

## Leopard eats UWA staff child

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**KASESE.** One of the daily duties of wildlife handlers is to protect animals from poachers.

However, a leopard at Queen Elizabeth National Park in Kasese District did not reciprocate the favour and instead devoured a three-and-half-year-old Elisha Nabugyere, a son of Ms Doreen Ayera, a Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) staffer.

The incident, described by Mr Bashir Hangi, the UWA spokesperson, as "very unfortunate but portrays how our lives as conservationists are always at risk", happened at 9pm at Mweya Safari Lodge on Friday.

Queen Elizabeth, Murchison Falls and Kidepo national parks have the highest population of predators such as lions, leopards and hyenas, according to UWA.

Despite the existence of such predators and the dangers they pose, some UWA staff, especially rangers, reside within parks as they protect the animals mainly from poachers and encroachment on their habitats.

Mr Hangi said the Friday incident ensued when a maid left the main house to the kitchen.

The baby, without the knowledge of the maid, followed her to the kitchen.

Unfortunately, a leopard was hiding nearby and within a blink of an eye, the predator mauled baby Elisha amid an alarm from the toddler and took him to the bush.

The late Nabugyere's last alarm caught the attention of the maid who tried to follow the killer leopard.

She then alerted the rangers who mounted a rescue mission through the night but in vain.

"The rangers immediately swung into action, searched for the baby but they found only a skull in the morning under a tree," Mr Hangi said.

Mr Hangi said they are pursuing the leopard using camera surveillances with intention of capturing and removing it from the wild since "it has tasted human blood and it will want to taste it again".

"Queen Elizabeth National Park is one of the top tourists' destinations in the country and ensuring the safety of both rangers and tourists is a priority," he added.

Of recent, there have been many incidences of wildlife-human conflicts.

About two weeks ago, a pride of 11 lions was allegedly poisoned by pastoralists. In 2007, 13 lions were poisoned and in 2010, eight lions were killed, all incidents pointing to pastoralists.

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