

# AWF SPECIES CONSERVATION FACT SHEET

## I It begins with biodiversity!

Ecosystems provide goods and services that underpin development and human well-being. If Africa is to achieve its vision of prosperity, protecting and conserving biodiversity is key. Wildlife species play critical roles in their habitats, stabilizing natural ecosystems by stimulating new tree and other plant growth through processes such as seed dispersal, pollination, grazing and regulating populations of prey through predation. Human well-being depends on these healthy natural ecosystems in which wildlife is imbedded.

## I Status of species in Africa

African wildlife populations are diminishing fast primarily due to habitat loss, poaching and human-wildlife conflicts, among other threats. Today, the African elephant is listed as vulnerable with a decreasing population trend, as illegal killings outstrip elephants' natural population growth rate. Historically, Africa's rhinos have recorded major losses including extinction of the western black rhino and the imminent extinction of the northern white rhino (only 2 individuals left). The great apes—chimpanzee, gorilla and bonobos—continue to be threatened as they are poached for the pet trade and bush meat, with approximately 1,000 mountain gorillas remaining on the continent. About 43% of African lion populations have declined in the last 21 years with current estimates at between 32,000 and 35,000 free-ranging lions. The African wild dog, estimated at 1,409, is extinct in 25 of its 39 former range countries. The current population estimate of 6,674 cheetahs indicates a 90% decline, with populations confined to only 9% of their historic range. The Ethiopian wolf, estimated at 450 individuals, is confined to six small fragmented populations in Ethiopian mountains.

## I Poaching

Poaching is a major threat facing Africa's endangered species, killed for their body parts in the form of tusks, pelts, bones, scales and skin that are illegally sold in black markets where demand is high. If current trends of wildlife killing persist, Africa's wildlife populations could decrease beyond recovery, and many species risk becoming extinct in the near future. The ecological systems they are part of will be forever transformed in ways that undermine people and the planet.

## I AWF Approach

AWF aims to reverse declines and improve the status of species populations and their natural habitats.

AWF strives to conserve:

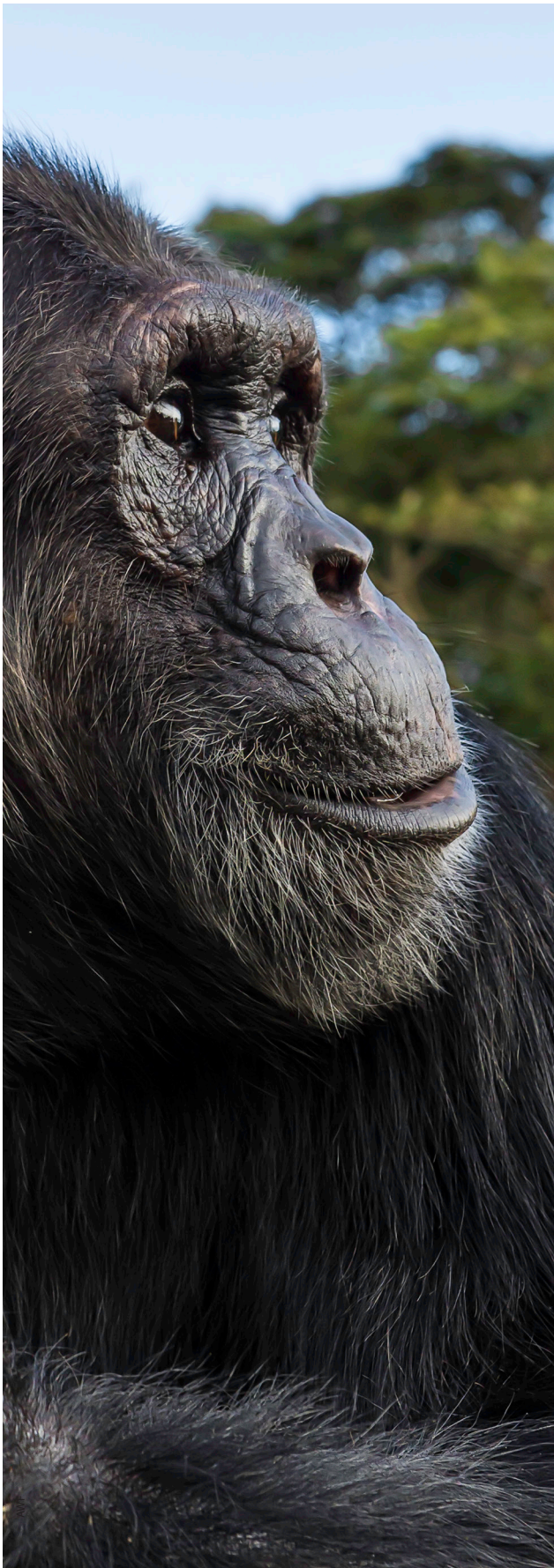
- 14 populations of African elephants in Southern, Eastern, Western and Central Africa.
- 10 rhino populations in Eastern and Southern Africa.
- 9 large carnivore populations including African lion, African wild dog, cheetah and Ethiopian wolf.
- 9 subspecies of African great apes; Western lowland gorilla, Cross River gorilla, Grauer's gorilla, Mountain gorilla, Bonobo, Central chimpanzee, Eastern chimpanzee, Western chimpanzee and Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee.

AWF employs the following interrelated key approaches to conserve species and their habitats:

**Wildlife Conservation** – AWF works to stop the killing, trafficking and demand of wildlife and their products. AWF prioritizes partnerships with wildlife authorities, trains and provides scouts with equipment for ecological monitoring and censuses, and advises on the development and



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implementation of national species strategies. AWF's Conservation Canines Programme trains handlers and sniffer dogs to detect wildlife products at Africa's seaports and airports, and tracker dogs to track poachers in Africa's wildlife areas. AWF empowers law enforcers to bring wildlife criminals to justice, and lobbies African governments for stricter laws and law enforcement.

**Land & Habitat Protection** – Along with the current poaching crisis, habitat loss is the most significant threat to African biodiversity. The expanding human population on the continent is crowding out space for wildlife. Where habitat has been set aside for wildlife in protected areas and community reserves, there are significant management challenges. AWF works with communities and governments to protect and manage large areas of land and habitat both within and surrounding protected areas by deploying a range of incentives to empower Africans to conserve critically important areas for wildlife in corridors.

**People and Wildlife** – AWF empowers communities to engage positively in conservation by seeking ways for wildlife to be a resource for communities promoting positive wildlife–community relationships and a long-term future for both. AWF's programmes provide incentives to engage communities positively in conservation through education, employment opportunities and tools to manage human–wildlife conflict.

## I Achievements

The results of AWF's species protection programme speak for themselves. Since 2014, our results include:

- 10 out of the 14 populations of elephants supported (71%) are stable or increasing.
- All 10 populations of rhino supported (100%) are stable or increasing, with reductions in poaching since 2015.
- 7 out of the 9 populations of carnivores supported (78%) are stable or increasing.
- Human–wildlife conflicts in landscapes where AWF works have significantly reduced.
- Conservation enterprises supported by AWF have incentivised wildlife protection across the continent in Botswana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
- Illegal wildlife product detection and arrests of traffickers have increased as a result of canine operations — more than 254 illegally trafficked wildlife products have been recorded.
- Wildlife legislation in Kenya has been amended with support from AWF.

AWF is committed to maintaining and improving on these successes going forward.



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