



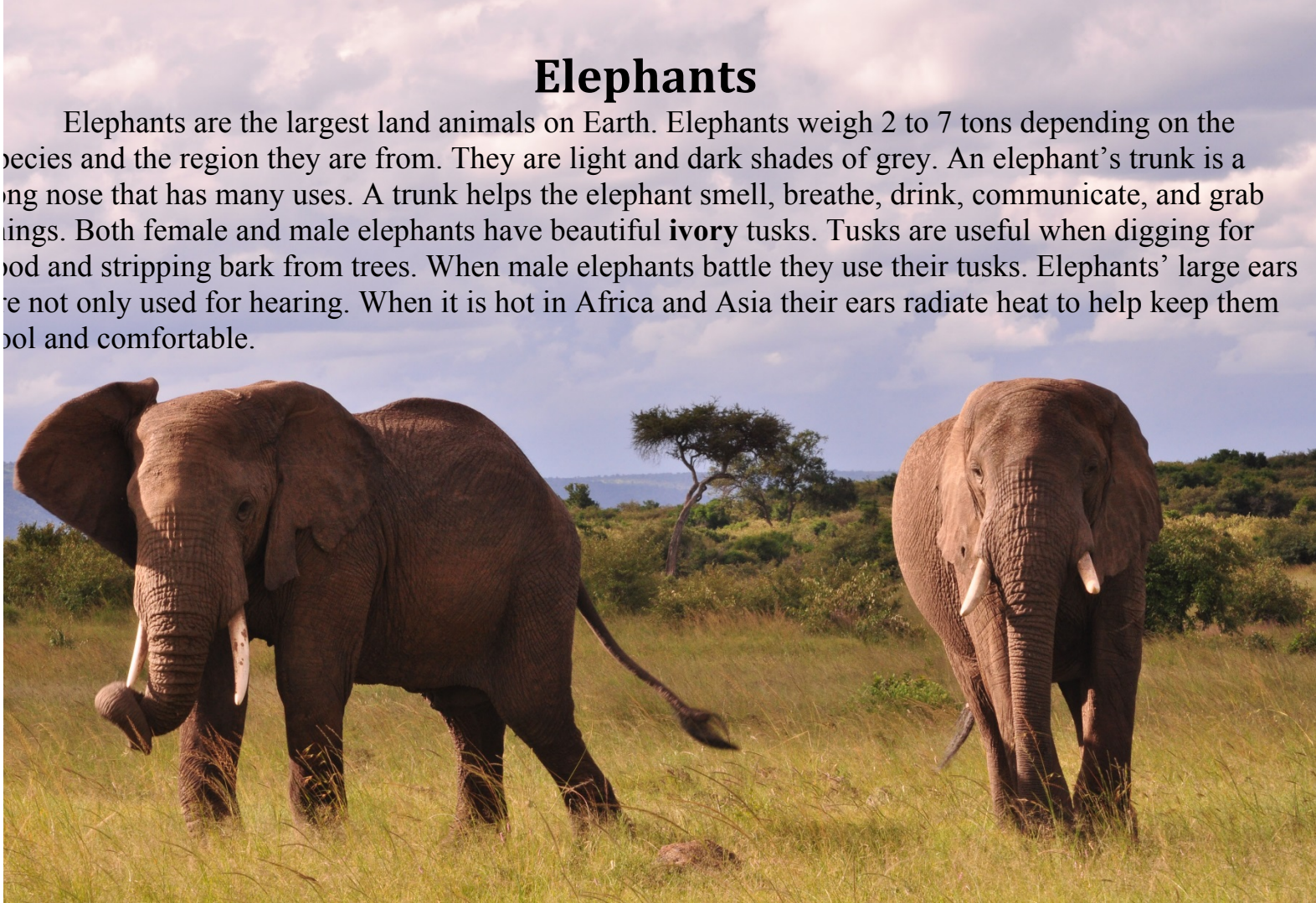
Elephants

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Elephants

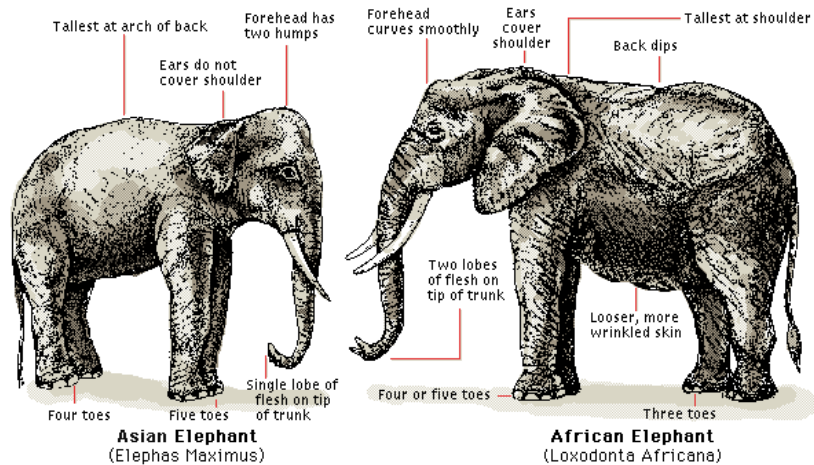
Elephants are the largest land animals on Earth. Elephants weigh 2 to 7 tons depending on the species and the region they are from. They are light and dark shades of grey. An elephant's trunk is a long nose that has many uses. A trunk helps the elephant smell, breathe, drink, communicate, and grab things. Both female and male elephants have beautiful **ivory** tusks. Tusks are useful when digging for food and stripping bark from trees. When male elephants battle they use their tusks. Elephants' large ears are not only used for hearing. When it is hot in Africa and Asia their ears radiate heat to help keep them cool and comfortable.



Two Types of Elephants

There are two types of elephants: African and Asian. African elephants are slightly larger than Asian elephants. The easiest way to differentiate between species is their ears. African elephants have ears somewhat shaped like Africa. Asian elephants have smaller, rounder ears.

The **habitat** for African elephants includes tropical forests, grasslands, woodlands, and savannas. Asian elephants' habitats are primarily tropical forests. Both African and Asian elephants **migrate** throughout the year. African elephants have been recorded migrating over 62 miles. Asian elephants have been recorded migrating between 12 and 31 miles. Elephants migrate during the dry season.





Elephant Families

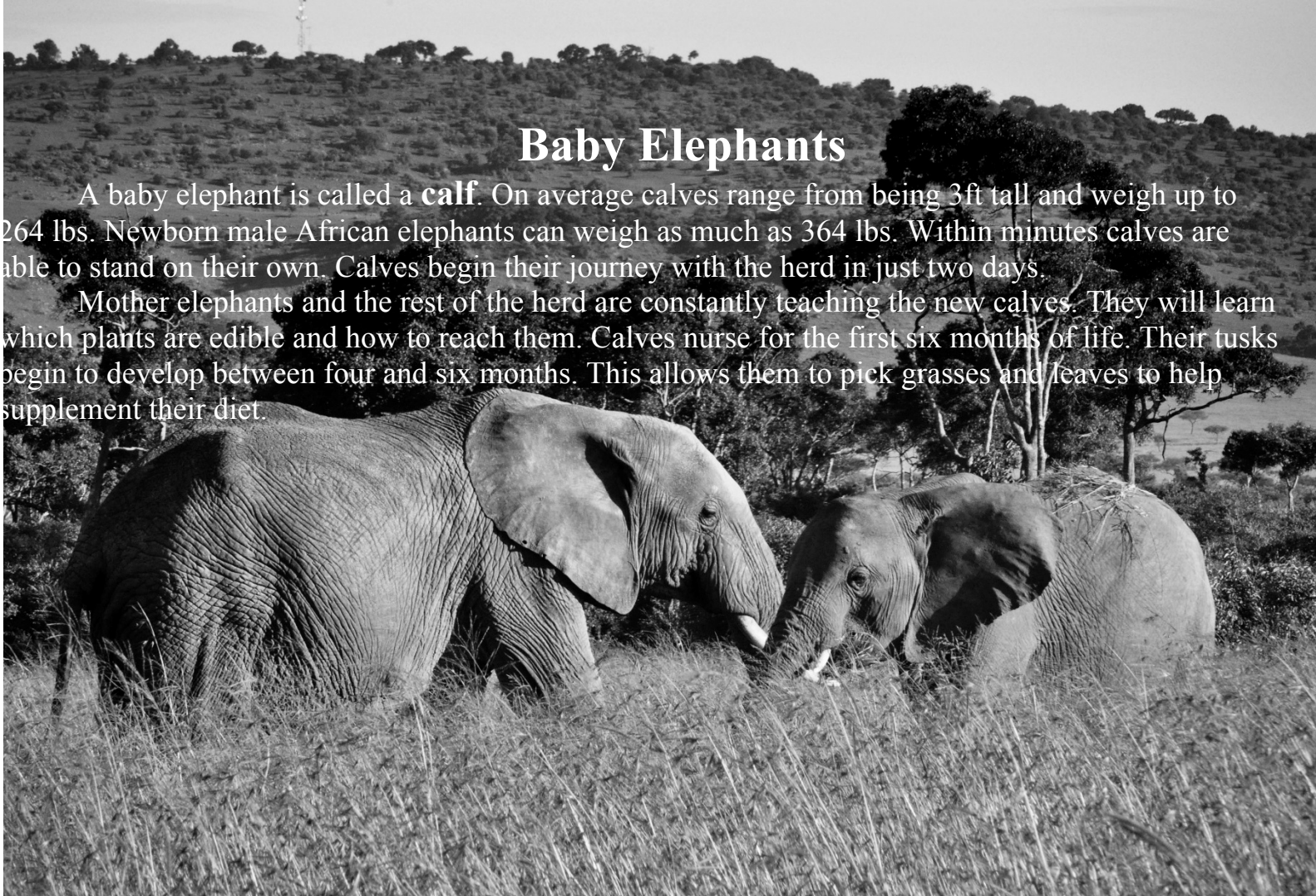
Elephants live in a **herd**. A herd consists of all female elephants and their babies. Male elephants live with the females until the age of twelve, and then they live on their own. Males will visit female herds every once in a while to mate.

In each herd there is one elder female who is in charge. The leader is always on the lookout for danger. Elephants have no natural enemies, but hyenas and lions are classified as elephant **predators**. They prey on young elephants when there is nothing else to eat. The entire herd protects the babies. Everyone works together to keep them safe.

Baby Elephants

A baby elephant is called a **calf**. On average calves range from being 3ft tall and weigh up to 264 lbs. Newborn male African elephants can weigh as much as 364 lbs. Within minutes calves are able to stand on their own. Calves begin their journey with the herd in just two days.

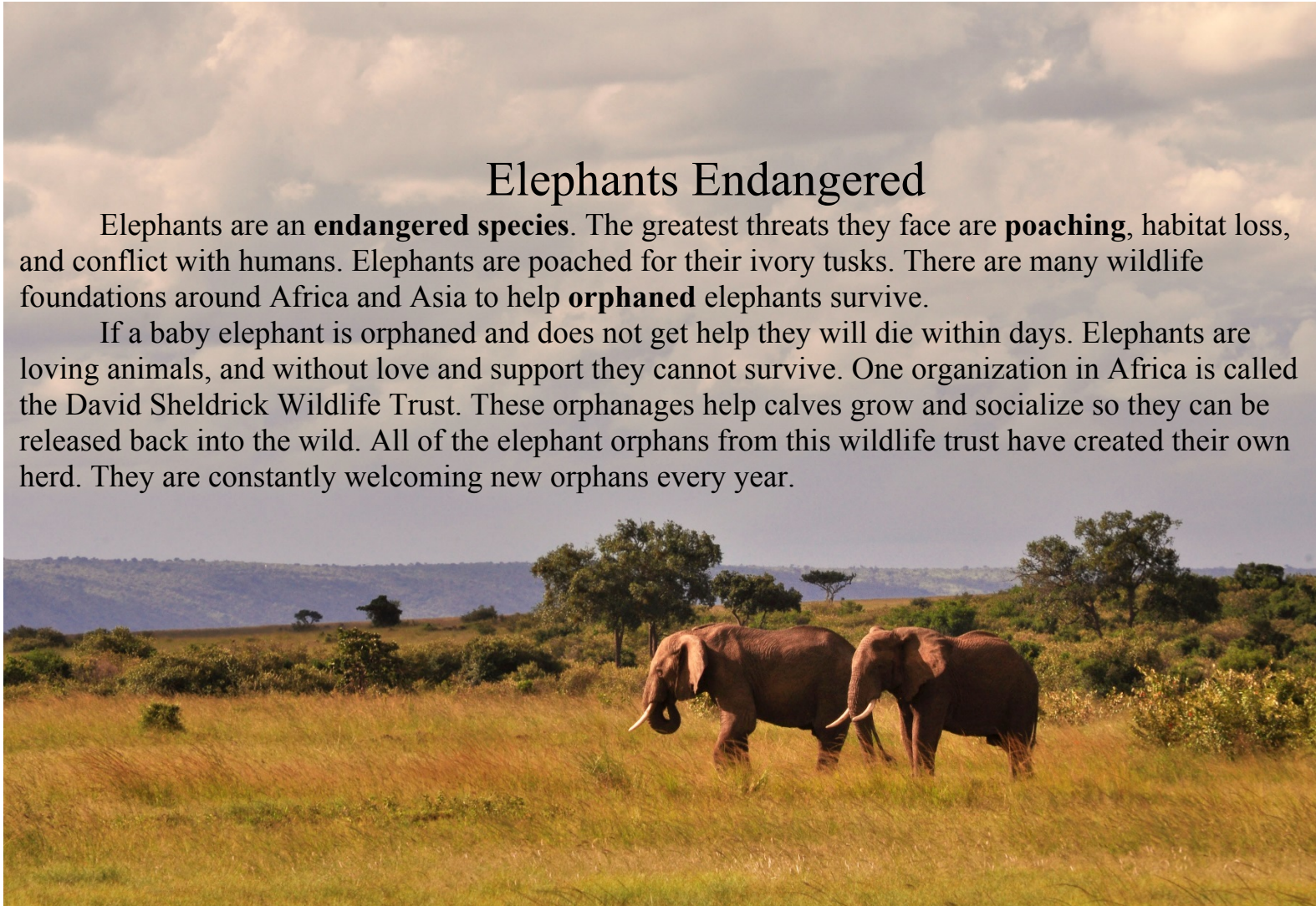
Mother elephants and the rest of the herd are constantly teaching the new calves. They will learn which plants are edible and how to reach them. Calves nurse for the first six months of life. Their tusks begin to develop between four and six months. This allows them to pick grasses and leaves to help supplement their diet.



Elephants Endangered

Elephants are an **endangered species**. The greatest threats they face are **poaching**, habitat loss, and conflict with humans. Elephants are poached for their ivory tusks. There are many wildlife foundations around Africa and Asia to help **orphaned** elephants survive.

If a baby elephant is orphaned and does not get help they will die within days. Elephants are loving animals, and without love and support they cannot survive. One organization in Africa is called the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. These orphanages help calves grow and socialize so they can be released back into the wild. All of the elephant orphans from this wildlife trust have created their own herd. They are constantly welcoming new orphans every year.



Summary

There are two types of elephants: African and Asian. They are known for being the largest land animals. Elephants are herbivores, which means they only eat plants. Female elephants live together in herds, while males live alone. Elephants are an endangered species.

Questions

What do elephants use their trunks for?

How can you tell an African elephant from an Asian elephant?

What do you call a baby elephant?

Why are elephants an endangered species?

Glossary

Ivory: A hard creamy-white substance composing the main part of the tusks of an elephant, walrus, or narwhal.

Example Sentence: *Both male and female elephants have ivory tusks.*

Habitat: A place in which an organism, plant, or animal lives.

Example Sentence: *The Asian elephants' habitat is a tropical forest.*

Migrate: Move from one region or habitat to another regularly according to the seasons.

Example Sentence: *African elephants can migrate over 62 miles in a dry season.*

Herd: A large group of animals in the same species.

Example Sentence: Elephants live in herds.

Predator: An animal that naturally preys on others.

Example Sentence: Hyenas and lions are classified as elephant predators.

Endangered Species: A species of animal or plant that is seriously at risk of extinction (dying out).

Example Sentence: *Elephants are an endangered species.*

Animal Poaching: Illegal hunting, killing, or capturing of wild animals.

Example Sentence: *Elephants are poached for their ivory tusks.*

Orphan: An animal/child whose parents have passed away.

Example Sentence: *Wildlife foundations help save orphaned elephants.*

Common Core Standards

CCSS.ELS-Literacy.RI.3.2

Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.

CCSS.ELS-Literacy.RI.3.4

Determine the meaning of general academic and domain specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a *grade 3 topic or subject area*.

CCSS.ELS-Literacy.RI.3.5

Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.

CCSS.ELS-Literacy.RI.3.7

Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., when, where, why, and how key events occur).

Works Referenced

African Elephant – National Geographic. 23 March. 2015

Elephants – SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment. 23 March. 2015

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