

The Social Elephant



Animal Behavior

Evolution

Science Film Festival Films

▶ **Anna and the Wild Animals – On the Way with the Elephant Police**

Learning Goals

- Identify three elephant behaviors that are similar to human behavior.
- Explain the social structure of elephant families and bull groups.
- Describe how elephants greet each other.

Explanation of Scientific Principles

Introduce students to the social life of elephants. They will learn that elephants are a lot like us in many ways. Elephants are social, intelligent animals with complex social lives. They live in families, care for their young, and have many social interactions - just like people. Young elephants live with adults who care for them, provide food and water, and raise them. Elephant families are made up of many elephants and that include moms, sisters, aunts, and cousins.

Explanation of Connection to the Film

The film covers several points of elephant behavior that are also explored through this activity and can be used as starting point for the activity in considering and discussing similarities between social behavior in humans and elephants.

Materials

- What is the Social Life of Elephants? (See link below)
- Elephant Behavior Cards (See link below)

Preparation

1) Print or project the lesson "What is the Social Life of Elephants?"

2) Print Activity Sheets "Elephants are a lot like us!" and cut or have the students cut out the behavior cards.

1

"What is the Social Life of Elephants?" Show the cut outs or behavior cards and ask students to compare them with the social life of human beings.

2

After the short discussion, have the students complete the activity sheet "Elephants are a lot like us!". The students will match the activity cards showing the human behavior to the similar activity cards showing the elephant behavior.

The Social Elephant

Lesson
4

What is the social life of elephants?

Grades
2-3

Introduce students to the social life of elephants. They will learn that elephants are a lot like us in many ways. They live in families, care for their young, and have many social interactions just like people.

Subject Area: Science

Background Information: Pages 6-8

Vocabulary: bull, calf, cow, matriarch

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify three elephant behaviors that are similar to people behaviors;
- Explain the social structure of elephant families and bull groups;
- Describe how elephants greet each other.

Materials:

- Lesson 4 - What is the social life of elephants – Background Information PowerPoint
- Activity Sheets 9-10 – Elephants are a lot like us!
- Elephant Behavior cards

Learning Activities

Preparation

1. Print or project Lesson 4 - What is the social life of elephants – Background Information PowerPoint
2. Print Activity Sheets 9-10 – Elephants are a lot like us! and cut or have the students cut out the behavior cards.

Activity

3. Elephants are a lot like us! They are social, intelligent animals with complex social lives. Show the students lesson 4's PowerPoint - What is the social life of elephants?
4. After reviewing the PowerPoint, have the students complete Activity Sheets 9-10 – Elephants are a lot like us! The students will match the activity cards showing the people activity to the similar activity sheets with elephants.

Discussion

5. How are elephant families similar to your families? *Young elephants live with adults who care for them, provide food and water, and raise them. Elephant families are made up of many elephants and that include moms, sisters, aunts, and cousins.*

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What is the social life of elephants?



6. What are some of the things that both elephant and human adults teach their young? *What to eat (when you learn what is good to eat and what might harm you, learning a family recipe; elephants learn what plants are good to eat and what might be poisonous, they learn the best feeding areas and where to find water), how to be safe (like looking both ways before you cross the street, not talking to strangers), how to show respect, how to be caring with others and how to be polite with other people/elephants.*

7. How are bull elephants different from the family groups? *When they are grown, they leave their family and sometimes socialize with other bulls in the area.*

8. What are some similarities between how people and elephants greet their friends? *Elephants will touch trunks like we shake hands and may rub heads and trunks together like we hug.*

9. What are some other ways elephants are just like us? *They talk a lot! Elephants communicate with each other through vocalizations (trumpets, roars, rumbles, chirps, and sounds below our hearing range), body language (head shaking, standing tall, retreat, etc.) and scent (dung and perfume). Families help each other out by coming to the aid of a family member in distress.*

In many ways, elephants are a lot like us! They are amazing!

Answer Key

Greeting



Caring for Young



Playing



Family Reunions



Eating



Extensions

Tell your friends how elephants are just like us! You could even start an elephant conservation club with your friends!

Additional Resources

- Ted Ed Talk with Caitlin O'Connell, animal researcher; this video goes into more detail describing how elephants are a lot like us.

o <http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-family-structure-of-elephants-caitlin-o-connell-rodwell>

The Social Elephant

Lesson
4

What is the social life of elephants?

Grades
2-3

Cut out the human behavior cards and match them to the elephant behaviors.



The Social Elephant



What is the social life of elephants?



Activity Sheet 9 Elephants are a lot like us!

Match the human behaviors to the elephant social behaviors.

Greeting



Playing



Eating



The Social Elephant



What is the social life of elephants?



Activity Sheet 10 Elephants are a lot like us!

Match the human behaviors to the elephant social behaviors.

Caring for Young



Family Reunions



Draw your favorite social behavior.



The Social Elephant

Answer Key

Greeting



Playing



Eating



Caring for Young



Family Reunions

