

Lion makes surprise comeback in Gabon

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The noble lion has made a comeback in southeast Gabon, after disappearing for years, according to US wildlife organisation Panthera, which recently took live video footage of a male.

Over a fortnight, two hidden cameras filmed the lion on an elephant trail in the immense savannah of the Bateke plateau region, which stretches

from Gabon to the Democratic Republic of Congo across the Republic of Congo.

"This footage is truly unexpected, and yet wonderful proof that life for the lions of Gabon and the region still remains a possibility," said Dr Philipp Henschel, coordinator of the lions programme for the US non-governmental organisation.

"The videos demonstrate that the efforts of the Gabonese authorities to protect this landscape, starting with the designation of the Bateke Plateau National Park in 2002 after an initial lion survey in the area, have been successful," Henschel said in a statement.

The discovery was made by chance, since the cameras had been put in position by one of Germany's Max Planck Institutes for research, as part of a study of chimpanzees in the wild.

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In 2001 and 2003, Henschel's team walked several hundred kilometres (miles) on foot in a quest for Africa's largest wild cat, but they found little wildlife of any kind.

Panthera said at the time: "Camera traps set during the surveys produced more photos of Congolese poachers than of animals."

The organisation plans to follow up its surprising find with a fresh study to determine whether the male lion caught on film is a single individual who may have migrated from a pride living in the DRC, or whether he belongs to "a new, breeding [lion](#) population in Gabon," the statement said.

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