

African Elephant Conservation Fund

In the last century, the African elephant dwindled from over ten million animals in 1900 to fewer than 500,000 by the late 1980's. The African elephant remains threatened today, but the threats vary from one region to another.

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.

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.

In some areas of Central Africa, poaching elephants for bushmeat has

even become a greater threat than poaching for ivory. Bushmeat is an affordable food source for people living in remote and rural areas, and is also highly valued by city dwellers as a link to cultural tastes and traditions. As urban populations increase, the demand for bushmeat in Africa's cities is skyrocketing. Increasing demand for bushmeat from outside of Africa is also threatening to decimate 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 are experiencing crowding due to loss of habitat and blockage of migration routes.

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, and sometimes people are killed in their attempt to fend off these elephants. More commonly, people kill elephants in their attempts 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 Africa's elephants. Special emphasis was placed on fortifying protection for elephants in countries with uncontrolled poaching and developing conservation plans throughout the elephants' range.



The 2005 appropriation of \$1.4 million to the African Elephant Conservation Fund allowed for the Service to support 30 crucial elephant conservation projects in Africa, including:

- Establishing a center in Livingstone, Zambia where wildlife personnel are trained in preventing, evaluating and mitigating human-elephant conflict in agricultural areas. The elephant-human strategies from this center will be a model for conflict resolution in the wider Four Corners Region of Southern Africa.
- Supporting anti-poaching activities and hunting management in key elephant habitat near the Lope and Waka National Parks of Gabon — an area increasingly vulnerable to poaching due to the construction of a new road through previously inaccessible forest.
- Providing media professionals in the Republic of Congo with the training and equipment necessary to produce locally relevant educational outreach programs for rural audiences on the subject of forest elephant conservation and management.
- Assisting elephant conservation and management in Zambia by providing locals with economic alternatives to poaching elephants and other wildlife. The project focuses on lessening pressure on area wildlife and improving the local standard of living by teaching sustainable agriculture practices.
- Determining the population status, characteristics and habitat associations of the elephants in the Ghebera Churchura National Park area of Ethiopia, as well as investigating human-elephant interactions in the region.
- Training local research assistants in the collection of baseline data and elephant identification near the Dzanga Clearing of the Central African Republic.
- Providing support for the Central African elephant range states to develop and implement a sub-regional strategy for the conservation and management of elephants in Central Africa.
- Supplying new uniforms and field supplies for security teams that operate throughout Meru, Laikipia, Isiolo and Samburu regions of Kenya. These rangers assist national authorities (including the Kenya Police Reserves and the Kenya Wildlife Services) to patrol and provide security within national parks and wildlife reserves.
- Equipping and training a contingent of rangers to protect elephants, gorillas and other endangered wildlife of the Virunga National Park in the politically volatile eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

| African Elephant Conservation Funding History from 1999 through 2005 | |
|---|--------------|
| Total Number of Grant Proposals Received | 378 |
| Total Number of Grants Awarded | 252 |
| Percentage of Countries with Asian Elephants that Receive Grants | 84% |
| Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress | \$16,082,766 |
| Total Funds Distributed through Grants | \$15,428,933 |
| Total Funds to Administration of Grants | \$653,833 |
| Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants | \$67,824,316 |



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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
International Affairs
Division of International Conservation
4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 730
Arlington, VA 22203
703-358-1754
703-358-2115/fax
internationalconservation@fws.gov
<http://www.fws.gov/international>
www.fws.gov
CFDA# 15.620

January 2006

