

# Botswana Trades Science and Tourism for the Biggest Elephant Trophy Hunt on Earth

At a time when Africa has fewer elephants than at any point in history, Botswana has ignored the strong advice of its top scientists and released plans for a record 430-elephant trophy hunt in 2026 targeting the last great 'big tusked' elephants, fuelling the very human-elephant conflict used to justify more killing.

## 1. Top Points for Editors

### a) World's biggest elephant trophy quota:

Botswana's draft 2026 Trophy Hunting quota authorises 430 elephants for trophy hunting – **the largest elephant trophy quota on Earth.** (Others: Namibia ~90, Tanzania ~50, Zambia ~80)

**Botswana Government Proposed Elephant Hunting Quota 2026:** <https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Hunting-Quota-Draft-2026.pdf>

### b) Targets the planet's last great 'Tuskers':

A new **scientific review by Botswana's Dr Mike Chase and Dr Scott Schlossberg** exposes that trophy hunters and ivory poachers **target the same tiny demographic: the last big-tusked adult bull 'elders':** a tiny fraction of 1% of the population, already suffering extreme pressure from armed poaching.

**Released 24th Nov 25, the Botswana Scientists' Report:** [https://elephantswithoutborders.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2025-EWB-Hunting\\_Report-Web-compressed.pdf](https://elephantswithoutborders.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2025-EWB-Hunting_Report-Web-compressed.pdf)

### c) US trophy-hunting lobby now inside Botswana's government:

In late 2025 Botswana signed an MoU with Conservation Force, the American trophy-hunting lobby group led by notorious international trophy-hunter, the US's John Jackson III.

### d) Hunting is the direct cause of dangerous community repercussions:

Research shows violence against elephants (including hunting, poaching, culling, zoo captures, and Problem Animal Control-PAC killings) produces traumatised survivors that can become extremely aggressive toward humans, multiplying human-elephant conflict inflicted on communities. **Governments then use the resulting conflict statistics to justify even more killing.**

**Document for CITES 'A Final Appeal for Africa's Last Elephants':** [https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025\\_A\\_Final\\_Appeal\\_for\\_Elephants.pdf](https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025_A_Final_Appeal_for_Elephants.pdf)

### e) Economically irrational:

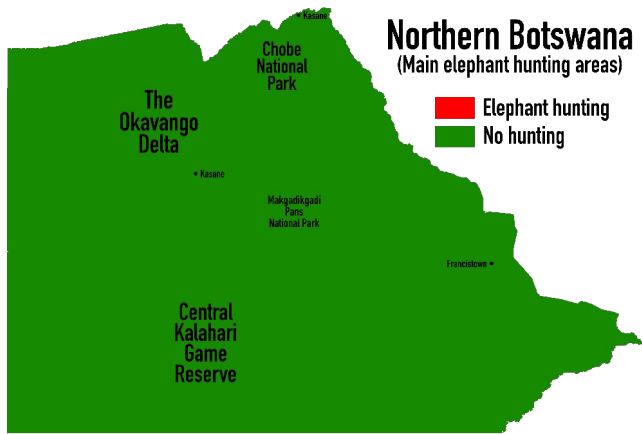
Trophy hunting contributes around **US\$140 million/year** across Africa – 0.03% of GDP in key lion-range states – while non-consumptive wildlife tourism generates **US\$30 Billion/year**. Further research shows that tourists, fearful of encountering stressful scenes, avoid these resorts. (See Fig 2 and links below)

### f) Catastrophic All-Year Open Season. Lions, Leopards and 1,769 hunts

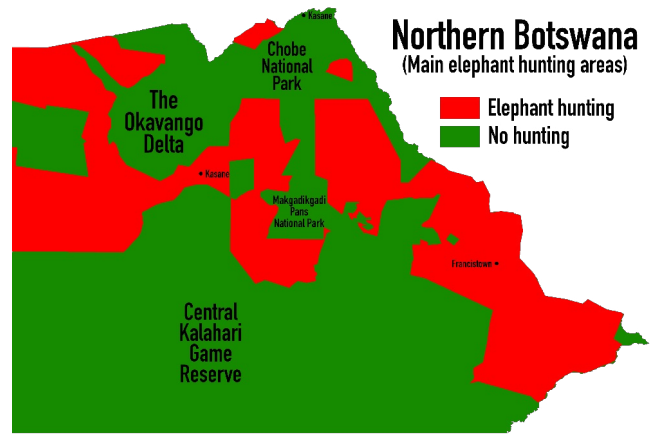
Elephant hunting season in Botswana is April-September. The rest of the year gives elephants the chance to move safely, conduct ancient migrations, access food and water, and mate with other herds. Not only has the government elephant trophy hunting across most of the country (see maps), but hidden in their proposal is the catastrophic introduction of **all year open season on elephants**. 93 Leopards and 10 Lions are also now available to trophy-hunters, and a staggering 1,769 other wild animals.

**Conservationists' fears confirmed:** <https://lionaid.org/news/2025/11/is-botswana-seriously-contemplating-reviving-lion-trophy-hunting-there-are-strong-hints.htm>

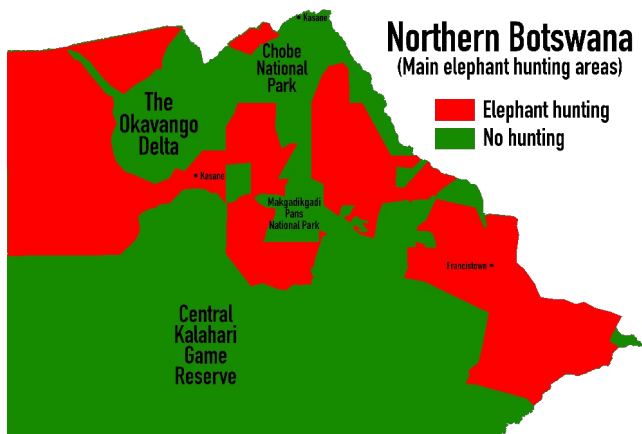
# Mapping the Rise of Trophy Hunting on Africa's Biggest Surviving Elephant Population



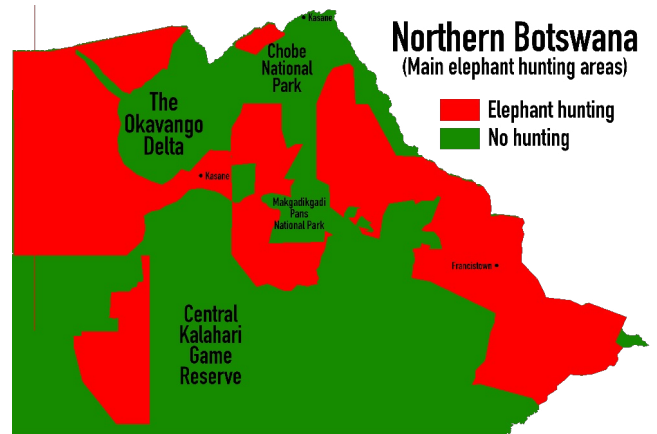
2014-19: President I Khama  
Elephant Trophy Hunts: **0**



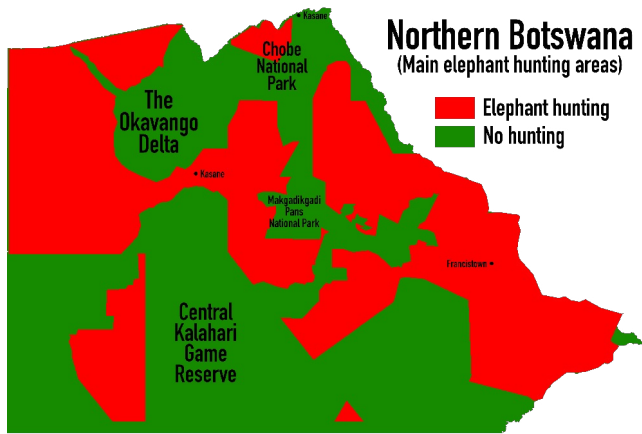
2020: President M Masisi  
Elephant Trophy Hunts: **277**



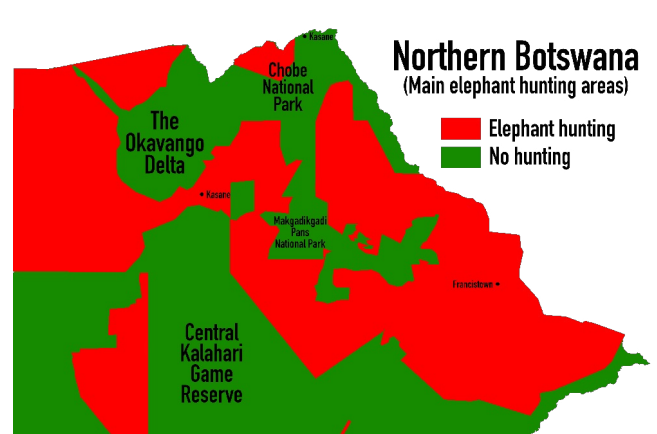
2022: President M Masisi  
Elephant Trophy Hunts: **294**



2023: President M Masisi  
Elephant Trophy Hunts: **356**



2024: President M Masisi  
Elephant Trophy Hunts: **400**



2025: President D Boko  
Elephant Trophy Hunts: **410**

# Northern Botswana (Main elephant hunting areas)

Elephant hunting  
No hunting

**PLUS!**  
Lions: 10  
Leopards: 93  
Others: 1769

**2026: President D Boko  
Elephant Trophy Hunts: 430**



Fig 1: from Africa Geographic Magazine's 'Trophy Hunted: Another Botswana Tusker' documenting trophy-hunters' aim to shoot the world's last big tuskers:

<https://africageographic.com/stories/trphy-hunted-another-botswana-tusker/>

## 2. What Dr Chase and Dr Schlossberg's Review Says

Botswana conservationist Dr Chase and Dr Schlossberg's 2025 scientific review concludes:

### 1. The "only 0.3%" argument is dangerously misleading

"The real threat is not how many elephants are killed; it is which elephants are being removed."  
Trophy hunters and poachers target the same extremely finite group of large-tusked bull 'elders', critical to the social composition and future survival of elephants, as we know them today.

### 2. Hunters and poachers extract exactly the same demographic

Nearly all elephants poached in northern Botswana are adult males with large tusks – the same animals sold to wealthy trophy hunters, most of whom hail from the US and Europe.

### 3. Demographic collapse is likely

Models show current hunting + poaching pressures could halve the number of older bulls (50+) and reduce middle-aged bulls (30+) by around 25%.

The mature male elephants targeted by poachers and hunters:

- Carry the rare genetics for large tusks,
- Stabilise younger male behaviour,
- and are the bulls females need for breeding.

Removing them, from the largest population of elephants left alive in Africa today, destabilises and severely damages complex elephant societies forever.

**Read the Elephants Without Borders – 2025 Trophy-Hunting Review (Dr Chase & Schlossberg):** [https://elephantswithoutborders.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2025-EWB-Hunting\\_Report-Web-compressed.pdf](https://elephantswithoutborders.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2025-EWB-Hunting_Report-Web-compressed.pdf)



**Fig 2:** Two graphics taken from the new document 'A Final Appeal for Africa's Last Elephants' which exposes multi-million dollar campaigns to demonise the last elephants to clear the way for their exploitation. [https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025\\_A\\_Final\\_Appeal\\_for\\_Elephants.pdf](https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025_A_Final_Appeal_for_Elephants.pdf)

### 3. Science: Trophy Hunting does NOT Reduce Conflict

Contrary to claims by governments and trophy hunters, the review finds no evidence that elephant trophy hunting reduces human–elephant conflict (the opposite is true).

#### MASS HUNTING → MASS REVENGE ON COMMUNITIES

This scientifically-proven point is avoided governments seeking to exploit elephants.

Elephants are highly-intelligent beings severely traumatised by violence. Scientific studies demonstrate:

- Elephants exposed to killing (war, culling, hunting) are more stressed,
- Behave abnormally,
- Become unpredictable,
- Raid crops more,
- and are more likely to attack people.

#### THE LETHAL CYCLE OF VIOLENCE:

1. Trophy hunters kill elephants for recreation.
2. Surviving elephants retaliate against nearby communities.
3. Complicit governments claim elephants are “problem animals.”
4. More trophy quotas, culling, Problem Animal Control (PAC) killings, baby-elephant zoo captures.

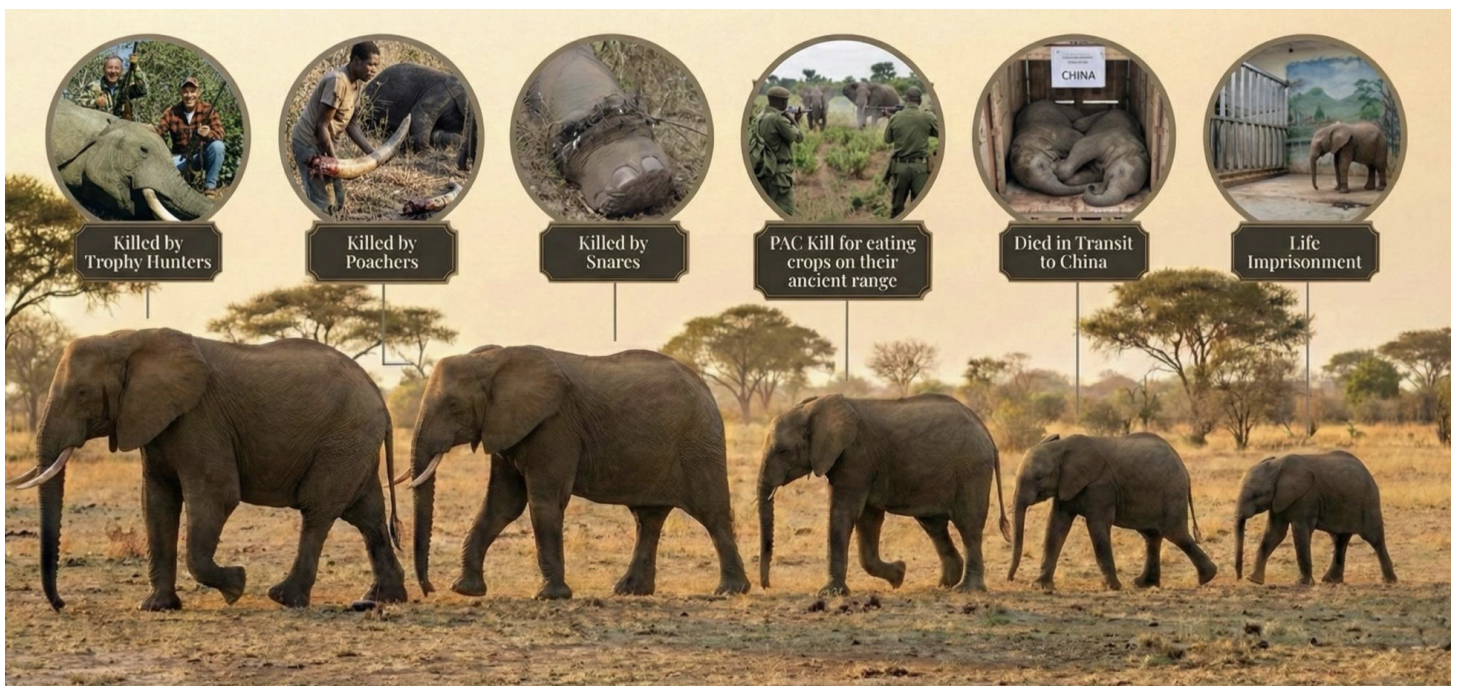
**THIS IS A SELF-CREATED, SELF-JUSTIFYING CYCLE OF VIOLENCE. BOTSWANA’S 430-ELEPHANT QUOTA IS NOT CONFLICT MANAGEMENT. IT IS CONFLICT MANUFACTURING.**

### 4. Follow the Money

#### Economics are simple:

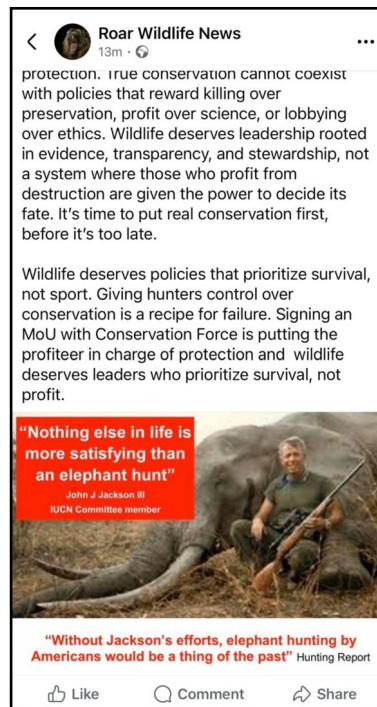
- Trophy hunting in Africa generates ≈ US\$140 million/year.
- Non-consumptive wildlife tourism generates US\$30 billion/year.
- Botswana’s high-value tourism industry (Okavango Delta, Chobe) depends on viewing the exact big bulls being targeted by hunters and poachers.

Botswana is risking a multi-billion-dollar industry for the benefit of small groups of rich foreign hunters and politically connected safari operators.



**Fig 3:** Another graphic from the new ‘A Final Appeal for Africa’s Last Elephants’ giving a rarely-considered elephant’s perspective on the killing industry: [https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025\\_A\\_Final\\_Appeal\\_for\\_Elephants.pdf](https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025_A_Final_Appeal_for_Elephants.pdf)

## 5. The Fox in the Henhouse: Environment Ministry Partners with Major US Trophy-Hunting Lobby Group



In November 2025, Botswana's Ministry of Environment and Tourism signed an MoU with Conservation Force – one of the United States' most aggressive trophy-hunting lobby groups, led by prominent trophy hunter John Jackson III.

According to the Ministry's own announcement, this partnership is longstanding and predates the MoU. The Minister publicly credited Conservation Force with contributing to the:

- Development of the National Elephant Management Plan and Action Plan,
- Creation of the Non-Detriment Finding (NDF) for elephants, and
- Establishment of the Leopard Management Plan.

This goes far beyond a simple conflict of interest. It means a foreign trophy-hunting lobby group with a commercial stake in increasing the killing of elephants and big cats has been allowed to participate in the development of Botswana's national wildlife policy – and now, under the MoU, has been formally invited into future policy-making.

**This is not partnership; it is policy capture.** It places private hunting interests inside the machinery of public wildlife governance, with direct influence over how many elephants and predators can be killed each year.

The Ministry's own description of the partnership shows that Conservation Force has already been involved in shaping core wildlife management documents. The MoU now formalises this relationship, giving a foreign hunting lobby a privileged position in determining Botswana's conservation policies.

**Botswana Guardian:** <https://www.pressreader.com/botswana/botswana-guardian/20251107/281676851165174>

**'The Fox in the Henhouse':** <https://www.facebook.com/share/p/16dbLgRNwD/?mibextid=wwXlfr>

## 6. The Catastrophic All-Year Open Season on Elephants

### Annexure 1: New Proposals Elephant Quota

1. The single game licence for elephant to be increased from **BW70 000.00** to **BWP100 000.00**,
2. There should be no closed season for hunting elephants

Botswana has always limited elephant hunting to the dry season (April–September).

Removing the closed season would expose elephants — especially the big bull 'elders' — to the threat of being shot in the massively-

expanded trophy-hunting areas – now covering the majority of the entire country of Botswana – all year without a traditional reprieve.

The impact of this move will be catastrophic for elephants, which – despite the relentless scale of violence they endure – have always known that the gunfire stops in September, allowing them to return to ancestral feeding grounds, resume migrations, and seek mates safely. Ending this seasonal refuge betrays basic conservation principles and the very notion of 'sustainability' claimed by trophy hunters. It will alter elephant behaviour profoundly and rapidly accelerate the loss of the world's last surviving large-tusked bulls.

## 7. Some Burning Questions

### 1. Who is really benefitting from trophy hunting in Botswana?

Since hunting was reinstated in 2019, DWNP has allocated 2,641 trophy elephants to “trophy hunters,” including the draft 2026 quota.

With elephant hunts selling for USD \$70,000–100,000, Botswana’s hunting companies have been awarded business worth USD \$184 million (P2.4 billion) **from elephant hunts alone.**

Yet the Botswana Government continues to present trophy hunting as a **major benefit to communities**, despite evidence showing the opposite:

- **Only 1,103 elephants (42%) were allocated to community trusts.**
- **Community trusts typically receive P70,000–P150,000 (USD\$5,200–\$11,200) per elephant.**
- **This equates to roughly P165 million (USD\$12.5m) into community trusts – less than 7% of the P2.4 billion (\$184 million) paid by foreign hunters.**

**Can Botswana explain how this vast revenue disparity is justified, and who the real beneficiaries are?**

**2. What evidence does the Ministry have of how hunting operators spend their profits, how much is taxed, and how much of their income is actually reinvested into elephant conservation, community upliftment and anti-poaching?**

**3. Can the Ministry provide any data showing that poaching rates have declined in any hunting concession as a result of claimed reinvestment by hunting companies?**

**4. Are communities being used as a façade to legitimise a lucrative industry?**

**5. Given the minimal economic return to Trusts, the absence of household benefits, and the disproportionate enrichment of hunting companies, is the Ministry not enabling a system where communities serve as a greenwashing tool for private profit?**

**6. Why is the Ministry ignoring its own scientific thresholds?**

DWNP’s own Non-Detriment Finding (NDF) states that elephant quotas must not exceed 0.5% of populations in hunting blocks.

Yet the 2025 quota was 0.9% — nearly double DWNP’s own limit.

On what scientific basis is the Ministry setting quotas that exceed its own NDF threshold?

## 8. Useful Links for Journalists

### A. Example Botswana Quota Coverage

Daily Maverick on the Growing Risk for Botswana – <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2025-12-01-unsustainable-elephant-hunting-is-a-grow-growing-economic-risk-for-botswana-says/>

All Africa on the Elephants Without Borders Report – <https://allafrica.com/stories/202512020122.html>

Africa Geographic: <https://africageographic.com/stories/botswana-elephant-hunting-under-scientific-review/>

### B. Scientific Evidence – Elephant Hunting, Poaching, Behaviour

The Elephants Without Borders – 2025 Trophy-Hunting Review (Dr Chase & Schlossberg): [https://elephantswithoutborders.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2025-EWB-Hunting\\_Report-Web-compressed.pdf](https://elephantswithoutborders.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2025-EWB-Hunting_Report-Web-compressed.pdf)

Africa Geographic – summary of the EWB scientific findings: <https://africageographic.com/stories/botswana-elephant-hunting-under-scientific-review/>

Dr Adam Cruise on Southern Africa’s obsession with killing: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2025-12-01-southern-africas-trade-agenda-implodes-as-and-with-it-the-veneer-of-a-successful/>

Document for CITES ‘A Final Appeal for Africa’s Last Elephants’ (p5: Elephant Politics Debunked): [https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025\\_A\\_Final\\_Appeal\\_for\\_Elephants.pdf](https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025_A_Final_Appeal_for_Elephants.pdf)

Journal of African Elephants – analysis of poaching vs trophy hunting impacts: <https://www.africanelephantjournal.com/the-last-great-bulls-inside-botswanas-silent-struggle/>

Frontiers in Zoology – Shannon et al. 2013, elephant trauma & abnormal aggression: <https://frontiersinzoology.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1742-9994-10-62>

Bradshaw et al. – elephant trauma, PTSD-like behaviour: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8004966\\_Elephant\\_breakdownSocial\\_trauma\\_Early\\_trauma\\_and\\_social\\_disruption\\_can\\_affect\\_the\\_physiology\\_behaviour\\_and\\_culture\\_of\\_animals\\_and\\_humans\\_over\\_generations](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/8004966_Elephant_breakdownSocial_trauma_Early_trauma_and_social_disruption_can_affect_the_physiology_behaviour_and_culture_of_animals_and_humans_over_generations)

Study–Repercussions of elephant killing lasts decades: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258038230\\_Effects\\_of\\_social\\_disruption\\_in\\_elephants\\_persist\\_decades\\_after\\_culling](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/258038230_Effects_of_social_disruption_in_elephants_persist_decades_after_culling)

Study–Removal of old males by hunters increases aggression: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8692974/>

Orphaning elephants increases herd aggression: <https://www.discovermagazine.com/elephants-orphaned-by-mass-killings-are-tormented-for-decades-afterward-27228>

Culling traumatises elephants for decades: <https://news.mongabay.com/2014/05/culling-elephants-leaves-an-impact-on-their-social-structure-decades-later/>

IUCN Red List – African savanna elephant assessment: <https://www.iucnredlist.org/species/12392/3339343>

### C. Economic Evidence

“The Lion’s Share? On the Economic Benefits of Trophy Hunting” – Economists at Large: <https://www.humaneworld.org/sites/default/files/uploads/assets/pdfs/economists-at-large-trophy-hunting.pdf>

Mongabay summary (trophy hunting economic claims overstated): <https://news.mongabay.com/2017/02/trophy-hunters-overstate-contribution-of-big-game-hunting-to-african-economies-report/amp/>

### D. Understanding the African Elephant ‘Business’

Groundbreaking document giving elephant’s perspective on the killing industry: ‘A Final Appeal for Africa’s Last Elephants’ (5. The Elephant Population Myth): [https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025\\_A\\_Final\\_Appeal\\_for\\_Elephants.pdf](https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025_A_Final_Appeal_for_Elephants.pdf)

Southern Africa’s ‘Wildlife Wars’: [https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Press\\_Notes-Africas\\_New\\_Wildlife\\_Wars\\_1.8F-1.pdf](https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Press_Notes-Africas_New_Wildlife_Wars_1.8F-1.pdf)

## 9. Interview Contacts

**All of the numbers below will work on Whatsapp for calls and texts.**

1. **Ministry of Environment & Tourism Permanent Secretary**, Boat Modukanele - +267 713 35107
2. **Director of Dept Wildlife & National Parks**, Moemi Batshabang - +267 71 294 012
3. **Botswana citizen and elephant conservationist**, Oaitse Nawa - +267 71 295 801

*Note: Oaitse Nawa is bravely taking Bots gov to court over the proposed hunting quota: <https://afe-uk.craft.me/8zHSrVoE9mg8ny>*

# Free Materials Available for Journalists



## A Final Appeal for Africa's Last Elephants

Essential Reading for Journalists Featuring:

- Debunking the elephant-demonisation campaigns
- Exposing the ways governments monetise endangered species
- The elephant-killing business from an elephant's perspective
- Filled with powerful free-to-use graphics
- Over 35 valuable links to studies, reports and articles

Download now: <https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/CITES-2025 A Final Appeal for Elephants.pdf>

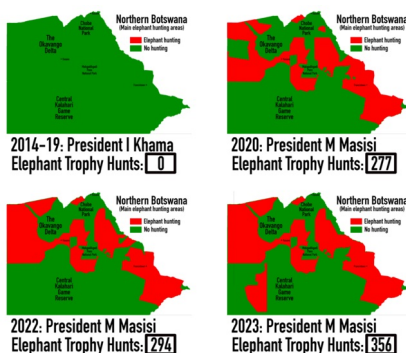


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- 65 Quotes by prominent figures on both sides
- 23 News hooks to help journalists generate important coverage
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- Conservation biographies of all major players
- Interview contacts and suggestions

Download now: [https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Press\\_Notes-Africas New Wildlife Wars 1.8F-1.pdf](https://www.actionforelephantsuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Press_Notes-Africas New Wildlife Wars 1.8F-1.pdf)



## New High Resolution PNG Maps

7 new maps showing how elephant trophy hunting has changed over time, constructed from official government data. Free for all media use.

Download now: [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-4e0vDHcWOWGly\\_JvKyp1aV7FVEp9Er4](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1-4e0vDHcWOWGly_JvKyp1aV7FVEp9Er4)

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