

26 more elephants poisoned in Zimbabwe: official

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An African elephant is pictured on November 17, 2012 at Hwange National Park in Zimbabwe

A total of 26 more elephants have been found dead from cyanide poisoning in Zimbabwe, taking the toll to 40 in two months, parks officials said Thursday.

Poachers killed the animals for their tusks, said Alvin Ncube, chair of

the Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.

In the latest incidents, 10 carcasses were discovered at Sinamatela Camp near Hwange National Park and 16 others in an advanced state of decomposition at Dzibanini near Zimbabwe's border with Botswana.

Last month, at least 14 [elephants](#) died of poisoning in separate incidents.

Ncube said it was difficult to track down [poachers](#) who use poison since they could sneak into game parks with the lethal substance.

"We are strengthening law enforcement," Ncube told reporters. "Very soon we will have drones and quad bikes which will be used to patrol and sight people who illegally enter the parks.

"We are introducing strategies and the most essential one is that we have to involve the local communities in fighting poaching.

"They must be seen as benefiting from wildlife so that they don't see wild animals as enemies."

But the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force (ZCTF), an NGO, said corrupt officials were responsible for syphoning off cash generated by the parks.

Communities living near game reserves are supposed to benefit from proceeds from activities such as sport hunting, which is meant to be used for projects such as the construction of classrooms, road maintenance and sinking boreholes.

"Those communities near game parks who are supposed to benefit from the animals are not getting anything so they are turning to [cyanide poisoning](#) and illegal trade," Johnny Rodrigues, ZCTF spokesman told

AFP.

"Nothing is being done to those involved because it's orchestrated by some chef (high-ranking government official)," Rodrigues said.

Poaching is common in Zimbabwe's game parks with elephants and rhino as the main targets.

Last year, more than 300 elephants died after suspected poachers placed cyanide near their watering holes.

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