

For Creative Minds

This For Creative Minds educational section contains activities to engage children in learning while making it fun at the same time. The activities build on the underlying subjects introduced in the story. While older children may be able to do these activities on their own, we encourage adults to work with the young children in their lives. Even if the adults have long forgotten or never learned this information, they can still work through the activities and be experts in their children's eyes! Exposure to these concepts at a young age helps to build a strong foundation for easier comprehension later in life. This section may be photocopied or printed from our website by the owner of this book for educational, non-commercial uses. Cross-curricular teaching activities for use at home or in the classroom, interactive quizzes, and more are available online. Go to www.ArbordalePublishing.com and click on the book's cover to explore all the links.

Keystone Species

An ecosystem is made of all the living and non-living things in an area. A savanna is one type of ecosystem. Savannas are usually found between a desert and a forest. Savannas are made of grass with a few trees and bushes. They have a warm climate with a rainy season and a dry season. There are savannas all around the world. Many savannas are in Africa.

All the living things in an ecosystem are connected. Sometimes there is one species that plays an important role in the ecosystem. This is called a **keystone species**. A keystone species helps other living things meet their basic needs. If something happens to a keystone species, the whole ecosystem is hurt. In the African savanna, elephants are a keystone species.



Savannas in Africa



Elephant habitats in Africa

Elephants used to live across all of Africa south of the Sahara desert. Now the places where they can live (habitats) are shrinking. People build new cities and roads, use savannas for farmland, and cut down forests. There are fewer wild places for elephants to live. This is called habitat loss.

In many places, elephants are killed illegally for their ivory tusks. This is called poaching. Poachers kill elephants so they can cut off their tusks and sell them.

Elephants are a vulnerable species because of habitat loss and poaching. People need to help protect the elephants. Without our help, elephants could disappear forever (become extinct).



Rainy Season, Dry Season

In many tropical habitats, there are only two seasons: the rainy season and the dry season. Sort the following events based on whether they occur in the rainy season or the dry season.



A. Plants need water to grow. When rain falls on the seeds in elephants' dung, the seeds sprout.



B. Fire burns the dry grass. The fire spreads quickly until it is slowed by the elephant path.



C. Animals need water to live. Elephants dig into dry earth to find water underneath.



D. Rain gathers in the elephants' footprints. Animals drink out of the small puddles.

Rainy season: A and D. Dry season: B and C.

All About Elephants

Female: cow
Male: bull
Baby: calf
Group name: herd

Cows usually live in family groups. The oldest or highest-ranking female leads the herd.

Bulls leave the herd when they are young. They live alone or with other bulls.



Elephants are the largest land animal on earth.

Elephants eat only plants (herbivores). They spend 16 hours a day eating or looking for food.

Wild elephants weigh up to 14,000 lbs (6,350 kg). That is as heavy as a school bus!

Elephants usually live into their early forties. Some elephants can live for 50 years or longer.