

Section 4

For my presentation today I want to tell you about how groups of elephants have been (1) in new reserves. This is known as translocation and has been carried out in Malawi in Africa in recent years. The reason this is being done is because of (2) in some areas.

Overpopulation is a good problem to have and not one we tend to hear about very often. In Malawi's Majete National Park the elephant population had been (3), who killed the elephants for their ivory. But in 2003, the park was restocked and (4) was introduced. Since then, not a single elephant has been poached. In this safe environment, the elephant population boomed. Breeding went so well that there were more elephants than the park could support.

This led to a number of problems. Firstly, there was more competition for food, which meant that some elephants were (5) As there was a limit to the amount of food in the national park, some elephants began looking further afield. Elephants were routinely knocking down fences around the park, which then had to be repaired (6)

To solve this problem, the decision was made to move dozens of elephants from Majete National Park to Nkhotakota Wildlife Park, where there were no elephants. But, obviously, attempting to move significant numbers of elephants to a new home 300 kilometres away is (7)

So how did this translocation process work in practice?

Elephants were moved in groups of (8), all belonging to one family. Because relationships are very important to elephants, they all had to be moved at the same time. A team of (9) flew over the park in helicopters and targeted a group, which were rounded up and directed to (10)

The vets then used darts to immobilise the elephants – this was (11), as they not only had to select the right dose of tranquiliser for different-sized elephants but they had to dart the elephants as they were running around. This also had to be done (12) so as to minimise the stress caused. As soon as the elephants began to flop onto the ground, the team moved in to take care of them.

To avoid (13) the team had to make sure none of the elephants were lying on their chests because their lungs could be crushed in this position. So all the elephants had to be (14) One person stayed with each elephant while they waited for the vets to do checks. It was very important to (15) – if there were fewer than (16) the elephant would need (17) Collars were fitted to the matriarch in each group so their movements (18) in their new home. Measurements were taken of each elephant's tusks – elephants with large tusks would be (19) from poachers – and also of their feet. The elephants were then taken to (20) before being loaded onto trucks and transported to their new home.

The elephants translocated to Nkhotakota settled in very well and the project has generally been accepted to have been (21) – and not just for the elephants. Employment prospects have improved enormously, contributing to (22) for the whole community. Poaching is no longer an issue, as former poachers are able to find (23) In fact, many of them volunteered to (24) as they were no longer of any use to them.

More than (25) have been born at Nkhotakota since relocation. With an area of more than 1,800 square kilometres, there's (26) for the elephant population to (27) Their presence is also helping to rebalance Nkhotakota's damaged ecosystem and providing (28) which could be replicated in other parks. All this has been (29) which contributes five times more than (30) to GDP, and this is mainly because of the elephants. There's also been a dramatic rise in interest ...