

World Elephant Day

12 August 2019



*Nature's great masterpiece – an elephant: the only harmless
great thing* – John Donne

INTRODUCTION

World Elephant Day is an international annual event on August 12, dedicated to the preservation and protection of the world's elephants. Conceived in 2011 by Canadian filmmakers Patricia Sims and Michael Clark on August 12, 2012. Since that time, Patricia Sims continues to lead and direct World Elephant Day, which is now supported by over 65 wildlife organizations and many individuals in countries across the globe.

The goal of International Elephant Day is to create awareness of both the urgent plight of African and Asian elephants, and to share knowledge and positive solutions for the better care and management of captive and wild elephants. African elephants are listed as "Vulnerable" and Asian elephants as "Endangered" on the IUCN Red List* of threatened species. It is thought that both African and Asian elephants face extinction within twelve years. The current population estimates are about 400 000 for African elephants and 40 000 for Asian elephants

**The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (also known as the IUCN Red List or Red Data List), founded in 1964, is the world's most comprehensive inventory of the global conservation status of biological species. It uses a set of criteria to evaluate the extinction risk of thousands of species and subspecies.*

LESSON PLAN

Read through the lesson plan in order to organise your Eco-Club session. Make use of the vocabulary list at the end of this lesson plan. Any word that is **bolded in red** in the lesson, will be in the vocabulary list.

Thereafter, follow the numbered steps in order to conduct your lesson. Make sure that you work through this step by step to ensure all parts of this important lesson are covered.



STAGE 1 – ENERGISER



1. DISCUSSION - ALL ABOUT ELEPHANTS

Time – 10mins

Location – Under the trees

1. Sit under the trees outside with the children and talk to them about lions, using the notes below.
2. Be sure to talk about this special lesson on World Pangolin Day.

This is just a quick discussion to introduce the children to lions – you will go more in depth later in the lesson.

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2. ENERGISER - ANIMAL OBSTACLE COURSE

Materials: Timer (even the one on your phone works perfectly); Items from around school / the environment to build your course (brooms, chairs, water bottles, rocks, etc.) *Note: you do not have to use exactly what is shown in the picture – be creative 😊

This activity requires discussion around the various characteristics of the animals mentioned at each step in the obstacle course. Discuss these first with the children, and then explain the obstacle course.



1. Divide the children into groups of 4 or 5.
2. Talk about the way these animals move. They will have to move through the obstacle course like these animals. Have them practise each movement out of the obstacle course first (eg. Clear a path for them to sprint like cheetahs; Have them stomp in a circle like heavy elephants; etc.)

Cheetah – Sprint as fast as a cheetah! The fastest land animal in the world, a cheetah can reach 112km/h in just three seconds – that's faster than a sports car accelerates! Its body has evolved for speed, with long legs, an elongated spine, adapted claws to grip the ground and a long tail for balance.

Impala – Jump as high as an impala! They are very fast runners and amazing jumpers, with the ability to leap 3 metres high and 10 metres long which helps them to escape from predators.

Frog – Leap like a frog! Many frogs can jump at least 30 times their body length, and some smaller species of tree frogs can jump 50 times their length. This is the human equivalent of jumping the length of a football field without a running start.

Elephant – Walk like an elephant! Weighing up to 6000 kg (6.6 tons) and measuring up to 3.3 m at the shoulder, the African elephant is the world's largest land mammal.

Giraffe – Take long strides like a giraffe! Giraffes have very long legs (1.8metres to be exact!). They take very long strides and can move at 60kms per hour!

Zebra – Zig Zag like a Zebra! Zebras are built for speed and long distance movement.

3. Set up the obstacle course as shown. Each set of obstacles requires the children to move and act as an animal that you have discussed with them. Try to spread it out so that they have plenty of time and space to move as each animal:
4. In their teams, each child must make it from beginning to end. Time the teams, and the team that does it in the quickest time, wins 😊



Start out hopping / leaping like a frog around boxes / crates / chairs.

START

Jump over the broom like an impala!
***Note: Don't make this too high!**

Zig zag like a zippy zebra between the water bottle ***Note: You will have to mark each point of the zig zag with a water bottle so that they know the path they will need to zig zag on.**

Walk like a big, heavy elephant! Use your arm to show the elephant's trunk.

Slither like a snake through the boxes
***Note: You might want to use chairs instead of boxes.**

Step over an object like a tall giraffe! ***Note: This can be a box or any other object that will require a big stride**

Sprint like a cheetah to the finish!

FINISH!



STAGE 2 – THEORETICAL LESSON



DISCUSSION – ALL ABOUT ELEPHANTS

Time – 15mins

Materials – Paper and pens / markers

Location – Under the trees. Children should bring a piece of paper along so that they can take notes about what they have learnt.

1. Use the notes below to teach and talk to the children about the threats which lions face.

Do not just read the notes to the children, but rather try to engage them during the lesson.

You can do this by asking them for their opinions. Encourage them to try to answer questions you might ask around these notes.

All about elephants

- Their trunk is a long nose that is used for breathing, smelling, drinking, trumpeting, and grabbing objects.
- Their trunks are also a grooming tool. Grooming consists of using their trunks to cover themselves with mud or water to maintain hydration.
- They also use their trunks to exhibit affection, by frequently touching and caressing one another.
- It's no great surprise these large animals love to eat. Elephants' diet consists of grasses, fruits, roots, and bark, and spend the majority of their day roaming across large distances foraging for food. They can eat up to 136 kilograms of food and drink 113 to 190 litres of water in one day.
- Much like humans, they are social creatures that live in small family groups that usually consist of an older matriarch and several generations of female relatives. Males are typically solitary once matured but may live in small groups of three or four bulls.
- They take care of weak or injured members and even appear to grieve over dead companions.

Why are elephants in danger?

- **Humans are poaching elephants** for their ivory tusks - The large tusks on either side of their face—used for foraging for food and water—have long been desired by people. The ivory trade is driven by consumer demand for products made from elephant tusks and supplied by a sophisticated international network of traffickers. Poachers kill this iconic species for its ivory tusks, which are then sold and made into anything from jewellery and crafts to musical instruments to religious objects. At current poaching rates, elephant populations may be extinct in the wild within our lifetimes.



- Elephants have **slow rates of reproduction** - They have longer pregnancies than almost any other mammal. They carry their calves for about 22 months, with cows usually bearing only one calf every three to six years. Their regeneration rate averages 5 to 6 percent annually, compared to the 8 to 9 percent poaching rates, resulting in a net loss in population numbers. Elephants are threatened with extinction as they are unable to sustain current population numbers if the high rate of poaching continues unabated.
- **Habitat loss** – elephants require a huge amount of space to move around, and find enough food and water to sustain them. With increased human populations comes less wilderness areas due to agriculture, buildings, roads, etc. This means there is less space for elephants to move around.
- **Human-wildlife conflict** – as a result of habitat loss, elephants often come into contact with humans. Incidents include crop damage and economic losses, as well as both elephant and human casualties

Why it is important to ensure lions are protected, and what can you do to protect them

Why elephants need to be protected:

- Across Africa they have inspired respect from the people that share the landscape with them, giving them a strong cultural significance.
- As icons of the continent elephants are tourism magnets, attracting funding that helps protect wilderness areas.
- They are also **keystone species**, playing an important role in maintaining the **biodiversity** of the **ecosystems** in which they live. Elephants are considered a keystone species in the African landscape. That means elephants play a very important role in keeping the balance of all other species in the community. They help to support the biodiversity, or variety of life, in their living areas.
 - During the dry season, elephants use their tusks to dig for water. This not only allows the elephants to survive in dry environments and when droughts strike, but also provides water for other animals that share harsh habitats.
 - On the savannahs, elephants feeding on tree sprouts and shrubs help to keep the plains open and able to support the plains game that inhabit these ecosystems.
 - They create salt licks by digging up earth containing many minerals, thereby providing a food source for other animals.
 - They create trails that act as fire breakers and water run offs.
 - Elephant dung (droppings) is important to the environment as well. Baboons and birds pick through dung for undigested seeds and nuts, and dung beetles reproduce in the dung. The nutrient-rich dung makes the soil healthy again, so that humans can have a nutrient rich ground to plant crops in.



What you can do to protect them:

- Work with your communities to help them realise the value of elephants and to help them protect their families and crops from elephants
- Give elephants room to roam - Wildlife corridors are large sections of land that allow wildlife to move from one national park to another—and even from one country to another.

STAGE 3 – DIRECT EXPERIENCE



MAKE A POSTER – IVORY BELONGS TO ELEPHANTS

Time: 20mins

Materials: Flip chart paper, pens, etc.

1. Split students into groups of about five.
2. Have the students make a poster with this statement written on it:

“Ivory Belongs to Elephants”

3. The students should draw pictures and write short sentences, in order to tell people about the struggle elephants face and why, and what they can do to protect them, etc.
4. Below are a few examples you might like to show them for inspiration:



STAGE 4 – DEBRIEF



DEBRIEF

- Talk about what they think might happen if this keystone species were to completely disappear.
- Ask the children to give their ideas of what they could practically do in their communities to help save elephants:
- For example, share their knowledge with family, friends and the community; encourage bee-keeping projects along fence lines to chase elephants away; etc.

LITTER COLLECTION

Use this time to clean up the school ground of ALL litter, not only plastics. You can make this fun in a number of different ways:

1. Split the children into their teams from the energiser. Have competition to see which team can collect the most litter.
2. As a group, form a line and sing your way around the school ground (or maybe stomp around like elephants 😊). Stop every few meters, and have the children spread out and collect litter around the area where you have stopped.
3. Challenge the children to find as many different types of litter as possible – paper, plastic, glass, other.

If your community have the facilities, sort the litter into recyclables and non-recyclables, and dispose of them accordingly.

- ALL LITTER COLLECTED MUST BE DISPOSED OF CORRECTLY (placed in bins recycling facilities)
- CHILDREN MUST WASH THEIR HANDS CAREFULLY AFTER COLLECTING RUBBISH



VOCABULARY

- **Biodiversity** - the variety of plant and animal life in the world or in a particular habitat, a high level of which is usually considered to be important and desirable.
- **Keystone species** - an organism that helps define an entire ecosystem. Without its keystone species, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether.
- **Ecosystems** - a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment

