

## The Biggest Land Animal

The first thing you probably notice about elephants is that they are big. They are the biggest animals on land. Only some whales are bigger.

Elephants spend almost all day working on staying big. Each day elephants eat 300 to 500 pounds of food. They eat grass, leaves, water plants, fruit, branches, and bark. They wash this food down with as much as 50 gallons of water each day.

Elephants have thick skins. The skin of an adult is  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches thick. It weighs about 2,000 pounds.

Elephants do not sweat. They must cool off in other ways. Sometimes they flap their big ears. At other times, they spray water on themselves. They may also roll in mud. The mud dries on the skin. This layer protects the elephant from the sun.

A unique thing about the elephant is its trunk. The elephant breathes and smells with its trunk. It uses its trunk to carry food and water to its mouth. With its trunk, an elephant can pull up trees and dig for water. An elephant can pick up a 600-pound log with its trunk. It can also use the tip of its trunk to pick up something as small as a coin.

Experts today think that elephants are in danger. Hunters threaten them. People will need to work hard to make sure that elephants survive.

1. How do elephants keep themselves cool?
2. Why do elephants spend so much time eating and drinking?