

Rare elephant found dead in Indonesia

May 16 2012



Indonesian wildlife officials and villagers view the body of a rare Sumatran elephant on road in a palm oil plantation in Aceh Jaya in Aceh province on May 1, 2012. A second dead Sumatran elephant has been found dead in Aceh province on Tuesday.

A critically-endangered Sumatran elephant has been found dead in Indonesia's Aceh province, an official said Wednesday, the second death from suspected poisoning within a month.

Villagers found the carcass, missing its [tusks](#), in a river in Aceh Jaya district on Tuesday, local forestry official Armidi told AFP.

The elephants are usually either killed by villagers, who regard the beasts as pests that destroy their plantations, or by poachers for their tusks.

"We went to the site on Tuesday evening and found the male elephant in a river located a kilometre (half a mile) away from a village," he said.

It was thought to have been killed around four days earlier because it was beginning to decompose, he added.

"According to villagers, the elephant had entered a plantation and was lumbering unsteadily. We suspected it might have been poisoned," Armidi said, adding that investigations to determine the cause of death were ongoing.

"Villagers did not know who took its tusks," he added.

Environmental organisation WWF earlier this month called on the government to investigate the death of an 18-year-old female Sumatran elephant allegedly poisoned at an Indonesian oil palm plantation in the same district.

WWF changed the Sumatran elephant's status from "endangered" to "critically endangered" in January, largely due to severe [habitat loss](#) driven by oil palm and paper plantations.

There are fewer than 3,000 [Sumatran elephants](#) remaining in the wild, according to the International Union for [Conservation of Nature](#), marking a 50 percent drop in numbers since 1985.

Conflicts between humans and animals are increasing as people encroach on wildlife habitats in Indonesia, an archipelago with some of the world's largest remaining [tropical forests](#).

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Citation: Rare elephant found dead in Indonesia (2012, May 16) retrieved 22 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-05-rare-elephant-dead-indonesia.html>

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