

DNA forensics could help fight illegal elephant poaching

Every year criminals around the world trade billions of dollars in products derived from wildlife. The elephant trade in particular has rankled government officials around the world with tens of thousands of the large mammals killed in Africa every year—a conservation threat, given the dwindling numbers of elephants in the wild.

Now, scientists say that they may be able to use DNA from government seizures of illegal ivory tusks to trace elephants' origins, a potentially groundbreaking method for law enforcement. Large-scale poaching, which accounts for more than 70% of the ivory trade, may be confined to just two areas, according to an [analysis](#) of the DNA tests published in the journal Science.

Scientists estimate that fewer than 500,000 elephants live in Africa today, and poachers kill up to 50,000 of the animal each year to sell their tusks on the black market around the world.

“Their loss is already causing major ecological, and economic damage in Africa, threatening national security,” said study author Sam Wasser, on a conference call for journalists. “If we do not curb the killings we are really going to cause serious problems throughout Africa.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [How DNA Could Help Catch Elephant Poachers](#)