

# 'Ivory Tower'

## Botswana Elephant Poaching Report

03 August 2018

Elephant Poaching Incident Report Reference: 53+5(1)43(3-4)

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More out of denial than hope, one of the observers said, 'we won't see any poached elephant carcasses today', as the survey team walked to the plane. My crew today were unusually quiet on our long 45-minute ferry to the survey area, perhaps the smoke-filled sky from bush fires added to the macabre atmosphere and thought of counting more dead elephants.

The drone of the Cessna 206 and quite reflection of the crew was interrupted when the Right Back Seat Observer shouted, "Elephant Carcass – Fresh!". I yelled for our pilot to 'Orbit'. Circling round to find an elephant carcass is difficult, but our pilot has become familiar with this manoeuvre. The Right Observer pointed to the carcass, a signal for me to take a photo and GPS location – I saw hyenas' feeding on the fresh elephant carcass. Almost simultaneously the Left Observer saw a second carcass - two dead elephants within a few 100m of each other - both with their faces hacked to remove their tusks.

Today we counted 48 elephant carcasses, I'll repeat that - 48 dead elephants. Carcasses of all age categories – five of which were classified as *Fresh* – i.e. have been killed in the past few days! All carcasses presumed to be poached, because all of them had their skulls chopped to remove their tusks. Poachers tried to hide their crimes by concealing the mounds of rotting flesh with drying bushes. Certainly, we flew over one of Africa's worst poaching hotspots today. I can attest to that with data having flown the Great Elephant Census, and not seen so many dead elephants anywhere else in Africa. The varying classification and age of carcasses is indicative of a poaching frenzy which has been ongoing in the same area for a long time.

These elephants were killed in a famous Wilderness area, managed by one of the world's largest eco-tourism travel companies. The region has a strong military presence with two airfields. The Botswana Government can't be expected to stop this poaching alone, it is incumbent upon all tourism companies - who have a responsibility to conserve these areas – to start putting their money where their mouth is and invest into protecting what they profit from, Botswana's natural heritage! For a moment, stop building more lodges in a World Heritage site and start doing something to help stop this madness.

We have exhausted our resources on helicopter time, so to anyone who doesn't believe in the scale of elephant poaching the survey team is reporting, they can pay for the helicopter charter and I'll fly with them to the carcasses, so they can wake-up, come down from their ivory tower, smell the carcass and see what we are bearing witness to...faceless rotting elephants!

If you are reading this and thinking 'Oh what can I do to help? Send this dispatch to someone who cares and can help us stop this killing. Come on Botswana, lets work together to save our elephants!

Please.

Figure 1. Location of elephant carcasses seen on Botswana Elephant Census, 03 August 2018. Exact locations omitted but provided to the Government of Botswana.

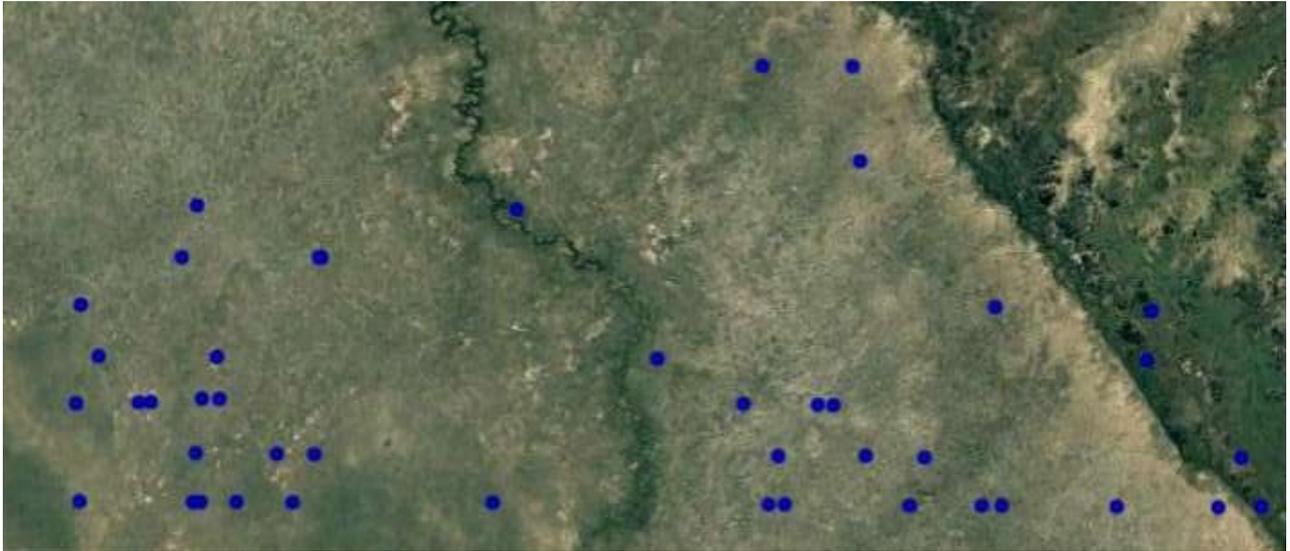


Figure 2. Fresh elephant carcass (Category 1). One of Five 'Fresh' poached elephant carcass seen during the survey, 03 August 2018.



Figure 3. Recent elephant carcass (Category 2). Bushes cut and used to cover the carcass to avoid detection and vultures.



Figure 4. Category 2 elephant carcass. Poor quality image as taken during survey.

