



ZAMBEZI DELTA ECOLOGY

HOLISTIC ECOSYSTEM RESEARCH PROJECT



LION REPORT
FEBRUARY 2020

TWENTY FOUR LIONS

| WETLAND | ADAPTED | LIONS |

ADAPTATION

“the process whereby an organism becomes better able to live in its habitat”

The Twenty Four Lions reintroduction project has clearly shown that lions truly are adaptable cats. Lions are known to occur in a wide variety of habitats, from deserts to floodplains. However, this is potentially the first time to see lions transition from one extreme habitat to another. Seeing lions swimming across rivers and successfully hunting in a floodplain is one thing, but knowing that some of these lions originally came from arid, desert environments is another. Below is a sequence of photographs taken of Tame Pride female TSW-F004 (originally from the Kalahari desert) swimming across a river. Although not pictured here, she killed two subadult Lichtenstein’s hartebeest on the edge of this river. Seeing these lions adapt so well to their new, wetland environment has been incredible to witness and shows that the Zambezi Delta is prime territory for lions.



MONITORING

February has been very productive from a monitoring and data collection perspective. In total, we have recorded more than 75 lion sightings and 30 lion kills for the month. Getting visuals on all the lions helps us to regularly assess their body condition and gather crucial life history information. We have also recorded a few more additions to population, most notably seven cubs from the Tembe Pride, and we are still to confirm the number of cubs from two more females that have given birth recently. Here is a breakdown of the population as of 29 February 2020:

Age Class	Number
Adults (>2 years)	20
Subadults (1-2 year)	9
Cubs (<1 year)	21
Total	50

HELICOPTERS VS VEHICLES

At this point last year, there was considerably more rainfall, however, even with the comparatively lower rainfall, searching for lions by vehicle will only be possible later on in the year (i.e. the dry season). This did not stop us from trying though, but our efforts didn't last very long as we managed to get the vehicle stuck close to the main road (only 200 meters from the lions). Fortunately, we managed to get ourselves out! Unfortunately, we did not see the lions. This again emphasizes the importance of using helicopters to monitor the Zambezi Delta lions. It is only by the generous aerial support provided by the Cabela Family Foundation, that we are able to successfully monitor this population.



PLUS 7

TEMBE PRIDE

We recently welcomed seven more cubs to the rapidly growing lion population. These cubs are from the Tembe pride, with four cubs belonging to TEM-F004 and the other three to TEM-F003. These cubs were born at the end of 2019 and are currently about 2.5 - 3 months old.

The Tembe pride spends the majority of their time along the floodplain edge in an area known as Beto's Island (see image below) and it is also currently the preferred hangout for the dominant Mozambican male lion (MOZ-M001), who has sired 27 cubs to date. He has also been seen mating with the third pride female (TEM-F002). So watch this space!

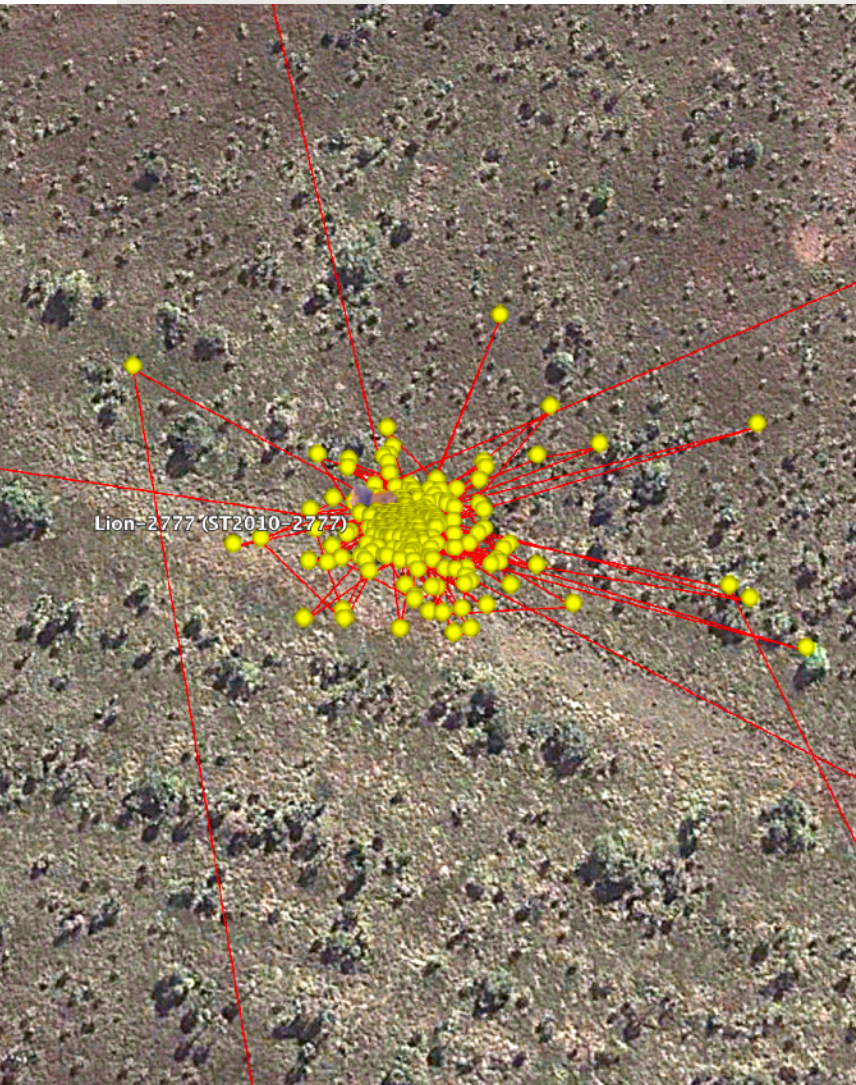


ANOTHER SUCCESS STORY

KAR-F001

If there is one lioness that has shown to be a true fighter it is KAR-F001. In 2019, we found this female caught up in wire snares on two separate occasions, one wrapped her waist cutting her deeply (see below) and the other caught her foot causing it to swell about twice its normal size. Fortunately thanks to the aerial support provided by the Cabela Family Foundation, we were able to remove the snares and treat the lioness immediately.

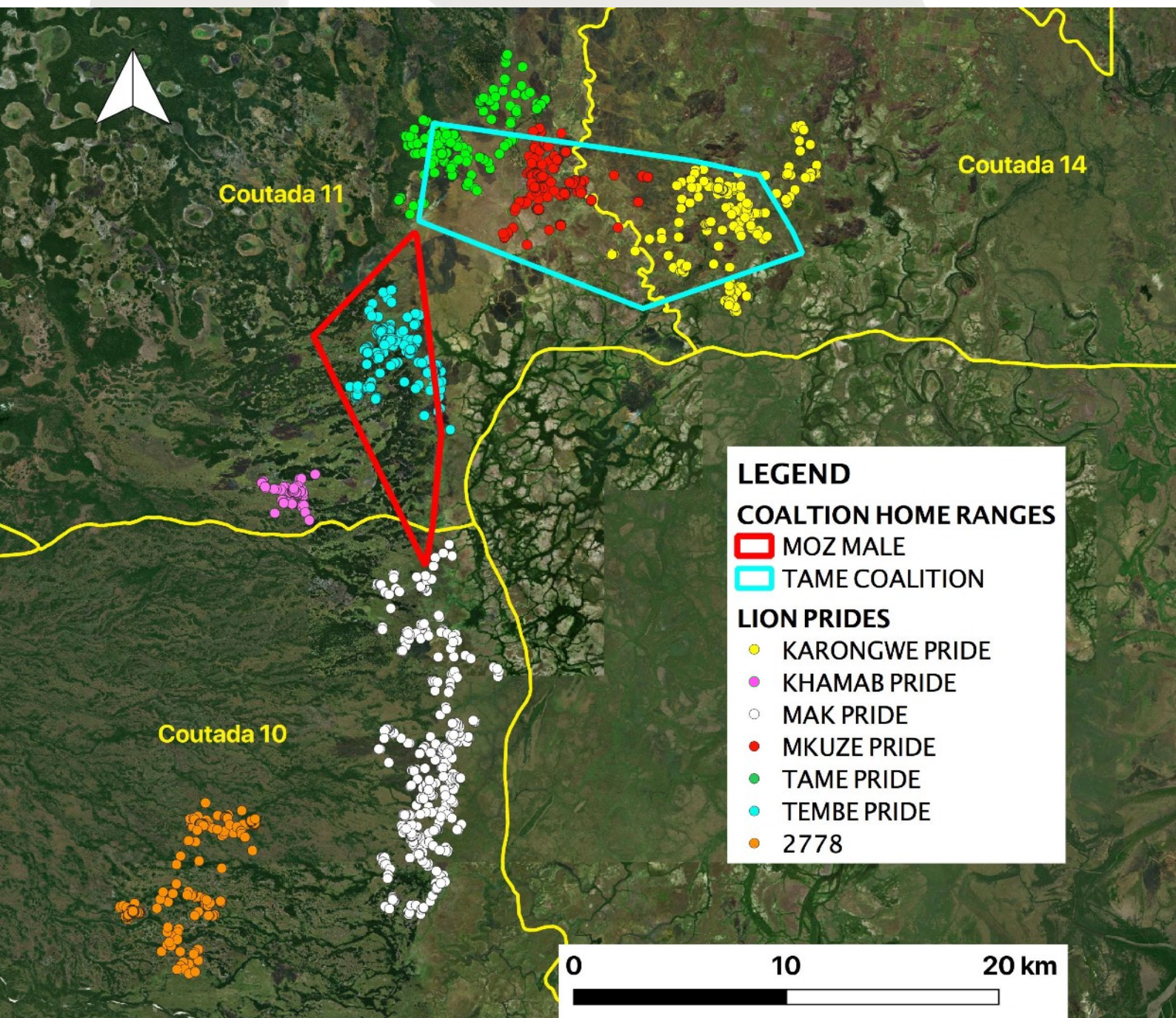
Today, we are excited to report that KAR-F001 started showing signs of *cubbing* this month. This is evident from the star-shaped pattern from her GPS collar data. When female lions have cubs, they normally spend a few weeks (or longer) at a den site, going out to hunt and returning to the den to nurse their cubs. In most cases, our lions tend to den in a thick patch of wild date palms (see below). We will hopefully be able to confirm the number of cubs in the coming month.



LION MOVEMENTS

FEBRUARY 2020

Below is a map of the lion spatial data for February 2020. Pride movements are indicated by GPS fixes (points) and male coalition area usage is indicated by home ranges (polygons). As is clear from the map, no overlap exists between prides or coalitions. The Tame Coalition moves between three prides, while the Mozambican male currently spends the majority of his time with the Tembe pride.





24LIONS

MARCH

- **RE-COLLAR 2 LIONESSES**
- **CONFIRM CUBS OF KAR-F001**
- **DETERMINE SEX OF CUBS/SUBADULTS**