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5 lies you need to stop believing about the lion cub petting industry

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The harsh truth is that when you're cuddling a lion cub or bottle feeding one, you're directly funding the canned lion hunting industry.





The cute cub you're cooing over will likely meet its end at the end of a hunter with a hunting rifle or bow and arrow.

Lie #1: Volunteering at these 'animal sanctuaries' promotes conservation

Google 'gap year' and 'big cats volunteer' and you will get millions of results about establishments offering well-intending but ill-informed gap year students the chance to interact with lion cubs, while "contributing towards conservation and research." Not all of these organisations are what they claim to be.

Beverly Pervan, director of the [Campaign Against Canned Hunting](#) explains that some lion farmers rent out their cubs to tourist resorts and "voluntourism projects".

"There is an insatiable demand for cub petting by tourists. All the tourists who indulge in cub petting are supporting the canned hunting industry," says Pervan.

"When the cubs are too big to be handled by humans any longer, they are sent back to the lion farmer to be hunted. Basically lion farmers use the profits they make from cub petting to externalise the cost of rearing the cub to a huntable size. Once you understand that there is virtually no market for adult lions other than hunting, and that more than a thousand lions are canned hunted every year, you begin to understand the scale of the tragedy."

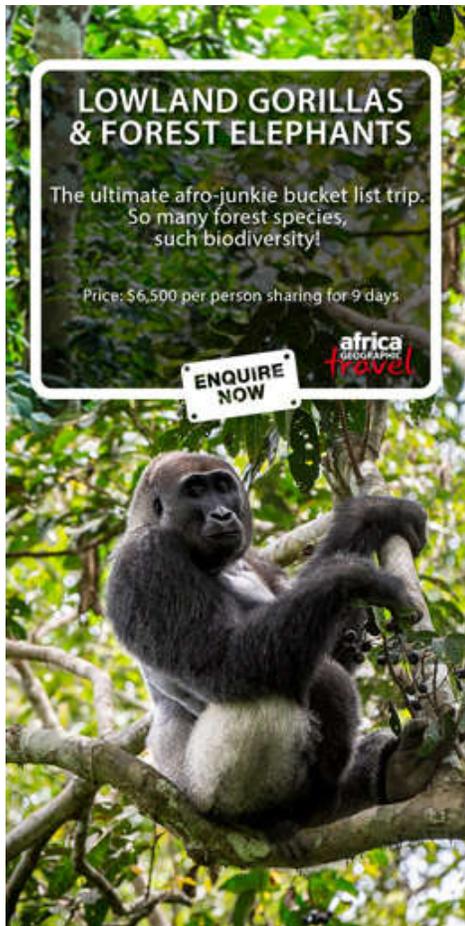
Lie #2: The cubs are orphans whose parents were killed by poachers or were rejected by their mother

Most of these establishments spin sob stories to gullible tourists about the animals' mothers abandoning them at birth, or their parents being killed by poachers.

"There are genuine sad stories but they are very rare," says Fiona Miles, South Africa's manager of the [FOUR PAWS Animal Welfare Foundation](#). They run [LIONSROCK](#), a sanctuary in Bethlehem for big cats that were kept in inadequate conditions in zoos, circuses or private captivity.

"The majority of cubs encountered at facilities where interaction is provided, are the product of intensive [captive breeding](#) or farming," says Miles.

"These cubs are removed from their mother as young as possible and hand



raised. The reason this is done is twofold: Firstly the cubs raise funds through interaction, and the second reason is that the mother will go into season again and will reproduce more rapidly than if she was allowed to raise her own young," Miles explains.

Lie #3: When they are adults, the cubs will be re-introduced into the wild

As social animals lion cubs learn from their parents how to hunt and interact with other lions. A hand raised animal will not have gained this experience. There is a certain instinctual knowledge on hunting but not successful hunting.

According to Miles, it is highly improbable that a lion raised in captivity by man will be able to survive for any extensive period once it's placed back into a wild environment.

The best goal for lions currently in captivity would be a situation like LIONSROCK where they are provided with ample space and minimal human contact.

Lie #4: Lion breeders are contributing towards the dwindling numbers of lions in the wild

"Firstly it is unlawful for any registered sanctuary to breed with animals other than in carefully controlled specific programs for endangered species," say Pervan. "Otherwise breeding is prohibited for sanctuaries."

In 2010 the Lion Breeders Association won a **court case** in the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) against the (then) Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Marthinus van Schalkwyk. Van Schalkwyk successfully imposed a verdict that semi-tame animals may only be hunted 24 months after being set free from their breeding cages, but the Lion Breeder's Organisation took the case to the SCA, where they won.

The SCA proved that lion farming was "a closed circuit", since no **captive-bred lions** have ever been released back to the wild, thereby showing that lion farming has nothing to do with conservation.

"Accordingly, the Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism had no jurisdiction to impose any restrictions on them. Lion breeders are farmers, not conservationists," Campaign Against Canned Lion Hunting explains.

"Therefore, no captive-bred lions have ever been released back to the wild, nor would conservation authorities ever allow it because of genetic and veterinary reasons," Pervan says.

Lie #5: Playing and posing with these animals teaches children the value of conservation and makes them appreciate the animals more

"Interaction with wild animals serves no positive influence on the animals.

Animals that are utilised for human interaction will invariably become habituated and lose any fear of humans," says Miles.

With habituation, the risk of the animal causing injury to another person is increased, as is the risk of disease transfer. Ethically any interaction between a human and an animal merely opens the door to risk to the animal and ultimately lowers the welfare of the animal.

"A hands-off approach would be just as beneficial towards any conservation program, while also maintaining the welfare of the animals. A direct interaction operation will claim that it aids conservation and ignore the fact that it does this at the cost of the welfare of every animal that passes through its doors," Miles explains.

To find out more about the lion breeding industry, read [Lion King or Commodity](#)



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