



African elephant poaching lowest in 17 years

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DECLINE: Poaching cases in Africa have dropped to the lowest in almost two decades. Photo: FILE

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Elephant poaching in Africa has fallen to the lowest level since 2003.

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species programme for Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) published its annual analysis of continental and sub-regional trends in the levels of poaching.

This is derived from data collected at 95 MIKE sites across 43 elephant range states in Africa, including Namibia, and Asia.

According to CITES, using data gathered by ranger patrols, the MIKE programme monitors trends in poaching levels based on the Proportion of Illegally Killed Elephants (PIKE) index.

The overall 2020 PIKE estimate for Africa is the lowest since 2003, says CITES.

“Strong evidence points to continued downward trends in sub-regional analyses of data from MIKE sites in central, eastern and southern Africa, while there is marginal evidence of a downward trend for sites in West Africa.

The dataset used for the latest trend analysis for Africa consists of 22 015 records of African elephant carcasses recorded between 2003 and 2020 at 66 MIKE sites in 30 range States in Africa.

"The evidence of a continued decline in elephant poaching pressure is proof that efforts by Parties and their conservation and enforcement authorities are having an impact on the ground.

“Less poaching pressure benefits protected areas and key ecosystems across their range States and supports other ongoing conservation efforts.

“This report also underscores the value of long-term data collection efforts such as those undertaken under the MIKE programme.

“The wealth of information available will be of great value to Parties in their decision-making as they prepare to further reinforce the Convention at next year’s meeting of the Conference of the Parties,” said CITES secretary-general Ivonne Higuero.

Covid gives animals a break

However, concern has been expressed that once the world gets the Covid-19 pandemic under control, poaching of elephants could skyrocket again because of the accumulated demand for ivory in the world's black markets.

Statistics provided by the environment ministry in Namibia indicate that by August this year, only four elephants had been poached in comparison to the 12 elephants killed by poachers last year.

In 2014, when poaching started increasing in Namibia, 78 elephants were killed, peaking at 101 poached elephants in 2016.

Since then, there has been a decline in the number of poached elephants with 50 poaching cases reported in 2017, 27 in 2018, and 13 in 2019.

The ministry has attributed the decline in poaching to increased law enforcement activities against wildlife crimes.

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