



# THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT

African elephant populations more than halved from 1980 to 1990 © javarman/Shutterstock.com

## THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT

### Names:

Scientific: *Loxodonta africana* & *Loxodonta cyclotis*

English: African savannah elephant & African forest elephant

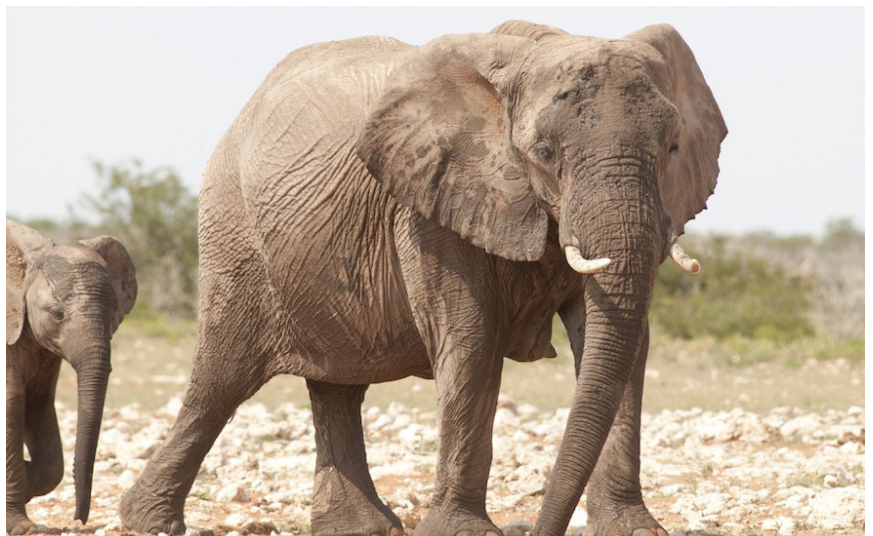
As the largest terrestrial animal on earth, the *Loxodonta africana* plays a crucial role in regulating the ecosystem within its range. Due to its impressive size, it naturally clears woodlands by uprooting trees and feeding on vegetation, thus enabling plants and forests to regenerate. Moreover, elephants are vital for maintaining floral biodiversity since they are capable of dispersing large seeds that smaller animals cannot.

Unfortunately, their size and iconic trunks also make them a prime target for poachers. Coupled with increased habitat loss, this has led to a dramatic population decline, with over 60% of their numbers lost in the last 50 years. As of 2021 the *Loxodonta africana* has been classified as Endangered by IUCN. In an even worse conservation status, the *Loxodonta cyclotis* has been listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.

## Threats & Challenges

As trans-boundary species, elephants rely on migration and movement across large swaths of land to sustain their population. Human encroachment into their habitat, as well as the expansion of infrastructure such as roads and railways, have thus led to a significant habitat loss and a fragmentation of their populations. The smaller, dispersed groups of African elephants are further put under pressure by competition with livestock, which often results in human-wildlife conflict, and the scarcity of water resources driven by climate change.

The most significant challenge to African elephant population remains poaching, however. Hunted for their valuable ivory, elephant numbers have declined significantly in the last decades. In 2013 alone, for instance, 300 elephants were killed in a single poaching incident in Hwange National Park. Although there has been some positive progress recently, poaching continues to remain the greatest threat to the African elephant.



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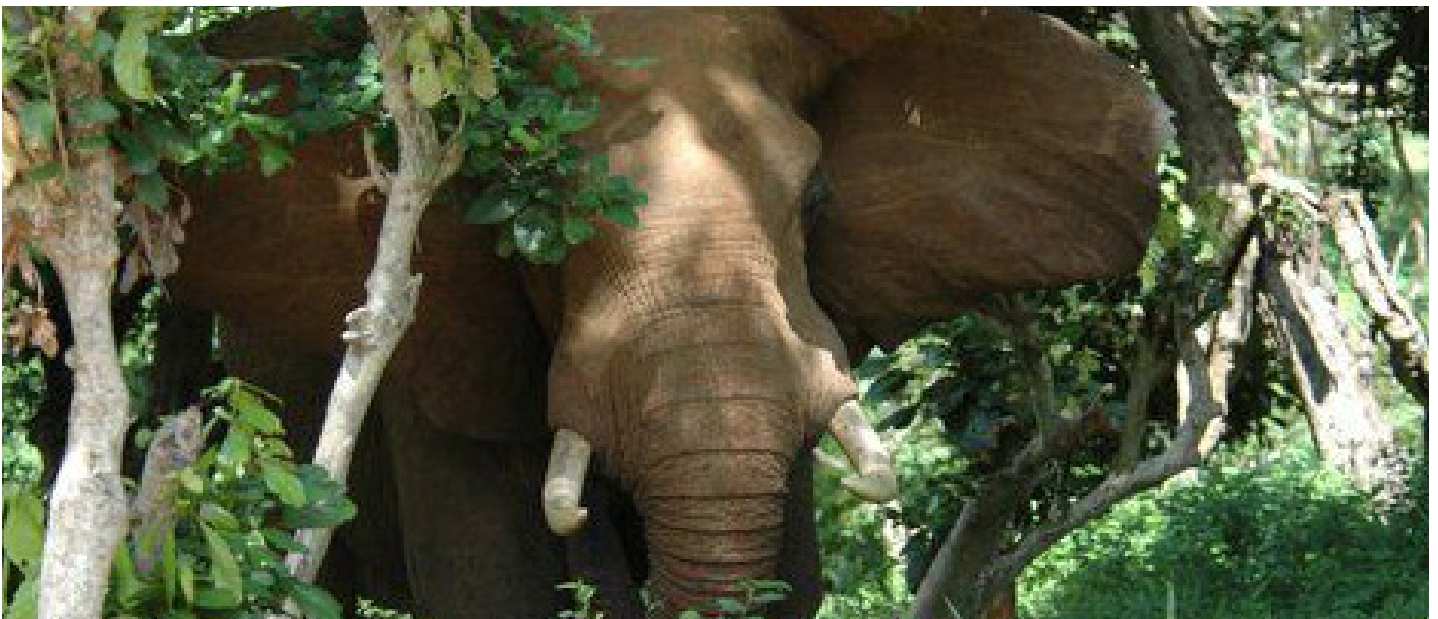
## Actions under CMS – West African Elephant MOU

In order to conserve the last remaining elephants and their habitats in West Africa, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed in 2005 by all 13 Range States within the CMS framework. Specifically, the MOU provides an international framework for Range States, NGOs, scientists, local people and the international community at large to collaborate in the restoration and maintenance of elephant populations and their habitats in West Africa.

At their last meeting in 2021 the Signatories of the MOU agreed to place the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) at the heart of future conservation efforts. This plan covers both the African savannah elephant, *loxodonta africana*, and the African forest elephant, *loxodonta cyclotis*, and seeks to improve the conservation status of these species by identifying eight priority objectives, to be addressed through the implementation of targeted activities.

## THE AFRICAN ELEPHANT FUND

The African Elephant Fund is a collaborative effort between the African elephant Range States and donor countries, hosted by UNEP, and supported by CITES, and CMS, aimed at curtailing the growing threats to elephants. One of its major objectives is to support the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) by funding regional and local conservation projects. As of 2024, there have been a number of key achievements, such as the conduction of aerial census surveys of elephants and the enhancement of the capacity of range States to enact and enforce stronger wildlife laws.



African elephant © Melanie Virtue

## About CMS

The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), also known as the Bonn Convention, works for the conservation of a wide array of endangered migratory animals worldwide through negotiation and implementation of agreements and species action plans. It has 133 Parties (as of 1 November 2024).

CMS engages all relevant stakeholders in addressing wildlife crime in concert with all other aspects of wildlife conservation and management.

## CMS Instruments

Animals receive protection under CMS through listing on its two Appendices, through global or regional agreements and through action plans.

## Contact



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