



Datasheet African Elephant

For internal WWF use only, compiled by Femke Koopmans (fkoopmans@wwf.nl), June 2012

Name: African elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*)

IUCN status: Vulnerable

CITES status: Appendix I

Subspecies:

Preliminary genetic evidence suggests that there may be at least two species of African Elephants, namely the savannah elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*) and the forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*). The African Elephant Specialist Group believes that more extensive research is required to support the proposed re-classification. Premature allocation into more than one species may leave hybrids in an uncertain conservation status. For this reason, this datasheet is compiled for the single species as currently described, encompassing all subspecies and populations.



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Distribution and population size

African elephants currently occur in 37 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The status of the African elephant varies considerably across the species range. These differences broadly follow the boundaries of four African regions, and are partly a result of the different historic trends. Figure 2 shows the present range of African elephants (forest and savannah elephants combined) within those four African regions.



Figure 1. Forest Elephant (C. van der Hoeven WWF)



Figure 2. Present range of wild African Elephants (Blanc et al., 2007)

Data on the numbers and distribution of African elephant at site, national, regional and continental levels are documented in the African Elephant Database (AED) and published in the African Elephant Status Report of the IUCN African Elephant Specialist Group. Data presented in table 1 are from the most recent African Elephant Status Report (AESR) published in 2007. Elephant data were collected by a multiplicity of agencies and individuals, often without any direct linkage between one another and using a variety of different techniques based on current opinion and available resources. The result is a collection of data of variable quality in most countries, and no data at all on many populations. Population data in the AED are categorized according to data quality and survey reliability. The mutually exclusive categories used are: DEFINITE, PROBABLE, POSSIBLE and SPECULATIVE number of elephants. The cumulative speculative estimates (i.e. the sum of Definite, Probable, Possible and Speculative figures) found in the AESR are comparable to the estimates in the African Elephant Action Plan 1979 (Douglas-Hamilton 1979).

Table 1. Elephant numbers per country in their present range (Blanc et al., 2007).

Region	Country	Elephant numbers				Range area (Km ²)
		Definite	Probable	Possible	Speculative	
Central Africa	Cameroon	179	726	4,965	9,517	118,571
	Central African Republic	109	1,689	1,036	500	73,453
	Chad	3,885	0	2,000	550	149,443
	Congo	402	16,947	4,024	729	135,918
	Democratic Republic of Congo	2,447	7,955	8,855	4,457	263,700
	Equatorial Guinea	0	0	700	630	15,008
	Gabon	1,523	23,457	27,911	17,746	218,985
	Total*	10,383	48,936	43,098	34,129	975,079
Eastern Africa	Eritrea	96	0	8	0	104
	Ethiopia	634	0	920	206	38,365
	Kenya	23,353	1,316	4,946	2,021	107,113
	Rwanda	34	0	37	46	1,014
	Somalia	0	0	0	70	4,526
	Sudan	20	0	280	0	318,239
	Tanzania	108,816	27,937	29,350	900	390,366
	Uganda	2,337	1,985	1,937	300	15,148
Total*	137,485	29,043	35,124	3,543	880,063	
Southern Africa	Angola	818	801	851	60	406,946
	Botswana	133,829	20,829	20,829	0	100,265
	Malawi	185	323	632	1,587	7,538
	Mozambique	14,079	2,396	2,633	6,980	334,786
	Namibia	12,531	3,276	3,296	0	146,921
	South Africa	17,847	0	638	22	30,455
	Swaziland	31	0	0	0	50
	Zambia	16,562	5,948	5,908	813	201,247
	Zimbabwe	84,416	7,033	7,367	291	76,931
Total*	297,718	23,186	24,734	9,753	1,305,140	
West Africa	Benin	1,223	0	0	0	13,673
	Burkina Faso	4,154	320	520	0	19,872
	Côte d'Ivoire	188	152	119	506	33,985
	Ghana	789	387	241	12	23,301
	Guinea	135	79	79	57	1,524
	Guinea Bissau	0	0	7	13	1,346
	Liberia	0	0	0	1,676	15,977
	Mali	357	0	141	156	31,878
	Niger	85	0	17	0	2,683
	Nigeria	348	0	105	375	22,968
	Senegal	1	0	0	9	1,090
	Sierra Leone	0	0	80	135	1,804
	Togo	4	0	61	0	5,444
Total *	7,487	735	1,129	2,939	175,545	
Continental total *	472,269	82,704	84,334	50,364	3,335,827	

*In order to produce national, regional and continental totals, the variances of sample counts are added together in order to produce a 95% confidence interval for the sum of the estimates before allocation of the pooled estimates to the four groups 'definite, probable, possible and speculative'. This is the reason why the regional totals are not always the sum of the corresponding national group subtotals. Likewise, the continental numbers of elephants in these groups do not match the simple sum of the regional subtotals (Blanc et al., 2007).

Population trends

At present elephant populations in Central and Western Africa suffer steep declines. For example, at present about 8,800 elephants can be found in the Ndoki landscape, northern Congo. Between 2006 and 2011, the landscape lost about 5,000 elephants. That is an average of three per day! Safeguarding the western and central African elephant populations is a major challenge for elephant conservation in Africa.

Populations in Eastern and Southern Africa, accounting for over two thirds of all known elephants on the continent are currently increasing at an average annual rate of 4.0% per year. This population increase is due to proper management and law enforcement, which is lacking in central and western Africa.

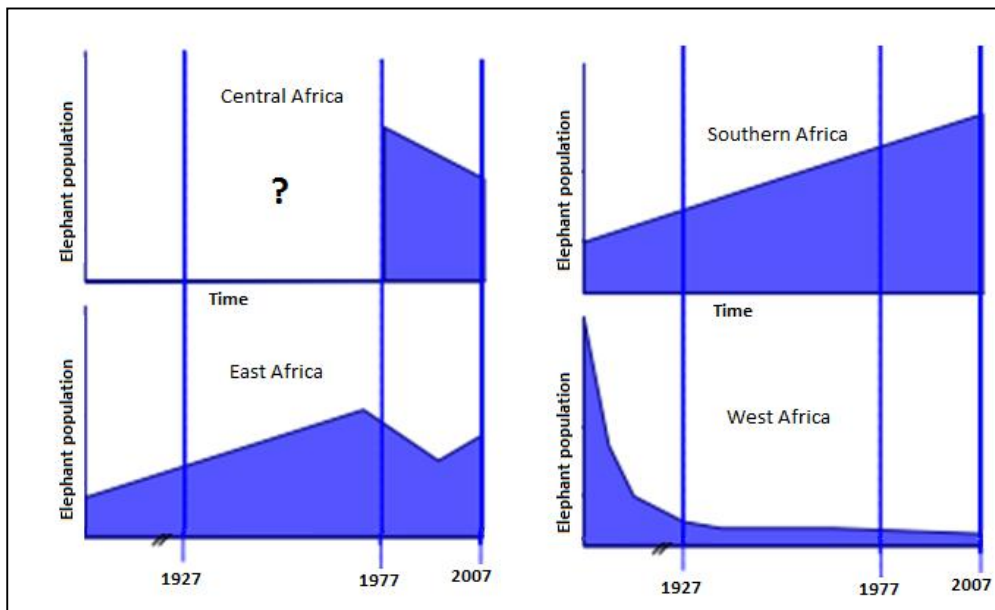


Figure 3. Speculated sub-regional trends in elephant populations in the 20th century (not to scale) (Blanc, 2008)

Main threats

Poaching and illegal trade

Throughout large parts of their range, African elephants are still hunted illegally, often to provide ivory for the illegal international trade (mostly fuelled by the Asian market). The limited resources available to wildlife departments, combined with the remoteness and inaccessibility of much of the forest in elephant range, makes it difficult to monitor and protect herds.

The problem is compounded by the unstable political situation in some range states. Tens of thousands of elephants are poached each year, mostly in Central Africa.

Figure 4 shows an increase of large ivory seizures (i.e. above 800 kg) between 2001 and 2011. The year 2011 was a dramatic year for African elephants, with a 'poaching crisis' in for example Cameroon's Bouba Ndjida National Park where more than 300 animals were killed in only several weeks.

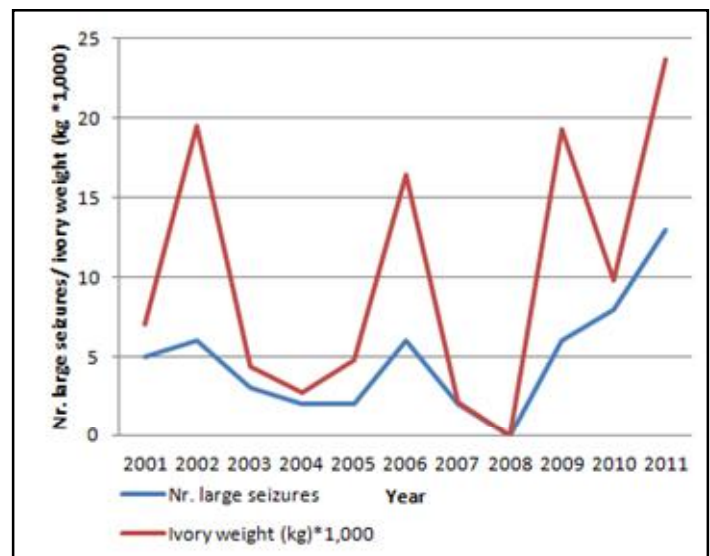


Figure 4. Nr. large ivory seizures between 2001 and 2011, and weight (kg*1,000) of seized ivory (TRAFFIC, 2011)

Habitat degradation, fragmentation, and loss

There is a continuing decline in the extent and quality of elephant habitat as expanding human population convert land for agriculture, settlements and development activities. Conversion of habitat for biofuels is an increasing problem. Extractive industries such as logging and mining also cause habitat destruction and increase accessibility of remote forests for hunters. Fragmentation of habitat is also problematic as it reduces or halts genetic flow between populations. Roads traversing forest blocks further exacerbate fragmentation and increase access for poachers.

Human- elephant conflicts

Although trends are difficult to verify, there is evidence that human-elephant conflict is an increasing problem and that the costs of dealing with “problem animals” are increasing. Shrinking elephant habitat and expanding human populations cause an increased potential of contact between people and elephants. Elephants enter fields where they eat and trample crops, raid food stores, and damage village infrastructure including water sources. In some cases they injure or kill people. In retaliation, involved elephants are being killed by people who suffer injuries or loss of livelihood.

WWF Programmes

The African Elephant Programme (AEP) was established in 2000. Under the AEP a continent-wide strategy for elephant conservation was defined which responds to the needs of the species across its full range, and in which WWF can play a significant and well-defined role under a programmatic approach. Under the AEP 20 African elephant conservation landscapes were defined with highest conservation priority. For the purpose of WWF’s African elephant work, a landscape is considered an area of land in elephant range that is currently inhabited by an inter- connected population of elephants. All elephant conservation work of WWF is aligned to the continent-wide strategy under AEP. Bilateral support is also given to NO’s and PO’s with their own African elephant conservation strategies and projects which are all in line with the AEP.

Vision of the WWF AEP

In 25 years time, forest and savannah elephants continue to roam across Africa in landscapes where people and wildlife flourish alongside each other.

Meta-goal for 2017

By 2020, elephant populations and their habitat cover are stable or increasing in 16 landscapes.

Under the AEP, a strategic plan has been designed for African elephant conservation between 2012 and 2015. This strategic plan presents a portfolio of immediate actions and targets to help achieve the overall goal of stabilising or increasing the elephant populations and their habitat by 2020. The strategies focus on:

- Protection and management: to reduce the illegal killing of elephants through improved protection and management;
- Capacity building: to increase capacity within range states to conserve and manage elephants;
- Conflict mitigation: to increase public support for elephant conservation by reducing conflict;
- Trade controls: to reduce the illegal trade in elephant products.

References

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