



**ENDANGERED
WILDLIFE TRUST**
Protecting forever, together.

21 August 2019

Tragic death a stark reminder of the urgent need to keep lions Wild 'n Free

Start

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) is saddened at the news of yet another death, which occurred at Mahala View Lion Lodge, as a result of lions being held in captivity. Our thoughts are with the family and friends of Leon van Biljon.

In previous media statements, the EWT has brought to light the numerous human safety, animal welfare, and conservation concerns presented by captive carnivore facilities. This latest tragic incident once again highlights the serious human safety issues associated with these facilities. From open-source records, we have recorded that there have been over 40 incidents, with 13 of these fatal, in South African captive carnivore facilities since 1996. The most recent incident prior to yesterday's fatal attack was a serious attack on a child in May 2019.

We reiterate strongly that there is no conservation requirement or recommendation for any captive breeding or keeping of carnivores in South Africa. Captive breeding does not address the key threats faced by carnivores in the wild, and captive bred lions have no role to play in reintroductions and restorations of wild lion populations. The proliferation of captive carnivore facilities in South Africa is primarily for commercial gain, and at significant cost to human safety and animal wellbeing.

There is no justifiable rationale for the public to be interacting with carnivores in captivity, risking people's lives. The EWT once again strongly calls on government to put in place regulations that will – at the very least – prevent direct contact between humans and captive carnivores, and to shut down all captive carnivore facilities that allow humans and captive carnivores to interact for commercial gain. We call on members of the public to take the [Wild 'n Free pledge](#) and to stop visiting these facilities.

The *Wild 'n Free* pledge: "I pledge to keep all carnivores Wild 'n Free by not petting, walking, feeding, or taking selfies with them. I vow to become an ambassador for wild carnivores and to honour their right to live a natural life. I encourage others to do the same."

End

About the Endangered Wildlife Trust

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) has worked tirelessly for over 45 years to save wildlife and habitats, with our vision being a world in which both humans and wildlife prosper in harmony with nature. From the smallest frog, to the majestic rhino; from sweeping grasslands to arid drylands; from our shorelines to winding rivers: the EWT is working with you, to protect our world.

The EWT's team of field-based specialists works across southern and East Africa, where committed conservation action is needed the most. Working with our partners, including businesses and governments, the EWT is at the forefront of conducting applied research, supporting community conservation and livelihoods, training and building capacity, addressing human wildlife conflict, monitoring threatened species and establishing safe spaces for wildlife range expansion.

A beacon of hope for Africa's wildlife, landscapes and communities, the EWT is protecting forever, together. Find out more at www.ewt.org.za

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