

Announcer 0:12

If you want a wildly healthy, naturally disease-resistant pet, who turns heads and starts conversations with awestruck onlookers, you're right where you belong. This is the Vital Animal Podcast, with your host, homeopathic veterinarian, Dr. Will Falconer.

Will Falconer 0:36

Welcome, everyone, to another episode of the Vital Animal Podcast. I'm here with a very special guest today. This is Eleni Gkikakis in Greece, who is going to talk to us about her experience as a lay homeopath prescribing for lions in another continent. So, here we are, separated by landmasses, she and I and the lions that she's prescribing for, but nonetheless, she's getting cool results, and we want to hear some of those stories. So, welcome, Eleni.

Eleni Gkikakis 1:09

Hi, thank you so much for having me. Such a huge honor to be here. Hopefully, I will be able to answer some of your questions. I'm not an expert. I try to help as much as I can.

Will Falconer 1:22

Oh, you're very good. Eleni's been on my membership group, the Vital Animal Alpha, and I oftentimes learn from her, so she's been at it for a lot of years.

Eleni Gkikakis 1:31

No, no.

Will Falconer 1:31

Yes, yes.

Eleni Gkikakis 1:33

Thank you, very kind of you to say. But I dare not. Oh, my gosh, thank you. No. I always learn from you.

Will Falconer 1:41

So, tell us, Eleni, how you made this connection with lions. Lions have a special place for you, I understand. But how did you get a connection with African lions?

Eleni Gkikakis 1:51

Wow. It is quite a long story, and I don't think we can get into that now. But I did first go to visit South Africa in 2015. And it was in a quest for me to deepen my practice as an intuitive interspecies communicator, and I followed some workshops. And one of those workshops was in a place where they have put the white lions back into the wild, into their heartlands, and they were considered to have gone extinct in the early 90s. But they have come back. And there's a reason behind that. There's a lot of spirituality and sacredness behind the white lions, and it's very revered and respected and considered holy in South Africa. And it is the only place on Earth that they do come naturally.

Will Falconer 2:46

Wow. What do they look like? Are they actually fully white, like an albino?

Eleni Gkikakis 2:51

They're not albino lions. They are a rare genetic, I don't know how you call it, it's a rare gene that the tawny lions, the golden lions, carry, and some are being born white. And they're not pure snow-white, like the albino animals, but they are white animals with bluish-greenish eyes, they're just absolutely beautiful. Yeah, they're amazing. And there are only 13 in the wild, in a country and in a planet where the lions are in a very difficult place. They lose their habitats and they're being trophy-hunted. It is a very, very sad story.

Will Falconer 3:31

Yeah.

Eleni Gkikakis 3:32

So, it did come to be a very, very special animal in my heart. I was actually guided in dreamtime to visit them. But I did not know or believe that they would actually exist. So, it was all new to me. And they have been amazing helpers, assistants and guides ever since. So, it was pretty amazing. So, I did meet a lot of people that they work with lions, conservation and trying to go against the establishment of South Africa that allows the trophy hunting, or the breeding of captive lions for the Chinese lion bone trade. So, I have come quite involved in that project in basis of conservation and I have made myself—I'm not an expert—but I have made myself available, that if they do need some assistance at times and I can long-distance communicate with someone, the monitoring team of a lion or a pride of lions and they need something, I could offer my assistance homeopathically, if they can get their hands in homeopathic remedies. That's another story. And so, this is how I have come to have some friends that do reach out and whenever they want assistance, I'm humbly honored to be able to serve the humans and the animals, as much as I can.

Eleni Gkikakis 3:51

So, just so I'm clear, you're not working just on this pride of white lions, but you're working on anyone who calls with a lion issue?

Eleni Gkikakis 5:04

Well, I am not, out of principle, I'm not going to assist—not have I actually been contacted, there might have been a suspicion—I will not assist anyone who calls me and is involved in some business that doesn't sound right.

Will Falconer 5:18

Oh, right, right.

Eleni Gkikakis 5:19

A breeding camp or a zoo or... I have assisted a zoo animal because a friend was working there at the time, and they were trying last-minute resort to save the animal's life before it was euthanized. I did it as a personal favor. But I choose conservation organizations or sanctuaries that do take lions out of hunting industry or zoos around the globe or basements that have been, they've been imprisoned in all their lives, especially from the Arabian countries where they're being raised as pets. And they can't be reintroduced back into the wild. So, they have to have these sanctuaries. And if these animals need some assistance to get back their paws into some grass or in the bushveld, then I'm trying to help

as much as I can. They're not really introduced into the wild. There is a project that has done that. And it is the one closest to my heart, it is the Global White Lion Protection Trust. And I'm happy to give more information about that if people are interested.

Will Falconer 6:24

Sure, sure. Yeah, and definitely what we'll do in this episode is have links to any place that you'd like to refer people. So, you and I can email back and forth to get those as part of the show notes.

Eleni Gkikakis 6:38

They have successfully managed to introduce captive lions back into the wild, which is supposed to be impossible, because they're not supposed to be able to survive if they can't hunt on their own or if they cannot breed. But they have actually been able to do that through what they call sacred science in the Global White Lion Protection Trust. So yes, this project is really close to my heart. I have offered all of my help as much as I can. But it's not the only one that... Whoever reaches out to me, I will do my best, as long as it's coming from an ethical and loving place for the animals.

Will Falconer 7:14

Yeah, beautiful, beautiful. And I've often posited over the years that our wolves are so genetically similar to the dogs, whether they're poodles or Great Danes, or anyone in between. Do you think there's a parallel also between the big cats and our domestic cats? Have you ever seen any work indicating that?

Eleni Gkikakis 7:37

It's very interesting, actually, I don't even think I feel, how do you say, educated enough to answer that, but I have done some research on my own. And there's very, very little research out there. There is actually a recent one in 2013, where they tested or they, no, they compared the genome of tigers and lions and snow leopard to the house cats. And they did find that pet cats share 95.6% of their genome with the Amur, maybe I'm not pronouncing this right, Amur tiger, which is an African tiger. It's not so much to the lions, but there's no, I haven't found, or I'm not aware if there is a specific percentage comparable to lions, but they say that the closest that they have is to the Amur tiger of Africa. But yeah, I think a scientist would be, a biologist, scientist, someone, would be much better to get to answer that.

Will Falconer 8:38

That's a high percentage, I think we can...

Eleni Gkikakis 8:41

It is a very high percentage. Yeah. Very, very. They're very close.

Will Falconer 8:44

And the wolves, they've done the work with wolf and dog, what do they call that little, it's the gene that runs the—the powerhouse of the cell, mitochondria.

Eleni Gkikakis 8:55  
Mitochondria. Yeah.

Will Falconer 8:56  
And those genetics are 99% the same.

Eleni Gkikakis 9:00  
I know, it's amazing.

Will Falconer 9:00  
So, it's amazing. Yeah. So, one of the reasons I wanted to have you on, Eleni, is what you've been working with the lions on can apply to domestic cats, I'm sure. You know, what they eat, what diseases. Did you see an overlap between diseases in the big cats that you've definitely seen in the domestic cat?

Eleni Gkikakis 9:23  
Yeah. Yeah, I have had the opportunity to face some issues that we do as humans face with our own house cats very often. And again, these were animals that were in sanctuaries, so I didn't have the chance to work with much of the wild. I do have an example about a wild one. But a tooth abscess was the case of one. And it was an animal that was not eating, it was very, very thin. Nobody was doing anything about it, a male lion, and it was rescued out of a zoo and it was in a sanctuary. A friend called me from there and said, "You know, we have this case, and we're just afraid to dart the lion." Because, yeah, they have been domestically raised, but sometimes, especially when they're in pain, they can become aggressive, surely. They are wild animals.

Will Falconer 10:10  
Sure.

Eleni Gkikakis 10:11  
And they were afraid to actually dart him because he was so weak. And she said, "Do you have any idea?" And I said, "You know, I really don't." But I was helping her, and this is where technology comes really, really handy. I asked her to send me some videos and photographs, so I can have a sense of what the animal looks like. And she said that he wasn't eating and he was going to the water, drinking a little bit, but not a lot. And he was salivating and the smell was really bad, but nobody could actually go in his enclosure to actually check him.

Will Falconer 10:42  
Hmm.

Eleni Gkikakis 10:42  
So, this is where intuition comes in. I do check with the knowledge that I have about house cats and say, "What would I check first? What would it look like to me if it was a house cat?"

Will Falconer 10:54  
Sure.

Eleni Gkikakis 10:55

And it just came to me that, you know, it's probably something in the mouth. I mean, it's a thin animal, looks hungry but cannot eat—it's probably something in the mouth. And I did have a deadline, I always have a deadline, because, you know, they get sick and the vet is coming out to dart them and check them. So, I have maybe 24 hours to come up with something. So, I said to her, you know, the salivation was coming mostly from one side, and long story short, I had sent this girl a first aid homeopathic remedy kit. I had done a fundraiser years ago, and I had tried to give a few kits to those people, because driving out hours in the bushveld to try to find a pharmacy just is not really an option at times.

Will Falconer 11:44

Right.

Eleni Gkikakis 11:44

So, mercurius was coming to my mind, but it didn't feel right. And it was just, again, it was a feeling, and I said, "You know what? Try with hepar sulphur." It just felt stronger to me that a hepar sulphur might help. And she put it in the water, because he was drinking a little bit from the water. She put the remedy in his water and he was drinking and he did have the option to have water without the remedy. So, we didn't have to oblige the animal to go for the remedy, if the animal didn't need it. But he was going for it. And she said that, "He has gone for quite a few laps than he would eventually." Long story, because it was a day on and off with messages and videos all the time about how the animal is doing, next morning said okay, it sounds a bit freakish and everybody's freaking out, but it's a good sign because there's a hole in his cheek, liquid coming out.

Will Falconer 12:38

Beautiful.

Eleni Gkikakis 12:39

Amazing, liquid coming out. And he actually did eat some this morning.

Will Falconer 12:45

Wow.

Eleni Gkikakis 12:46

Okay, the people that monitor this lion, it's just not that one person, it was many others and the decision was made that the vet is going to come out and check him. But they did give him that one or two days with doing the homeopathy remedies. And the animal did get a little bit stronger, I suppose, with eating a little bit of cat food, actually canned cat food, you know, bad or not, but that was the reality at the moment. And the vet did check that it was a tooth abscess. So, he considered that he was doing well with whatever it is that this girl was doing with him, and was reluctant to give antibiotics to such a weak animal. So, we continued with silica for two or three days, and he was fine.

Will Falconer 13:29

Wow.

Eleni Gkikakis 13:29

So, that was one of the stories that actually the house cats experience helped me recognize things that seemed similar to the lion. So, they shared, you know, a tooth abscess, something's going on. And so, that was quite a nice story. It was one of the first ones.

Will Falconer 13:50

Just for people who haven't experienced homeopathy and its curing, one of the things we expect and hope for is that the vital force or this innate intelligence will push things to the outside. So, that exteriorization is always a good thing when it happens. So, an abscess that's been bothering somebody will find its way out naturally without a scalpel. And this happened in several hours, it sounds like, as opposed to days. That's really cool.

Eleni Gkikakis 14:20

By the same night, we had started talking early morning, and by night there was a small pimple-sized, well, pimple for a lion head must be a big hole, I suppose. So, fluid was coming out. So, yeah, that was pretty amazing. That was pretty amazing. It was a wonderful, wonderful example of that working.

Will Falconer 14:40

And kudos to the veterinarian for saying, "I'm not gonna use antibiotics." I mean, most would jump on that. You know, we've got this one chance, we got the lion darted and tranquilized, let's give antibiotics.

Eleni Gkikakis 14:51

Yeah.

Will Falconer 14:52

But he didn't. That's beautiful.

Eleni Gkikakis 14:53

It is, of course, it is a very, very common practice. But I have also realized that this is something that works in the favor of the caretakers of these animals and the animals themselves, because when these animals have been rescued from very difficult conditions, and they're going into sanctuary, there is usually no money to actually pay the vet. So, even though they want to help, they will do the bare minimum, because they don't have the resources or the funds to actually do what is necessary. So, it does work to the benefit of the animal. So, it works both ways. Somehow, it's come together in a way that it's assisting. And, of course, there are many cases that, either way, they will do what they seem to feel that is necessary, and the funds will come later. And that's fine and admirable as well. But it is beautiful that, I don't know what the case was with this vet, but it did feel to me that his response was, "I don't want to give antibiotics to such a weak animal." So, that was a really, really, really great response on his part. I was very happy to hear that.

Will Falconer 15:58

Beautiful. So, I suspect urinary tracts come up sometimes in your work. Correct? We have that all the time in the domestic cat, and unfortunately, it's usually a management issue with the domestic cats, eating dry food and that sort of thing, but I think you've seen

something in that realm as well, right?

Eleni Gkikakis 16:18

Yes, I have. And surprise, surprise, this is the example that I have had in a wild pride. Female lioness.

Will Falconer 16:26

Wow.

Eleni Gkikakis 16:27

I know. And it was quite a surprise. Now, when we say "wild" about lions, they do live in the wild, they do mate, they do hunt, but there are fences at some point to keep humans out, or animals out, depends on how people see it. So, there was this monitoring team in a reserve, and there was this wild-roaming pride and there was a lioness that had cubs for about two months at that time. And one of the drivers was calling me, somebody I had met, and people have my number and they call me, and he said, "You know, there is this lioness, she's wild, there's no chance there's anything to be done. But if you have any idea, it just looks to me like she cannot pee." I was like, "A wild lioness?" It just felt... But I also had in my mind that she's a mother, so maybe something might have gone wrong and people have not noticed it. She's hiding her cubs.

Eleni Gkikakis 17:26

So, he did monitor her for quite a few hours and he did send me a few videos at that time and it did seem like she was walking, taking position to pee. I could not tell if she was actually peeing or not, she was in the grasses in the bushveld, but then she'd get up and she would move a little bit further and she would take position to pee again. And I was just asking from my friend, "You know, you just have to use your binoculars and see whatever it is that you can see and describe to me." And I was just asking him questions that, you know, we always—does she lick herself, does she seem to cry, does she frown, does she have an agonizing expression on her face? She's not happy. He was telling us, "She's not happy. She does pee on and off. But I don't think that she's actually peeing but," he said, "I cannot verify that because I can't see very well. And she's also become quite agitated with her cubs, like she doesn't want to be with them too much. She gets more upset when they go to nurse." She was just really agitated. And I did know that, because this was a big, famous reserve, I can't mention names, I'm afraid, you know.

Will Falconer 18:37

That's okay.

Eleni Gkikakis 18:38

And I know that there's another good thing, you know, if tourists see that something is off with an animal they become infuriated. And so, the reserve is feeling compelled to actually ask for assistance, even though humans are not supposed to interfere. And they don't, many times they don't. But they said that they would call the vet because this was a mother and she had cubs, and they were feeling that it is important for the conservation as well. But so, I did have, again, a very small window of time to see what is possibly happening.

Eleni Gkikakis 19:05

So, I had this friend and he was monitoring her as close as possible. She wasn't hiding, which was a surprise. It was as if she came out to say, "Okay, look at this, because I do need some assistance." So, I did take that into account. So, what he was able to do during dusk drive is that he went to the watering hole, which is a huge watering hole where a lot of wild go and I just said that there's a small pond, like a very small one that actually the cubs may use to drink. So, if the mother uses that, that's great, you know, just try some nux vomica. Because I was feeling maybe the aggravation and the agitation that she had, I wasn't sure though, I wasn't sure. So, he did try the nux vomica, and nothing really changed. He said to me that she kept on taking position to pee and apparently not being able to have the ability to.

Eleni Gkikakis 20:05

So, we gave her cantharis in the water. And she did have a few laps of that water. She actually chose to drink from that, like, the car came very, very close to the hole and they emptied a few pellets in there, and then they drove off. She did actually go for that. And they said, they described to me, she almost immediately came to that, as if she knew that this was going to help her. And she did drink a few laps from that. And later on into the night, she actually took a position and she peed, like a lot, a lot. And she was very, yeah, she was very relieved and she was much better. By morning, she came back to the same situation. But at this time, they were able to see that there was a lot more pain in her expression. I mean, she was peeing a little bit more, but she was a lot more painful.

Eleni Gkikakis 20:56

So, I said, you know, this is a watering hole, let's just try sarsaparilla, because it has more pain in the rubrics. And apparently, after around midday of the following day, she seemed absolutely fine. She laid down. She allowed her cubs to go back to her. And then she actually went into the bushveld, and they lost sight of her for quite a few days. So, it was pretty amazing. It was touch-and-go, every step of the way, I was completely unsure, because I didn't have much information. And I was also doubting that a small quantity of remedy would actually be enough. Which, okay, shame on me, I shouldn't be saying that. When you put it in a watering hole, and I'm like, "Okay." But it did. I mean, there was nothing else that had been done. And she was being observed to have that behavior for at least a day and a half before we started with our remedies. And she did choose, she did seem to choose to drink water from that little hole where the remedies were.

Will Falconer 22:03

Yes. That's amazing in itself, isn't it?

Eleni Gkikakis 22:06

I know, it is. It is a vibration, we know that it is a resonance, and they feel that and it's not just the remedy. It's also the human. Because that driver, he was saying to me that she seems to know my voice, because many times on our checks of the wildlife and seeing how they're doing, she seems to know my voice. So, she appeared to him. So, she showed him, "Look, I'm taking position, I'm trying to pee and nothing comes out or whatever it comes out, it's a little." Yeah. So, it was really wonderful how it all came into, holistically, the

environment, her willingness and her decision to ask for help from what would be a hostile human, under other circumstances. And the person who was there and me being reached on the other side of the planet, on the northern hemisphere. And, you know, having remedies to put them there at that time. It was pretty amazing. It was pretty amazing. That actually blew me away, that blew me away.

Eleni Gkikakis 23:09

Because the change and difference, we couldn't actually check it in the quality of the pee, of the urination. But we did check it in how she looked in her face, from her facial expressions. And how the fact that she lay down relaxed and she allowed her cubs more calmly to approach her and nurse again. So, that was a situation that actually, on the greater scheme of things, was of great assistance, because if she were to be darted, she would have definitely taken antibiotics. And then the cubs would be nursing this mother and they would take some of the darting medicine, you know, the sedative, and they would be taking the antibiotics, and that is being involved into the wild in a way that yes, you would be assisting an animal, of course, but you're not actually allowing the animal to build more of the vital force to combat whatever it is that actually created this imbalance in that moment. So, I was feeling so certain that even the cubs now have that information from mother's milk to overcome possible future UTIs. But that was pretty incredible. That was pretty incredible. I was so, so happy to be given this feedback of this beautiful lioness. Yeah, it was amazing.

Will Falconer 24:27

So, for our listeners to get a sense of this and me too, actually, how big across was this watering hole that she went to? Roughly.

Eleni Gkikakis 24:37

Meters, right?

Will Falconer 24:38

Yeah, meters is fine, sure.

Eleni Gkikakis 24:40

I think it would have been about, well, the big watering hole was about 20 meters across. But because big animals go, like elephants apparently would go to the side as well. There were smaller watering holes, like from animals' prints, and we used one of that, which must have been about a meter and a half across.

Will Falconer 25:01

Okay.

Eleni Gkikakis 25:02

Yeah.

Will Falconer 25:03

And what potency of remedy did you have?

Eleni Gkikakis 25:06

We gave 30 CH in all of those remedies.

Will Falconer 25:11

Okay.

Eleni Gkikakis 25:11

I started with a 30 CH. And actually, I didn't, except for the nux vomica, I didn't think the other remedies did have the 200 in the kit that I had given them. But I was doubtful about the nux vomica from the beginning, for some reason. And I started with a low potency as well. And she didn't seem too thrilled about this. But with the cantharis, she was just taking laps. And she was visiting that water and staying close by. Yeah, she helped herself, which was pretty incredible.

Will Falconer 25:38

Yeah, it is. And when you gave the final sarsaparilla, was that a separate watering hole? Or the same one?

Eleni Gkikakis 25:46

I have no idea, to be honest.

Will Falconer 25:47

Okay. Okay.

Eleni Gkikakis 25:48

I have no idea. I think it was very close in that he said, "I'm gonna go to the same spot, because I know that she drinks water from there." But he did explain to me that, you know, the formation of the land and the water changes, because many animals were visiting and others were drinking as well. And birds were there. So, I don't know if it was that specific one or one closer. You know, it's smaller, smaller little holes all around the big watering hole. So, I don't know if it was the same one, to be honest. But if it was a different one, maybe she helped herself to the both, depending on what she needed.

Will Falconer 26:23

Yeah, yeah. I wonder.

Eleni Gkikakis 26:24

But yeah, but it's those things that you can't really have the feedback that we would like, but you see the results. She got better. And she started being motherly and playful again with her cubs, which was pretty, pretty incredible.

Will Falconer 26:40

Yeah, that is.

Eleni Gkikakis 26:41

And to me, that was the significant one, that she was refusing to be engaging so much, at least with her cubs, on that first day, and on the end of second day, she was much better.

Will Falconer 26:53

Oh, that's beautiful. That's such a great story. So, let me get to my questions. I had some other thoughts that I wanted to check in with you on.

Eleni Gkikakis 27:02

I do have one that is quite easy, that I can mention, if you don't mind, which is...

Will Falconer 27:06

Yeah, let's do.

Eleni Gkikakis 27:08

It's a very common case, when it comes to sanctuaries with captive animals. And many times, they need to be darted, as we said, and some of them have difficulty coming out from the anesthesia. So, opium, I've supplied plenty of opium.

Will Falconer 27:25

Opium and homeopathic...

Eleni Gkikakis 27:26

Opium supplier over here. I know somebody listens to this, they're probably, I'm gonna be in trouble. But yeah, opium homeopathic remedy, let's just make that clear.

Will Falconer 27:35

Yeah, yeah.

Eleni Gkikakis 27:36

So, yeah, that is also one that has been extremely helpful, because, you know, they can't weigh the animal and dart later. Dart first, ask questions later, is kind of the thing. So, some, they have difficulty coming back from the anesthetic. So, while they are a little bit drowsy, a friend discreetly, because it's not always welcome to do something extra from what the vet is doing, you know, they'll just drop a few pellets into the mouth and collect the animal. And they do see that they do come back a lot faster and a lot calmer than they would have under other circumstances. So, that is something that is, yeah, I think it's been used quite often when an animal has to be darted.

Will Falconer 28:20

Nice, nice. My go-to in the acute remedy world is phosphorus for that situation. But I'll have to look in on opium and maybe give that as a lesson in the Alpha group. It's a remedy I haven't had a lot of experience with.

Eleni Gkikakis 28:36

For domestic animals, it is my experience that phosphorus works well when an animal needs to come back from anesthesia. But I think it was a situation with this particular monitoring team that there was an animal that wasn't coming back from anesthesia, even though he had the antidote. And he was almost in a comatose state. And that seemed like an opium. So, from what I understand, they're using that without asking me. And they say, "It's been great. It's been great." So, I don't know, maybe they are overdosing on darting, to be sure and to be safe. So, maybe some animals do have a lot of difficulty coming out from that.

Will Falconer 29:15

And so, they're using a reversible anesthetic.

Eleni Gkikakis 29:18

Yes, yes, sometimes, I think they do, sometimes. I'm not sure, but they are supposed to be reversing the anesthetic, and even though they do, that's how the information came to me, that even though they do give the antidote, the animal may still have a much, much longer and difficult time coming out of that. So, that is how we started, we once started using the opium and then they've used it again, from what they have said. They see a great difference. Yeah.

Will Falconer 29:48

Beautiful. So, I don't know if you want to get into this but a previous episode, I interviewed Kasie Maxwell about transitioning to raw food and that sort of thing. And out of that came an experience with lions where she was, I think in Kenya, and you know, she pointed out...

Eleni Gkikakis 30:06

On the Maasai Mara.

Will Falconer 30:07

Yes, yes. And she pointed out that these lions go first for the thigh when they bring down a prey animal, and then pretty quickly after that thigh, they go eat the liver, probably the most dominant animal gets first choice and goes for the liver. And she pointed out that their stools are never solid. They're always some form of loose stool. Have you seen stool in the wild? Yes?

Eleni Gkikakis 30:37

Yes, I have. They're really not what we would consider formed stools of our animals. They're not. They are more like—they're quite liquidy, I wouldn't say diarrhea, because it's just lion poop. You know? It's just, you see, it's, "Oh, lion poop."

Will Falconer 30:54

More like a cow patty?

Eleni Gkikakis 30:55

Yes. Yes. More like a cow patty. That's right. That's a very good analogy. And they're quite dark. They're almost black, but not entirely. And it does verify that they do choose the organs a lot. If they bring down an animal and they have choice to eat, they would eat the organs mostly. And they do start from, I mean, I haven't seen a lot of kills firsthand, but from what I have seen, they do start from the belly. So, that is very close to the thigh. I haven't noticed if it is the thigh itself. Many times, you know, they drag the animal into the bush, and it's not very easy to see. But I have seen lions coming out of the bush with the intestines or—sorry about that, listeners—with different parts of the organs of the animal. Yes, their stool is like you said, it's like a cow patty and it is very, very dark. It's almost black.

Will Falconer 31:54

Yeah, yeah. Makes sense.

Eleni Gkikakis 31:55

And there's other animals going into finish other parts of the animals. Everyone benefits. It's a shared benefit.

Will Falconer 32:02

Yes, yes.

Eleni Gkikakis 32:03

In nature, whatever they do, all animals can benefit from whatever one predator may bring down. So, it's a beautiful thing.

Will Falconer 32:12

From the birds to the insects, finally, I suppose, at the last.

Eleni Gkikakis 32:15

Yeah. Yeah. Beautiful.

Will Falconer 32:18

So, what's your sense of the future? Are you encouraged that these guys can make a survival or a comeback of sorts as a species? Not necessarily the white ones, which sound like they're probably genetically fairly isolated. But lions in general, it's really challenging, isn't it?

Eleni Gkikakis 32:39

It is very challenging. I'm just gonna share this piece of information with our listeners. Over half of the lion trophies that come out of Africa are from American trophy hunters.

Will Falconer 32:52

Oh, brother.

Eleni Gkikakis 32:54

Yes. And I would assume that very close to the other half would be European hunters, trophy hunters.

Will Falconer 33:03

Yes.

Eleni Gkikakis 33:03

So, it is a sign of the times that the arrogant, greedy, Western civilization feels entitled to overstep and to actually feel comfortable to kill such a majestic animal, to put its head over the mantle. It's just, it sounds insane. But it's not, it's a reality.

Will Falconer 33:27

Yeah.

Eleni Gkikakis 33:27

The problem is that the government allows this. It is legal. The government allows captive lion breeding camps, allows for the lion bone trade. So, there is a lot, a lot of work being

done. And I know that this is being done very much from the Global White Lion Protection Trust, with parliament talks, and going around the globe, well, except for this past year, to raise awareness on this subject, and to get people to respond to this kind of practice, so that eventually, establishment and the laws and the legislation is going to change. It's like you said, it's not just about the white lions. There are just very, very few of them. And there are three wild prides of the Global White Lion Protection Trust introduced back into protective wild, but quite, quite big areas that they have. They do hunt on their own, they're completely independent, there is no human interference, except for the monitoring teams, to be sure that they're doing well and that the fences are in place.

Eleni Gkikakis 34:34

There is also the problem of poaching, poaching of neighboring communities that are beyond poverty, and they are poaching for bushmeat. But when they set a trap, doesn't necessarily mean that a lion is not going to go through it. So, there's a lot, a lot of things to be taken into consideration. The sad reality is that there are 13,000 lions living in captivity. And it is very possible that the number is much higher from camps that, of course, they are legal but we don't know about because the practices are even harsher.

Eleni Gkikakis 35:12

And the majority of these lions are a part from what is called the cuddle-to-kill industry. And I would like to say a couple of things about this because it is when cubs are ripped away from their mothers, just hours after being born and put on tranquillizers, so that they can be cuddled and petted and, you know, bottle-fed by paying tourists. And, I mean, there's a lot of people, I know people who have ignorantly thought that we are going to help a lion orphanage. And like, use your common sense. There can't possibly be thousands of lion cubs orphaned while you're there. So, this cuddle-to-kill industry is extremely, extremely profitable. But what happens is that...

Will Falconer 35:55

Just so I'm understanding your words, it's cuddle, like cuddling a baby.

Eleni Gkikakis 35:58

Cuddle.

Will Falconer 35:59

To kill, meaning the end result is these animals are put to...

Eleni Gkikakis 36:03

The end result is... Yeah.

Will Falconer 36:04

Put to death.

Eleni Gkikakis 36:05

So, this is how it happens. They take them from their mothers, then I go, a happy tourist, pay a lot of money to volunteer in these kinds of facilities where there is a facade of a beautiful, for optics, of a beautiful, caring staff. And I can sleep with a baby cub and I can

carry it in my arms all day long, and I can bottle-feed it. But what happens when these babies get older?

Eleni Gkikakis 36:31

So, they get older, and then they go to the other part of a tourist industry, which is "walk with lions" industry. Now, these cubs have been accustomed to human touch and human cuddling. So, they are somewhat—not always, because there are a lot of stories out there that hand-raised animals, accidentally or intentionally, it doesn't matter, have killed tourists, especially when they're grown enough to walk. And after they are even bigger to walk with tourists, which again, they're being tranquilized, or there is a guide who has a stick poking them to keep them in place and to keep them behaving.

Eleni Gkikakis 37:09

And after they've become big enough, then they're put into very, very small enclosures, like a can, that is why it's called canned hunting, and then a tourist goes and just, you know, there is... I mean, there are videos out there, people can see, that lions are so happy to see a human and they go straight to the fence because they want to cuddle with that human and someone shoots...

Will Falconer 37:31

Oh, my god.

Eleni Gkikakis 37:32

So, it is a very, very sad industry. It's not just about the lions. It just goes to show what humans have been reduced to.

Will Falconer 37:41

Right.

Eleni Gkikakis 37:42

How did we come to do this? How did we come to do this for pleasure, for sport?

Will Falconer 37:47

Yeah.

Eleni Gkikakis 37:48

And it's not even sport, it's not sport anymore, because you're not actually going out hunting, you're just enclosing an animal that has learned to know you and trust you, and then you shoot it. And you have to be careful how to shoot it, so that you don't damage the fur, so that it's going to be a beautiful piece of art on your wall.

Will Falconer 38:07

Amazing.

Eleni Gkikakis 38:08

So, there's a huge chain of industries that are benefiting from this. For example, I mean, I know that a lion trophy can go from \$50 to 100,000.

Will Falconer 38:22

Oh my god.

Eleni Gkikakis 38:22

And a white lion would be 160 to 180. Depending on the size and the beauty. It's unbelievable. People will mortgage their homes in order to do this, to feel what? Yeah.

Will Falconer 38:37

Unbelievable.

Eleni Gkikakis 38:38

It is. It is very distressing, so let's not go further into that. Because it does upset me. But I will mention that, at this month, until the 25th of December, the Global White Lion Protection Trust celebrates the 20th birthday of the founder lioness Mara, who was born 20 years ago on Christmas Day in a killing camp in Bethlehem, Africa. I know.

Will Falconer 39:04

Oh, my god.

Eleni Gkikakis 39:05

So, it was prophesized that she will come and bring back the white lions into their natural habitat, which is the heartlands of a place in South Africa called Timbavati, and this is their natural birthplace. And so, she was kept captive and in a dungeon, almost, and she was forcibly bred and she had cubs. But the founder of the of the White Lion Trust, Linda Tucker, was able to rescue her and she was the first one with her cubs to be introduced back into the heartlands. So, if a few people are interested in that, [whitelions.org](http://whitelions.org), they do have a campaign going to support all the work that is being done against the cuddle-to-kill industry in her name and they accept donations. So, please, please be very, very generous this Christmas in the name of Mara and in the name of our beautiful kings and queens. Yeah.

Will Falconer 40:02

Amazing. So, let's end on that note, that is a high note. We can do something; we can support this move against the industry of cuddle-to-kill by supporting this White Lion Trust. That's beautiful. So, we'll have a link to that in the show notes for certain.

Eleni Gkikakis 40:18

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely.

Will Falconer 40:20

And this will come out well before Christmas. So, a couple weeks, we'll see this episode. Yeah.

Eleni Gkikakis 40:27

Yeah.

Will Falconer 40:27

Well, thank you so much Eleni. This has been really interesting and amazing to know what a little tiny non-physical medicine can do, dropped in a waterhole, for an animal and to see

them seek out that particular waterhole to come for their remedy, that sort of thing. It's fascinating stuff.

Eleni Gkikakis 40:49

It's true medicine. It's true medicine, into their natural environment. And the same way they would seek an herb or a root, which they do, occasionally, even lions. They will choose, then they will seek to see that resonance, that remedy for assistance. It was absolutely magical to witness that, even long-distance.

Will Falconer 41:10

Yes, yes. Beautiful.

Eleni Gkikakis 41:12

Thank you, Will, thank you so much.

Will Falconer 41:13

All right, everyone. My pleasure, Eleni. Love the chance to get to talk to you. So, until next time, everyone. We will keep you updated as links come in, and watch for the show notes on this. I think this is going to be episode number 15. So, when it's published and live, you can look for [vitalanimal.com/015](http://vitalanimal.com/015) to get to the show notes and find these links. So, all my best to everyone, and stay tuned for more coming.