Gujarat's Barda Wildlife Sanctuary emerging as a second home for Asiatic lions

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News

According to a PLOS One study by Gujarat Forest Department officials, 'Beyond Gir: Barda Wildlife Sanctuary as a Potential Stronghold for Asiatic Lions' (reported Oct 2026), Barda Wildlife Sanctuary now holds 17 lions – the first there in about 144 years (since 1879). Recolonisation began with a male that dispersed on its own; 5 females were later released. GPS collars on 6 lions gave over 1.69 lakh location fixes (2023–25).

Key facts

Sanctuary	Barda Wildlife Sanctuary – 192.31 sq km; Porbandar and Devbhumi Dwarka districts, Saurashtra (1979)
Lions	17 – after about 144 years; 6 radio-collared
Prey	441 chital moved from Gir in 2025–26
2025 census	16th lion estimation (May 2025) – 891 lions (674 in 2020; +32.2%)
Tourism	Ecotourism since 2024; 3,359 visitors in 2025–26 (+48%)

Background

- The Asiatic lion lives in the wild only in Gujarat, India; Gir became a sanctuary in 1965 and a national park in 1975; 'Project Lion' – 2020; Wildlife Act Schedule I.
- A single population risks being wiped out by disease or disaster, hence the need for a second home. On 15 Apr 2013 the Supreme Court ordered lions moved to Kuno (MP) – this has not happened; Kuno now holds African cheetahs.
- 2025 census: 507 of the 891 lions live outside the Gir National Park and Sanctuary; results were announced by Gujarat CM Bhupendra Patel in Gandhinagar on 21 May 2025.

Tamil Nadu link: Arignar Anna Zoological Park, Vandalur (Chennai), has a lion safari. Tamil Nadu has no wild lions; its big cats are tigers and leopards.

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