Researchers examine the complex interactions between timber, logging, and forest elephants

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Forest elephant populations have been seriously declining for decades. In a recent and extensive literature review published in *Mammal Review*,

investigators describe the impacts of logging in central Africa on forest elephant populations, and conversely, the role of forest elephants in timber species' dynamics.

Existing research suggests that logging, when carefully planned and legally conducted, may help conservation efforts of forest elephants—for example, by providing a buffer around a network of protected areas. Research also indicates that forest elephants contribute to the regeneration of many timber species by dispersing their seeds over long distances. On the other hand, they can cause economic losses, by debarking trees or breaking saplings of timber species, but this has never been quantified.

"By compiling the results of numerous studies, this paper provides for the first-time lists of timber species known to be dispersed and/or debarked by forest elephants," said corresponding author Morgane Scalbert, a Ph.D. student at Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech (University of Liège), in Belgium. "Coexistence between logging and forest elephants appears to be possible, and timber concessions should therefore be part of the conservation strategies for this critically endangered species."

More information: The challenging coexistence of forest elephants Loxodonta cyclotis and timber concessions in central Africa, *Mammal Review* (2022). DOI: 10.1111/mam.12305

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