

ELEPHANT



FACTS

Elephants are the largest land mammals on earth and have distinctly massive bodies, large ears, and long trunks. They use their trunks to pick up objects, trumpet warnings, greet other elephants, or suck up water for drinking or bathing, among other uses. Both male and female African elephants grow tusks and each individual can either be left- or right-tusked, and the one they use more is usually smaller because of wear and tear. Elephant tusks serve many purposes. These extended teeth can be used to protect the elephant's trunk, lift and move objects, gather food, and strip bark from trees. They can also be used for defense. During times of drought, elephants even use their tusks to dig holes to find water underground.

WHY THEY MATTER

Elephants help maintain forest and savanna ecosystems for other species and are integrally tied to rich biodiversity. Elephants are important ecosystem engineers. They make pathways in dense forested habitat that allow passage for other animals. An elephant footprint can also enable a micro-ecosystem that, when filled with water, can provide a home for tadpoles and other organisms.

THREATS

African elephant populations have fallen from an estimated 12 million a century ago to some 400,000. In recent years, at least 20,000 elephants have been killed in Africa each year for their tusks. African forest elephants have been the worst hit. Their populations declined by 62% between 2002-2011 and they have lost 30% of their geographical range, with African savanna elephants declining by 30% between 2007-2014. This dramatic decline has continued and even accelerated with cumulative losses of up to 90% in some landscapes between 2011 and 2015. Today, the greatest threat to African elephants is wildlife crime, primarily poaching for the illegal ivory trade, while the greatest threat to Asian elephants is habitat loss, which results in human-elephant conflict. WWF has advocated for an end to commercial elephant ivory sales as the most effective and efficient solution to end this illegal ivory trade.

PROTECTION

Community and government rangers and game guards help protect endangered species like elephants and WWF helps train and equip them. WWF trains rangers in elephant monitoring and antipoaching techniques and works with communities to manage and reduce conflict with elephants. WWF works to protect and enable movement of the elephant population, of which the population on the Vietnam side is significant and the largest remaining wild elephant population in the country.

All information comes directly from the World Wildlife Fund Website

