

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

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

- a. Complete the table with the animals you normally find on those continents. There are two in each group.

alligator giraffe iguana puma tiger zebra

Africa	Asia	the Americas

2 Key words

- a. Find the following words in the text. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.
1. a noun meaning *a situation in which people live together, or things exist together, at the same time, or in the same place* _____ (paragraph 2)
 2. a noun meaning *a long period of time when there is little or no rain and crops die* _____ (paragraph 3)
 3. a noun meaning *the illegal capture or killing of animals or birds on someone else's property* _____ (paragraph 6)
 4. an adjective meaning *using new and clever ideas* _____ (paragraph 7)
 5. a noun meaning *a long narrow open container used for holding food or water for animals* _____ (paragraph 7)
 6. a noun meaning *a sudden increase in something* _____ (paragraph 8)
 7. a noun meaning *the meat of wild animals that have been killed for food* _____ (paragraph 8)
 8. an adjective meaning *tasting unpleasant* _____ (paragraph 10)
 9. a noun meaning *a serious and public promise* _____ (paragraph 12)
 10. an adjective meaning *able to quickly become healthy, happy or strong again* _____ (paragraph 13)

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- 1 When Francis Mutuku moved to south-east Kenya 35 years ago, the rains came on time and he could 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 in the region. “We did not have problems with elephants. We all had enough to eat,” says Mutuku.
- 3 But now Mutuku 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 need little water, such as mung beans.”
- 5 The drought has brought wild animals closer to farmers such as Mutuku, especially elephants looking for food and water. A fully grown elephant can consume about 200kg of food 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. And while the country has fought hard to raise elephant numbers, the tourism minister said earlier in 2022 that the climate crisis was killing “20 times more elephants than poaching”. Kenya, he 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 elephants away. “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 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. In 2022 alone, poachers may have killed 100 giraffes.
- 9 Mary Wangio Wanyika is a 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 limit the effects of the drought.
- 10 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 stop them. The beehives are connected by wires and if an elephant touches them, the bees become angry and repel the elephants.
- 11 The area lacks water and Wanyika, through the AWF, hopes to help farmers harvest rainwater through digging water pans and dams. Again, such measures are dependent on getting enough rain, a remote possibility at present.
- 12 Tsavo residents such as Mutuku and Kennedy are hoping for “new pledges” at the COP27 climate summit in Egypt. But developed countries always fail to keep their promises to assist those most affected by the climate crisis, so it is easy to be sceptical.
- 13 “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 walking 20 kilometres looking for water, we are doing nothing. People must be at the centre of all interventions.”

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3 Comprehension check

a. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. There has been a drought in south-east Kenya for the last 35 years.
2. Francis Mutuku can no longer plant mung beans, so he grows maize.
3. Adult elephants drink up to two hundred litres of water a day.
4. There are around 40,000 elephants in Kenya.
5. Poachers kill more elephants than the climate crisis does.
6. Mutuku no longer has any cows.
7. Poachers kill giraffes for their meat.
8. Elephants love eating sunflowers.
9. There is not much chance of rain at the moment.
10. Some people there have to walk 20 kilometres to find water.

4 Key language

a. Complete the phrases from the text using the prepositions in the wordpool.

on from to in between at for with

1. peaceful coexistence _____ people and animals
2. invest _____ biodiversity management
3. water meant _____ cows
4. confrontations _____ elephants
5. suffer _____ the effects of drought
6. due _____ lower numbers of tourists
7. dependent _____ rain
8. _____ the centre

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "Climate change is affecting poor nations the most."
- "COP27 was a waste of time."

6 In your own words

- a. Use an internet search engine to find more information about the effects of climate change on the continent of Africa as a whole. Which other countries are affected by drought and where have there been large-scale floods? How have these weather events affected people, animals, and crops?
- b. Find more information if possible. Present your findings to the class.