

FACTSHEET

ELEPHANT POACHING: VANISHING GIANTS

FACTS ABOUT ELEPHANT POACHING AND THE IVORY TRADE

THE PROBLEM

Poaching levels are increasing in all African subregions with east and central Africa continuing to display the highest levels of elephant poaching. The main cause for the escalating rise in elephant killings is the growing demand for ivory: Asia is recognized as a major market for poached ivory. The liberalization of the ivory trade pushed by some countries is also contributing to the widespread slaughter. The increased presence of Chinese labourers and traders in Africa feeds a massive domestic demand for ivory in their home country.



DANGEROUS DEMANDS

Ivory is used especially in China, Japan and Thailand for decorative and religious ornaments. A conservative estimate for 2011 is that more than 25,000 elephants have been killed and their tusks smuggled into these countries to be carved into artefacts. Depending on the quality, current market prices for ivory in China range from \$750-\$7000/kg. In Asian countries there is a growing affluent middle class and the demand for elephant ivory has now become an investment vehicle in China, wanted as a form of white gold.

ELEPHANT POACHING

CITES Secretariat's programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) warns of an ongoing increase in levels of elephant poaching since 2006, with 2011 displaying the highest levels of poaching since MIKE records began. Poaching levels are now clearly increasing in all African subregions. Central Africa continues to display the highest levels of elephant poaching. The current level is believed to be the threshold above which elephant populations are in net decline.



BRUTAL METHODS

Ivory has replaced blood diamonds as a major source of cash for criminal syndicates and terrorist groups. In many African countries, middle-men work with local trackers, hiring weapons from corrupt rangers or police officers to kill elephants. Tusks are sent to East African ports such as Mombasa, Djibouti or Dar es Salaam and are typically exported via Malaysia or Vietnam to avoid the more rigorous customs checks at Chinese ports.

Poachers in Africa are heavily armed and organized. In 2012, 650 elephants were killed in Bouba N'Djida National Park in Cameroon by Sudanese militia using machine guns. In DR-Congo, 22 dead elephants were found in Garamba National Park with a single bullet hole in the top of their heads. Authorities believe the Ugandan military and one of their helicopters have been involved. In March 2013, rebels from Sudan killed 86 elephants in Chad. Urgent action is needed to stop these atrocities.

IVORY SUPPLY & DEMAND

In recent years, tens of thousands of elephants have died so that their tusks can be carved into ornamental or religious objects. Most of the large-scale ivory seizures in the past three years occurred in Kenya and Tanzania. The shipments were primarily bound for markets in China. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and Thailand have been identified as the three most problematic countries with regard to the illegal trade in ivory (MIKE and ETIS - the Elephant Trade Information System). Ranked in order of ivory seized, ivory consumer countries include, China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Philippines, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and India. Congo and DR-Congo, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Uganda, Ethiopia and Gabon have been strongest hit by elephant poachers. However, poaching is increasing and causing alarm in all African countries with remaining elephant populations.

ACTION PLAN

A Strategic Elephant Rescue Plan is the key to Elephant conservation and requires a multi-faceted approach:

1. Improving the welfare of communities living close to elephant populations and ensuring they derive incentives from that peaceful coexistence;
2. Massive public education of consumers in Asian countries aimed at curbing the demand for ivory in the main consumer markets (medium to long term effects);
3. Improving monitoring systems; intelligence-led enforcement in transit countries and prosecution of criminals in African countries, export control and intensified on-the-ground surveillance and anti-poaching units (immediate effects);
4. Total ban on ivory sales including domestic trade in China. As long as there is a legal trade, there will be a way of laundering illegal ivory (EIA);
5. Diplomatic action to urge African and Asian governments to dramatically and consistently improve its enforcement controls.



EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Blood Ivory, National Geographic:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6PDNQsembo> and <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/10/ivory/christy-text>

BBC Report on ivory trade:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpF7saIvPVo>

The Ivory War:

<http://nyti.ms/NIVof5>

DATA SOURCES

African Elephant Specialist Group:

<http://www.african-elephant.org>

CITES: <http://www.cites.org/>

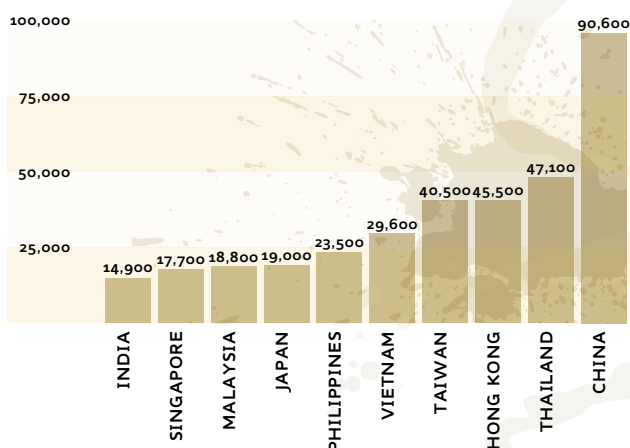
TRAFFIC: <http://www.traffic.org>

The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™

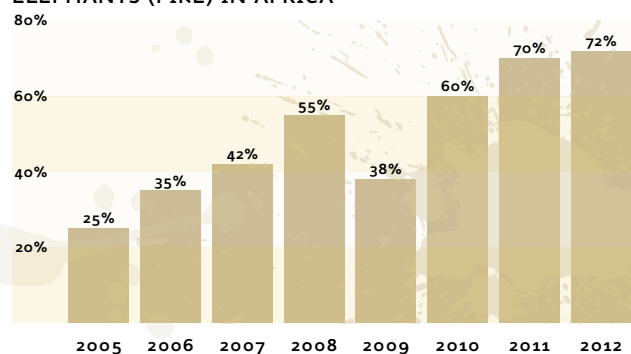
IUCN 2012. IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Version 2012.2. www.iucnredlist.org. Downloaded on 16 November 2012

IVORY SEIZED 1989-2011 (pounds)



TREND IN PROPORTION OF ILLEGALLY KILLED ELEPHANTS (PIKE) IN AFRICA



PIKE is an index that measures illegally killed elephants out of the total number of elephant carcasses found.



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