Activity 8: Wild Elephants

In Brief: Investigate elephants in the wild. What is special about them? How do they spend their days? What do you find most interesting? What should a circus keep in mind if they are interested in having elephants as performers?

Objectives: Learn about the lives of wild elephants.

Background: Elephants are an endangered species. We need to learn all that we can about their lives and what makes them special. Can circuses serve a useful role in helping their survival? There are many different opinions about this topic. Learning about them is the first step to understanding what will be best for all elephants.

Materials: websites, movies and books on wild elephants.

With/for Your Child: Engage!

Get Ready! Read letter from the circus owner of Cats & Dogs Spectacular (below). Review the Brainstorming Packet for Wild Elephants.

Step 1. Investigate wild elephants and their lives. Where do they live? What do they eat? Drink? How do they communicate? Tip: use the resource pages that follow to provide guidance and context.

Step 2. Once your research is done, go over your notes to try and answer the following question: what does a circus need to know about elephants in order to best include them as circus performers?

Step 3. Make a visual graph or mind map to describe/illustrate your answer. Example: make a graph for the animal care team showing the kind and quantity of food one elephant needs every day.

Step 4. Write and/or record the special characteristics you found and present your visuals. How do these facts help a circus to create the best type of environment and life conditions for circus elephants?

Follow up and Extensions: What is your opinion about elephants in the circus? Is there an educational value to having elephant circus acts?

RESOURCES
Welcome!
You have been selected to be a member of the Animal Care Team (ACT). This Team has the very important job of making sure that all animals are well cared for as the circus travels around the country.

Since the beginning this circus has only had dogs and cats as its featured animal performers. Many people have suggested that we add more interesting animals to the show to build our audience. This is important because ticket sales are falling. We need to add something exciting to the program!

What should we know about the lives of wild elephants?
Your first assignment as an ACT member is to investigate if it would be a good idea to adopt some elephants. Find out everything you can about the lives of wild elephants. We know they are special but how are they special? What do they eat? What are their habits? How do they communicate?

Of course, our main priority is that the elephants will be well cared for and happy as part of our circus family. Some people believe that there should be NO wild animals in the circus. Other people think the circus is great because they get to see wild animals that they’d never see in everyday life. They believe the circus provides an educational opportunity for the public to get to know more about these wonderful animals that share planet earth with us.

We need you to teach us about wild elephants. We need some new acts in our show to keep the audience happy and excited to come to the circus, but we don’t want to take on elephants if it is not the right thing for them.

First, investigate what elephants need to be healthy and happy and what a circus like us needs to keep in mind.

Let us know what you suggest that we do about elephants (or any other wild animal act). We look forward to hearing what you think!

Sincerely, Owner, Dogs and Cats Spectacular Circus
Your 1\textsuperscript{st} Mission

1- How do elephants live in the wild? What makes them special?

2- What do elephants do in their everyday lives? What do they eat?

3- How do elephants communicate?

4- What should the circus keep in mind about the needs of elephants?

5- What do you think about having elephants in the circus?