

**‘When we plant, they come’: thirsty elephants pose new problem for drought-hit Kenyan farmers**

**Level 3:** Advanced

**1 Warmer**

a. Complete the table with the animals you normally find on those continents.

giraffe	hippopotamus	iguana	llama	orangutan
puma or mountain lion	sloth	snow leopard	zebra	

Africa	Asia	the Americas

**2 Key words**

a. Use the key words or phrases from the box to complete the sentences.

at bay	bushmeat	dejected	drought	graze	ingenious
mitigate	poaching	roam	trough	unpalatable	

- If animals or people \_\_\_\_\_, they move from place to place with no particular purpose.
- If someone is \_\_\_\_\_, they have lost all their hope or enthusiasm.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a long period of time when there is little or no rain and crops die.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is illegally catching or killing animals on someone else’s land.
- If a plan or scheme is \_\_\_\_\_, it uses new and clever ideas.
- If you keep someone or something \_\_\_\_\_, you prevent something serious, dangerous, or unpleasant from affecting you.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ is a long narrow open container used for holding food or water for animals.
- When animals \_\_\_\_\_, they eat grass or other plants.

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9. \_\_\_\_\_ is the meat of wild animals that have been killed for food.
10. To \_\_\_\_\_ means *to reduce the harmful effects of something*.
11. If food is \_\_\_\_\_, it tastes unpleasant.

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#### ***People in Taita-Taveta county have had to find ingenious ways of keeping wildlife at bay as competition for resources increases***

**Peter Muiruri**

**27 October, 2022**

- 1 When Francis Mutuku settled 35 years ago in Marungu, in the south-east of Kenya, he had no concerns about how he would feed himself or a future family. Back then, the rains would come on time and he would harvest about 60 bags of maize and 20 bags of mung beans, enough to have a surplus for sale.
- 2 In addition, there was peaceful coexistence between his family and the wild animals that roam the region. "We did not have problems with elephants. We all had enough to eat," says Mutuku.
- 3 But now Mutuku is dejected. He cannot plant in the land yet because he does not know when the rains will come. This is the third consecutive year of drought that has not only affected humans but animals as well.
- 4 "Experts say we are suffering because people in rich countries have polluted the atmosphere," says Mutuku. "I cannot plant maize any more and need to switch to crops that take a short time to mature and that require little water, such as mung beans."
- 5 The drought has brought wild animals closer to farmers such as Mutuku, especially elephants scouring the area for food and water. A fully grown elephant can consume about 200kg of dry mass and 200 litres of water a day.
- 6 The Tsavo ecosystem is home to nearly 15,000 elephants, or 37% of Kenya's elephant population, according to the 2021 wildlife census. And while the country has fought hard to raise elephant numbers, the Tourism Minister, Najib Balala, said earlier in 2022 that the climate crisis was killing "20 times more elephants than poaching". Kenya, Balala said, had lost 179 elephants to drought between January and June, 2022 because the country "has forgotten to invest in biodiversity management."
- 7 Now local people are forced to use ingenious ways to keep the marauding elephants at bay. "I am forced to leave water in the drinking trough that was meant for my cows so that, when elephants come, they can drink and not destroy the nearby concrete tank. I moved my cows to my ancestral home over 50 kilometres away to avoid confrontations with elephants," says Rachel Kennedy, who lives close to Mutuku.
- 8 Joseph Mwanyalo, a wildlife sanctuary manager, says that with another year of drought, such conflicts will only increase. Since 2018, the conservancy, which allows grazing of livestock on some blocks, began collecting hay and selling it to herders at a subsidized rate of 300 Kenyan shillings (£2.13) a bale.
- 9 In the short term, the move reduced human-wildlife conflicts as herders refrained from grazing in areas set aside for tourism. However, with the rains having failed again, there has been no hay to collect in recent times, a situation that will see stiff competition between humans, livestock and wild animals for the meagre resources inside the conservation area. "Wildlife and livestock now share the same pasture grounds with wild animals crossing over to human settlements, sometimes with fatal consequences," he says.
- 10 As livelihoods suffer from the effects of the drought and the lack of opportunities due to lower numbers of tourists as a result of Covid, the area has seen a surge in poaching for bushmeat. Mwanyalo says the conservancy may be losing three giraffes a day, and he estimates that in 2022 alone they may have lost as many as 100 giraffes to poachers.
- 11 Mary Wangio Wanyika is a community development officer for the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF). One of her assignments is to create awareness about conservation within the local community and help them mitigate the effects of the drought.
- 12 With the elephant being the "problem animal" here, Wanyika urges residents to make a bio-fence by planting sunflowers, a plant that is unpalatable to elephants. She has also been helping the villagers create beehive fencing to deter them. The beehives are connected by wires and if an elephant touches them, the bees are agitated and repel the elephants.

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- 13 The area is water-deficient and Wanyika, through the AWF, hopes to help farmers harvest rainwater through the excavation of water pans and provision of dam liners. Again, such measures are dependent on getting enough rain, a remote possibility at present.
- 14 Tsavo residents such as Mutuku and Kennedy are pinning their hopes on "new pledges" at the COP27 climate summit in Egypt. But with developed countries failing time and again to keep their promises to assist those most affected by the climate crisis, it is easy to be sceptical.
- 15 "We have policies on paper," says Wanyika. "Let's go to the ground and help people become more resilient, listen to them. We will talk, but as long as nothing happens on the ground, to that woman trekking 20 kilometres in search of water, we are doing nothing. People must be at the centre of all interventions."

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### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the questions using information from the article.

1. What came regularly in the south-east of Kenya 35 years ago but rarely come now?
2. Why did farmers and wild animals coexist peacefully 35 years ago?
3. Why does Francis Mutuku plant mung beans instead of maize?
4. What is killing more elephants than poaching?
5. Why did Mutuku move his cows over 50 kilometres away?
6. Why are there fewer tourists than before?
7. What plants are used in a bio-fence?
8. What creatures can be used to repel elephants?
9. The area is described as water-deficient. What does this mean?
10. Why are people sceptical about the COP27 climate summit?

### 4 Key language

a. Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make phrases from the text.

- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. stiff        | a. management   |
| 2. meagre       | b. area         |
| 3. peaceful     | c. consequences |
| 4. biodiversity | d. possibility  |
| 5. ancestral    | e. competition  |
| 6. fatal        | f. coexistence  |
| 7. remote       | g. home         |
| 8. conservation | h. resources    |

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### 5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Climate change affects poor countries more than rich countries."
- "The COP27 climate conference was a waste of time."
- "Everyone will soon have to move to cooler places."

### 6 In your own words

- a. Use an internet search engine to find more information about the African Wildlife Foundation. Find out about its history, which countries it is active in, and what its aims and priorities are.
- b. Report your findings to the class.