

the Elephant

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The power of nature

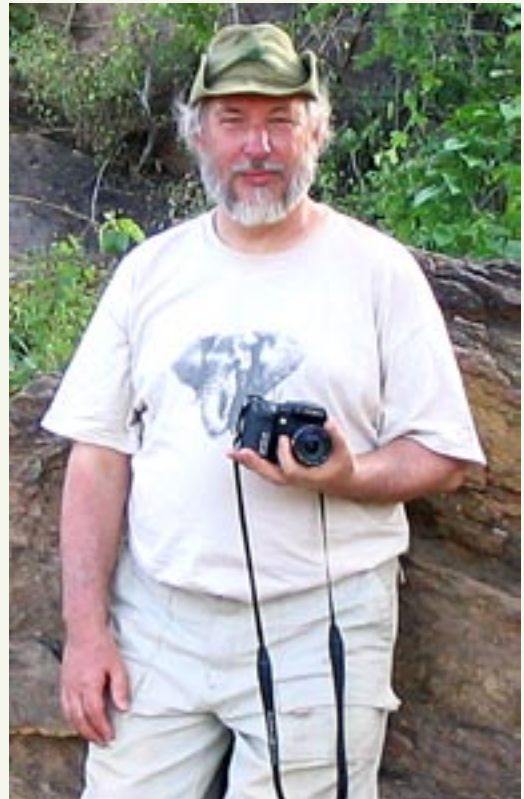
In the past year several natural disasters have affected various places in the world. The Tsunami in Southeast Asia which wreaked heavy damages on Sumatra, Sri Lanka and Thailand. And various hurricanes and typhoons in the Caribbean and Pacific region, where many areas were brought down simultaneously by flooding. Many people lost their lives, and in the case of animals it was particularly those in captivity that suffered.

It seems that nature is making a desperate attempt to restore its natural balance. The balance that has been seriously damaged by humans and continues to be disrupted on a daily basis. Primarily through the cutting down of rainforests and cultivation of nature areas in agricultural areas. We continue to carry on as though we have a spare world in reserve. But no, we don't have one! This is the only world we have and we must keep it habitable for humans and animals (insofar as distinctions between the two can be made).

Recently, typhoon Damrey raged over Asia and brought gigantic rain storms to the north of Thailand, resulting in heavy flooding which carried everything with it. Elephant Haven was completely destroyed and will have to be completely rebuilt. The elephants were temporarily transferred to safe places and the carers were also brought to safety. But all the

buildings and accommodation were destroyed by the water.

While I write this, the end of October, it is about 20 degrees outside. The whole of nature is confused. Spring flowers have come into bloom once more and mosquitoes are still flying around. The only way to turn the tide is to be more aware about the environment and to be careful about what we buy.



Antoinette brings the elephants HOME

In the last few weeks increasingly more elephants have been wandering the streets in Thai cities. Now that the dry season has begun

in Surin, the 100s of elephants are all moving out of Surin into the city in order to find money and food. For a small amount, tourists

can have a ride on their backs or can buy bananas to feed them.

Antoinette van de Water is now in Thailand to ensure a better future for the street elephants. This has been the case for two elephants: Silver Flower and Sri Nuan are now occupied with a symbolic journey back to freedom.

New tricks

Silver Flower (6 years old) is one of the luckiest elephants. Antoinette says: "When I first saw her, she was cold to the touch and her whole body trembled. Her body was full of scars and fresh wounds. With panic in her eyes, it seemed as if she was letting out a silent cry for help: 'help me!'. Silver Flower begged in Pattaya. Shortly before the elephant rescue team bought her free, she was being 'trained' to learn new tricks, such as play the mouth harmonica. She was stood with both her front legs in chains in a bare rice field in the blazing sun. And despite all she has suffered she is incredibly sweet. Very gentle and interested in all the attention she





is now receiving. Her enormous appetite has ensured that she is quickly growing stronger: several bags of bananas and melons have already been gone through!

Park

During the festival in Surin, so many elephants walk the streets that they are sometimes parked like cars in parking spaces. Sri Nuan (35 years old) was one of those elephants when the elephant rescue team arrived. Her mahout told them that one evening she broke loose from her chains. Someone with a catapult shot her in the eye. She is now blind in one eye, but must still navigate her way down the street. Now blind in one way, she still has to beg on the street. She has a two year old daughter: Nhung Nhung. The mahout sold her

to an elephant show in Phuket. Antoinette: “The idea was to reunite mother and daughter and find them a place together in the Elephant Nature Park. But finding a lost baby elephant in Thailand is not an easy task!”

No more heavy trips

Silver Flower and Sri Nuan were bought free in mid December. The chains with which Silver Flower's front legs were bound together were removed for the final time. They were both transported to a quiet place in a truck where they were well looked after. Silver Flower's wounds were finally treated. And Sri Nuan didn't have to make any more heavy trips carrying tourists on her back. These two will now have a wonderful life as an elephant in the Elephant Nature Park!

Elephant Lesson

The team, including Silver Flower and Sri Nuan, are now involved with an educational journey through the heart of Thailand. They are camping near temples, giving 'elephant lessons' to schools, and have a mobile free animal clinic: Jumbo Express. "The first school we visited was a school with many poor children in Ayutthaya. Alongside elephant lessons, the programme also contains an elephant game, English lessons, a quiz and an art competition," says Antoinette. "But the children simply can not wait until we go to see the elephants. They look at the elephants with big eyes, some of them can't keep their eyes off them. We gave out books and pens, and after school lots of children started their elephant drawings. With a real elephant as a model! The next day we received a thick wad of beautiful drawings of

Sri Nuan and Silver Flower. On many of the drawings the elephants are walking from the town to the jungle, so they clearly listened well." The journey goes through Ayutthaya, Lopburi and Sukhotthai. On around the 22nd of January they will finish at the Elephant Nature Park above Chiang Mai.

But this is not the end of Bring the Elephant HOME! Antoinette: "We are continuing the quest to Nhung Nhung. If we find her, we naturally want to buy her free and bring her to the park. But for the Elephant Nature Park, purchase of land currently has the highest priority, as the park desperately needs more land to be able to take in more elephants."

See www.bring-the-elephant-home for the diary of the journey.



**Silver Flower
reach their fin**



and Sri Nuan al destination





photo: Hans Hendriksen



Family

The elephants are currently getting to know every inhabitant and finding out which family they want to belong to. “The morning after their arrival, Sri Nuan fell head over heels for a three week old baby elephant. An impressive greetings ritual took place with the baby’s mother and aunt with deep sounds, shuffling, and snuffling.

Since then Sri Nuan has not left the baby’s side at all!”

Final Destination

On the 22nd of January, Antoinette van de Water finally reached the end destination of her long journey ‘home’: the Elephant Nature Park near Chiang Mai, Thailand. Two street elephants which had been bought free, Silver Flower and Sri Nuan, had now taken their last steps towards freedom. In the Elephant Nature Park they can move around freely and live in as elephants in herds for the rest of their lives. The last steps were taken through thick jungle, with fresh food all around for the elephants. When they arrived, the park’s 28 elephants were standing waiting for the new arrivals. “Silver Flower and Sri Nuan didn’t have enough eyes and trunks! They were snuffled from all sides, they were blessed by a monk, saw green areas everywhere, and naturally received much food to eat. What a difference to their earlier lives on the streets!” said Antoinette.

Rescue team

The two elephants and the “elephant rescue team”, 12 people in all, finished their tour here, which in total lasted one month. A trek which took them through the heart of Thailand. On the way they stayed for one week in the historic towns of Surin, Ayuthaya, Lopburi en Sukhothai, where they camped in temple complexes. Important parts of this educational tour were the visits to schools where elephant lessons were given, study scholarships were awarded, and the free treatment of domestic animals was offered. Local and national media were targeted to give maximum publicity to the project dealing with the problem of street elephants.

Elephants Hav



ven destroyed



At the beginning of October, Elephant Nature Park was hit by typhoon Damrey (Cambodian for 'elephant'). As a result the park lost a significant amount of land and the recently built complex of huts was destroyed. The land where the grass was grown for the elephants now resembles a rugged desert landscape. Some way further along new huts have been built from the materials which have been rescued. The people here aren't looking so much at what has been destroyed, rather at what can be rescued and how quickly they can start rebuilding. Along the river huge piles have been driven into the ground with sand bags behind them. The flooding has claimed a vast amount of the Elephant Nature Park's reserves,

and the park is in immediate need of financial support. Thanks to the quick reparation work, tourists and volunteers were able to visit the park only a few days later. In December the river will be deepened and rocks will be placed along the embankment. A lot of money is needed to do this. If this happens, there is a good chance that the Elephant Nature Park will be able to stay where at its present location.

Banana plantation

In order to grow, the park needs extra land in the not too distant future. Not only for extra room for more elephants, but also for the growing of grass and other food. The mahouts are now gathering grass from surrounding





areas. In one neighbouring elephant camp, 14 elephants became ill through eating grass with pesticide on it. Two days later 13 of them had died. In the dry season, it does not take long for there to be a shortage of “100% safe grass”. The fear that the elephants can be poisoned is very real. More ground for the park’s own agriculture would provide a solution to this. At the moment the provision of food for the elephants is a huge daily expense. The number of bags bought at the market each day is rising every week. A banana plantation has been bought to solve this problem. This is a structural solution, which they can profit

from every day and which will ensure that the elephants will have enough healthy, safe food to eat. The elephants in the park have a good life. The smallest was born one and a half months ago in the park and now runs with the whole family through the grass. Boon Rod, the street elephant from Chiang Mai, despite being as young and inexperienced as she is, immediately took on the role of protective sister. She follows the baby everywhere, and it is clear to see they are devoted to each other. Boon Rod is so full of energy that it’s hard to believe that two months ago she was wandering around dazed, begging in the night life of Chiang Mai.

South African elephants processed into fresh or canned meat?

D-Day is fast approaching for thousands of elephants in the Kruger National Park. An elephant report advises culling and canning South African elephants. South Africa has more than 17,000 elephants and all 80 private and state reserves with elephants report rapidly growing populations. Scientists are divided on the effects elephants have on other species and vegetation.

The Elephant Managers' and Owners' Association (Emoa), which represents 75 percent of registered state and private elephant owners and managers, believes that nearly every small nature reserve in South Africa with an elephant population has reached the upper limit of capacity, and immediate action is necessary if biodiversity is to be protected.

Opponents

Elephant management policies and methods have been discussed at several conferences arranged by SANP, Emoa and other organisations over the past year, but some scientists and animal welfare groups believe that insufficient attention has been given to those who oppose culling. South African National Parks (SanParks) confirmed publicly that, based on a long-awaited report, they believe they will have to resume killing elephants again as one

way of helping sustain the ecological health of the Kruger National Park (KNP) and other game reserves.

Culling

The report addresses the controversial option of culling. It also looks at other methods of managing populations, including contraception and allowing the animals to re-enter traditional range areas. The report reveals that SanParks are keen to press ahead with culling to prevent elephant damage to the environment and threats to neighbouring communities. It argues that the onus is on those who disapprove of culling to prove that elephants don't damage the environment, and states that the only solution to the debate rests with government decision-makers. SanParks also say they have not worked out how many elephants need to be culled or in which areas of the KNP this



needs to take place, and that their management plan has yet to be finalised. The report will form the basis of draft guidelines to be drawn up by the department of environmental affairs and tourism and provincial authorities, which will be open for public comment before being finalised and presented to the cabinet in early 2006. The guidelines will be used to determine elephant management practices in all South African game reserves. Critics of the SanParks' stance on culling say insufficient attention has been paid to scientists who believe there is no need to cull and that existing research is not conclusive. They also believe that the views of animal welfare groups have been sidelined. Earlier suggestions by SANP officials that culling should be considered were met with vociferous

opposition and some organisations even threatened a tourism boycott of South Africa. The elephant population in the Kruger National Park and bordering private game reserves stands at about 14 000 and is growing at a rate of about seven percent a year, but experts disagree on the degree to which this affects biodiversity. Some believe that the increase in numbers - the population was maintained at just over 7 000 until culling was stopped in 1995 - has resulted in widespread habitat destruction that they argue has a negative effect on other species.

Factors

Others say the ecological effects of the sometimes destructive feeding habits of



elephants are not fully understood, and have called for more studies. “We are looking at a whole range of factors but we are not married to the concept of managing fixed numbers of elephants,” the director of conservation at SANP, Dr Hector Magome, said this week. “No figures have been put to the plans.” The Report on the Elephant Management Strategy states that it is “unreasonable” to expect SanParks to produce conclusive scientific proof of damage to biodiversity caused by elephants. It suggests that the only way to really understand the issue is to first cull

animals and then study what effects this action has on biodiversity. It also argues that while “science should clearly inform conservation decision-making”, the wide range of conflicting views on the issue means that the final decision on culling should be left to the government. Additionally it argues that, rather than SanParks providing proof of elephant threats to biodiversity before reducing populations, the onus falls on those opposed to culling to prove that elephants do not cause long-term damage to the environment. Elephant populations in the KNP were maintained at between 7 000 and 7 500 until international and local pressure forced the suspension of culling operations in 1995. In recent years the population has grown rapidly and stands at about 12 500, with a



further 2 000 elephants in the private reserves bordering the western boundary of the KNP. “We are working on it,” Mabunda said. “It is just a matter of time before we have such a plan. We don’t want to rush into number-crunching - that doesn’t work.” He added that the concept of calculating an elephant “carrying capacity” for the whole KNP had been discarded in favour of “preferred management densities”, which manages elephants according to high-impact and low-impact zones within the park. Elephants may be culled in some “high impact” areas, but left alone in others, and this method, he believes, will help maintain biological diversity and limit the number of elephants that break out of the park into neighbouring communities.

"It is going to be controlled, it's not going to be massive culling throughout the park," Mabunda said.

Other methods

"There will be specific densities that will be determined. Take-offs will be recommended through the specialist scientific group, through our ranger management. It is an ongoing debate within the organisation." He said culling had been recommended because other methods of population control, including translocation, contraception and expanding the elephants' range through transfrontier parks, had not worked in the short term.

"We did not just recommend culling to the minister because we are crazy, bloodthirsty, khaki-clad butchers," he said in an interview at SanParks headquarters this week. "We recommended it because we are not seeing an improvement in the alternative methodologies and those methodologies have not passed muster in terms of scientific scrutiny." He pointed out that there was still space for public participation, and that the minister had yet to decide whether to grant approval for culling. Mabunda said there was an abundance of scientific material available from more than 200 scientists and delegates to several conferences on elephant management, but the concept of adaptive management - which advocates that you "learn by doing" - suggested that actions should be taken as a precaution against any potential loss of biodiversity. "Given the value placed on the maintenance of biodiversity in South Africa's new legislation and the potential for economic returns for both communities and parks, it has to be accepted in principle that it is legitimate to apply population

management as a precaution." Mabunda said the large elephant population had resulted in more and more elephants - he estimates between 150 and 300 a year - breaking out of the park, sometimes damaging crops and endangering lives in poor neighbouring communities. He said that culling could ease pressure in zones bordering populated areas and that more attention had to be paid to what communities near parks think. "When we talk about interested parties and affected parties, we tend to think about the most vocal people who don't even live near those protected areas," he said. "I want the people of Bevhula, I want the people of Nkwinyamahembe, of Lillydale, the people of Mhinga to tell us what they want out of that management plan." Existing legislation requires that any elephants killed in management operations must be utilised as much as possible, and the report suggests that communities bordering the KNP could benefit from the supply of cheap meat, the establishment of canning plants and butcheries, and the creation of other forms of employment.

Needlessly killed

Tens of thousands of elephants have been killed in southern and east Africa during the past 50 years to control populations believed to be damaging the environment, during misguided attempts to prevent tsetse flies breeding (thousands of elephants were needlessly killed in the erroneous belief that they were important in the breeding cycle of the flies) and in the control of "problem animals" and "crop raiders". The animals are usually shot with heavy-calibre hunting rifles or, in some instances, 7.62mm military assault rifles. SanParks officials say the drug scoline



(succinylcholine chloride) will not be used if culling is undertaken because its use is now considered cruel and unethical. The drug, which was extensively used in the KNP in previous culling programmes, is a muscle relaxant which in large doses causes paralysis and the collapse of the respiratory muscles. After darting, the animal remains conscious and aware throughout the process, which takes several minutes. In cases where the drug did not work properly, some animals had to be shot. In culling operations, a family group of elephants, usually about 10 to 20, is herded together by helicopter and driven towards culling teams that shoot the entire herd. Most animals are shot in the brain. During the shooting, the elephants often panic, trumpeting in fear.

Utter confusion

“When things go right, the elephants mill [around in] total and utter confusion and they

don’t know what’s hit them. Just dust and shots and bodies falling down all over,” said a former game department official in Zimbabwe quoted by Douglas Chadwick in his book *The Fate of Elephant*. “We do most of the firing from five to 10 yards. Younger ones aren’t keen on running away from the older ones.” Some scientists believe that the trauma of the incident is spread to other elephants in the area via ultrasound communication used by elephants. Once the elephants have been shot they are loaded into trucks and transported to the nearest abattoir, which, in the case of the KNP, is near Skukuza.

Fresh or canned

The elephants are then processed into fresh or canned meat. The use of ivory and hides is limited by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

Visiting Natumi

There was once a small elephant by the name of Natumi.... That's how most fairytales start. And sometimes, very occasionally, some fairytales come true.

The trip which will take us to Natumi, the elephant I have been godmother to for five years now, starts in Nairobi. At 11 o'clock in the morning we paid a visit to Daphne Sheldrick's orphaned elephants. It is an unforgettable and moving experience. There come the elephants...with melting hearts we look at how the little ones receive their milk from a big bottle. The babies are in constant need of their carers, for games, protection, cuddles, and feeding. The carers naturally take good care of their "elephants". An enormous task and a

huge responsibility. After their drink of milk and a mud bath, the elephants leave for their afternoon walk in the park. In between a family of warthogs appears with a whole load of small 'warts'.

Topis

The next morning we left very early for Masai Mara. A silent wish was fulfilled, as there lay a leopard. Such a stunning animal in the evening light, we were silent with awe.... And as if that wasn't enough we got to see a group of lionesses with young ones. The sun sets in a golden-red glow, it is a privilege to be allowed to be here. For the next day we planned a full day to the Mara. After a short ride we meet a family of topis with calves, they are a beautiful colour in the golden morning light. We ride to the marsh and shortly





see a few large buffalo bulls, and the surrounding land becomes greener. When we get closer we see lion family lying in the shade of a large tree: a lioness with somewhat older children, and slightly further on father Simba sleeping under a dead tree trunk. Further on in the marsh, tens of elephants, mothers and babies are grazing and drinking. The matriarch begins to head in the direction of the lions and we wait nervously. The sounds a warning and suddenly the lions are wide awake.

Tsavo East drew me to it like a magnet: that's where one finds Natumi. A long drive takes us past a few small towns: chaotic, colourful, and dusty. Along the way the landscape change: great baobabs rise up, intermingled with bushy savannah. The earth becomes ochre colour: Tsavo. There's the town of Voi, where Finch Hatton, the friend of Karen Blixen, crashed his aircraft. Voi Safari Lodge is build against the backdrop of hills with a wide view across the savannah. I immediately fall in love with the place. Perhaps because Natumi lives so nearby. From the covered restaurant there is a lovely view across two watering holes where many animals come to drink. We are hoping for many elephants. Are expectations were realised, as you could see them all arriving from afar: a whole herd neatly in row. It starts to rain... After

the hot, sunny days, it was a refreshing change for man and animal.

Sweet character

I can hardly wait, today is the day: seeing Natumi in the flesh. We are shortly off to the rescue centre and even arrive a quarter of an hour too early. It is a few minutes after five when I spot movement in the bush. There come the little orphans, tired after a day out in the wilderness and thirsty. They immediately run to the enclosure where the milk bottles await: four for every elephant. These are the younger orphans and Natumi isn't yet with them. The drinking goes very quickly. Mweiga joins them a little later on. She is a little slower with drinking as she has heart trouble. She is a sweetheart and I delight intensely in that unforgettable moment. We were then called to the other side where the older orphans, including Natumi, were arriving. And there she is, my girl.... I recognised her very quickly, with a little help from Abdi, one of the carers. She's just beautiful. I blink my eyes: is this truly real? The small matriarch Natumi: slender legs, head held high, sweet character, fine tusks, and a super flexible trunk. Later she goes to visit the palisade.... There is a pile of cut-off branches. Edie goes outside and heads towards the other group. Natumi immediately wants to follow her but can't. She remains rest-



less for the whole time. She keeps coming over to us and then shakes her head, a sign that she doesn't like something. She continues to pace in a circle round the palisade. A little later she is visibly calmer and starts munching on leaves. Tsavo, a sturdy bull suddenly comes purposefully towards me and grips my hand with his trunk, he wants to suck on my fingers. We talk ten to the dozen

with her baby. Their bodies contrasted well against the grey grass of the savannah. They ambled slowly over in our direction. In the afternoon we descended into the observation tunnel via Voi Lodge. Shortly afterwards elephants began to appear: a tuskless female with a not so young child and another young one came to drink a bit and throw some mud around. We looked,

breathless, from a distance of only 5 metres. The garden around the lodge is also heavily inhabited by klipdasjes, agamen en hagedissen. As soon as the sun sets the genetats and bats come out. Frogs start a deafening serenade. In front of our bedroom the grass is 'mowed' by a dominant waterhog iguanas.

Giraffe-gazelles

A beautiful morning, as ever in Africa. Today on the



with Abdi about Africa's fauna and when the time comes to say goodbye, it's with heavy hearts that we leave. Abdi asks if I will return next year and is visibly moved. I give Natumi a strong hug and then, sadly, we have to go. Bye, Natumi, hopefully you will have a long and happy life, and we will see you again soon. The bond we have made here is one I will carry with me in my heart. The time has flown by far too quickly; I want to see, experience, touch so much more.

Observation tunnel

The follow day is cooler and cloudy. It was drizzling a bit but that only made the colours of the wildlife more intense. The surrounding is so overwhelming that you forgot all minor troubles. We came across a majestic female elephant

itinerary is a longer journey to Luggards Falls. A greener landscape beckons. The river and waterfalls are there. All around us there are monumental rock formations and rotsholtes. Once again it becomes hot, and on the ride back we see the red sandy roads in all their dusty glory. On the way we spy a small group of giraffe-gazelles who are crossing the road. We are only able to catch a glimpse of them as they are shy animals. Further on we need to stop for a short while as a small herd of elephants crosses the road. We stop and enjoy the wonderful scene, once again. I find all elephants beautiful and can not get enough of them. Back at the lodge, there are also elephants at the watering hole. We observe two bulls who are romping in and next to the water. I would like to stay here forever.

Tsavo-West

Our trip continues to the nearby Taita Game Sanctuary. During our last breakfast in Voi, an enormous herd of buffaloes arrived to drink at the pool. What a show, there seemed to be no end to the long line of animals. After a fairly short ride we see our next abode: the Salt Lick Lodge is breathtaking and very special, as it is built on poles. As we approach a herd of elephants has just arrived. Could it get any better? It seems just like the 'Garden of Eden'. Close to the watering hole we see zebras, topis, gazelles, hartebeests, elephants, buffaloes and waterbucks. We sit on stools only a few metres away from the water and watch patiently. An enormous bull with two broken tusks comes to have a drink. I watch and enjoy.... A second bull joins them: what power and beauty. After they have had their fill they give up the space to another herd: mothers, aunts and very small babies. You can easily identify the

matriarch. Everything I had previously read in my elephant books I could now see live before me. Suddenly there is dissension in the group. Trumpeting, grumbling and jostling is the result. We continue to watch the many elephant families taking it in turns to drink until dusk arrives. Tomorrow we leave for Tsavo West, the other section of the amazing nature park. A beautiful ride through a changing landscape of thick bush, red earth, and hills with acacias. At the gate we are amiably waved on by park rangers. The ride is, as usual, dusty, but soon we arrive at the next spell-binding location. Tsavo West has a totally different landscape: savannah interspersed with hills. Here and there an old baobab rises up in the distance. Near to the water we see many animals: hippopotami, crocodiles, birds, giraffes, waterbucks and reedbucks, and, of course, elephants. We also see a herd of giraffes, some 15 or so animals standing next to each other drinking.



A captivating spectacle. Elephant families cruise back in our direction, you just can't help but keep watching....

Cheetah

The next morning we get up early for an early game drive. Before long we see hyenas, a sign that lions are in the area. A few lionesses with their young are having breakfast – probably a young gnu – lying in the cool of a few palm trees. Now and then there appears to be some arguing, judging from the grumbling and growling. Nearby some hyenas and jackals patiently await their turn for food. We ride on further and suddenly we unexpectedly find ourselves eye to eye with a cheetah. We are delighted. The cheetah pricks its ears and discovers prey in shrubs. She takes a couple of giant leaps and grabs a large hare who was sitting hidden. She quickly turns on her heels and disappears into the bush. We wait patiently. After half an hour she reappears and moves on a bit to have a drink. Afterwards she makes an elegant jump over the brook and heads out onto the plain. We remain behind, breathless.....

Heart-melting

On the way to the lodge we come cross a herd of elephants who are up to their shoulders in the marsh. The small white herons hitch a ride on their broad backs. After dinner we go to 'Observation Hill'. Above you have a 360 degree panorama view over the park. We are there alone and enjoy the views. Back on the plain we see many elephants: protective mothers, vulnerable babies. One of them is very small and unsteady on his feet, and even still has down on top of its head. It is heart-melting to see everything the little one gets up to. I am enjoying these last few days of safari in this glorious park immensely.

its end

On our last day we travelled back to Nairobi. In the orphanage we saw Makena: the loveliest, sweetest, and smallest elephant at that moment. I beamed as I stroked her on her head. We watched how she gleefully received her milk. In her stall she played with the covers and a bunch of twigs. It is much to early to say the goodbye. A fairytale is at its end....



Elephant phobia in Vietnam

There seems to be a problem with aggressive elephants in the central province of Vietnam. In the province live about three herds of approximately 7 to 10 elephants. According to residents, a group of elephants has been aggressive since 1992. At that time 9 of the 14 elephants of the same herd were slain by hunters. The remaining elephants became ferocious after that. In elephant population control studies in Africa, researchers have found that if a few of a herd are left alive, they will remember and start attacking humans, unprovoked.





Living in harmony

Another reason for the aggressive behaviour of elephants could be the encroachment of humans on elephant's habitats and food sources. Because of human activities, such as agriculture or mining activities, food sources are depleted. Methods to drive the elephants away, like using explosives, only make them angry. Several people have lost family members, who were killed by aggressive elephants. This poses a real problem, since for a lot of the people in this area life is already difficult. To support a family, (often with a lot of children) with only one of the parents is often nearly impossible. Older people say they remember the elephants and humans always living together in

harmony. The elephants were good-natured and friendly. Now their behaviour has changed and they have killed many people in the last ten years.

Both sides

To preserve the elephant herds while protecting the people and their crops, Quang Nam authorities have relocated 51 households in the Tien Phuoc and Que Son districts in the province. Another option is to try to move all the elephants into one area. Authorities are investigating the area and are studying conflict prevention measures. They have yet, however, to find one feasible strategy. They are trying to find a way to preserve life on both sides of this heated row.

Auction for Born

On the 2nd of October, surrounded by heavy interest, the WWF arranged the auction of Prince Bernhard's elephant collection at Het Loo Royal Palace. Some 3,500 interested parties bore witness to the unique and irreplaceable royal collection going under the hammer. The auction, led by Sotheby's, lasted for six hours and raised a total of € 379.250 for the dangerously threatened forests of Borneo, living habitat for animals such as the orang-utan and dwarf elephant.

Top pieces

Prince Bernhard's entire elephant collection comprised around 1,000 elephants and ranged from small miniatures to large paintings, from expensive unique pieces of art to simple, mass-produced items. And so these pieces, which included an elephant made of crystal with gold tusks, but also candles and watering cans in the shape of elephants, all went under the hammer. The elephants were auctioned individually or in small groups by auctioneers Diederik Westerhuis and Patrick van Maris van Dijk. The auction's top items included, amongst others, a bronze elephant by Belgian sculptor Tremont, which sold for € 16.000, and a 19th century pendant in the shape of an elephant which went

for € 11.000. An elephant donated by Queen Beatrix also raised the considerable sum of € 7500. Prince Bernhard gave this green-brown serpentine elephant statue to his daughter many years ago.

All elephants sold for more than their taxed (material) worth, in some cases as much as 10 or 20 times more. Only a few elephants were sold for less than € 1000. "This exceeds our wildest expectations!" said Niek van Heijst, director of the WWF. "We are truly unbelievably happy with this beautiful donation



eo great succes



for Borneo. Prince Bernhard himself was deeply moved when he looked an orphaned baby orang-utan in the eyes in Indonesia, and said that he would never forget that look for as long as he lived. We find it really amazing that so many people, by buying a personal memento of the prince, are contributing at the same time to the protection of Borneo's forests."

Personal mementos

Sotheby's auctioneer Patrick van Maris van Dijk: "I have never stood before such a great number of bidders. And I have never led an auction where everything has sold! It was clear that not only did people very much want to have a personal item in remembrance of Prince Bernhard, but that they also wanted to support WWF. A terrific combination!"

Borneo

Prince Bernhard's four daughters had donated their famous elephant collection to the WWF. The WWF decided to put the collection up for auction and donate the proceeds to a cause

which was also close to Prince Bernhard's heart: protection the natural kingdom of the Asian island Borneo. In terms of natural habitat Borneo is a treasure island with an enormous biodiversity of plants and animals. But through illegal logging, construction of (palmoil) plantations and forest fires, Borneo's forests will have disappeared by 2010, according to the World Bank's forecasts. The WWF will use the proceeds of the auction to create more protected areas in Borneo, to protect better existing protected areas than is currently happening, and to stimulate a lasting economical development in Borneo. The WWF aims, for example, to develop eco-tourism on Borneo, but also to realise the lasting production of palm oil and sustainable logging.



Elephants attack

It has been almost a month since Sakdani had a good night's sleep. It was a month ago that he began staying up into the early hours of the morning to protect his banana plantation from being totally destroyed by rampaging elephants. The elephants already have ruined great areas of the plantation, and he would do everything in his power to protect the rest of his land.

Other residents of the Acar Besar district, Sumatra Isle, are facing the same problem of how to protect their watermelon and papaya plantations from the elephants. There, habitat has shrunk drastically over the past several years.

Plantation

The area around Sakdani's plantation is prone to elephant attacks, being situated on the edge of the animals' natural habitat. Sakdani recalls that when he was a child, he would see hundreds of elephants wandering through the forest near Teuladan district. However, the number of elephants in the area has plunged in recent years and Sakdani estimates there are no more than dozens of elephants left in the area. Despite their small numbers,

the number of conflicts between elephants and residents has risen. This is probably because the elephants' habitat has been drastically reduced by illegal logging, leaving the animals to roam through the plantations near Teuladan subdistrict in search of food. The animals not only take fruit from the plantations, but they also fell trees and electricity poles. Sakdani was worried that it was only a matter of time before the elephants began attacking the residential areas located about two kilometres from the plantations. "When night falls, the elephants come from all different directions and begin to steal fruit," said Sakdani.

The threat is real, and if something is not done the farmers will suffer crippling losses. Since



fruit plantations

the elephant attacks began in earnest a couple of years ago, papaya and banana production in the area have dropped by about 40 percent. A group of plantation owners have got together to protect their land, using anything at their disposal to stop the animals. Residents have notified the local government several times about the problem but have so far received no assistance. According to a government estimate, the number of elephants in the area is about 400. The animals are on the brink of disappearing entirely from the area due to poaching and illegal logging, which has destroyed the elephants' natural habitat. At the same time expert Wisnu Wardhana, a zoo and wild animal consultant from WWF, has called on the Indonesian government to step in to save Sumatra's elephants, whose population has dwindled in recent years. Data states that the number of elephants has decreased enormously. In 1985 the number of Sumatra elephants was estimated between 1,067 and 1,617 and between 356 and 435 in 2003.

Declining population

Wisnu said that the declining population was attributed to the rapid deforestation of Sumatra's jungles, forest fires and the conversion of forests to plantations. The shrinking of the elephants' habitat has also brought adverse effects. Elephants have ventured into nearby villages in search of food. This leads to the fatalities of both humans and elephants.

Protect

In order to protect the rare species, the government has established training centres for elephants in several places and areas. The elephants



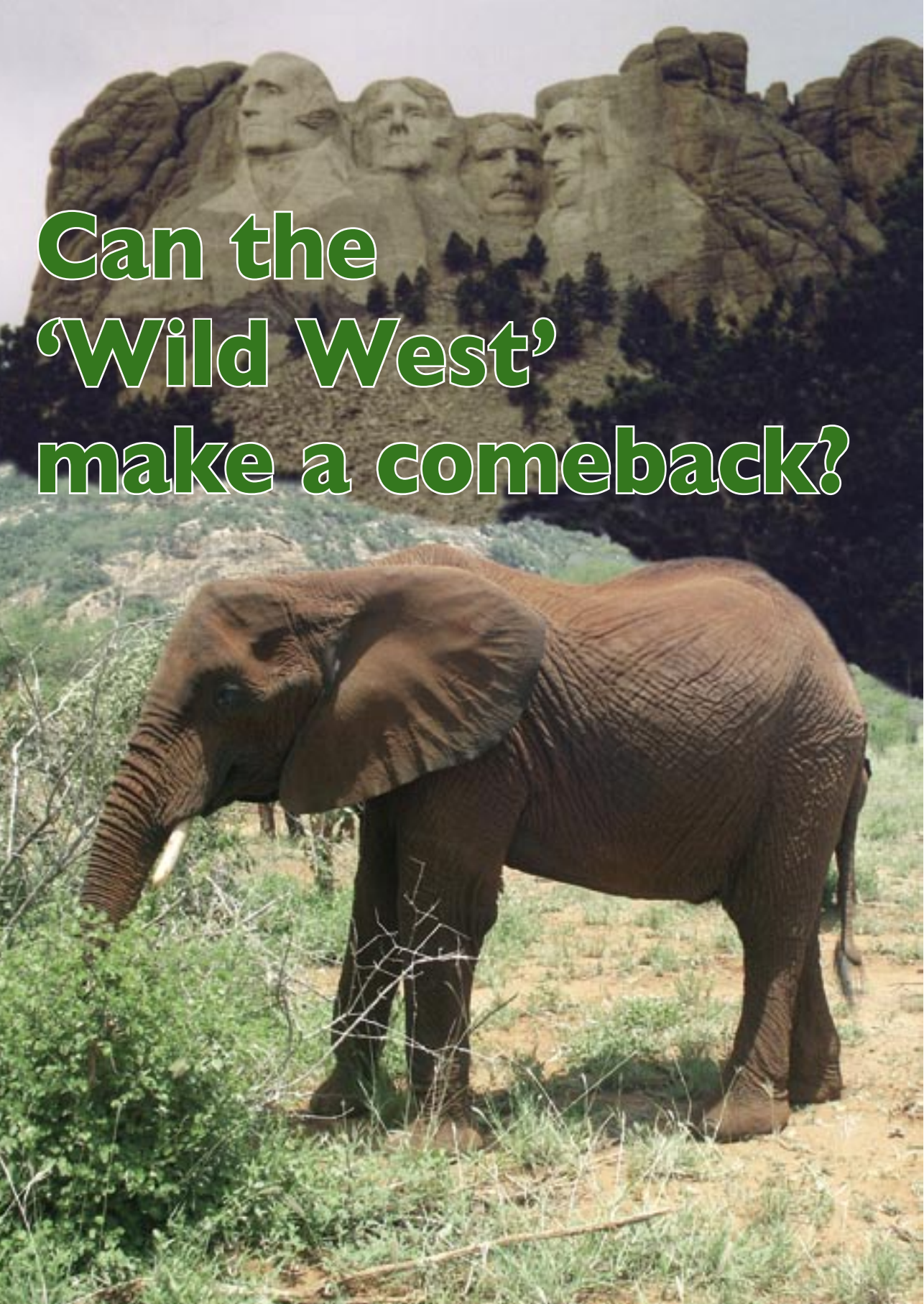
are trained to help humans lift cargo or logs. This also led to elephant deaths by mishandling. In other cases, staff at the centres captured young elephants but failed to capture their mothers, which resulted in the deaths of the young elephants due to lack of nutrition. The training centres are underfunded and cannot provide adequate nourishment for the young elephants. A young elephant needs at least one litre of skimmed milk a day. According to government data, 96 elephants died at the training centres or in the hands of humans between 2000 and 2005. "The government must ensure that only well-trained people can look after the elephants," said expert Wisnu.





photo: Jan van Duinen

**Can the
'Wild West'
make a comeback?**



Huge clouds of dust can be seen blowing on the horizon. But this time they have not been caused by elephants (even though they are involved), but by scientists who have launched an idea which is no less than remarkable. An idea which could lead to revival of the 'Wild West'. Not with cowboys and herds of cattle, but with large animals of prey such as lions, leopards and ... elephants!

On the 17th of August this year, a group of scientists from Cornell University, New York, led by ecologist Josh Donlan¹, published a plan to bring back animals which, around 13,000 years ago (during the Pleistocene era), populated North America. At the time, the far-reaching lands of the Great Plains were populated by large animals of prey (megafauna) such as the mastodon, the American mammoth, cave lion, the sabre tooth tiger, the American

camel, various horses and bison. Because the arrival of man resulted in the extinction of all these species, the animals would now have to be replaced with the far-removed, although genetically very similar, family members. Thus: elephants, lions, cheetahs, camels, etc.

Aim

Donlan states that nature protectors are currently mainly trying to prevent the extinction of various species of animal. North American nature protectors often use the arrival of Columbus in 1492 as a starting point for the restoration of fauna. They are striving to keep the animals who were there at that time. But the first 'Americans' arrived around 13,000 years ago in North America. The same large mammals were encountered on all continents. Interference from man resulted in the extinction of much megafauna and the smaller species began to make up the animal kingdom. But it is the greater carnivores and herbivores (meat and plant eaters) who often play an important role in supporting the diver-



sity of life forms. Donlan wants to replace the current (often deficient) methods of preserving animals on the verge of extinction by actively restoring the natural processes – by bringing back (close relations of) the original occupants.

Via this ‘re-wilding’ he wants to

- a. make a contribution to the upkeep of the African fauna;
- b. create an ecosystem that closely follows the North American ecosystem from the Pleistocene era.

An additional advantage would be the boost to the ecotourism and ailing economy of the Great Plains.

Three phases

Donlan’s team see the plan in three phases:

Phase 1: the (re)introduction of the heavy Bolson-tortoise, (Przewalski-)horses, donkeys and camels.

Phase 2 (naturally more controversial!): keeping a certain number of Asian and African elephants, lions and cheetahs on private ground. The idea behind the introduction of – for example – the elephants is that in North America there were once five sorts of Proboscides (elephant ancestors like mammoths, mastodons and gomphotheres) roaming the land. Like their African and Asian cousins now, they probably ensured that the grass areas didn’t become overgrown with forests. According to Donlan it should be possible, along with the current elephants living in captivity in the US, to bring approximately 16,000 tame Asian elephants over to North America. The elephants would then be kept *and* looked after in a ‘natural’ environment and let them



graze on and keep under control the grass lands in turn. Besides the elephants, farmers also stand to gain when well-herded elephant populations keep the grass land under control and contribute to the ecotourism.

Phase 3 then needs to be used for setting up a number of ‘ecological-historical parks’ in far-reaching areas of the Great Plains where the current economic situation is not good. The animals would have sufficient room and surrounding villages and towns would benefit, once more, from the ecotourism.

Opposers and critics

It will surprise no-one that those proposing this plan have had to endure much criticism (and sniggering). Few see the prospect of lions roaming freely in their neighbourhood as an exciting one. Some reactions:

Donald Grayson (University of Washington):

“There is no talk of restoration when the animals you are introducing have never been here in the first place.”

Callum Rankine from the WWF: “We already have such an area and it’s called Africa.” She believes that it will not be a simple matter to get the Americans to vote positively for

the future of elephants and other predators. She also pointed to the fact that animals from Africa can spread disease and that it is not clear what the consequences for the ecosystem will be. She prefers to devote her energies and resources to the protection to animals currently under threat.

Christopher Irwin Smith (University of van Idaho) states that Donlan's plan doesn't take into account the changes in environment (such as climate change) which have taken place in the previous 13,000 years) and which resulted in other types of plants and animals with a new ecological balance. He fears that the imported animal species would therefore react rather differently to their new surroundings than expected. It could of course bring fantastic results, but it could also be that the animals would not be able to survive, or that they develop to the cost of other endangered species.

Steven Shay (Washington State University) thinks that the plan severely ignores the needs of the human occupants of the grass

lands. He states that it has already cost a lot of effort to bring back the – likewise almost extinct – bison back. Now that that is finally becoming more and more accepted and beginning to bear fruit, you can't immediately demand that the farmers also welcome lions and elephants.

Supporters

Naturally there are also positive reactions. The plan still throws up certain questions. Questions such as 'Are the chosen species of animals sufficiently closely related to their predecessors to form a good replacement?' Are these species of animals capable of restoring the ecological balance, which does not seem to be possible via different means?' and 'Is this the way to preserve the diversity in animals (and plants) that is currently being threatened in Africa and Eurasia? Some see the project as a good opportunity to find the answers to these questions. Besides the fact that the plan is seen as an opportunity to combat the extinction of various species of animals and



restore the ecosystem, people also frequently name the possible boost for the local economy through ecotourism that undoubtedly would follow.

A unique plan?

Well, no! Eric Dinerstein and W. Robert Irvin from the WWF (Washington) point out that Donal and his colleagues are not joining similar projects which already exist. The WWF and the American Prairie Foundation, for example, have already launched an ambitious plan to use a large area in Montana, partly from the government, partly brought from individuals, as a living area for a variety of species of animals who lived during the previous 10,000 years on the North American grass lands.

Blind patches

Then there is also the article of Paul S. Martin and David A. Burney (*Whole Earth Spring 2000*)², entitled “Bring back the elephants”. They actually had the same idea as Donlan’s team, but they wanted to start the project with the animals which they believed had exerted biggest influence on their natural surroundings. Mega herbivores “as powerful as fire in their dynamic influence upon ecosystems”: ancestors of elephants. Because their influence was so great, it is important to find out as much as possible about the extinct species, but there are still many “blind patches” in the knowledge of scientists. Through the genetic relationship of the African and Asian elephants with the elephant species in the Pleistocene, these



animals can help fill in the “blind patches” that ecologists have. Because these enormous animals procreate at a slow rate, it would be possible to keep any eventual unwanted developments under control. Martin and Burney think that we can learn an awful lot from the elephants if they get the opportunity to ‘start up’ once more the eco-system from 13,000 years again, in which their ancestors played such an important role.

Wild West

It is naturally an idea that requires some thought. There will be mixed feelings amongst the human occupants of the Great Plains. Put simply: it would of course be fantastic to look out of your kitchen window and see elephants walking by ... as long as they didn’t visit your carefully planted kitchen garden! ‘Re-wilding’ seems a wild plan and a lot of water will have to pass under the bridge before it can be realised. But seeing as we humans can be held responsible, to a large extent, for the extinction of elephant species (not forgetting other species of animal), we do owe them a new chance. And, who knows, this could be the chance they are waiting for!

KIDS PAGES

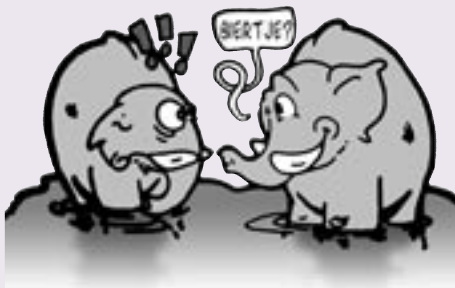
The Elephant Alphabet

A is for Africa and Asia

The countries where elephants live in the wild. Incidentally, African elephants are slightly bigger than Asian elephants.

B is for Bull

A bull is a male elephant. Bulls are the biggest mammals on earth. They weigh the same as 12 horses!



C is for communication

A long word that actually means 'talking'. Elephants talk to each other by cackling, bellowing, snorting, and rumbling sounds with their stomach.

D is for drinking

Elephants drink at least 70 litres a day! Elephants can put away 100 litres in five minutes!

E is for eating

Elephants are also excellent eaters: they eat for 16 hours a day! In that time they can work through between 100 and 200 kilos a day!

F is for feet

Elephants have sturdy feet to carry their heavy bodies. An elephant foot can have a circumference (the distance around the outside of the foot) of 1.5 metres.



G is for grey

An elephant's skin is wrinkly and mainly grey. The wrinkles allow the mud to stick better. Did you know there are also white elephants?!

H is for herd

The females of the family stay together in herds for their whole lives. They take good care of each other. The men make their way on their own when they are grown up.

I is for ivory

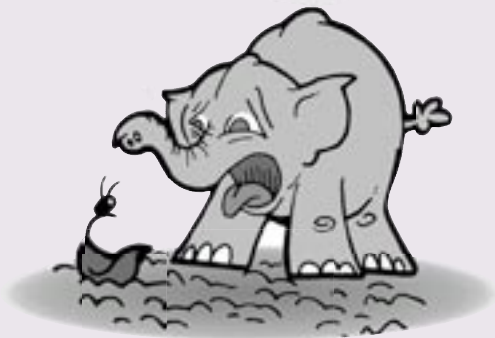
Elephants' tusks are made of ivory. Many elephants used to be killed because humans wanted the ivory.

J is for jaws

The eating of all those plants wears an elephant's teeth down. Sometimes so badly that there is no tooth left! Luckily a new one grows in its place.

K is for Kenya

The country of the orphaned elephant you have adopted. As soon as the elephant is big enough, it will be released into a wildlife park in Kenya.



L is for large ears

The ears of the African elephant are simply enormous! Sometimes as big as a bed sheet and as heavy as a human!

M is for mud

Elephants simply love mud. They take regular mud baths. This is good for their skin and provides a protective covering against the warm sun.

N is for nails

Elephants' nails are worn down naturally when they walk. But elephants don't walk much in zoos and their nails have to be regularly cut back.

O is for opponents

There are no animals who dare to attack a fully grown elephant. It's a shame that humans do. Lions and tigers will sometimes attack a baby elephant.

P is for poaching

Elephants weren't only hunted for their ivory tusks for were also hunted for the fun of it. Some people really are stupid!



R is for running

Elephants can't gallop. They walk and run with shuffling feet. They usually walk 25 kilometres a day in search of food.

S is for swimming

Yes, elephants can swim, and they swim very well! They can even swim for 6 hours in a row.



T is for trunk

The most incredible part of an elephant: its trunk. With 60,000 muscles in the trunk, the elephant can do everything with it! A very useful thing.

U is for Unbelievable

Something crazy: elephants can get drunk if they eat too much overripe fruit. Imagine it - such an enormous animal swaggering and wandering about!

V is for very good hearing

Elephants can hear better than us. They hear much lower tones. They can hear the rumbling of another elephant's tummy from a distance of 8 kilometres away.

W is for water

If they are able to, elephants will look for a new source of water every day to drink and have a good swim in. Elephant love water!

X is for 'xcrement

In other words, poo! Elephants produce huge amounts of it! Dung beetles live on elephant poo - they eat it and lay their eggs in it.

Z is for the end of things.

Elephants say goodbye when they mourn for their dead. When a family member dies, the other elephants comfort her young and stay in the area for days to say goodbye.



Jokes

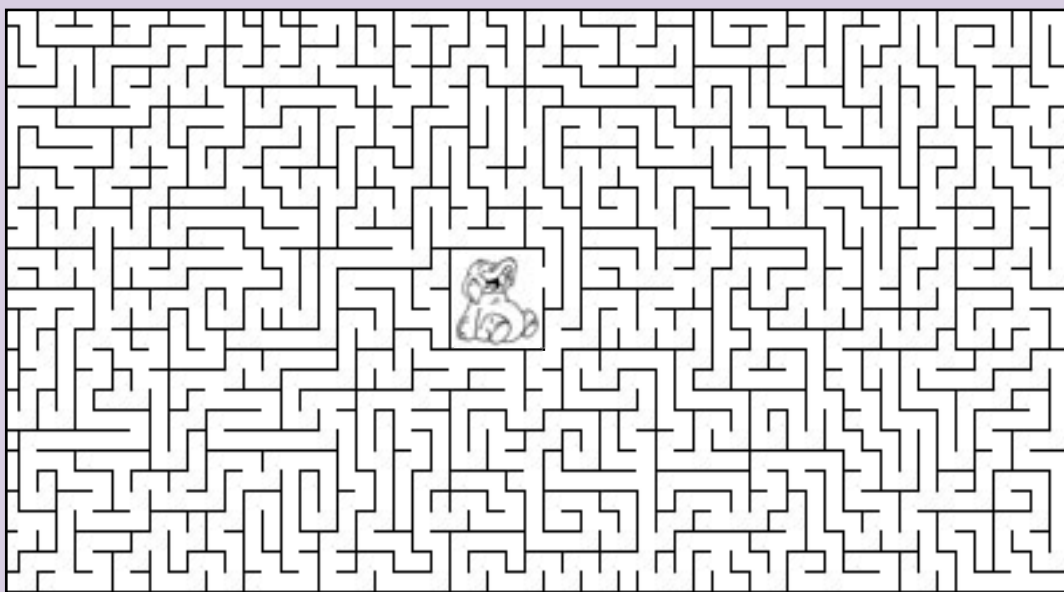
How do you know when an elephant is in your fridge?
Answer: when the door won't shut!

Have you ever seen an elephant behind a
blade of glass? No?
Answer: Just goes to show how well they can
hide themselves!

Why did the elephant cross the road?
Answer: It was the chicken's day off!

Maze

Help the elephant find its way out of the maze.



Elephant handicraft

This time: make your own chocolate elephant puffs



Ingredients:

- Melted chocolate for covering
- 100ml water
- 40g butter
- a pinch of salt
- 50g self raising flour
- 2 eggs
- whipped cream for the filling



Step 1: Bring the water, butter and salt to the boil in a pan. Turn the heat down and add the flour until it binds together and forms a ball. Take it off the heat and let it cool slightly. Add the eggs one by one until you have a gleaming mass. Let an adult help you.

Step 2: Take two teaspoonfuls of the mixture at a time and place it in small heaps on a greased baking tray.

Step 3: Place the baking tray in the middle of an oven pre-heated to 225 C. Allow 10 tot 15 minutes for small puffs.

Step 4: Dip the cooled puffs in the melted chocolate.

Step 5: Fill them with whipped cream.



GOOD LUCK!!

Help the Asian elephants to survive, support the **S.O.S. Asian Elephant Fund**



Elephants Haven, where maltreated elephants can live freely, is one of the projects supported by the S.O.S. Asian Elephant Fund.

The Asian elephant is the most threatened. Young elephants are still being taken (illegally) from the wild to work as work-elephants or tourist attractions. Their natural habitat in Asia is becoming smaller and smaller, leading to greater conflict between humans and elephants. Because the bulls are being killed for their ivory, the survival of the species is in jeopardy. That's why we set up the S.O.S. Asian Elephant Fund. By becoming an Elephant Protector, you will be making an important contribution to the survival of the Asian elephant. The Asia Bulletin keeps all Elephant Protectors up to date with all the latest progress and developments.

Would you like to become an Elephant Protector?

For a donation of only £ 3.75 / € 5 / \$ 6,25 per month
you can protect the Asian elephants.

Take a look on the website: www.elephantfriends.org

Or send us an email: friends@elephantfriends.org

Elephant die in the fire at Park Pilanesberg

In a fierce fire on Friday 23rd September in the National Park Pilanesberg, in the north west of South Africa, at least 7 elephants lost their lives. About 20 elephants, mostly young ones, were able to be saved. Manager of the park Peter Leitner's first reaction was to describe it as "the greatest disaster he has witnessed in the previous 20 years." The NSPCA (The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), the South African animal protection organisation, has expressed its appreciation for the action undertaken after the fire, but is concerned about the future of the elephants. The organisation has pleaded for a humane treatment of the animals and advised, amongst others, euthanasia in cases where there is immense suffering.

The National Park Pilanesberg, a park of around 55,000 hectares on the edge of the leisure centre Sun City, suffered a fierce fire on Friday 23rd September. The park, which was opened in 1979, lies a short 2 hour drive to the north west of Johannesburg and is home to more than 6,000 wild animals. This initially involved bringing in rhinoceroses from the Natal province, species of antelope from parks in South African and Namibia, and elephants were flown in from Addo Elephant Park, the

national park which is situated to the north of the South African city Port Elizabeth.

Weather conditions

During the last few months, the south of Africa has been ravaged by extreme weather conditions, with the heat and wind playing an important role. In South Africa alone, many thousands of hectares were destroyed by constant fires. In the province of Freetown, for example, more than 400,000 hectares were



young elephants in particular have been badly affected. This is the third fire this year that the park has suffered and it is noticeable that only the elephants have been victims. Not one other animals has been affected by the fires,” said Leitner.

Damage

A team of specialists managed to bring a large number of the affected elephants to safety. The team, which included

destroyed by fire in the past few weeks. Even The National Park Pilanesberg has been savaged several times by the claws of fire. It was on Friday 23rd September that a fire broke out in the park, which a large number of elephants ended up victims of. Immediately after the call to the fire brigade, a number of rescue workers raced to the place of disaster and were able to save the majority of the elephants (particularly the young ones) from the growing fire. Unfortunately help came too late for a number of elephants. Peter Leitner, manager of Park Pilanesberg, was one of the first to reach the elephants threatened by the fire. In his first statement he said he was deeply affected by what he had seen. “The fire began on Tuesday 20th September, outside of the park, and before we knew it a large area of the park was on fire. This is the worst that I have encountered in the 20 years I have been working here. The

vets Douw Grober and JJ van Altena, worked through the night to save as many elephants as possible. The vets’ priorities on the first night were directed towards the young animals who had relatively speaking had suffered the greatest amount of damage from the fire. “The young elephants are smaller and stand with their bodies closer to the ground, and therefore suffered the most burn injuries,” said JJ van Altena, one of the vets involved in the rescue operation. “Particularly to their stomach, below their legs, on their face and round their eyes. Four elephants had suffered so badly that we had to put them to sleep.” Of the threatened elephants, 20 were saved and were transported to a private reserve in Hammanskraal. Peter Leitner, speaking about the elephants’ situation one day after the fire, said: “We are seriously questioning whether some of the elephants will survive this. If they

recover, it will take a fair number of months.” Besides the four elephants who were put out of their suffering, one elephant died on the spot and another was attacked by a number of lions and didn’t survive.

NSPCA

The fire at Park Pilanesberg has led to a reaction in the recent weeks from the NSPCA (The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), the South African animal protection society. In a statement, the organisation declared its immense thanks to the rescue operation was that was set in place upon discovery of the fire, but pleaded for a humane handling of the elephants. The NSPCA advised euthanasia, in cases of unbearable suffering. The statement, issued on the 13th of October, stated: ‘The NSPCA is of the opinion that the animals

should not suffer unnecessarily, especially now that it appears that a return to normal life in the wild is probably not possible. Approximately a month after the disaster in Park Pilanesberg, experts were asking what should be done with the animals who had survived the fire. Despite the many requests to set the animals free, that has not as yet happened. According to Peter Leitner this is because the elephants are still too traumatised. Leitner thinks that the elephants should only be released into the wild if that can be in an area where there is more surveillance, for example in areas that tourists visit. In the meantime the messages of support and donations from many parts of the world continue to stream in. According to Leitner this support is desperately needed, as the whole operation of caring, food, and help has costs the park many tens of thousands of Euros.



Tame elephants

In India's north-eastern state of Assam, groups of tame elephants – called kunkis – are being used to control the excesses of their wild cousins. Marauding wild herds cause mayhem and a number of deaths every year. Now more than 200 “raids”, putting tame elephants in the path of wild herds to get them to back off, have been conducted by expert handlers. In one badly affected district where the tactic was first tried, the number of deaths has been halved. The unique tactic has been perfected as part of a human-elephant conflict-mitigation strategy.

Forest officials track the movement of the herds of wild elephants and the kunkis then

proceed to the area that is threatened. The tamed elephants are driven into place by expert handlers, or mahouts.

Introduced

The scheme comes under the North Bank Landscape Project of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). The tactic was first introduced and developed in Assam's Sonitpur district on the north bank of Brahmaputra river. Between 25 and 30 people have lost their lives to wild elephants in Sonitpur every year since 2000. District officials there say after the kunkis were introduced last year, fewer than 15 people have died. Ten wild elephants have been hunted



curb wild cousins



down and killed during the period, they said.

Red chilli bombs

The kunkis or tame elephants form the core of the “anti-depredation” squads, which have been formed by the Assam forest department, supported by the WWF. Assam’s forestry minister, Pradyut Bordoloi, said 50 anti-depredation units had been set up with forestry officials, mahouts and equipment such as searchlights and sound generators.

Previously wildlife experts had tried tripwires and “red chilli bombs” to keep wild elephants away from villages.

Trained elephants

The Chief Minister, Mr Pratapsing Rane said

that the Karnataka government has agreed to send five trained elephants to tame three wild elephants which had caused extensive damage to the plantations in Sal, Mencurem, Adval Pal, Latambarcem, Pirna and Nadora villages of Bicholim and Bardez talukas.

Compensation

Mr Rane was speaking before the affected farmers this evening after assessing the damage caused by three wild elephants, who have entered Goa through Maharashtra and later lost the track. He said that when he spoke to his counterpart in Karnataka, Mr Dharam Singh, yesterday, the latter agreed to help to tame stray elephants. Earlier in the day, Mr Rane told reporters in city that the



preliminary investigation revealed destruction of crops to the tune of Rs 2.50 lakh and that the government had decided to provide compensation to the affected farmers.

Precautionary steps

Mr Rane distributed financial aid to the tune of Rs 2 lakh as immediate relief to 17 affected farmers under the Chief Minister's Relief Fund at Sal, Mencurem and Advalpal Villages. He said five trained elephants, along with mahout, will arrive in Goa soon to herd the wild elephants which have strayed into Goa from Maharashtra causing damage to paddy and other crops. The exercise of driving the wild

elephants, which have lost their track, to enter into its habitat, will be completed in three to four days, he said.

Stating that he has given directions to the Forest Department to take all precautionary steps to avoid further damage, Mr Rane said there is no cause for worry from wild animals provided the people do not cause harm to them. The Chief Minister said he has received a total of 40 cases of affected people from five villages and further informed that the concerned mamlatdar will assess the damage caused to more people, if any. Forest Department also has its own relief scheme in this regard, he said.

Kenya's ark

The Shimba Hills Reserve in Kenya currently offers habitat to 600 elephants, which is three times more than it can comfortably handle. This results in animals moving into populated areas where they destroy crops and injure people.

Hence it was decided that over 400 elephants from Shimba Hills National Reserve had to be transported more than 220 miles to the northern part of Tsavo East National Park in order to protect wildlife and reduce conflict with local people. However, it is the same Tsavo East National Park where the elephant population was severely reduced by poachers in the 1970s, 80s and early 90s. 10,397 Elephants now reside at Tsavo East National Park, down from

a peak of 25,268 in 1972. The heaviest losses of elephants were suffered during the 1980s and early 1990s when poachers destroyed Kenya's pachyderms. Poaching has since subsided, helped by a 1989 global ban on the ivory trade that has caused prices to drop. Kenya Wildlife Service Director Julius Kipng'etich said that his organization has increased security in the area where the elephants will be relocated, by deploying 83 young ranger recruits to Tsavo



East last July and by having regular aerial patrols. Kipng'etich is convinced that if the poachers come, his organization will be ready.

Relocation operation

The first bull elephant was darted by a ranger in a helicopter shortly after dawn on a Thursday in September last, bound with rope and loaded onto a truck for what should have been the start of an ambitious relocation operation. The 22-year-old male elephant was to be the first to have been transported on the eight-hour drive. The next Saturday entire family groups were to follow. However, Kenya Wildlife Service rangers discovered their truck wasn't up to the job. The biggest elephant relocation Kenya has ever attempted was suspended indefinitely after the truck's trailer broke under the bull's weight. After this incident 150 elephants were moved, this number consists of 32 different family units and 20 independent bulls. For days, tourists, journalists, scientists and lovers of nature camped in the wilds of Shimba Hills to witness this historic elephant relocation.

Global Positioning System

On September 28 the Kenyan Wildlife Service (KWS) suspended the relocation once again in order to monitor the elephants' resettlement as in the relocation process 5 animals had died. At the northern belt of Tsavo East, the KWS has deployed three aircraft and several rangers to monitor the new lifestyle of the relocated jumbos, which have been fitted with global positioning system collars to assist in tracking. The collars can help to check if the elephants are comfortable and have enough food and security.

Largest translocation

In addition, the suspension was necessitated by the short rainy season that was expected soon after and could pose logistical problems. The operation to move 400 elephants from Shimba Hills National Reserve to Tsavo East National Park, which began in August, is now said to resume in three months' time, as per KWS spokesperson Connie Maina. By that time KWS hopes to be able to move at least 30 elephants per day instead of the current 10 a day, because they are planning to get better equipment in order to improve on their previously made flaws. This extensive relocation is a \$3.2 million exercise, which is funded by the Kenyan government. Furthermore it is considered to be the single largest translocation of animals ever undertaken since Noah's ark. Naturally KWS sees this as a huge success because it has handled the relocation without the help from outside and it has managed to lose only five elephants.

Human-Wildlife conflict

Overall, Kenya has 28,000 elephants, many of which are increasingly coming into conflict with farmers who have settled on land that the animals treat as their territory. The wildlife service said it has taken measures to ensure the relocated elephants do not cause conflict in their new neighborhood. They have, for instance, dug five water holes to discourage elephants from wandering into community farms. Also a 41-kilometer (66-mile) electric fence was erected along the most vulnerable spots on the parks boundaries. Furthermore, six matriarchs have been radio-collared and their movements will



be monitored using GPS, so that our rangers can drive them away before they reach private farms. It has been made very clear that the KWS wants to be pro-active in their management of problem elephants. Dozens of animals were moved to the Tsavo National Park. For the residents of Msangatamu village, only one word describes the event: “relief”. For decades, they have lived with the world’s largest terrestrial mammal and have become accustomed to spending sleepless nights, while watching over their farms, losing their property and sometimes their lives in an area battle with incidents of human/wildlife conflict. But now, with over

100 elephants relocated, they are optimistic that their crops will once more flourish, free of attacks from the marauding jumbos. Their children, like thousands of others, can now go to school regularly. The trumpeting of the animals alone is enough to scare even the brave, not to mention the ferocity with which the elephants destroy anything in their path. Hence parents were reluctant to have their children leave the house. The name Msangatamu means that anyone who comes here will never want to leave because the soil is sweet. Perhaps that is the reason why the elephants never wanted to leave on their own before.



An elephant as a totem animal



“I prefer to paint animals to humans. And when I do paint humans they are very special people.” Speaking these words is the pictorial Yby Potlatch. She has her own specific opinion about elephants.

Totem animal

“The elephant is my totem animal. I came upon this in a strange way. Ten years ago I was at a Pow Wow, an Indian party, when an older Indian woman spoke to me and said that I had a powerful personality and that I was careful, just like an elephant. If I have problems I can call the



elephant and it was bring me good luck, as it is my totem animal.”

Favourite animal

“I was amazed, because elephants had always been special to me. I looked at pictures of elephants, examined prints carefully and read books about elephants. The elephant is my favourite animal and appears regularly in my work.” Yby doesn’t only paint elephants, but a whole range of subject. Nevertheless, the elephant forms an important part of the work.



Own Style

“I started painting about 10 years ago. I painted a bit before

then, but it was then I turned professional and began to develop my own style which is recognised by many as an Yby painting.”

“I have strong will power and now that it’s going to work. My work represents this and speaks to people. 4th November 2005 was my first exhibition, ‘Expedition for exposition’, with which I first displayed to the public. I received much feedback and e-mails requesting an appointment. I hadn’t expected such positive reactions, and naturally I am delighted. I want to do good things for the world. I support as many good causes as I can, and if my work sells well then I can do even more.”

Yby has now lived and worked for around



a year and half in a miller’s house, full of character, in the middle of pasture land. This gives her the peace and inspiration to paint and create what she envisages in her mind.

“I painted my first elephant picture when I was seven years old. I remember it was a blue elephant,” continues Yby, “but sadly I no longer remember whom I gave it to. The trunk was very recognisable.”



Yby’s style is easily recognisable by the black lines and cheerful colours. The white specks represent the stars and the universe, symbolising the bonds between everyone. “In the universe everyone is equal and if I paint an elephant then, for me, it is also equal to a human,” explains Yby.

Elephants can understand sound waves



Researchers have discovered that elephants in Namibia can understand sound waves. These big animals seem to know instinctively when to ‘send’ their infrasonic messages to their relations at the time of day when the air is the most suited for carrying sound over long distances.

During the study, which took three weeks, researchers make use of a large number of meteorological instruments and a collection of eight microphones. During this time, 42% of the infrasonic communication was sent during the period of three hours after sunset, when the air is the most stable. The second most popular

time of day was two hours after sunrise, when the acoustics of the atmosphere are well suited to carrying sounds over long distances. One of the researchers was Michael Garstang of the University of Virginia. “This project was an attempt to discover first-hand whether the ideas, which we had achieved with theoretical,

mathematical models, could work in reality,” he said. “Of the approximate 1,300 attempts at contact measured during the study, 94% fell within the two specified periods of the day.” Although the interests of the researchers also stretched to other animals, elephants were the logical ‘first choice’ to study, because they make the loudest sounds. Furthermore in theory their communication reaches the furthest because it is infrasonic.

Stable air

The ‘stable air’ Garstang is talking about is the air which is composed of several layers because of the influence of the temperature. It included an inversion-layer, like the light which in many large cities keeps the smog close to the earth’s surface. The layered air helps the sound to bend back towards the ground so that it carries further. According to researchers at the National Snow and Ice Data Center of the University of Colorado, it is known that extremely layered air, such as can exist in pole regions, is can contain human conversation at an audible level for up to three kilometres

Weather balloons

In Namibia, during the day the sun warms the ground to such a degree that the heat rises and thereby breaks through the layers. It is at the same time that the best chance of calling elephants at great distances is disrupted. To verify this theory, Garstang’s team made use of extensive apparatus to measure the atmosphere. During the entire period, weather balloons were up in the air to provide a constant measurement of wind direction and speed, together with the the temperatures



at different heights above the studied area. Elephants rely on their ability to communicate over large distances for their survival. Females are only fertile for short periods and need to be able to find a good partner in that limited time. They can only do this by sending an “availability call” and listening carefully to the answers that are returned. It seems that the elephants know that the early morning and late evening are the most suitable times for sending messages, without them knowing exactly why they are the best times. They have simply learnt from experience what works best and have stuck with that.

Win Thida as



At the beginning of August in Artis zoo, the elephant Thong Tai gave birth to a girl: Yindee. A bag of elephant blood stood ready in case the mother disowned her first young. Sanquin helped with taking blood from a very special donor: the elephant Win Thida. Here's the account.

Taking blood from an animal which weighs around 5,000 kilos is a dangerous undertaking. But the Amsterdam zoo Artis took all possible precautions to make sure the first born of

elephant Thong Tai survived. 'In 30 percent of cases something goes wrong with a first birth,' says Mark Hoyer, vet at Artis. 'The mother can trample on her young or disown it. Even in the last instance the baby is essentially doomed as it can not live without the antibodies from its mother's milk.' That is terrible enough on its own, but all the more so given that Asian elephants are threatened with extinction.

Antibodies

Mother's milk can save a disowned baby elephant. But it is difficult to get a nervous mother elephant to milk. Administering antibodies which have come from the blood of another elephant from the same environment

blood donor



is another option. Vet Mark Hoyer says: 'To do this you then need an elephant who will let you take blood easily. Luckily we have Win Thida.' It had to happen on 27 June. In the elephant stable, the carer Marcel Breeschoten is busy spraying water on Win Thida to stimulate the blood flow. Win Thida thoroughly enjoys the streams of warm water and enormous quantities of food which have been placed before her. Vet Mark Hoyer decides to start and crouches under the elephant to prick her in her paw. After a couple of attempts, the needle is in the elephant's vein. The blood flows, but not quickly enough. He tries to inject again, this time in the ear. Once again the bloodstream stops very quickly.

Emergency plan

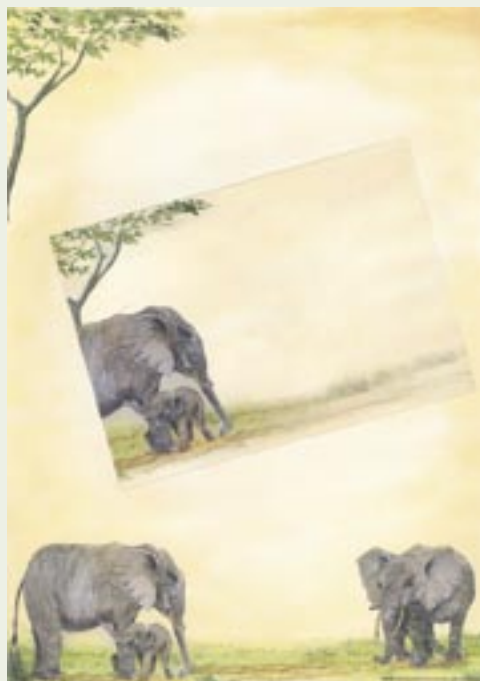
Hans Vrielink, transfusion doctor with Sanquin, thinks up an emergency plan on the spot. With a large injection needle, blood is 'pulled' out of the vein and then brought over into the bag. That works, but in the meantime Win Thida has had enough. The task is therefore completed a week later. The total is about 2 litres of blood. The Operations department of Sangiun processes the elephant blood into 1200g of serum. Vet Mark Hoyer says: 'That is more than enough to save the life of a disowned baby elephant.' Luckily it was not necessary. Thong Tai gave Yindee antibodies herself through her own milk.

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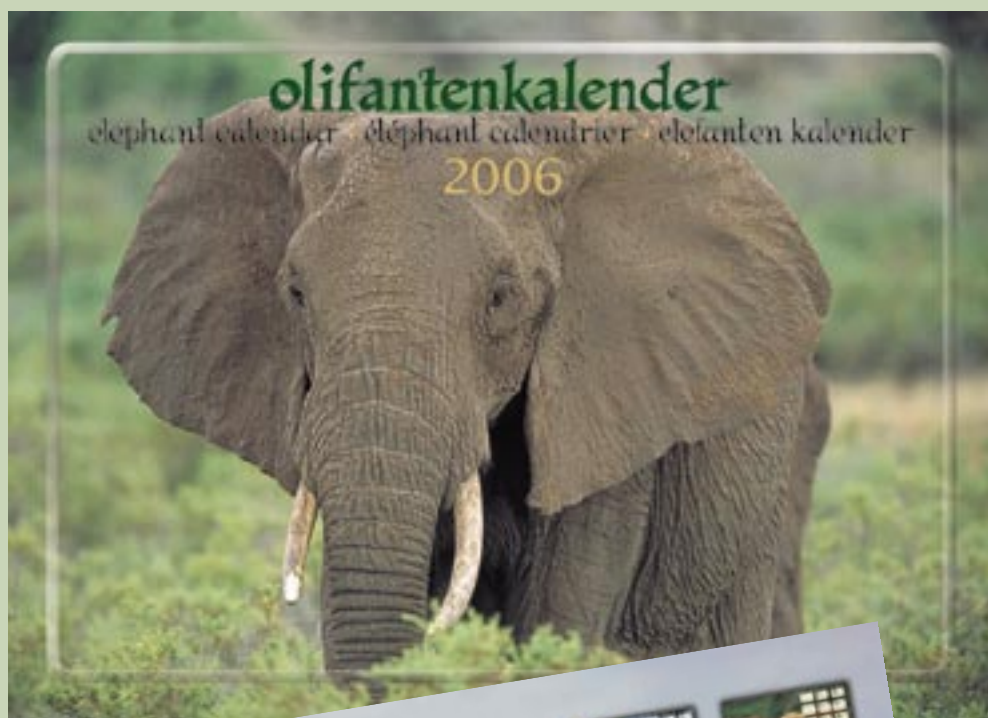
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