

# UGANDA'S LION POPULATION IS DOWN 45% IN 20 YEARS



The Ugandan Minister of Tourism and Wildlife has reported that the lion population in the country has decreased by 45% in nearly 20 years, from 493 to 275. This is due to the growing conflicts between humans and wildlife. However, the Minister is optimistic about the increasing numbers of other species, such as gorillas, which have risen from 302 in the early 2000s to 459 in 2022.

In the East African country known for its incredible biodiversity, it was reported that the lion population has drastically declined as a result of deadly retaliation stemming from human-wildlife conflicts. **The number of lions has plummeted from a peak of 493 in 2014 to only 275 in 2023.** Most remaining lions (224) are found in Murchison Falls Park, while only 39 are left in Queen Elizabeth Park. Interestingly, the lions in Queen Elizabeth Park are known for their exceptional ability to climb trees.

## Numerous Cases of Poisoning

Over the recent years, there have been several cases of lions being poisoned, including 11 in 2018, 6 in 2021, and 9 in 2022. Unfortunately, investigations have rarely identified the perpetrators, and few successful prosecutions have occurred.

Some herders poison predators to protect their livestock, but others use it to poach.

In 2021, the arrest of four poachers led to the discovery of the decapitated heads of four lions and limbs, as well as bottles of poison, spears, a machete, and a hunting net.

## National Parks, Pillars of Tourism

In a report published last year, the government warned about the threats faced by the lion population as well as the chimpanzees in Uganda. **Despite the challenges, the country has witnessed a remarkable increase in the number of elephants, almost quadrupling to 7,975 in the past 40 years.** During the same period, the population of giraffes increased sixfold to 2,072 and buffaloes nearly doubled to over 44,000.

Uganda's national parks are a crucial source of tourism revenue for the country. According to the tourism authority, in 2022, the tourism sector contributed 7.6% of the country's GDP.

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