**318 - Ivory Poaching Decimates Forest Elephant Population**

The worldwide demand for ivory is playing a key role in the dramatic decline of the African forest elephant population, according to a new study released March 5.

Between 2002 and 2011, 62 percent of the population of forest elephants disappeared. Furthermore, the elephants lost 30 percent of their geographical range, leaving the population at only 10 percent of its potential size and occupying less than 25 percent of its potential range.

“Saving the species requires a coordinated global effort in the countries where elephants occur – all along the ivory smuggling routes, and at the final destination in the Far East. We don’t have much time before elephants are gone,” said Fiona Maisels of the U.S.-based Wildlife Conservation Society and a lead author of the study.

Just 30 years ago, the population of African forest elephants was roughly a million, but the study estimates the current population to be around 100,000, spread mostly across Gabon and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The study, which was [published by the journal Plos One](http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi/10.1371/journal.pone.0059469), puts much of the blame for the decline on illegal poaching for ivory, which is driven largely by high demand in China. The study added that increased human populations, absence of law enforcement and poor governance aggravate the problem.

The impact of such a decline in forest elephants can have wider effects, according to the study. For example, the elephants play a key role in maintaining the health and diversity of the forests of central Africa. The elephants move “great quantities of large seeds many kilometers from the parent tree,” for example. The study also said the elephants create forest clearings, which are important for various African forest fauna.

The trade in elephant ivory was mostly outlawed in a 1989 treaty, but illegal killing of elephants has continued.  Much of the poaching is the work of organized crime syndicates.

Forest elephants are not the only targets. Kenyan wildlife officials said poaching resulted in the deaths of 384 elephants in 2012.  In South Africa, a record 668 rhinos were slaughtered last year, as poachers also take advantage of Asia’s demand for rhino horn.

Earlier this year, researchers announced that poachers may have killed as many as two-thirds of the elephants in Gabon's Minkebe National Park over the past eight years. The Gabonese government says the park is the largest elephant sanctuary in the Congo Basin. Gabon is estimated to host more than half of Africa's 40,000 forest elephants.

 **Vragen bij de tekst:**

1. Lees de titel van de tekst, en de eerste alinea. Waar denk je dat deze tekst over gaat?
In de titel staan een aantal lastige woorden die je misschien moet vertalen.
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2. Alinea 2: “Furthermore, the elephants….”
Wat betekent “furthermore”?
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3. In alinea 3 wordt beschreven dat dit probleem op twee plekken moet worden aangepakt.
Welke zijn dit?
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4. Benoem voor beide plekken wat er precies voorkomen moet worden.
Plek 1: ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Plek 2:
……………………………………………………………………………………………………………

5. Waar zijn de meeste Afrikaanse olifanten nog te vinden?
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6. In alinea 5 wordt gezegd dat de oorzaak van het probleem te vinden is bij de illegale smokkel van ivoor en de grote vraag vanuit China. Toch worden er ook 3 factoren genoemd die het probleem verergeren. Welke zijn dit?
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7. Olifanten hebben ook een heel praktisch nut in de natuur. Noem een van de dingen die ze doen.
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8. Alinea 7, wat is een “crime syndicate”?
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9. Welk dier wordt ook bedreigd door de stropers?
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10. De laatste alinia, wat is een “elephant sanctuary”?
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