

You all had your first ski classes of the year last week. How did it go? Do you like skiing? I used to. When I was younger, I used to go skiing every weekend through the winter. I happily drove all the way to Niseko or Furano for the great snow. I left very early in the morning and I skied all day, driving back in the dark. Now, I am old, and I would much rather¹ sit at home reading a book and drinking a nice cup of coffee. It all seems like too much effort and it is so cold on the mountain. Haha. I hope you enjoy yourself. And, today, as you read this, is the inauguration² of President Trump. Or, the second inauguration of President Trump because he has already been president once. I wonder what he will do during his four years.



10 differences!

Last week's answer



Something you didn't know about elephants

1. The largest elephants are 3 m tall at the shoulder and weigh 8 tons.
2. Elephants have very good memories³. They can remember places, other elephants, and even people over many years.
3. At 22 months, elephants have the longest gestation period⁴ of any mammal.
4. An elephant's trunk has over 40,000 muscles and can feel things.
5. An elephant needs to drink 190 liters of water and eat 136 kg of food a day.
6. Wild elephants can live for 60 to 70 years. With many animals, they live longer when they are in a zoo because they are safer and get food regularly, but that is not true for elephants. Captive⁵ elephants only live for about 40 years.

Elephants Call Each Other by Name

Researchers have discovered that elephants call each other by individual names and they remember those names. If you listen to a herd⁶ of elephants you will hear them calling to each other. You probably can't understand what they are saying and you probably can't tell if what they say to one elephant is different to what they say to another elephant. Well, AI can. Researchers used artificial intelligence to analyze⁷ the calls of two wild herds of African savanna⁸ elephants in Kenya. Elephants used specific calls for different elephants. They also reacted to calls that used their name but ignored⁹ calls that used another elephant's name. Elephants can make very low calls that are too low for us to hear, but these low calls travel a long way. Names were used by adult elephants much more than calves¹⁰, so it is probably that it takes a long time for elephants to learn names and when to use them. The researchers tested the theory¹¹ by playing recordings of an elephant's name. When an elephant heard its name, it responded¹², but when they used another name, the elephants didn't respond. This means that elephants are the only animals other than humans to make and use names for each other. This might also mean they have the ability for abstract thought¹³. Using AI, researchers might find even more out about elephants and other animals that we never knew before.



- 1.much rather むしろ 2.inauguration 就任式 3.memory 記憶 4.gestation period 妊娠期
間 5.captive 捕虜 6.herd 群れ 7.analyze 分析する 8.savanna サバンナ 9.ignore 無視する
10.calf 小象 11.theory 理論 12.respond 応答する 13.abstract thought 抽象的思考



World record

This week's news was about elephants, so let's look at some elephant world records. Did you know that the biggest elephant ever found was an African elephant that weighed 11 tons and was 4.5 m tall. Unfortunately¹, the elephant was shot by hunters² in 1956, which is why we know how heavy he was. The oldest known elephant was called Lin Wang and he died in 2003 at the age of 86. The longest elephant tusks³ are 3.5 m long and they weigh 120 kg each. Unfortunately, again, we know how heavy they were because the elephant was killed for the tusks. Elephants can easily lift over 400 kg with their trunks⁴, which is more than all but a few humans. However, unlike the humans that lift these weights, elephants can hold them and carry them. The tallest elephant statue in the world is in New Jersey, USA, and it is called "Lucy the Elephant". The statue is 20 m tall and it was built in 1881 to try to bring more tourists to the area. I wonder if it worked.



“No one in the world needs an elephant tusk but an elephant.” Thomas Schmidt

An Unusual Job

Elephant Specialist

Sticking with⁵ this week's theme of elephants, here is an unusual job: elephant specialist. You might be able to imagine what an elephant specialist does, but there are not many of them in the world. An elephant specialist works in a zoo or a conservation park⁶ and they are in charge of looking after the wellbeing⁷ of the elephants. If the elephants are in a zoo, part of the work is easier because the elephants are always nearby⁸. The specialist has to make sure the elephants are fed and cared for. If the elephants are in a conservation park or a safari park, the elephant specialist will have to find them because the park is much larger than a zoo, which will make the job a little more difficult. However, elephants in open conservation parks will be much happier mentally than animals kept in a zoo, which will make the elephant specialist's job easier. Elephants can walk up to 50 km a day with ease and they like to move around. If they are kept in a small enclosure⁹ in a zoo, they will become psychologically damaged¹⁰, which is one reason why they don't live as long as animals in the wild. These days, traditional zoos are being replaced by more open conservation parks in many countries because the animals are happier. Hopefully, Japan will follow suit¹¹.



- 1.unfortunately 残念ながら 2.hunter 狩猟者 3.tusk 牙 4.trunk 鼻 5.sticking with 続けて
 ~を使う 6.conservation park 保護公園 7.wellbeing 幸福・健康 8.nearby 近くの
 9.enclosure 囲い地 10.psychologically damaged 精神的に傷ついた 11.follow suit 後に続く