

# The African Elephant

The African elephant. The largest land animal on earth. Intelligent, caring, and potentially fierce, these majestic creatures roam the savannas and forests of Africa in search of food, water, and partnership. African elephants are occasionally categorized into 2 subspecies: savanna elephants and forest elephants. This guide will focus on the savanna species. African elephants live in Central and West Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and the Sahel desert in Mali. The savannah elephants are listed as Vulnerable by the IUCN due to habitat loss and poaching for the illegal ivory market.



## The Stats...

Scientific name: *Loxodonta*

Weight: Up to 13,000 lbs.

Length: Up to 24 feet

Height: Up to 10 feet

Lifespan: Up to 70 years

- 1.) Elephants have about 150,000 muscles in their trunk!
- 2.) They use their massive ears to cool themselves off. Their ears have a huge network of blood vessels that help to thermoregulate (regulate heat).
- 3.) When the temperature gets too hot to handle, they will cool off by siphoning water into their trunks and spraying themselves off. They usually follow this with a nice dust bath to help keep from getting sunburned.
- 4.) Like us humans, elephants can have a favorite side. This even applies to tusks. You can spot which side is their favorite due to that tusk being more worn down than the other.
- 5.) Tusks are actually very large incisors that begin to show by the age of 2.
- 6.) Elephants eat grasses, roots, fruit, and even bark.

## *Did you know...?*

*Their trunks can hold over 2 gallons of water!*

- 7.) African elephants can consume up to 300 lbs. of food a day!
- 8.) All elephants live in a matriarchal society. This means that the females rule the roost.
- 9.) Elephant herds can contain between 6 – 20 animals, led by a dominant female.
- 10.) Using a low pitched seismic rumble, elephants can communicate over long distances via sound waves. Other elephants can hear these sounds up to 2 miles away!
- 11.) Their skin is up to 1 inch thick and wrinkled to help conserve moisture and repel heat.

## *Did you know...?*

*They are extremely intelligent animals. Capable of showing advanced problem-solving skills and displaying empathy, mourning, and even self-awareness.*

- 12.) Females give birth to a single calf, following a 22 month Gestation (pregnancy).
- 13.) The newborn calf weighs between 150 – 350 lbs. and stands about 3 feet tall!
- 14.) Young elephants are able to stand within 20 minutes of birth.
- 15.) An elephant's temporal lobe (the section of the brain associated with memory) is larger and denser than that of humans. This aids in their incredible memory.
- 16.) There are approximately 415,000 African elephants left in the wild.
- 17.) In a strange twist of evolution, it has been discovered that some elephants are now lacking tusks altogether, in response to constant poaching.

## *The Questions...*

1.) What is the largest land mammal on earth?

2.) What is the IUCN status of African savannah elephants?

3.) How many muscles do they have in their trunks?

4.) Thermoregulation is achieved from their large ears. True or false.

5.) What are their tusks and when do they start to show?

6.) Elephants eat these things...

7.) Their trunks can hold only 1-gallon of water. True or False.

8.) How is 1 way elephants communicate?

9.) What is the thickness of their skin and why is it wrinkled?

10.) How much can a newborn elephant weigh?

11.) What is the estimated number of elephants left in the wild?

12.) Describe the evolutionary response some elephants have made in response to being poached for their ivory.

13.) Do elephants have a favorite side? Do they favor 1 side over the other? Explain.