

by Gerhard Damm

News from and about Africa

African Elephant Range States

Since February 2014 an Africa-wide elephant census sponsored by Microsoft billionaire Paul G. Allen is under way. 90 researchers made aerial surveys in 18 elephant range countries. Field work is nearly complete and results will be available soon. According to National Geographic the preliminary findings so far have revealed good and bad news for African elephants.

One of the most shocking discoveries was a 53 percent fall in elephant numbers in Tanzania – from an estimated 109,000 animals in 2009 to 51,000 in 2015. In Mozambique elephant numbers are also down by 48 percent in just five years. On the positive side elephants in Uganda have recovered from 1,000 to 5,000 animals. Botswana's population remained stable with about 130,000 elephants and Zimbabwe has recorded only a loss of 6 percent since 2001. RDB

Australia

The banning of importation of legal rhino hunting trophies by the Australian Government is of concern as this action was taken without any consultation of key rhino range states and rhino expert. It also undermines sustainable use that is a cornerstone of IUCN, CBD, as stated at the 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress. The banning emerges from the confusion between legitimate ethical sport hunting, which is an accepted form of rational resource use that can benefit and incentivize rhino conservation, with indefensible unethical canned [shooting] of captive bred lions in small enclosures. It remains imperative that any such [banning] actions should not be taken unilaterally and without consultation with expert conservationists. Decisions need to be based upon best supporting evidence, with an assessment of positive and negative outcomes.

Cameroon

The Africa Trade in Wildlife Information eXchange (AFRICA-TWIX) platform was launched following a phase of in-country needs assessments with government stakeholders. AFRICA-TWIX is based on experience drawn from the hugely successful EU-TWIX database and information exchange system used by enforcement personnel from across Europe for more than a decade. AFRICA-TWIX, managed by TRAFFIC and hosted by COMIFAC, will initially run in four countries of Central Africa—Cameroon, Gabon, Congo, and Democratic Republic of Congo—after which, the aim is to expand its geographical scope and coverage to other parts of the continent. The launch of AFRICA-TWIX took place following a two day workshop held in Douala, Cameroon, to validate the structure of the database on seizures and to define which criminal offences relate to illegal wildlife trade in each country (Source TRAFFIC)

Kenya

The African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) announced Ugandan native Kaddu Kiwe Sebunya as its new

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President. Sebunya will focus on advancing a clear policy agenda for wildlife as part of Africa's future, ensuring the continent's blueprint for development and growth includes space and protections for Africa's natural heritage.

Kenya

A report by the Kenyan Parliament's Environment and Natural Resources Committee says wildlife populations of different species have declined by between 30 to 90 percent since 1977, when hunting was banned in the country. The Committee warns Parliament that some animals could disappear in the next few decades. Species that have significantly declined and are critically threatened include elephants, rhinos, Grevy's zebra, roan and stable antelopes, hirola, bongo, lion and cheetah. Besides poaching, the committee found that habitat loss due to increasing human settlement and developments, human-wildlife conflict and widespread bush meat hunting are also contributing to the dwindling numbers. RDB

Malawi

African Parks, a nonprofit conservation organization for the rehabilitation and long-term management of national parks in Africa in partnership with governments and local communities, has been awarded €2.6 million by the Dutch Postcode Lottery for the restoration of Liwonde National Park and Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve in Malawi totaling 225,000 ha.

Malawi

African Parks has started construction for a 42,000-acre fenced elephant sanctuary within Malawi's Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve. African Parks took over management control of the run down 1,800km² park half a year ago and now tries to develop it into a viable wildlife sanctuary. Elephants will be translocated from Majete WR and Liwonde NP which face elephant overpopulation. RDB

South Africa

South Africa is in the grips of its worst drought in decades. The South African Weather Service recently announced that 2015 was the driest year on record since 1904. Hippos in Kruger National Park are increasingly grazing during the day rather than staying in rivers and pools as usual, a sign of an intensifying drought expected to kill some animals in the weeks ahead. Buffalos are also expected to suffer heavily.

South Africa

Peter Flack received the Bataleur Award from SA Hunters and Game Conservation Association. SAHGCA CEO Fred Camphor said "the association presented its most prestigious conservation award to Peter Flack in recognition of his lifetime conservation work." In January, 2016, The African Professional Hunters Association (APHA) presented Flack with their inaugural Selous Award. In his speech Jason Roussos, vice president and secretary general of APHA, said "the Selous Award is fundamentally based

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on a single criterion - a passion for African hunting". Source SAHGCA

South Africa

A group of companies, known as Greater Kudu Club advertises that "three exceptional bulls will be used in its innovative new breeding programs". Named Hercules (66 5/8"), Apollo (68 4/8" - see photo) and Mr. Universe (widely regarded as the bull with the biggest horn potential in South Africa), they "form the nucleus from which truly exceptional kudu genetics will be produced. They are running on a rotation basis with a group of 100 hand selected cows."

South Africa

News24 reported that Park Chol-jun, political councilor at the North Korean embassy was accused of abusing his diplomatic immunity and his embassy's diplomatic bag to smuggle rhino horn. He has been expelled from South Africa. Park was arrested on May 3 in Maputo after 4.5kg of rhino horn and \$99,300 in cash were found in a vehicle with diplomatic license plates of the North Korean embassy in Pretoria. Quoting a "South Korean embassy source", news agency UPI reported at the time of the arrests that "North Koreans regularly access the land route to Mozambique, in order to acquire horns; the revenue is needed, the source said, "to keep the North Korean mission in operation". Source <http://allafrica.com/stories/201512231138.html>

South Africa

South Africa's environment minister Edna Molewa said in January that 1,175 dead rhinos were discovered during the country's annual census of poaching activities - 40 less than the 2014 record of 1,215. This announcement adds a misleading gloss to another devastating year. Tom Milliken, a rhino expert from TRAFFIC, warned about misinterpretation of the numbers. He said the real number of deaths "could be considerably higher given that not all poached rhino carcasses are found". Milliken also said many Chinese nationals had been implicated in the growing trade. "The infiltration of these communities by sophisticated criminal gangs not only threatens rhinos, it also compromises the safety and sustainable development of the people living in these communities," said Jo Shaw, WWF-South Africa's rhino program manager. Source The Guardian

South Africa

The rhino horn moratorium judgment was handed down by the High Court of South Africa, in November 2015. An application for leave to appeal filed by the Department on 9th December 2015 suspended the execution of the judgment; hence the moratorium on the domestic trade in rhino horn remained in place. On 20th January 2016 the Department's application was dismissed and the moratorium is now no longer in place. Minister Molewa decided to apply for leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Appeal, which - once lodged - will result in the renewed suspension of the execution of the court's decision to review and set aside the moratorium. (Source DEA).

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Tanzania

The Ambassador of Germany to Tanzania, Mr. Egon Konchake, handed over two Aviat Aircraft Husky A-IC aircraft to the Tanzanian Minister for Natural Resources and Tourism, Prof. Jumanne Maghembe, February 16th. He said Germany has been looking at adding efforts to conservation of wildlife in Tanzania. The two planes will be used for aerial patrols over Serengeti National Park and the Selous Game Reserve to monitor poaching and wildlife conservation. Germany had granted Tanzania over 32 million Euro in the next five years. The funds will cover the establishment of the Tanzania Wildlife Authority (TAWA), wildlife research, anti-poaching efforts, and the setting up of a game ranger squad (Source TurboNews)

Zimbabwe

Six South Africans (Francois Petrus Grobler, Peter Schalk, Torrie and JD Potgieter Damian Leroux and Pieter Burger) and one Zimbabwean (Munyaradzi Tapera) accused of trying to smuggle 12 young sable antelopes out of Zambia pleaded guilty to 13 counts of unlawful possession of wildlife and ammunition. They were caught at Kotakota Airstrip in Gwembe District about to load the antelopes onto a small specially fitted airplane destined for South Africa. Zambian and South African authorities were collaborating on investigating the "complex wildlife smuggling syndicate". Some people with knowledge of the wildlife sector suggested that this operation was uncovered only because an underpaid insider got disgruntled. The sable were alleged to be bought by Louis van der Walt on behalf of Soutpansberg Boerdery Trust from a group of sable at Kyindu Ranch south of Lusaka belonging to Swanvest 234 (Pty) Ltd of South Africa. Swanvest has denied any involvement. Source The Bulletin & Record, Zambia.

Zimbabwe

In January Zimbabwe National Parks rangers exchanged gunfire with 11 armed poachers from Zambia in the Kariba/Chirundu district in Northern Zimbabwe, on the Zambezi River. During follow-up operations, the rangers recovered 22 elephant tusks, over 400 bullets, food supplies, and clothing. Source: The News Hub .com

Zimbabwe

A significant surge in rhino poaching in Zimbabwe in 2015 saw at least 50 rhino poached, 42 of them black rhino, more than double the figure lost the previous year, the Lowveld Rhino Trust reported. The majority of losses were suffered in the Lowveld Conservancies that contain the only populations that are regarded by IUCN as being genetically and demographically viable."

Zimbabwe

The Save Valley Conservancy has been hit with rhino poaching, orchestrated by a well-known villain, and have lost some rhino. They also have recorded some success lately - they had a shootout and killed one poacher, arrested three more and confiscated some weapons. Unfortunately the poachers had killed at least two rhino. The captured poacher was sentenced to 35 years of which 15 years were suspended

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on condition he repays the state \$ 480,000 (the value of the rhino poached). (Source Bhejane Trust Newsletter 12/2015)

World

According to US scientists the year 2015 was by far the hottest year since records began. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that the Earth's average temperature was 0.9 degrees Celsius situated above the mean of the 20th century. The previous heat record set in 2014 was exceeded by 0.16 degrees.