

# ELEPHANTnama



## The elephant chronicles

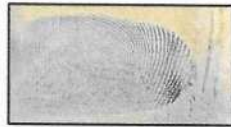
The elephant is the most recognized animal in the world. However, awareness about the elephants is very limited. So it is only apt that the chronicles of the elephant be told with help of stamps and relevant philatelic material. The exhibit "ELEPHANTnama" (*nama* in Persian signifies chronicles) aims to enable readers to understand elephants and their relationship with humans. The exhibitor sincerely hopes the awareness created would contribute in conservation of elephants and to secure their future.

### Exploring various aspects of elephant



▲ Colour Proof in Cyan (C), Magenta (M), Yellow (Y) & Black (K).

### ...And the human imprint on elephant



▲ British India 1926, Vignette obverse and reverse. Purple thumbprint (most likely of Mr. Stephen Smith) at the reverse and depicting an elephant, mahout and a bi-plane on the obverse. Vignette was attached to airmail covers flown on Royal Airforce demonstration flight from Calcutta to Patna/ Risalpur.



The exhibit explores known and not so known aspects of elephants through a variety of philatelic elements. The exhibit touches upon the evolutionary journey, physical and social characteristics, habitats, threats and the complex relationship between humans and elephants. Attempt has been made to build the story through the most variety of philatelic items such as original artwork, errors, postmarks, meters, various proofs and postal stationery. Unique and rare items are highlighted with a red triangle. ▲

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### References:

- Mr. L. N. Williams, Fundamentals of Philately – Revised edition, 1990
- American Topical Association Checklist, Online and auction house catalogues
- Online International Postage Meter Stamp Catalogue
- Mr. Ian Redmond, Elephant, 1993
- Mr. M. Philip Kahl and Mr. Charles Santiapillai, A Glossary of Elephant Terms, 2004



## 1.2. Proboscidea evolution

## 1. EVOLUTION OF THE ELEPHANTS

The evolution of Proboscidea over the last 55 million years can be broadly classified into three phases. The **first phase** was the age of the earliest Proboscidea. It covered from the Eocene age to Oligocene age (55 – 25 million years ago). This age saw the emergence of Moeritherium, Palaeomastadon and the biggest beast Deinotherium.

**Moeritherium**



Stamp with information tab.

**Palaeomastadon**



**Deinotherium gigantissimum**



Special cancel.

The **second phase** of evolution, was know as the age of Gomphotheres and lasted the Miocene age (25 – 13 million years ago). Well know Gomphotheres includes Ambeledon, Stegodon amongst others.

**Ambeledon**



Imperforate block of four.

**Stegodon ganesa**



Colour shades.

The **third phase** of evolution, was the age of real elephants as we know them today. It lasted from the Miocene age to the Pleistocene age (10 – 0.1 million years ago). The phase was dominated by Mastodons and Mammoths initially and later by the Elephas (ancestors of Asian elephants) and Loxodonta (ancestors of African elephant) families.

**Elephas namadicus**



Only two species of elephants survive to the present day:

- They are
- The African elephant
- The Asian elephant

**Mastodon & Mammoth**



**Loxodonta atlantica**



Double imprint error.

The modern day elephants: First ever stamps issued.

**Asian elephant**



1895, Specimen.

**African elephant**



1892, Actual stamp and colour trial in Plum.

## 2.1. The African elephants

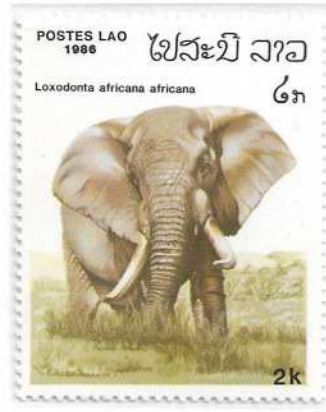
The African elephant, scientifically known as *Loxodonta africana*, is the biggest living terrestrial animal. The name *Loxodonta* refers to the diamond shaped ridges on the African elephant's teeth. A fully grown male African elephant can weigh up to 6 tons and stand 4 meters in height and 8 meters in length. They have single domed head.

There are two living sub-species of the African elephant: African bush or savanna elephant (*Loxodonta africana africana*) and the African forest elephant (*Loxodonta africana cyclotis*). Forest elephants are native to Congo river basin in West Africa, while bush elephants are found spread across sub-Saharan Africa

### Forest elephant



### Bush elephant



## 2. THE MODERN DAY ELEPHANTS

**Biggest living land animal: Single domed head & diamond shaped tooth ridges**



South Africa 1958, Registered cover from Marion Island, South Africa to England. First day cover for the special cancel.

**Forest elephants: Native to Congo (Zaire) river basin**



**Bush elephants: Native to Sub-Saharan Africa**



Bulls and cows of both the African elephant species have tusk.

**Cows have tusks**



The back of the African bush elephant is concave shaped, while the African forest elephant has a nearly straight back.

Both the species of African elephants have large ears covering shoulders and two finger like lobes at the tip of the trunk.

**Bush elephant: concave back**



**Imperforate**

**Forest elephant: straight back**



**Two fingered trunk**



**Ears covering shoulders**



**Surcharged.**

**Large ears**



**▲ Trial colour proof strip of four**

## 2.2. The Asian elephants

The Asian elephant (Gajah) is scientifically known as *Elephas maximus*. While the scientific name means the biggest elephant, the Asian elephant is the second largest land animal. The Asian elephants are endemic to the Asian sub-continent, continental south east Asia and S. E. Asian islands. A fully grown male Asian elephant can weigh up to 5 tons and stand 3.5 meters in height and 8 meters in length. They have a convex back and small pointed ears.

**Gajah**



**Two domed head**



The head has two distinct domes (Kumbha).

**Female tusches**



**Convex back and small ears**



**▲ Perforation error.**

Only males have tusks. Females have no tusks or small tusks called tushes.

**Females - No tusks**



**Sumatran elephant**



**Sri Lankan elephant : Heaviest depigmentation**



**Pink Depigmentation**



*Postal meter, CB5. Francoptyp-Postalia "T1000" (digital), 1992.*

Asian elephants have one finger like lobe at the tip of the trunk.

**One fingered trunk**



**Indian elephant**

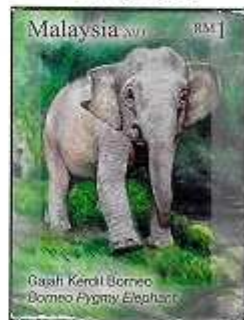


**Malayan elephant : Hairiest**



There are four living sub-species of the Asian elephant: Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*), Sri Lankan elephant (*Elephas maximus ceylonensis*), Malayan elephant (*Elephas maximus hirsutus*) and Sumatran elephant (*Elephas maximus sumatranus*). Borneo elephants (*Elephas maximus borneensis*) also known as pygmy elephants are believed to be related to the Sumatran elephants. The Sri Lankan elephant is the largest of Asian elephant, while the Malaysian elephant is the hairiest.

**Borneo elephant : Smallest**



*Self adhesive.*

**Sri Lankan elephant : Largest**



As the Asian elephants grow old, their skin depigments around face, trunk and ears and turns pink. Of the Asian elephants, the Sri Lankan elephant is known to have the heaviest of depigmentation.

### 3.1. Trunk, eyes and ears

The trunk of an elephant is really a long upper lip with two nostrils. The 40,000 muscles and tendons in an elephant's trunk ensures that it is strong, long and supple and primarily helps elephant to breathe. It also serves like a hand enabling elephant to pull, pickup things and also helps ingest food & water.

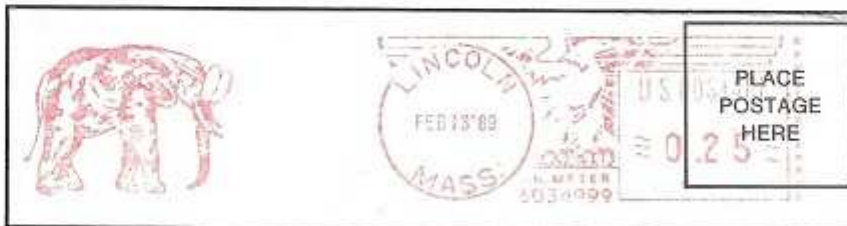
Trunk = hand



▲ Burundi 1991, Original artwork for postal stamp, Acrylic on cardboard. (Only one known exists)

Elephants have weak eyesight with limited front vision. However, hearing is good and elephants can hear sounds kilometers away.

Limited front vision



Postal meter, IE1. Pitney Bowes Model "6500" series, Type B Small triad at left (≈), 1980.

Poor eyesight

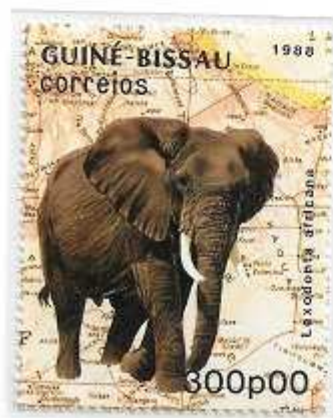


▲ Missing eye flaw.

Good hearing



Hear long distances



### 3. THE ANATOMY OF ELEPHANTS

Trunk has 40,000 muscles and is highly flexible



Postal meter. PA11.1. Hasler "F66" (MV).

Ingest food & water



The trunk acts like a radar and loudspeaker and helps communicate with other elephants.

Radar & loudspeaker



The elephants ears contain many blood vessels. On warm days the elephant cools itself by flapping its ears. This causes the blood to move quickly and cools down the blood in the veins.

Flapping of ears to cool down



Imperforate with colour guide.

### 3.2. Skin, legs, tusks and teeth

The elephant's skin is grey, thick, loose and wrinkled with deep furrows. The wrinkles and furrows help elephant keep the skin moist by retaining moisture.

#### Wrinkled skin with furrows



Postal meter. QC4 Frama "EcoMail" (digital). Type B - Inscribed "TPGPOST"

### 3. THE ANATOMY OF ELEPHANTS

#### Skin - Shades of grey



▲ Imperforate shades

#### Loose skin



Elephants have sturdy column shaped legs that helps them to generate enormous power to pull things. Underneath they have thick elastic cushions which help to carry their enormous body weight. They are nimble footed as they walk on their toes.

#### Walk on their toes, hence nimble on feet



Australia 1969, Booklet back

The tusks are two overgrown incisor set in top jaw. They are made of ivory and each weighs over 50kgs. Ivory comprises of dentine, a hard mineralized tissue.

#### Hard and durable



Stamp with tab

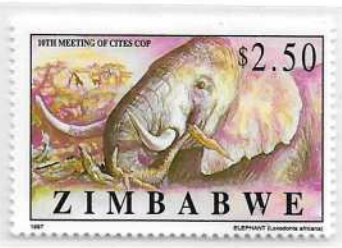
#### Majestic ivory tusks



Stamp with tab

Elephants have 26 teeth including two tusks and highly serrated 12 premolars and 12 molars. Elephants change their chewing teeth six times during their life time. This is because the food that they eat is coarse. They act like heavy duty crushers & grinders.

#### Coarse food



#### Teeth serrations



#### Heavy duty crusher and grinder



North Korea 1994, Booklet front

By the age of 60 years, elephants worn out their last set of teeth. Since they cannot chew their food, they die of starvation

#### Losing teeth..end of days



#### 4.1. Birth, growth & family life

A mother's life turns upside down during and after pregnancy. At birth the calf measures around 1 meter in length and weighs 100 kgs. Their weight quickly doubles every six months.

Child birth turns mother's life upside-down



▲ Imperforate tête-bêche pair

The mother affectionately nurses and teaches the calf for up-to four years

Nurses and teaches



Postal meter generated by special post office machines. Digital 2000

Female & calves



Bulls stay away from herd and lead a solitary life



#### 4. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF ELEPHANTS

Baby elephant = 1 meter



Special COVID19, toilet paper semi postal stamp.

Elephants are social animals and tend to live in groups known as herd. African elephants have larger herds than Asian elephants

Elephant herd



▲ Double imprint error

Safeguarding calves

▲ Different shades

The herd is led by an old female elephant, the matriarch, and is made up of female elephants, calves and young elephants. The herd protects the calves from rampaging bulls and predators. Female born in the herd stay in the herd for rest of their lives. Males leave the herd after reaching maturity.

Matriarch



Adult bull elephants lead a solitary life in their own territory and battle other bulls for territory and social stature. Adult bulls regularly get into a physical state called "Musth". During "Musth", the glands between the eyes and ears swell and secrete liquid substance. The bulls become aggressive and fight with other bulls to gain female preference for mating.

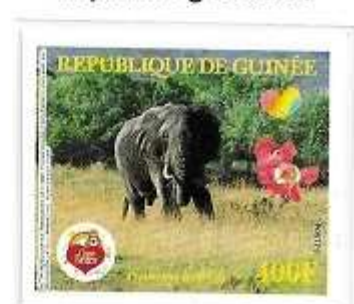
Swelling of gland between eyes and ears



Bull fight



Impressing females



◀ Specimen with punch hole

## 4.2. Food, water & habitat

Eating and drinking are the most important activities in an elephants life. They are voracious herbivores and eat all parts of the tree. They spend up to 12-18 hours a day feeding and eat around 200kg of food everyday.

### Voracious



## 4. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF ELEPHANTS

Non fussy Herbivores – eat from roots to leaves and even branches



▲ Imperforate strip of two.

Elephants drink around 150 litres of fresh water every day. In fact elephants can suck up to 8.5 liters of water in its trunk and squirt the water into their mouth for drinking. They also love to cool down by bathing in water or by sprinkling water over their body.

Cool down by sprinkling water over their body



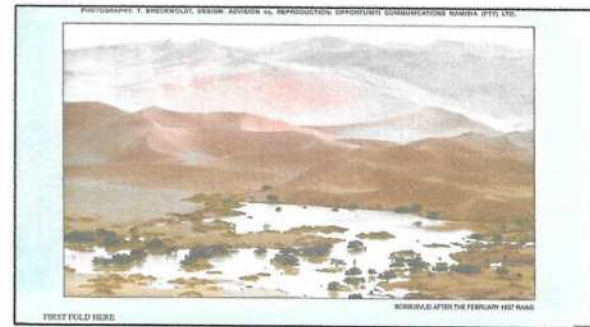
Postal meter, RB2.5 Frama "Mailmax" (digital).

### Fussy drinkers

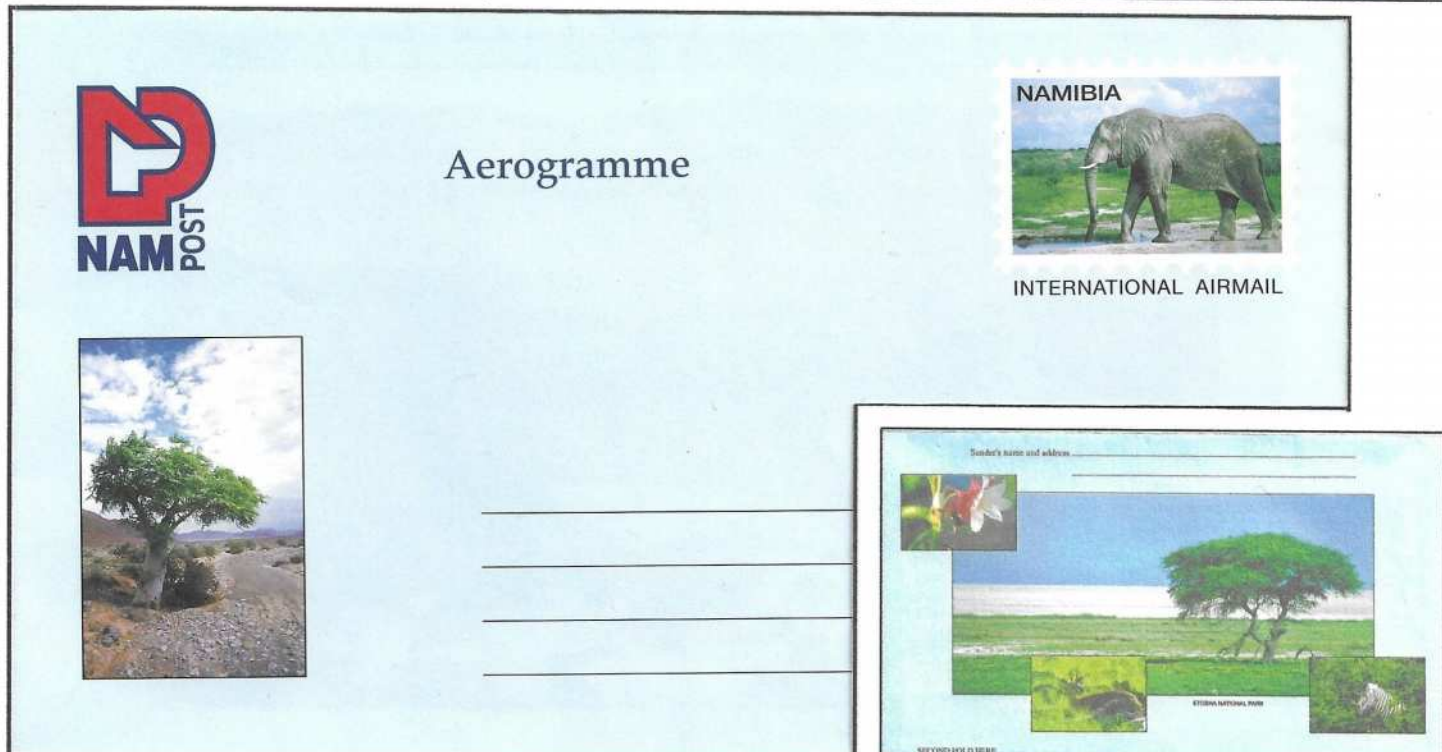


Imperforate.

Elephants inhabit wide variety of habitat from desert to tropical forest. They can cope with a extreme range of climates, from the hot (day)/ cold (night) and dry desert to the hot and humid tropical forest zone.



From deserts to tropical forests



Aerogramme. Reverse shown in reduced scale.

### 4.3. Life expectancy & reasons for death

Elephants can live up to 60 years of age. However, determining the age of an elephant is not an easy task.

#### Age is difficult to determine



IA IA IA



▲ Imperforate proof pair with black & value missing. Only 10 pairs exist.

Elephants do not have natural predators, except when they are young. The biggest unnatural cause of death is human poaching.

#### Natural predators



#### Poaching



Strip of two.

Elephants are known to mourn their dead. They often keep vigil for hours over dead family member

#### Mourning process



### 4. SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF ELEPHANTS

Condition of teeth, length of back, visibility of temples above eyes and thickness of tusk are used to determine age of the elephant.

#### Tusk thickness



#### Teeth condition



#### Length of back



#### Visible temples



#### Mosquitoes



#### Ticks



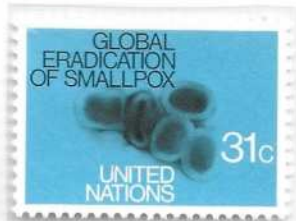
#### Keeping vigil of the dead



00C071

▲ Imperforate block of four with control number.

#### Small pox



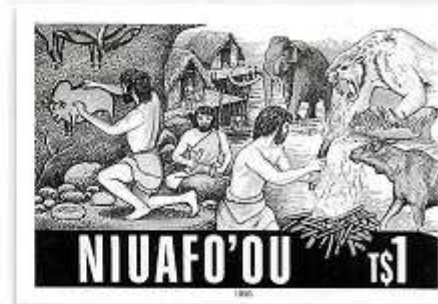
## 5.1. The prey for food & ivory

Human and elephant ancestors have shared relationship since the dawn of the time. The basis of the relationship has been that of the hunter and the hunted. Humans hunted elephants for food. They used the elephant bones and skin for shelter, clothing and lighting fires.

### Hunting elephants for food



### Relationship since the dawn of time for food shelter and clothing



### Lighting fire



### Prehistoric humans & ivory



Cuba 1967

▲ Black and White Proof & Specimen.

From pre-historic times, humans have been utilizing ivory for varied purposes. As humans modernized in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they became obsessed with Ivory – the white gold. Ivory art became a rage across the world. Humans started preying on elephants at a commercial level. Ivory from killed elephants was purchased by ivory fabricators, who in turn created the piece of art that were in huge demand.

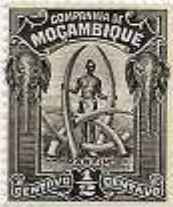
### Preying on elephants for ivory.



53 Congo Belge - Belgisch Congo Eléphant. - Olifant.

Belgian Congo 1918, Used Postal stationery sent from Kasongo to Belgium

### Commercial ivory industry



### Ivory artisan



Imperforate

### Ivory fabricator workshop



### Ivory artifacts



## 5.2. The fighter, worker & entertainer

## 5. WHAT ELEPHANT MEANS TO HUMANS

### Pit-fall

Humans quickly realized the utility of elephants, when alive. Elephants have been captured using multiple methods such as Khedda (Gate), Melashikar (Roping) & Pit-fall. They were then tamed and trained by mahouts, their lifelong companions.



### Khedda gate



### Melashikar



### Mahout



Since the elephants could pull and carry heavy weights especially in hostile terrain, they have been employed in multiple industries such as tourism, logging, hunting etc.

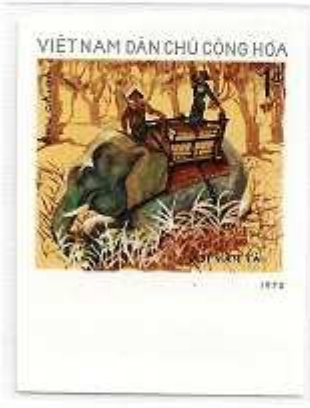
### Load carriers



### The tourist vehicle

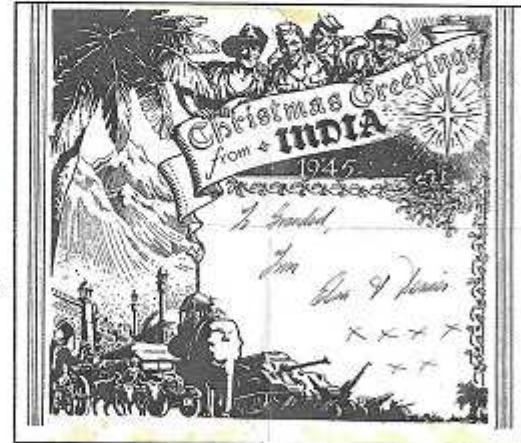


### Hunters companion



During medieval and modern ages, elephants took active part in battles as fighters and were the original battle tanks.

### The original battle tank



Imperforate.

British India 1945, Force mail Christmas air letter sent from India to England. No postage required. Inside design at a reduced scale.

### Star performer of the circus



Trained elephants perform acrobatics for circuses. They also became the stars of the zoos.

### Mainstay of the zoo



Australia 1994, Commemorative Frama vending machine label stamps on waratah flower paper.

## 5.2. The symbol and inspirer

In Asian cultures, elephants are regarded as a symbol of divine and play an important role in many religions. Lord Ganesha, the elephant headed God in Hindu religion is one of the most revered and loved Gods. In Buddhism, Lord Buddha is believed to have taken an avatar of a white elephant (White elephants are not white in colour.. They are light grey with pink pigmentation).

Royalty sees elephants as a symbol of power. Heavily decorated elephants form a part of royal entourage.

### King and the elephant



Sirmoor 1894.

## 5. WHAT ELEPHANTS MEAN TO HUMANS

### Lord Buddha's avatar – White elephant



Syncopated perforation

Images of elephants have been used as national symbols, mascots and in heraldry to convey allegorical messages.

### National symbol (Elephant under palm)

### Mascot

### Coat of arms



▲ Specimen.



▲ Misperforation error.



Duttia 1899, Shades with normal & larger Ganesha image.

Elephants have inspired humans in many fields, as a result they appear in our art, literature, coinage, flags, official decorations and even in philately!

Many species that resemble elephants in some way have been named after elephants.

### Art: Painting

### Official decoration: Order of the white elephant

### Elephant seal



Stamp with Prior tab.



### Flag

### Elephant watermark

▲ Double printed value error.



### Literature



### Coinage

### Elephant perfin

Elephants is one of the first animals that children learn about and elephants play an important role in their initial years..



### Alphabets: S for sloń (Elephant in Polish)

## 6.1. The destroyer

The number of wild elephants are falling drastically. Humans are the biggest reason for this decline. Humans encroach on elephant habitat. Whole savannah and forests are disappearing due to tree felling and land reclamation. The reclaimed land is being used for building villages

## 6. WHAT HUMANS MEAN TO ELEPHANTS

### Human encroachment by building villages on elephant habitat



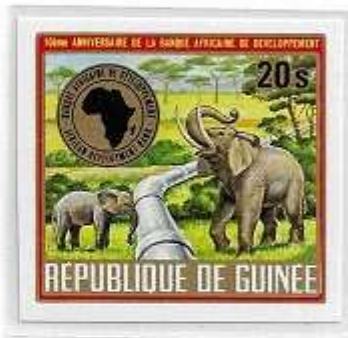
Triptych.

Developmental projects such as expansion of railways, building of roads, infrastructure and airports have also taken a toll on elephant habitat.

### Building roads through elephant habitat

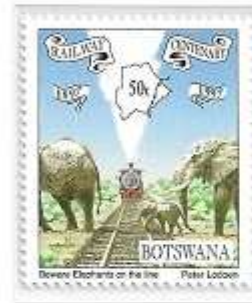


### Building infrastructure



Imperforate.

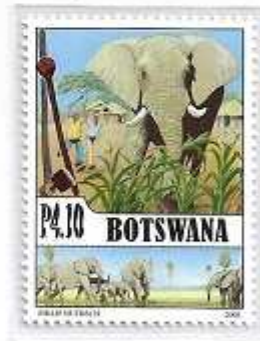
### Expansion of railways



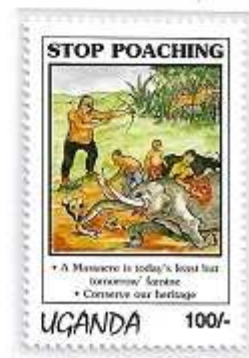
### Airports



### Crop raiding elephants: Human – Elephant conflict



### Poaching for ivory & other body parts



Elephants are under a continuous human siege and are sending us an SOS signal. We need to urgently respond and come to their rescue by becoming their preserver and protector.

### SOS from the elephants



Imperforate block with control number.

The vanishing habitat and continuous human encroachment is leading to Human-Elephant conflict. Resulting in destruction of human property by crop raiding elephants and subsequent hunting of elephants..

Humans are also mercilessly poaching elephants for ivory and other body parts, pushing elephants to the brink of extinction.

## 6.2. The preserver and protector

## 6. WHAT HUMANS MEAN TO ELEPHANTS

If we wish to prevent the extinction of elephants, their habitat must be protected by establishing national parks and saving them from poaching through robust policing & neutralizing poachers.

### National Parks

### Robust policing

### Neutralizing poachers



Postal Meter. 18. Frama "EPS" (MV).

### Colour guide on tab

To preserve elephant for the next generations, organizations such as CITES, IUCN & WWF have been formed. These organizations raise awareness about plight of elephants and help in conservation efforts for the elephants.

### IUCN



### WWF



### Love elephants



Scratch stamp

The survival of elephants is in the hand of humans. Its time to for all of us to come together and work towards ensuring that our future generations love and enjoy the company of the gentle giant.

Come together and work towards..

