

African Elephant Conservation Fund



In the last century, rampant ivory poaching and habitat loss caused African elephant numbers to drop from over ten million animals in 1900 to fewer than 500,000 by the late 1980's. Although elephants began to recover in some African countries throughout the 1990s, we are currently experiencing a dramatic resurgence of uncontrolled hunting for ivory and meat, and loss of habitat in the past decade which could eliminate elephants from many parts of Africa.

People often rely on wild animals as a source of meat (commonly referred to as 'bushmeat'). As human populations increase, the demand for bushmeat within Africa is skyrocketing. To make matters worse, people from urban centers and from other continents are increasingly looking to Africa's forests as sources of wild products. This uncontrolled hunting is stripping Africa's wilderness areas of elephants and other coveted game animals.

In addition to the ivory and bushmeat trades, the loss of natural elephant habitat and the resulting conflict between elephants and humans threaten elephant survival throughout Africa.



In arid parts of Africa, elephants struggle to find water where rivers have been dammed for hydroelectric power and upstream irrigation. Ruaha NP, Tanzania

Credit: Michelle Gadd/USFWS

As human populations grow and expand into remote areas, natural habitat is cleared and destroyed to make way for agriculture. Elephant populations are compressed into smaller ranges with limited food and water supplies. Hungry elephants may wander into villages and damage crops. People often kill elephants in an attempt to stop the crop raids and people are also sometimes killed trying to fend off elephants.

The specific threats to elephants vary in severity from region to region. Central Africa has been plagued by political instability and civil war which have led to an increased flow of guns into the region and unabated flow of ivory out. Economic hardship has driven people to use these weapons to kill elephants for food and for ivory. By contrast, in well protected areas of Southern Africa, elephant numbers have stabilized or even increased. In some parks, elephants suffer from crowding due to loss of habitat and blockage of migration routes. In East Africa, elephant populations have decreased by 65 percent due to poaching and land conversion. Where elephants persist, conflict with humans is on the rise.

In 1988, the United States Congress passed the African Elephant Conservation Act to establish a fund to help protect, conserve, and manage African elephants. Special emphasis was placed on fortifying protection for elephants in countries with uncontrolled poaching, and implementing conservation activities throughout elephant range.



Most of the large-tusked elephants in Africa have already been killed. Tragically, poachers are now hunting young elephants for small tusks. Credit: Conservation Justice

In 2013 USFWS awarded funding to 29 projects from the African Elephant Conservation Fund totaling over \$1.9 million and leveraged by more than \$4.5 million in matching and in-kind funds, including the following projects funds.

- Support the final phase in training and deployment of a team of five bloodhounds and handlers from the staff of Virunga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo that are specifically trained to track and locate poachers, weapons and ivory.
- Funding anti-poaching scouts in two forest reserves in Malawi that serve as one of the last refuges for elephants near Lake Malawi. This includes operating costs for the team of twenty scouts and a manager, rations and equipment for patrols, installation of a new radio communications system, basic training, and agricultural extension work and fence maintenance to minimize conflict with local farmers.
- Work with local pastoralists and farmers to secure access to forage and water for Africa's northernmost elephant population, in the Gourma region of Mali. Building on past successes in spite of regional instability, activities include continuing expansion of the community resource management program into additional areas.
- Reinvigorate anti-poaching efforts in the Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania, which was formerly the second most numerous elephant population in Africa, but was heavily hit by poaching during the past decade. This project will support operating expenses for an aircraft to conduct aerial surveillance, for patrol vehicles, and for basic equipment for rangers throughout the reserve.

aerial patrolling and surveillance, upgrades to the radio system for law enforcement communications, and road maintenance for park management.

- Produce training materials and conduct training workshops to build the capacity of enforcement agencies in the Phillipines, one of the prime destinations for illegal ivory, to identify and take action against illegal ivory trafficking.



Bull elephants (*Loxodonta africana africana*) were believed to be solitary, but tracking data indicates that they range widely and have complex social networks covering vast areas. **Kruger NP, South Africa.** Credit: Michelle Gadd/USFWS

- Support ground patrols by village scouts in Kakumbi and Mkhanya Chiefdoms in the Lupande Game Management Area and aerial surveillance in and around the South Luangwa National Park, Zambia. Activities are conducted in collaboration with local Community Resource Boards and the Zambia Wildlife Authority.
- Expand ranger presence in the Zimbabwean portion of the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Conservation Area by establishing new ranger bases and a patrol regime along the boundary with Mozambique.
- Support ongoing core operational and anti-poaching expenses as well as improved infrastructure and communications in and around one of Zambia's most important wildlife areas, North Luangwa. Activities include ground and



With USFWS funds, the Elephant Listening Project discovered new ways to census elephants using their vocalizations. The project is now developing methods to detect gunshots of poachers. Credit: Michelle Gadd/USFWS

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African Elephant Conservation Funding from 2006 through 2013	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	472
Total Number of Grants Awarded	217
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$10,186,219*
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$23,664,986

*Amount includes funds from USAID/CARPE and from the Save Vanishing Species Stamp

