



## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **United against Wildlife Poisoning**

First-ever anti-poisoning training to be held in Kenya

**Nairobi, Kenya, 11 November 2016:** A consortium of concerned conservation bodies is coming together for a first-ever event in Kenya to help reduce the number of wildlife dying from illegal poisoning. This historic 2-day training event is to be held on 15-16 November in the Masai Mara, Kenya.

As nature's most important clean-up crew, vultures are the hardest hit by indiscriminate poisoning, which typically is targeted at predators, such as lions and hyenas. In December 2015, there was an international outcry in response to the poisoning of the Mara's Marsh Pride lions, organizations working on the ground have identified the need for a consistent and robust approach to dealing with any and all poisoned species. A two-day workshop has been developed with the aim of limiting the impact of individual poisoning events through informed and rapid response.

Thirty-seven participants representing 30 local conservation partners will convene at Ilkeliani Camp, bordering the world famous Masai Mara Reserve.

Training will be led by Andre Botha, a South Africa-based leading expert on wildlife poisoning. It will focus on identifying the signs and symptoms of wildlife poisoning, prompt reporting, incident scene treatment, collection of good information and sterilizing the scene to prevent further poisoning.

This expertly led workshop is the result of an ongoing collaboration between BirdLife International, the Mara Lion Project, Nature Kenya and The Peregrine Fund, and is focused on how best to deal with the rising problem of wildlife poisoning throughout the country. Wildlife rangers based on the ground are usually first to notice poison incidents, but are not always aware of the signs and symptoms, nor are they well versed in what steps to take following an incident. This course will provide the training and solutions to enable rangers and others working on the ground in the Mara and in northern Kenya to limit the impact of individual poisoning events.



Julius Arinaitwe, Regional Director for Africa at BirdLife International added, “The unique abilities of vultures that make them very effective scavengers, such as the keen eyesight that helps them spot carcasses and signal to others over large distances makes them especially vulnerable to poisoning events. For example one poisoned elephant carcass has been known to cause the death of up to 500 Critically Endangered vultures drawn from tens of kilometres away. BirdLife therefore considers this training to be of paramount importance in efforts to halt vulture declines across Africa.”

Following this two-day workshop, trainees will commit to disseminating their learning by delivering subsequent training to their respective teams. Each trainee will also become a main point of contact within his/her local area for all issues relating to wildlife poisoning.

The Mara ecosystem is a kaleidoscope of land use types, with the Maasai Mara National Reserve, and a range of conservancies in various states of development. We have confirmed attendance of key government personnel, including but not limited to Kenya Wildlife Service veterinarians and research scientists, Narok County Government wardens and Mara Conservancies management. Trainees also represent Lewa and Borana conservancies, Lion Landscapes and Ewaso Lions, all based in northern Kenya.

Co-hosts and funders of the event include San Diego Zoo, Fondation Segré, Nature Kenya, The Peregrine Fund, Mara Lion Project, BirdLife International and African Wildlife Foundation.

This training is part of a larger project being developed by BirdLife International, the Mara Lion Project, Nature Kenya and The Peregrine Fund, aimed at developing a formal poisoning response protocol in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service. This protocol would better facilitate prosecution of wildlife poisoners throughout Kenya.

Lucy Morgan, Chief Executive Officer of Kenya Wildlife Trust said, "Lions are frequently a threat to local livelihoods as they kill livestock, and sometimes people. In return, people kill lions. The use of poison is particularly worrisome, since whole lion prides can be killed in a single incident. It is vital to have personnel on the ground who fully appreciate the impacts of wildlife poisoning. The forthcoming training event will help to ensure that personnel from the Mara, and Kenya more generally, are well equipped to deal with any future incidents".



It is the hope of these organizations and projects that a formal, systematic response to poisoning incidents will deter those from the activity and help reduce the number of wildlife dying from illegal poisoning.

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### Contacts

Masumi Gudka, BirdLife International, Volker's Gardens, Westlands, Kenya,  
[masumi.gudka@birdlife.org](mailto:masumi.gudka@birdlife.org), 020 8068314, 0722 200538, 0734 600905

Paul Gacheru, Nature Kenya, P.O. Box 44486, Nairobi, Kenya, [species@naturekenya.org](mailto:species@naturekenya.org)  
0771343138, 0780149200

Nic Elliot, Mara Lion Project (Kenya Wildlife Trust), P.O.Box 86, Karen, Kenya,  
[nic@maralions.org](mailto:nic@maralions.org), 0716 813717

Erin Katzner, The Peregrine Fund, 5668 W. Flying Hawk Lane, Boise, Idaho, USA  
[erinkatzner@peregrinefund.org](mailto:erinkatzner@peregrinefund.org) 208 362 3716

Munir Virani, The Peregrine Fund, [virani.munir@peregrinefund.org](mailto:virani.munir@peregrinefund.org) 0733 748922

Darcy Ogada, The Peregrine Fund [ogada.darcy@peregrinefund.org](mailto:ogada.darcy@peregrinefund.org) 0722 339366

Images are available here

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