



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Head over heels for big cats!

Trek for Big Cats' new lion mascot spotted in the Scottish countryside as the team prepare for their epic challenge in aid of Born Free!

With the countdown on until the Trek for Big Cats team start their unique challenge to conquer both Everest Base Camp and Kilimanjaro in November, Gareth James Legg, Tracey Bruton and Timothy Jansen Van Vuuren are proud to unveil their custom-built lion mascot.

The lion, which is yet to be named, is the first of the mascots to be finalised, and will be worn by the project's founder, Gareth James Legg during Trek for Big Cats' epic journey.

Trek for Big Cats is the brainchild of South African-born Gareth. After spending many years as a safari guide, his passion for the big cats and their environments led him to this next chapter in his conservation journey. Concerned by declining big cat populations due to hunting and habitat loss, Gareth was inspired to take action, and raise money for UK-based international wildlife charity Born Free.

Gareth, who now lives in Edinburgh, says: *"It was only when I put the lion mascot on for the first time that the reality and enormity of this special expedition really sank in. I am even more determined now with the help of the mascots and my incredible team members Tracey Bruton and Tim Van Vuuren to be the voice for the voiceless - our endangered and iconic big cats and their environments."*

"Most of my training has been in the hills and braids of Morningside so look out for the big male lion mascot. Don't be scared to come and say hi and help pledge your paw print to the conservation of big cats and their wild habitats."

The mascots have been custom-built in the UK by Frenzy Creative, and designed to be as life-like as possible. The lion will shortly be joined by a leopard, which will be worn by environmentalist and Field Guide Tracey and a tiger, worn by newly-announced team member, film maker and ranger, Timothy.

The expedition will take place throughout November, beginning in Nepal with the 17,600ft trek to the base camp of Mount Everest, an area which is home to a variety of big cat species such as the magnificent snow leopard. The team will then head to Tanzania, home to iconic African species such as the lion and the leopard, where they will attempt to reach the 19,340ft summit of Mount Kilimanjaro. The team will visit primary schools in the Khumbu valley en route to Everest Base Camp, and also in Tanzania, to run educational activities with the children on the topic of wildlife conservation.

To find out more about the Trek for Big Cats, see how it will help protect big cats in the wild, and get involved please visit: www.trekforbigcats.com

Keep up-to-date with the team's progress on social media!

Twitter: www.twitter.com/trekforbigcats

Facebook: www.facebook.com/trekforbigcats

Instagram: www.instagram.com/trek_for_big_cats

For more about Born Free's global conservation work and how to support the charity, please visit: www.bornfree.org.uk

Name the lion!

Trek for Big Cats is looking for its King of the Jungle... can you think of a good one?

To submit your choice of name simply 'like' both Trek for Big Cats and Born Free's pages on Facebook, and leave a comment with your suggestion on the lion mascot competition post.

The winner will be chosen by the Trek for Big Cats team, and will receive an adorable Born Free lion cuddly toy!

Ends

Images: © Lukas Svoboda and Trek For Big Cats

FOR MORE INFORMATION RELATING TO THIS CHALLENGE PLEASE CONTACT:

Gareth James Legg, Founder and UK/ Global representative

+44 756 826 2297

Gareth@trekforbigcats.com

Tracey Bruton, Co-Founder and South African representative

+27 71 8267031

Tracey@trekforbigcats.com

Notes to Editors:

About Born Free

Born Free's mission is to ensure that all wild animals, whether living in captivity or in the wild, are treated with compassion and respect and are able to live their lives according to their needs. Born Free opposes the exploitation of wild animals in captivity and campaigns to keep wildlife in the wild.

Born Free promotes Compassionate Conservation to enhance the survival of threatened species in the wild and protect natural habitats while respecting the needs of and safeguarding the welfare of individual animals. Born Free seeks to have a positive impact on animals in the wild and protect their ecosystems in perpetuity, for their own intrinsic value and for the critical roles they play within the natural world. For more information about Born Free please visit: www.bornfree.org.uk

FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES RELATING TO LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS ONLY PLEASE CONTACT:

Victoria Lockwood T: 01403 246903 E: victoria@bornfree.org.uk

FOR ALL OTHER NEWS AND MEDIA ENQUIRIES, PLEASE CONTACT OUR PR AGENCY:

Gemma Hook T: 01403 783400 M: 07920 820 018 E: gemma.hook@pmw.co.uk

Born Free Foundation | Broadlands Business Campus | Langhurstwood Road | Horsham
West Sussex | RH12 4QP | www.bornfree.org.uk | Charity No: 1070906

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