

2019 - 2023



IMPACT REPORT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ANAC AND NIASSA SPECIAL RESERVE



VISION



A unique wilderness of Niassa Special Reserve and surrounds where carnivores and other wildlife continue to persist and thrive with the full participation and support of local communities.

MISSION



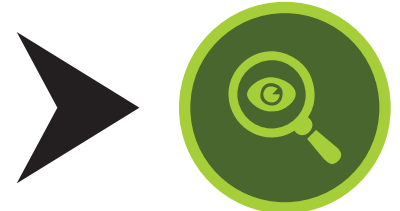
Niassa Carnivore Project (NCP) serves to conserve large carnivores and their prey in Niassa Special Reserve (NSR) by promoting coexistence and through a shared respect for people, their culture, wildlife and the environment.

VALUES



Respect (for each other and the environment), Tchova-Tchova, Communication, Inclusion, Teamwork and Opportunities to Learn.

OVERVIEW



These past 5 years have been difficult ones marked by a need for resilience and courage by our team but also hope. The reduction in elephant poaching with very few elephants killed since 2018 has been a relief and brought much needed stability to NSR but brought a new challenge in an increase in the illegal killing of lion for the trade in lion teeth that is being seen across the region and started in NSR in 2015. In 2020 and 2021 we dealt with Covid-19 which required us to reduce our group activities, reorganise to keep our team safe, get vaccinated and support the emergency evacuation of one of our team to hospital in Maputo. No lives or jobs were lost, and no salaries were decreased. In 2021, the insurgency moved into NSR briefly with villages attacked, people killed, and thousands of people displaced in the Mecula District. NCP had to evacuate our HQ at Mariri Environmental Centre for two months whilst still providing support for our team and their families to get to safety and provided support to the district through transport for people and food in our truck throughout this period. In 2023, Cyclone Freddy brought the Lugenda River down in flood and NCP was evacuated again but with limited damage to infrastructure but major damage to farmer fields in many communities leading to increased food insecurity.

It has also been a period of growth in skills and leadership in our Mozambican team, and increased scaling through collaboration with partners particularly through the Niassa Lion Coalition to address illegal killing of lions, where we provide financial and technical support to four operator partners and ten community partners, provided SMART training support to inside NSR and to Chimanimani National Park and through the continued strengthening of our partnerships with Mozambique Wildlife Alliance and Still Standing.

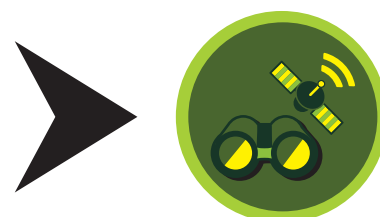
A major challenge has been the high turnover in the NSR co management team and the lack of a clear NSR general management plan with clarity and transparency of objectives, activities, roles, responsibilities and financials from the NSR management team. This will allow us to complement their activities, fill in gaps linked to our own expertise and resources in carnivores and community engagement. This will create a more balanced, holistic, collaborative approach to the landscape level conservation of lions, leopards, spotted hyenas and African wild dog in NSR and will increase the chances of success.

GOAL 1: OUTCOMES BASED, VALUES DRIVEN ORGANISATION



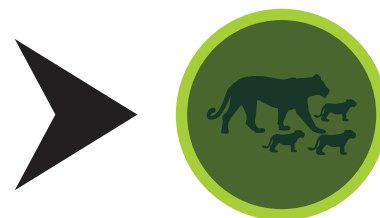
- NCP won the Best Conservation Team award at the African Conservation Awards in 2021.
- 20 years of collaboration between NCP, ANAC, and NSR management under a 5-year rolling MOU.
- A stable team of 107 employees in Mozambique, with 85% born in Niassa Reserve,
- The team is led by three co-directors: Agostinho Jorge, Colleen Begg, and Keith Begg, along with seven managers, all Mozambican (four men and three women).
- Our budget has increased from \$10,000 in 2003 to an annual expenditure of USD 2,692,534 in 2023 .
- The organization has a growing and stable donor base built on long-term relationships and trust, including over 300 individual donors and family foundations.
- USD 2 401 984 paid directly to Niassa residents in salaries and stipends to support the conservation economy and reduce illegal activities.
- Opportunities to Learn is one of our core values, with over 350 training opportunities offered to our team in the past five years ranging from certifications for non literate mechanics, cooks, and electricians to support for BSc, MSc, and PhD studies.
- Two of our team were accepted into the international Emerging Wildlife Conservation Leaders course in the USA, and two others are part of the African Conservation Leaders Network.
- The infrastructure development of NCP HQ and Mariri Environmental Centre is complete, including a 29-bed Mariri Environmental Education and Skills Training Center and three researcher cottages.
- It includes four offices, a small veterinary field laboratory, a honey store, a bottling room, a craft room and shop, a fully equipped workshop and carpentry shop, eight storage areas, a dining hall, and a library.
- All construction on site is led and carried out by Mbamba residents using eco-bricks and thatch, creating a sustainable economy for local men and women.

GOAL 2: CONSERVATION MONITORING



- The major threats to large carnivores in NSR are inadvertent bushmeat snaring and poisoning which not only kills carnivores directly but also reduces their prey, and direct poisoning and snaring for parts, particularly for the escalating international illegal wildlife trade in lion claws and teeth and leopard skins.
- Niassa Carnivore App was developed to streamline the collection of carnivore sightings across NSR.
- Leopard population density was estimated using camera trapping across 8 sites (2021, 2023) and analysed using Spatial Explicit Capture Recapture (SECR). The densities ranged from 0.496 (0.14 - 1.69) leopards /100 km² to 4.54 (2.81 - 7.34) leopards /100 km² showing the high variation in leopard density across NSR linked to conservation management input.
- 6th NSR wide call up survey for lions and hyaenas was completed in 2023 (to match those done in 2005, 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018) to assess density and distribution across NSR with 174 call stations covering 5595km² of NSR surveyed by four teams. It showed low lion densities in the west, open concessions and far east (L9) mirroring the leopard density pattern.
- African wild dogs are monitored through sightings using the community guardian data from 45 villages across NSR which show that the average pack size remains above 7 but packs have declined particularly in the Mecula corridor.
- In 2023, four teams of patrol scouts and expert trackers (all local) walked 1578 km across 580 km². They collected 208 scat samples over three weeks as a pilot to test if scats could be used to determine density using Indigenous knowledge and genetics.
- In the past 5 years (2019 to 2023) a minimum of 44 spotted hyaenas, 40 leopards, 96 lions and 26 African wild dogs have been killed illegally.
- All large carnivores are showing more patchy distribution with populations declining in many areas but likely to be stable and/or increasing in eastern NSR (L8, L7, L5S, L5N).
- NCPs MOMS community guardian program started in 2006 in 5 villages is now active in 45 villages (95% Of NSR villages) with 49 community wildlife guardians collecting information on human wildlife conflict, mortality, honey, fishing and special species sightings.
- This is one of the most important community networks and long-term databases in NSR and is available online for NSR conservation management.

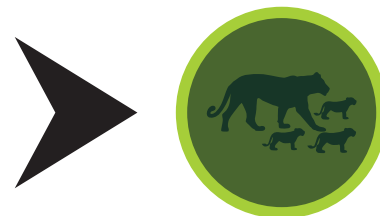
GOAL 3: REDUCE THREATS AND CREATE ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS



REDUCE THREATS

- Our partnership with Mozambique Wildlife Alliance grew to include a vet based full time at Mariri Environmental Center in the dry season to assist NCP with carnivore emergencies and rapid reaction from 2023.
- The NCP Lion Coalition Project was started in 2021 to directly address illegal killing of lions. It established intensive protection zones, provided technical and training assistance and funding to partner concessions to improve antipoaching coverage, monitoring and collaboration.
- The Lion Coalition met its three-year target with 6 operator partners across 11 concessions (28 914km, target was 25, 458 km2) with 14 intensive protection zones covering 9700 km2 and three new NSR concessions trained to use SMART more effectively.
- 19 lion prides and 28 lions have been collared and are monitored and protected through Earthranger across 7 ops rooms with 96 lions currently protected in the collared prides (65 lions over the age of 1 years) with at least 26 cubs born in 2023.
- Since 2006, the MOMS community guardians have collected data on more than 6785 attacks on domestic livestock inside NSR with the data showing that small carnivores particularly black backed jackal, honey badger and African wild cat as well as baboons and eagles are responsible for most of these attacks, not the large carnivores.
- For large carnivores the trend in attacks on livestock are stable and have not increased measurably in the past 5 years although the attacks on goats by hyaenas in western NSR requires attention and is part of our focus for this next phase.
- Attacks on people by large carnivores are relatively rare. NCP has data on 109 recorded lion attacks on people from 1980 to 2023 however in the past 5 years there have been 2 people injured and 4 people killed by lions. All but one of these attacks were in Mavago District.
- A safe behaviours campaign conducted in 2021 in villages across the Mecula District reaching 1757 families showed that only 59% of families were sleeping in safe shelters in the wet season.
- However in one village of 2000 people that has received extensive and repeated education messaging from NCP, more than 98% of people are now sleeping in safe shelters in Mbamba Village compared to 2008 when only 7% were sleeping in Sanja, safe shelters on stilts and 13% were sleeping in reasonably safe shelters on the ground.
- NCP has increased the MOMS community guardian network and has reached our target >90% coverage in NSR villages (45 villages; 49 guardians) and expanded to 5 villages in Chipanje Chetu in partnership with Lipilichi.
- Annual auditing of sport hunted trophies is done by NCP each year in coordination with NSR.
- The percentage offtake of lions (offtake as a percentage of quota) has declined over time from a high of 80% offtake in 2003 until 2018 with an increase in offtake between 2019 to 2023 (30-40%) with 6 to 10 lions taken as trophies each year,
- However, between 75 - 100% of lions are now over the age of 6 years and lion sport hunting is sustainable although illegal offtake needs to be taken into account for those areas where there is poor antipoaching coverage.
- Between 2005 and 2023, 316 individual male leopard trophies were aged by NCP based on teeth wear and only 11 % had significant wear and met the recommended minimum age limit of 7 years for sustainable hunting.
- However there has been a shift in the past three years (2021 -2023) with an increase in the leopards taken in the 4-7 years age category (from 29,7 % to 47,2%) due to ongoing communication on visual aging cues.
- In past 5 years, DNA samples from spotted hyaenas have been taken for sexing and more than 50% are females.

GOAL 3: REDUCE THREATS AND CREATE ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS CONTINUED



LIVELIHOODS

- The CPP (Conservation performance payments through camera trapping) project is active in ten villages in Mecula. More than \$75,000 has been earned by these communities for photos of live animals within 1km of their villages and these funds have been used by the communities to buy food, and construction materials.
- USD 30,000 has been earned by communities directly linked to carnivore presence. To earn more points one village has started voluntarily removing snares around their cameras and this program is highly valued with additional villages requesting to join.
- The NCP beekeeping program has shown a major increase in honey yield and income for 187 beekeepers with 827 hives across 7 villages in the Mecula corridor with more than USD 30,000 earned from honey by beekeepers in cash in 2023 alone.
- Our small livestock programs aimed at producing a viable alternative to bushmeat are on the road to recovery after substantial losses during the insurgency. NCP is currently working with ten villages and 200 households in the Mecula District to increase duck and chicken production.
- The Kushirika craft group is comprised of 26 largely non literate elders, and they have increased the quality of their items (quilt, mats, baskets) and are showing increased sales internationally with \$5525 earned in 2023 alone.
- The Lion Scholarship Program aims to provide a secondary school scholarship to children in remote villages inside NSR. Since 2013 when the program was started, 96 children have benefited from the scholarship program with 49 on scholarship annually across 11 villages from Grade 6 to university level at 11 institutions.

GOAL 4: ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



- The Mariri Environmental and Skills training Centre was built in L5 South by NCP to provide a venue to support busvisits and workshops for Niassa residents to learn about and experience wildlife and conservation.
- Since 2015 more than 1800 children have stayed overnight at the Environmental Centre with an aim of 200 children visiting for 4 night bushvisits each year and experiencing game drives and conservation education activities.
- Every year 3-4 outreach activities are conducted to villages inside the Mavago and Mecula district reaching more than 1800 people over 17 villages in each campaign. These includes outreach on safe behaviours, poison, uncontrolled fires and rabies and are done in coordination with community guardians, SDAE and NSR teams where possible.
- NCP Wildlife clubs were started in 2016 in schools in the Mecula District with a focus on OneHealth with 5 clubs currently active.
- Joy of Life- Niassa is a partnership between Niassa Carnivore Project, Still Standing, and Mecula District Education Office which aims to use sport, art and song to build a culture of conservation, good citizenships and leadership in Niassa's youth (7 to 14 years) and has reached 200-300 children a year since 2015.
- The best way to experience Joy of Life, 2023 is through this short film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BnlejP7IQ4>
- The 13th Lion Festival took place in November 2023, this festival has become an important annual, indigenous festival of dance, games, and song focused around lions and conservation with 800-1500 people taking part each year. It has become known across the district and province.

GOAL 5: COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



- Mariri is a 58,000 hectares concession managed through a unique community conservation partnership (2-year renewable contract between NCP and Mbamba Village (2000 people, 460 households) with joint responsibilities, revenue sharing and performance payments.
- The Tchova Tchova partnership has shown measurable increases in lion, leopard ungulate, hippo, and African skimmer populations.
- Each year 18,000 worker days (50% women) are provided in conservation services for Mbamba residents that pays out more than USD 70,000 in local salaries annually.
- 38 scouts (patrol and gate guards) with 12 community scouts protect the concession achieving full coverage of L5 South with no elephants killed since 2018 and and many snares removed.
- A 4km elephant trench was dug by the village and is maintained to reduce elephant and buffalo entering the village and is extremely successful enabling the village to grow bananas and papayas for the first time in 20 years.
- An increasing number of children are attending school due to school lunch program that supports 300-350 children each day and has shown an increase in the school attendance and an increase in the number of children reaching grade 7 from less than 10 in 2017 to more than 35 last year.
- Income has increased into the community conservation fund with USD 108,000 in past 9 years and \$20,000 in 2023 which has been used by Mbamba to build a maternity unit and support an electric fence around fields.
- Mpopo Trails Camp was built and opened in 2019 by the Mbamba community in partnership with NCP. This is the only community tourism ecolodge inside NSR and generates revenue as a 20% bed night levy for Mbamba Community Conservation Fund as well as ongoing employment.
- The Mpopo Trails ecotourism camp was listed as one of the “The Best Places to Go in Africa in 2024” by Conde Nast Traveler November 15, 2023: www.cntraveler.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Thank you to all our partners and individual donors, NCP team, Niassa operators and NSR staff



www.niassalion.org