

UK trackers' Cecil the lion appeal tops £500,000

August 4 2015



This handout picture taken on October 21, 2012 and released on July 28, 2015 by the Zimbabwe National Parks agency shows a much-loved Zimbabwean lion called "Cecil"

People moved by the killing of Zimbabwe's beloved lion Cecil have donated more than half a million pounds in his memory towards lion conservation, the unit which spent years tracking Cecil said Tuesday.

The Wildlife Conservation Research Unit at Britain's prestigious Oxford University, which had tracked Cecil since 2008, said more than £550,000 (\$860,000, 785,000 euros) had been received in donations over the past week.

WildCRU, which set up the appeal to fund future big cat research, said the amount means the unit's work might now be extended beyond Zimbabwe.

"We will devote ourselves, supported by the incredible generosity of these donations, to working for the conservation of lions in Hwange and, with this marvellous support, the surrounding landscapes in adjoining countries," said WildCRU's director, Professor David Macdonald.

The July 1 killing of 13-year-old Cecil, a cherished resident of Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park, sparked an international outpouring of anger against wealthy US dentist Walter Palmer, who paid \$55,000 for the hunt in which the [lion](#) was lured out of the park to be killed as a trophy.

The donations via WildCRU's website will fund the training of local Zimbabwean conservationists, anti-poaching patrols, and tracking devices for the lions which cost £1,500.

"I believe that the worldwide engagement with Cecil's story transcends the tragic fate of one lion, and sends a signal that people care about [conservation](#) and want it to be reflected in how humanity lives alongside nature in the 21st century," said Macdonald.

He added: "We feel inspired by this support and will work tirelessly to deliver the science and understanding that will enable wildlife and people to co-exist for the wellbeing of both."

US airlines Delta and American on Monday banned the shipment of big game trophies on flights, in the wake of outrage over the killing of Cecil.

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