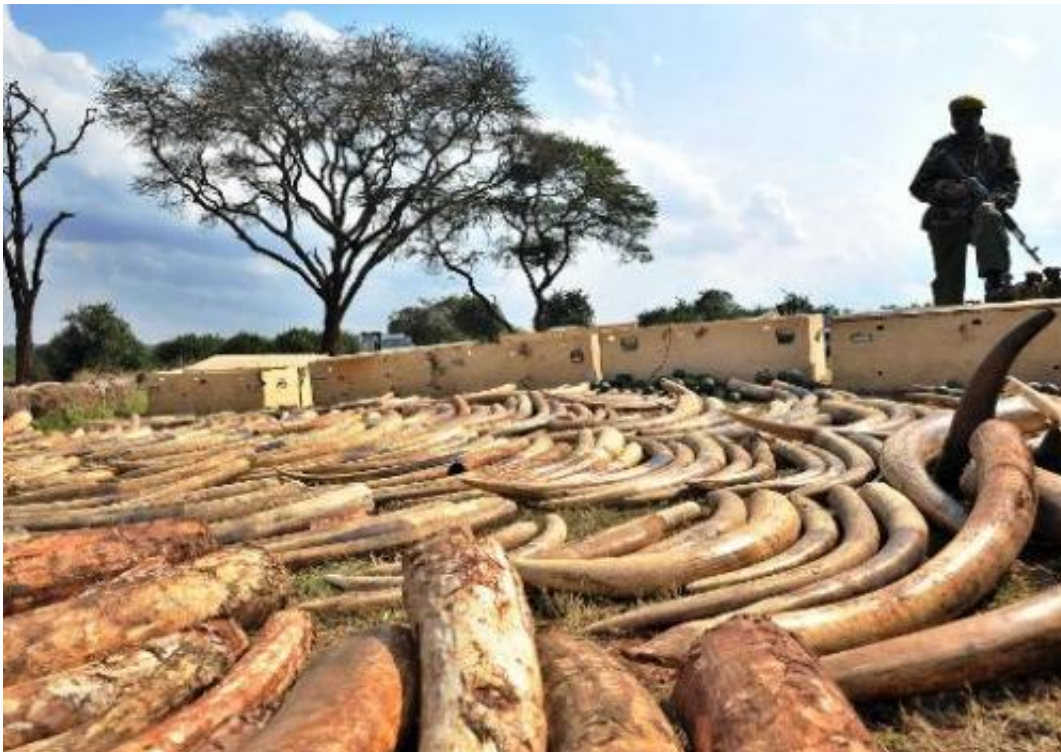


Conservationists urge Europe to destroy ivory stock

February 3 2014



A Kenya Wildlife Services ranger stands guard over an ivory haul in Nairobi on August 23, 2013

A conservation group urged European countries Monday to destroy their stockpiles of seized ivory as France prepared to pave the way with the burning of three tonnes of elephant tusks.

Robin des Bois, a Paris-based environmental lobby group, has been

pushing France to permanently get rid of its growing [ivory](#) hoard, seized from smugglers over the past 25 years, in a bid to halt the slaughter of African elephants.

The group, whose name in English means Robin Hood, estimates the French state has confiscated about 17 tonnes of ivory, most of which remains in storerooms and museums.

The ecology ministry has announced that three tonnes will be crushed in a symbolic gesture near the Eiffel Tower on Thursday, then incinerated.

It has also pledged to "systematically" destroy all ivory confiscated in future.

"We are very satisfied that the French state has changed its doctrine; moving away from the stockpiling of seized ivory," Robin des Bois president Jacky Bonnemains told journalists.

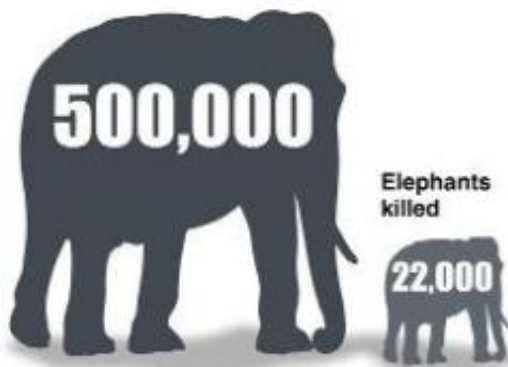
"We hope that this new approach of systematically destroying seized ivory will be extended to rhino horn and other illegal animal products."

The organisation claims that destroying such contraband reduces the temptation to ever return it to the market.

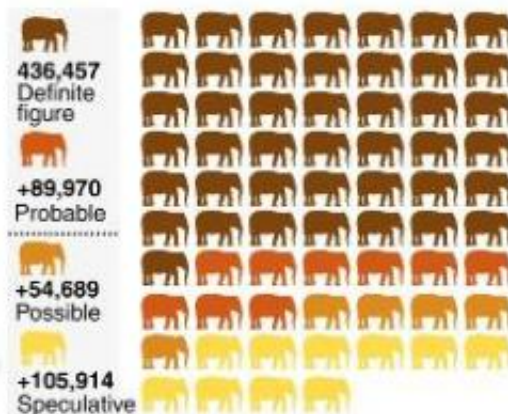
The future of African elephants threatened

Poaching and the trade in ivory could result in one fifth of the population wiped out in 10 years.

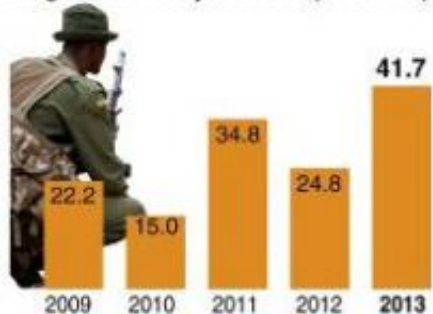
Estimated number of elephants (in 2012)



The hard task of checking their numbers



Large scale* Ivory seizures (in tonnes)



Sources: IUCN, Cites Traffic *Over 500 kilos

Eight countries accused of passivity over the fate of elephants:



Data on elephant poaching and the ivory trade from 2009 - 2013

Bonnemains said Thursday's demonstration should be the first of many, and "we call upon the rest of the European Union to do the same."

France will become the latest country to destroy its confiscated ivory after China, which crushed a six-tonne pile in January, and the United States' destruction of a similar stockpile last November.

The Philippines destroyed five tonnes of tusks in June last year, and Kenya set fire to a pile of the same weight in 2011. Last month, Hong Kong said it would incinerate 28 tonnes within the next two years.

A report of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature last year said that some 22,000 African elephants were killed illegally in 2012 and warned of "local extinctions if the present killing rates continue".

The elephants are being massacred for their massive tusks to produce ivory that is in high demand in the rapidly growing economies of Asia, particularly China and Thailand.



Two men stand guard over ivory seized by the Togolese police, as they are exhibited for journalists in Lome on August 9, 2013

The African elephant population is estimated at some 500,000 individuals—about half the 1980 total.

Robin des Bois said ivory seized between April and November last year amounted to the tusks of some 4,900 elephants—but underlined that seizures represented only about ten percent of illegal trade.

An international ban on ivory entered into force in 1990, but has since been partially overturned to allow limited legal sales—a move which conservationists claim has boosted black-market demand.

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