

MFIAP APPLICATION - Jill SNEESBY
INTODUTORY TEXT - ELEPHANT TRUNKS

There is much about the African Elephant that is absolutely amazing - an adult male can weigh over 6 tonnes and yet it can walk almost silently - it has a complex social society based on the same principles as our own; love, understanding, compassion, remorse and tolerance - and a trunk, made up of thousands of muscles which enable it to move in any direction - it works as a nose, an arm, a hand, a voice, a straw, a hose and much more.

The trunk, a fusion of the upper lip and nose formed over millions of years of evolution, has no equal in the animal kingdom for dexterity, maneuverability and strength. It has captured my imagination and it is the key element on which I have based this portfolio.

My photographs show the elephants in many different situations, areas and times, but at all times the trunk is the dominant theme. With the images I aim to show the versatility of this amazing organ, not merely as a scientific record but each as a work of art - the trunk being the element which binds them.

1. Protection - All elephants display great dexterity with the trunk, although it takes baby elephants a number of years to become truly expert in their use. Hanging down in front and seemingly innocuous mothers' trunk is ready and waiting, protecting her calf from all possible dangers.

2. Power - From protection to power - this image portrays the power of the trunk in one of its many uses, that of splashing mud.

3. Enthusiasm - Almost childlike in their enthusiasm, with the water splashing all around, cooling the elephant down as he drinks.

4. Mass Power - Running into the water having reached it after a long walk - their sheer power sending the water flying.

5. Strength - the branch that the elephant has torn from the tree shows just how much power and strength there is in the trunk.

6. Delicately - the elephants trunk has two highly sensitive fingers at its tip allowing it to select the smallest flower.

7. Flexibility - almost completing a full circle the trunk is used not only to place food in its mouth but also water in what appears to be quite a hit and miss process as much cascades out.

8. Complete Circle - whether just for show or flexing its muscles the trunk is impressive and a work of art on its own interestingly coloured by the different shades of the drying mud.

9. Friends - the waterhole offers a time and place for social interaction and elephants use their trunks to touch each other to reinforce friendships.

10. Rubbing Noses - a close up view emphasizing the affection between two elephant.

11. Sharing - family and close friends will put their trunks into each others mouths, not only to share the water but also to reinforce social relationships.

12. Family - the family is very important and the elephant will all stand together while drinking at the waterhole.

13. Sibling Protection - an older sibling will often stand in for mother when a youngster needs protection, keeping the baby close to it and under its trunk to ensure that the baby elephant is well protected.

14. Practising - it takes baby elephants a number of years to completely master the use of their trunks, in the meanwhile they will try out anything including scenting which they do by raising their trunk.

15. Scenting - a classic pose - the elephant takes time away from drinking as some scent has disturbed it and it will use its strong sense of smell to determine who or what is on its way.

16. Adversaries - the length of the trunk makes it possible to test an opponent • without getting into close contact especially if he is bigger than you.

17. Mud Spray - just as the elephant uses the trunk to draw up water so it also uses it to draw up mud with it then sprays onto its body to protect it from sunburn and insect bites.

18. Mud Bath - Standing in shallow water the elephant uses his trunk to gather the mud and then systematically sprays it on one side and then the next flapping his ears wide to ensure full coverage - and in the process looking very large and daunting.

19. Dust Bath - these dark, almost black elephants are not a different species, they are just wet and having finished their mud bath they now complete their beauty routine by spraying dust onto themselves to add further protection against the elements.

20. Signing - This formidable gentle giant uses his trunk to indicate that he is aware I am there and making sure that I do not venture any closer.