

Elephant  
Crisis  
Fund

# ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND

2024 REPORT





# ABOUT THE ELEPHANT CRISIS FUND

The Elephant Crisis Fund (ECF) invests in organizations, big and small, to ensure elephant populations across Africa are able to thrive without threat from ivory poaching and coexist with the humans they share the landscapes with. The ECF is a joint initiative of Save the Elephants and the Wildlife Conservation Network and was launched in 2013.





## Message from the Director

We visit ECF partners to get a feel for how they, and their elephants, are doing. Three trips this year showed how different the situation is across the continent. In Nouabalé Ndoki in Congo, the Wildlife Conservation Society has secured the core of the national park, where the elephants are now safe, and is trying to do the same in the neighboring forestry concessions, despite the threat of a new tarmac road. In South Sudan, one of the most insecure parts of the continent, African Parks is trying to save the last elephants in a vast landscape east of the Nile – a few hundred survivors out of the tens of thousands that used to live here, who have come together in only three far-ranging herds. In the Luangwa Valley in Zambia, elephant numbers are increasing, and Conservation South Luangwa and the Frankfurt Zoological Society are developing new approaches to deal with the increasing challenge of human-elephant conflict.

Poaching for ivory has not been a threat to the majority of elephant populations this year, although killing in conflict or for meat are increasing concerns. There have been reports of increased poaching in Botswana and some other areas, but this is not at a level that poses an immediate threat to more than a few elephant populations.

Ivory prices remain at a low level compared to their peak, although there have been some reports of local increases. Fortunately, there is no strong evidence of an increase in demand for ivory in Asia, and there have only been a few major interceptions of illegal ivory shipments.

However, across Africa, levels of human-elephant conflict and resulting pressure on governments is increasing. This reinforces our decision to put more ECF funds towards innovative actions to support human-elephant coexistence.

While ivory poaching has reduced in protected areas, rangers still face danger on a daily basis, often because they are seen as symbols of law and order in otherwise chaotic landscapes. We mourn rangers who have been killed this year in areas supported by the ECF.

Two rangers were killed by Mai-Mai rebels in Upemba National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in different incidents in the first half of the year, and we have just heard

the horrifying news of the abduction, torture and killing of two elephant trackers in Upemba last week. In July, five African Parks rangers were killed in a jihadist attack on an outpost in W National Park. In June, a ranger was killed in an attack on the Babesua Patrol Post in Okapi Wildlife Reserve in DRC. These tragic events highlight the ongoing risks rangers face and serve as a reminder that, while elephants are not as directly threatened as they once were, they will not survive unless their refuges are secure, and constant effort and sacrifice is needed in the face of increasing threats.

### Dr. Chris Thouless

Director of the Elephant Crisis Fund





Overall ECF investments

**498**

Number of grants issued to date

**115**

Number of partners that have received grants

**44**

No. of countries with investments

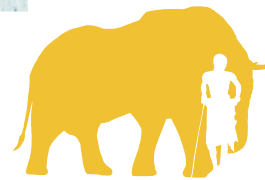
US\$ allocation by region in 2024

Central Africa	<b>\$636,942</b>	Southern Africa	<b>\$721,806</b>	Multiple Africa	<b>\$274,337</b>
East Africa	<b>\$883,847</b>	West Africa	<b>\$105,792</b>	Global	<b>\$137,859</b>

US\$ allocation by pillar in 2024



Ivory Crisis  
**\$540,959**

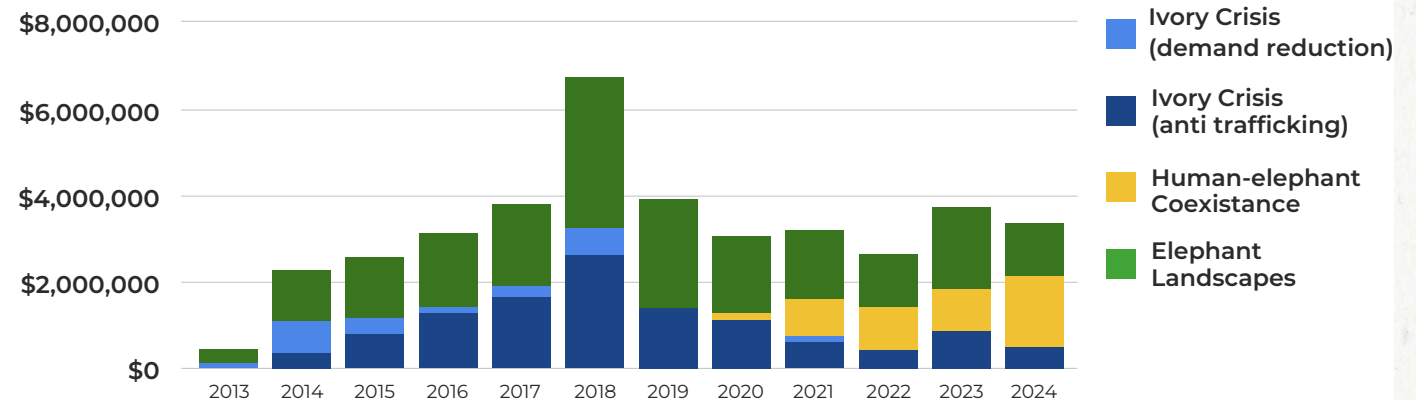


Human-elephant Coexistence  
**\$1,641,791**



Elephant Landscapes  
**\$1,287,771**

US\$ allocation by pillar by year





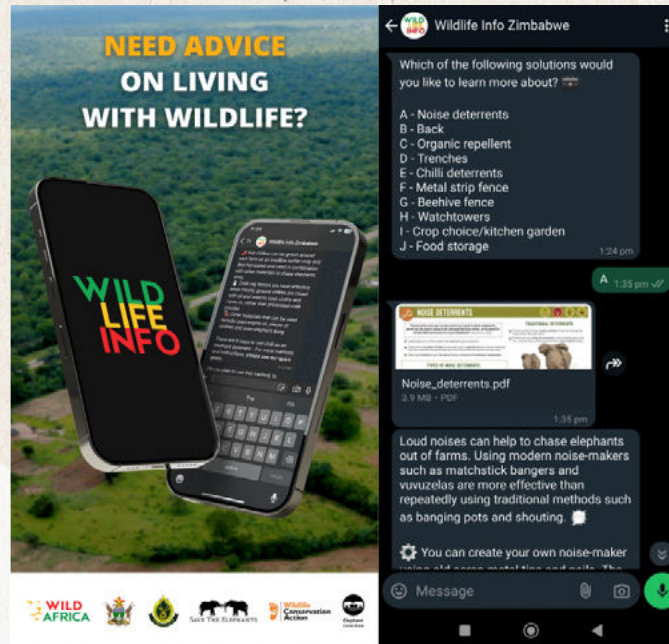
# BUILDING A FUTURE OF COEXISTENCE

## Overlapping elephant range

The rapid spread of people, infrastructure, and livestock into traditional elephant habitats across Africa is creating an immense and costly conservation challenge. As rural villages and cities expand outwards and skywards, the remaining pockets of elephant habitats are shrinking. Underfunded protected areas struggle from illegal timber harvesting, soil erosion, excessive water extraction, and a proliferation of invasive weed species that choke vital grazing areas. Meanwhile, rural communities living alongside elephants continue to face growing poverty and are increasingly excluded from global conservation discussions.

Far from being daunted by these challenges, the ECF has elevated investments into coexistence projects since 2020. We understand that proper land-use planning combined with community-based conservation tools are central to creating long-term solutions. These strategies not only protect vital habitats for elephants but also support local livelihoods, transforming elephants into symbols of opportunity rather than threats.

The impact of these efforts is inspiring, particularly when communities begin to see elephants as allies in their economic future. For many of our ECF partner sites, elephants are becoming a revised symbol of employment, enterprise, food security, and hope for the next generation.



## Tools for Coexistence - Education and Awareness

In 2024, we invested \$1,642,000 to support 27 coexistence projects across all four African regions. This included collaborative efforts with partner Ecoexist to formally gazette elephant corridors around the Okavango Delta into law. Our Human-Elephant Coexistence Toolbox, translated into English, French, Kiswahili, and Ndebele, has been distributed to every elephant range state.

To enhance accessibility, we launched an innovative WhatsApp Chat tool called “Wild Life Info” which is being piloted across Zimbabwe. Designed by ECF partner Wild Africa, this engaging AI-powered chatbot is helping thousands of farmers across Zimbabwe gain practical tools and knowledge for peacefully coexisting with elephants.

We paired this “in the hand” education support for rural farmers with a 16-page booklet for community leaders and government officials - “Ten Steps to Turn Human-Elephant Conflict into Coexistence” - which provides simple but targeted governance routes to tackle rising conflict without resorting to lethal solutions or selling ivory for income.

“ Save the Elephants’ expertise combined with the continental-wide network of partners and practitioners across Africa is a particular strength of the ECF. ”

JG Collomb - CEO, Wildlife Conservation Network.



## Water for Elephants

Amid the global roller coaster of 2024, we faced an unprecedented drought across Southern Africa that hit elephant habitat hard. As climate impacts increase, safeguarding water for both people and elephants has become critical. From Namibia's Kunene highlands to Botswana's Kalahari and up to Kenya's Rift Valley, cries for water assistance have surged.

In Southern Kenya, we've enabled ECF partner SORALO to solarize and repair five vital, but damaged, boreholes essential for both elephants and pastoralists. Using methods from our Human-Elephant Coexistence Toolbox, several grantees have surrounded water tanks with sharp white rocks to limit unwanted elephant access, whilst also constructing chest-height, elephant-safe stone walls around solar powered boreholes to provide all animals with access to drinking water. These clever strategies mean communities and elephants can both access water year-round, proving that with the right tools, we can share resources even in the toughest conditions.



ECF funded solar panels installed by SORALO in the Southern Rift Valley, Kenya. © Jophie Clark.



Elephants patiently awaiting water as repairs to the Western borehole are underway in Ngamiland, Western Botswana. © Arthur Albertson / Kalahari Wildlands Trust.

Tragically, in Namibia, severe drought has led the government to reopen elephant cropping as a controversial way to relieve pressure on limited grazing and provide meat for struggling communities. While we can not support using elephants as meat for drought relief, we understand the intense pressures that both governments and communities living with elephants face when combined with climatic changes and we are deeply sympathetic to people struggling with food insecurity. Without practical and timely solutions to ensure water supplies and co-existence with elephants - like the ECF's recent funding for Conserve Global to protect and upgrade seven water sites for elephants in the semi-arid Kunene Highlands - we may see more calls for elephant cropping in the future.



The upgraded solarized borehole in the Kunene Highlands, implemented by Conserve Global and funded by ECF. © Peter Chadwick.

We are deeply grateful to you, our donors, for joining us on this journey which has taken us from the height of the poaching crisis to navigating this complex path towards a lasting solution for living in harmony with elephants. Your support is invaluable.

“ Since I grew up, this is the first time we, as the Mailua and Matapato community, have received an investment in conservation that truly and sustainability cater for the cost of providing water to Elephants and other wildlife when they really need it. This investment supports coexistence; it has a great future.

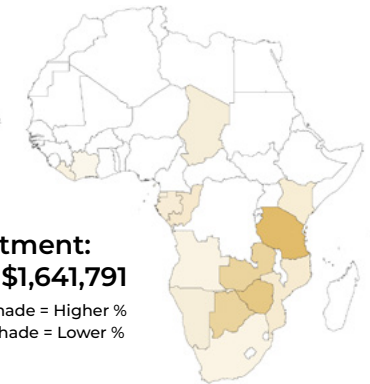
”

Senior Chief Ole Njaanka of Mailua Location in Matapato, Kunene Highlands, Namibia.

### HEC: Pillar metrics

Active grants in 2024

US\$ Investment: Total \$1,641,791  
Darker shade = Higher %  
Lighter shade = Lower %



27 Number of grants

18 Number of partners

33 Number of water points in total upgraded/maintained/repaired

3 Number of new project vehicles funded



# PROTECTING ELEPHANT LANDSCAPES

## Overview

We support the protection of elephant landscapes across Africa, from those with relatively large but threatened elephant populations, to areas with a few scattered survivors whose numbers may grow if safeguarded.

One of Africa's most threatened and important elephant populations is in the border region between Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger. The majority of West Africa's elephants live here. While jihadists have overrun the parks in Burkina Faso and Niger and the security situation is dire, African Parks, working with the government, is defending those in Benin, but at a high financial and human cost. This year, ECF support in this area has included vital helicopter operational costs, 11 satellite tracking collars for elephants, field equipment for rangers, and the purchase of a Savannah ultralight aircraft to conduct aerial patrols. A radio network upgrade increased communication coverage to 95% of the area, although this has reduced slightly after an insurgent attack on a radio repeater.

Upemba National Park in southern Democratic Republic of Congo is home to the last hundred or so survivors of the region's once vast population of savannah elephants. Upemba, one of the most lawless parts of Africa, is under intense pressure from Mai-Mai rebels and illegal miners, making protection difficult. The ECF has helped Forgotten Parks Foundation, which holds management authority for the park, with the purchase of an ultralight aircraft and running costs, including a pilot's salary. It has proved transformative, allowing park management to know where the elephants actually are and deploy rangers to the right place to protect them.



Receiving the Upemba Bathawk.  
© Upemba National Park, DRC.



The last elephant of Badingilo National Park. © African Parks / Megan Claase.

## Elephant conservation in South Sudan takes off

South Sudan, home to globally important wildlife, vast spaces and protected areas, has been a priority for ECF landscape investments in recent years. Years of civil war massively reduced elephant populations and reduced conservation efforts. ECF partners, working with South Sudan's National Wildlife Service, are boosting elephant conservation in key elephant landscapes. With our flexible funding model, the ECF has given significant support to this renewed wave of conservation work. In 2024, our investments in three distinct projects highlight the positive impact of dedicated conservation efforts for wildlife and people, despite extreme challenges.

The Jonglei ecosystem - roughly the size of Pennsylvania - is home to the largest land mammal migration on Earth, that of the white-eared kob, diverse communities with livelihoods closely tied to the landscape, and only a handful of elephant herds. Since 2022, African Parks has been implementing a recovery plan targeting the entire ecosystem, with initial emphasis on Boma and Badingilo National Parks.

African Parks is tracking some of the surviving elephants, including a herd of 50-80 elephants which moves between Boma National Park and neighbouring community areas. Operating in this area - with limited road access, armed groups, intercommunal conflict, illegal gold mining, and poaching - is challenging. The ECF has supported African Parks from the start, providing an ultralight aircraft, a Land Cruiser, and elephant collars for surveillance and monitoring. The funding is also supporting the planned creation of wildlife-only waterholes to reduce conflict between elephants, livestock, and people, with Save the Elephants' tracking team assisting in data analysis to determine the best locations for these waterholes.





Top & left: ACD teams moving through the Sudd by canoe. Right: The ECF funded motorboat. © Agency for Conservation and Development.

The Agency for Conservation and Development (ACD) is a small, youth-led NGO working in Zeraf Game Reserve in the Sudd wetlands, to understand and protect this incredible ecosystem. The Sudd once held South Sudan's largest elephant population. However, it has suffered from years of civil conflict and extreme flooding. Communities have lost their homes and livelihoods, and people and wildlife have been forced to retreat to higher ground. The ECF has supported ACD since 2021 with training, equipment, and mentorship. In collaboration with the National Wildlife Service, the team has conducted numerous outreach and awareness campaigns in this watery landscape. In 2024, we funded operational and survey costs and two canoes and a motorboat, reducing ACD's reliance on costly hired boats. This year, the team also celebrated the first ground-based detection of elephants in the area for years. This encounter gives tenuous hope that elephants may permanently return if the water recedes.

The third focus for the ECF in South Sudan is Southern National Park (SNP) in the west. Fauna and Flora supports the National Wildlife Service in managing SNP, and together they have been slowly but steadily re-establishing and expanding a conservation presence. The once large elephant population has almost disappeared, but camera traps funded by the ECF have confirmed a breeding herd just outside the park's boundary to the south. Given the size of the area, there may still be undiscovered groups inside the park, and there is hope that this elephant population can recover with sustained landscape protection.

In 2024, the ECF funded a ranger outpost and community wildlife ambassadors to patrol and protect the known elephant area. ECF Director Dr. Chris Thouless visited South Sudan in early 2024 and saw the first positive developments needed for effective management of the Jonglei ecosystem, vast herds of migrating antelope, and a small number of elephant survivors. With the backing of our generous ECF donors, we will continue to support these important partners as they work to establish impactful conservation projects that will ensure a positive future for the wildlife and people of South Sudan.

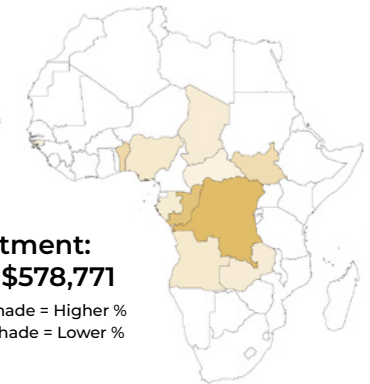


The first elephant breeding herd captured by camera trap. © Fauna & Flora.

### Landscapes: Pillar metrics

Active grants in 2024

US\$ Investment: Total \$578,771  
Darker shade = Higher %  
Lighter shade = Lower %



- 10** Number of grants
- 8** Number of partners
- 318** Number of tracking collars fitted in total
- 7** Number of ultralight aircraft funded by ECF



# COMBATting THE IVORY TRADE

The illegal trade in ivory continues, but at a significantly lower level than at its peak ten years ago. Some of the illegally traded ivory has been stolen from stockpiles, or long-held, rather than from freshly poached ivory. While there are worrying reports of an increase in ivory prices, they are still much lower than they were at the poaching peak.

Major seizures included 1.6 tons in Vietnam in March and 4.8 tons in Mozambique in the same month. The Vietnam shipment, originating in Nigeria, was concealed among cow horns. With assistance from ECF grantee Wildlife Justice Commission (WJC), Nigerian authorities swiftly arrested two suspects involved in this case.

Due to stronger law enforcement in Nigeria and the efforts of ECF partners like WJC, Focused Conservation, and the Environmental Investigation Agency, trafficking routes appear to be shifting to countries such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, and Mozambique.

In addition, traffickers have become more cautious out of fear of arrest, which has made their operations more difficult to sustain. In the words of one trafficker in February 2024, "You know this business is not like before and people are really after us."

**MAJOR SEIZURES INCLUDED 1.6 TONS IN VIETNAM IN MARCH AND 4.8 TONS IN MOZAMBIQUE IN THE SAME MONTH.**



Yunhua Lin (Left) at the court in Malawi 2021. © Malawi Police.

The struggle to keep members of the Lin-Zhang Wang transnational organized crime network behind bars continues. Based in Malawi, this network has been one of Africa's most notorious trafficking networks since 1994, exporting tens of tons of wildlife products and linked to serious crime, including corruption, child prostitution, kidnapping, and murder.

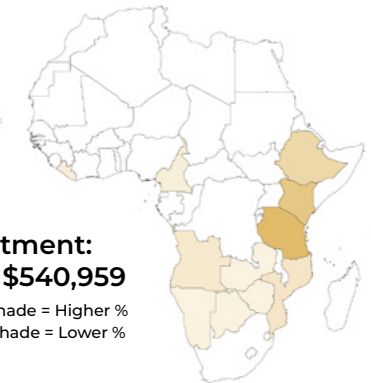
Lin Yunhua, the group's leader, was sentenced to 14 years behind bars in 2019, alongside ten Chinese and four Malawian nationals. Lin has persistently attempted to leave prison and is facing charges of corrupting prison officials and bribing judges, all whilst allegedly attempting to seek a presidential pardon.

These efforts have been thwarted through constant vigilance from our partners in Malawi. Lin's wife was also nearly released from prison in May, in order to flee back to China, but this was uncovered, and her case was referred to a judicial review while she remains in prison.

## Ivory Trade: Pillar metrics

**Active grants in 2024**

**US\$ Investment: Total \$540,959**  
Darker shade = Higher %  
Lighter shade = Lower %



**5** Number of grants

**5** Number of partners







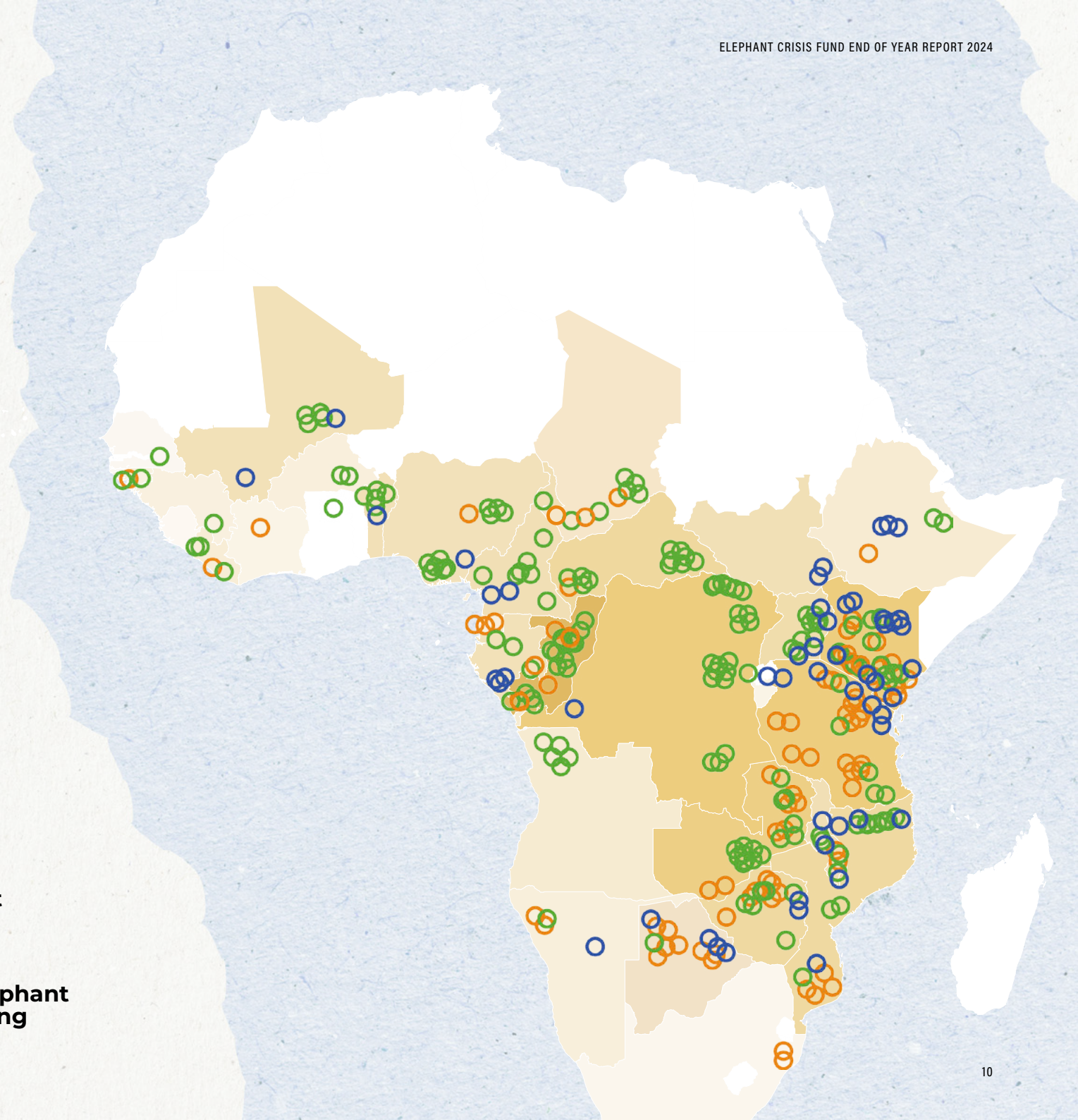
# OUR ECF INVESTMENT MAP

2013 - 2024

Since 2013 the ECF and our generous donors have invested US\$37,983,015 into 44 countries to help reduce the demand & prevent the trafficking of ivory, anti-poaching activities, landscape protection and coexistence strategies.

**KEY:**

- 
**US\$ allocation by country**  
 Darker shade = Higher %  
 Lighter shade = Lower %
  
- 
**Sites with investments in fighting the ivory crisis**
  
- 
**Sites with investment in promoting human-elephant coexistence**
  
- 
**Sites with investment in elephant landscapes and anti-poaching**





# OUR DONORS

We would like to thank all our donors and funders who have supported the Elephant Crisis Fund, for your incredible generosity and loyalty. It is your support that has made all our work possible, and we know you share our vision of a future where elephants are no longer under threat. Your trust and partnership as we work towards this together is greatly appreciated. We would particularly like to thank the following generous people and organisations for donations made between November 2023 and October 2024:

## FOUNDERS CIRCLE | \$200,000 AND ABOVE

Beagle Charitable Foundation  
Heidi Charleson and Lou Woodworth

Mary S. Boardman Fund for Conservation  
M. Piuze Foundation

Save the Elephants  
The Walt Disney Company  
Anonymous

## CONSERVATION VISIONARIES | \$100,000 - \$199,999

March Conservation Fund

Nancy P. and Richard K. Robbins Family Foundation

## BENEFACTORS | \$20,000 - \$99,999

Bob Worth and Margaret McCarthy  
Briar Patch Fund  
Denise Filakosky  
Dry Creek Foundation

Jan Hatzius and Linda Eling Lee  
Martin Fabert Foundation  
Oakland Zoo

Plum Foundation  
The Overbrook Foundation  
The Maue Kay Foundation

## AMBASSADORS | \$5,000 - \$19,999

Anje van der Naald  
Berger Family Fund  
Bev Spector and Ken Lipson  
Beverly A Grahmann  
Beverly Archer  
Gordon R. Ray, MD

Heath Thomson and Nicole Perlroth Thomson  
Huroncus Fund  
John and Nuri Pierce  
Joyce Kaneshiro and James Poley  
Julie and Thomas Hull  
Linda Polishuk

Lynne LaMarca Heinrich and Dwight M. Jaffee Fund  
Maggie Kaplan, A Bow Of Gratitude Fund Of RSF Social Finance  
Mark G. Williams  
Martin Tanner  
Quinn Morgan and Upacala Mapatuna

Schoelzel Family Foundation  
Stephen Lexow  
Stephen Pratt  
Sudie Rakusin  
Victoria Sujata  
Anonymous (5)

## SPONSORS | \$2,000 - \$4,999

Alan and Becky Thurman  
Ann Bujas, in memory of Priscilla "Peaches" Curtis  
Barron S. Wall Incorporated  
Bruce and Trish Campbell  
Carol and Christopher Kronenwetter  
Chris and Mary Margaret Ng


Christine Lang and Frederick Snowden  
Gail Odell  
Geri Finkelstein-Lurya and Steve Lurya  
Glen Apseloff  
Gordon Andersson  
James Spader  
Jonathen Kwok

Judith Hain  
June Heilman  
Kathleen Peto  
Lisa Ching  
Melling Family Foundation  
Michele Crerand  
Norma Mahmood


Pat Gilbert  
R. Faye Goodwyn  
Ralph L. Spencer  
Richard Lyndes in memory of Gail  
Sarah Cohen  
Stephanie Druley  
Anonymous



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