

EXEMPLAR

African Elephant

Common Name: African Elephant

Scientific Name: *Loxodonta africana*

Physical Characteristics:

- African elephants are the largest mammals on earth.
- They have large ears that look similar to the country of Africa.
- The ears radiate heat to keep them cool .
- The elephant's trunk is a long nose that is used for smelling, breathing, drinking, communication, and grabbing things. It contains about 100,000 different muscles. Unlike their cousin, the Asian Elephant which has one, the African elephant has two fingerlike features at the end of their trunk used to grab small things.
- Tusks are used to dig for food and water and to remove bark from trees. The males use the tusks for battle.
- These elephants usually have a gray brown skin color.



Geographic Distribution: African Elephants live in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. One species, the forest elephant, lives in dense forests in Central Africa from Zaire west to Mauritania. The other species, the savanna elephant are more widespread in drier woodlands and savannas. Savanna elephants are most common in Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa.

Niche:

- African Elephants defoliate trees by stripping trees of bark with their tusks.
- Plants rely on these elephants to germinate.

Natural Community Size: The body length of a male ranges from 6 to 7.5 m. Females range from 5.4 to 6.9 m. On average, a male weighs 6 tons, and a female weighs 3 tons.

Economic Importance:

- Many plant species rely on passing through the elephants' digestive tract before being able to germinate.
- An elephant browsing through vegetation affects the structure of habitats and bush fire patterns.

Legal Status:

- African Elephants are threatened.
- Many elephants have been killed for their tusks because ivory is so valuable to some humans. Although not completely eliminated, this trade is illegal today. Some African elephant populations remain endangered.

Works Cited

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