

Slaughter of the African Elephants

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(1) THERE is nothing a mother elephant will not do for her infant, but even she cannot protect it from bullets. About a year ago, poachers attacked a family of forest elephants in central Africa. The biologist who witnessed the attack told us that wildlife guards were completely outgunned. In the end, an elephant mother, riddled with bullets and trumpeting with pain and fear, was left to use her enormous body to shield her baby. **Her sacrifice was for naught**; the baby was also killed. Such is the reality facing African forest elephants today.

(2) This mother and child were just two of the tens of thousands of forest elephants that have been butchered over the past decade. A staggering 62 percent vanished from central Africa between 2002 and 2011, according to a study we have just published with 60 other scientists in the journal *PLoS One*. It was the largest such study ever conducted in the central African forests, where elephants are being poached out of existence for their ivory.

(3) In China and other countries in the Far East, where economies are booming, there has been an **astronomical** rise in the demand for ivory trinkets that, no matter how exquisitely made, have no essential utility whatsoever. An elephant's tusks have become **bling** for consumers who have no idea or simply don't care that it was obtained by inflicting terror, horrendous pain and death on thinking, feeling, self-aware beings.

(4) One of us recently came face to face with this _____ while walking through a forest in central Africa. The sickening **stench** provided the first warning. As the smell grew more pungent, the humming sound of death that surrounds the body of a dead elephant became more pronounced: thousands of buzzing flies, laying eggs and feeding on the corpse. The body was grotesquely cloaked by white, writhing fly maggots; the belly was swollen with the gas of decay. The elephant's face was a bloody mess, its tusks hacked out with an ax — **an act of cruelty** that is often committed while the animal is alive.

(5) Both forest and savanna elephants, thought by some biologists to be separate species, have been killed off by poachers across vast areas of Africa, though it is the forest elephant at this point that is being pushed to extinction. The continuing **slaughter** of these animals means more than the loss of an iconic species. Forest elephants play a crucial ecological role in the life of the forests they inhabit. **These** are places of incredible biodiversity and one of earth's most important carbon-sequestering regions.

(6) These elephants are accomplished gardeners on a grand scale. As they move through their forest home, creating a network of trails used by other animals, they eat and scatter large quantities of seeds over many miles. Sprouting in countless piles of dung, new trees keep the forest healthy and contribute to the clean air we all like to breathe. Elephants also keep open salt-rich forest clearings that serve as giant salad bowls crucial for many animals, including gorillas.

(7) While habitat destruction from the rapid increase in industrial agriculture looms for central Africa, the disastrous losses of forest elephants are almost entirely a result of poaching. This killing is also affecting behavior as these highly intelligent animals respond to the threats they face. _____, they avoid roads not protected from poachers by wildlife guards. Once wide-ranging, the various population groups have become geographically isolated, hemmed in by fear. They no longer garden on a grand scale, and they have been cut off from vital food, mineral and water resources they require to remain healthy. There is less time to feed and none for play or leisurely interactions between close and far-flung family.

(8) Nor do young elephants develop secure social relationships when living in a state of terror, or mourning slain family members — and elephants do mourn. When mothers are killed, babies still dependent on their milk die slowly from starvation, heartbroken and alone. **We** increasingly see groups of young elephants without knowledgeable females accompanying them. Lost with **these matriarchs** are traditions and collective memories passed down through many thousands of generations that guide their offspring to that isolated salt lick or patch of fruiting trees that helped to sustain them.

(9) Poaching is big business, involving organized-crime cartels every bit as ruthless as those trafficking narcotics, arms and people. Existing international laws against money laundering should be used to follow the money trail and to prosecute **these criminals**.

(10) A universal attribute of humanity is compassion. **We** protect those in harm's way. We need to show this compassion to forest elephants, giving them space to roam and protection from danger. Most crucially, people must stop buying ivory. If we do not act, we will have to shamefully admit to our children that we stood by as elephants were driven out of existence.

Samantha Strindberg and Fiona Maisels are conservation scientists who work with the Wildlife Conservation Society to save elephants, apes and other wild animals.

Questions

1. (1) The main purpose of the article is to...
 - a. blame the people responsible for the rapid disappearance of forest elephants.
 - b. encourage officials to take action to end the trade in forest elephant ivory.
 - c. explain the reasons for the increasing problem of elephant poaching in Africa.
 - d. raise awareness of the consequences of elephants poaching and the need to stop it.

2. (1) In paragraph 1, what do the writers mean when they say that “Her sacrifice was for naught”?

Her death did not save her baby./ Her giving up her life was futile/useless/wasted/in vain because the baby that she wanted to protect also died.

3. (1) Why do the writers mention China in paragraph 3?

China is a good example of fast growing economies where demand for ivory jewelry and pretty items has skyrocketed and is driving this slaughter of elephants.

½ for not linking China to elephant slaughter

4. (1) The word that best completes the blank in paragraph 4 is...
 - a. danger
 - b. adventure
 - c. horror
 - d. courage

5. (1) In your own words, what is the main idea of paragraph 5?

The killing of African forest elephants has ecological effects because of the elephants' very important role in the ecosystem.

0 for simply copying text

0 for “Elephants are being killed.”

6. (1) Explain in your own words why forest elephants are called “accomplished gardeners on a grand scale” in paragraph 6.

The natural habits and movement (walking, eating and defecating) is like a gardener's planting many seeds over large areas that results in a great number of trees that give us clean air, and their trampling clears pathways to salt sources which are like providing nutritious salads for fellow animals.

7. (1) What is the best transition to complete the blank in paragraph 7?
- In contrast
 - Furthermore
 - Similarly
 - (d) For example**
8. (2) What are two reasons mentioned in the article that the killing of adult female elephants is especially harmful to the survival of these animals?
- Without mothers, unweaned babies starve.**
 - Young elephants have difficulty finding their way to salt sources essential to their diet.**
 - Orphan elephants do not have enough extensive knowledge about the locations of their food sources.**
9. (2) Name two suggestions the writers make for stopping the activities that are killing off the forest elephants.
- Use international laws already existing for tracing money to find and arrest the source funding the organized network killing forest elephants.**
 - Stop buying ivory.**
10. (1) In paragraphs 8 and 10, the writers use the pronoun “we.” Does this pronoun refer to the same group of people in both of these paragraphs or not? Explain.
“We” in the two paragraphs are different. In paragraph 8 it refers to the researchers, while in paragraph 10 it is broader, referring to the general public, human beings (who should have compassion).

No ½ points

11. Are these statements TRUE or FALSE? For each statement, provide evidence from the article that supports your answer.

Merely citing ¶ number for evidence is not enough to merit the ½ point

- a. **___T___** Wildlife guards often lack the equipment they need to stop elephant poachers.
Evidence: **(¶ 1) The biologist who witnessed the attack told us that wildlife guards were completely outgunned.**
- b. **___F___** Destruction of the forests is more responsible for the disappearance of elephants in central Africa than illegal hunting.

Evidence: (¶ 7) While habitat destruction from the rapid increase in industrial agriculture looms for central Africa, the disastrous losses of forest elephants are almost entirely a result of poaching.

- c. ____**T**____ According to the writers, forest elephants help to reduce greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Evidence: (¶ 5) Forest elephants play a crucial role in the life of the forests they inhabit. These are places of incredible biodiversity and one of the earth's most important carbon-sequestering regions.

- d. ____**T**____ The extinction of the forest elephants may result in the extinction of other animal species.

Evidence: (¶ 6) Elephants also keep open salt-rich forest clearings that serve as giant salad bowls crucial for many animals, including gorillas.

12. (2) What do the following refer to?

- a. an act of cruelty (¶ 4) cutting out the elephant's tusk (often while it is alive) with an ax
- b. These (¶ 5) forests where forest elephants live
½ for forests only
- c. these criminals (¶ 9) poachers and the businesses funding them
- d. these matriarchs (¶ 8) knowledgeable adult female elephants

13. (2) Using context clues, supply a definition for each of the following words.

- a. astronomical (¶ 3) very high
- b. bling (¶ 3) not very useful jewelry, trinkets, pretty things
- c. stench (¶ 4) terrible/stinking smell
- d. slaughter (¶ 5) killing