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Kenya's Elephant Population Halved by Poachers Since 1973

The elephant population of Kenya has been reduced to less than half by poaching since 1973, according to a report received by the World Wildlife Fund. The present elephant population of the country is put at between 65,000 and 75,000, following a study carried out in Kenya as part of a three-years' project for conservation of the world's elephants. This project, jointly financed by the World Wildlife Fund and the New York Zoological Society, aims at establishing a true picture of the elephant situation in Africa and Asia, and at working out effective conservation measures. These should include control of the ivory trade, which is the main threat to the survival of elephants, together with loss of habitat to agriculture and human settlement.

As there is always ivory resulting from the natural deaths of elephants, it is hoped that countries with elephant populations will understand that they have a direct financial interest in conserving them if the trade is properly controlled.

It is estimated by Dr Iain Douglas-Hamilton, leader of the project, that there are at least 1,300,000 African ele-

phants, but they are declining in numbers in almost all of the 30 or so countries where they are still found. The Asiatic elephant is estimated at between 27,000 and 40,000, and is considered seriously threatened.*

A team of scientists and other specialists has been drawing up a draft action plan for 'Elephants and Their Environment', which is based on the fact that the elephant must be regarded as part of its ecosystem, and so conservation of its habitat is the best way of protecting elephants and other species which share that environment.

* See also comments in recent issues of *Environmental Conservation*, including Vol. 3, No. 4, p. 258, 1976; Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 68, 1977; Vol. 4, No. 3, p. 236, 1977; and Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 146, 1978.—Ed.

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