

Endangered Species: Elephants



The largest land mammal on earth, the African elephant weighs up to eight tons. The elephant is distinguished by its massive body, large ears and a long trunk, which has many uses ranging from using it as a hand to pick up objects, as a horn to trumpet warnings, an arm raised in greeting to a hose for drinking water or bathing.

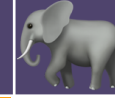
Asian elephants differ in several ways from their African relatives. They are much smaller in size and their ears are straight at the bottom, unlike the large fan-shaped ears of the African species. Only some Asian male elephants have tusks. All African elephants, including females, have tusks. Elephants are either left or right-tusked and the one they use more is usually smaller because of wear and tear. The Asian elephant has four toes on the hind foot and five on the forefoot, while the African elephant has three on the hind foot and five on the forefoot.

What does an elephants diet look like?



- Elephants eat between 149 and 169 kg (330-375 lb.) of vegetation daily.
- Sixteen to eighteen hours, or nearly 80% of an elephant's day is spent feeding. Elephants consume grasses, small plants, bushes, fruit, twigs, tree bark, and roots.
- Tree bark is a favorite food source for elephants. It contains calcium and roughage, which aids digestion. Tusks are used to carve into the trunk and tear off strips of bark.
- Elephants require about 68.4 to 98.8 L (18 to 26 gal.) of water daily, but may consume up to 152 L (40 gal.). An adult male elephant can drink up to 212 L (55 gal.) of water in less than five minutes.

Where do they live?



Elephants live in tropical and subtropical regions of Africa and Asia. They are found most often in savannas, grasslands, and forests, but they also live in deserts, swamps, and mountains. Though African elephants once ranged throughout the continent, today they are found mostly in reserves south of the Sahara. The more widespread of the two African species is the savanna, or bush, elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), which lives in dry woodlands and savannas.

Why are they endangered?



1. People are killing them illegally for their tusks. They are selling ivory for large amounts of money.
2. Their space is being taken up; they are not able to roam which is leading to starvation.
3. For many the thrill of hunting such an amazing animal is a huge thrill. They will pay large sums of money to go on hunting safaris. These are often lead by people in the villages that know exactly where the elephants will be. While such activities are often deemed illegal, the laws aren't strictly enforced and so the process continues to be one that people take part in.

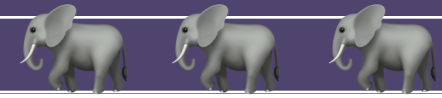
Why they matter?



Elephants help maintain forest and savanna ecosystems for other species, and are integrally tied to rich biodiversity.



How can you help?



1. Don't buy ivory
2. Buy elephant-friendly coffee and wood
3. Support conservation efforts
4. Be aware of the plight of captive elephants
5. Adopt an elephant

