

ELEPHANT, ASIAN

RANGE:

Asia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, Indo-China, Malaya, Sumatra and Borneo.

HABITAT:

Dense forested areas to grasslands.

SIZE:

Length: 20 feet

Height: Approximately 8 - 10 feet at the shoulder

Weight: Average 3 - 5 tons.

LIFE EXPECTANCY:

Studies have show that life expectancy at birth in Asian 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:

- Breeding occurs at any time of year
- Courtship is initiated by the female before or at the onset of estrus and is intended to bring a male to his peak of interest. Although courtship can last many weeks, copulation lasts only two minutes and occurs at intervals of several hours.
- Mated couples are close for several months until the female becomes unresponsive.
- Gestation is 22 months. Onset of labor until birth lasts approximately 30 minutes.
- Young average 185 to 225 pounds at birth and stand 3 feet at the shoulder.
- Mothers will acquire a constant female companion who helps in the protection of the newborn.
- Young begin eating solid foods at around 3 - 4 months, but continue to rely on milk as their main food requirement for up to 4 years.
- Midway through nursing, the female again starts estrus cycles and can bear another calf 22 months later. Lactation is continued throughout the subsequent pregnancy.
- A calf is produced every 4 years until the female is no longer fertile.

DIET:

Herbivorous.

Wild: All types of vegetation

Zoo: Commercially prepared grain pellets and hay, as well as produce.

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- A dying elephant is sometimes circled by members of their herd which try to raise the body. After circling several times, they will halt and raise the face outwards with their trunks hanging down, perhaps forming a guard. Finally, if an elephant is dead, they will move aside but remain close for several hours or until nightfall. They will then throw clumps of grass and branches on and around the body. Dirt is often scraped toward the dead elephant.
- Elephants normally do not attack men in their wild state. A beast of burden for many years, elephants have been used for work and show. Captured adults can be trained in a 7 year course of schooling.
- Elephants were once slaughtered for their hide and ivory tusks.
- In many areas, elephant over-population has occurred due to range restriction by human settlement. This has led to elephants destroying crops and their own habitat. This destruction has had an effect on the other animals (antelope and big cats) that live in these confined areas, and has led to a reduction of their numbers.

theZOO

L O U I S V I L L E



Order:	Proboscidea
Family:	Elephantidae
Genus:	Elephas
Species:	maximus

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STATUS:

In the wild they are considered Endangered. Its long-term prospect for survival in southeast Asia is uncertain. There has been a steady decline in their numbers as its habitat has been reduced. Existing populations are restricted in isolated habitats. Severe habitat destruction is leading to fragmentation and eventual extinction of wild populations.