

Study: Elephants might seek revenge

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Image: African elephants in Kenya's Samburu National Reserve. Note the adult elephant's tail hair. University of Utah geochemist Thure Cerling analyzed chemical isotopes in elephant tail hair to help track the diet and movements of the giant creatures, which have international status as endangered animals. (by George Wittemyer)

An increasing number of incidents involving African elephants attacking humans is leading some scientists to believe the animals may be seeking revenge.

Although elephant attacks have long been occurring, such attacks were believed the result of the animals being territorial or competing for food, Sky News reported Thursday. But that rationale is being questioned since the elephant population has never been lower in many areas and food has

never been so abundant.

Amid frequent reports of herds of elephants destroying African villages without apparent cause, some scientists are speculating elephants might be attacking humans in revenge for years of abuse, giving new meaning to the saying "elephants never forget," New Scientist magazine reported.

Joyce Poole, from the Amboseli Elephant Research Project in Kenya, told New Scientist: "They are certainly intelligent enough and have good enough memories to take revenge. Wildlife managers may feel that it is easier to just shoot so-called 'problem' elephants than face people's wrath.

"So an elephant is shot without (hunters) realizing the possible consequences on the remaining family members and the very real possibility of stimulating a cycle of violence."

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