



Killers

Hippos kill around 3,000 people annually. To put that in perspective, lions kill about 70 people per year on average and last year there were fewer than 500 fatal shark attacks worldwide. Hippo attacks can occur in water or on land, often without obvious provocation.

Still, not surprisingly, humans are far more dangerous to hippos than they are to us. Hippos are listed as a vulnerable species by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. Threats such as illegal hunting for their meat and ivory and habitat loss, exacerbated by drought, have led to steep declines in hippo numbers in recent years, especially in areas of political and economic instability.



Hundreds of hippos are shot each year to minimize human-wildlife conflict, despite the fact that ditches or low fences easily deter hippos. It is more likely that the popularity of hippo meat is the reason for this strategy. Hippo fat and ivory tusks are also valuable to humans.

As human populations grow, they encroach on wildlife habitats as they build new settlements, increase agricultural production, and construct new roads. The hippo once ranged from the Nile Delta to the Cape, but now it is mostly confined to protected areas like Serengeti or Ngorongoro.

