



1

Elephants teach each other...



Sadly, not all of the humans that elephants meet are friendly. The East African Masai tribe have a tradition of proving their bravery by spearing animals they consider dangerous – including elephants. Luckily, elephants can actually tell different human groups apart.

In an experiment, elephants were presented with the clothing worn by two groups – the Masai hunters and harmless local farmers. The elephants ran and hid when they saw or smelled the clothing worn by the Masai, but reacted much more calmly to the farmers' clothes. Surprisingly, even elephants that had never been attacked responded in the same way. How did they know to run?

"This kind of knowledge is passed down, just like it is with humans," says Joyce Poole, a biologist who studies with the organisation, Elephant Voices. "If your mum responds in a certain way to things, you learn from her by example."

Years of wisdom are passed down from mother to baby

Did you know?

Because of their size, adult elephants have no enemies other than humans, who hunt them mainly for their ivory tusks.

2

Elephants listen to their elders...



Elephants live for about 60 years or more – one of the longest life spans among mammals. They store all the knowledge they learn over the years in their powerful brains, and younger elephants trust the wisdom of their elders.

Male elephants leave the family when they grow up, and the oldest female, called a matriarch, leads the group.

All the adult females in the group help make decisions during calm times. "But if the herd is under threat, then everyone in the family looks to the matriarch for her wise and strong leadership," says Joyce. "Families led by the oldest matriarchs tend to survive droughts the best, and have the most babies."

3

Elephants really never forget...



A long time ago, Joyce made friends with a wild male elephant named Vladimir. After a separation of 12 years, Joyce wondered how Vladimir would react to seeing her again.

"I called to Vladimir and he came over and let me touch his trunk and tusks again," she says. "There was no doubt in my mind that he remembered me – I was the only human he would ever allow to pet him."

Elephants remember important things about their environment, too. A single elephant can eat hundreds of kilograms of vegetation and guzzle over 200 litres of water every day. For the savannah elephants in the grasslands of East Africa, where trees are scattered and the land often becomes bone-dry, memorising where to find faraway food and water is a matter of survival. And even if an old watering hole seems dry, the clever elephants know to dig a well. Incredible!

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All the elephants in the 'family' look to the matriarch to keep them safe in the wild

4

Elephants pick up with their trunks...



Most people know that elephants use their trunks to trumpet loudly, to say things like "I'm happy" or "Leave me alone." But their trunks, like our handy thumbs, also help them to do many other things, such as picking up things from heavy branches to delicate leaves. Elephants also use their trunks to put food into their mouths, fling stones and sometimes get into mischief...

Elephants lift the lids on water tanks and suck them dry, and they've even figured out how to turn on a tap to get a drink. "It just shows how intelligent they are," says George Wittemyer, a biologist who studies elephants with the organisation, Save The Elephants. "Unfortunately, they don't turn the tap off – to the great annoyance of the people living among them!"



Elephants are very sociable and wrap their trunks together to say hello!