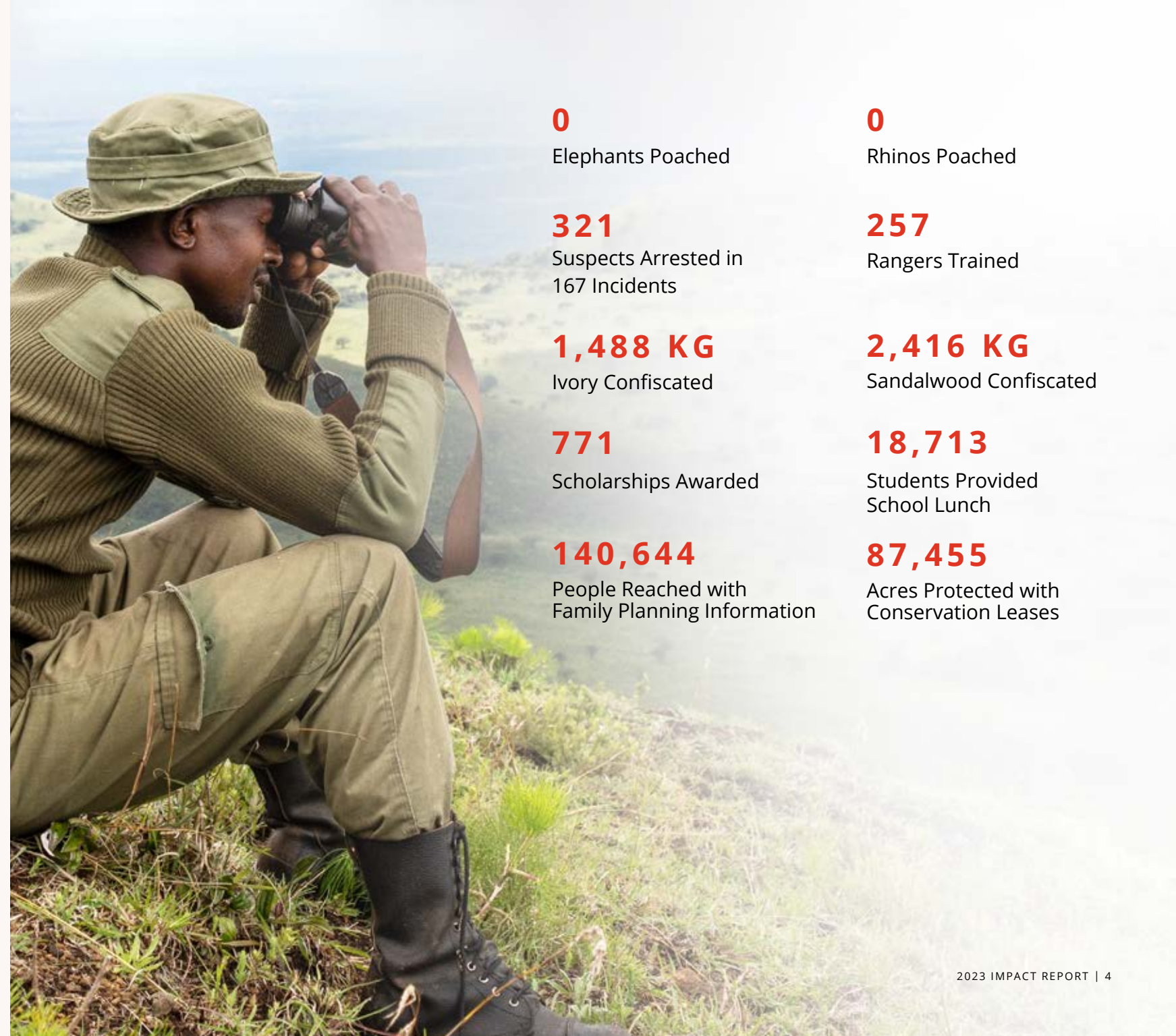


TOTAL KILOMETERS PATROLLED

On Foot: **182,269**

By Vehicle: **604,939**

By Plane: **30,912**



0
Elephants Poached

0
Rhinos Poached

321
Suspects Arrested in
167 Incidents

257
Rangers Trained

1,488 KG
Ivory Confiscated

2,416 KG
Sandalwood Confiscated

771
Scholarships Awarded

18,713
Students Provided
School Lunch

140,644
People Reached with
Family Planning Information

87,455
Acres Protected with
Conservation Leases

AREA OF OPERATION

Big Life’s Area of Operation (AOO) covers approximately 1.6 million acres of the Greater Amboseli Ecosystem in East Africa.

Our team of 550+ helps to protect wildlife and secure critical habitats stretching from north of Amboseli National Park to the Chyulu Hills and Tsavo West National Parks in the east, and south to Kilimanjaro National Park. The ecosystem is part of a region that is one of the most biodiverse, and contains some of the highest densities of large mammals, in the world.

The ecosystem crosses an international border and Big Life was the first organization in the region to conduct collaborative cross-border patrols between Kenya and Tanzania, where we continue to support community rangers.

Our AOO is divided into a core area with a permanent ranger presence that is also regularly patrolled by mobile units, a non-core area that is actively covered by our intelligence network and where mobile units respond based on need, and adjacent areas where we provide support to partners when requested.

Core AOO:

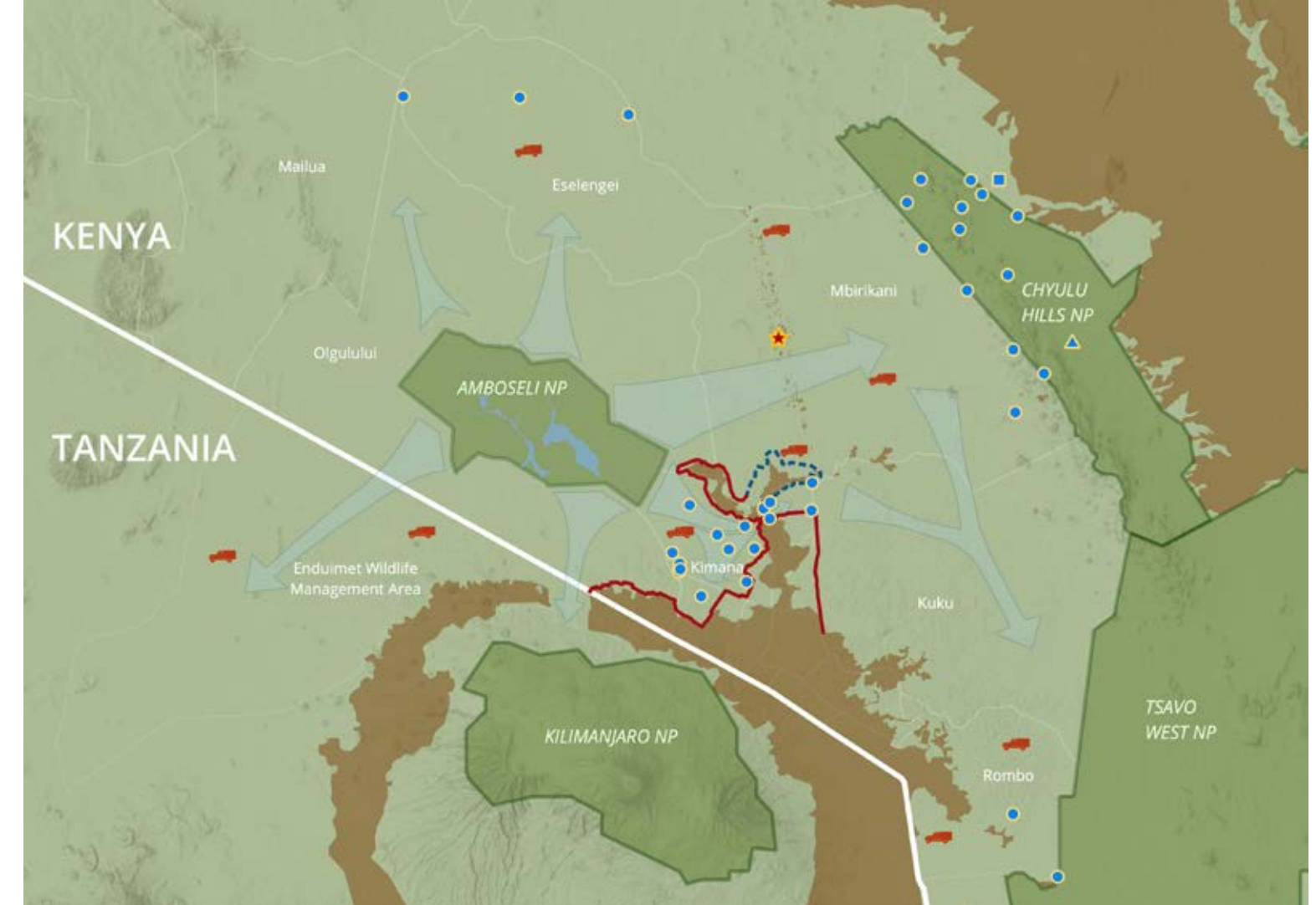
Chyulu Hills National Park
Enduimet Wildlife Management Area (Tanzania)
Eselengei
Kimana
Mbirikani
Rombo

Non-Core AOO:

Mailua Ranch
Merrueshi Ranch
Taveta Area

Adjacent Areas:

Amboseli National Park
Kuku
Olgulului
Tsavo West National Park



★ Big Life Headquarters

● Ranger Outposts

▲ Mobile Foot Unit

■ Home-based Community Units

🚚 Mobile Ranger Units

▬ Wildlife Migration Routes

■ National Parks

■ Agricultural Areas

— Completed Fence

- - - Planned Fence

WILDLIFE PROTECTION

The Greater Amboseli ecosystem is one of the richest wildlife regions left in Africa. But the same animals that make it famous also put it in the crosshairs for wildlife crime.

Some species face greater threats than others, but Big Life's rangers work closely with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and other field partners to protect all wildlife in our area of operation. This includes everything from stopping poachers, to mitigating human-wildlife conflict, to coordinating rescues and veterinary care for wildlife.

As a result, many threatened wildlife populations are increasing, including elephant, giraffe, and even lions.

ELEPHANTS

Amboseli is famous for its elephants. They've been intensively studied by our partners at the Amboseli Trust for Elephants since the 1970s, which is how we know so much about them, including their complex emotions and social lives. One of the reasons Big Life was established was to stop ivory poaching in the Greater Amboseli ecosystem and thanks to our rangers and supporting partners, not a single elephant has been poached in our AOO since March of 2018.

In 2023, a new and surprisingly legal threat emerged for Amboseli's elephants. Just across the border in Tanzania, where Big Life supports 20 rangers, elephant trophy hunting has inexplicably resumed after a 29-year hiatus. Multiple tuskers (extraordinary elephants with at least one tusk weighing 100+ lbs) were legally killed by hunters in 2023, a tragic loss.

0

Elephants Poached

39

Elephant Mortalities

Causes

- 15 Human-Elephant Conflict
- 6 Natural Causes
- 15 Unknown (most suspected natural)
- 3 Human-Related (including trophy hunting)

97%

Ivory Recovery Rate

(following elephant deaths)

5

Elephant Rescues

26

Elephant Injuries

19*

Elephant Injuries Treated

**Rescues & treatments done in collaboration with our partners at Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and Kenya Wildlife Service*



RHINOS

The Eastern black rhinoceros is critically endangered. There are estimated to be fewer than 1,000 remaining. A small population has survived in the Chyulu Hills - some of the last wild and unfenced black rhinos in East Africa and the remnants of a population that Big Life intends to re-establish as a stronghold for the species in Kenya.

All of our anti-poaching and monitoring efforts are conducted in close collaboration with KWS. Specially trained Big Life rangers use traditional tracking methods, camera traps, and live sightings to maintain an accurate record of the rhinos' whereabouts and actively patrol the area for threats like snares or poacher incursions.

Most excitingly, in 2023 the Chyulu rhino population grew from 7 to 8. A tiny rhino calf was spotted on a routine check of a remote camera trap. Given how small the population is, every baby is a cause for celebration and our rangers will do everything they can to ensure it survives.

0

Rhino Mortalities

1

Rhino Birth

57 Rhino Protection Rangers

10 Dedicated Rhino Units/Outposts

3 Water Points

70 km Fencing

45 Camera Traps

5 Direct Sightings

147 Indirect Sightings (via camera trap)

46 Spoor Sightings

Learn more about our rhino protection program:



Big Life operates an ever-expanding intelligence network that extends far beyond our AOO, supplying information on illegal activity. Working with KWS, the targeted responses are extremely effective and hundreds of criminals have been taken out of wildlife poaching and trade syndicates. Of the 321 suspects arrested in 2023, more than 90% of the arrests were driven by intelligence.

BUSHMEAT

Bushmeat poaching occurs for two reasons: protein for subsistence, or meat to sell for income. It usually spikes in the dry season, when crop farms are inactive and both food and legitimate paying work are harder to come by. The rains were much better in 2023 compared to an intense drought the previous year, resulting in a reduction in bushmeat poaching, but the black market for bushmeat never goes away.

75

Suspects Arrested in 45 Bushmeat Poaching Incidents

1,643+ KG

Bushmeat Confiscated

8

Suspects Arrested in 3 Bushmeat Poaching Attempts

ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

Hunting is not legal in Kenya, but poaching of animals to supply the trade in their parts still occurs. This includes everything from animal skins to teeth, horns, tusks, scales, or claws, to be turned into decorations or used in traditional medicine. Poaching of this type is extremely rare in Amboseli, thanks to conservation efforts, and most of the confiscated items, like ivory, are from animals killed outside our AOO.

101

Suspects Arrested in 48 Trophy Possession Incidents

1,488 KG

Ivory Confiscated

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Living among charismatic megafauna might sound wonderful, but reality often paints a very different picture. From elephants raiding their crops to lions preying on their livestock, the Amboseli Maasai community is often at risk of injury or even death from living in close proximity with wildlife populations.

If the local community is to support conservation, then conservation must also support the local community, and that includes mitigating the impacts of human-wildlife conflict whenever possible. Big Life's solutions are based on decades of experience, and span everything from keeping elephants out of farms to compensating livestock owners for losses to apex predators like lions, among others.

Our holistic conservation model is designed to keep both people and animals safe across Greater Amboseli, and the result can be seen in local attitudes to wildlife and conservation.



HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT

Elephants are intelligent and emotionally complex animals, but their incredible size and strength means that they can be destructive, even deadly. From raiding crops, damaging water supply infrastructure, trampling livestock, and even causing human injuries and death, elephants can be extremely challenging to live alongside.

Working to support co-existence takes a lot of resources and manpower. That includes Big Life ranger units dedicated to monitoring elephant movements and preventing crop raiding. It also requires maintenance of 100 km of strategic electric fencing that we constructed to keep elephants out of farms, and which elephants are growing increasingly adept at breaking. Conflict in the areas with fencing has been reduced by more than 90%, but 15 elephants were still lost due to conflict elsewhere in the ecosystem.



15
Conflict-Caused Elephant Mortalities

123
Crop-Raiding Incidents

57
Acres of Crops Damaged by Elephants

66
Crop Raids Prevented by Rangers

100 KM
Crop-Protection Fencing Maintained

32
Fence Maintenance Workers

61
Additional Conflict Incidents Involving Elephants (water tank and plumbing destruction, etc)

13
Livestock Killed by Elephants

3
Retaliatory Elephant Hunts Prevented by Rangers

Learn more about our crop-protection fence



PREDATOR COMPENSATION FUND

Africa’s lion population has been in steep decline, by some estimates as much as 43% in the last 20 years.

But here in Amboseli, 2023 marked a 20-year milestone of a different kind: the launch of Big Life’s Predator Compensation Fund (PCF). The program was created in close collaboration with local communities to help prevent retaliatory lion killings in response to livestock depredation. A formal verification process confirms eligible incidents, and varying amounts of compensation are issued depending on the circumstances and species involved.

Since launching the program in 2003, there’s been a 95% reduction in the monthly average number of lions killed in the ecosystem. But more excitingly, the local lion population has grown from as few as 20 to more than 250 individuals (monitoring done by Lion Guardians).

The numbers are worth celebrating and we acknowledge our partners, including Lion Guardians and Born Free Foundation, who have played a part in this success story.

There is work yet to be done. One notable incident in 2023 involved the tragic loss of 6 lions. Emotions were running high after an intense drought that had devastated livestock numbers, and repeated depredations by one group of lions pushed a tense situation over the edge.

We’ve come out of it stronger: with a renewed community commitment to PCF and much-needed dialogue around the role lions play in the ecosystem and the need to protect them.



Compensation Issued for Predation

Cows: 394









Sheep/Goats: 1,496

Donkeys: 22

**TOTAL LIVESTOCK KILLED:
1,912**

**TOTAL COMPENSATION PAID:
\$129,036**

Livestock Killed By

 HYENA Total: 1,116 58%	 LION Total: 465 24%	 JACKAL Total: 138 7%	 CHEETAH Total: 136 7%
 LEOPARD Total: 36 2%	 ELEPHANT Total: 30 <1%	 CARACAL Total: 4 <1%	 PAINTED DOG Total: 2 <1%

Lion Statistics

20 Lion Mortalities

Causes

Natural Causes: **2**

Human-Wildlife Conflict: **16**

Feral Dogs: **1**

Unknown: **1**

8 Lion Deaths in Violation of PCF Rules

10 Retaliatory Hunts Attempted

6 Retaliatory Hunts Stopped

MAASAI OLYMPICS

The Maasai Olympics represent a history-changing shift from lion killing to lion conservation. Every two years, teams compete in a local organized sports event based on traditional warrior skills to replace the long-held tradition of hunting lions as a mark of bravery and prestige.

2023 was an “off” year for the games, but they will resume in 2024, culminating in the Maasai Olympic Finals on December 14, 2024.



HABITAT PROTECTION

The world changes, and conservation efforts must adapt to stay relevant.

The largest threat to Amboseli's wildlife was historically from poachers. Together with partners, we've tackled this. We haven't lost a single elephant to poachers since March 2018, nor a rhino since September 2015. However, we've had to broaden our focus to tackle new challenges, the most urgent of which is the threat to natural habitats.

The wild spaces of Amboseli have always been informally protected by the Maasai pastoralist way of life, and communal land tenure that put community needs ahead of the individual.

This has changed dramatically, through a recent process of land subdivision that has broken large areas into tens of thousands of private land parcels.

Amboseli was at risk of losing its open savannahs.

To prevent this, Big Life has supported proper land use planning, and is now working with communities to create structures and incentives to protect migratory corridors and grazing areas, for the benefit of wildlife and livestock-based livelihoods.

Rangeland Restoration

'Rangeland degradation' has reduced the productivity of hundreds of thousands of acres of land in Amboseli. Restoring rangeland health is possible, and we've established 5 pilot sites thanks to partners, including Apple Inc., Conservation International, JustDiggIt, and WWF. Community teams are working to control erosion and increase grass cover in these areas that have been temporarily protected from grazing, giving the land a chance to recover, while providing jobs in the process.

14,150 Acres of Rangeland Restoration Area

102,322 Anti-Erosion Bunds Installed

2,102 Acres Reseeded

466 People Employed

REDD+ Carbon Project

Big Life has joined with community, government, and NGO partners to implement the Chyulu Hills REDD+ Project, part of a global network of interventions helping communities to conserve forests and other important carbon stores.

The Chyulu REDD+ project supports the protection of over 1 million acres of land, resulting in the storage of over 37 million metric tons of carbon. More than 2 million high-quality credits have been sold, the revenue from which is reinvested into the community and conservation efforts.

Habitat Destruction & Encroachment

Illegal activities like charcoal production, arson, logging (especially of high-value protected species like sandalwood), unregulated sand harvesting, and water over-extraction are ongoing challenges in Big Life's AOO.

89 Suspects Arrested in 41 Habitat Destruction Incidents

45 Incidents of Conservancy/Grazing/Land Use Rules Enforcement

2,416 KG Sandalwood Confiscated

CONSERVATION LEASES

There's no point fighting to save wildlife if there's no space left for animals to live.

Land subdivision has left Amboseli at risk of splintering. The resultant land sales, fencing, and land-use conversion to agriculture threaten the fabric of the ecosystem. If animals cannot move freely, they die. It's that simple.

As the Greater Amboseli ecosystem changes, so has our focus to prioritizing long-term solutions to save the natural spaces that remain. Big Life has worked with communities to delineate wildlife movement corridors in need of protection, as well as open rangelands necessary for wildlife and livestock grazing.

For the most important of these, we are actively partnering with local communities and offering conservation land leases. Under these voluntary agreements, we pay lease fees to individual landowners. In return, wildlife can continue to move freely, and landowners retain full shared access to the area for livestock grazing, while prohibiting fencing and unsustainable uses. It's the ultimate win-win.

Big Life has signed leases on 2,448 land parcels, covering 87,455 acres, but this is just the start. Leases are needed across some 500,000 acres of Big Life's core AOO in the long-term, driving the need for an exponential increase in our already significant budget for conservation leases.

ESELENGEI

683

Landowners Benefitting
from Lease Payments

32,101

Acres Protected

OLGULULUI

1,426

Landowners Benefitting
from Lease Payments

29,946

Acres Protected

KIMANA CONSERVANCIES (ALOCA)

336

Landowners Benefitting
from Lease Payments

19,708

Acres Protected

KIMANA SANCTUARY

844

Landowners Benefitting
from Lease Payments

5,700

Acres Protected

1,789

Paying Visitor Days

MBIRIKANI

124,163

Acres Retained Under
Communal Ownership
for Conservation and
Livestock Grazing

2,200

Title Deeds Processed
with Rangeland
Land-Use Restrictions



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Conservation should contribute to the development needs of local communities, rather than compete with them, and all Big Life conservation programs have been conceived with this in mind.

Big Life is the second largest single employer of people from the Greater Amboseli ecosystem (after the Teachers Commission). Our programs provide direct community support, not only through this employment, but also through lease payments, tourism revenue, and by supporting education and healthcare.

Our long relationships and continuous efforts to address human needs through the programs described below have generated trust and all-important goodwill toward conservation, and are a key reason that our wildlife and habitat protection efforts have been successful.



EDUCATION & SCHOLARSHIPS

One of the biggest conservation-related benefits for our partner Communities is education. Primary school tuition is free in Kenya but many families struggle to pay the auxiliary costs (uniforms, school books, etc). To help, Big Life offers scholarships for secondary/tertiary tuition and related expenses for local students at all education levels. We place an equal emphasis on girls, since families tend to favor sons when deciding which children to send to school. Thanks to our generous supporters, since 2000 we have provided more than 1,977 scholarships and paid for more than 8,000 school terms.

Big Life also helps to fund teachers' salaries, supports school infrastructure projects like dormitories, and implemented a school lunch program during the drought.

18,713
Students Provided
School Lunch Across
54 Schools

453
Long-Term
Scholarships Awarded
Boys: 177 // Girls: 276

318
One-Time
Scholarships Awarded

\$369,157
Scholarships Awarded

14
Tertiary-Level
Graduates

7
Teachers' Salaries Paid

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

The program is focused on 12 to 13-year-olds and includes a 6-part lesson series, trips to protected areas, and Junior Ranger Clubs.

7,738
Students Reached with
Conservation Education via
134 School Visits

73
Students Participated in
National Park Trips



HEALTHCARE

Working in close coordination with the Kajiado South Department of Health, Big Life facilitates the provision of primary health care, family planning services, immunizations, and antenatal check-ups across the Greater Amboseli ecosystem.

Big Life is also working to improve sexual and reproductive health and rights education for both the wider community and for youth and adolescents in local schools. This approach improves individual health outcomes and helps to build more resilient and empowered communities.

- 296** Medical Backpack Outreaches
- 310** Family Planning Dialogue Days
- 150** Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights School Talks
- 795** Child Rights Club Meetings
- 38,305** Community Health Volunteer Household Visits
- 8,283** People Dewormed
- 12,600** Immunizations Administered
- 7,755** Family Planning Services Provided
- 140,644** People Reached with Family Planning Information
- 8,456** People Receiving Primary Healthcare

ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT

We are not separate from the community, but an integral part of it. Big Life rangers assist with needs that range from intervention in crime, to search and rescue efforts, to emergency transportation.

- 28** Arrests for Community Crimes
- 29** Search & Rescue Operations for Missing People
- 8** Search & Rescue Operations for Missing Livestock
- 13** Emergency Hospital Transports

IN MEMORIAM



Corporal Agnes Sopil
Big Life Ranger



Joan Seleyian
Community Health Project Officer

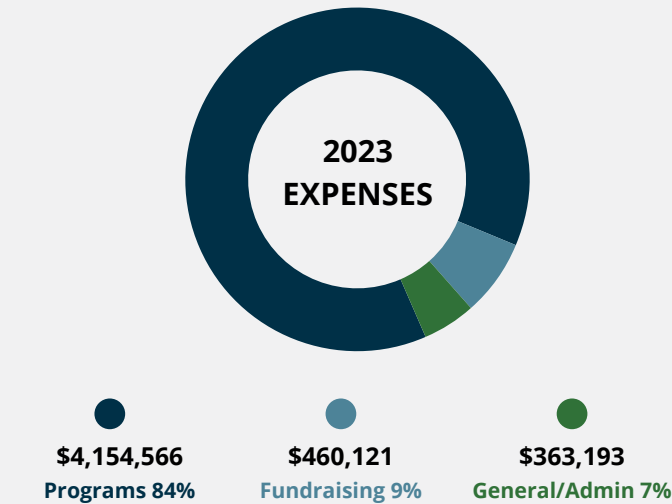
FINANCIALS

Organization: Big Life Foundation USA | Period: January to December 2023 | Currency: US Dollars

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

INCOME	2023	2022
Contributions & Grants	\$5,323,936	\$6,771,010
In-Kind Contributions	\$108,820	\$89,973
Other Income	\$125,551	\$12,177
Total Income	\$5,558,307	\$6,873,160
EXPENSES		
Programs	\$4,154,566	\$4,995,753
General/Admin	\$363,193	\$293,994
Fundraising ¹	\$460,121	\$419,410
Total Expenses	\$4,977,880	\$5,709,157
Change in Net Assets	\$580,427	\$1,164,003
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	\$3,935,996	\$2,771,993
Net Assets, End of Year ²	\$4,516,423	\$3,935,996

At Big Life, we **maximize every penny** of your contributions. **84¢** out of every **\$1** donated goes directly towards our mission of protecting wildlife and wild lands for the benefit of all.



Our Form 990 tax filings and audited financial statements are available online at: biglife.org/about-big-life/financials.

¹ Big Life receives up to \$120,000/yr of [free online advertising](#) from a Google Ad Grant. Auditing standards require us to categorize this donated advertising as a fundraising expense.

² Big Life maintains two Board-designated funds. One is a reserve fund to be drawn upon in the event of financial distress or an immediate liquidity need resulting from events outside typical operations of the organization, the other is restricted for future land-related expenses.

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To all of our Board of Directors and Advisory Board members, who invest considerable amounts of time, resources, expertise, in-kind donations, and financial contributions towards achieving our mission: THANK YOU.



We are grateful for the support of our partners, including:

Field Partners

- 51 Degrees
- African Conservation Centre
- African People & Wildlife
- African Wildlife Foundation
- Amboseli Conservation Program
- Amboseli Ecosystem Trust
- Amboseli Landowners Conservancy Association
- Amboseli Trust for Elephants
- Amboseli Tsavo Community Wildlife Ranger Association
- Association of Private Land Rhino Sanctuaries
- Born Free
- Capricorn Foundation
- Chase Africa
- Chyulu Hills Conservation Trust
- Conservation Alliance of Kenya
- Conservation International
- EarthRanger
- Elephant Crisis Fund
- Enduimet Wildlife Management Area
- ForRangers
- International Fund for Animal Welfare
- International Monetary Fund
- JustDiggIt
- Kajiado South Sub-County Department of Health
- Kenya Wildlife Service
- Kinetic6
- LeadRanger

Corporate Partners

- 1% for the Planet
- Electric Forest
- Elephant Gin
- Mazarin Paris
- Memo Paris
- Part Time Rangers
- Temple St. Clair

Tourism Partners

- Amboseli Bush Camp
- Angama Amboseli
- Elephant Gorge Camp
- Gamewatchers Safaris
- Great Plains Conservation
- Kilimanjaro Balloon Safaris
- Odysseys Unlimited
- Tawi Lodge
- Tulia Amboseli Safari Camp

Zoo Partners

- Beauval Nature
- Chester Zoo
- Oakland Zoo
- Ouwehands Zoo Foundation
- Play for Nature
- Zoo Basel
- Zoo Dresden
- Zoo Verein Wuppertal E.V

- Lion Guardians
- Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust
- Maliasili
- Mara Elephant Project
- Mellmann Foundation
- National Environment Management Authority
- National Geographic Society's Big Cats Initiative
- Northern Rangelands Trust
- Ranger Campus
- Satao Elerai Safari Camp
- Save the Elephants
- Save the Rhino International
- Saving the Wild
- Seedballs Kenya
- Sheldrick Wildlife Trust
- Southern Rift Association of Land Owners
- Space for Giants
- Tanzania National Parks Authority
- Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority
- The Thin Green Line Foundation
- Tsavo Trust
- Tusk Trust
- U.S. Agency for International Development
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Wildlife Conservation Network
- Wildlife Direct
- WildlifeWorks
- World Agroforestry Centre
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and Donate*

