

Brett Schwartz, Devon Roberge, Leo Robles Gonzalez, Spencer Whiteway
EDG-220-01 Production 1
Project 2 – Team 3
Professor Wehr
Sprint 2 Concept Research

Content Research – Lion Guardians

Overview

When researching, we focused on properly displaying the roles of Lion Guardians and the benefits of establishing a coexistence between the lions and humans in the conservation areas. We hope to create a game that would educate children between the ages of six and nine about Lion Guardians, their mission, and the tactics they use. Their mission being to help people coexist with the local lion population, through traditional African community values, science-based research, and valuing co-existence. Our research was primarily focused on the tactics used by the Lion Guardians and their tactics. Along with this we researched into why and what groups hunt lions. Finally we researched the learning capabilities of our demographic and how to best convey our message to them.

Understanding a Lion Guardian's Role

Lion Guardians are a group of 80 East Africans who work to actively protect lions in an area of about 1.3 million acres (5,500 sq. kms/3,417 sq. miles). They are founded on local values, community participation, and science. Their process includes recruiting young uneducated Maasai warriors along with other pastoralist warriors and then educate them on the skills needed to migrate conflicts between the wildlife and people, monitor the lion populations, and help local communities live with the lions. We plan to portray the work done the Lion

Guardians by simulating some of the roles of the guardians, while also showing the reasons locals might act aggressively towards the lions, and vice versa in the case of the lions. We intend to show off the work of the guardians and the reasons for aggression by involving task the player must do that come with a backstory that explains the motive of either the lion/lion hunter. An example would be at the start of a level the player is presented with a text box saying “a local herder’s livestock was eaten by a lion when it wandered from the pack, out of anger the herder has decided to hunt down the lion which you need to protect.” Following this the next level would have more poachers the player would have to direct away from the lion. Along with this we intend to use traditional African art styles to provide a look at African culture.

Understanding the Maasai People

The Maasai people are a tribe who live in Tanzania and Kenya, and are known as tall, fierce warriors, or as the Maasai call them; “Moran”. They can be recognised by the special red cloth they wear, which is known as Shuka. The Maasai people live a nomadic life, moving from place to place, when it’s most beneficial. They rely on their animals for milk, meat, and animal blood. They will walk for many miles with their animals to find fresh food and water. They get all the other foods they need by swapping with other Maasai people. The men of the Maasai herd cattle, and carry spears to protect their cattle from wild animals such as lions. The Maasai women are responsible for cooking, collecting sticks for fires, and building the homes. The Maasai people live in a large park which has been designated for them, known as the Maasai Mara Park. The park was named after them, and the river that cuts through the land. When an area where one of the tribes is settled runs out of food or water, they will pack up and go searching for a new place

to settle. They will often walk along the river to find new areas. The Maasai don't just protect lions, but rhinos, giraffes, zebras, warthogs, and buffaloes as well.

Why do the Maasai people want to protect the lions?

The African wild lion has lost 80% of its grazing territory, specifically 50% of which has been lost in only the past 20 years. It is unknown how many lions exist today, due to it being relatively difficult for wild lions to be counted, but estimates put the numbers somewhere around 35,000. One of the many reasons Lions are hunted in these areas, aside from poaching, is *olamayio*, or *murrān* two words for the right of passage for young men who are a part of the Maasai warriors, where they are required to kill a lion. This being tradition for them, it is obviously hard to break, but the Maasai people convince these young men to instead join the lion guard, and protect the very beasts tradition says they must kill. But, the Maasai people do not protect the lions for noble reasons, at least, not exclusively. The Maasai people have simply realized that wild lions are more valuable alive than dead, as they bring tourism and wages to the people. So for this reason, the lion guard use GPS technology to constantly track lions in order to keep them away from livestock, and keep angry farmers from killing them, and protect them from poachers, and protect tourists from them as well.

Why do poachers and Maasai people become lion guardians?

The initial idea for this was created by Leela Hazzah, after living with the Maasai people in the Mbirikani region for more than a year. Many of the Lion Guardians had to learn to read and

write, as they had to keep data on the lions, and fill out monthly reports. The guardians have a small monthly wage, and each has a cell phone to ask for back-up when necessary. These wages actually net the lion guardians more money than poaching the lions would, which is a big plus, and reason to join the group for many poachers. For the Maasai people, the prospect of tourism based on lion sightseeing is a main driving factor for their desire to see the lions survive.

Designed to Help Educate Children about Maasai Culture and Wildlife Conservation

As previously mentioned the intent of our game is to educate children on African Culture and Wildlife Conservation, as both are pressing and under taught subjects. The first method would be to display the intentions of the lion guardians by showing what they do in an easy to understand manner. The next method would be displaying the ability for coexistence between species as to show that what the lion guardians stand to achieve. Finally we hope to show what traditional cultural values the guardians implement in their work.

Visual Portrayal

Research shows children of this age enjoy bright colors and cartoon like art styles, due to this we intend take influence from popular mobile game art styles such as *Angry Birds* while incorporating art and colors from traditional West African art styles. The lions and herders will both be represented with figures similar to those in traditional African art.

Sources:

- Briggs, Phillip J. "Lion Guardians." *Lion Guardians*, 2015, lionguardians.org/.
- Dunn, Meghan. "Transforming Lion Killers into 'Lion Guardians'." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 17 Dec. 2014, www.cnn.com/2014/07/24/world/cnnheroes-hazzah/index.html.
- Afp. "In Kenya, Lion Hunters Become 'Lion Guardians'." *The Hindu*, 28 Sept. 2016, www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/In-Kenya-lion-hunters-become-Lion-Guardians/article15004023.ece.
- By. "The Maasai Guard over the Lions of East Africa." *Africa Geographic*, 16 Mar. 2016, africageographic.com/blog/maasai-guard-lions-east-africa/.
- Griggs, Mary Beth. "African Lions Are Now Considered An Endangered Species." *Popular Science*, 21 Dec. 2015, www.popsoci.com/african-lions-are-now-considered-an-endangered-species-in-united-states.
- "THE MAASAI PEOPLE." *Maasai People, Kenya*, www.maasai-association.org/maasai.html.
- Chadwick, Alex. "Protecting African Lions: Hunters Turned Guardians." *NPR*, NPR, 12 Mar. 2009, www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101761344.
-