

All About Elephants



Elephants are the largest of all land mammals on Earth. With their lengthy trunks and sizeable ears, they are a distinctive sight in savannas and rainforests across Africa and areas of Asia. Elephants are known for being clever and are one of only a handful of animals that can recognise themselves in a mirror. In addition, elephants have a famously impressive memory and can remember where different water sources are as they walk across huge distances.

Elephant Herds

Elephants live in large groups called herds. These herds are made up of female elephants and their calves and are typically led by a matriarch. Usually, the matriarch is the oldest and largest female elephant. Incredibly, herds of over 100 African savanna elephants have been spotted in the wild.

African Elephants

African elephants are the largest and heaviest species of elephant. Both male and female African elephants grow tusks which they use for a number of tasks, including lifting and gathering objects and defending themselves. If an elephant can't find any water nearby, they have also been known to dig a hole with their tusks to find water underground.

There are two different types of African elephants: these are the savanna elephant and the forest elephant. Both species of elephant can be found in different parts of Africa.

The savanna elephant, also known as the bush elephant, is the largest of all elephants and can be found in grassy plains and bushlands throughout Africa. Savanna elephants mainly eat grass but have also been known to eat other plants and fruit. On average, an elephant can spend up to 18 hours a day eating.



Smaller than the savanna elephant, the forest elephant can be found in wooded rainforests. Being among thick trees makes forest elephants more difficult to count than savanna elephants, who can be easily spotted on the vast plains. To keep an eye on their population, researchers often count the number of droppings to estimate how many forest elephants are in a specific area.

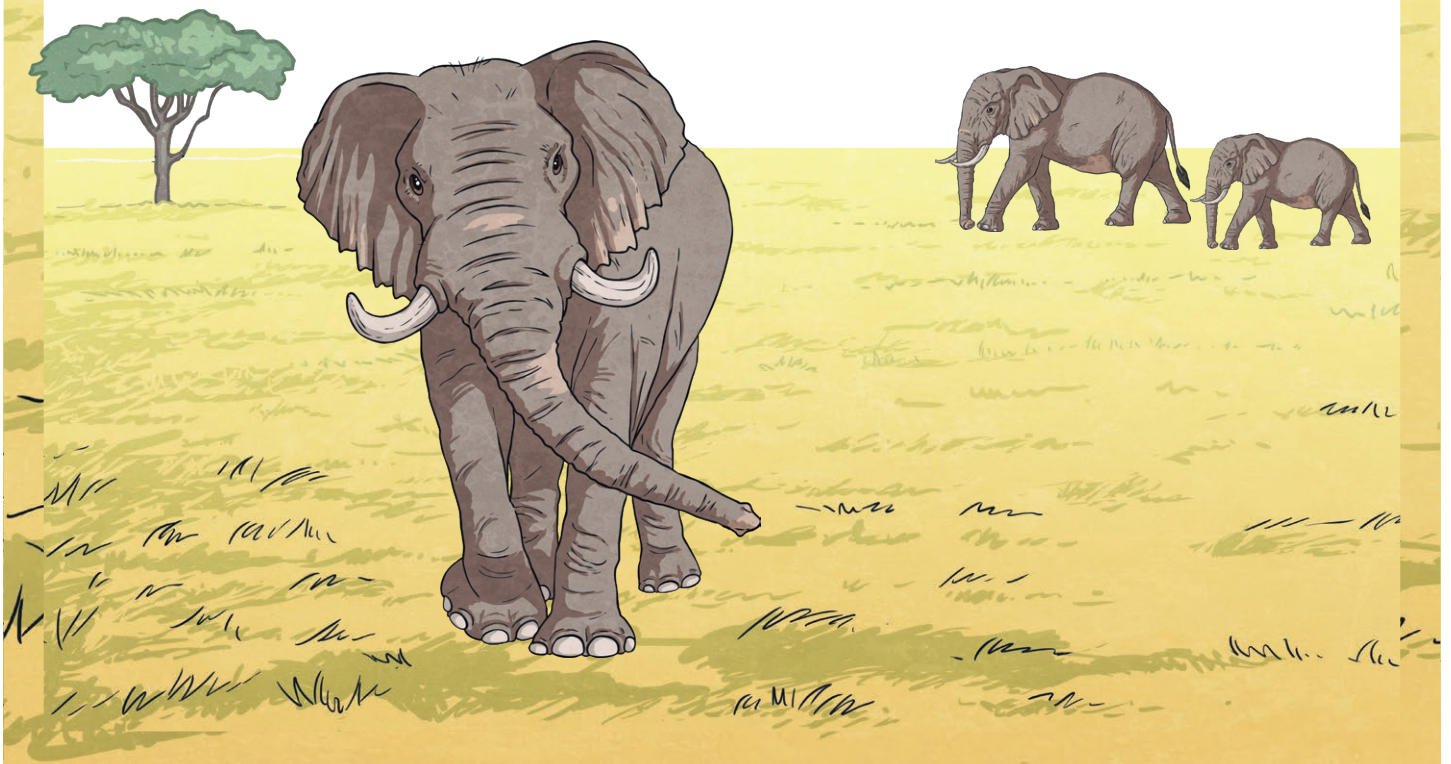
Asian Elephants

Asian elephants are smaller than African elephants and can be found in different parts of Asia. Unlike African elephants, Asian elephant herds are typically smaller and usually contain around six to seven female elephants. Female Asian elephants don't develop tusks. Asian elephants can be identified by the shape of their ears which are smaller than those of African elephants.

There are several different types of Asian elephant. These include the Sri Lankan elephant, the Indian elephant and the Sumatran elephant. The Sri Lankan elephant is the largest and darkest of all Asian elephants. Amazingly, some studies have found that, when filled with rainwater, Asian elephant footprints can make an excellent home for frogs and their tadpoles.



Historically, elephants have faced a variety of different threats that have led to their numbers declining in the wild. While African elephant populations are now slowly increasing, Asian elephant populations are still in decline and they are classed as endangered. To try and increase the number of elephants in the wild, many countries have now put laws in place to help to protect these magnificent creatures and their habitats.



Questions

1. ... they are a distinctive sight in savannahs and rainforests across Africa and areas of Asia. Which of the following definitions is closest in meaning to the word 'distinctive'? Tick one.

- unimpressive
- unique
- smelly
- enormous

2. Which of the following is the largest type of elephant? Tick one.

- the forest elephant
- the Sumatran elephant
- the savannah elephant
- the Indian elephant

3. Look at the paragraph beginning **Smaller than the savannah elephant...** Find and copy one word which means the same as 'large'.

4. On average, how many hours a day can an elephant spend eating?

5. What happens to an Asian elephant's footprint for it to become a home for frogs?

6. Do you think that the author of this text likes elephants? Explain your answer.

7. Explain how the layout of the text helps you to understand the information.

8. Summarise what you have learnt about elephants using 25 words or fewer.
