BirdLife Partner NABU engages in Africa against ivory poaching

Title
NABU, BirdLife Partner in Germany, is warning of an increase in poaching in African national parks where poachers are killing around 100 elephants a day. In the 1970's there were still some 1.2 million elephants living on the continent; today there are fewer than 444,000. Last year alone, more than 45 tons of ivory were confiscated worldwide. The majority of ivory ends up in China, where it is turned into amulets and statues. NABU has stressed that the smugglers are not impoverished rural inhabitants trying to make a living; these are unscrupulous profiteers who are often involved in drug smuggling and terrorism. More and more game wardens (national park employees in charge of protecting wildlife) are losing their lives or sustaining serious injuries in the fight against the ivory mafia as the poachers are normally equipped with semi or fully automatic firearms.

According to the International Ranger Foundation, more than 85 game wardens were murdered in the line of duty in 2013 and around half of these cases were in Africa. When a ranger loses his life or is injured while working to protect the environment or a species, his relatives do not just lose a beloved person, but normally the family's main breadwinner too.

NABU International – Foundation for Nature has therefore launched the Ranger Fund. Using the money from this fund, rangers can be given support through improved training and equipment in order to carry out their dangerous job. NABU International also uses the Ranger Fund to give financial assistance to the families of injured or deceased game wardens in Ethiopia. Since the beginning of this year, this assistance to families has been extended to Kenya, where the state-run organisation Kenya Wildlife Service uses the donations to ensure that the children of murdered rangers can attend secondary school or university.

Just like many other environmental agencies and animal rights groups, NABU and NABU International – Foundation for Nature point out that any relaxation in ivory trade legislation, which is currently the subject of much debate, would be completely unacceptable for many environmental reasons. NABU, along with many other organisations, has demanded a total ban on national and international ivory trading and that the confiscated ivory currently being stored in Germany is destroyed so that it will be unusable and will not attract thieves. They are also calling for a central registry to be developed in order to record any ivory imported into Germany so that that the abuse can be made public.

For more information, please contact Dr Barbara Maas, Head of Species Protection for NABU International