

EMBARGOED until Aug 31st, 2016: 07.00 East Coast Time / 11.00 GMT



Your Peers, Your Science
Academic Publishing is Evolving

PRESS RELEASE

The Great Elephant Census Reports Massive Loss of African Savannah Elephants

Revealed today as the IUCN World Conservation Congress convenes, the Great Elephant Census will inform major conservation policy decisions across the globe in an effort to ensure African elephants' survival

Paul G. Allen's Vulcan Inc. today announced the results of the \$7 million, three-year Great Elephant Census (GEC - <http://www.greatelephantcensus.com/>), the first-ever pan-African survey of savanna elephants using standardized data collection and validation methods. Managed by Elephants Without Borders (EWB,) the immense project's report confirms substantial declines in elephant numbers over just the last decade. The researchers report that the current rate of species decline is 8 percent per year, primarily due to poaching.

The Pan-African survey shows the estimated savannah elephant population to be 352,271 within the 18 countries surveyed to-date, representing at least 93 percent of savannah elephants in these countries. For savannah elephant populations in 15 of the GEC countries, for which repeat counts were available, populations declined by 30 percent between 2007 and 2014. 84 percent of the population surveyed was sighted in legally protected areas compared to 16 percent in unprotected areas. However, large numbers of carcasses were observed in many protected areas indicating that elephants are struggling both within and outside of parks. Experts say the ivory trade and poaching pose serious threats and there is now a risk that savannah elephants could disappear from parts of Africa. The scientific report of the GEC findings was published on August 31, in the peer-reviewed open access journal PeerJ and is freely accessible at <https://peerj.com/articles/2354/>

The GEC team used the most accurate, up-to-date counting and statistical methods to analyze data, accurately determining the number and distribution of the great majority of African savanna elephants and this now provides a baseline on a continental scale for future surveys and trend analyses, that wildlife ecologists will be able to use to coordinate conservation efforts.

Overall, 90 scientists, six non-governmental organization partners, and two advisory partners, managed by a team at Paul Allen's Vulcan Inc. collaborated in the work. These included the organizations Elephants Without Borders, the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Nature Conservancy, Frankfurt Zoological Society, African Parks Network and the advisory groups Save

the Elephants and the International Union for Conservation of Nature's African Elephant Specialist Group. The effort was conducted which partnered with in country park biologists, rangers, and game wardens.

The first GEC flights started in February 2014. The GEC teams flew a total of 294,517 km of transect lines to sample 218,238 square km or 24 percent of the total ecosystem area being studied. This involved 9,700 hours (406 days) in the air by 81 airplanes and 286 crew. The census has completed 18 country surveys with two countries still to be completed, organizers say. South Sudan and the Central African Republic are anticipated to be flown by the end of 2016 depending on safety conditions and data reliability.

Dr Michael Chase, the Principle Investigator on the project, said that "the results of the GEC show the necessity of action to end the African elephants' downward trajectory by preventing poaching and protecting habitat."

###

Images:



Caption: Setting up one of the survey aircraft
Image credit: Kelly Landen, License: CC BY 4.0



Caption: Elephants from the air
Image credit: Kelly Landen, License: CC BY 4.0



Caption: Elephants in Chobe National Park, Northern Botswana
Image credit: Kelly Landen, License: CC BY 4.0

EMBARGOED until Aug 31st 2016: 7 am EST; 11 am GMT (i.e. the date of publication)

PDF of this Press Release: <http://static.peerj.com/pressReleases/2016/Press-Release-Chase.pdf>

Link to the Published Version of the article (quote this link in your story):

<https://peerj.com/articles/2354> - your readers can **freely** access this article at this URL.

Citation to the article: Chase MJ, Schlossberg S, Griffin CR, Bouché PJC, Djene SW, Elkan PW, Ferreira S, Grossman F, Kohi EM, Landen K, Omondi P, Peltier A, Selier SAJ, Sutcliffe R. (2016) Continent-wide survey reveals massive decline in African savannah elephants. PeerJ 4:e2354 <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.2354>

###

About:

PeerJ is an Open Access publisher of two peer-reviewed journals and a preprint server. PeerJ is based in San Diego, CA and the UK and can be accessed at <https://peerj.com/>. PeerJ's mission is to help the world efficiently publish its knowledge.

All works published in PeerJ are Open Access and published using a Creative Commons license (CC-BY 4.0). Everything is immediately available—to read, download, redistribute, include in databases and otherwise use—without cost to anyone, anywhere, subject only to the condition that the original authors and source are properly attributed.

PeerJ has an Editorial Board of over 1,400 respected academics, including 5 Nobel Laureates. PeerJ was the recipient of the 2013 ALPSP Award for Publishing Innovation.

PeerJ Media Resources (including logos) can be found at: <https://peerj.com/about/press/>

###

Media Contacts

For the authors: EWB Directors Mike Chase and Kelly Landen. Tel: +1 267 625-0202. Email: info@elephantswithoutborders.org

For PeerJ: email: press@peerj.com , <https://peerj.com/about/press/>

Note: If you would like to join the PeerJ Press Release list, visit: <http://bit.ly/PressList>