



## **SACT – Collar a Lion – Q4 – 2025 Report**

### **Overview:**

Over the past few months, much of the collaring efforts have shifted from Hwange NP in Zimbabwe to parks in South Africa. This has been in part, due to some administrative issues making it more challenging to conduct this project in Hwange. The work in South Africa has been conducted in partnership with researchers and conservationists at Nelson Mandela University. Recent activities have taken place in Marakele National Park (part of SANParks). The three satellite collars sponsored by SACT have been used to replace aging collars in 2 prides.

### **Purpose of Collar Replacements**

Two resident prides in Marakele NP—the Kingfisher Pride and the Eastern Pride—held collars originally purchased under my NRF grant. Both collars showed rapidly declining battery life, risking data loss and compromised monitoring. Maintaining uninterrupted Tracking is essential for:

- Mapping core and peripheral territories
- Detecting boundary shifts and contest events
- Understanding the dynamics of breakaway groups
- Supporting SANParks/Marataba in proactive management responses should lions approach boundary areas

The latest activities are summarized below:

### **Kingfisher Pride – Collar Replacement Completed**

- Animal: Adult female (ID: MM Kingfisher Female)
- Old collar: NRF-funded AWT model (battery near end-of-life)
- New collar fitted: SAT10762
- Status: Successful.
- Notes: The lioness was in good condition, immobilization and fitment were routine, and the collar is transmitting hourly GPS fixes as programmed. Marakele NP – Lion collaring field report Nov 2025

### **Eastern Pride Breakaway Group – New Collar Deployment**

- Animal: Adult lioness from the Eastern breakaway pride
- Collar fitted: SAT10761
- This female represents an important component of an emerging sub-unit within Eastern Pride, information central to our work on pride fission, resource competition, and territorial pressure in fenced systems

- Status: Successful. Collar is performing well.
- Notes: The lioness was in good condition, immobilization and fitment were routine, and the collar is transmitting hourly GPS fixes as programmed. The female was lactating, so she has cubs at the moment. This was confirmed by the staff.

### **Eastern Pride (Main Pride) – Collar Replacement Pending**

- Target animal: Adult female (collared under NRF funding)
  - This lioness is currently occupying steep and inaccessible mountain terrain in the northern portion of Marakele NP.
  - Assigned collar: SAT10760
  - Plan: The Marataba Conservation Team will replace the collar at the next safe access opportunity when she descends from the escarpment.
  - Expected timeframe: As terrain use opens, typically within the next 1–8 weeks.
- Marakele NP – Lion collaring field report Nov 2025

### **Importance of These Collars to the Research Program**

The three SACT-sponsored collars are strategically placed to:

- Maintain continuous monitoring in two key prides where territory boundaries, overlap patterns, and group cohesion are under active study.
- Track a newly emerging breakaway group, which provides rare and valuable data on pride fission in fenced parks, one of the least understood behavioral processes affecting population stability.
- Serve as reference animals for upcoming playback experiments and stress analyses (Objectives 2–4 of the project)
- Support Marakele NP’s management needs, particularly early-warning of any pride or coalition movement toward boundary areas. Marakele NP – Lion collaring field report Nov 2025

These deployments directly strengthen SACT’s mission of using technology to reduce potential human–lion conflict and to inform better management decisions in constrained landscapes.

### **Example of collaring team in action: Photos**

