

# Botswana population survey shows surprising drop in species numbers

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A recently completed aerial survey of northern Botswana by Elephants Without Borders (EWB), through the support of Botswana's Dept. of Wildlife & National Parks, indicates that wildebeest, giraffes, kudu, lechwe, ostriches, roan and tsessebe antelope and warthog species are significantly challenged. Populations of these species appear to have dropped significantly over the past 15 years, specifically in Ngamiland, which encompasses the Okavango delta.

"Particularly troubling is the almost 90% drop in the numbers of wildebeest sighted by the survey," said Michael Chase, Ph.D., the San Diego Zoo's Henderson Endowed Conservation Research Postdoctoral Fellow and founder of EWB. "Land use, habitat fragmentation, vegetation changes, drought effects, veterinary fences, fires and poaching are all contributing factors to the decline of [wildlife](#) throughout Africa."

The [aerial survey](#) took nearly 250 hours of flying time to cover a total of, I'd use 28,370 square miles which included the national parks of Chobe, Makgadikgadi, Nxai Pan, Moremi Game Reserve, the Okavango Delta and the surrounding Wildlife Management Areas in the Ngamiland, Chobe and Central districts. Survey results were analyzed comparatively to 9 similar surveys, conducted between 1993 and 2004. Numbers of individuals counted and species sighted were noted.

"Although we are concerned about the challenges faced by some species, we are encouraged that wildlife numbers in Chobe National Park appear

fairly stable," said Kelly Landen, EWB's program manager. "The elephant population in northern Botswana also appears not to have changed significantly, holding at about 130,000 individuals."

EWB conservationists noted a particular concern for the status of wildlife in the Okavango Delta, pointing at recent droughts and human encroachment as serious concerns for the [species](#) that depend on this area.

Provided by Zoological Society of San Diego

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