

Malawi hails 'historic' relocation of 520 elephants

August 3 2017



African Parks officials load elephants into a truck, to be translocated from Majete Game Reserve in southern Malawi to Nkhotakota Game Reserve to increase the animal population and boost tourist attraction in the country's central region.

Malawi on Thursday celebrated the successful conclusion of a two-year project moving 520 sedated elephants by truck to a reserve where the animals had been nearly wiped out by poaching.

Described as one of the biggest-ever wildlife translocations, the elephants were transported 350 kilometres (220 miles) from two southern parks to the Nkhotakota reserve in the centre of the country.

"We have taken extraordinary measures to secure a future for Malawi's elephants, and at the same time are helping people who live around these critically important wild areas," said Brighton Kumchedwa of the national parks department.

The elephant population in Nkhotakota fell from 1,500 to just 100 in 2015. Since then security work and community relation programmes have made the reserve safe for wildlife.

Africa Parks, a conservation organisation that led the translocation, described it as "historic", adding that 261 elephants were moved last year and the remainder this year.

Only two elephants died in the process, which was completed on August 2.

The elephants were selected family by family and darted from a helicopter, before being winched by their legs into crates on the back of 30-tonne trucks.

They were driven overnight from the two parks, which had a overpopulation of elephants, to their new home in Nkhotakota.

Their new home is now surrounded by a high electric fence and has also re-filled with buffalo, antelope, warthog and zebra.

"This successful translocation is a pivotal moment for Malawi," said Peter Fearnhead, head of African Parks.

"Rehoming more than 500 elephants, and knowing they will thrive in Nkhotakota, is a story of hope and survival, and a real example of what is possible with good collaboration."

Britain's Prince Harry assisted in the first stage of the relocation.

Project organisers said there were more than 10 million African [elephants](#) 100 years ago, but only an estimated 450,000 remain today.

About 40,000 are poached every year to feed the insatiable demand for ivory.

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