



#8708

ELEPHANTS

Grade Levels: 9-13+

26 minutes

NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA 1999

DESCRIPTION

Joyce Poole, elephant researcher and conservationist, shares her insights and convictions about this large, dignified animal. Closeup photography support her discussion about elephant family units, mating rituals, behaviors, and "vocabulary." Recently lifted bans on elephant ivory means this endangered animal is even more at risk.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Life Sciences

- ◆ Standard: Understands relationships among organisms and their physical environment
 - Benchmark: Knows that all individuals of a species that exist together at a given place and time make up a population, and all populations living together and the physical factors with which they interact compose an ecosystem
 - Benchmark: Knows ways in which humans can alter the equilibrium of ecosystems, causing potentially irreversible effects (e.g., human population growth, technology, and consumption; human destruction of habitats through direct harvesting, pollution, and atmospheric changes)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To observe African elephants in their natural habitat.
2. To know why ivory is poached.
3. To compare the similarities of humans and elephants.
4. To stimulate interest in protecting endangered species.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Joyce Poole speaks about elephants—the world’s largest and most powerful land-based mammals.

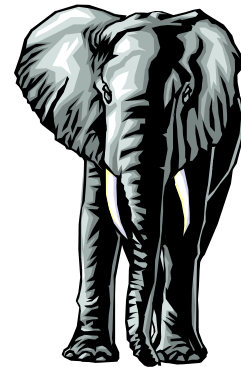
Elephants live in extended family units headed by a dominant female, or matriarch. The matriarch rules not through force, but through respect. She is instrumental in passing on knowledge and survival skills to the rest of the family.

We meet a family whose mother, the much-loved elephant known as Tuskless, had been killed by the Kenya Wildlife Service in a tragic case of mistaken identity. Tuskless’ 14-year-old daughter, Tulip, cares for her own daughter as well as her younger sister and an orphan. She may eventually become the new matriarch.

Elephants use a broad number of vocalizations to communicate with each other. Using sensitive microphones to capture sounds beyond the range of human hearing, Poole discovered that elephants make about 20 low-frequency sounds nobody had heard before. Poole decoded what the rumbles meant, “Let’s go,” or “Here I come.”

Decades of ivory-poaching reduced the number of elephants in Kenya from an estimated 165,000 in the late 1960s to about 20,000 by 1989. But things are looking up for African elephants these days, thanks in part to the work of Poole. She has helped to draft an international treaty banning trade in ivory.

Most human beings accept that all humans have rights, but most are unwilling to extend protection to animals. The more similarities we find between ourselves and an animal, the more willing we are to treat that animal with care and respect, which might help us to save the elephants from extinction.



BEFORE SHOWING

1. Poole says that elephants are similar to humans in many ways. Can you think of three similarities?
2. Poole felt a responsibility to help save elephants. Should researchers become actively involved in conserving the animals they study?

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Poole calls Tulip’s care of the orphan “compassion.” Do you agree? Do you believe elephants can feel such complex emotions? What about other animals?
2. Do you think the Kenya Wildlife Service was justified in having a shoot-to-kill policy to deal with poachers? Is it right for the KWS to shoot elephants that have killed Masai cattle?
3. The video paints the reopening of the ivory trade as a tragedy for elephants. But some south Saharan countries claim their record on elephant conservation is better

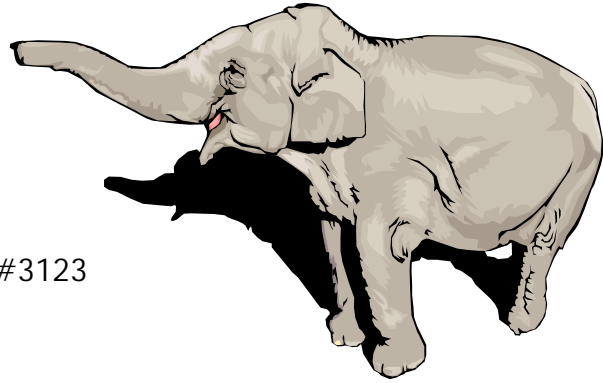
than that of countries such as Kenya. If this claim is true, does it justify a limited elephant kill and controlled ivory sales?

RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Elephants #1965
- A First Look at Elephants and Rhinos #3123
- Nazinga Game Reserve #8835



World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and “kid-safe” sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **ELEPHANT INFORMATION REPOSITORY**

<http://elephant.elehost.com/>

Lots of information on elephants. Learn about their family structure, anatomy; read about conservation, ivory links, about circuses; browse through various news topics; and much more.

- **WORLD WILDLIFE FUND: AFRICAN ELEPHANTS**

<http://www.worldwildlife.../speciessection.cfm?newspaperid=21§ionid=26&contentid=53>

Learn what African elephants eat, their physical characteristics, and other traits. Read WWF's international reports on conserving these elephants.

- **ECHO OF THE ELEPHANTS**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/nature/echo/index.html>

Go on a safari and visit Amboseli National Park to see the matriarch Echo, learn some facts in ways elephants communicate, and click on the “Resources” section.

