



# Facilitated Research Program

# CONTENTS

Click on any item to be taken directly to that section.

3. [Welcome](#)
4. [About ALERT](#)
6. [Study sites](#)
8. [Study themes](#)
9. [Support & guidance](#)
11. [Scientific support](#)
12. [Other benefits to letting us facilitate your study](#)
12. [A message from a past student](#)
13. [Program fees](#)
13. [How to apply](#)
14. [The small print](#)

**"If you know wilderness in the way that you know love, you would be unwilling to let it go.... This is the story of our past and it will be the story of our future."**

**Terry Tempest Williams**

**African Lion & Environmental Research Trust (UK)**

39 St. James's Place  
London  
SW1A 1NS  
United Kingdom

**UK Charity Commission Number 1120572**

**African Lion & Environmental Research Trust (Zimbabwe)**

11 Phillip's Avenue  
Belgravia  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

**African Lion & Environmental Research Trust (Zambia)**

7th Floor, Godfrey House  
Kabelenga / Longolongo Roads  
P.O. Box 33066  
Lusaka  
Zambia

**E:** [research@lionalert.org](mailto:research@lionalert.org)

**W:** [www.lionalert.org](http://www.lionalert.org)



## Welcome...

The ALERT Facilitated Research Program offers unique and unrivalled opportunities for study, whether you want to be up close and personal with lion cubs as they practice their hunting skills, watching a pride of released lions as they adapt to a wild environment, observing a variety of African game species or implementing a study with local communities assessing conservation awareness or the impact of conservation initiatives on livelihoods for example.

Our program not only allows students undertaking dissertations or senior theses to complete their course requirements in a unique environment, but will also enable valuable data sets to be produced that will greatly assist our organization in developing sound conservation and management plans.

Support is available throughout your research process, from preparing your methodology to its implementation and data analysis from our highly experienced scientific officer, expert consultants and project-based research technicians.

ALERT also offers subsidies from the program fees to students conducting research that directly assists in achieving the aims of the Trust.

Ten percent of all program fees paid by research students from non-African nations are retained by the Trust to provide fully funded placements to students from African universities that will enable capacity building within Africa for research.

This pack will provide you with all the information that you will need as you consider your options for what may be the most important piece of work you have ever undertaken, however if you have further questions please do not hesitate to contact our experienced team at [research@lionalert.org](mailto:research@lionalert.org) who will be happy to assist you.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Youldon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**David Youldon**  
ALERT Chief Operating Officer





Measuring spoor of captive bred lions to assist in assessing social groups in unseen wild prides

***The African Lion & Environmental Research Trust works with all sectors of society throughout Africa to promote the development of sustainable conservation management plans. ALERT is proud to foster partnerships with local communities that collaboratively develop and implement African solutions to African challenges. ALERT promotes community action by raising awareness, motivating and empowering people to protect and restore their environment and improve livelihoods.***

#### **About ALERT...**

We are the African Lion & Environmental Research Trust (ALERT), a non-profit organization dedicated to the facilitation and promotion of sound conservation and management plans for the African lion (*Panthera leo*) in consultation with governments, wildlife authorities and communities. ALERT also comprises the Conservation Centre for Wild Africa (CCWA) and the ALERT Communities Trust (ACT), each with distinct but complimentary programs as part of our holistic approach to conservation.

ALERT was founded in 2005 at Antelope Park, near the city of Gweru in the heart of the Zimbabwe Midlands, to support the four-stage African Lion Rehabilitation and Release into the Wild Program developed by Andrew & Wendy Conolly.

Given the recent, rapid reduction in lion populations across Africa it is ALERT's opinion that habitat protection methods implemented at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars over the last 30 to 40 years have so far failed the lion and many other species. Further, as stated by the IUCN, *"the causes of this reduction are not well understood, are unlikely to have ceased, and may not be reversible."*

***"There is probably no other species whose distribution range has shrunk over historical times to the extent shown by the lion"*** (Smithers, 1983)

The aim of this program therefore is to provide a solution to augmenting the sharply decreasing numbers of African lions, but also to provide long term solutions to protect habitat such that wild and reintroduced prides can survive in viable numbers.

ALERT fully believes in habitat protection for the long term sustainability of the species, and there have been some success stories to applaud, but given we are clearly failing the lion we believe that a range of solutions must be found before the lion becomes critically endangered. Those habitat protection methods that have worked in the past should be extended and ALERT, through our CCWA division, is already involved in this; funding anti-poaching units for example. With greater funding we will enhance our role in this area through education, research and working with communities to reduce livestock lion conflicts.

But new ideas are necessary to compliment those existing methods if we are to have any real long term success in habitat protection. ALERT, through our ACT program, supports the notion that only through local community support can the lion, and other species in Africa, survive. If the livelihood of communities bordering conservation areas is intrinsically linked to the health of that environment then the community will have reason to protect it, motivated by Africans to the benefit of Africans.

**For further information about the lion release program, as well as our other conservation and community development programs please download our project packs and latest newsletter at [www.lionalert.org](http://www.lionalert.org)**





### Study sites...

ALERT has opened up all of its programs as potential field study sites for students completing a dissertation or senior thesis. At present these include:

#### **Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, Livingstone, Zambia**

On the banks of the Zambezi as it topples over the Victoria Falls lies the c. 6,600ha Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park. The Park is home to abundant wildlife including giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*) and white rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum*). Contiguous to the wildlife areas of Zimbabwe the Park is also occasionally visited by predators including African Wild Dog (*Lycaon pictus*).

The Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park is home to stage one of for the African Lion Rehabilitation & Release into the Wild Program.

Immediately north of the Park lies the Dambwa Forest within which we will commence construction of stage two and stage three release sites in 2009. The Forest comprises uninhabited indigenous forest with undulating open savannah grasslands, however at present it is denuded of game species although elephant are regular transient visitors.

The region is the site of Livingstone town as well as numerous rural communities offering many further study opportunities.

#### **Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**

Set within the spectacular Zambezi National Park our Victoria Falls program includes stage one of the African Lion Rehabilitation & Release into the Wild Program as well as opportunities to study a wide variety of fauna and flora species.

The 56,200 hectare Zambezi National Park; wild with bush and big game, stretches along the Zambezi river for forty kilometres. Game includes mega fauna such as elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) and lion (*Panthera leo*); larger antelope species including greater kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) and waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*), along with a large number of smaller mammal species such as common duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*), small-spotted genet (*Genetta genetta*) and honey badger (*Mellivora capensis*).

Within Zimbabwe the Zambezi National Park is contiguous with the Kazuma Pan – Matetsi - Hwange complex, forming a total contiguous conservation area of over 1,846,700 hectares excluding forest reserves. Victoria Falls is part of the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, established with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Angola, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Situated in the Okavango and Zambezi River basins and incorporating the highest concentrations of wildlife on the African continent, it is the largest conservation area in the world. Including 36 national parks, game reserves, community conservancies and game management areas the total conservation area spans approximately 287 132 km<sup>2</sup>.

The Victoria Falls National Park is home to a unique floral community. A relic of a rainforest that closely resembles that of a true equatorial rainforest; the vegetation is being supported by a seasonal spray of water from the Falls themselves.

The town of Victoria Falls and the surrounding rural communities are located within the National Park. This constant interaction between people and wildlife provides many opportunities for study.

## Antelope Park, Gweru, Zimbabwe

The African Lion Rehabilitation & Release into the Wild Program was founded at Antelope Park, a private 3,000 acre game reserve of mixed Acacia and Miombo woodland on the bank of the beautiful Ngamo dam. This region is part of the Zambezi Highveld and as such has a relatively cool climate due to its altitude. Antelope Park is 15km outside the city of Gweru on the central Zimbabwean plateau.

The Park is currently home to our breeding base and operates stage one of the four-stage program during which cubs up to 18 months old go through their pre-release training prior to release into stage two.

This is also currently the only location where our *Night Encounter* program takes place – seeing young lions aged between 18-months to two-and-a half years taken out after dark to further hone the hunting skills.

Antelope Park is also home to many game species, from zebra to impala, giraffe, kudu and hartebeest amongst others, allowing for additional research opportunities.

As well as stage one of the program, several stage two sites are being constructed on land adjacent to the Park. We hope to have release prides within these sites by mid- to late-2009. These release areas will offer students unparalleled opportunities to study lions in their natural environment.

Birdlife, especially water-birds and raptors, is prolific due to the permanent water source from the dam within a climatic region that suffers at least 7 months drought per year. Most importantly, the Park provides refuge for a variety of vulture species – six have been recorded - including White-backed (*Gyps africanus*), Cape (*Gyps coprotheres*) and Lappet-faced vultures (*Aegypius tracheliotos*).

**Please contact us for the latest updates on new study locations and options that have become available since publication of this sheet.**





### **Study themes and priorities...**

**ALERT will prioritize subsidies to any study that provides an independent review of our existing programs or adds to the effectiveness of those programs. Priority will also be given to new research.**

Recent studies facilitated by ALERT include:

- Influence of social upbringing on activity pattern in lion cubs – National University of Science & Technology, Zimbabwe
- Behavioural sequencing and personality development in lions – University of Exeter – United Kingdom
- The rehabilitation of captive bred lions (*Panthera leo*) in a semi-wild environment for release into the wild – University of Zimbabwe
- The role of volunteer tourism in sub-Saharan African environmental conservation, University of East Anglia, United Kingdom
- Economic impacts of tourism in the Livingstone area, Zambia – University of Oslo, Norway
- Local participation and aid dependency in rural communities – University of Oslo, Norway

Below is just a tiny sample of themes for studies that ALERT is able to facilitate:

#### **Animal husbandry & welfare**

**Reproduction**

**Sociality**

**Behaviour**

**Ecology**

**Physiology**

**Predatory behaviours**

**Prey density requirements**

**Lion / human conflict mitigation**

**Elephant / human conflict mitigation**

**Census techniques**

**Methods in habitat protection**

**Participatory ecosystem management**

**The effects of trophy hunting on habitat use**

**The effectiveness of conservation education**

**Vegetation dynamics and environmental change**

**Vegetation dynamics and human impact**

**Sustainable harvesting of medicinal plants**

**Biodiversity monitoring**

The variety of research projects that are made possible by our facilitation process is endless. To discuss your ideas with us please contact us at [research@lionalert.org](mailto:research@lionalert.org)



## Support and guidance...

Our Facilitated Research Program provides you with a network of support and guidance throughout the research process to enable you to complete your study to the highest possible standard.

### Designing your project proposal...

The first step is to prepare a draft research proposal. You can either choose to prepare one from our list of research priorities or propose your own.

Our experienced staff will assist you with this process based on their first-hand knowledge of our project sites to ensure that your proposed study is viable given the resources available at each site.

Once your research proposal is prepared it will be presented to our panel of experts for their feedback. Based on this evaluation your proposal may be accepted or we may ask that further consideration is given before resubmission. This process is to assist you in developing a proposal that is of the highest possible standard and effectiveness.

The panel will also decide at this stage what level of subsidy we will be able to offer to help fund your research. From this we will be able to provide you with a costing for facilitating your study.

Specialist equipment for study can be arranged by ALERT at additional cost provided enough notice is given before your arrival.

Some research proposals may also need to be accepted by the regional wildlife management authority and may require the purchase of a study permit. In such cases ALERT will facilitate this acceptance and permit application process but please be aware that this can cause significant delays.



### Preparing for the field work...

Once you have been accepted on to one of our programs we will put you in touch with our Scientific Officer and project-based research technicians who will assist you in preparing your field study to ensure that you get the most out of your time in Africa.

It is important to note that the success of each project is largely dependent on the individual undertaking the study. Comprehensive planning before arriving at your study site is the most important element to a successful project.



### **In the field...**

After arriving at your study location, you will meet our project-based research technician who will provide you with logistical support throughout your stay to ensure your data collection is carried out effectively.

The research technician will induct you into the facilities available at your chosen study site and give you any necessary safety and procedural training. For example, in the case of studies conducted at our stage one lion projects you will be trained in the lion handling skills necessary to work alongside them safely.

At some sites, where dangerous game roams freely, it may be necessary for you to be accompanied by experienced guides and scouts. We can also provide this for you.

Throughout your stay in Africa you will have continued remote access to our Scientific Officer to discuss how your field work is progressing and to assist with any problems that you may discover putting your methodology into practice.

At most of our project locations we also operate eco-tourist volunteer programs. These individuals from all walks of life around the globe can be available to assist your data collection if required.

We strongly advise that you complete as much of your data analysis as possible before departing the project; once you have left it will be very difficult to resolve any discovered deficiencies in your data sets.

### **Writing up...**

Even once you have returned home we will continue to support you. As you proceed with writing up your study you will have continued access to our Scientific Officer to discuss your results and their interpretation.



### Scientific support...

Our Facilitated Research Program offers you a wealth of experience to assist you as you prepare, implement and write up your research study.

### Scientific Officer...

**Professor Peter Mundy** of Zimbabwe's National University of Science & Technology (NUST) attained his PhD from the University of Zimbabwe having previously studied at King's College London.

He was scientific officer for the Endangered Wildlife Trust in Zimbabwe from 1976 to 1983 and in South Africa from 1983 to 1984. He worked as Principal Ecologist (Ornithology) with the Zimbabwean Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management from 1984 to 2003, joining the National University of Science and Technology in June of 2003 where he is acting chairman of the faculty of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management.

His many publications include five books as the author or co-author such as 'The Vultures of Africa' (1992) and 'Francois Levillant and the Birds of Africa' (2004). He is an assistant editor of the 'Vulture News' and 'Honeyguide' journals, and an editor of the 'Zimbabwe Journal of Science and Technology'.

Peter is also winner of the 1994 Rutherford Conservation Award and co-founder of the Biodiversity Foundation for Africa.

### Scientific Panel...

**Dr. Pieter Kat** is a consultant ecologist to the African Lion Rehabilitation and Release into the Wild Program and has been involved in a diversity of scientific fields for the past 25 years.

With degrees in biology / geology BSc from the University of Rochester, marine biology MSc from the University of Delaware and ecology and evolution MA & PhD from Johns Hopkins University, Pieter spent 10 years in Kenya establishing biological research programs at the National Museums. His work there included documentation of biodiversity in the African Great Lakes, genetic diversity among bovid populations in Uganda, Kenya & Tanzania, research on predators in the Masai Mara, and research on a variety of diseases likely to affect predators.

Pieter then spent two years at the University of California, Davis School of Veterinary Medicine and at the Center of Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, working on rabies virus genetics, African horse sickness, and bluetongue virus among carnivores.

He was invited by the Government of Botswana to independently study lion populations for 10 years and make recommendations on their conservation and viability and is the author of over 60 scientific papers on such diverse subjects as taxonomy, ecology, genetics, reproduction and paleontology.

**Dr. Don Heath** is also a consultant ecologist to the Conservation Centre for Wild Africa.

Holding degrees in Zoology and Ecology, his doctorate for the University of Zimbabwe investigated the dangers of genetic drift induced by hunting.

From 1986 to 1998 Dr Heath was the senior ecologist for Zimbabwe's National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. He has also spent many years working with Zimbabwe's Professional Hunter's & Guide's Association, first as an examiner and as now their chief examiner.

Working with the Wildlife Research Institute from 1997 to 1998 he wrote the current Departmental Quota Setting Manual and Guidelines for Sustainable Utilization, which has since been adopted by Botswana and Mozambique.

The author of over 200 scientific and popular articles and one book, Nyati: The Art of Buffalo Hunting, he has been the Editor of African Hunter Magazine and Associate Editor of African Sporting since 1998.

### Other benefits to letting ALERT facilitate your research study...

To further assist you we will arrange for your collection from the nearest airport to your chosen study site, as well as provide comfortable but basic accommodation and three meals a day throughout your stay.

Additional resources, such as transport or research equipment can also be made available to you. The details of what resources are available differs from site to site and will be discussed with you during the preparation of your project proposal. What is not already available on site can usually be arranged if we have enough notice of your needs and may or may not incur additional charges.

Your study may allow you some free time, and if so you have the opportunity to take part in a number of optional activities, many at no additional cost, depending on your project location. These could include visits to your host country's many cultural sites and natural wonders. You could bungee off the Victoria Falls Bridge, take a horse ride through a National Park, swim on the back of an African elephant or lend a hand at a local orphanage.

We will provide you with the details of all these options before your departure to Africa and our locally based staff will assist you to arrange any activities that you are interested in taking part in.



*"Deciding to undertake a postgraduate thesis was a huge life decision for me and the whole process seemed quite overwhelming at first. I had an idea of what I wanted to do, but turning that into a viable research study was a daunting prospect. Given that my field work was to take place in Africa my university was limited in how much support they could provide.*

*The team at ALERT were hugely helpful as I prepared for my study. Their thorough understanding of the animals that they work with and the environment that they operate in was incredibly useful to me in establishing my methodology and making sure that it would really work on the ground. They handled all the logistical arrangements for me and have been incredibly supportive as I have embarked on this journey.*

*I would highly recommend their programs to anyone interested in carrying out a research study in Africa."*

Lisa Clifforde, MPhil, Exeter University



### Program Fees...

Project Location	Per Month (United States Dollars)
Livingstone, Zambia	3590.00
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe	3590.00
Antelope Park, Zimbabwe	3590.00

Your program fee, less any agreed subsidies granted by ALERT, covers your travel to and from your project location from its nearest airport, full room and board, access to our Scientific Officer and project based research technicians, as well as all induction and training programs appropriate to your study location. At each project location certain other facilities and resources are included in your program fee. These will be confirmed to you once your study location is decided upon.

Your project fee excludes return flights to and from the nearest airport to your project, all items of a personal nature, emails and telephone calls, any optional excursions or activities over and above those included at your project location, personal insurance cover for the duration of your stay and any specialist research equipment not available at the project.

Additional charges will be made for our assistance in obtaining any necessary research permits and other services that we may be able to provide over and above our standard project fee inclusions.

Upon successful acceptance of your research proposal we will confirm any subsidy that will be offered by ALERT to facilitate your study.

### How to arrange your research placement...

Your first step is to contact us as [research@lionalert.org](mailto:research@lionalert.org) with an idea for your research proposal along with a letter from your university (or equivalent) supervisor confirming that you are studying at that institution, your course title and qualification level (i.e. BSc, Msc, MPhil, PhD etc.). If you have not yet considered a research theme and would like to discuss some ideas with us please just send us the letter from your study institution and provide us some information about your course and research interests.

We will confirm receipt of your application and start the process of working with you towards getting your research proposal accepted.

## The small print...

### Applications...

- Applications for ALERT's Facilitated Research Program will only be considered when accompanied by a letter from your course supervisor confirming that you are studying at that institution, your course title and qualification level;
- Upon receipt of your application ALERT staff will work with you towards a final research proposal for submission to our panel. Research proposals may be considered by the panel at any time and feedback will be provided on how to improve the proposal or confirmation of acceptance will be provided;
- Upon acceptance of your research proposal ALERT will confirm any subsidy offered against your program fee. The decision of the panel on the level of subsidy offered is final. No appeals will be considered.

### Payment schedule...

- An administration fee of US\$ 300 that is non-refundable in all instances must be paid once ALERT has accepted your research proposal and confirmed the final program fee less any subsidies in order to confirm your research placement. The amount will be deducted from your final program fee payment;
- The balance of your program fee is payable no later than 90 days prior to arrival. If you do not pay your full placement fee 90 days prior to arrival, without prior arrangement with ALERT, we reserve the right to cancel your placement. If you book less than 90 days before your placement starts, you will be asked to make payment within one week of your provisional booking;
- In the case that your placement involves multiple study periods the program fee for each period of placement is payable 90 days prior to arrival for that period. We reserve the right to cancel the part of your placement for which payment for that period has not been paid 90 days prior to arrival unless prior arrangements have been agreed with ALERT;

### Cancellation...

- At no time does any refund include travel or extraneous expenses as part of your trip plan. Refunds are also less any subsidies you may have been granted. If you cancel your placement up to 91 days before the start of your placement, we will refund 100% of the cost of the program, excluding the US\$ 300 administration fee. If you cancel your placement between 61-90 days before your start date we will return 75% of the cost of the program. If you cancel between 31-60 days from your start date we will refund 50% of your fee. If you cancel within 30 days of your scheduled arrival, we are unable to return any payments to you. Please check when you buy your insurance that a cancellation clause is part of the deal;
- In most cases ALERT will permit the deferment of your arrival date to an alternative arrival date to be agreed between both parties at no charge, however, if any costs are incurred by ALERT as a result of your deferment they will be passed onto you for payment;
- In the unlikely event of us having to cancel your placement (due to circumstances beyond our control) we will, if possible, offer an alternative location. If this is not acceptable to you, we will refund all program fees, less the US\$ 300 administration fee plus any costs already incurred in facilitating your study.
- If your placement is terminated by ALERT during your placement due to circumstances beyond our control and are unable to provide acceptable alternatives we will refund all fees after the month in which the placement was terminated less the US\$ 300 administration fee and any costs already incurred in facilitating your study over the cancelled months.
- If your placement is terminated by ALERT because of an infringement of the code of conduct you will not be entitled to claim any refund.
- If you terminate your placement at any time during your placement, you will not be entitled to claim any refund.
- You will not be entitled to claim any other costs applicable to your placement and any charges relating to change of tickets etc... will be for your own account.
- Please note that we will not be liable for any incidental expenses incurred as a result of your placement such as vaccinations, visas, non-refundable flights etc...
- You must be covered by insurance before you travel to your research location, which must include adequate cover for baggage, medical expenses and the cost of repatriation. Should you not have adequate cover prior to the commencement of your placement, you may not be allowed to continue on the program and will have no right to a refund. Any claims concerning matters for which you are insured must be directed to your insurers. In a medical emergency, ALERT will put forward the costs of medical expenses. You will be required upon your arrival to sign an agreement that ALERT has the right to claim from your medical insurance for any expenses that ALERT may incur on your behalf.

### General...

- Any information provided by ALERT on matters such as visas, vaccinations, climate, clothing, baggage, etc. is given in good faith, but without the responsibility for obtaining any necessary visas and travel documentation required for your placement unless otherwise agreed and confirmed in writing as part of our service agreement to you.
- Your booking is accepted on the understanding that you realize the potential hazards that may arise in this kind of travel, including injury, disease, loss or damage of property, inconvenience or discomfort. This type of travel is one that should allow for a degree of flexibility. Changes in itinerary may be caused by circumstances beyond our control. No refunds will be issued on services not utilized.
- When booking your flights you might like to consider booking a changeable return ticket. If circumstances arise which lead to extra expenses because you have purchased a non-changeable ticket, you will be solely responsible for the expense.

### Your behaviour whilst on placement...

In order not to bring ALERT, CCWA, ACT or any of its affiliates into disrepute in any of the countries in which our programs are operational, it is important that you follow the guidelines set out below during the course of your placement:

- We ask that you do not carry or use any illicit substances or non-prescription drugs while staying in your host country.
- Do not involve yourself, other students, program ecotourists or staff in any behaviour that may amount to disrepute. If your behaviour is found to be detrimental to the program you may be asked to leave without compensation.
- Please maintain a level of courtesy consistent with the customs of your host country.
- If you would like to make changes to your program placement schedule, please do not do so without consulting ALERT first.
- If joining an ecotourist activity, or if you have requested the assistance of ecotourists for your research, please show consideration by attending activities on time.
- If your words, actions or behaviour are thought to be disruptive or breach the safety procedures laid out by ALERT, CCWA, ACT or any of its affiliates then after one warning, either verbal or written, you may be removed from your placement without compensation. In the event that such disruption or breach is considered to be serious then ALERT reserves the right to remove you from your placement immediately without compensation.
- Accommodation provided is for your use only.

### Publishing of your completed thesis...

- All applicants agree to provide ALERT with a complete copy of your finished thesis and permit ALERT to publish an abstract and/or cite the thesis within its newsletters and other marketing materials.