

# Getting to know elephants

## Elephants in teams – using their strengths

- Elephants have strong individual personalities that affect how they interact with other elephants, how others perceive them, and how well they are able to influence members of their group
- Members of a family (**the team**) show extraordinary teamwork and are highly cooperative in group defense, resource acquisition, offspring care, and decision-making
- The intricate teamwork between members of an elephant family is mediated by a complex suite of vocalisations i.e. **they communicate together**
- Elephants have the greatest volume of cerebral cortex available for cognitive processing of all land mammals. The neo-cortex, which in humans is the seat of enhanced cognitive function such as working memory, planning, spatial orientation, speech and language, is large and highly convoluted
- Elephants have unusually good memory. They accumulate and retain social and ecological knowledge, remembering the scents and voices of scores of other individuals and places for decades
- Elephants are able to make subtle discriminations between predators, even between different groups of people, showing that they comprehend the different levels of threat each poses – i.e. **they assess each other**
- Day to day **decision-making** involves broad participation including consensus building
- Like all highly social mammals elephants have a **well-developed system of communication** that makes use of all of their senses - hearing, smell, vision and touch - including an exceptional ability to detect vibrations
- Elephants are **self-aware**
- Elephants extend their ears perpendicularly to their heads in order to better localize sounds. – they prick up their ears
- Matriarchs (**the leaders**) express their dominance in both competitive and cooperative situations

## Getting to know elephants

- The Matriarch (usually female) must prove to the others that she is worthy of being their leader - by her display of courage and wisdom in times of crisis, by her awesome memory of places and individuals in tough or dangerous times, by her intricate use of tactics in socially difficult situations, and through her excellent social skills to regularly and consistently build, maintain and reinforce the close bonds – **leadership strengths**
- They convey information about their physiological and emotional state as well as communicating specific statements about their intentions or desires – **subconscious and conscious communication**

*Elephants work together to survive and thrive*

