
A large African elephant stands in a grassy field under a clear blue sky. The elephant is positioned on the left side of the frame, facing right. Its skin is textured and wrinkled, and it has a prominent white tusk. The background shows a line of trees and bushes in the distance.

What is Happening to the African Elephant?

By: Steven Bhargava, Joe Bjornsen, Spencer Brooks, Brett Burlington, Andrew Byars, John Calkins, Paru Chainy, Isabella Colt Glas, Jack Colwell, Andrew Confusione, Chelsea Dobbin, Emily Ebel, Sarah Edwards, and Blake Farokhnia

Group 1: What has happened to the population of African Elephants?

- In 1930, the population of African Elephants was about 10 million
- With a decline of nearly 97%, only about 350,000 remain - less than the population of Arlington
- Through the 1980's, around 100,000 elephants were killed each year
- In the most recent decades, Elephant poachings has spiked once again. Why?
 - Increased demand for Ivory, especially in Asia, has incentivized these mass killings. From 2007 to 2014 alone, the population fell by nearly a third.
- The countries with the greatest overall decline in numbers were Tanzania and Mozambique, where they slaughtered 73,000 in just 5 years.
- It's not all bad:
 - Botswana, South Africa, Uganda, Malawi, and Kenya seem to have stable populations of Elephants

Group 2: Why are elephants endangered? Who is killing them and why?

- Since Europeans began to colonize Africa, elephants, specifically their tusks, have been targeted in order to produce a variety of goods.
- By far the greatest threat to the survival of the African elephant is poaching for the Ivory trade.
- To add to the problem of poaching, the reproduction rate has remained low, around 5 or 6%. This means that there are not enough calves being born to make up for the losses caused by poaching.
- Elephants live in herds, which makes it far easier for them to be hunted in large numbers.
- In simple terms, the supply of elephants has not been able to keep up with the massive demand for Ivory.

Group 3: What does the ivory trade have to do with the politics of sub-Saharan African Countries?

- As the ivory trade has expanded internationally (and especially to China) and enforcement efforts by African countries have increased to prevent the international trade, the ivory trade has adapted to underground exporting
- This underground exporting of ivory has led to increased corruption in the government as organized crime profits from ivory and influences officials, thus weakening enforcement efforts
- Sub-Saharan African countries are unfortunately already vulnerable to corruption due to poor governance, weak institutions, and a lackluster economy, so organized crime can take advantage of these realities at the cost of damaging the elephant population

Group 3 (cont.)

- Many rebel militant groups around Africa rely heavily on the illegal trade of ivory to finance their missions, using funds to acquire troops, weapons, ammunition, etc.
 - Al-Shabaab (a Somalian militia affiliated with Al-Qaeda) reportedly rely on ivory trade to support 40% of their 5000-person army
 - The Lord's Resistance Army (fronted by Joseph Kony) used ivory as one of their primary sources of financing
- There are many reports and suspicions of national armies, such as Uganda's, using their military resources to streamline the poaching process by using large amounts of soldiers and employing helicopters before smuggling the proceeds.
- Many international borders in Africa fall along large areas of territory and wildlife that are not able to be effectively policed (if at all)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lit2DbeT-9U>

Group 4: Name one measure that has been put into place to save the elephants.

- The World Wide Fund for nature (WWF) has many projects and measures in place for elephant protection.

They support such projects that serve to:

- Improve elephant protection and management
- Reduce illegal trade
- Build capacity with range states
- Mitigate human-elephant conflict

- The WWF is also bettering and protecting areas where elephants live by working with local governments and communities to:
 - ameliorate conditions and reduce human-elephant conflict.
 - Influence policy and legislation to benefit elephant conservation
 - Working with TRAFFIC (the wildlife trade monitoring network) to help train law enforcement agencies and lobby governments to improve laws on wildlife crime such as illegal elephant trade.

Group 4: Name one measure that has been put into place to save the elephants.

- Poaching for the illegal ivory trade is one of the biggest threats to the elephant population.
 - Around 55 African elephants are killed a day for their tusks
- The WWF has put into place a program where you can symbolically adopt an elephant.
 - Adopting an elephant helps fund these programs that serve to protect elephant habitats, reduce poaching, and other services for elephant protection.
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e6BixNiDgts&feature=emb_logo

Group 5: Impact of Restricted Ivory Trade on Symphonies

- A lot of musical instruments that are used in symphonies and orchestras often utilize ivory parts, and for music groups traveling internationally these instruments are often not allowed into countries due to the ban on ivory trade
- Many musicians fear that the instruments they have played for many years will be confiscated because of these restrictions
- Symphonies are having to replace musical instruments that contain ivory with other alternatives which could cost more and not sound as good when traveling
- Instruments could also be damaged when removing ivory to make them legal to travel with
- The League of American Orchestras has led an effort for musical instruments to be excluded from the recent bans on ivory trade

Group 5: Impact of Restricted Ivory Trade on Rock Music

- Acoustic guitars used Elephant ivory for saddles and nuts until the mid-1970's. This is when the international ban of Ivory trade was enacted.
- Ivory used to be used to cover the exterior of Piano keys.
- Collectors of Vintage instruments are asking for change in the law, as the resale of instruments made with Ivory is prohibited.

Group 5: Issues With Ban on Ivory Trade

- The law does not account for issues like what percentage of the instrument is made from ivory or what the intended use is for a buyer. Many buyers simply like to play the instrument, and most instruments have little to no Ivory other than small, specific pieces.
- Musicians believe that logical concessions by federal regulators would allow antique or vintage instrument dealers to stay in business while also accomplishing the reduction or abolishment of Elephant poaching.
- One concession is changing the definition of “antique” when it comes to the law stating that these instruments must have entered the country through verified ports. Another is the allowance for items with very small amounts of ivory that actually have a purpose such as an old school guitar.

Group 6: The Argument For Hunting Licenses

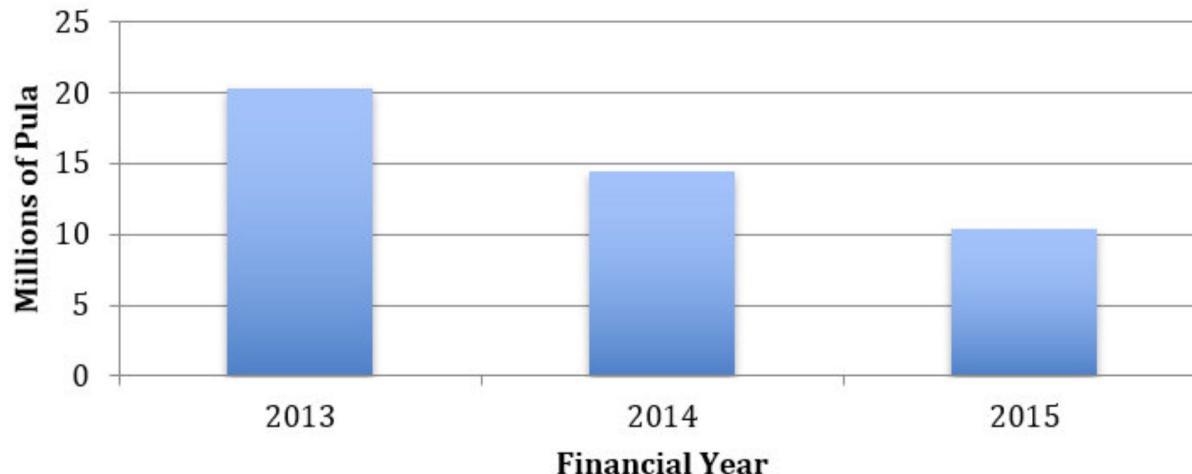
- Elephant overpopulation problem and the destruction of crops and farms
- The Environment Ministry cites the rising levels of human-elephant conflict as one of the primary reasons why President Masisi ended the nationwide 5 year ban on hunting in May 2019
 - Department of Wildlife and National Parks are ill equipped to deal with animal control issues and believes the reinstatement of hunting in an orderly and ethical manner is necessary
- February 2020: Botswana held its first auction to sell 7 hunting licenses of 10 elephants each
 - Prices ranged from 3.6 million to 4.7 million pula (\$330,000 - \$430,000)
- Government ensured that hunting will be controlled and confined to areas impacted by human wildlife conflict
- In order to bid on a hunting license, bidders had to have “demonstrable and appropriate elephant hunting experience” and no wildlife criminal convictions

Group 6: The Argument for Hunting Licenses (Continued)

- Local communities benefit most from hunting in Botswana: In many cases hunters can't transport the meat of the animal they killed, and their carcasses are donated or sold at a cheap rate to communities for food.
- Hunters often spend around \$10,000 per trip, which is much higher than the average spending done by any other type of tourist.
- The anti-hunting license argument is that photographic safaris are a natural and better replacement for the issuance of hunting licenses, but the reality is that it is not easy to replace hunters with photographic tourists since:
 - On average these photographic safari tourists spend less money than hunters
 - Photographic safaris can be done almost anywhere in the world and they are not limited to game farms or concession areas where hunting is limited to specific areas
 - A large increase in tourists would be necessary for photographic safaris to replace hunting, which is NOT guaranteed.

Group 6: The Financial Impact of Hunting on Local Communities

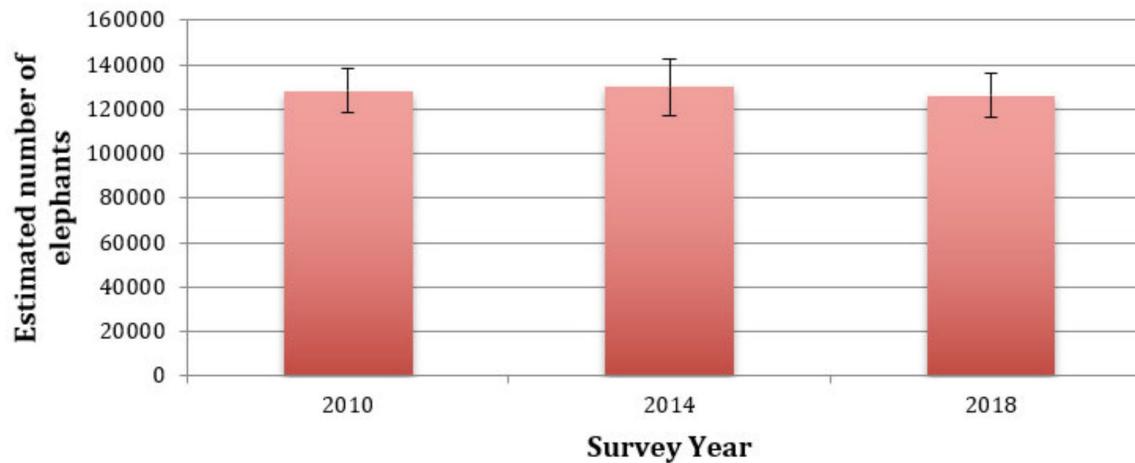
- The income of locals declined significantly in the year following the ban on hunting in 2014



Income reported in millions of Botswana Pula by five community Trusts situated around the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Data from Mbaiwa (2018).

Group 6: Hunting Licenses and the Tragedy of Commons

- Richard Leakey argues that if private property in savannas and wildlife resources could be established they could be managed to enhance land-use productivity. The auctioning of hunting licenses would therefore save elephants from destruction and enhance the economic wellbeing of the indigenous people who co-exist among the wildlife herds as they do not need to fear being trampled or having their crops destroyed.



Group 7: The Argument Against Hunting Licenses

- The temporary ban on trophy-hunting created issues such as human-elephant conflict and income deficits within Botswana
 - Ex. Humans being killed by animals, villages being destroyed, loss of jobs for hunting workers
- However, the consequences can be fixed with other alternatives rather than dissolving the ban on trophy-hunting and reissuing hunting licenses. “Trophy hunting” is not benefiting the lives and populations of the precious animals for which Botswana is blessed with. We do not want to deplete the population of elephants and doing so in Botswana, a country that is home to the largest amount of elephants in the world, would be immoral.

Group 7: The Argument Against Hunting Licenses (Cont.)

- While the majority of tourism income in Botswana is due in large part to the hunting licences granted to visitors to take down elephants, Audrey Delsink, wildlife director for Humane Society International has questioned the effectiveness of licences in regards to completing their goal of mitigating the population. She told the AFP that "hunting is not an effective long-term human-elephant mitigation tool or population control method."
- The ultimate goal to contain the elephant population is not solved through the permission of licences as resources could be easily depleted if not easily regulated, and the incentive for Botswana to increase the amount of licences permitted is present and shows a clear conflict of interest
- To control the elephant population in the long run, the nation of Botswana can take poachers and turn them into mitigation hunters as it has already begun to do so. The nation could pour its existing resources to help poachers turn into game wardens with year round access to the elephant population instead of relying on untrained tourists to participate.

Group 7: The Argument Against Hunting Licenses (Cont.)

Alternative Solution:

- Botswana can change the narrative of the country by redirecting its current reputation as hunting grounds to a tourism destination. The Human Society International believes that other forms of tourism like safaris and photography would be more beneficial to the local community than trophy hunting.
- Botswana could change their policy directive to be similar to that of Kenya, who also has a huge elephant population and has banned hunting for decades, and adopt the “photographic safari” outlook for the country and target their tourism income.
- The economic sectors such as travel, hospitality, and entertainment would create more jobs with a larger range of experiences than the ones that hunters often seek.
- The income deficits from not receiving monetary compensation for hunting licenses can be recovered in tourism.

Group 7: The Argument Against Hunting Licenses (Cont.)

- Botswana auctions licenses to hunt 70 elephants in effort to reduce conflict with humans in 2020, which is less than a year after the government lifted the five-year hunting ban. There was an auction that was not open to reporters. However, participants had to pay a deposit of \$18,000 for a seat. Each of the seven hunting “packages” will come with licenses to kill 10 elephants, and each was expected to sell at a price between \$300,000 and \$500,000. If sold at the highest price, the earning potential is around \$35 million for hunting the 70 elephants.
- Critics say that the income governments get from licensing of wildlife hunting does little for conservation efforts. About 130,000 of Africa’s elephants (which is around a third of the total population) live in Botswana. Therefore, how is killing 70 elephants really making a difference?

Group 7: The Argument Against Hunting Licenses (Cont.)

- When Botswana stopped hunting in 2014, the government wanted to focus on photographic tourism. In some areas, the new business model thrived, while in others it failed due to previous hunting areas not being especially photogenic. However, the number of tourists has gone up since the ban occurred in 2014. Though there could be many reasons for the increase and it's hard to differentiate from the data available what the largest contributing factor for. Nevertheless, it is significant that before the ban in 2012, Botswana recorded 367,000 tourists arriving on holiday including 19,376 Americans, while in 2017, 502,000 tourists visited the country, including 45,977 Americans.
- Thought experiment: According to BudgetYourTrip, two people would spend on average \$852 for a week trip to Botswana. The increase of 135,000 visitors could amount to potentially \$57,510,000 for Botswana's economy in tourism revenue.
- One would need to have a full effort by the entire country to have a similar effect to Bilbao.