

# Drought-Stricken Zimbabwe Selling Wild Animals to Raise Money

by Jordi Lippe-McGraw May 17, 2016



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Zimbabwe has announced that in an effort to raise money the country is putting some of its wild animals up for sale. The desperate attempt comes as the country has been dealing with a severe drought and after last year's sale of dozens of elephants to China to raise money for conservation efforts, something animal protection groups harshly criticized.

While few details have been released, the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority made a statement to *Reuters* and *CNN* saying, "In light of the drought...Parks and Wildlife Management Authority intends to destock its parks estates through selling some of the wildlife." Environment, Water and Climate Minister Oppah Muchinguri-Kashiri says the government is planning to use the money "to buy food and secure water facilities for distressed animals" after the severe drought has destroyed crops and livestock.

According to *Reuters*, "about 54,000 of Zimbabwe's 80,000 elephants live in the western Hwange National Park," along with lions, cheetahs, monkeys, and other wildlife. ZimParks spokeswoman Caroline Washaya-Moyo didn't specify the number of animals for sale or whether they could be transported outside Zimbabwe. "We do not have a target. The number of animals depends on the bids we receive," she said, according to *Reuters*.

According to ZimParks, those wanting to purchase animals must "... provide the following information about the habitat [in] which they intend to put the acquired animals: name and address of property, size of property, ownership of the property, description of current land use, intended use for the acquired animals and existing infrastructure e.g. fences, water availability, roads, fireguards, protection/law enforcement capacity and management."

Who will be getting these animals? "While nobody knows the official answer to this question," Ashish Sanghrajka, President of Big Five Tours & Expeditions told *Travel + Leisure* via email, "the logical answer is quite grim. It would be consumers of ivory or private sector circuses or attractions where animal abuse is a known issue." Sanghrajka, whose company is committed to best practices of sustainable tourism, continued, "This is being done in the name of a drought to raise capital without the governance...[of] any conservation organization, private or public."

So, what effect will this have on tourists to the country? "For those going to Victoria Falls, likely none," revealed Sanghrajka. The effect for travelers to other parts of the country "also should be minimal because there is no unified public outcry against this, only individual protests."

Various studies in Africa have shown that tourism-rich countries show lower poaching rates—five out of 10 are poached—than those of tourism-starved countries, where the rates average nine out of 10. "So the correct outcome here should be to enlarge the spotlight on Zimbabwe," added Sanghrajka. "And that only happens by increasing tourism..."