

A CKP Excerpt:
Wildlife Heroes:
The Story of Joy and George Adamson

On March 3, 1980, the world woke up to shocking news. Animal rights activist Joy Adamson was found dead near her camp in Kenya, a country in East Africa. The first reports of Joy's death were both shocking and frightening. Newspapers around the world said Joy had been attacked by a lion — by an animal she loved most in the world. But those reports later proved to be wrong! What doctors discovered was even more shocking. They determined Joy had not been killed by a lion, but by a human. She had been brutally murdered! She was 69 years old.

Wildlife Heroes tells the story of Joy Adamson and her husband George. They are two of the most famous wildlife conservationists in the world. For more than 40 years of their adult lives, they lived and worked in the African bush in the Northern Province of Kenya.

For Joy and George, life in the wild was never easy. They were attacked by wild animals, threatened by poachers, and infected with malaria. They suffered broken bones and broken hearts. But never broken spirits!

In this excerpt from *Wildlife Heroes*, readers are introduced to Joe and George Adamson and their thrilling adventure, devastating heartbreak, and ultimately enormous triumph. Once asked why they did what they did, the Adamsons answered simply, "To give the lions a chance of a decent life."

For helping to change the way people throughout the world think about wild animals and their place in the world, Joy and George Adamson will forever be remembered as *wildlife heroes*.

*“Who will now care for the animals,
for they cannot look after themselves?
Are there young men and women
who are willing to take on this charge?
Who will raise their voices,
when mine is carried away on the wind,
to plead their case?”*

— George Adamson, 1906-1989

Prologue

Who Were Joy and George Adamson?

“Joy and George together completely transformed the way the world felt about conservation, about keeping animals in captivity, and about looking after the environment.” — Tony Fitzjohn

JOY AND GEORGE ADAMSON were two of the most famous wildlife **conservationists** in the world. They did something no one else had ever done. They did something no one believed *could* be done. What was that?



Joe with Elsa and her two sisters.

They raised a lion cub as a pet. They named her Elsa. When Elsa grew up, they helped her learn to survive in the **African bush** in Kenya, a country in Africa.

Most people said Elsa would not survive. They said she didn't know how to hunt for food on her own. She didn't know how to protect itself. Many experts also said Elsa wouldn't be accepted by other lions. She had too many human smells.

But Joy and George proved those people wrong. It wasn't easy. It took much longer than they thought it would to get Elsa used to living on her own in the wild. But, in the end, they succeeded. Elsa mated in the wild. She produced her own litter of cubs.

Later Joy wrote a book about their adventures. She called it *Born Free*. It told about the fun of raising Elsa as a pet. It told about how difficult it was to return Elsa to the wild.

But Joy and George did something else just as important. They made the world aware of the need to protect wild animals. They fought against **poachers**. They fought against the random killing of wild animals just for the "fun" of it.

Joy and George spent nearly 40 years of their adult lives in the African bush. It wasn't always easy. They were shot at by poachers; they were snapped at by crocodiles. They were charged by rhinos; they were spit at by cobras. They were even attacked by the very lions they raised and loved.

But Joy and George never gave up. When they first arrived in Kenya, there was not a single national park where wildlife was protected.

Today, there are 22 **National Parks** in Kenya and 28 **National Reserves** — thanks in large part to the work that Joy and George Adamson did to bring awareness to African wildlife.

This, then, is their story — the story of two wild life heroes.

Think About It

1. Many people did not think that a lion raised as a pet could be released back into the bush. Why? Give three reasons the text says.
2. Why do you think the author calls Joy and George Adamson "wildlife heroes"? Base your answer on information in the text.