

# ELEPHANT, AFRICAN

## RANGE:

Africa, south of the Sahara.

## HABITAT:

Varies from forest to grassland to semi-desert.

## SIZE:

Largest living land animal.

**Height:** Avg. Male ~ 10 - 12 feet tall

**Weight:** 8,000 - 14,000 pounds

## LIFE EXPECTANCY:

Studies have show that life expectancy at birth in African Elephants is 41 years for females and 24 years for males. In the wild, half die before the age of 15 and only one in five reach 30.

## REPRODUCTION:

- Maturity is reached between eight and thirteen years.
- Gestation is 22 months.
- Birth weight is 200-250 lbs.

## DIET:

**Wild:** Grasses, bark, leaves, shrubs.

**Captivity:** Grain, hay and produce.

## BEHAVIOR:

- Live in matriarchal family groups called a herd, led by an older female cow.
- Males can be very aggressive.
- Members of the herd are mindful of the well being of others in the group.
- Females are excellent mothers and may often adopt a calf that has been orphaned.
- Rival males fight, sometimes to the death.
- Rogues are solitary elephants that have a bad temperament and have become aggressive. This behavior is usually the result of a physical ailment.

## POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Skin is kept conditioned by wallowing in water or mud, or with dust baths.
- Temporal gland between the eye and the ear exudes an oily secretion during periods of excitement, sometimes sexual. The condition is known as musth and may last days, weeks or months and generally occurs annually. The condition occurs mainly in male elephants and can cause them to be aggressive and uncontrollable.
- Ivory tusks are actually incisor teeth, which grow continuously.
- Elephants have six sets of molars in their lifetime. As one set wears out, a new set erupts and moves forward.
- Ears can be used for both hearing and thermoregulation. Fanning the ears allows the elephant to cool its body by allowing heat to escape the blood through the blood vessels in the ears.
- Elephants sleep only a few hours a night and can sleep either standing or laying down.

## STATUS:

**Endangered** (Appendices I, II of CITES).

## REFERENCES:

Elephants. Encyclopedia of Animals. (Fog City Press), 1993; 167.

Elephantidae: Elephant Family. Macmillan Illustrated Animal Encyclopedia. (Macmillan), 1984; 122.

# theZOO

LOUISVILLE

photo by Laura Lamb



Order:	<b>Proboscidae</b>
Family:	<b>Elephantidae</b>
Genus:	<b>Loxodonta</b>
Species:	<b>africana</b>