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TOP 10 FACTS ABOUT ELEPHANTS

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1. THEY'RE THE WORLD'S LARGEST LAND ANIMAL

The African Savanna Bush Elephant is the world's largest land animal – with adult bull males in Kruger elephants, standing up to 3m high and weighing up to 6,000kg on average. Males only need their full size at 20-40 years – males and even half-their lifespan are still adolescents can live for up to 60-70 years.

And it's not just the adults – even calves are huge! At birth, a baby elephant can weigh 120kg – that's almost 19 stone.

2. YOU CAN TELL THE THREE SPECIES APART BY THEIR EARS

There are three species of elephant: African Savanna (Bush), African forest and Asian. The ears can tell you everything you need to know about a specimen and are described as being shaped like the African continent, whereas the ears of Asian elephants are shaped like the Indian subcontinent.

There's also a third difference – African elephants have two 'fingers' at the tip of their trunks, whereas Asian elephants have one.

3. THEIR TRUNKS HAVE MAD SKILLS

Elephants have around 150,000 muscle units in their trunk. Their trunks are perhaps the most sensitive organ found in any mammal.

Elephants use their trunks to suck up water to drink – it can contain up to 8 litres of water. They also use their trunks as a snorkel when swimming.

4. THEIR TUSKS ARE ACTUALLY TEETH

Elephants have 26 teeth in total, but only one pair of tusks – the upper ones. Elephants are around 2 years old. Tusks continue growing throughout their lives.

Tusks are used to help with feeding, pinning part of trees or digging up roots – or as a defence when fighting.

But these beautiful tusks often cause elephants danger. They're made from ivory, a much desired object. Read on to find out why elephants are under threat.

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5. THEY'VE GOT THICK SKIN

An elephant's hide is 2.5 cm thick in places, but sensitive. The folds and wrinkles in their skin can retain up to 10 times more water than flat skin does, which helps to cool them down.

They keep their skin clean and protect themselves from sunburn by taking regular dust and mud baths.

6. ELEPHANTS ARE CONSTANTLY EATING

Elephants are grazers, leaves, shrubs, fruits and roots depending on the season and their environment. Bush elephants in Kruger National Park can consume 150 kilograms of food per day to keep in shape and fuel their bodies. They need to eat up 150kg of food per day – that's around 300 lbs of baked beans – although half of this may have the body undigested.

Elephants eat so much that they can spend up to three quarters of their day just eating.

7. THEY COMMUNICATE THROUGH VIBRATIONS

Elephants communicate in a variety of ways – including sounds we can hear, scents and vibrations. Elephants are too low for people to hear, including touch and scent. They can also communicate through touch, and sounds that create vibrations in the ground, which they may detect through their bodies.

8. A BABY ELEPHANT CAN STAND WITHIN 20 MINUTES OF BIRTH

Amazingly, elephant calves are able to stand within 20 minutes of being born and can walk within 1 hour. After that, they can keep up with the herd.

This incredible survival technique means that herds of elephants can keep migrating to find food and water in times.

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9. AN ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS

The elephant brain is about the size of a human brain, but with more neurons – logically due to the forty-tonne – leaving an estimated 4-5,000 adult elephants alive today.

Asian elephants are also under threat, having declined by at least 50% in the last three generations. There are only around 40,000-50,000 individuals left in the wild. In the Indian subcontinent, Asian elephants are facing a number of conservation challenges. Habitat loss means elephants are finding it harder to follow their traditional migration routes to reach water, feeding and breeding grounds, and they're coming into often dangerous contact with people.

10. AROUND 90% OF AFRICAN ELEPHANTS HAVE BEEN WIPED OUT IN THE PAST CENTURY

Around 90% of African elephants have been killed in the last 100 years – mainly due to the ivory trade – leaving an estimated 415,000 wild elephants alive today.

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WHAT'S WORK

We work in east Africa and across Asia to protect and manage wildlife-friendly farmlands and people with wildlife conflict so elephants can migrate safely.

We also support local people to be alongside elephants by protecting their fields from crop-raiding animals using solar-powered electric fences and by creating beehives (elephants hate bees).

AND WE'RE MONITORING ELEPHANTS...

...by regularly surveying them and fitting GPS collars to track their movements, to keep both elephants and people safe.

We're determined to stop the illegal wildlife trade by supporting community scouts, rangers, coffee dogs and wildlife trade monitoring networks, to deter poachers and stamp out demand from would-be buyers.

But we couldn't do all this without your support.

WATCH OUR YOUTUBE VIDEO ABOUT ELEPHANTS

BRINGING OUR WORLD BACK TO LIFE

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