White Lions Released Into the Wild

Pride includes two adult males, two adult females.

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This rare white lion, one of about 300 remaining in the world, was released onto a game reserve in South Africa. Photo courtesy The Mantis Collection.A white lion family has been released into the wild at Sanbona Game Reserve in South Africa.

The rare big cats, including two adult males and two adult females, were successfully released as part of a $4 million conservation project by the Mantis Collection – a company that owns a series of hotels and wildlife reserves – to return wildlife to the area. White lions, also known as blond lions, are the result of a recessive gene causing a condition known as leucism.

The pride was released onto almost 100,000 acres at Sanbona and is being closely monitored by members of the Shamwari Dubai World Africa Conservation team.

Typically the pride separates, but the lions reunite on a regular basis, and are able to hunt and fend for themselves.

White lions were first spotted in the wild 400 years ago; the next recorded sightings were in 1928. There are 300 remaining white lions found in zoos and circuses around the world.

“After all the time and effort we put into the project, it was incredibly rewarding to see them take their first steps as free-ranging lions,” said Dr. Johan Joubert, Shamwari Dubai Wildlife Conservation director.