

Hippos are being decimated in the DR Congo

November 15 2005

The world's largest hippopotamus population is being destroyed in the Democratic Republic of Congo and it's being done by poachers using weapons of war.

Only about 800 hippos remain in Virunga National Park, in the northeast part of the nation, down from 29,000 in the mid-1970s, said Walter Dzeidzic of the Worldwide Fund for Nature in Congo.

Virunga is home to as many as 5,000 Rwandan Hutu rebels, who villagers call "the enemies," The Independent reported. They kill the hippos with automatic weapons, rocket launchers or even by tossing dynamite into lakes. The dead animals float to the surface along with hundreds of dead fish.

A fully grown hippopotamus can weigh 3 tons, and its meat can fetch thousands of dollars from village markets across northeastern Congo, The Independent said.

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