

African Elephants – Savanna Elephant - Tembo

- "Africa's Gentle Giants" are the largest animal walking the planet. They are continually on the move.
- They live an average of 56 years in the wild – 70 is possible. (*Less than 40 in captivity. More like 16-20.*)
- African male elephants grow from 10 to 13 feet tall (*from toe to shoulder*) Female's (*known as cows*) height is 7 – 11 feet. They weigh from 5000 pounds up to 14,000 pounds.
- Ears of African elephants are larger than Asian elephants. The shape looks like Africa when stretched out.
- Elephants have **highly developed brains**.
- They have **long eyelashes**.
- Both males and females have tusks that grow throughout their lives. Tusks can weigh over 200 pounds.
- Their unique appendages – trunks – have at least 40,000 muscles and **two fingerlike features on the end**. Trunks contain a small amount of fat but **no bone or cartilage**. Like the human tongue – it's a muscular hydrostat – a muscle that works independently without bones.
- An elephant's trunk serves as a nose, a hand, an extra foot, a signaling device and a tool for smelling, breathing, gathering food, siphoning water, dusting, digging and much more. Sensory hairs at the end can feel an object's shape, texture, and temperature.
- **Elephants do not drink with their trunks**, but use them as "tools" for drinking - like a hose, pouring the water into their mouths. They visit watering holes during daylight hours.
- An elephant's trunk can hold 2.5 gallons of water. In a day, an elephant can drink 20-50 gallons of water.
- An elephant consumes an average of 200-300 pounds of vegetation per day. They eat grasses, shrubs, woody trees, bark, herbs and fruit.
- Elephants can swim – they use their trunks to breathe like a snorkel in deep water.
- The elephant is the only mammal that can't jump.
- Ear flapping and using their trunks to spray water all over their bodies help cool the elephant.
- Dirt baths also help cool the elephant. Plus, dirt provides sunscreen and removes parasites like ticks. Elephants kick to loosen the dirt such as at the base of a plant. Then, they grab the dirt with their trunks and throw/blow a fine mist to cover their skin.
- **Elephants stamp and dig into dry stream beds or other spots to uncover water that is lurking below the surface**. They often create very large holes by digging with their feet, trunks and tusks, working until they reach an adequate supply of water for them all to share. Other animals come take advantage of these makeshift watering holes which is why elephants are called a "**Keystone Species**."
- The elephant's gestation period is 22 months. They give birth to a single calf every 3 – 5 years.
- At birth, an elephant weighs 200-250 pounds and is almost 3 feet high. For 2 years, they depend entirely on Mother's milk. They are very vulnerable to hyenas during this time.
- The relationship between mom and daughter lasts a lifetime. Males leave at puberty around 12-14 years.
- Elephants have a matriarchal family unit composed of mothers, daughters and males prior to puberty.
- **The oldest female leads her family unit**. She has the memory banks to teach and make survival choices. The others defer to her wise judgements.
- Offspring learn through experience by watching and imitating.
- Members help each other, go to aid sick or injured, and share the rearing of youngsters.
- A family unit size can be 2 – 12 or more. If they get too numerous, they separate into 2 groups, but still visit often. They continue to gather in bond groups or clans numbering over 100.

- Elephants offer great affection – often greeting each other with intertwining trunks in embrace.
- **Males, known as bulls**, band together in temporary bachelor groups. Though mature by late teens, bulls do not compete for breeding until mid-20's. Dominance is established by age, size, and engaging tusks and trunks with pushing and shoving. The winner often blasts a long, blaring trumpet sound.
- By 30, bulls begin experiencing a yearly period of aggressiveness known as musth, when testosterone charges within them. The length of time grows longer each year – such as a week in the 30's and 3 months in late 40's. During musth, a fluid is secreted from the temporal glands behind the eyes.
- Elephants communicate with a variety of trumpet sounds to show playfulness or give location.
- Another way to correspond with other elephants over long distances – even miles - is through infrasound, a low frequency rumble that is below the level of human audibility.
- Elephants also communicate through body signals.
 - Sense of well-being: Moving with trunk down and ambling gate
 - Challenge issued: Shaking of head, Ears flared, trunk moving up and down
 - Extremely Upset: Trumpet loudly with trunk raised
 - Charge Coming: Squared off, Head held high, trunk down but arched, Ears flared out
- In Tanzania, elephants eat a plum-like fruit from the mgongo tree. It causes the elephants to act a bit drunk because it is believed to ferment in their stomachs. *(We saw this happen in Tarangire Nat'l Park.)*
- Ivory tusks are considered "white gold" by poachers and make big money. Illegal and rampant poaching continues to be problematic in Tanzania. The elephant population dropped from 114,504 in 2009 down to 43,330 in 2014. Then back up to 60,000 in 2019. *(A Chinese businesswoman dubbed the "Ivory Queen" was sentenced to 15 years in prison by a Tanzanian court in Feb 2019 for smuggling more than 350 elephant tusks to Asia – a great example after years of governments working together.)*
- Note: Dec 31, 2017 was the last day it was legal to buy or sell elephant ivory in China. However, there are groups trying to eliminate the ban. Plus, many other countries around China still sell ivory. Help make it socially unacceptable and please never purchase any product made from elephant tusks.
- Another problematic situation with humans is that elephants can destroy an entire season of crops overnight with eating and trampling. Conservation groups try to work with the farmers. One solution that's proving helpful is farming beehives. Elephants detest the little creatures and stay away.
- Find more elephant pictures and info about other animals at: www.theater4church.com/Animals.htm
- Read much more about elephants at <https://elephantaidinternational.org/elephant-facts/>

