

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

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Match these animals with the continents or regions where they normally live.

- | | |
|--------------|------------------|
| 1. panda | a. Antarctica |
| 2. kangaroo | b. South America |
| 3. penguin | c. Asia |
| 4. alligator | d. Africa |
| 5. zebra | e. Australasia |
| 6. sloth | f. North America |

2 Key words

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

coexistence

consume

drought

maize

poaching

- _____ is a tall plant that produces sweetcorn.
- _____ is a situation in which people and/or things live together, at the same time, or in the same place.
- _____ is a long period of time with little or no rain.
- To _____ means *to eat or drink* something.
- _____ is when someone illegally kills animals or birds on someone else's land.

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beehive

pledge

remote

sceptical

surge

6. A _____ is a sudden increase in something.
7. A _____ is a structure in which people keep bees.
8. If something is a _____ possibility, it probably won't happen.
9. A _____ is a serious and public promise to do something.
10. If you are _____, you have doubts about something that other people think is true or right.

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- 1 35 years ago, the rains came on time in south-east Kenya and Francis Mutuku could harvest about 60 bags of maize and 20 bags of beans. Also, there was peaceful coexistence between his family and the wild animals in the region. "We did not have problems with elephants. We all had enough to eat," says Mutuku.
- 2 But now Mutuku cannot plant in the land yet because he does not know when the rains will come. This is the third year of drought that has not only been bad for humans but animals as well.
- 3 "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 plant crops that don't need much water, such as beans."
- 4 The drought has brought wild animals closer, especially elephants looking for food and water. A fully grown elephant can consume about 200kg of food and 200 litres of water a day. There are nearly 15,000 elephants in the region, 37% of Kenya's elephant population. Now local people are forced to use different ways to keep the elephants away.
- 5 People are suffering from the effects of the drought and the lack of opportunities due to lower numbers of tourists as a result of Covid. There has also been an increase in poaching for bushmeat. There has been a surge in poaching for bushmeat in the area. In 2022 alone, poachers may have killed 100 giraffes.
- 6 Elephants are the "problem animal" here, so people make bio-fences by planting sunflowers, a plant that elephants don't like. They also use beehive fencing to stop them. Wires connect the beehives and if an elephant touches them, the bees become angry and attack the elephants.
- 7 The area lacks water and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) is helping farmers collect rainwater through digging water pans. But this depends on getting enough rain, a remote possibility at the moment.
- 8 People in the area are hoping for "new pledges" at the COP27 climate summit in Egypt. But developed countries always fail to keep their promises to help countries most affected by the climate crisis, so it is easy to be sceptical.
- 9 "We have policies on paper," says AWF development officer Wanyika. "Let's go to the ground and help people become stronger, listen to them. We will talk, but if nothing happens on the ground, to that woman walking 20 kilometres looking for water, we are doing nothing. People must be at the centre of everything."

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3 Comprehension check

a. Answer these questions about the text.

1. How much maize did Francis Mutuku harvest 35 years ago?
2. According to experts, who has polluted the atmosphere?
3. How much food can an adult elephant consume each day?
4. And how much water can it drink?
5. How many elephants are there in Mutuku's region?
6. How many giraffes have poachers killed in 2022?
7. Which animal is the 'problem animal' in south-east Kenya?
8. Which plants don't elephants eat because they don't like the taste?
9. What happens if elephants touch the wires that connect the beehives?
10. Where was the COP27 climate summit?

4 Key language

a. Complete the table using words from the text.

adjective	noun
1. _____	peace
2. dry	_____
3. possible	_____
verb	noun
4. coexist	_____
5. poach	_____ (person)
6. increase	_____

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5 Discussion

a. Answer this question.

- Should rich countries give more help to poor countries? Why? Why not?

6 In your own words

- a. Use an internet search engine to find more information about wild animals in Kenya. Try and find out which animals you can see there and how many of the 'Big Five' live in the country.
- b. Report your findings to the class.