

# NIASSA NATIONAL RESERVE



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DAS ÁREAS DE CONSERVAÇÃO



## A Future Eden for Elephants?

The Niassa National Reserve in northern Mozambique is one of Africa's largest (42,300 km<sup>2</sup>), wildest, and most spectacular landscapes, comprising 28% of Mozambique's protected land. A globally important site for African biodiversity, Niassa contains the largest extant blocks of miombo woodland - dotted by enormous inselbergs soaring hundreds of metres high - within a single protected area. The Reserve harbors some of Mozambique's most significant populations of wildlife, including elephant, lion, leopard, wild dog, sable, kudu, wildebeest and zebra.

Niassa was also the site of nearly catastrophic elephant poaching, primarily from 2009 to 2014, which cut the population to 3,675 ( $\pm 1,521$ ) as recorded in a 2016 aerial survey. Nonetheless, given the enormous extent of wild habitat available in Niassa - exceeding the size of Switzerland - it remains one of the few areas left in Africa capable of supporting a robust elephant population, with some research estimating the landscape could support as many as 20,000 individuals. From 2015 to 2017, anti-poaching strategies reduced killings to an average of around 100 individuals a year - still far too high, but nevertheless marking a positive turn of events. Additional actions starting in 2018 have succeeded in slowing poaching rates even further, providing hope that Niassa elephants stand a genuine, if tentative, chance for recovery.



## To Stop Poaching, Collaboration is Essential

To fight elephant poaching head on, a group of Niassa National Reserve partners - comprised of the Government of Mozambique, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Niassa Conservation Alliance - began to implement a coordinated anti-poaching strategy in early 2018. This strategy included chartering a helicopter during the wet seasons of early 2018 and late 2019 to conduct daily patrols of areas with known elephant concentrations, deploy scouts and supplies to remote poaching locations, and support maintenance of a digital radio system.

The partnership also cleared - and kept clear - illegal mining and fishing camps, began pursuing numerous poaching cases in Niassa and Cabo Delgado, and improved and expanded the existing Niassa radio system for better coordination among all partners on anti-poaching operations.

**Altogether, these actions, resulted in an 87% reduction in the number of illegally killed elephants in 2018 compared to 2017, and a 100% reduction in 2019 compared to 2017 and 2018 over the January to March time period.**



## ANTI-POACHING TIMELINE

POACHING INCIDENCE MUCH REDUCED



2017 - 2018

DEC 2018

DEC 2018  
TO PRESENT

EARLY 2018

EARLY FEB 2018

MID-FEB TO END  
MAR 2018

MAR 2018 TO  
PRESENT

MAY 2018 TO  
PRESENT

JUN 2018 /  
EARLY 2019

JUN 2018

ONGOING

SEP 2018

OCT 2018

NOV 2018

DEC 2018

DEC 2018 -  
JAN 2019

**1 poaching ringleader arrested and 1 killed**

**Flight of head poacher** from Mbamba village due to capture of his assistant by scouts

**Powerful political will** dramatically reduces poaching support within the government

**Enhanced coordination** with concession operators

**Anti-poaching equipment supplied to Reserve scouts**, boosting morale and deterred poachers

**Arrival of WCS aircraft**, increasing aerial surveillance

**Deployment of helicopter.** All elephant poaching stopped during helicopter operations.

Reserve Administration begins to utilize a new secure **prisoner transport vehicle**

70 elite well-equipped and reputable **Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) policemen deployed** on a + or -60 day rotation

**Senior Reserve policeman deployed to coordinate** "blitzing" of target areas, focusing on known poachers

**Digital radio system upgraded** and communications enhanced

**16 people jailed for a total of 137 years** for poaching and trafficking following court cases from Reserve arrests

**Removal of mining and illegal fishing camps** - that protected poachers and advised on elephant movements

**Patrol Leader training** conducted

**Aerial census of elephants**

**40 elephants collared; additional aerial activity** (fixed wing and helicopter)

**President Filipe Nyusi visits the Reserve** and commits the Mozambique Government to conserve Niassa Reserve

**New patrol and individual scout equipment** arrives

**Helicopter deployed at onset of the wet season** and programmed for the full 6-month duration

Two batches of **scout refresher training** conducted

## ELEPHANT KILLINGS FOR EACH MONTH OF THE YEARS 2017 AND 2018

\*Note that the 12 elephants killed in January and February of 2018 occurred before deployment of a helicopter and a Rapid Intervention Unit

