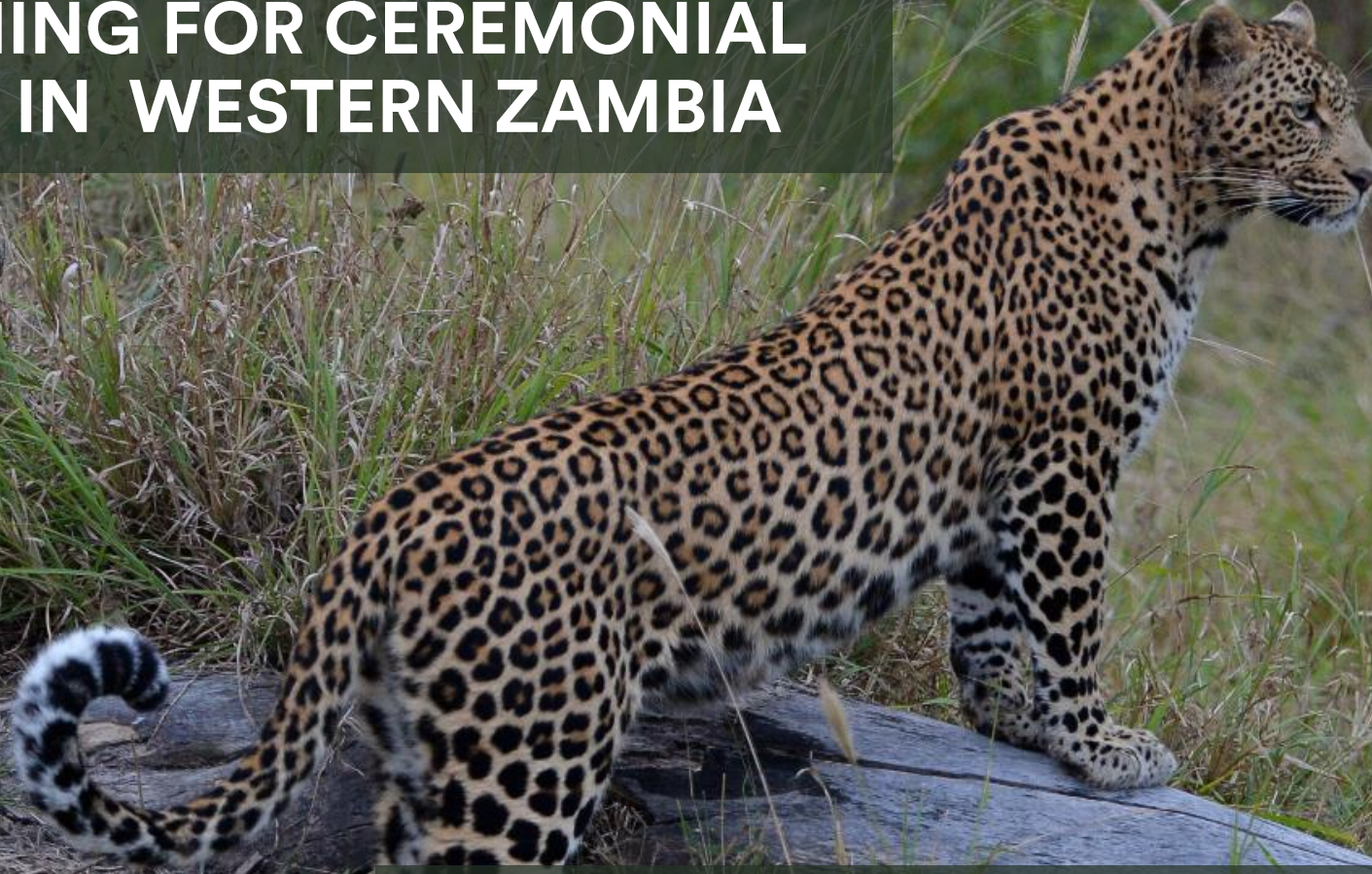
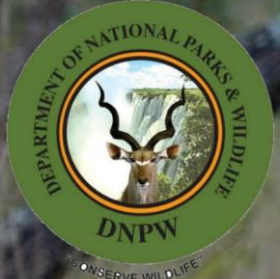


# **Saving Spots:**

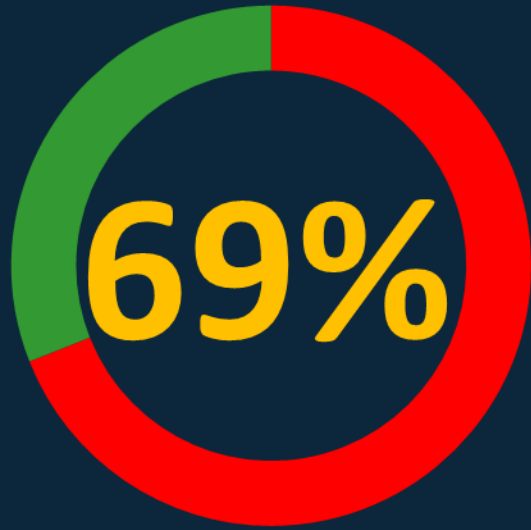
## **TACKLING LEOPARD POACHING FOR CEREMONIAL ATTIRE IN WESTERN ZAMBIA**



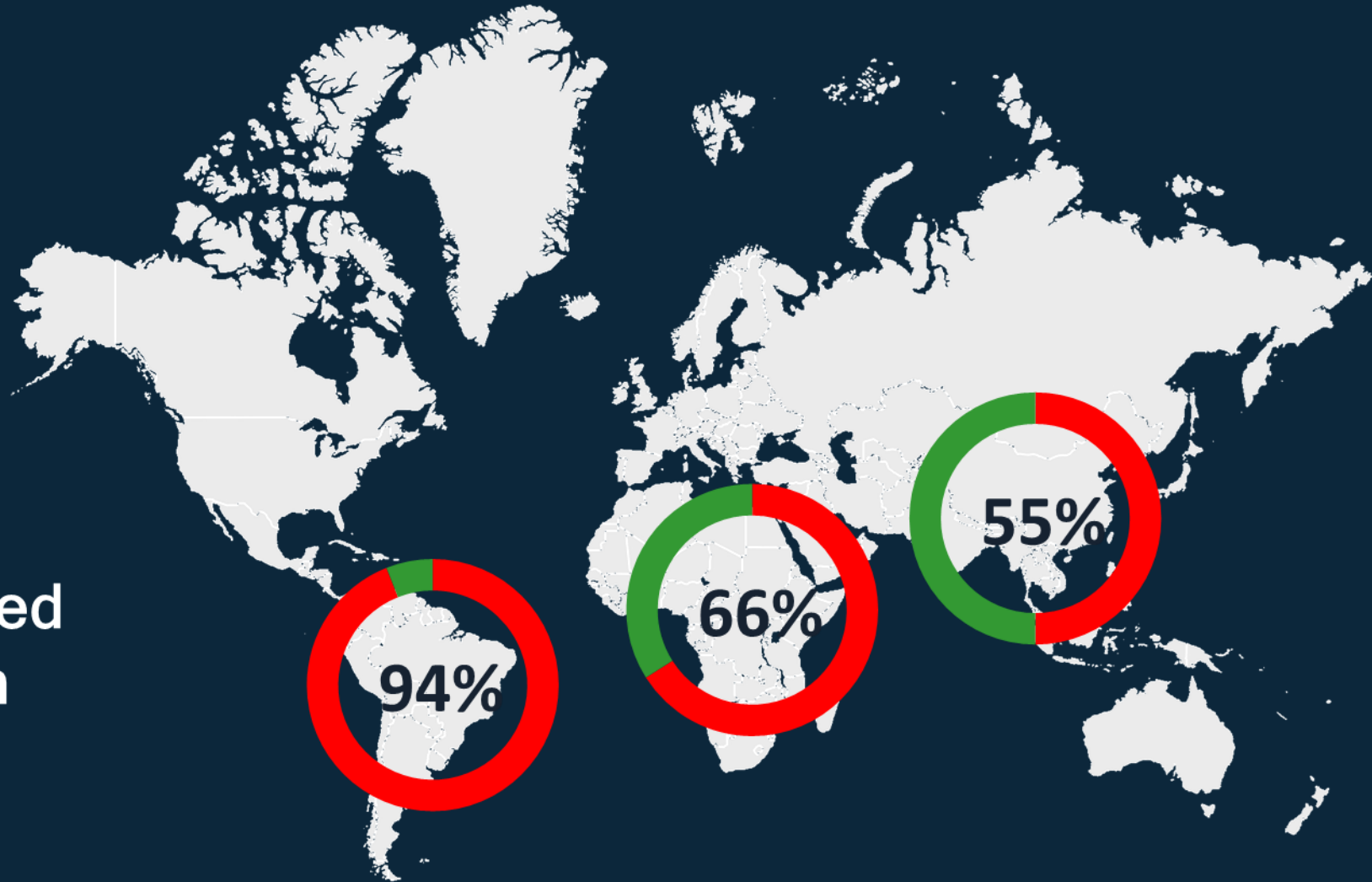
**Finalist Presentation for the Herman Goldstein Award 2023**  
**31st International Problem-Oriented Policing Conference**  
**Boulder, Colorado, USA**  
**August 2023**



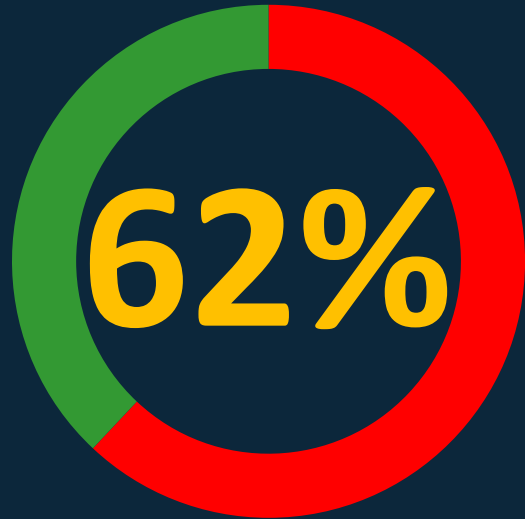
# Global Biodiversity is in decline



Global decline in monitored  
vertebrate species from  
1970 to 2018



# Illegal wildlife trade threatens species with extinction



Decline in species  
populations in areas  
affected by wildlife trade



White Rhinoceros  
**Critically Endangered**



Tiger  
**Endangered**



African Bush Elephant  
**Endangered**



Chinese Pangolin  
**Critically Endangered**

# Wildlife crime harms human well-being

- Depleting natural resources and harming livelihoods
- Increase in armed violence and decline in governance
- Increased biosecurity risks



Photo: Brookings



**Wildlife trade is connected to livelihoods, religion and cultural heritage**

**40-85% households** in rural areas of southern & west Africa consume bushmeat as a source of protein



Source: Mbete et al. 2016, Ordaz-Németh et al. 2017, Martins & Schakelton 2019, Ceppi & Nielsen 2014.

Photo: Christian Thompson / AP



# Local communities are key stakeholders in preventing Wildlife Crime

- Guardians of wildlife
- Place managers of wilderness areas
- Handlers of potential offenders

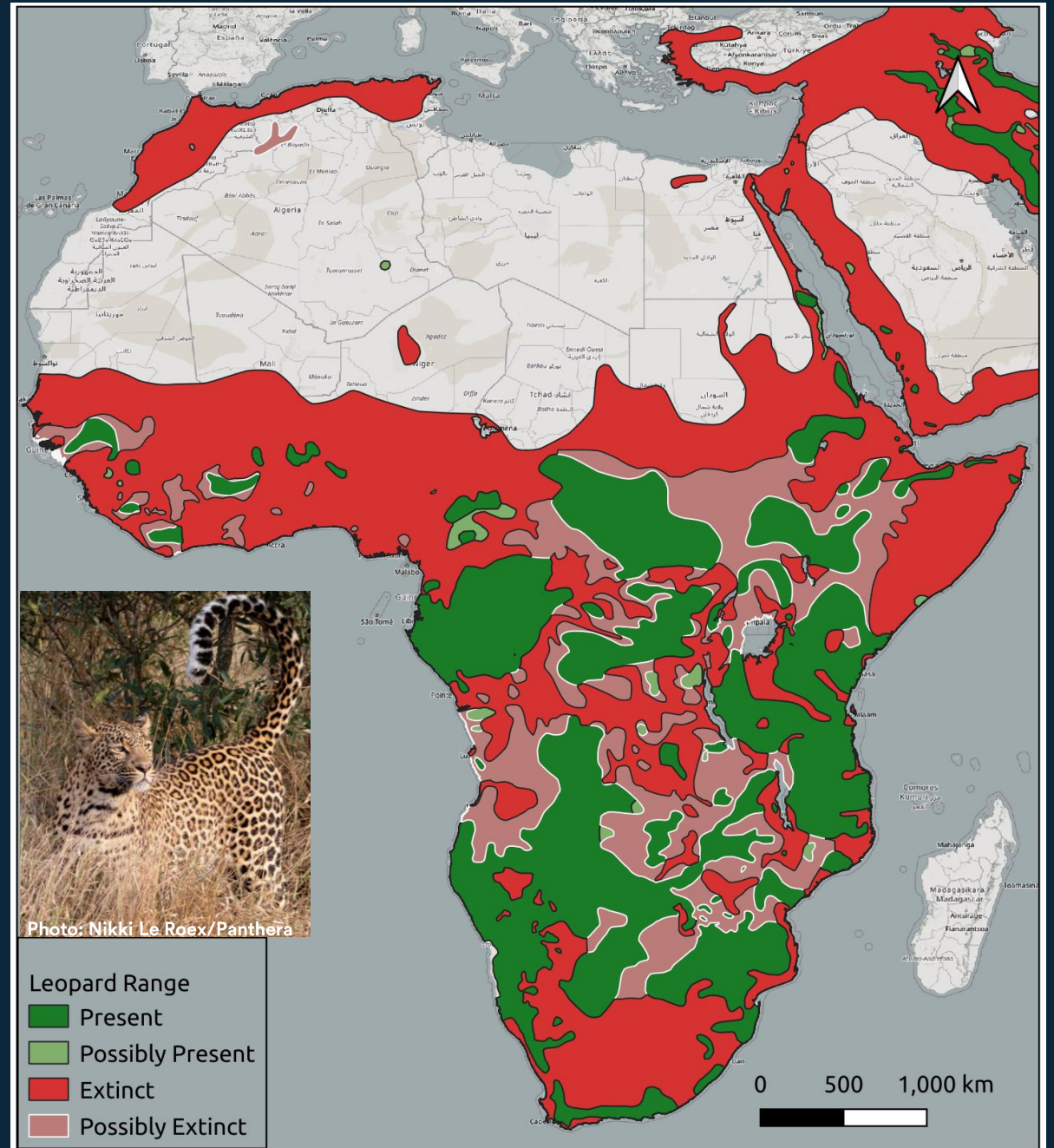


Photo: Shreya Mohan



Leopards are estimated to have been lost from up to **67%** of their historic African range

Source: IUCN Red list, 2016.





# Poaching for leopard skins and body parts is one of the primary threats in the region

- Leopard skin trade is fueled by **demand for Ceremonial Regalia**
- Nazareth Baptist "Shembe" Church, Zulu, Lozi, Ngoni and Swazi gatherings were identified as key demand sources in southern Africa

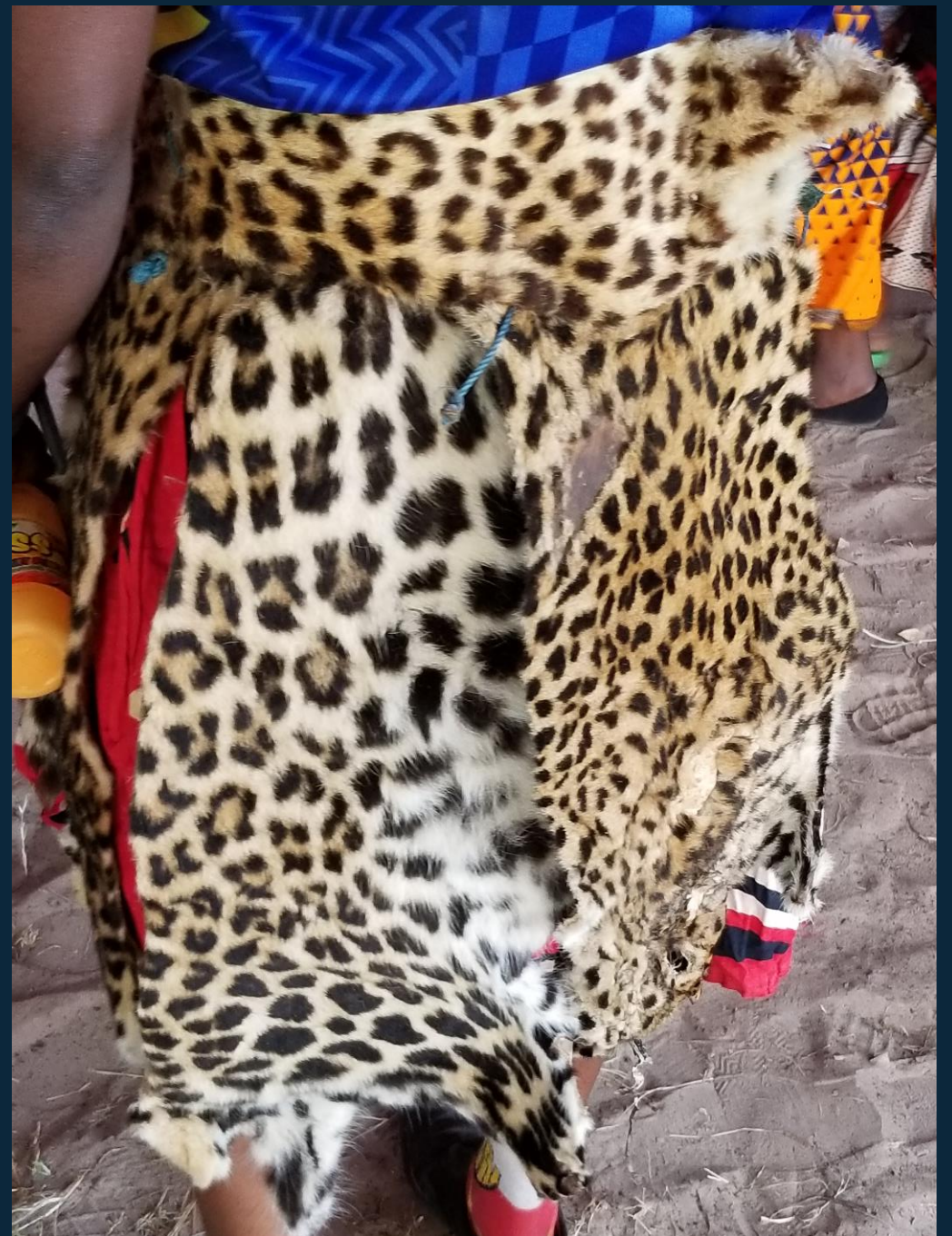


Photo: Gareth Whittington-Jones/Panthera



# Furs for Life initiative provided a potentially replicable solution

Shembe Church  
generated an estimated  
annual demand of **800-  
1200 authentic leopard  
skins**



# Furs for Life initiative provided a potentially replicable solution

Use of synthetic leopard furs increased to **50%** from 10 % in 2013



Photo: Tristan Dickerson/Panthera



# Panthera was requested to form a partnership to resolve a similar problem

The Lozi Senior Chief, His Royal Highness Inyambo Yeta requested a partnership to implement an initiative to tackle ceremonial skin use in Western Zambia



Photo: Gareth Whittington-Jones/Panthera



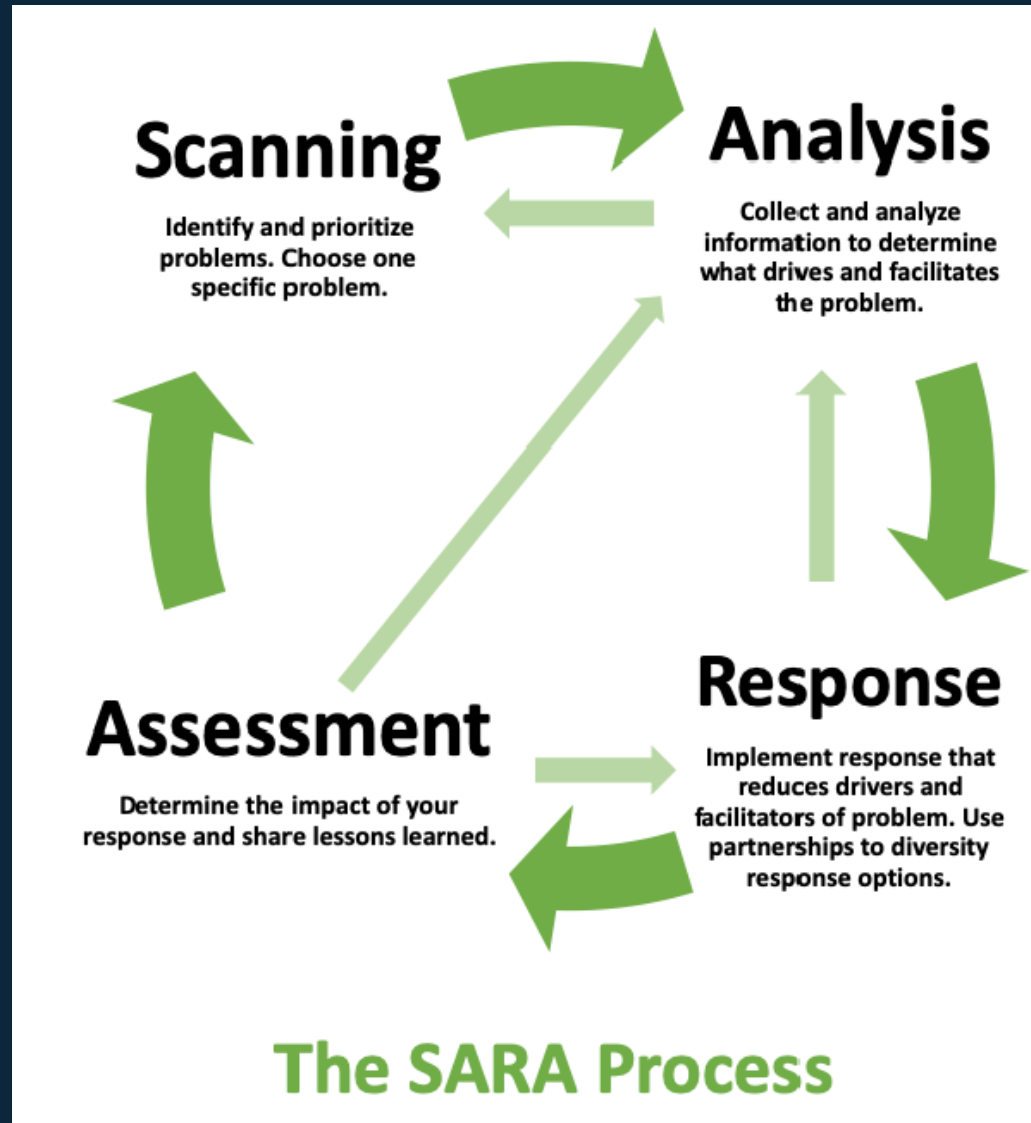
# Kuomboka



Royal Barge



# Which problem ?



# Target Species



Leopard



Serval



Cheetah



Lion



Large-Spotted Genet



**Problem definition:**  
*“Leopard poaching to supply ceremonial attire for Lozi cultural gatherings.”*



# Analysis



# Sources of Information

**Field visits to Kuomboka**

**Baseline measures of scale of skin use**

**Interviews with key community contacts**

**Product-based crime script of poaching and trade**

**Questionnaire surveys of Lozi paddlers**

**Skin use and motivations of paddlers**

**Court Monitoring (WCP)**

**Information on trafficking incidents**

**SMART LE Patrol Data**

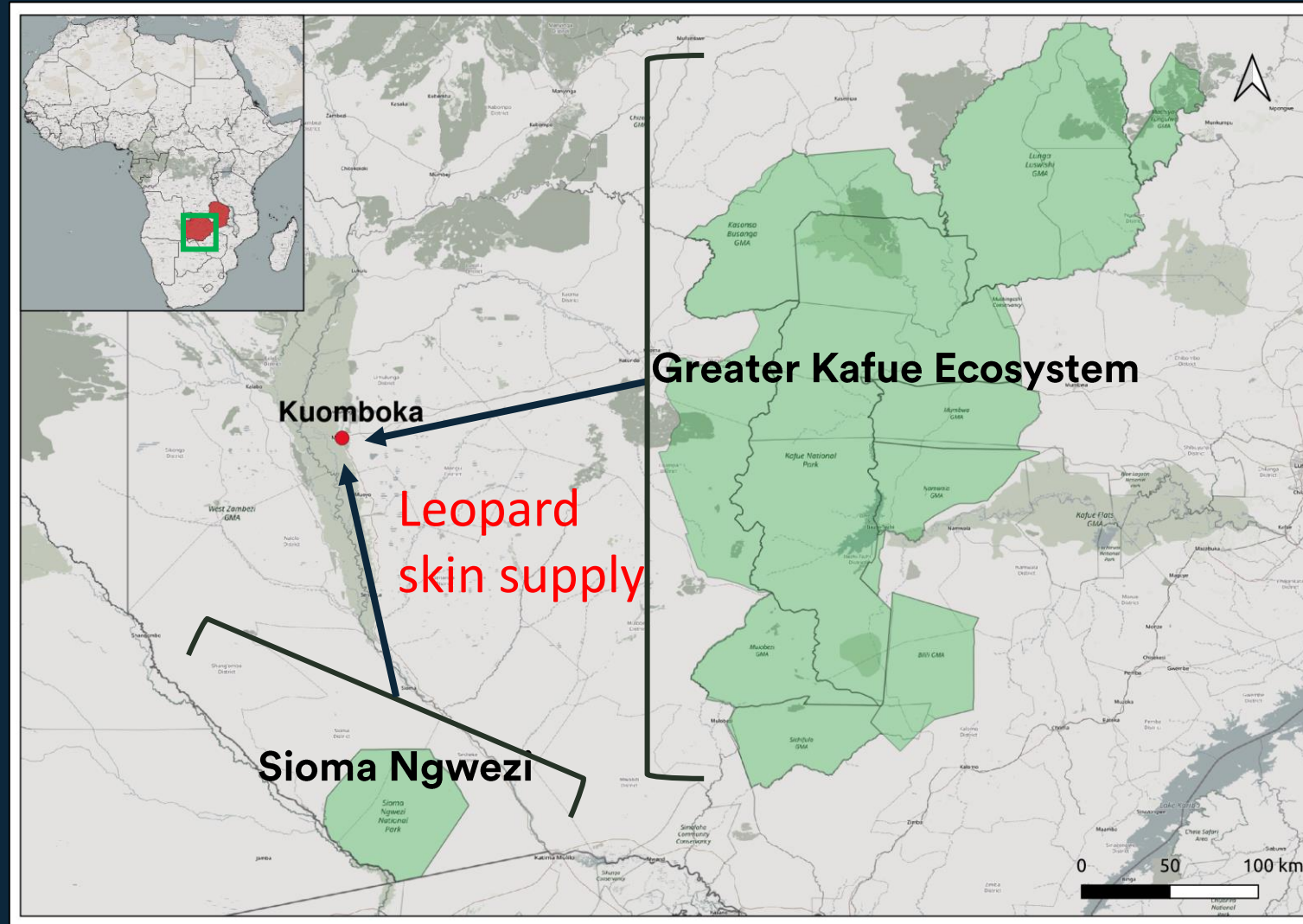
**Poaching incidents in Kafue**

**Camera-Trap monitoring**

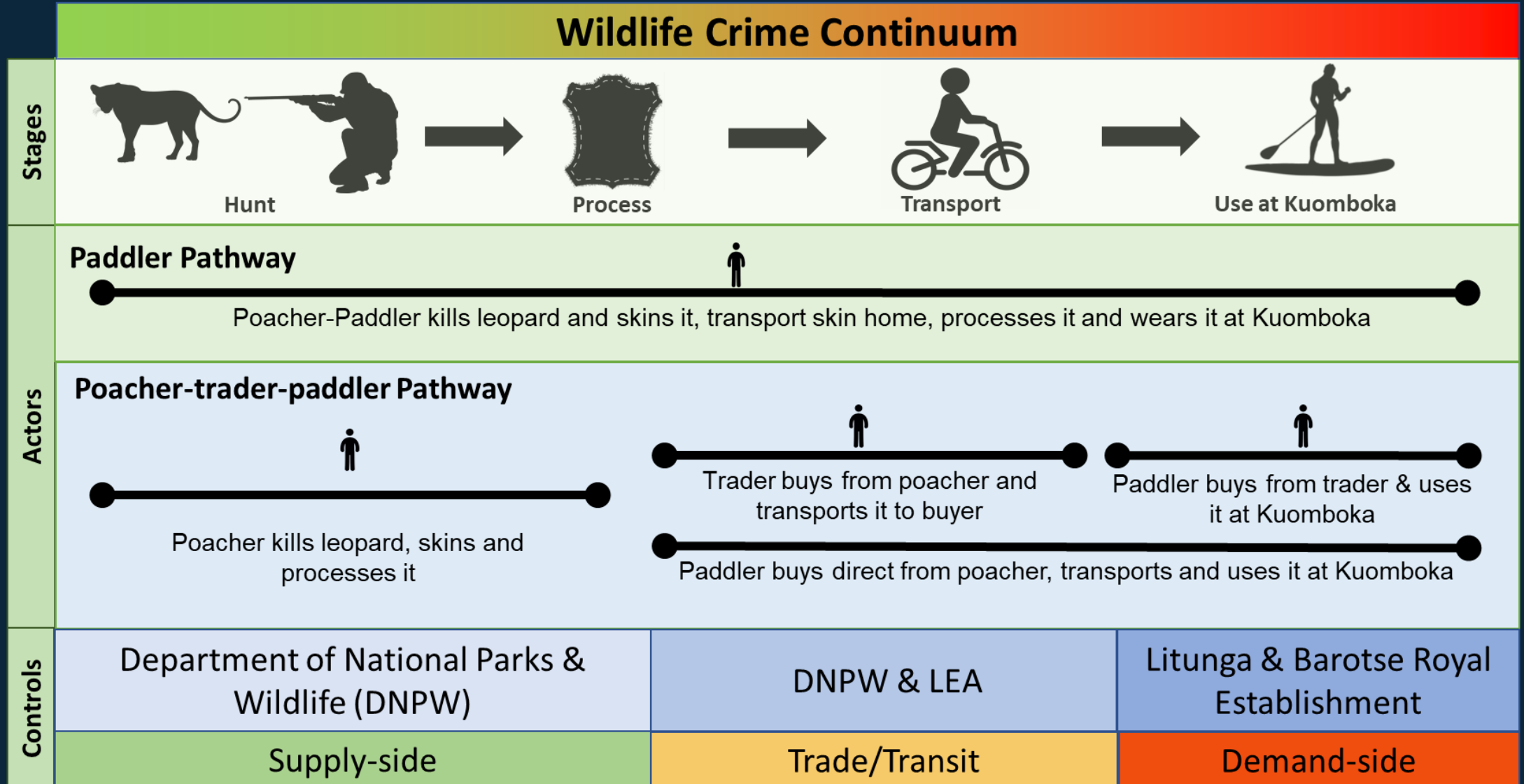
**Leopard densities in Kafue**



# Leopard skin use is highly concentrated in space and time



# Majority of prospective paddlers hunted leopards (35%) or purchased skins (32%)





# Ceremonial skin use is linked to trafficking of leopard skins from Kafue Ecosystem

**Demand at Kuomboka**

- 32 % of the interviewed Lozi paddlers bought skins from traders

**Trafficking of Leopard Skins**

- 72 % carnivores trafficked are leopards
- 95 % of leopard seizures included skins

**Poaching at Kafue**

- 79 % of leopard seizures in W & S Zambia purportedly from Kafue and surrounding areas
- 4 of 6 leopard poaching incidents detected on patrols in Kafue NP involved harvesting of skins

# Short lifespan and anticipatory purchasing of authentic skins leads to high demand

- Estimated at least **1000 Lozi men** seek to paddle in the Kuomboka each year
- Skins last for around **4.2 years**
- Estimated **200 to 300 wild cat skin** garments required annually to supply demand for Kuomboka and other ceremonies - leopard skins are the most desired



# Influential leadership: Litunga and Barotse Royal Establishment (BRE)



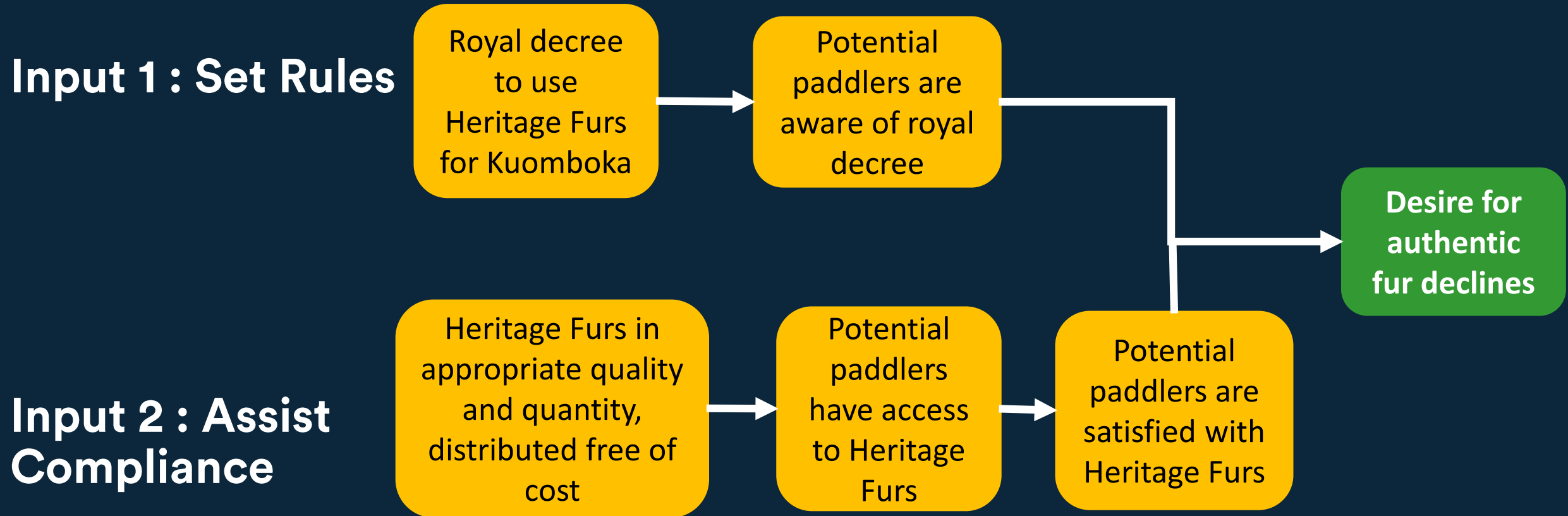
Photo Credit: Unknown

# Response





# BRE declaration and Heritage furs will reduce desire for authentic skins

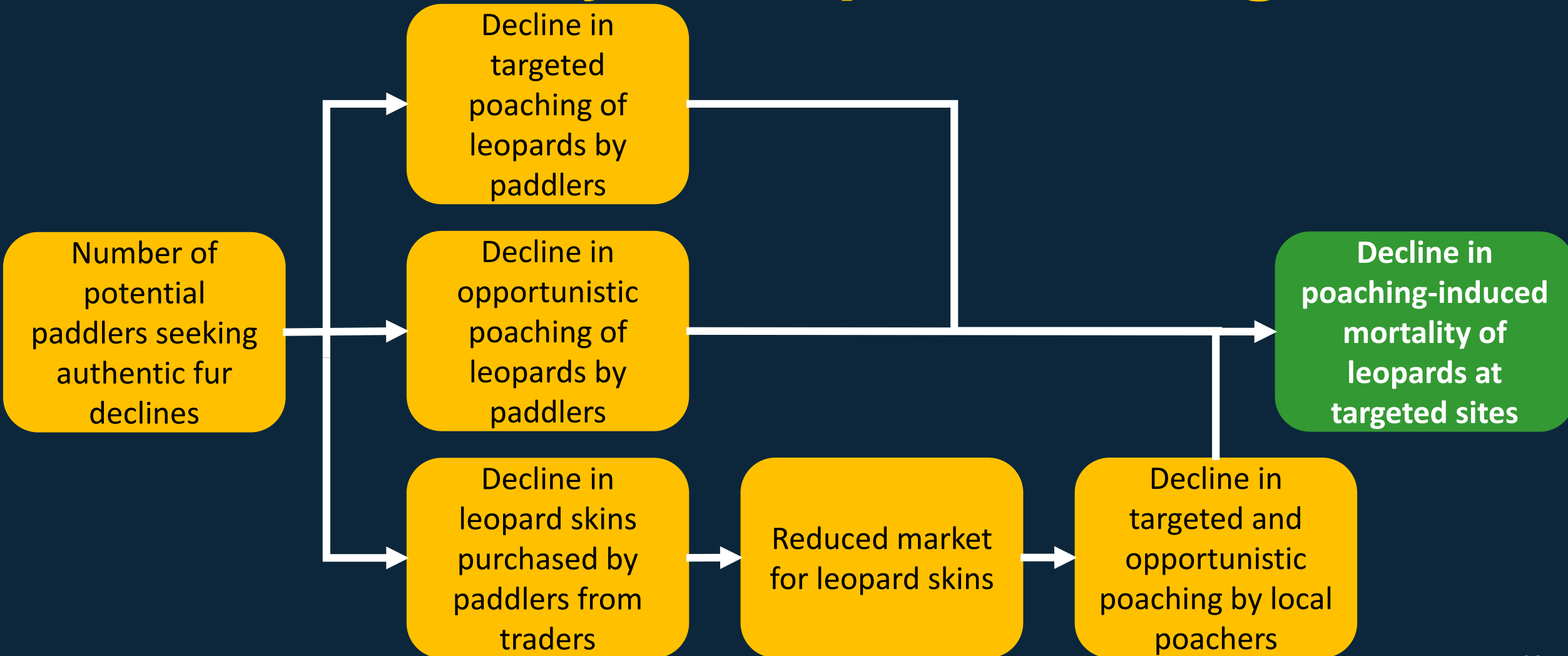


# Reduced desire will result in fewer paddlers buying authentic skins

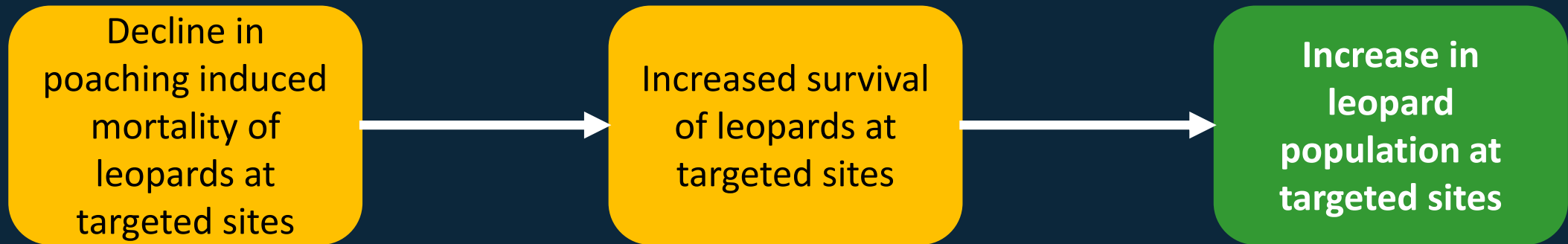




# Decline in demand by Lozi paddlers will reduce mortality of leopards at target sites

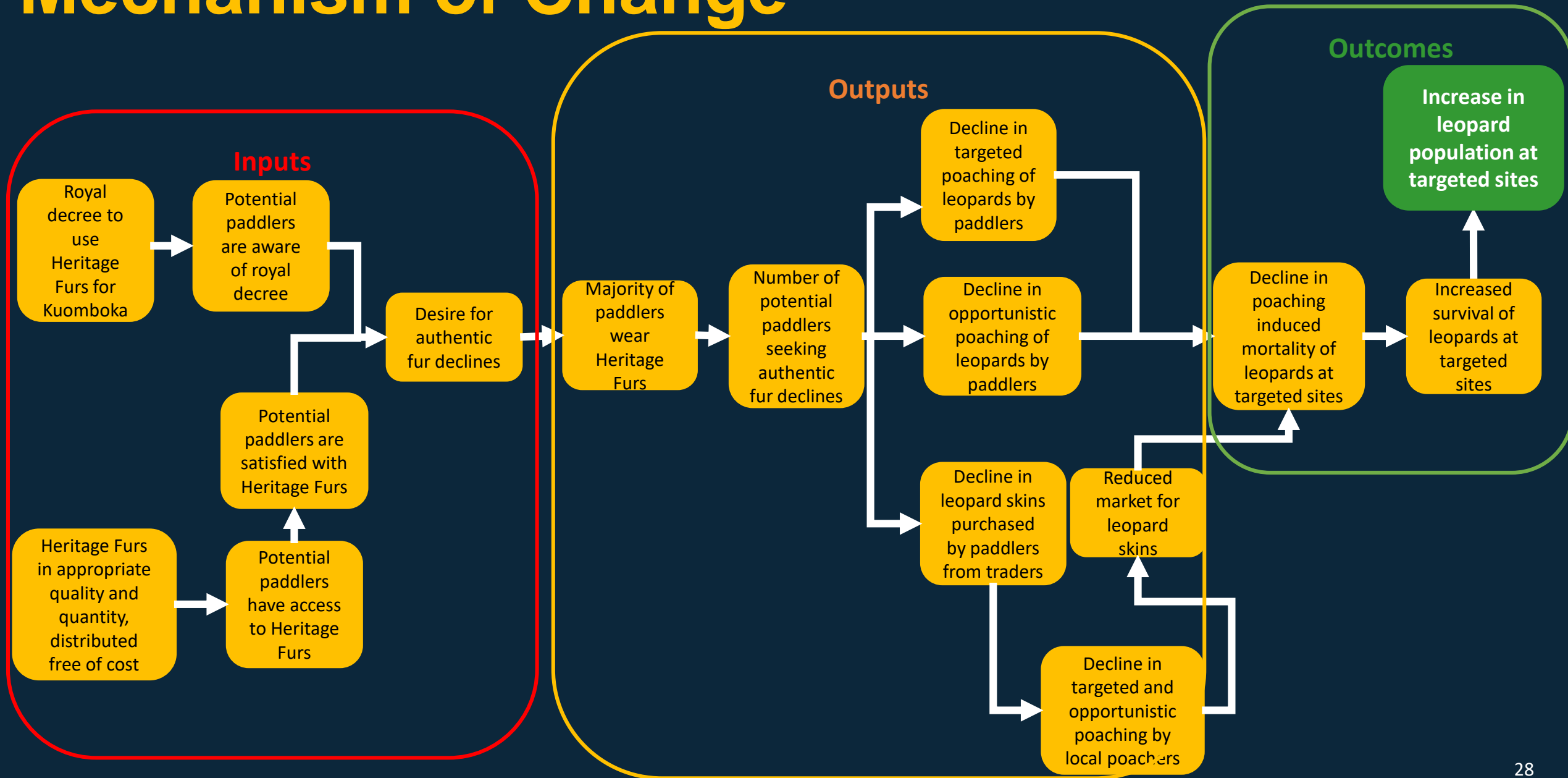


# Reduced poaching induced mortality will result in increased leopard population





# Mechanism of Change



## Key implementation challenge

- The covid-19 pandemic created a gap between public launch in 2019 and first use of skins at the Kuomboka in 2022
- The pandemic affected overall engagement with partners & community

## Key implementation strength

- Strong endorsement from BRE leadership
- Intervention simultaneously addressed a cultural and conservation need

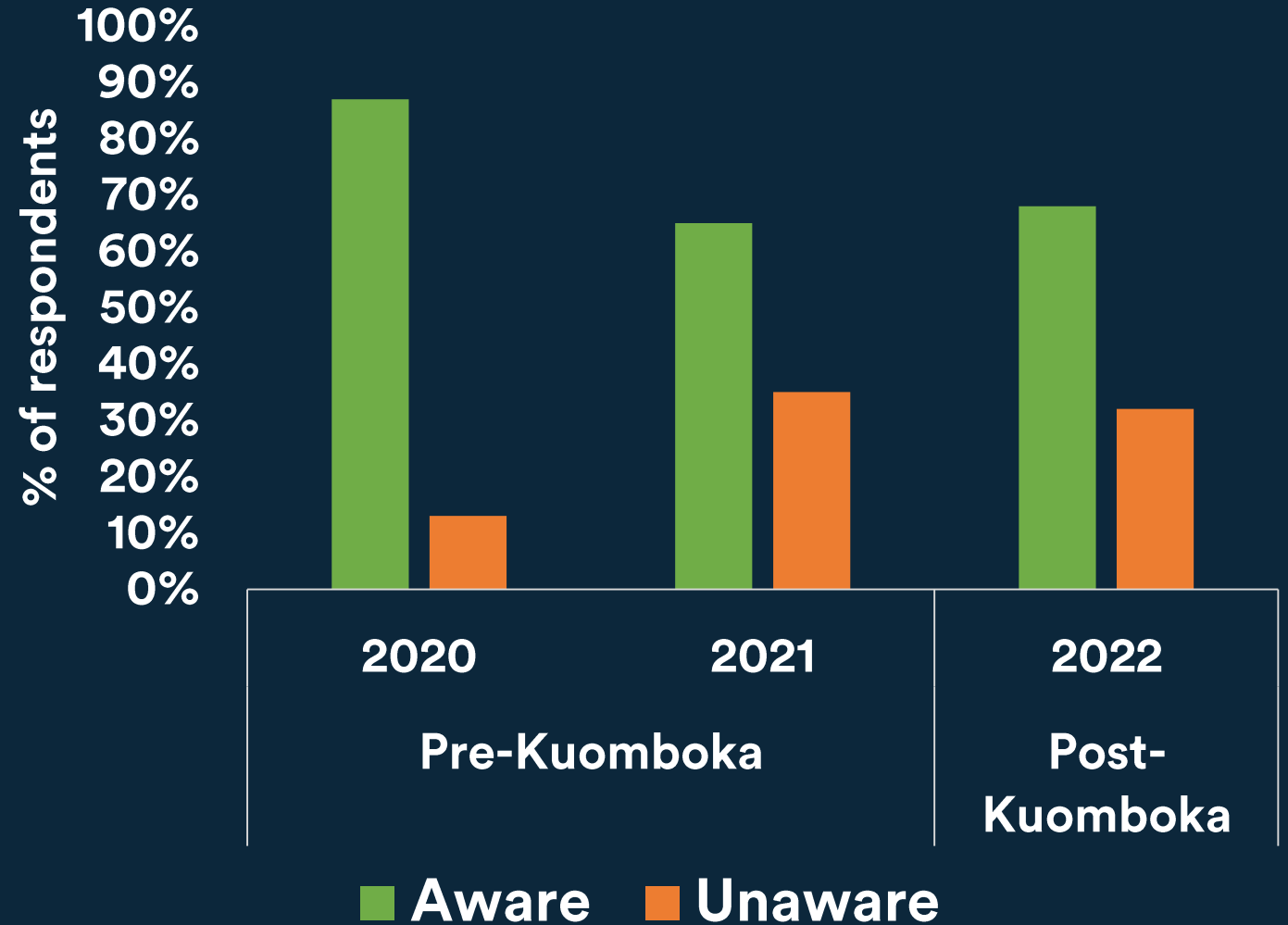


# Assessment



# The royal declaration was effective in raising awareness of the Heritage furs

**Over 70%** of respondents were aware of Heritage Furs across three years



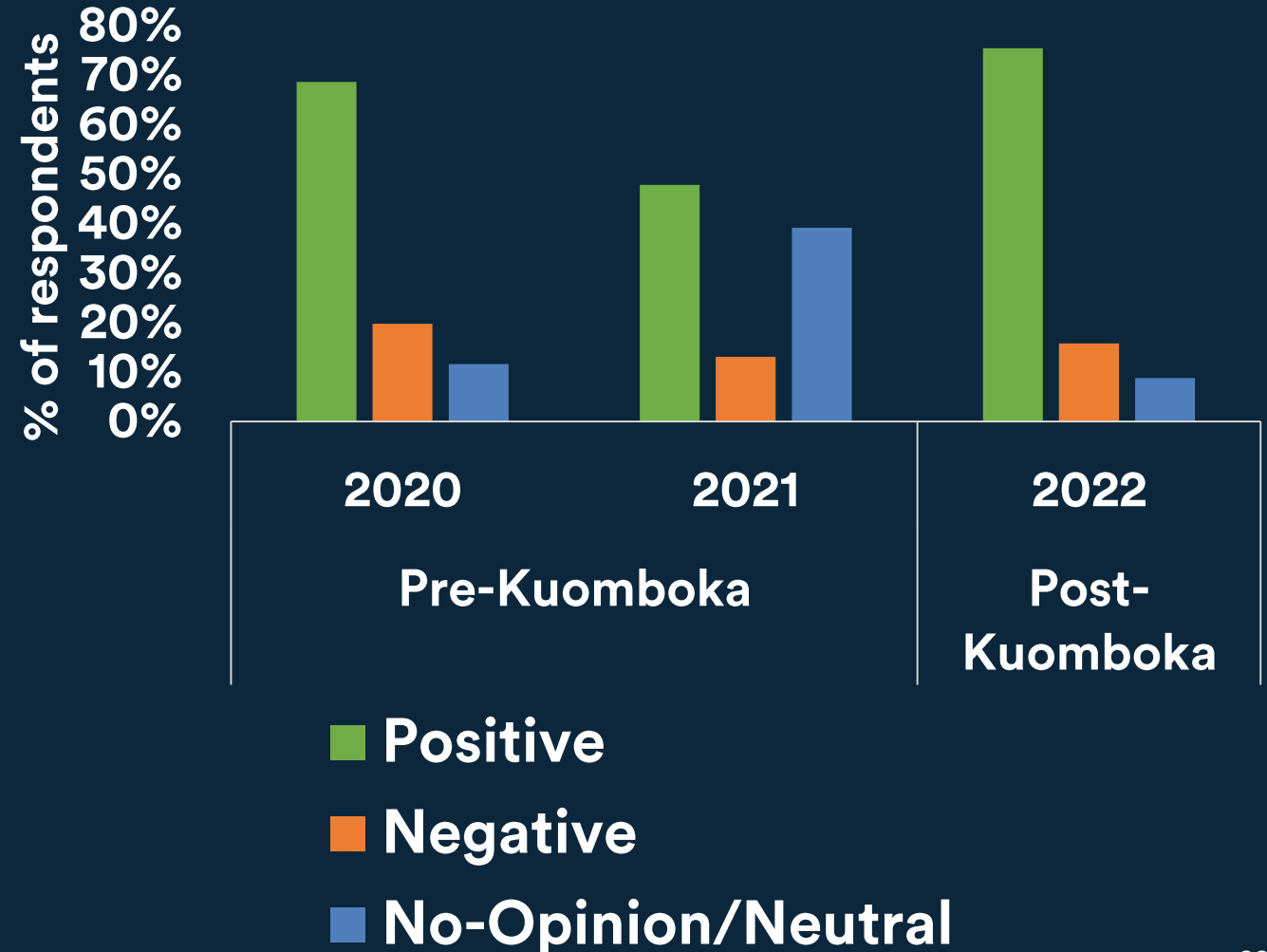


# Majority of paddlers were positive towards Heritage furs

**68%** of respondents had a positive opinion of Heritage Furs

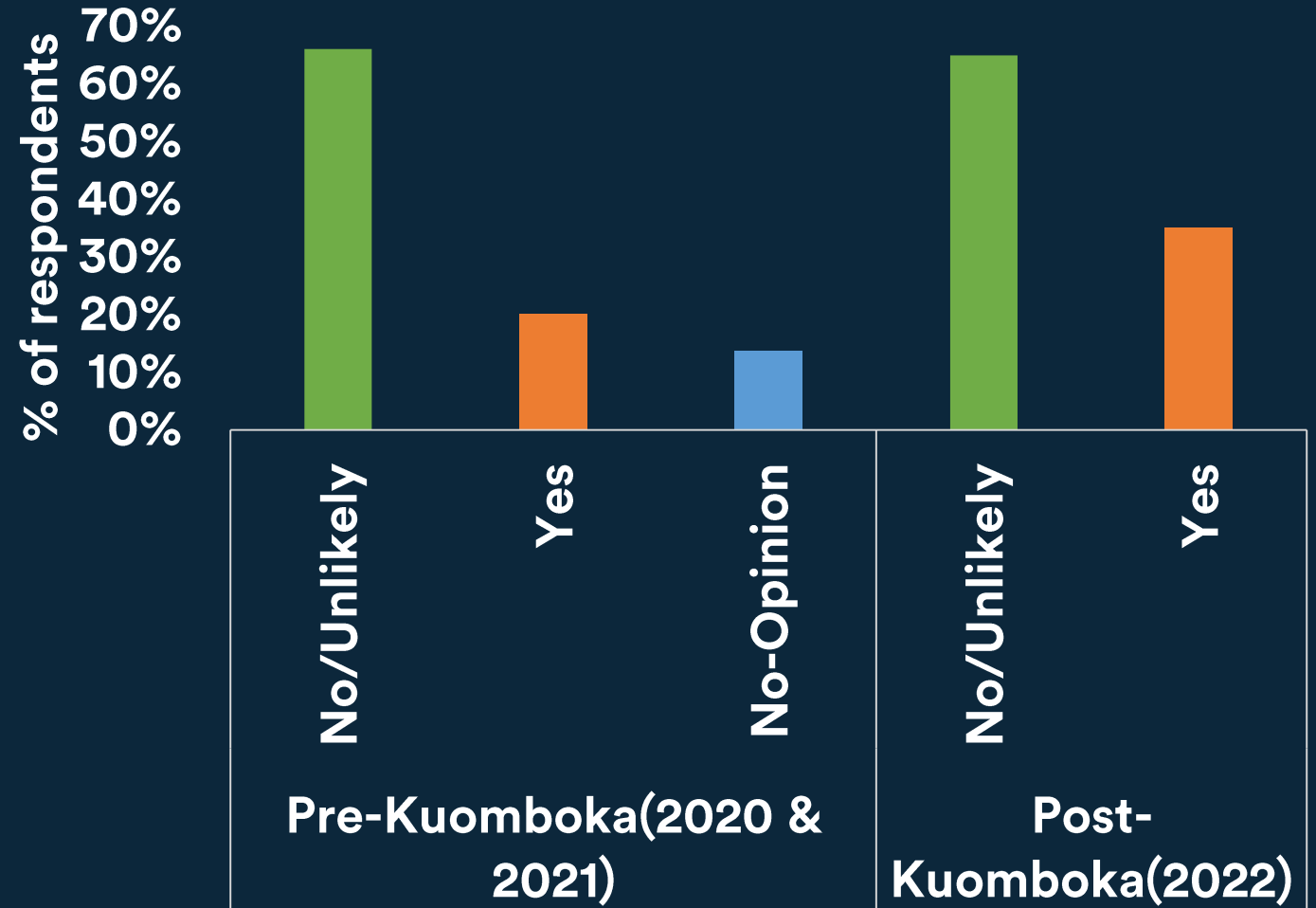
Reasons for positive opinion:

- **Conserving Wildlife**
- **Preserving Culture**
- **Reduced Effort in Procuring Furs**
- **Quality of Heritage Furs**



# ...And most paddlers didn't desire an authentic leopard skin

**Over 60%** of respondents did not intend to acquire an authentic skin





# Majority of Lozi paddlers used Heritage Furs at Kuomboka in 2022

**79%** of paddlers were recorded using Heritage Furs in Photographic Survey

**61%** of paddlers wore Heritage Furs according to Post-Kuomboka Interviews

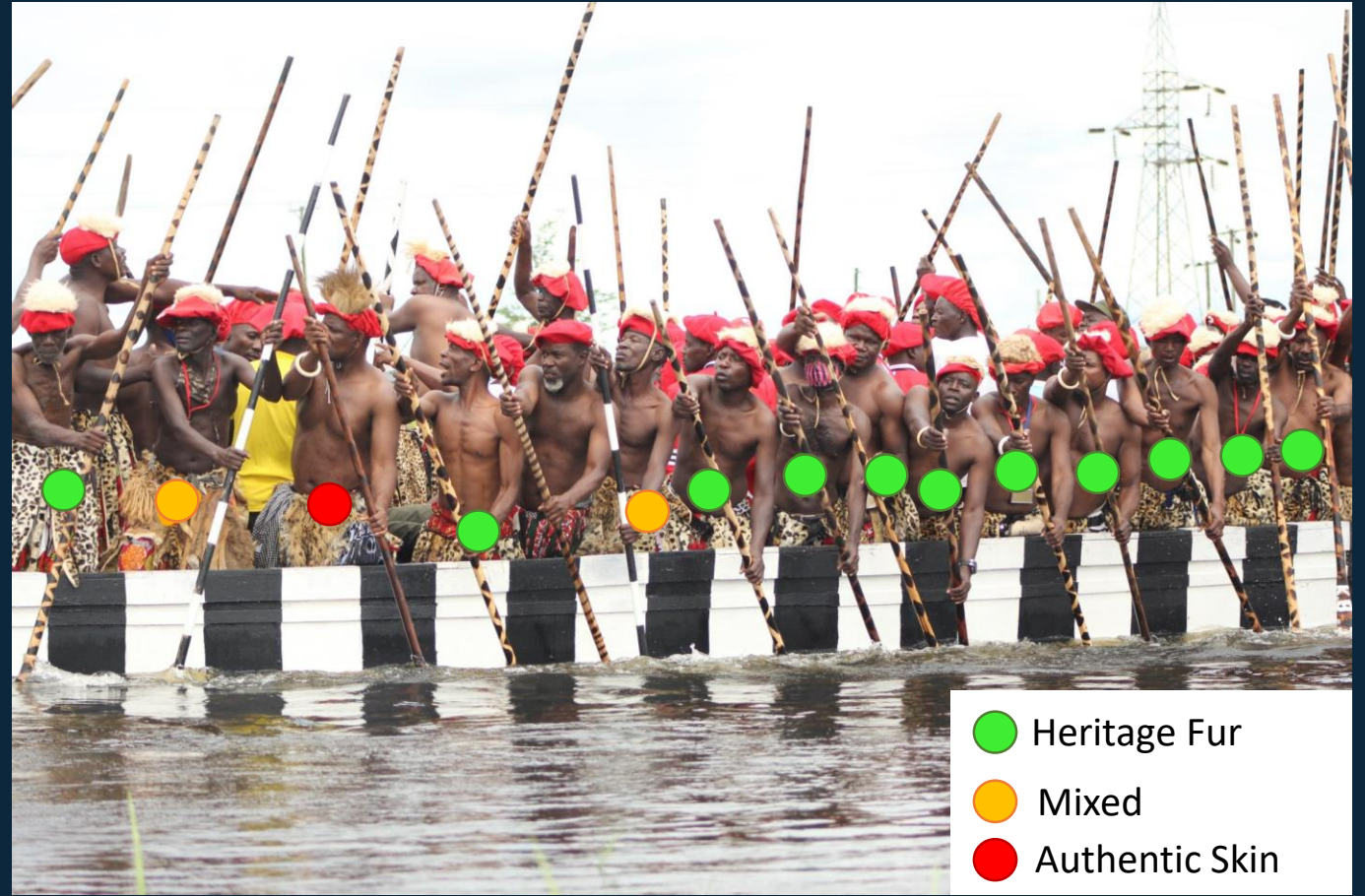
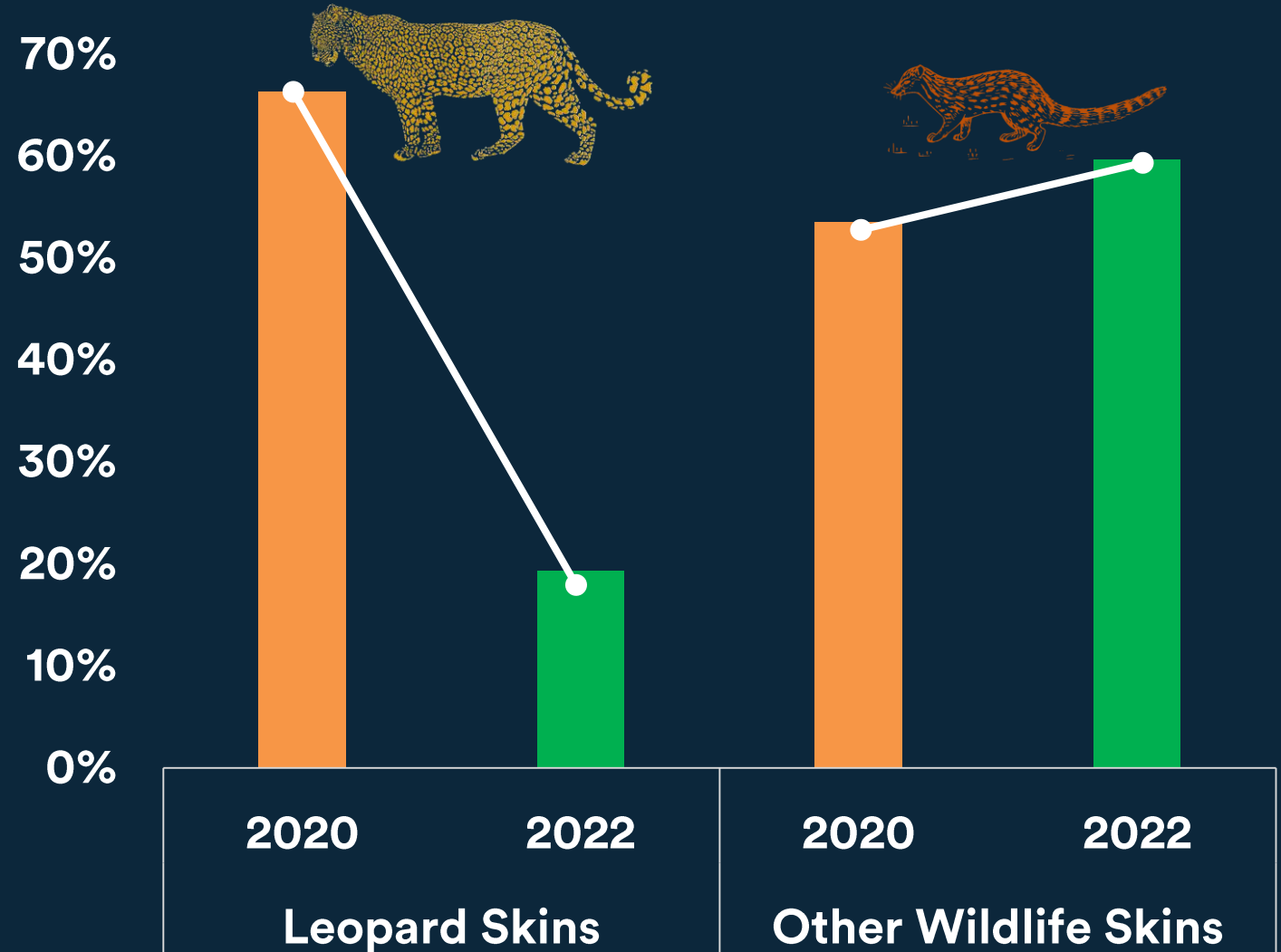


Photo: Gareth Whittington-Jones/Panthera

# Ownership of leopard skins decreased

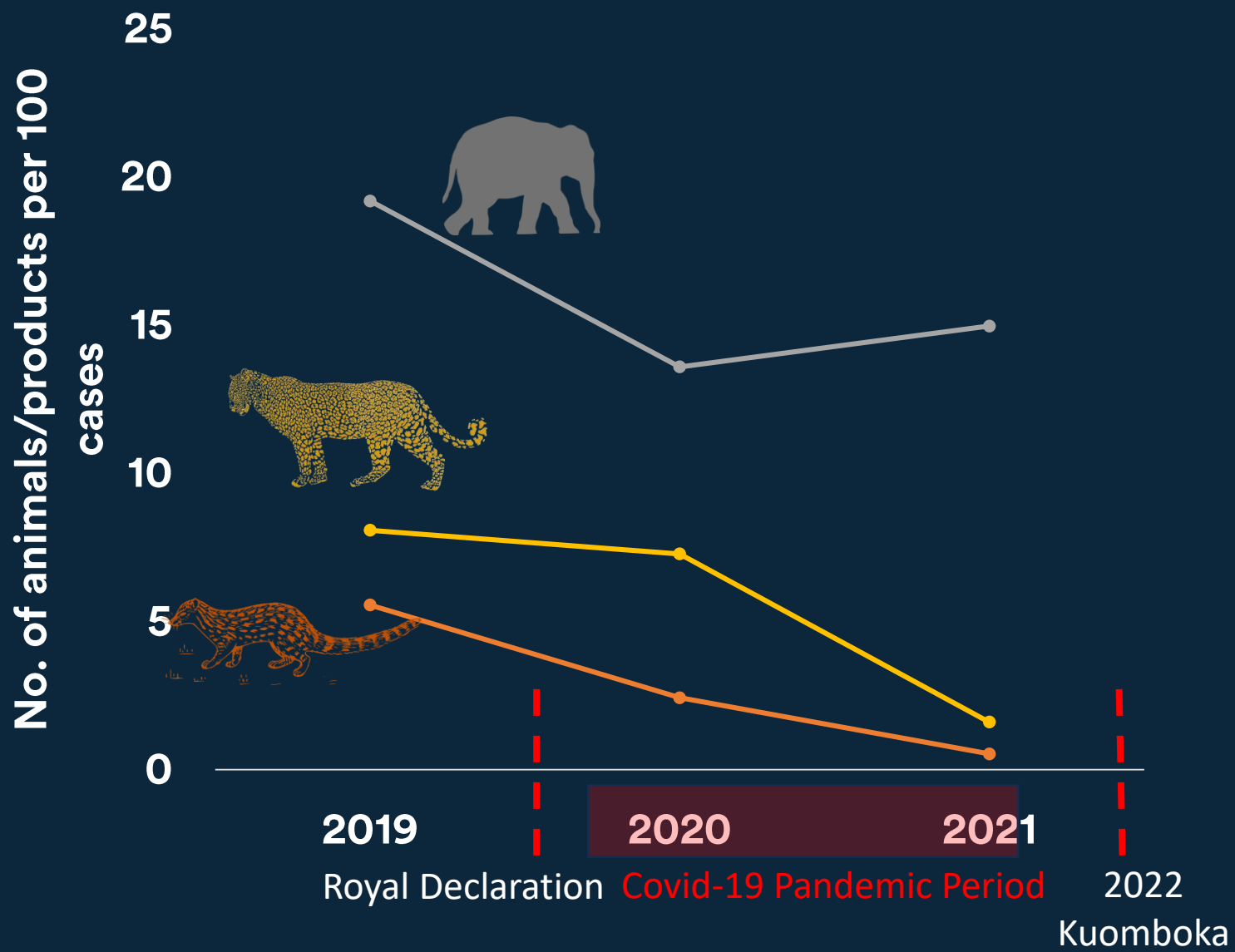
**70%** decline in  
leopard  
skin ownership

Paddlers were not  
replacing their old  
leopard skins



# Leopard skin seizures declined after our response

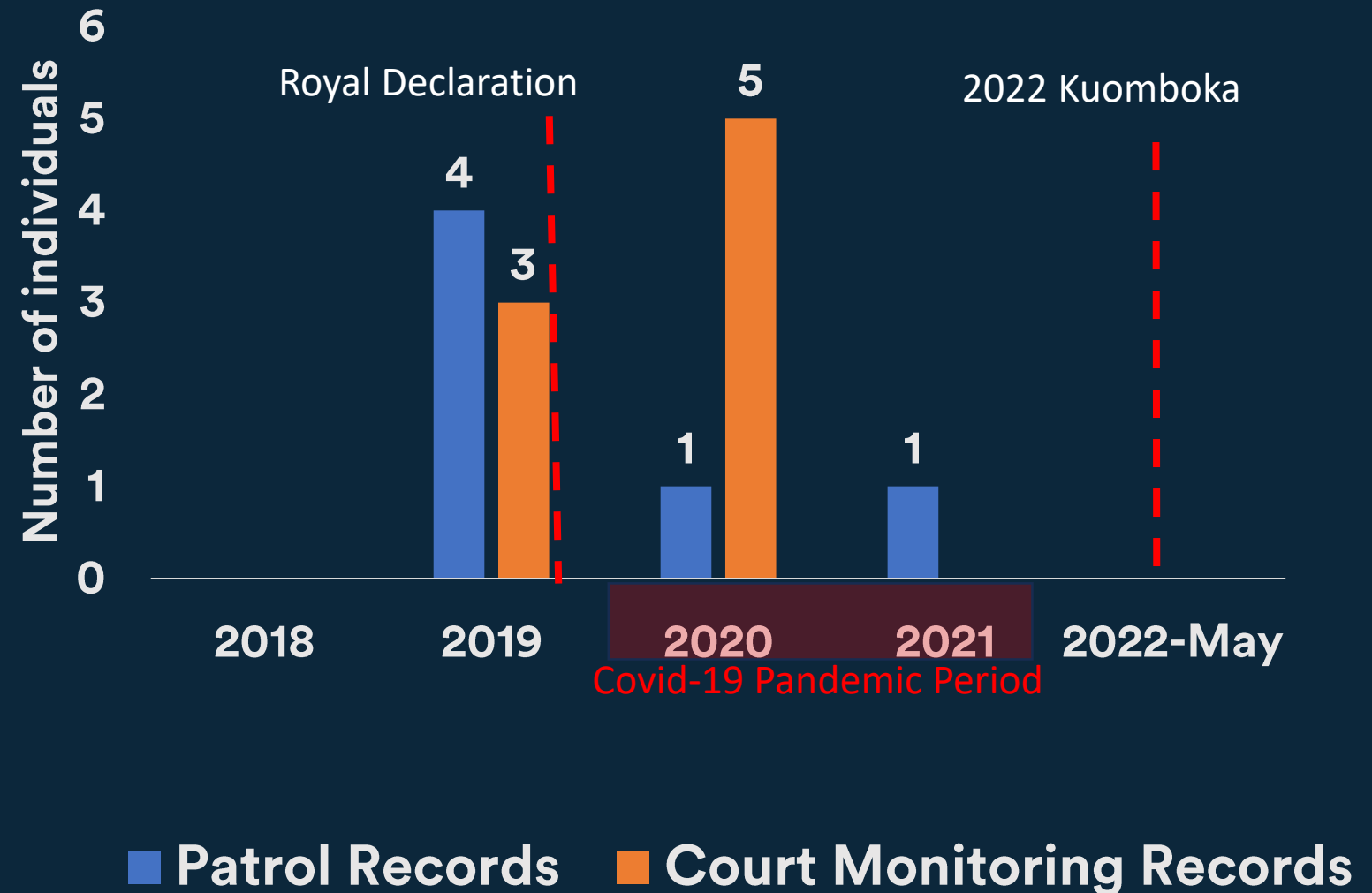
Less than 2.5% of seizures in 2021 were spotted cats despite high anticipated post-pandemic demand



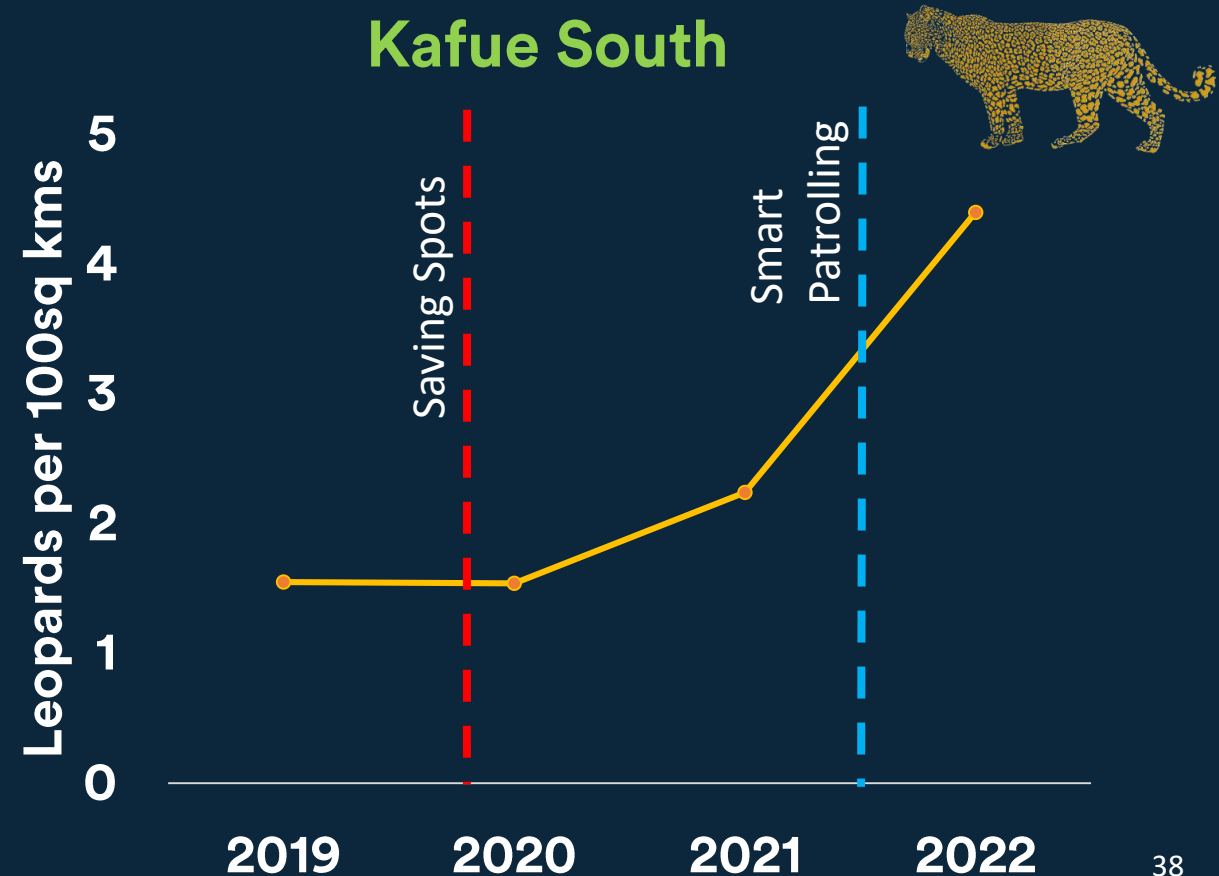
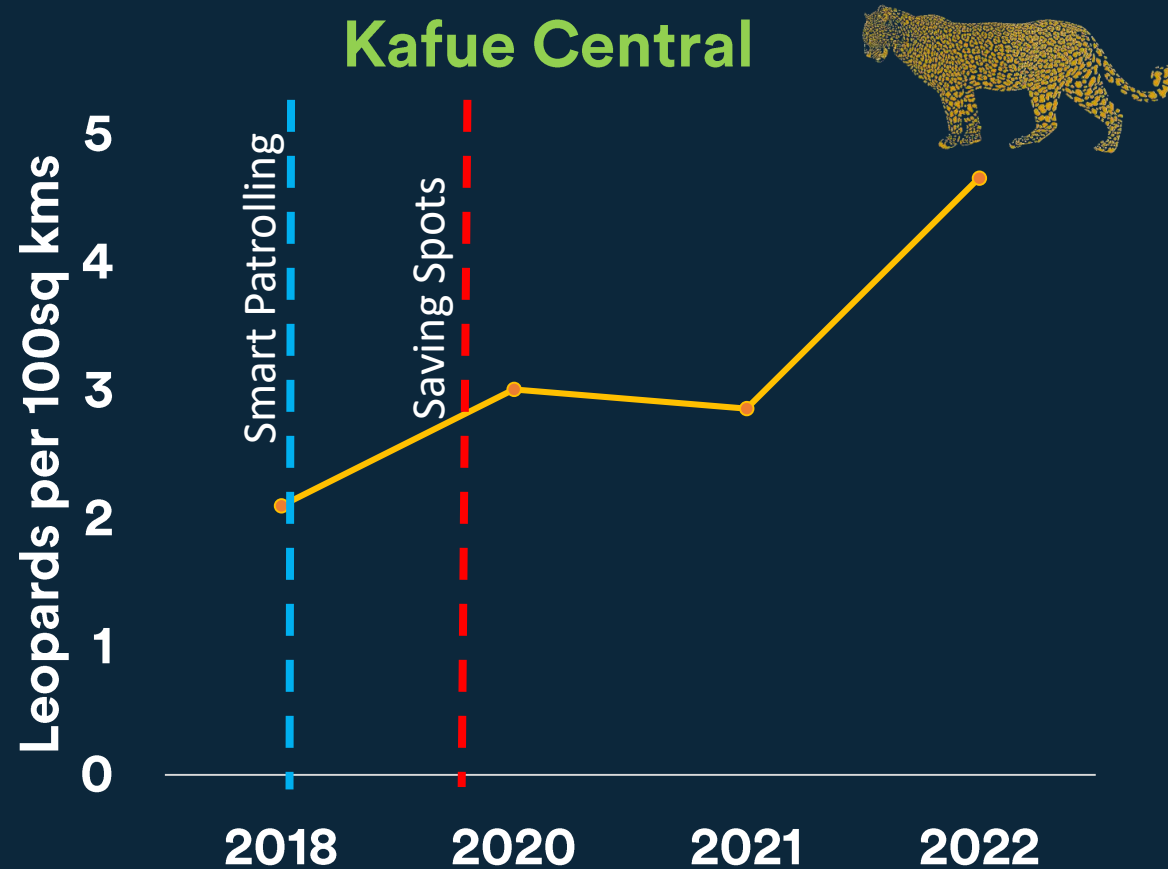


# Potential decline in leopard poaching in Kafue National Park

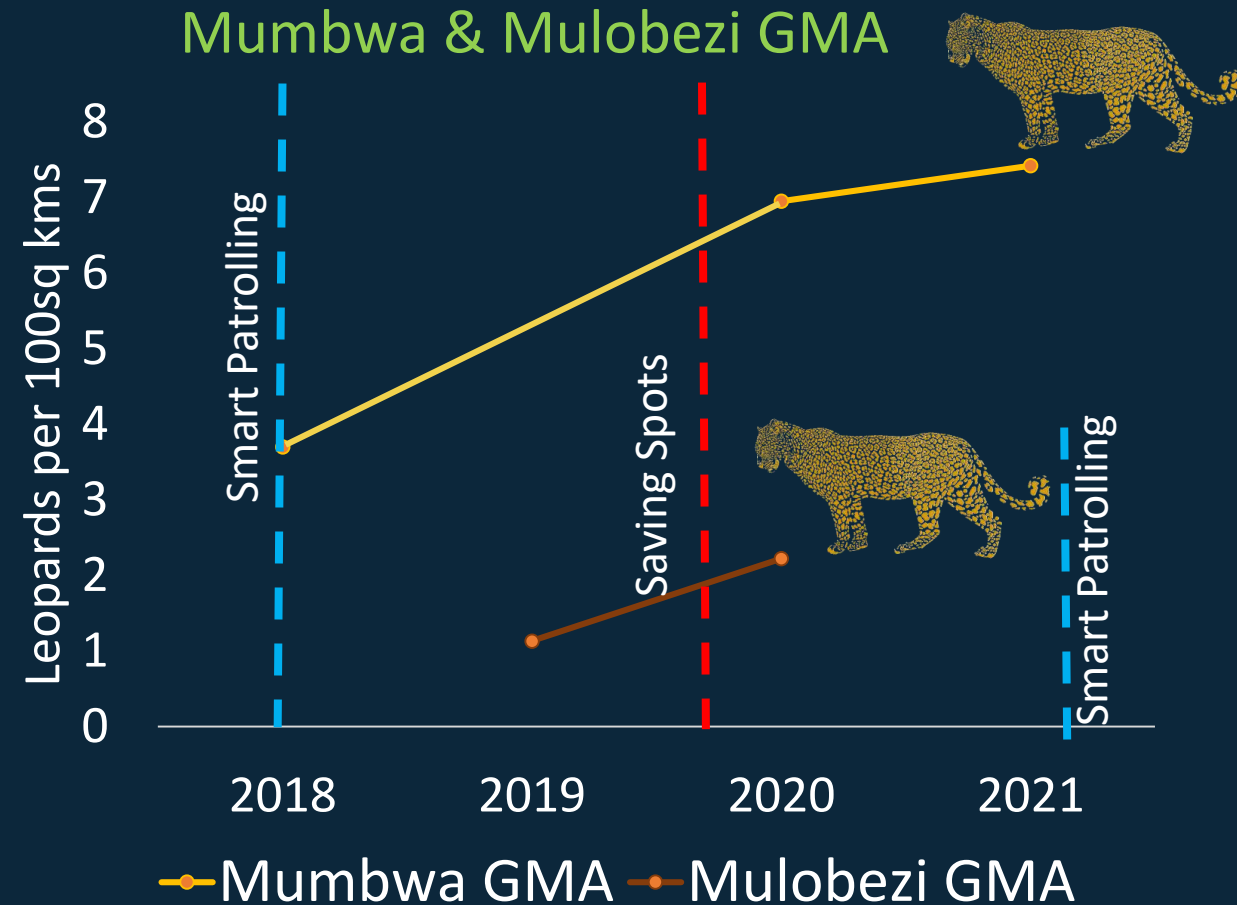
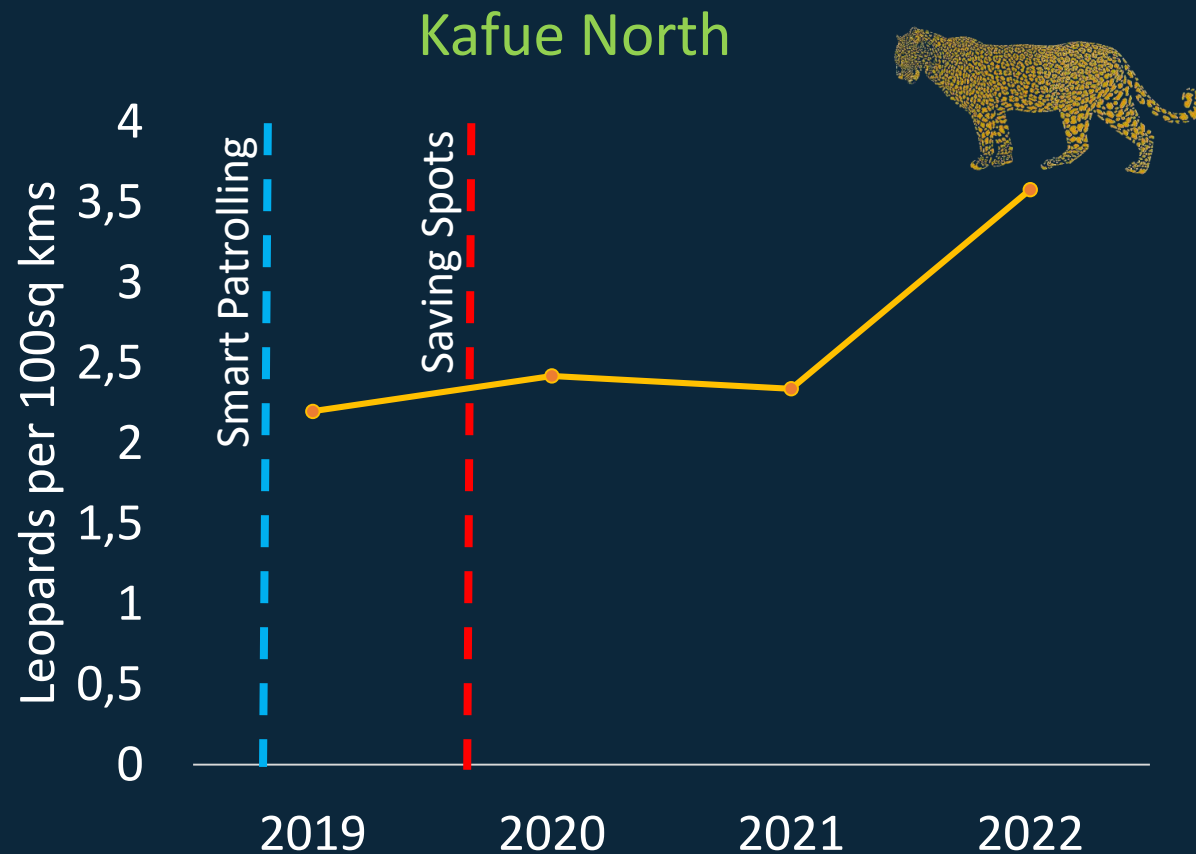
Reported incidents of leopard poaching declined after implementation of Saving Spots



# Increase in leopard densities in Greater Kafue Ecosystem occurred after implementation of Saving Spots



# Increase in leopard densities in Greater Kafue Ecosystem occurred after implementation of Saving Spots





# Moderators



**Less than 20%** of interviewed  
paddlers had a negative opinion of  
heritage furs

**But ....**

**55%** of paddlers with negative opinion of heritage furs **hunted for leopard skin**

**70%** of paddlers with negative opinions **wish to acquire authentic skins**



# Flexible skin user



## Accept Heritage Fur

- Purchase or inherit skin
- Educated
- Full time job

# Adherent skin user



## Reject Heritage Fur

- Mostly hunt their own skin
- Intend to acquire new skin
- Poor education
- Mostly unemployed

# Conclusion

**Do we modify our intervention or  
devise a new targeted intervention ?**

# Conclusion

*The demand-reduction  
intervention played a key role in  
successfully **reducing the  
problem***

# Conclusion

*Endorsement and shared ownership of the intervention by traditional authorities was critical to its implementation*



# Conclusion

*Significant **buy-in** by majority of  
**users** played a **key** role in  
**success***

# Conclusion

The success of this initiative demonstrates the potential to expand this approach by partnering with other culturo-religious groups across the globe that utilise wild cat skins in ceremonial attire

# Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the following organisations for their generous financing of this project:

*Cartier for Nature*

الهيئة الملكية لمحافظة العلا  
Royal Commission for AlUla



# Acknowledgments

Special thanks to all our colleagues at Panthera, the Barotseland Royal Establishment, Department of National Parks and Wildlife (Zambia) and WCP for their support and contributions to the case study. Additionally, we are also grateful to the following organisations for their support of this work:

- National Prosecution Authority, Zambia
- Peace Parks Foundation
- Iziko South Africa Museum
- KAZA Secretariat
- LEAD Ranger
- ASU Center for Problem-Oriented Policing



# IN MEMORIAM

**His Royal Highness Senior Chief  
Inyambo Yeta**

**1954 - 2023**

**His leadership, vision and dedication to wildlife conservation in Western Zambia was key to initiating and sustaining the Saving Spots project and many other initiatives to conserve wildlife and preserve western Zambia's rich cultural heritage.**

**He will be greatly missed by our team, the conservation fraternity and the Lozi community.**



Photo: Peace Parks Foundation

# Thank You



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Photo: Aditya Malgaonkar/Panthera

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