**Elephants** are large land [mammals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammal) in two extant [genera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genus) of the[family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family_(biology)) [Elephantidae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephantidae): [*Elephas*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephas) and [*Loxodonta*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Loxodonta), with the third genus[*Mammuthus*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammoth) extinct.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-0) Three living [species](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Species) of elephant are recognized: the [African bush elephant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_bush_elephant), the [African forest elephant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African_forest_elephant)and the Indian or [Asian elephant](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asian_elephant);[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-1) although some group the two African species into one[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-African_Elephant_Specialist_Group-2) and some researchers also postulate the existence of a fourth species in West Africa.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-3) All other species and genera of Elephantidae are [extinct](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extinction). Most have been extinct since the last [ice age](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_age), although dwarf forms of [mammoths](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mammoth)might have survived as late as 2,000 BCE.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-4) Elephants and other Elephantidae were once classified with other thick-skinned animals in a now invalid [order](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_(biology)), [Pachydermata](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pachydermata).

Elephants are the [largest](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Largest_organism) living land animals on Earth today.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-NationalGeographicAfricanElephant-5) The elephant's [gestation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gestation) period is 22 months, the longest of any land animal.[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-birds.cornell.edu-6) At birth, an elephant calf typically weighs 105 kilograms (230 lb).[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-birds.cornell.edu-6) They typically live for 50 to 70 years, but the oldest recorded elephant lived for 82 years.[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-7) The largest elephant ever recorded was shot in [Angola](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angola) in 1955.[[9]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-8) This male weighed about 10,900 kg (24,000 lb),[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-SD_Zoo-9)with a shoulder height of 3.96 metres (13.0 ft), 1 metre (3.3 ft) taller than the average male African elephant.[[10]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-SD_Zoo-9) The smallest elephants, about the size of a calf or a large pig, were a prehistoric species that lived on the island of [Crete](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crete) during the [Pleistocene](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleistocene) epoch.[[11]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-10)

Elephants are a symbol of [wisdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wisdom) in Asian cultures and are famed for their memory and[intelligence](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Animal_cognition); their intelligence level is thought to be comparable to that of[dolphins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dolphins)[[12]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-ABCScience-11)[[13]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-12)[[14]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-DolphinGuide-13)[[15]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-Friendsoftheelephant-14) and [primates](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primate).[[16]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-Hart-15)[[17]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-Scott-16) [Aristotle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aristotle) once said the elephant was "the beast which passeth all others in wit and mind."[[18]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-17) The word "elephant" has its origins in the Greek [ἐλέφας](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/%E1%BC%90%CE%BB%CE%AD%CF%86%CE%B1%CF%82), meaning "ivory" or "elephant".[[19]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-COED-18)

Healthy adult elephants have no natural [predators](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predator),[[20]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-Joubert_et_al.-19) although [lions](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lion) may take calves or weak individuals.[[21]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-20)[[22]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elephant#cite_note-PlanetEarthEpisode7-21) They are, however, threatened by human intrusion and poaching.