

At least 26 elephants massacred by C.African poachers

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Elephants in the Addo Elephants Park near Port Elizabeth on February 9, 2013. Heavily armed poachers have killed at least 26 elephants in the Dzanga Bai reserve, a world heritage site in south-western Central African Republic, conservationist body WWF said.

Heavily armed poachers have killed at least 26 elephants in the Dzanga Bai reserve, a world heritage site in south-western Central African Republic, conservationist body WWF said Friday.

"At least 26 elephants were massacred in the Dzanga Bai World Heritage Site in the Central African Republic, after 17 individuals armed with Kalashnikov rifles on Monday entered this unique elephant habitat," the WWF said in a statement.

The WWF described the Bai, a large clearing where between 50 and 200 forest elephants congregate every day to drink nutrients present in the sands, as an "elephant mortuary". Four of those killed were [calves](#).

The [poachers](#) presented themselves as part of the transition government made up of the former Seleka rebel coalition which seized power in a coup six weeks ago, the WWF said.

The new leaders have struggled to restore security in the unstable nation.

The WWF had already drawn attention to the presence of the poachers on Tuesday.

"The killing has started. The Central African Republic must act immediately to secure this unique [World Heritage site](#)," Jim Leape, WWF international director general said in the statement.

"The brutal violence we are witnessing in Dzanga Bai threatens to destroy one of the world's great natural treasures, and to jeopardise the future of the people who live there."

The Central African region is regularly hit by poaching operations and in February 2012 at least 300 elephants were killed for their ivory in the Bouba NDjidda national park in northern Cameroon.

The WWF urged the international community, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo to help preserve the site, which also stretches into their countries.

Forest elephant species in [Central Africa](#) have plummeted 62 percent over the past ten years. the WWF said.

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