

Elephant poaching declines slightly

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Credit: Naturepl.com/Tony Heald / WWF

Although the number of African elephants killed for their tusks declined slightly last year after worldwide recognition of the severity of the wildlife crime epidemic, the rates remain unacceptably high, conservation group WWF says. UN data released today shows that an estimated 22,000 elephants were slaughtered by poachers across Africa in 2012, down from the previous year's record of at least 25,000.

Central Africa remains the hardest hit with poaching rates twice as high as the continental average, according to analysis conducted on behalf of the 179 members of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Scientists say the region has lost nearly two-thirds of its elephant population over the past decade, leaving little time left to reverse its decline.

"High level commitments to action against poaching and smuggling are beginning to have an impact, but Central Africa's endangered forest elephants remain in peril," said Lamine Sebogo, WWF International's African Elephant Programme Manager.

The number of large ivory seizures increased last year signalling better detection, but also indicating a continued involvement by organized criminal groups. Projections for 2013 are even graver; already this year over 40 tonnes of tusks have been confiscated while in transit.

Analysts from TRAFFIC, a joint programme of WWF and IUCN, have also found that smuggling routes are shifting as enforcement is bolstered in some locations. Although global shipping patterns are changing to exploit weaker systems, China remains the top destination for illegal ivory, TRAFFIC found.



Credit: WWF-Canon / Folke Wulf

"Wildlife crime is a serious global security issue and participation by all countries is required to stop it. In many places improvements are needed in regulation, enforcement, transparency, resourcing and transnational collaboration," Sebogo said.

Governments are meeting this week at back-to-back summits in Botswana and Paris to agree emergency activities to protect elephants from poaching and trafficking, and to discuss the peace and security implications of this transnational crime. WWF is urging nations to adopt the Marrakech Declaration, a ten point action plan to combat illicit wildlife trafficking launched by the African Development Bank and WWF in May.

Provided by WWF - Conservation news

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