

# 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.

Uncontrolled hunting for ivory and meat, and loss of habitat continue to threaten the African elephant today.

People often rely on wild animals as a source of meat (commonly referred to as 'bushmeat'). As 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. As human populations grow and expand into remote areas, natural habitat is cleared and destroyed to



*Dzanga forest elephants, Central African Republic* © Andrea Turkalo /WCS

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 developing conservation plans throughout the elephants' range.



*Wildlife Action Group scouts, Thuma Forest, Malawi* Michelle Gadd/USFWS

*The 2008 Congressional appropriation of \$1,476,600, which leveraged over \$2.4 million in matching funds, funded 29 African elephant projects, including the following efforts:*

- Assessing illegal hunting activities, implementing surveillance patrols and control posts on public roads to prevent illegal trafficking of natural resources, and making recommendations for long-term wildlife management strategies in the Ngombe logging concession adjacent to the Odzala Kokoua National Park in the Republic of Congo.
- Analyzing satellite images and conducting preliminary aerial and foot surveys in order to draft new conservation action plans for Upemba and Kundelungu national parks in the Democratic Republic of

Congo, where wildlife populations have not been assessed in more than two decades due to civil strife and collapse of the national infrastructure.

- Establishing a conservation program for a highly threatened population of elephants in Kafta-Shiraro, on Ethiopia's northern border. Activities will include basic training for anti-poaching patrols and supplying basic equipment and uniforms for community scouts.
- Financial assistance to the Mara Conservancy, in Kenya's Masai Mara region, to help cover anti-

poaching expenses. Since post-election violence at the beginning of 2008, tourism numbers have fallen far short of expectations, and emergency assistance is needed to compensate for the lack of income.

- Equipping park rangers with new uniforms and basic field supplies for patrolling and camping in the protected area, and providing funding to maintain vehicles and motorcycles in the newly designated Nyika Transfrontier Conservation Area in Malawi and Zambia.
- Assisting with basic running expenses for a small team of wildlife scouts that protect a small but increasing population of elephants in a forest reserve in Thuma Forest Reserve, Malawi. Funding will also support the construction of more suitable office and housing structures at their base camp.
- Working to improve human coexistence with the Gourma desert elephants in Mali. The project will support a collaborative effort by international and local organizations in a campaign to improve natural resource management decisions locally and nationally, and to alleviate human-elephant conflict.
- Supporting a non-governmental organization in Gonarezhou National Park, Zimbabwe with training, equipment, and supplies to increase their patrol coverage and improve the level of park protection and monitoring.



*Savanna elephant and calf, Zambia* Michelle Gadd/USFWS

<b>African Elephant Conservation Funding History from 2004 through 2008</b>	
Total Number of Grant Proposals Received	245
Total Number of Grants Awarded	137
Percentage of Countries with African Elephants Receiving Grants	100%
Total Amount Appropriated by U.S. Congress	\$6,999,155
Total Funds Distributed through Grants	\$6,581,896
Total Funds to Administration of Grants	\$417,259
Total Matching/In-kind Funds Leveraged by Grants	\$16,366,798

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