

Wild trumpets sound in Africa

What is the world's largest land mammal?

If you said the African elephant, you are right.

We travel to the Maasai Mara national park in western Kenya to see African elephants. The 583-square-mile park borders Lake Victoria and the Serengeti national park in Tanzania.

An adult African elephant weighs 7,000 to 15,000 pounds. It is 28 to 25 feet long and 10 to 13 feet tall. A new-born calf weighs about 265 pounds.

Elephants live in dense forest, open savannas and semi-desert scrub, wherever they can find enough food and water.

Elephants have big appetites. They spend up to 18 hours a day dining. They eat grass, leaves, shrubs, bark, fruit and berries. A zoo elephant eats 125 pounds of hay and 10 pounds of fruit and vegetables in a day. It gulps down 26 gallons of water at a time.

An elephant's trunk is amazing. It serves as a hand, foot, nose and tool. It allows an elephant to reach tall vegetation, pull a tree out of the ground, or pick up a grain of rice.

African elephants have big fan-like ears, a single hump on their forehead, a sway-back and wrinkled skin.

Both the male and female grow large tusks. Tusks are used for fight-



ing, pushing, lifting and digging for water.

Mild-tempered male elephants have the biggest tusks. That's because they don't break their tusks ramming trees and fighting.

The African elephant is endangered because of ivory poaching, sport hunting and loss of habitat.

Elephants once roamed from the Sahara Desert to South Africa. Farming and logging took away much of their territory.

Now they are found mostly in parks and reserves.

About 500,000 African elephants are left in the wild.

In the 1980s ivory trading was banned. This has helped to steady the population.

However, hunters have killed many of the larger, older elephants. Elephants reach their prime at age 40 and can live to be 60 or more.

The average age of elephants is now just 24.

African elephants are sociable and intelligent. An older cow heads the extended family group. Adult bulls leave the family and live in bachelor herds. Families get to know others in the area and greet their friends at common watering spots.

Elephants talk loudly with growls, bellows, rumbles, and moans. They can hear each other up to five miles away.

Too bad we can't communicate better with elephants. They would probably say, "Help us survive!"



Word Search

Find these words: Africa, Bull, Calf, Cow, Elephant, Hunt, Ivory, Kenya, Lion, Tiger, Tusk

E	L	E	P	H	A	N	T
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