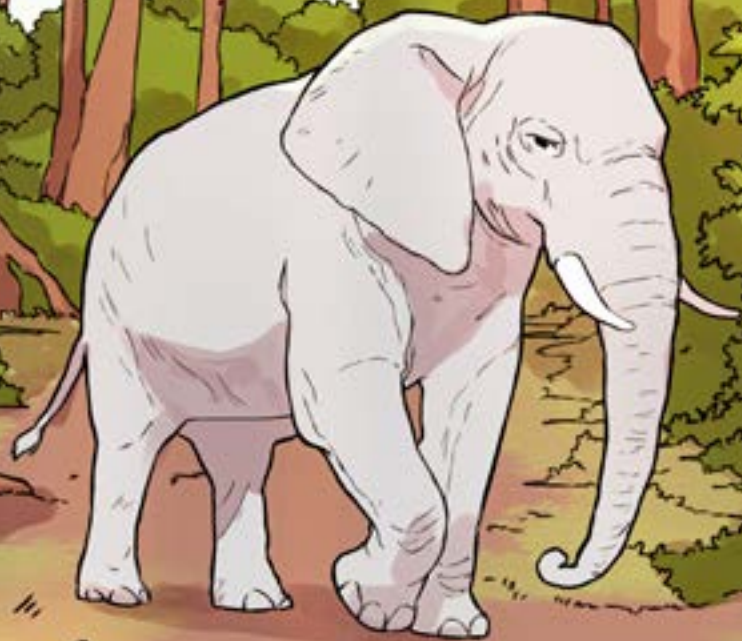


MBONGO
queen of the
ELEPHANTS



This book belongs to _____

Do you want to discover the secrets of the forest?

Do you want to help protect elephants?

Then read carefully this fascinating story of Mbongo and her group, and you will find solutions to help preserve this magnificent species.

This book is intended for young children, teenagers, and adults. It can be used at school, in nature clubs, with families, or during community activities to raise awareness across all ages about the protection of forests, wildlife, and the environment.

MBONGO QUEEN OF THE ELEPHANTS

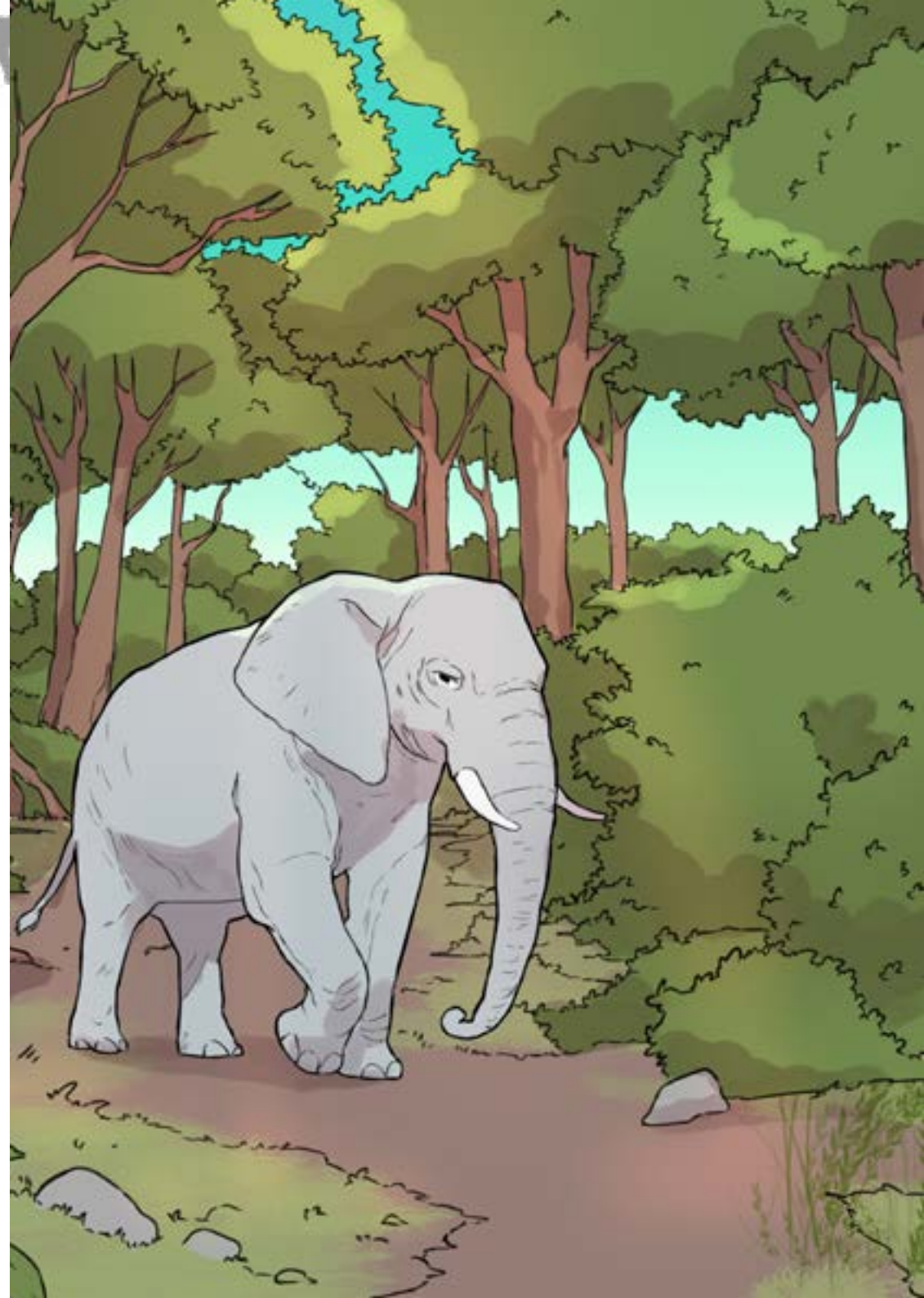
Epanda Jonathan



In the heart of the dense equatorial forest lived a peaceful herd of elephants. At its head was Mbongo, a majestic female known for her remarkable memory and deep connection with nature.

Under her leadership, the herd moved in perfect harmony with the other animals of the forest and with the plants that surrounded them.

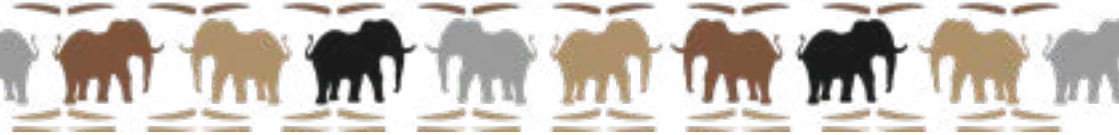
Mbongo intuitively understood the delicate balance of the ecosystem: she knew that every action had consequences and that every species, whether big or small, played an essential role in the life of the forest.





But one day, humans entered this natural sanctuary to exploit its resources. They cut down trees, opened tracks, and polluted the habitats of plants and animals for timber extraction, road construction, and the expansion of farmland. Deeply shaken by the destruction, Mbongo realized that she had to act before it was too late.



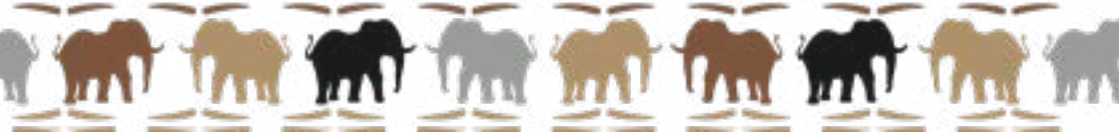


Determined, she used her impressive strength to block the machines and stand up to the loggers. The humans panicked, though some still tried to continue their work. Mbongo then alerted her herd to the imminent danger threatening their home. She let out a powerful battle cry:

« HOUUUUUUUUU »

At once, all the elephants recognized the call of their queen.

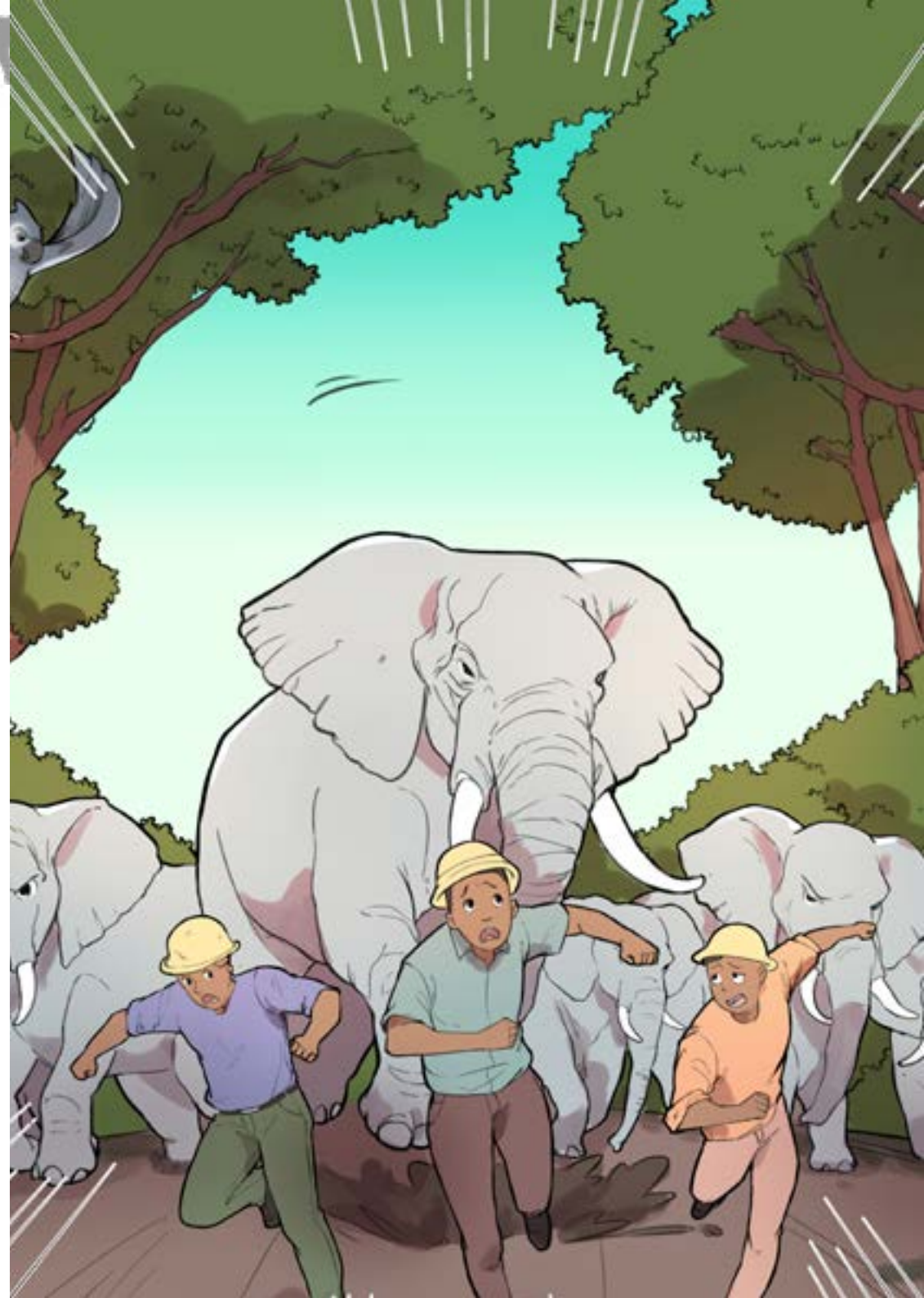


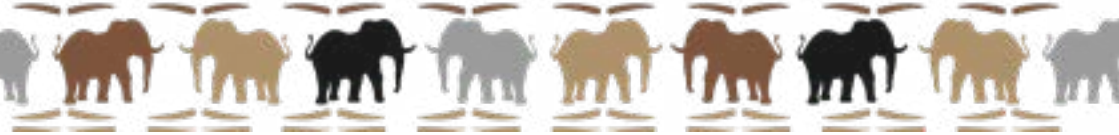


The herd gathered around Mbongo and decided to unite their strength to protect the forest. They advanced like a living avalanche no force in the world could have stopped them.

The ground shook beneath their feet, the trees trembled, and the herd's power made the entire forest quake. Only the oldest trees remained standing, silent witnesses to this struggle.

Some humans, terrified, tried to climb into trees to escape the advance of the giants.





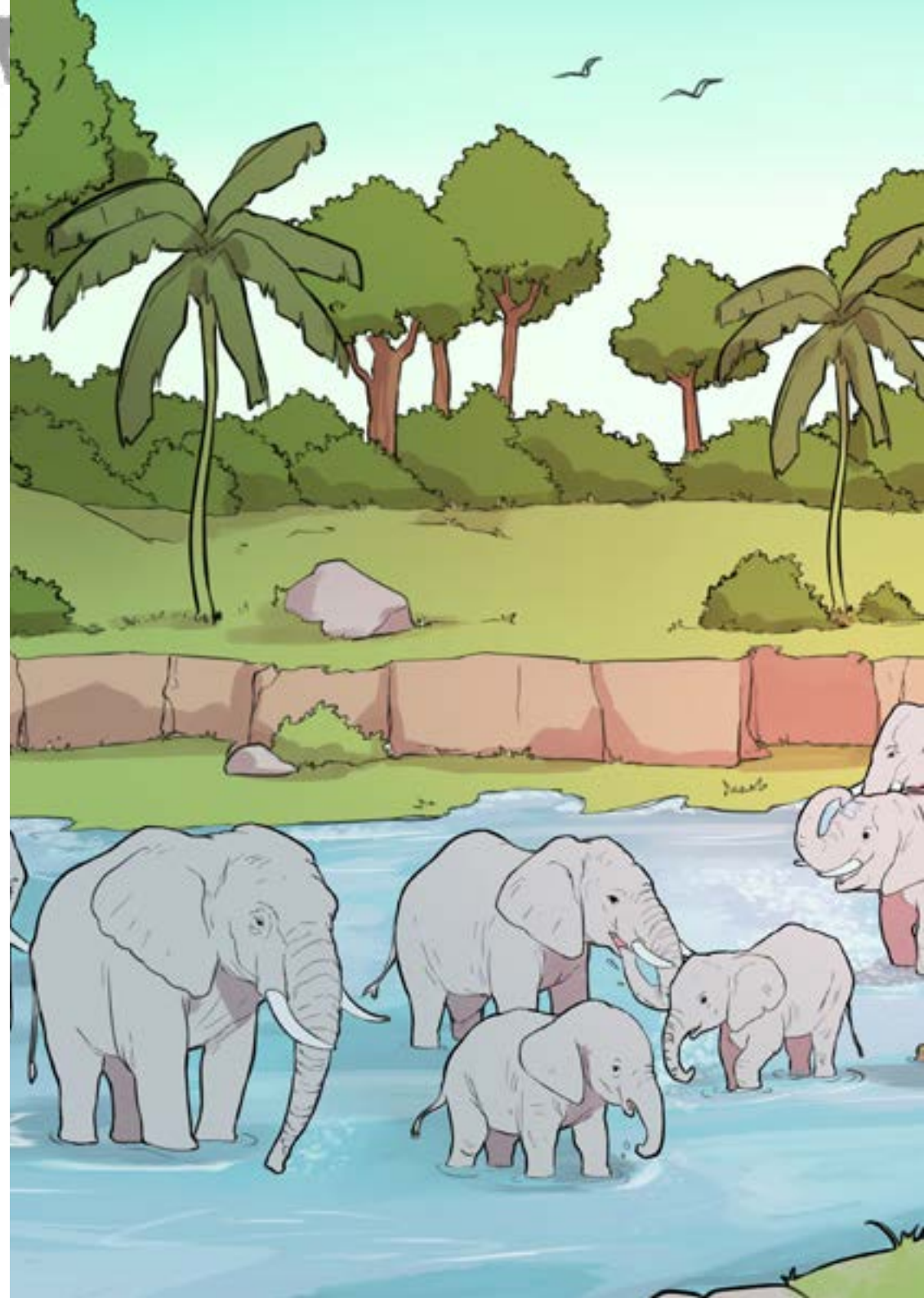
Thanks to Mbongo's determination and the courage of her herd, the humans were surrounded and forced to retreat. Faced with the elephants' solidarity, they had no choice but to leave the forest. Shaken and overwhelmed, they finally understood that this forest was not an unprotected territory, but a kingdom fiercely defended.





Peace returned to the forest. Mbongo continued to watch over her territory with the same wisdom, strength, and compassion. The elephants, as well as all the other creatures of the forest, now saw her as a benevolent queen a symbol of courage and protection.

Her story became a legend passed down through generations: the tale of Mbongo, the queen of elephants, who defended her forest and reminded everyone that nature deserves respect and protection.



Lesson to Remember

The story of Mbongo, the queen of elephants, teaches us the importance of protecting the environment and preserving natural resources. It shows that the destruction of the forest by humans threatens the fragile balance of ecosystems and endangers the survival of the species that live there.

Through Mbongo as a symbol of wisdom, memory, and strength. The story highlights the value of responsible leadership. Faced with the damage caused by human activities, she acts to defend her territory and mobilize her herd. Her courage and solidarity demonstrate that protecting nature also depends on cooperation and collective awareness.

Finally, this story reminds us that environmental conservation is a shared responsibility. Everyone must adopt respectful behaviors toward nature to protect forests, animals, and natural resources for future generations.

Characteristics of Forest Elephants

The forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) is a species that lives in the dense tropical forests of Central Africa. It differs from other elephants because of its smaller size, the shape of its tusks, and its essential role in the forest ecosystem.

Characteristics	Details
Size and weight	Smaller than savanna elephants
Weight	2 700 to 3 000 kg
Height	3 to 3,2 meters
Tusks	Smaller and straighter
Ears	Smaller and rounder
Habitat	Dense and humid tropical forests
Habitat	Secondary forests and forest galleries
Habitat	Clearings
Habitat	Mineral-rich swampy areas
Speed	Up to 40 km/h
Gestation period	22 to 25 months
Reproduction	One calf every 4 to 5 years
Lifespan	60 to 70 years
Diet	Herbivore
Food	Leaves, fruits, bark, roots, herbaceous plants
Intelligence	Very intelligent, excellent memory, complex communication, problem-solving ability

Some Interesting Facts About Elephants

Elephants are the largest land animals

African elephants can reach 3 to 4 meters in height and weigh 4 to 7 tons. Their huge size protects them from predators but requires a lot of food and space.

They communicate through ground vibrations

Elephants can sense vibrations from footsteps, calls, or movements of other elephants over long distances. Their sensitive feet and leg bones transmit these signals to the brain, helping them detect danger or locate their group.

They can sleep standing up

Elephants usually take short naps while standing to stay alert. They lie down only a few hours per week, because getting up is difficult due to their weight.

They eat almost all day

An elephant eats 150 to 300 kg of food per day such as leaves, fruits, bark, roots and spends 16 to 18 hours feeding. This constant eating helps spread seeds and creates open spaces in the forest.

Their skin is thick but sensitive

Elephant skin can be 2.5 cm thick, protecting them from insects and branches. However, it is still sensitive, so they cover themselves with mud to avoid sunburn and infections. Mud works like natural sunscreen and a parasite repellent.

Elephants and the Forest

Elephants need the forest to survive, and the forest needs them. They are often called the “gardeners of the forest.”

Seed dispersal

They disperse seeds over long distances through their dung.

Creation of clearings and pathways

As they move, they open trails and let sunlight reach the forest floor, helping new plants grow.

Access to water and mineral salts

They sometimes dig in swamps to reach water or minerals, which benefits many other animals.

Support for biodiversity

Many species take advantage of the vegetation that grows thanks to their actions.

Contribution to the climate

By promoting the growth of large trees, they help store carbon, thus limiting climate change.

Threats Facing Elephants

The African forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) is listed as Critically Endangered (CR) on the IUCN Red List due to poaching and forest destruction. Their population has declined dramatically, and the species is at risk of disappearing without urgent action.

- 🐘 **Poaching for ivory:** Elephants are killed for their tusks, which are highly valued on the illegal market. This greatly reduces their population and disrupts herd structure.
- 🐘 **Deforestation:** Trees are cut for agriculture, timber, or settlement expansion, destroying their habitat and reducing food availability.
- 🐘 **Habitat fragmentation:** Roads, villages, and infrastructure break the forest into small isolated patches, making movement difficult and increasing the risk of collisions or conflict.
- 🐘 **Human-wildlife conflict:** Elephants enter farmland to feed, causing damage and often triggering retaliation from local communities.
- 🐘 **Climate change:** Droughts and shifting weather patterns reduce water and food sources, forcing elephants to travel longer distances.
- 🐘 **Diseases:** Illnesses such as nodular dermatitis weaken elephants and may threaten their survival, especially when their habitat is degraded.

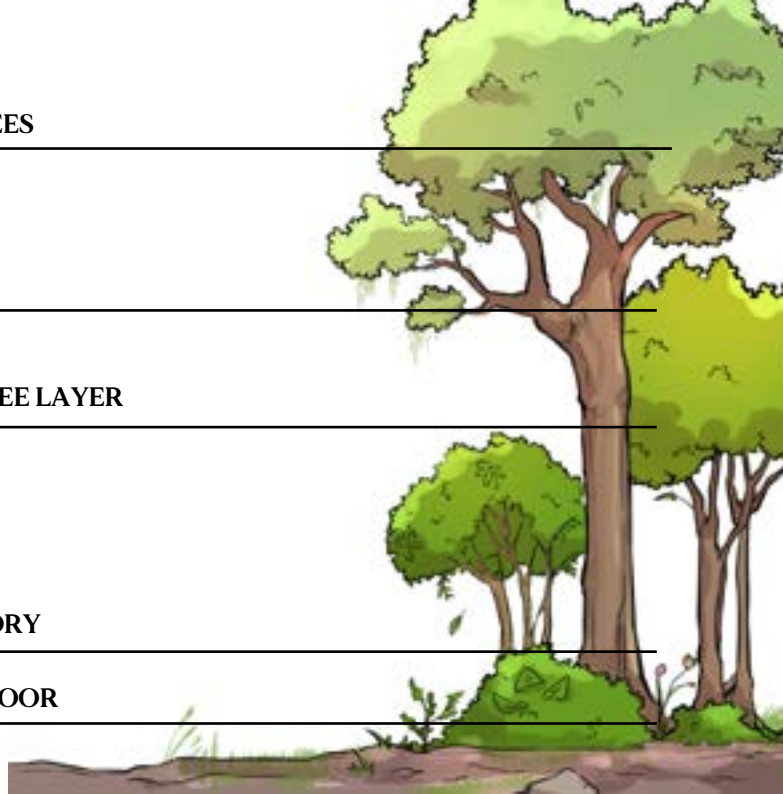
EMERGENT TREES

THE CANOPY

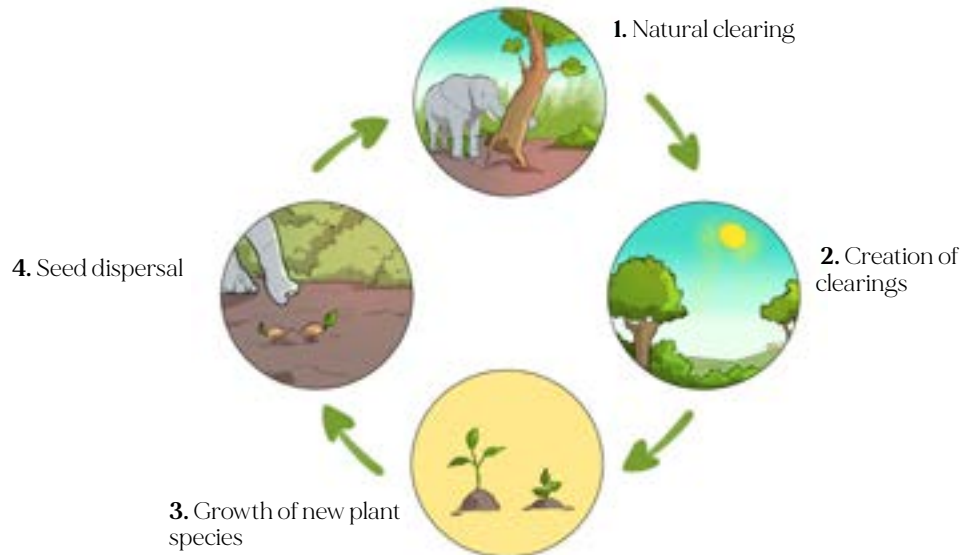
THE LOWER TREE LAYER

THE UNDERSTORY

THE FOREST FLOOR



The elephant helps the forest grow back naturally



Forest Destruction by Human Activities

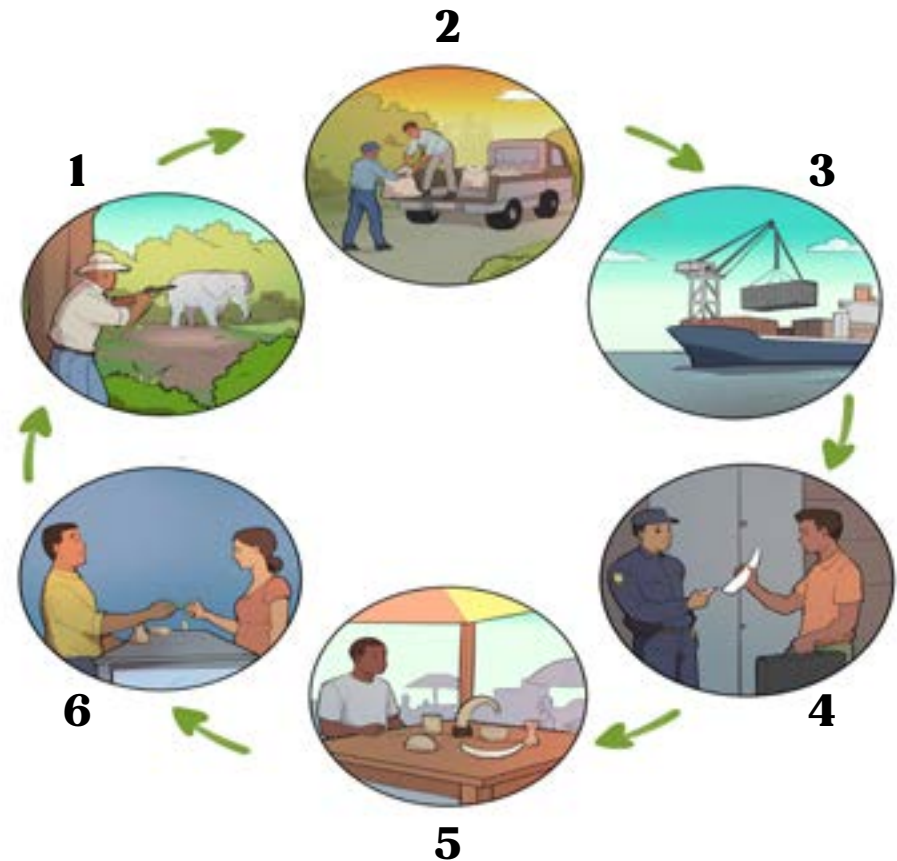
The decline in forest elephant numbers is caused by poaching



Why Is the Demand for Ivory So High?

- 🐘 **High economic value:** Ivory sells for very high prices on the market, attracting poachers.
 - 🐘 **Symbol of wealth and prestige:** In some cultures, owning ivory objects is seen as a sign of social status.
 - 🐘 **Artistic use:** Ivory is used to make jewelry, sculptures, and decorative items.
 - 🐘 **Cultural or religious uses:** Some traditions use ivory in rituals or ceremonies.
 - 🐘 **Highly profitable illegal trade:** Illegal ivory trafficking generates huge profits, despite being banned in many countries.
- 👉 **Consequence:** The high demand fuels poaching and severely threatens the survival of elephants.

Ivory trade



1. **Poaching:** The animal is killed for its parts (ivory, skins, tusks).
 2. **Local transport:** Products are moved secretly.
 3. **Illegal export:** Sent hidden to other countries.
 4. **Corruption:** Smuggling is facilitated by fake documents or money.
 5. **Sale:** Products are sold on illegal markets.
 6. **Consumption:** Bought for luxury or beliefs.
- 👉 **Key message:** Trafficking is an organized chain; without buyers, poaching stops

Solutions to Protect Elephants

Creation and strengthening of protected areas: National parks, reserves, and wildlife corridors allow elephants to live and move safely.

Law enforcement (e.g., CITES): National and international regulations prohibit the illegal ivory trade and punish poaching.

Involvement of local communities: Residents participate in elephant protection and benefit from awareness and responsibility-building programs.

Public awareness: Educating citizens and tourists about the importance of elephant conservation reduces the demand for ivory and encourages respect for wildlife.

GPS tracking and participatory mapping: Monitoring elephant movements helps manage their habitat more effectively and anticipate human-elephant conflicts.

Compensation for crop losses: Providing financial or material support to farmers affected by elephant damage helps reduce retaliatory actions.

Promotion of alternative livelihoods: Developing ecotourism, beekeeping, or handicrafts provides income to communities while protecting elephants.

Involvement of local communities and public awareness on the importance of protecting elephants and the forest



Reforestation is an effective method for preserving forest habitats for forest elephants



Ecotourism can contribute to the sustainable conservation of forest elephants while generating significant income



Livestock farming, agroforestry, handicrafts, and beekeeping provide income sources for communities and serve as sustainable alternatives that reduce dependence on elephant meat and ivory

How to Prevent Human-Elephant Conflict

Establish wildlife corridors

This involves identifying and protecting natural paths used by wild animals to move between forest areas, water sources, or feeding sites. Keeping these corridors open reduces the chances of animals crossing farmland.

Create buffer zones

These are strips of land placed between the forest and cultivated fields. They may contain repellent plants, fallow areas, or species not eaten by elephants. Buffer zones reduce animal intrusions and limit crop damage.

Avoid farming on old wildlife routes

Animals often continue using traditional pathways. Planting crops on these routes greatly increases the risk of destruction. Avoiding these areas helps reduce conflict.

Use repellent crops

The cultivation of chili, ginger, lemongrass, garlic, pineapple, these plants release strong odors that some animals, including elephants, do not appreciate. Planting them around fields can help keep wildlife away.

Community awareness

Training and informing residents about appropriate behaviours, risks, and prevention techniques helps reduce conflicts and promotes coexistence.

Community patrols

Local watch groups monitor animal movements, alert villagers when elephants are near and coordinate quick action to prevent damage.



Chili-Used Oil Barriers

A mixture of red chili and used oil is applied to ropes surrounding the fields. The strong smell irritates the elephants' trunks and discourages them from approaching



Bee Hives

Elephants are very afraid of bees. Installing active beehives around the fields creates a natural barrier and produces honey as an alternative source of income



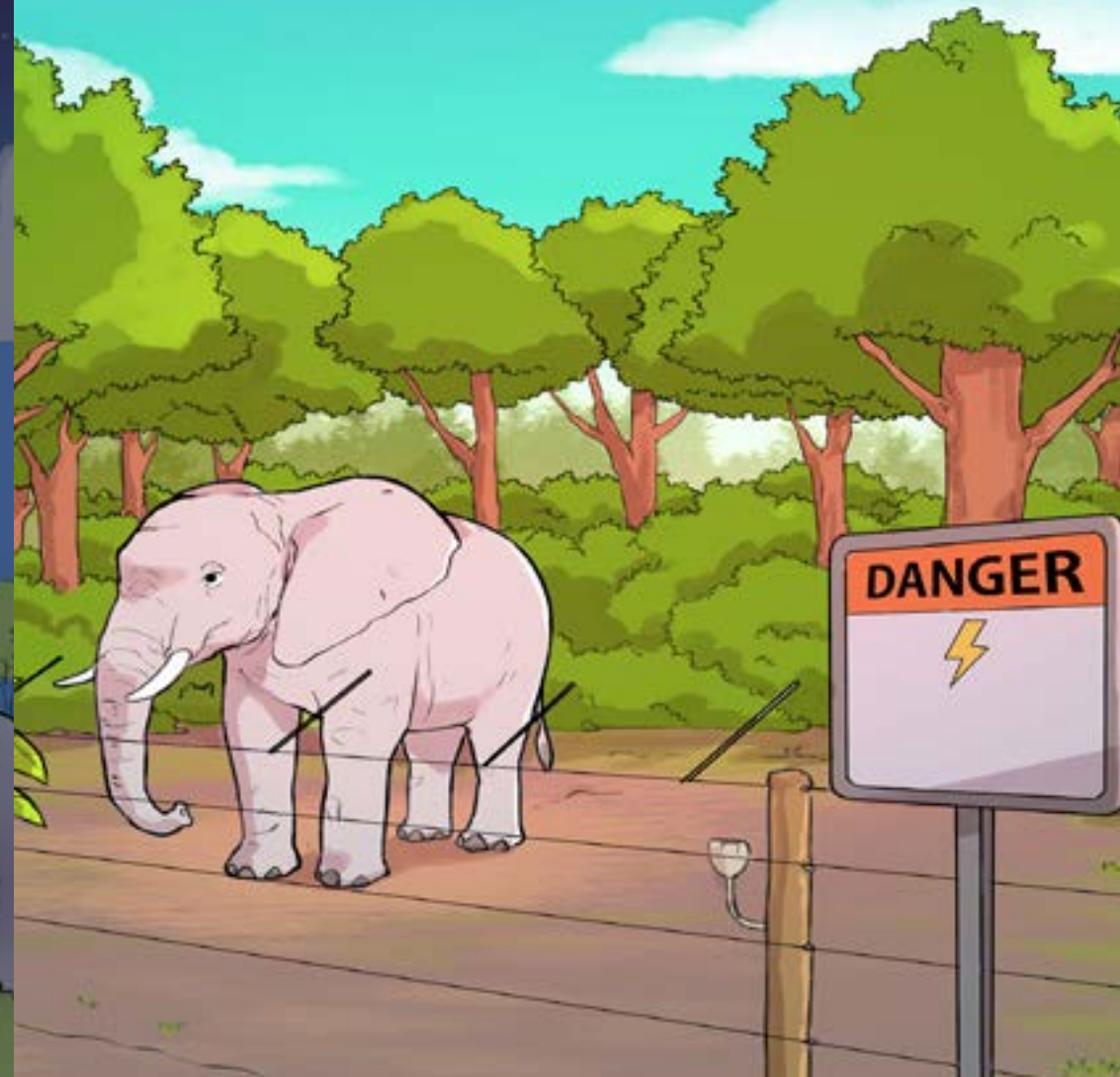
Solar Lamps, Bells, and Alert Fires

These are simple devices used at night to signal the presence of animals. The lights and sounds disturb wildlife and allow villagers to intervene in time



Solar Electric Fences

They operate using solar energy and deliver a small, non-lethal shock when an animal touches the wire. This serves as a warning and prevents repeated intrusions



Exercises





Exercise 01: Multiple-choice

1. What is the name of the queen of the elephants?
 - A. Lima
 - B. Ela
 - C. Mbongo
 - D. Zena
2. Why did the elephant herd stop the humans from continuing their work?
 - A. To prevent the destruction of the forest
 - B. To prevent the migration of ants
 - C. To prevent the destruction of water
 - D. To prevent the destruction of the desert
3. Why are forest elephants considered the “gardeners of the forest”?
 - A. They disperse seeds throughout the forest
 - B. They build houses
 - C. They serve as food for predators
 - D. They destroy trees

Exercise 02: “Yes or No”

1. Do forest elephants have smaller and straighter tusks than savanna elephants?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. When elephants move through the forest, do they open pathways and small clearings?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. Is hunting an effective way to protect elephants?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Do national parks and nature reserves provide protected habitat for forest elephants?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. Can deforestation be an effective solution to fight climate change? ?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
6. Can the involvement of local communities play an important role in protecting elephants?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Can eating elephant meat help protect the forest?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Ecological Challenges: Become a Nature Protector like Mbongo

-  Pick up waste in your neighborhood, at school, or in a natural area.
-  Plant a tree or a small plant to help the forest grow.
-  Explain to two friends why ivory is banned and how this protects elephants.
-  Do not eat elephant meat.

If you succeed, you become a true friend of animals and the forest!

Answers to exercises

Exercise 01: Multiple-choice

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About Tropical Forest and Rural Development (TF-RD)

TF-RD is an organization dedicated to the conservation of tropical forests and the sustainable development of local communities in the South-East of Cameroon, particularly around the Dja and Campo Ma'an reserves. It supports local populations, especially women, through agroforestry projects and the development of non-timber forest products, while strengthening local capacities for biodiversity protection.

TF-RD also carries out scientific research, environmental education, and ecotourism promotion activities, thereby contributing to the preservation of ecosystems, raising awareness among young people and adults, and promoting sustainable coexistence between humans and nature.



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