



ELEPHANT KIDNAPPINGS

There is high demand for young elephants for use in the industry in South Africa. Consequently, during the last two years there have been a number of captures of wild elephants for commercial use in captivity.

Some examples:

- June 2006 - Six young elephants aged between 6 -12 years old were captured in the Selati Game Reserve (Limpopo) and taken for training at Elephants for Africa Forever (EFAF) in the Limpopo province.
- October 2005 - Six young elephants were snatched from a herd and captured in the Mabilingwe Game Reserve in the Limpopo province and transported to the Kwantu Game Reserve in the Eastern Cape. One died.
- Mid 2004 - EFAF captured four young elephants which had 'broken out' of the Kruger National Park and took them for training.
- (Zimbabwe) In November 2006 Zimbabwean operator Shearwater Adventures captured 12 young elephants in the Hwange National Park, removing the animals from free ranging herds. Two of the captured elephants have since died.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Every voice counts.

- The South African government is facilitating the unethical and heartless elephant captivity industry. Write a letter/fax/e-mail to the Minister of Environmental Affairs Martinus van Schalkwyk. Ask him to ban the capture and use of elephants for elephant back safaris/rides/walks, zoos and circuses and not to allow elephants to be exported to similar destinations outside of South Africa.
Tel: +27 21 465 7250/1/2. **Fax:** +27 21 465 3216.
E-mail: mwillemse@deat.gov.za (cc to gibson@icon.co.za)
- Write letters to newspapers.
- Write to travel agents and tour operators asking them not to support this industry.
- Only support tour operators and destinations that do not support elephant back safaris.



For more information go to:
www.animalrightsafrica.org
or email
info@animalrightsafrica.org

GET OFF THE ELEPHANTS BACKS

When you think of African elephants roaming the African landscape, you usually think majestic presence and the strength that leaves them almost invincible. You also think of their proven intelligence, their close family bonds, the lifelong friendships they form and their comprehension of death. Then you think of the sad, broken-spirited elephants in zoos and circuses in and they just don't hold the same allure. So you decide to visit Africa to see elephants as nature intended them to be. Which is great, but you must also know that your tour operator or travel agent is going to try and sell you the option to experience African elephants in a way you never expected! And how is that?

Elephant back safaris/rides, walks with elephants and general interaction with these animals is heavily promoted as a tourism attraction in South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia. This rapidly growing 'elephant' industry in South Africa has increasing numbers of elephants being captured, tamed and trained. These elephants are then supplied to local and international zoos, circuses and elephant back safari operators. At present there are at least 112 elephants kept in captivity for commercial use in South Africa. Of the 112 animals in captivity, 92 are used for elephant back safaris/rides, walks or other interactions with humans, 14 (including four Asian elephants) are used for circuses, filming or other entertainment purposes and six are in zoos.

Riding on an elephant's back does not represent the nature and mysteries of a majestic elephant spirit as marketers would have you believe, rather it is the result of human intervention. Young elephants are usually removed by force from their families, and subjected to rigorous training. Do not be fooled into the romanticised sales pitch that the elephants enjoy being put in this position.

INDUSTRY JUSTIFICATIONS

The 'elephant industry' has used the opportunity presented by 'culling' to jump on the bandwagon and promote the growing elephant industry as a supposed alternative to 'culling'. These issues should not be confused: taming and training an elephant and sending them to zoos, circuses and utilising them in elephant back safaris is not an alternative to 'culling' and nor does it impact on elephant population size.

There have been moves to suggest that 'problem' elephants be taken up into the industry. But they are more resistant to training and thus require more intensive domination and a vicious cycle develops with the cruelty escalating and the animal becoming increasingly more aggressive. There are at least two confirmed incidents of 'difficult to train' elephants being hunted.



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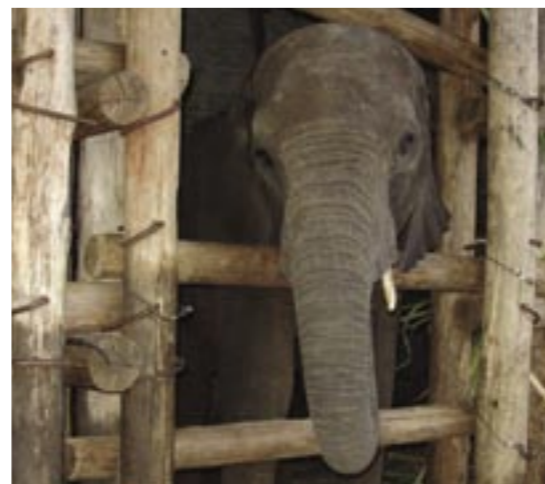


“During the separation process, calves are kept isolated and tied with ropes at the front leg and back leg.”

THE SAD TRUTH BEHIND THE SALES PITCH

The capture, taming, training and working of an elephant is usually cruel and reveals what goes on behind the scenes in the name of “sustainable utilisation” in South Africa.

- The elephants used for the safari back industry are generally young elephants forcibly removed from their parents and family units with the use of weapons, helicopters and violence.
- Because elephants are large, strong and intelligent, constant control of an elephant is maintained by domination and fear.
- The fate of the elephants in this industry is determined by the business cycle of the tour operator - the future of these elephants is left in the hands of profit margins, if these tour operators fail to succeed what happens to these elephants?
- Elephants are complex and sensitive beings. Like humans, young elephants need to stay with their families.
- The removal of young elephants from their families in the wild and taking them into captivity is a cruel and unethical practice condemned by elephant ethologists and is contrary to international norms.
- From research studies it has been shown that calves/ juveniles separated from their mothers and family groups endure immeasurable suffering.
- It has been proven that as with human children, elephant children need adult role models, without this guidance these elephants are more likely to turn into delinquents.
- It has been shown that elephants treated in this way can resort to violence. After years of persecution and disrespect, these once calm animals become a threat to human life.



TOOLS OF THE TRADE

At the training facilities, the methods of training usually involve the use of electric prods, ankuses, chaining and other submission protocols.

- **Chains.** Elephants are chained by one or both front and hind legs during training sessions and transport. Inadequate exercise and prolonged standing in wet, unsanitary conditions may lead to foot problems such as foot rot, cracked nails, and infected cuticles.
- **Rope.** During the separation process, calves are kept isolated and tied with ropes at the front leg and back leg. Rope burns may develop as they struggle against the restraints.
- **Bullhooks or Ankus.** The ankus, has a long handle and a sharp metal hook, and is used to discipline elephants. Although an elephant's skin is thick, it is sensitive enough for them to feel the pain of an insect bite. Trainers embed the hook into the soft tissue behind the ears and inside the mouth or tender spots under the chin and around the feet. The sharp hook is used to apply pressure to the elephant's skin and sensitive body parts. This pressure may consist of gentle jabbing; repeated and forceful puncturing; slight or full insertion; and insertion combined with twisting. Once an elephant has been trained with an ankus, the sight of it is sufficient to evoke the response desired by the trainer.
- **Whips.** The sting of a whip causes lingering, intense pain.
- **Electrical shock.** Like the whip, a jolt of electrical current is painful. Circuses often use electric prods and smaller hand-held shocking devices that are easily concealed.
- **Sticks, axe handles, baseball bats, metal pipes.** These weapons are used to hit and beat restrained animals in order to break their spirits and show them “who's boss.”



Ankus - the tool used to beating the elephant into submission

