



## (TWENTY)-FOUR PAWS

Six lions from Romania and Bulgaria set off on a new life at the end of October 2010. The animals, which had all been rescued from illegal private ownership or inadequate zoos, were transported to Lionsrock, a big-cat sanctuary in Betlehem (South Africa) that is run by the FOUR PAWS animal protection organisation. The lions came to Zurich from Bulgaria and Romania by truck via Vienna. On arrival they were loaded on our 28 October flight LX 288 to Johannesburg; and from there they completed their journey by road to their new South African home.

By Heiner Siegmund, Pictures: Francis Ramuz & 4 Paws International

Hello, I am Kara. Kara is Romanian and means darling. Here you can see me standing in a box at Zurich airport in Switzerland. Me and my five companions have been brought here to catch a Swiss plane heading for Johannesburg. Traveling with me were my two sons, a male lion called Tecuci, plus Simona and Lea, two lionesses from Bulgaria. Together we numbered six.

We all have been kept in captivity at private zoos, safari parks, small circuses or, in case of Tecuci, held in a little shed by a private „master“. Our owners didn't take care much about us and neglected our maintenance. Locked up in small cages we hardly could move. We had no chance to follow our natural behavior patterns. In winter - Romanian winters can be very harsh - me and my cubs were kept in unheated containers most of the time. At some nights temperatures fell below 15 degrees Celsius. Somehow we managed to survive. A miserable fate day after day. Most humans I guess would call it torture the way we were kept and treated.

But circumstances have changed lately. Bulgaria now has one of the strictest laws in the European Union when it comes to animal husbandry. To keep unregistered wild animals in privacy is forbidden there meanwhile. That's why a number of circuses and privately-run zoos had to close lately and find a new place for their living inventory. In Romania the guidelines are much laxer but an increasing number of smaller zoos run out of funds so they are forced to shut their doors. For us this led to a further deterioration of our living conditions.



"2 paws" during the transportation

### ISIDOR ROSENBAUM SENIOR RELATIONSHIP MANAGER VIER PFOTEN (FOUR PAWS)

We collaborate closely with environmental organizations and also authorities especially in countries like Romania and Bulgaria. This way we get to know if a private zoo is shutting down or wild animals are illegally kept in captivity by some private owners. That's when we step in right away to change the creatures' fate. So far we have been very successful as our many projects demonstrate. They span from Lions Rock in South Africa to bear sanctuaries in Austria, Germany and some other European states. VIER PFOTEN is a Vienna-headquartered NGO, purely financed by private donors.

More info at [vier-pfoten.org](http://vier-pfoten.org) or [fourpaws.com](http://fourpaws.com)

### HELMUT BOGNER HEAD OF FORWARDING AGENT ANIMALS FIRST

Being part of a complex supply chain that enables lions to escape captivity and get into freedom is something very special. Since we are a dedicated agent for transporting animals by air the animal charity organization FOUR PAWS approached us soon after we were founded in summer 2004 to take care of their intercontinental shipments. All in all we manage approximately 930 transports every year. Major consignees are the U.S. Police and the Canadian Mounted Police. They constantly import Europe-bred and trained dogs for sniffing explosives or drugs at airports, harbors and borders.

More info at [animalsfirst.at](http://animalsfirst.at)



One of the cages at Zurich Airport during loading operations



Tecuci, upon arrival to his new home in South Africa



Lionsrock Big Cat Sanctuary

Then Four Paws was given a hint. This organisation, founded in 1988, enables wild animals to find a new habitat that had been raised and held in captivity.

That explains why last Thursday a courier vehicle suddenly stopped at our shed. We were all put in cages and lifted on board the vehicle. I heard the drivers mumble the word „Bethlehem“ a couple of times before the transporter brought us to Zurich where a Swiss Airbus stood to fly us off.

Finally, after a journey of roughly 48 hours I know what the Romanian drivers meant when mentioning Bethlehem. It's a place in South Africa's eastern Free State half way between Johannesburg and Durban. There the organization FOUR PAWS has built a 1,250 hectares comprising sanctuary for big cats called Lions Rock. Meantime more than 60 lions, tigers, cheetahs and karakals are living in this habitat, enjoying their newly won freedom after having been caged in Eastern Europe before. That's where we are now, thanks to Four Paws, forwarding agent Animals First, and Swiss WorldCargo. To us Bethlehem is divine, a paradise on earth. Only I'm waiting for the arrival of Dr. Marc Loose now, a dentist from Hamburg that comes down to Lions Rock regularly to take care of the animals' teeth. And mine very badly need treatment after gnawing and biting the metal bars of my Romanian cage for some years.

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**MICHEL BONSERA**  
 HEAD OF ACCEPTANCE  
 SCREENING & DANGEROUS GOODS AT  
 HANDLING AGENT CARGOLOGIC LTD.

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Handling wild animals like lions, bears or tigers is always a very special task, although we have constant shipments, be it snow leopards, apes, alpacas or lamas here in Zurich. Primary objective of our teams is to prevent any hectic and stress; everything is done very calmly in a quiet manner by our staff. Our first priority is the well-being of the animals and their shortest possible stay here at our warehouse.

More info at [cargologic.com](http://cargologic.com)

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**OLIVER EVANS**  
 CHIEF CARGO OFFICER  
 SWISS WORLDCARGO

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We are delighted to have been able to play our part in the rescue and rehabilitation of such magnificent animals as these lions.

Every piece of freight that we carry has its own story to tell, from the spare part that will be used in a factory to repair machinery and keep the business going, or the live human organ which will be brought to a hospital bed to save a critically patient. But these stories are often never told in the hectic processes of our own factory where all the attention of my colleagues and of our partners is focused on ensuring the safe and on-time delivery of the thousands of shipments we handle every day.

It is therefore especially pleasing to have the opportunity to publicize the story of Kara and her cubs, as their tale is an especially poignant one, and one that should make everyone involved in their transportation to Africa proud to have been part of the story.

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