



## Malawi makes history in support of elephant conservation

**Two weeks ago the start of one of the world's largest and most significant elephant translocations happened in Malawi. Since then 150 elephants have made the 350km journey to their new home, Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve.**

In total, up to 500 elephants are being translocated from Liwonde National Park and Majete Wildlife Reserve, in southern Malawi to their new home not far from the famous Lake in central Malawi. In addition to these elephants, thousands of other animals including sable, waterbuck, zebra, kudu, eland and warthogs are also being translocated all with the goal of repopulating Nkhotakota and restoring it to its former glory and years of neglect and poaching. With anti-poaching measures, fencing and local conservation education as integral parts of African Parks' rehabilitation of Nkhotakota, the newly-arrived animals will have a much safer and more secure new home.

The first elephants to enter the Reserve were a family of nine individuals but families of up to 20-25 can be moved at a time. So far all the elephants are doing well and staying within the perimeter fencing. African Parks, who are leading the translocation, plan to collar a total of 35 of these first 250 elephants in order to monitor them in their vast new home. Collars will be attached to 10 bulls and the rest to matriarchs.

The operation has two objectives: to relieve pressure from the elephants surplus in Liwonde and Majete, and to restock Nkhotakota which supported more than 1,500 elephants 20 years ago, but

today has fewer than 100. Liwonde and Majete are source populations for elephants and are at or nearing capacity (with populations of 800 and 400 elephants respectively), resulting in habitat degradation and high levels of human-wildlife conflict. As Malawi is a densely-populated, agro-based country, no ecological corridors exist to allow for natural migration. The “500 Elephants” initiative is a human-assisted migration providing the best chance of a long-term and sustainable future for these elephants.



This is an extremely hopeful story for conservation, elephants and particularly for Malawi. Journalist Sue Watt, who has been given special access to the project, said “I watched the elephants being darted and captured in Liwonde, then was fortunate to see the first group walking into their new home in Nkhotakota the following day. It’s a very complex operation and I have been hugely impressed, not just at the professionalism of the team but their compassion and commitment - it’s such an inspiring project.”

The future for Nkhotakota looks bright, the next 12 months will see a repopulated park both with elephants and other game species, a premier elephant sanctuary for Malawi and tourism hotspot for the country in the coming years. Add this to the big 5 Majete Wildlife Reserve and the stunning Liwonde National Park all and Malawi is set to become one of the most complete destinations in Africa - Lake, Landscape, Culture and now Wildlife experiences of the highest quality.

Since 2003 African Parks has, in partnership with the Malawi government, managed Majete Wildlife Reserve, a partnership that has seen the reserve restored and restocked with 2,500 animals including the Big Five. Majete has been a great success and is now one of Malawi’s premier wildlife sanctuaries, conserving and protecting more than 8,800 animals. With the addition of Liwonde National Park and Nkhotakota Wildlife Reserve in 2015, African Parks now manages three of Malawi’s nine protected areas and with goals to match all that has been achieved in Majete,

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African Parks are transforming the wildlife of the country.

**ABOUT AFRICAN PARKS:**

African Parks is a non-profit conservation organisation that takes on the complete responsibility for the rehabilitation and long-term management of national parks in partnership with government and local communities. African Parks manages 10 national parks and protected areas in seven countries covering six million hectares: Malawi, Zambia, CAR, The Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Chad. To learn more, please visit [www.african-parks.org](http://www.african-parks.org)

To learn more about the translocation and how you move 500 elephants, and to get current updates, please visit [www.500elephants.org](http://www.500elephants.org)

