

# Poachers kill rare giant elephant in Kenya

March 6 2017

---



The Tsavo Trust helps monitor giant "tusker" elephants through aerial and ground reconnaissance, and works closely with the Kenya Wildlife Service

One of Africa's oldest and largest elephants was killed by poachers in Kenya on Monday, according to a conservation group that protects the dwindling group of giant "tuskers".

Richard Moller of the Tsavo Trust told AFP that Satao II, named after another famed giant killed in 2014, was found dead on Monday and was believed to have been shot with a poisoned arrow, though this had not

been confirmed.

"Luckily, through the work we do with the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS), we were able to find the carcass before the poachers could recover the ivory," said Moller.

The elephant, believed to be about 50 years old, was beloved by visitors to the Tsavo National Park where he roamed.

Not long after his carcass was spotted in routine aerial reconnaissance of the park, two poachers believed to be responsible for the killing were apprehended.

The incident comes just two days after a KWS officer was killed during an anti-poaching incident in the park, the second to die in less than a month at the hands of poachers, according to the wildlife authority.

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) the number of African elephants has fallen by around 111,000 to 415,000 over the past decade.

The killing shows no sign of abating with around 30,000 elephants slaughtered for their ivory every year, mainly to satisfy demand in the Asian market for products coveted as a traditional medicine or as status symbols.

According to Moller, there are only about 25 of the giant tuskers remaining in the world. They are so named for their impressive tusks which nearly scrape the ground. About 15 of these are in Kenya.

"They are icons, they are ambassadors for elephants," he said.

He said one of Satao II's tusks weighed 51.5 kilos (112 pounds), and the

other 50.5 kilos.

"I am pretty gutted really. This particular elephant was one that was very approachable, one of those easy old boys to find. Many are the others are much more difficult to see" and stay in remote areas, said Moller.

"He has been through lots of droughts and probably other attempts at poaching."

The Tsavo ecosystem covers some 42,000 square kilometres (16,000 square miles), a major challenge for rangers from the KWS to patrol.

The Tsavo Trust helps monitor the [elephants](#) through aerial and ground reconnaissance, and works closely with KWS. Moller praised the "pretty swift action" which led to the two [poachers](#)' arrest.

© 2017 AFP

Citation: Poachers kill rare giant elephant in Kenya (2017, March 6) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-03-poachers-rare-giant-elephant-kenya.html>

|  |
|--|
| <p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p> |
|--|