

ELEPHANT

Phylum: Chordata Class: Mammalia; Order: Proboscidea; Family: Elephantidae

Weight: male 11,000 lbs. up to 13,000lbs./ female 6,600-7,700

Height: male 9 ft. 10 in. to 11 ft. / female 8 ft. 4 in.

Lifespan: 50 to 60 years

Habitat / Geographical Range: Formerly everywhere south of the Sahara where water and trees occurred. . They can be seen in National Parks Amboselo, Masai Mara,, Kenya, Tarangire and Ruaha (dry season) , Tanzania; Kafue, Zambia; Mana Pools and Hwange, Zimbabwe, Chobe, Moremi, Botwana, Kruger, South Africa, Etosha NP, Namibia.

Status in the wild: Range and numbers declined this century first through uncontrolled ivory hunting. Continental population estimated at 1.3 million elephants in 1981, mostly outside protected areas, fell to 750,000 by 1986. Losses up to 80% in most countries of eastern and central Africa convinced most conservationists that stopping ivory trade was the only way to stop the carnage. Thanks to aroused worldwide concern over elephant's plight, most major importing countries joined a moratorium on ivory trade. If this trend continues, Elephants can make a comeback in protected areas or at least hold their own

Special Features:

- Their trunk is a muscular extension of the upper lip containing the nostrils, tip equipped with 2 finger like projections for handling small objects.
- Huge ears, up to 6.5 x 5 ft. have a large network of veins that are used to keep them cool by flapping them in the wind on hot still days.
- They carry 6 sets of cheek teeth (2 upper and 2 lower), upper incisors modified as continuously growing tusks average 134 lbs. To 287 lbs These tusks are used for prying bark loose, digging pits and caves in mineral earth to increase salt intake.

Diet in the wild:

- The elephant's food passes so quickly and mostly undigested through its small digestive system. To compensate, adults consume vast amounts 330 lbs. a day of grass and herbs in the rainy season while browse and foliage are eaten in dry season.
- Bulls drink up to 60 gal. of water a day , 26 gal. at a time.

Breeding and Caring for Young:

- Not strictly seasonal, but most mating and births occur during the rains.
- First conception at 10 to 11 years
- Gestation is 22 months
- Intervals between calves is 4 to 9 years
- Birth weight 265 lbs.
- The tender loving care lavished on baby elephants is one of the species more endearing traits. Calves small enough to walk under mother (first year) remain in constant touch; if one strays over 20 yards away, it is retrieved. Gradually the burden of staying close shifts to the calf developing into the leader-follower ties that bind an elephant herd. A 9 year old still spends half its time within 5 yards of mother's side, 5 to 6 years after weaning.
- There is frequent touching with trunk and feet, helping the calf to its feet using one foot and its trunk
- Crooking trunk around calf's rump to help it up steep places.
- Lifting calf over obstacles or out of a wallow
- The mother pushes the calf under her to protect from danger or the hot sun



- Bathing calf: spraying water over and scrubbing it gently with her trunk
- Drawing water from her own stomach and spraying calf during the drought, to cool the calf (not an every day event).
- Steering the calf by holding its tail and the calf following and holding mothers tail.
- Calf distress call: squealing, elicits immediate protective response from the mother and other herd males.
- The babies control over using its trunk comes gradually
- The bond between mother and daughter lasts up to 50 years.

Social Structure and Behavior:

- Elephants feed 16 hours a day and sleep 4 to 5 hrs a day, usually standing, sometimes lying on one side. They drink and bath daily but can abstain several days while away from water source.
- A matriarchal clan society, the basic unit consists of a mother with her dependent offspring and grown daughters with their offspring. Males live separately, alone or in bachelor herds.
- Cow herds typically number 9 to 11 elephants. Larger herds tend to split in two but continue occupying the same home range and associating at least half the time. These “bond groups,” averaging 28 related elephants in 2 to 3 family units, usually stay under a mile apart, staying in touch through rumbling calls too low for people to hear. Disturbances cause the herd to cluster around the matriarch (the biggest cow), with calves in the middle. Whether they flee or charge is up to her. Should something happen to her like getting shot the rest mill in blind panic. Rather than abandon her, they usually stay and get shot. The most touching proof of the cooperative nature of elephant society is attempts to raise and support a fallen group member, one on each side. Under normal circumstances, a matriarch that becomes too old or sick (at 50 to 60 yrs) to continue leading is replaced by the next-oldest cow; the feeble one either leaves the herd or is abandoned.
- Males leave cow herds at 12 years or so. Once on their own, bulls wander solo and associate with other bulls, typically in herds of 2 to 14, occasionally over 35 and up to 144 bulls. Very old bulls, ponderous hulks with the biggest tusks, are the most sendentary. They end up their days in swamps where they can still consume quantities of herbage as their last set of molars wears out.

