

Free and Wild

The African Elephant for our group of Game Changers (11 to 15 years)

Scientific name:
Loxodonta africana

Family Name: Elephantidea
Habitat: Grassland
Classification: Mammal
Diet: Herbivore

They are the biggest earth-living mammals in the world.



Life span:
70 years old



Weight:
5000-14000 lbs



Length:
8.2 – 13 feet



An adult African elephant's trunk is about seven feet (two meters) long! It's actually an elongated nose and upper lip. Like most noses, trunks are for smelling.



Since African elephants live where the sun is usually blazing hot, they use their trunks to help them keep cool. First they squirt a trunkful of cool water over their bodies. Then they often follow that with a sprinkling of dust to create a protective layer of dirt on their skin. Elephants pick up and spray dust the same way they do water—with their trunks.



When an elephant drinks, it sucks as much as 2 gallons (7.5 liters) of water into its trunk at a time. Then it curls its trunk under, sticks the tip of its trunk into its mouth, and blows. Out comes the water, right down the elephant's throat.



Elephants are social creatures. They sometimes hug by wrapping their trunks together in displays of greeting and affection. Elephants also use their trunks to help lift or nudge an elephant calf over an obstacle, to rescue a fellow elephant stuck in mud, or to gently raise a newborn elephant to its feet.



Elephants also use their trunks as snorkels when they wade in deep water.

An elephant's trunk is controlled by many muscles. Two fingerlike parts on the tip of the trunk allow the elephant to perform delicate maneuvers such as picking a berry from the ground or plucking a single leaf off a tree.

Adult females and young travel in herds, while adult males generally travel alone or in groups of their own.



Elephants can also use its trunk to grasp an entire tree branch and pull it down to its mouth and to yank up clumps of grasses and shove the greenery into their mouths.

And just as a human baby sucks its thumb, an elephant calf often sucks its trunk for comfort. One elephant can eat 300 pounds (136 kilograms) of food in one day.

When an elephant gets a whiff of something interesting, it sniffs the air with its trunk raised up like a submarine periscope. If threatened, an elephant will also use its trunk to make loud trumpeting noises as a warning.

People hunt elephants mainly for their ivory tusks.

There are only 470,000 African elephants left and 8% of the population is poaching every year.

At current poaching rates, elephant populations may not survive 10 years in the wild.

