



wild dog

**Wild Dog Books  
Teachers' Notes**

Elephants: On the Edge

## Synopsis

Elephants are comprised of three species: African bush elephants, African forest elephants and Asian elephants (which have a further four subspecies). All of these species and subspecies are considered to be vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered. These gentle giants face a range of threats to their survival, with most of them being caused by humans. Threats include trophy hunting, poaching for the ivory trade and the loss of their natural habitat. However, humans are also trying to protect and increase the number of elephants in a variety of ways. Welcome to the fascinating world of *Elephants: On the Edge*.

## Writing style

*Elephants: On the Edge* has been designed with the needs of both early and more advanced readers in mind. Simple and succinct language is used throughout the book, and the font size is relatively small to allow the images to engage reluctant readers. Font size is smaller again when used in conjunction with inset images, to indicate information that is secondary to the primary text/image. There is a brief glossary in the back of the book, which will aid young readers in developing the tools of research and analysis.

## Photographic style

The *On the Edge* series uses photographs that bring the viewer close to the subject that is being discussed. They are colourful, evocative images that clearly convey the species and subspecies, habitats and dangers facing various animal groups under threat of extinction. Inset photographs are used on occasion to further illustrate topics of interest. These photographs also have the advantage that the image is static, giving the reader the opportunity to explore the image and look at the subject matter and its features in detail. The photographs are also strongly composed and clearly printed with bright, strong colours to increase the appeal to visual readers. Readers can explore how photographs are used to convey messages.

## Study notes

Themes:

- Descriptive words
- Different species and subspecies
- Family structure and the differing roles of females and males
- Relatives in the animal kingdom
- Physical characteristics and intelligence
- Habitats and diet
- Natural threats i.e. predators
- Unnatural threats i.e. poaching, climate change, trophy hunting etc
- How humans are harming elephants
- Conservation i.e. how humans are helping elephants

## Curriculum link: Literacy

Before reading *Elephants: On the Edge*:

- Brainstorm what students know about elephants.
- What is their first response when they look at the cover of the book?
- How do they think elephants would feel to touch? Would it be safe to touch/approach a elephants?
- Ask the students if anyone has seen an elephant in nature, or at a zoo/museum. What can they recall about their behaviour and appearance?

While reading *Elephants: On the Edge*:

- Ask the students to take turns reading a paragraph aloud to the rest of the class. Where appropriate, ask the students what they think certain words may mean.

After reading *Elephants: On the Edge*:

- Ask the students to reflect on the words they would use to describe elephants and the words that have been used in the book. Ask them to draw up a list of words that can be used to describe elephants.

## Curriculum Theme: Critical and Creative Thinking

After reading *Elephants: On the Edge* ask the students the following questions:

- What type of animal are elephants?
- Are all elephants the same?
- What are their key features?
- What do elephants eat?
- What prey animals eat elephants?
- Is this different for babies and adults?
- What are some unnatural threats to elephants?
- Are these unnatural threats the same for all species/subspecies?
- What human activities are harmful to elephants?
- How are humans helping elephants?
- Is it ok to touch or interact with elephants? Is it ok to ride them?

## Curriculum link: ICT Capability

After reading *Elephants: On the Edge*:

- Organise the class into small groups. Assign each group a different species/subspecies of elephant and ask the group to research online and answer the following questions: What are the key features of their elephant? How are they different from other elephants? Where are they found around the world? What sort of environment/habitat do they prefer e.g. dense forest, grassland etc? How big are they? What foods do they eat? What is their conservation status i.e. vulnerable, endangered etc? How are they threatened? Are these natural or unnatural threats? What is being done to help them survive?
- Ask the children to look for and print images relating to their elephant. Specifically, look for close-up pictures that show the major physical characteristics i.e. ears, eyes, tusks, trunk etc, and also the various threats to their survival.

- Ask each group to create a poster collage. Ask them to attach the images they found and to write a short sentence detailing the connection to their elephant. All members of the group then take turns presenting their findings to the rest of the class.

## Curriculum Theme: Personal and Social Capability

After reading *Elephants: On the Edge*:

- Organise the class into two groups. In one group, ask the students to work as a team to construct a word finder puzzle. Ask each student to suggest an appropriate word about elephants using words they have learned from the book. (e.g. tusk, matriarch, pachyderm etc). Once completed, print copies for the other group to complete.
- In the second group, students should work as a team to create a trivia bingo game. Ask each student to suggest a fact they found surprising or interesting. Combine these facts into a game for the whole class.

## Find out more

- <https://taronga.org.au/>
- <http://www.wwf.org.au/>
- <http://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/animals/elephant.html>
- <http://www.defenders.org/elephant/basic-facts>
- <http://www.elephantodyssey.com/game/>
- <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/a/african-elephant/>
- <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/a/asian-elephant/>

## Marketing and promotion

*Elephants: On the Edge* is the second title in a new series looking at various groups of animals around the world that are under threat of extinction. *On the Edge* shares similarities with the *CloseUp* series, though is aimed at an older age range. Past titles include *Sea Turtles*, while future titles such as *Primates*, *Wild Cats*, *Rhinos* and *Jungle Creatures* are planned.