

# African Elephant Conservation Fund

In the last century, rampant ivory poaching and unabated 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. Uncontrolled hunting for ivory and for meat, and loss of habitat continue to threaten the African elephant today.

Central Africa has been plagued by political instability and civil war, which has led to an increased flow of guns into the region and unabated flow of ivory out. Economic hardship has contributed to some of these weapons being used to kill elephants for food—commonly referred to as “bushmeat,” and for ivory.

People often rely on wild animals as a source of meat. As urban populations increase, the demand for bushmeat within Africa is skyrocketing. To make matters worse, people from other continents are increasingly looking

to Africa's forests as sources of wild products. This uncontrolled hunting is decimating Africa's wilderness areas of elephants and other coveted game animals.

By contrast, in parts 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 addition to the ivory and bushmeat trades, there is another threat to elephant survival that pervades Africa — the loss of natural elephant habitat and the resulting conflict between elephants and humans who find themselves in

competition for space and resources. 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. Sometimes, people are killed in their attempt to fend off elephants. People often kill elephants in an attempt to stop the crop raids.

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 developing conservation plans throughout the elephants' range.



The 2007 Congressional appropriation of \$1.4 million, which leveraged over \$2.8 million in matching funds, funded 29 African elephant projects, including the following efforts:

- Support of aerial surveillance around Zakouma National Park in Chad for elephants. Surveillance and deterrence of illegal activities, conducting systematic surveys of elephant distribution and population size, and detecting any carcasses from poaching, will provide park officials with information on the exact sites of any elephant poaching incidents or poachers' camps to reduce further such instances.
- Supporting monitoring of forest elephants near an oil exploration site in Loango National Park, Gabon to ascertain the effects of human activity on spatial and temporal patterns of elephant activity. This project, like others similar to it, seeks to determine how best to reduce the impacts of extractive industries on elephant conservation.
- Supporting management of land-use changes and local community awareness in the Amboseli ecosystem in southern Kenya by promoting land uses compatible with elephant habitat needs. This project focuses on determining the impact of human activity on elephants and their habitat; assessing local stakeholders' attitudes towards conservation; developing strategic land use plans for Kuku, Kimana, and Mbirikani Group Ranches that incorporate elephant range use; and designing and implementing elephant conservation awareness programs for primary and secondary school youth, Maasai morans, women's groups and local Conflict Resolution Committees. These type projects promote local involvement in elephant sustainment now and in the future.
- Improving national park staff response to human elephant conflict around Quirimbas National Park in northern Mozambique through training. Training for human-elephant conflict response teams includes topics such as the development of new non-lethal elephant deterrents, possibly using sound and light technologies; development and implementation of a fire management program to minimize degradation of natural elephant habitat; use of outreach campaigns through the media to foster local involvement; and collaborative efforts with locally and provisionally appointed committees and government agencies. These activities mitigate elephant conflict with humans.
- Supporting an assessment of the effects of artificially provisioning water for elephants in Botswana. This project tests the extent of elephant impact around water points, the effect on vegetation diversity, structural composition and overall biomass. The results will help assess the overall effectiveness of provisioning water as a management and conservation tool in elephant areas.



African elephant herd

Andrea Turkalo/WCS

African Elephant Conservation Funding History from 1990 through 2007	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	474
Total Number of Grants Awarded	305
Percentage of Countries with African Elephants that Receive Grants	100%
Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress	\$18,840,105
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$18,032,378
Total Funds to Administration of Grants	\$807,727
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$74,513,132

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
**International Affairs**  
**Division of International Conservation**  
**4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 100**  
**Arlington, VA 22203**  
**703-358-1754**  
**703-358-2115/fax**  
**internationalconservation@fws.gov**  
**http://www.fws.gov/international**  
**www.fws.gov**  
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