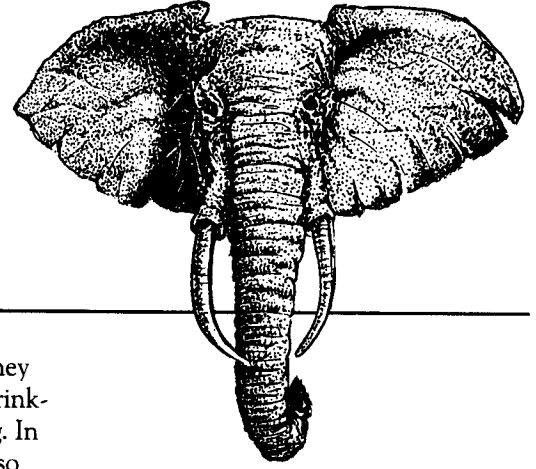


ENDANGERED SPECIES

This Species is Protected Under the Endangered Species Act of 1973

ELEPHANT



African and Asian elephants descended from a long line of giant animals that included the woolly mammoth and mastodon.

The word "elephant" comes from the Greek word *elephas*, meaning ivory, in reference to the animal's prominent tusks, which are actually elongated incisor teeth. Excepting tusks, elephants have only four molar teeth. These teeth are replaced as they are worn away, up to six times throughout an elephant's life.

The elephant's trunk is another unique and important feature. It is used not only for drinking and bathing but for smelling, breathing, feeling, and grasping food. At the end of the trunk is a sensitive "finger" for grasping things as small as a berry or as large as a branch. African elephants have two fingers while the Asian has only one. They also use their trunk as a snorkel when crossing deep rivers. Baby elephants are not born knowing how to use their trunk—they must learn.

Elephants live in the hot climates of Africa and Asia. To help protect themselves from the heat, elephants have large ears, with prominent veins, that

they can flap to cool their blood. They must stay near water, not only for drinking, but also for bathing and cooling. In addition to mud baths, elephants also take dust baths to try to keep cool and deter insect attacks.

Elephants are *herbivores*, or plant-eaters. They feed on grasses, fruits, leaves, branches, bark, and twigs. Because of their large size and because as much as 60 percent of what they eat passes through without being digested, elephants spend about 16 hours a day foraging for nearly 350 pounds of food. In addition, they drink about 18 gallons of water each day.

Elephants are very social animals. They live in small herds composed of a group of females, or *cows*, and their young (*calves*) which are led by an older, experienced cow called the *matriach*. The herd works together to take care of the calves and to signal the others of danger. When a member of the herd dies, the other elephants may cover it with twigs and leaves and mourn their loss by staying at the gravesite for hours. Some males, or *bulls*, form bachelor herds, joining the females only to mate, while other bulls are loners.

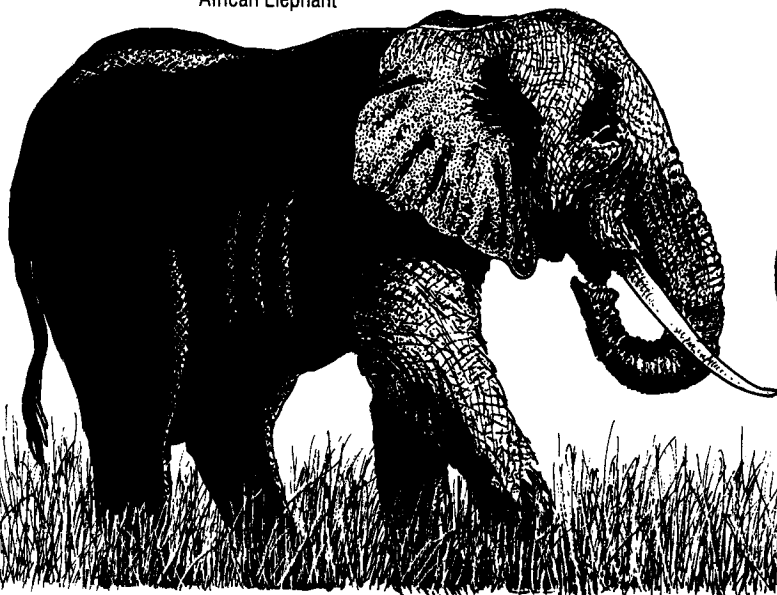
The elephant's lifespan is up to 60 years. Elephants do not mate until they are about 15 years old, and usually give birth every 4 years. After 22 months of pregnancy, a single calf is born weighing about 250 pounds and standing almost 3 feet tall. While the calf will begin eating vegetation within a few months, it continues to nurse on its mother's milk until it is at least 2 years old.

While calves may fall prey to lions or hyenas, adult elephants have no natural predators except man. Not only have elephants been slaughtered for their ivory tusks, but their populations have declined significantly because of habitat destruction and fragmentation.

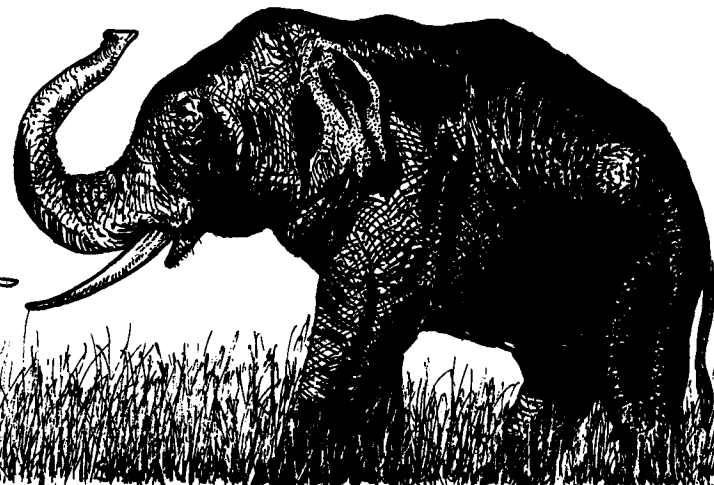
While Asian and African elephants have a lot in common, each species

The African elephant is larger than the Asian. Other differences between the two species are the ears (the African's are larger), the tusks (the African's are much larger), and the back (the African's back dips, while the Asian's back is slightly arched).

African Elephant



Asian Elephant



AFRICAN ELEPHANT

(*Loxodonta africana*)

African elephants are the largest of all land animals. Males stand an average of 10 feet tall at the shoulder and weigh as much as 12,000 pounds (6 tons). Females are a little shorter and weigh about 8,000 pounds (4 tons).

The African elephant has large, floppy ears that cover its shoulders and a small, smooth forehead. Both males and females have large tusks. It also has a dip in its back.

Found throughout much of Africa, those living in bush habitat are found south of the Sahara, while those inhabiting forest areas live in Cameroon, Congo, Ivory Coast, and other central and western African nations. Although African elephants numbered approximately 1.5 million in 1978, today there are about 600,000 African elephants remaining in the wild.

While habitat destruction and fragmentation threaten the African elephant's future, the greatest immediate threat to their survival is *poaching*, or illegal killing, to supply the ivory mar-

ket, an extremely lucrative trade. Many products are made from elephant ivory, from jewelry to piano keys.

Several African countries have implemented elephant conservation programs, many of which include setting aside preserve areas and hiring wildlife rangers to protect elephants from poachers. However, limited resources and the eminent danger of poaching operations, as well as the political instability of many African countries, makes it very challenging to implement effective, long-term elephant conservation programs in Africa.

ASIAN ELEPHANT

(*Elephas maximus*)

Asian elephants differ in appearance from their African relatives by having smaller ears, smaller tusks (the female's are almost non-existent), two humps on the forehead, and an arched back.

As for size, the Asian elephant is smaller. Males stand 9 to 10½ feet tall and weigh about 8,000 pounds (4 tons)

while females are a bit shorter and weigh a little more than 6,000 pounds (3 tons).

The Asian elephant's home is in the forests and jungles of India, Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia, and southeast Asia. Today, there are about 29,000 to 40,000 Asian elephants remaining in the wild.

While poaching threatens African elephants, Asian elephants are mainly threatened by destruction and fragmentation of their habitat.

Conversion of certain areas to crop land to feed ever-growing human populations in places like India has led to an increased amount of elephant attacks on humans, as elephants eat crops planted on lands that were once their feeding grounds.

Elephant migratory routes have been interrupted by highways and other urban development. Such fragmentation isolates herds, preventing unrelated elephants from mating with one another—a vital necessity if elephants are to maintain their genetic diversity and survive in perpetuity.

looks a bit different and each faces different threats to its survival.

Under the Endangered Species Act, the African elephant is listed as a threatened species and the Asian elephant is listed as an endangered species. "Endangered" means a species is considered in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range, and "threatened" means a species is considered in danger of becoming endangered. This protection prohibits elephant parts and products from being imported into the United States except under certain conditions.

In addition, elephants are protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), an agreement among more than 120 nations to eliminate illegal trade in animals and plants, such as elephants, and their parts and associated products. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the federal agency responsible for the U.S. government's compliance with the CITES treaty.

The African Elephant Conservation Act of 1988 prohibits the import of raw or worked ivory into the U.S., with certain exceptions.

It also set up a

grant program to fund elephant conservation efforts.

In June 1989, the U.S. government imposed a ban on commercial importation of African elephant ivory into the country. This led to a commercial ivory trade ban being adopted by all CITES member nations later in 1989.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service also supports elephant conservation efforts in other countries through funding and technical assistance that includes resource management, research, and education.

BIOLOGUE SERIES

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Female elephants live in small herds and are usually joined by males only to mate. Elephants do not reach breeding maturity until they are about 15 years old, and give birth about every 4 years.

