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Elephantine Animals

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Conservation Measures Recommended: To combat the major threat of habitat destruction, specific reserves should be established for the Asian elephant. As a first step, surveys are needed to identify the largest remaining discrete populations and action should then be taken to minimize or halt fragmentation of these key populations. This could be achieved by the creation of special, managed reserves (often incorporating existing parks and reserves) based on the total seasonal range requirements of the elephant population. Where this is impossible, forest corridors should be set aside at the very least to safeguard routes of major seasonal movements. Such action is only feasible if a multiple-use ethic towards land management is adopted involving compromise between conflicting demands of land use by humans and elephants (1).

Remarks: For description of animal see (3).

References:

1. Olivier, R.C.D. 1977. Distribution and conservation status of the Asian elephant (Elephas maximus Linn.). Oryx, (in press).
2. Olivier, R.C.D. (in prep.). On the ecology and behavior of the Asian elephant (Elephas maximus Linn.). - with particular reference to Malaya and Sri Lanka.
3. Walker, E.P. 1975. Mammals of the World. The Johns Hopkins University Press. Baltimore and London. 1500 pp.

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ELEPHANTINE ANIMALS

by Dale J. Osborn

A great many animals bear names borrowed from other totally unrelated species. Examples are Zebra Finch, Bullfrog, Kangaroo Rat, Lion Fish and Swallow Tail Butterfly. A commonly used prefix for vernacular as well as scientific names of many diverse forms of animals is "elephant."

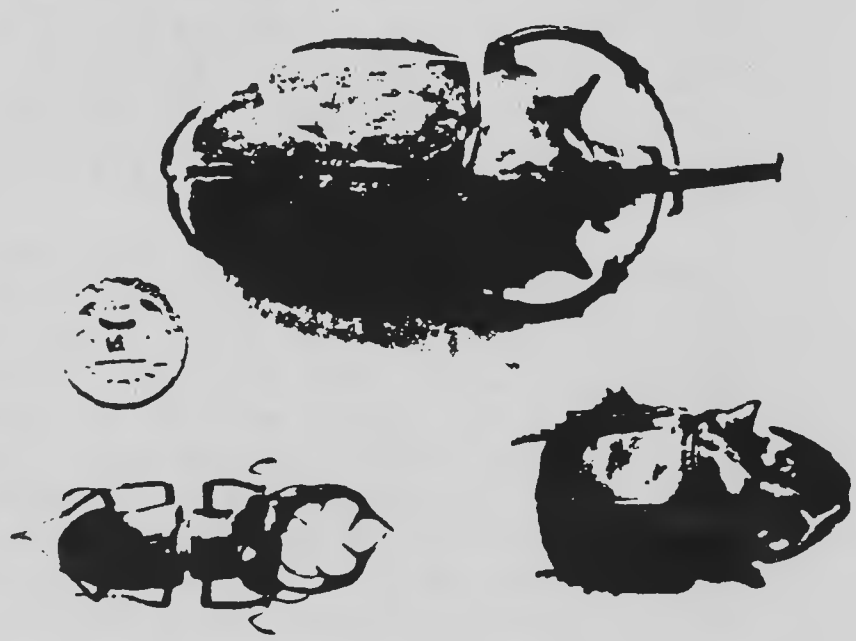
Large size and any resemblance to the trunk or tusks are features that usually recall the name elephant in the animal kingdom.

The largest shark is the Whale Shark (*Rhincodon typus*) which can grow to 60 feet and second largest is the Elephant, or Basking, Shark (*Cethorinus maximus*) which reaches 30 - 40 feet in length. Similarly, *Testudo gigantea*, the world's largest tortoise is called the Elephant Tortoise, and the slightly smaller Galapagos Giant Tortoise is *Testudo elephantopus*. The world's largest birds, *Aepyornix*, a genus of extinct, flightless birds of Madagascar, are called Elephant Birds. One species stood 12 feet high and probably weighed 1,000 pounds.

The Elephant Dung Beetle (*Heliocopris gigas*) of Africa gets its name from its size (adult males may become 6 inches long) and tusk-like integumental horns. The Elephant Beetle of Europe (*Lucanus elephas*) is also large, but its enormous and formidable mandibles must have reminded early entomologists of tusks.

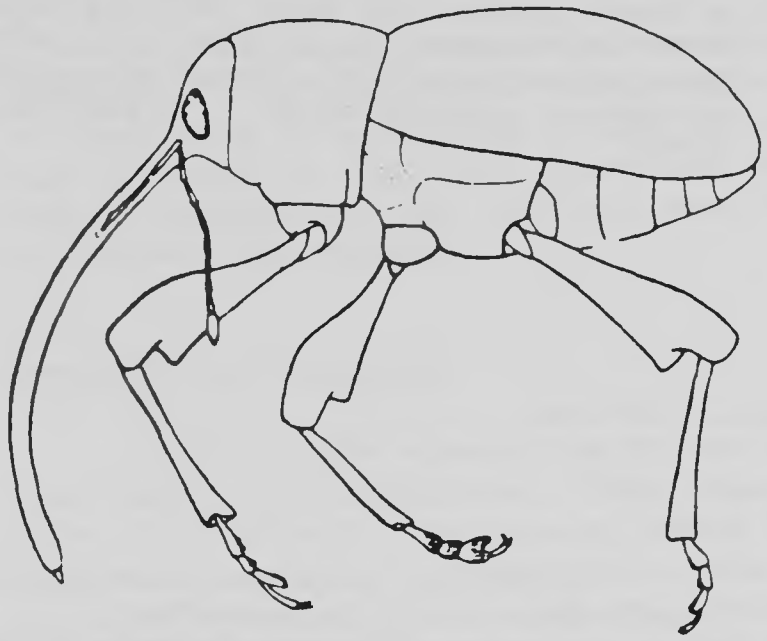
The huge Elephant Beetles of Mexico, Central America (*Megasoma elephas*) and Brazil (*M. anubis*) have large, proboscis-like integumental projections on the head. The Elephant Bug or Weevil, also called Acorn Weevil, (*Curculio elephas*) of Europe is about a half inch long and bears a "drill" or snout used in piercing hard shells of nuts. The Elephant Louse (*Haematomyzous elephantis*) is a sucking louse with a tubular head forming a kind of beak and is a parasite of elephants in Africa and the East Indies. There are special Elephant Ticks and Elephant Bot Flies, but they are lacking in elephantine features.

The Elephant Hawk Moth, *Deilephila elpenor*, the most beautiful of all European hawk moths, was so named from the

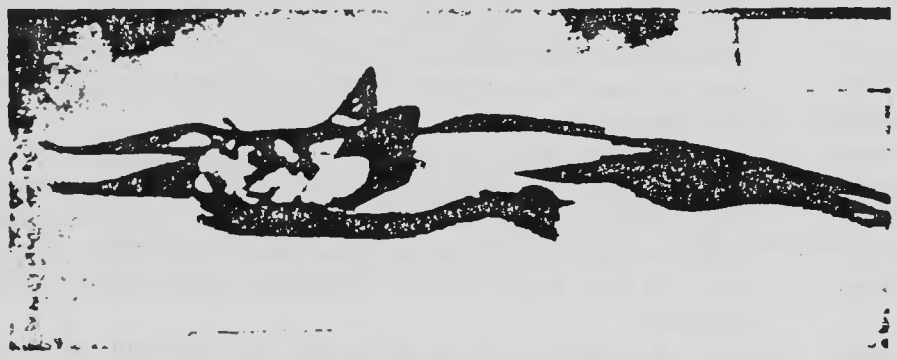


Mexican Elephant Beetle (above). Elephant Dung Beetle (lower right). European Elephant Beetle (lower left).

caterpillar by a Dutch entomologist, Jan Gaedart, in 1662, "since it has a thing in front of its head which is not at all a bad resemblance to an elephant's trunk." A recent author stated that when the larva was searching for food with the front segments stretched out and swinging back and forth they did resemble an elephant's trunk in shape, color and action.



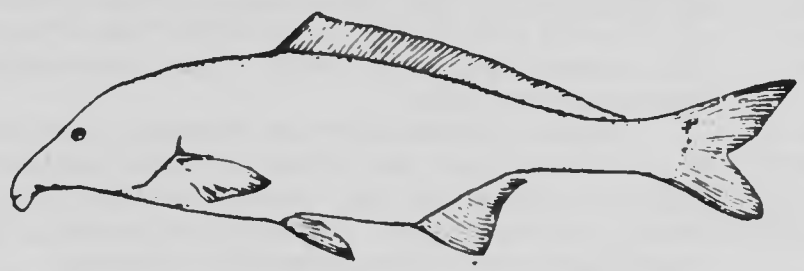
Elephant Weevil (Borror and DeLong, 1964. *An Introduction to the Study of Insects*).



Elephant Fish.

There is a group of cartilaginous fishes, genus *Callorhyncus*, known as Elephant Fishes due to the prehensile prolongation of the snout.

The Elephant Snout Fish (*Mormyrus kannune*), is a fresh water fish of Africa with the jaws prolonged into a downward pointing beak.



Elephant Snout Fish (Greenwood, 1958. *Fishes of Uganda*).

The Elephant's Trunk Snake (*Acrochordus javanicus*) is a heavy bodied fresh water snake from Southeast Asia. *Elephantulus* and several other genera of African Shrews are called Elephant Shrews due to their elongate, moveable snouts. Elephant Seals or Sea Elephants get their name from their size and the trunk-like inflatable proboscises of the males. There are two species, *Mirounga leonina*, of New Zealand and Falkland Island shores, and *M. angustirostris* of the Pacific coast and offshore islands from Central California to Baja California.

Elephant Shrew (Brehm, 1883. *Brehms Thierleben*).

Sea Elephant.

The only Elephant's Ear animal is the commercial sponge of the Mediterranean, *Euspongia officinalis*.

Tusk shells of the genus *Dentallium* are world wide in distribution. The handsomely ridged Elephant Tusk Shell (*D. elephantinum*) is native of Phillipine shores.

Elephant Tusk Shells.

There should be no question as to how the Ivory Billed Woodpecker got its name.

Elephantiasis is a name given to various skin diseases of man which cause it to look like an elephant's hide, and to the swollen condition of lower appendages accompanied with hardening of the skin caused by blockage of the lymphatic system by a minute roundworm, *Wuchereria bancrofti*.

Composite monsters or *makaras*, that have elephant heads and bodies of serpents, alligators or fishes, are common in the architecture of India and the Far East. The mythology behind these wonder beasts cannot be dealt with here, but a Burmese poet's theatric explanation of an elephant head and fish body, or ichthyoproboscidea, was a comparison of a battlefield full of elephants to a sea teeming with sharks and fishes, an analogy difficult for the Western mind to comprehend.

Elephantine, the adjective meaning anything elephant-like, refers also to its movements, which are described in dictionaries as clumsy, ponderous and heavy. Now, any elephant tracker knows that an elephant can walk softly as a cat and long ago an Indian poet said the walk of an elephant was reminiscent of the movements of a graceful woman . . . or was it the other way around?

ELEPHANTS IN THE PLANT WORLD

by Dale J. Osborn

Beastly names from all branches of the animal kingdom are attached to members of the plant world. Familiar to most of us are toad stool, cranes bill, moth orchid, tiger lily, skunk cabbage, fox glove, lobster claws, butterfly bush, bird of paradise, mother-in-law plant, hen and chickens, kangaroo paws, octopus plant, bear grass, monkey puzzle tree and many more.

First among animals whose names have been applied botanically is the elephant, be it African or Asian. Following are some of the less obscure "elephant plants" of the world.

Elephant is symbolistic of size or strength, hence, elephant garlic and elephant pepper in India. The baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) of tropical Africa, which can have a trunk diameter of 30 feet, is for obvious reasons, called the elephant tree. Elephant apple or wood (*Faronia elephantum*), a large East Indian tree, yields strong, durable timber.

In the short summer of the North American subarctic and alpine meadows a small perennial, (*Pedicularis groenlandicus*) bears a 2 - 6 inch spike of red flowers resembling elephant's heads, trunk and all. A related species (*P. atollens*) of the high mountains of California and Oregon, lacks the trunk of the above and is known as little elephant's head.

Plants with large and/or assymetrical leaves that are called elephant's ears are encyclopaedic. Most familiar of these are species of *Begonia, Caladium, Philodendron* and *Alocasia*, which are popular house plants. One Indonesian elephant ear, *Colocasia esculenta*, has leaves up to three feet in length. Two species of fern having undivided fronds, *Elaphoglossum crinitum* and *Platycerium angolense*, also bear the common name elephant's ear.

Trees with short, thickened and crooked trunks, reminiscent of an elephant's proboscis, are elephant wood, *Veatchia* (*Pachycormus*) *discolor*, of Baja California and the elephant tree, *Burserea* (*Elaphrium*) *microphylla* of the Southwestern and Lower California Deserts.

Tusk-like features on plants, such as the large, spreading thorns of the East Indian *Acacia tomentosa*, prompted the name elephant thorn. Elephant tusk (*Martynia altheafolia*), a small perennial of the Colorado Desert, was named from the tiny curved prongs on the pod.

The ivory tree (*Combretum imberbe*) of Africa has whitish or ivory bark, and the leaves of the ivory fig (*Ficus eburnea*) of Asia have white midribs. The ivory nut is the hard seed of the South American palm, *Phytelephas macrocarpa*.

Vegetable ivory of commerce is obtained from the latter and an African fan palm, *Hyphaene thebaica*.

Elephant's foot (*Dioscorea elephantipes*) is a South African yam having a broad surface tuber that may grow to nine feet in diameter. Another elephant foot, *Testudinaria elephantipes* of Asia, develops enormous corms. The elephant foot tree (*Beaucarnia recurvata*) of Mexico has the trunk swollen at the base as does the elephant or palmyra palm (*Borassus flabellifera*) of tropical Asia.

In the sandy pinelands of South Carolina, Florida and Texas there is elephant's foot (*Elephantopus carolinianus*). The genus, which also occurs in Asia, was a translation by Linnaeus in 1753 from the Aboriginal vernacular. With imagination, its flat, basal rosette of leaves resembles the track of an elephant.

A number of food plants are prefixed with elephant. The most accurately latinized name in this group is elephant's root (*Elephantorrhiza elephantina*), which was discovered by Burchell in 1812 from information supplied him by the Bechuanas. One of the most important "elephant's food" is *Portulacaria afra*, a small tree or bush having juicy leaves and found in the drier parts of Africa.

The popular Sausage Tree (*Kigelia pinnata*), which bears long, pendulous, sausage-like fruits, is called elephant corn by the Zulus. There are numerous elephant grasses (*Pennisetum purpureum* of the African Savannah is one of the better known), all of which grow as high as or higher than an elephant's eye. The common Old World cat-tail (*Typha elephantina*), is called elephant grass in India.

Mopane (*Colophospermum mopane*), a low tree or shrub of the African bush, and a favorite food of elephants, provides such camouflage that they cannot be seen from a few feet away. Elephant privet (*Ptellopsis habeensis*), a low tree of Nigeria, also provides concealment for elephants.

There is one elephant cactus, a globular Mexican species known as *Coryphantha* (*Mammilaria*) *elephantidens*.

Nothing has been named for the elephant's eye, but *Vellozid retinervis* of South Africa with its fibrous stems and terminal tufts of leaves does appear to have been named appropriately, elephant's tail.