

Elephants on the edge fight back

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After years of trauma at the hands of humans, could Africa's elephants be nursing a grudge?

TWO years ago the people of Bunyaruguru in western Uganda would think nothing of cycling to the nearby township of Katwe to meet friends and do business. Then one day a herd of elephants paid them a visit. They came from the bush, knocked down huts and garden plots, then left with nothing to show but a trail of destruction. Now elephants regularly block the road to Katwe, and villagers are too afraid to cycle past.

Across Africa, elephants seem to be turning on their human neighbours in ever increasing numbers. Although such attacks are nothing new, they have always been seen as a side effect of elephants competing for food and land, either as a result of population explosions or because people have encroached on elephant territory. But that may not be the whole story.

"Elephant numbers have never been lower in Uganda. Food has never been so abundant," ...