

'Vampire Diaries' actor joins herd to save elephants

By **Jacqueline Gulledge, CNN**

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Ian Somerhalder

Actor

Actor Ian Somerhalder's mission to save elephants 01:22

Story highlights

Actor Ian Somerhalder has partnered with Wildaid to save elephants

Wildaid wants 2016 to be the year in which more elephants are born than poached

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"It's WildAid's goal. It's all of our goal to make this the year of the elephant, where more elephants are born than killed by poachers," the actor said.

The campaign educates people on how ivory products are made and asks people to pledge never to buy ivory again.

"They don't realize that that little piece of ivory in their bracelet or their necklace, that it came from an elephant. So, it's about starting to question everything. Question where these things come from, why they're even there and join the conversation," Somerhalder said.

Encouraging people not to purchase ivory is one of the best ways to save the elephants, he added.

"When the buying stops, the killing will stop."

(CNN) — Actor Ian Somerhalder, best known for playing bad boy vampire Damon Salvatore on the hit show "Vampire Diaries," has a softer side when it comes to animals and the environment.

During a visit to Africa several years ago, he decided to make it his mission to help save wild African elephants.

"I was staying in Zimbabwe in the bush at this incredible conservation institute. Every morning I got to wake up and have my coffee with a young, orphaned elephant named Dojiwae. Both of her parents were killed by poachers unfortunately."

After that encounter, he wanted to help stop elephant poaching and the ivory trade.

"If people had the ability to make that connection, the physical connection of this beautiful intelligent animal... I think people would really feel differently about when they think about taking this tusk and what it means to kill these beautiful animals."

Somerhalder partnered with the organization [WildAid](#) for its [Year of the Elephant](#) campaign.