

Written Testimony

Taegen Yardley, Endeavor Middle School, Shelburne, VT

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Hello, my name is Taegen Yardley. I am a sixth grader at the Endeavour Middle School in Shelburne. I first became passionate about saving elephants last year when Laurel Neme and Ashley McAvey invited me to help with a bake sale to raise money to save the elephants. Along with several other students, I cooked baked goods to sell at a screening of the documentary "Battle for the Elephants" at UVM.

The movie "Battle for the Elephants" had an enormous impact on me and made me want to act in their defense. I have spent a lot of time on the website 96elephants.org educating myself on the importance of keeping elephants on this planet. I have discovered what a large role elephants play in protecting our planet from climate change. The rain forests in Central Africa are one of our most important resources in fighting climate change. Elephants spread seeds throughout the land which help new plants and trees to grow. They also open woodlands and clearings as they feed and roam which creates more space for trees and plants to grow and helps to regenerate forests.

In a world where everything feels like it is moving at the speed of light, slowing down and watching an elephant in its natural habitat is calming and shows us the importance of paying attention to the natural world. Elephants are altruistic creatures meaning that they have a selfless concern for the welfare of others. It has been proven that their concern extends beyond just elephants and that it even extends to human beings. If elephants have an ability to be concerned about us, what does it say for humans if we can't look out for them?

I will never be able to see an African Western Black Rhino. They officially became extinct in 2011. I don't ever want to be able to say the same about elephants. Federal laws can not stop ivory from being sold within state borders. The states of New York and New Jersey have implemented bans. Vermont must do the same.

Thank you for listening today. Please help stop the slaughter of these gentle giants and save this beautiful species from extinction.