



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Audubon Zoo Collaborates with Disney to Protect the Pride**

(New Orleans, La.) – Audubon Zoo is joining the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums](#), and will collaborate with [Disney and the Lion Recovery Fund](#) to stop the lion crisis. In support of Disney's *The Lion King* Protect the Pride campaign, Audubon Zoo is contributing \$10,000 to the Wildlife Conservation Network's (WCN) [Lion Recovery Fund](#) (LRF) to help double the number of lions in the wild by 2050.

In celebration of the release of Disney's new groundbreaking, *The Lion King*, the highly-anticipated feature film helmed by Jon Favreau in theaters today, The Walt Disney Company has announced a global conservation campaign to raise awareness and support the dwindling lion population across Africa.

Since Disney's *The Lion King* was first released in theaters 25 years ago, half of Africa's lions have disappeared. Lions continue to face rising threats, such as poaching, loss of prey, and destruction of habitats.

Disney has already donated more than \$2 million to WCN's LRF and its partners and will make additional grants as well as invite fans to participate and help increase the donation for a total contribution of up to \$3 million as part of *The Lion King* Protect the Pride campaign. Alongside Disney, Audubon Zoo is raising additional support for the LRF and encouraging fans to join in to help this iconic species.

"We are excited to participate in this groundbreaking partnership to help protect this magnificent species," said Audubon Nature Institute President and CEO Ron Forman. "Lions face many threats across Africa that have contributed to a drastic decline in their numbers. With as few as 20,000 lions in the wild remaining, the time to act is now."

Zoos and aquariums accredited by the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums](#) are helping to ensure a future for African wildlife, including lions. African lions have been named an [AZA SAFE Species](#), and AZA institutions are partnering with organizations in Africa to mitigate conflict between farmers and lions, increase monitoring of the lion population's numbers and distribution, and address habitat loss. The SAFE African lion team, Lion Recovery Fund, and Disney's *The Lion King* Protect the Pride campaign are working to double the number of lions in the wild.

Audubon recently welcomed a [pride](#) of lions to the Zoo with the opening of a new lion [habitat](#) in May of 2019. The new lion habitat is located in the Zoo's popular African Savanna exhibit, which opened in the 1980s. The new exhibit's focal point is a replica of an abandoned 1920s-era train station — a symbol of the transportation system that once spanned lion country and, tragically, opened the door to habitat loss, poaching, and the devastation of Africa's vast natural resources.

African lions are classified as vulnerable in the wild, so Audubon manages its lion pride under the guidance of AZA's Species Survival Plan. Members of the new pride were chosen based on their genetic and behavioral matches to increase the likelihood of breeding and help bolster the population of lions in human care.

#### **About Lion Recovery Fund**

The [Lion Recovery Fund](#) (LRF) was created by the Wildlife Conservation Network in partnership with the Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation to double the number of lions in Africa, regaining those lions lost over the past 25 years. In recovering lions, the LRF also aims to restore the health of their landscapes and all that they provide for local people and wildlife. The LRF sends 100% of donations directly to projects that conserve lions, investing in the best ideas for lion recovery, and supporting projects beyond any singular country across lions' entire range.

#### **About SAFE**

[SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction](#) combines the power of zoo and aquarium visitors with the resources and collective expertise of AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums and partners to save animals from extinction. Together we are working on saving the most vulnerable wildlife species from extinction and protecting them for future generations. To learn more, visit [www.aza.org/aza-safe](http://www.aza.org/aza-safe).

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