

Arresting extinction of African elephants

Back in 1981, JWCS's honorary chairman Dr. Hideo Obara published "Life is Disappearing, One Species Per Day" [Kodansha Bluebacks]. In this book, Obara demanded understanding that wildlife is essential to environment of humans.

80's was the period when African elephants' populations declined from approximately 1.2 million to fewer than 600 thousand, and Japan was one of the biggest importers. (*1)

From the time of the first issue of CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) in 1975 to 7th meeting of the CoP in 1989, African elephants were classified in Appendix II, suggesting international trade of the animals required permissions. However, they were upgraded to Appendix I, which prohibited international trade of ivories, because population decline had never ceased to an end.

Signs of population recovery in the 90's seemed somehow promising. The elephants' pregnancy takes 22 months, and female elephants give birth once in several years, and a single calf a time. Thus, population growth is quite slow.

Nonetheless, ivories were imported to Japan in 1999, and to Japan and China in 2009 as "one-off sales". Afterwards, Elephant poaching had intensified again. According to the UNEP report, 7.4% of total African elephants' population is illegally killed in the year 2011. The poaching rates have been maintained steadily at a high level. (*2)

Knowing the African elephant's range state have been dedicated to the conservations, Japan as an ivory consuming country should abolish illegal ivory trades, and never propose restarting the trades.

June 13, 2015

All the directors of JWCS

(*1) Objection and requests to Japanese Governmental wish statements about downgrading CITES Appendix of African elephants (JWCS Newsletter No.8)

Reference: Douglas-Hamilton, I. (1992). In defense of the ivory trade ban. *Oryx*. 26:1.

(*2) UNEP, CITES, IUCN, and TRAFFIC. (2013). *Elephant in the dust - The African elephant crisis*. pp.12, 22, and 33.

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