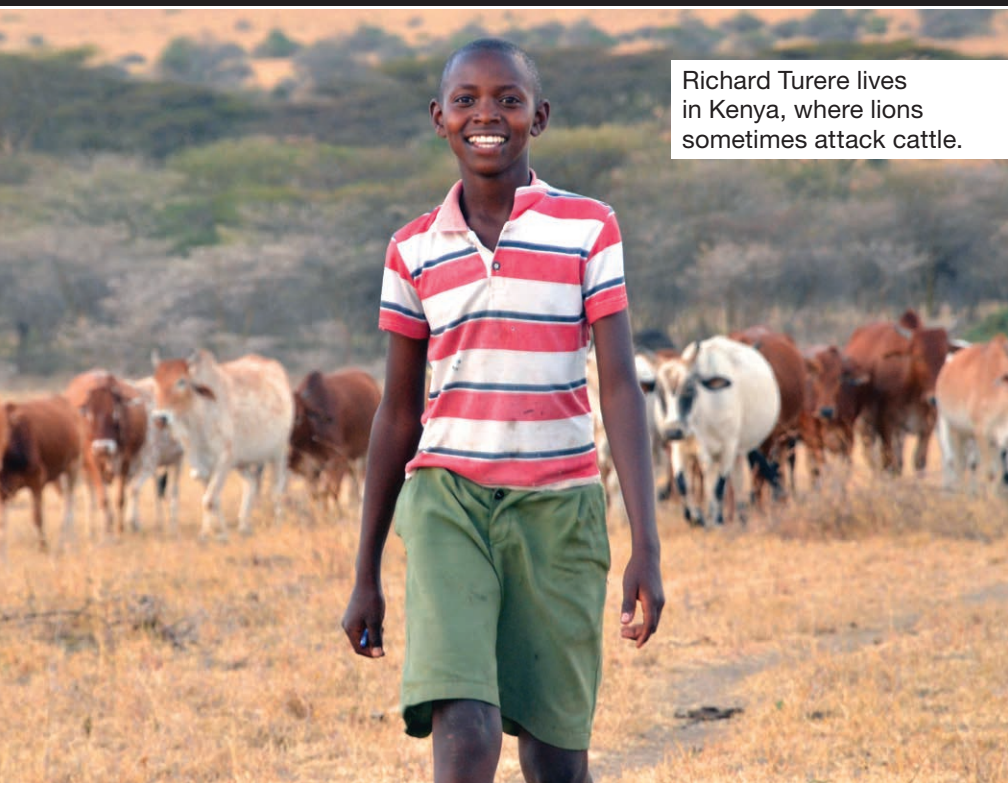
Lion Lights

A new invention keeps lions away from farms without causing the animals harm.

By Elizabeth Aaron



Richard Turere lives in Kenya, where lions sometimes attack cattle.

In parts of Africa, lions can be a major problem. They creep into farms, where they attack and kill livestock, including cattle, goats, and sheep. The attacks have angered many farmers, who rely on the livestock to survive.

As a result, some frustrated farmers have resorted to killing the lions. And that's an even bigger problem. Why? Over the years, African lion populations have been dwindling. Some experts even fear that these animals may be in danger of dying out.

So, can anything be done to keep lions away from livestock without harming them? Thirteen-year-old Richard Turere thinks so. In fact, his new invention, called "Lion Lights," aims to do just that.

A Wild Problem

Richard Turere grew up on a farm in Kenya, Africa. The farm is near Nairobi National Park, a famous wildlife reserve that is home to many animals, including elephants, giraffes, and lions.

When Richard was nine years old, his father gave him an important chore: he would be responsible for the upkeep of his family's cows. So, early each morning, Richard herded the cows to a pasture, where they would graze grass. Later, with the help of his father, he herded the cows back to the farm. "We kept them in a small shed at night," he said.

That's when trouble started. Lions from the nearby reserve would break into the shed. "They used to come in at night and feed on our cattle and other livestock when we were sleeping," said Richard.

Since Richard was responsible for the cows, he took this very personally. He tried to think of ways to keep the cattle safe. This included using a scarecrow or small fires to frighten the lions. These methods worked for a few nights, but nothing kept the lions away for very long.

A "Bright" Idea

Then one night, something unusual happened. Richard went to inspect the cattle. He used a flashlight to guide his way in the dark. Richard didn't hear or see any lions. In fact, there were no attacks that night.

"I figured that the lions were afraid of the moving light," said Richard. "So, I decided to create a light system to keep them away."

Richard installs his Lion Lights.

To create the light system, Richard grabbed some old materials lying around his house. This included LED bulbs from broken flashlights, and an old car battery. He also bought a solar panel, which would power the lights with energy from the sun. Richard then strung the system together and hung it around the shed. When the lights were turned on, they had a flashing effect. Now, the only thing left was to test the invention.

That night, Richard turned on his flashing lights and went to bed. When he woke up the following morning, he ran to the shed. He discovered that the cattle were safe! There were no lion attacks that night.

The Idea Spreads

News about Richard's "Lion Lights" spread quickly. Soon, Richard found himself installing the system in many nearby farms. And it didn't stop there. The system soon became popular in other parts of Kenya, and in its neighboring country, Tanzania. Today, it is even being tested in India as a way to keep tigers away from farms.

So what does Richard think about his successful invention? "I was just happy to make something that works," he says laughing.

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