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# Book Reviews

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## Some Children's Books About Elephants (1987–1997)

Review by Robert H. I. Dale

For this review, I sampled 23 children's books about elephants from the Indianapolis Public Library. All of these books were written at the preschool or elementary school level, although several were suitable for middle school as well. Although all of the books were coded as "juvenile," many of them provided significant details about the natural history of elephants, and all of them were substantially accurate. I examined the texts for information about elephants in the field and in captivity, for both African and Asian elephants. I also looked for discussions of elephant ecology, anatomy, behavior, and evolution. Being impressed at the overall quality of the books, I have developed a table listing the key features of each book, with recommendations concerning the seven that I thought were the most comprehensive and informative. I did not include "behavior" as a column in the table, because all of the texts discussed the behavior of elephants.

Most of the books (14) discussed both African elephants and Asian elephants, while the rest (9) discussed only African elephants. There was not a single book that discussed only Asian elephants.

The seven books that I found to be the most thorough and accurate were Arnold (1993, #1); Barkhausen and Geiser (1994, #2); Grace (1993, #8); MacMillan (1993, #11); and Redmond (1990, #18) at the elementary/middle school level (roughly Grades 3–8). Harrison (1990, #9) and Smith (1995, #20) were best at the preschool/primary level (roughly up to Grade 2). The Harrison book is a simplified, shorter version of Redmond.

In fairness to the books that I did not highlight, most of them were clear, accurate, and interesting, but simply less comprehensive in content than the others.

Several of the texts—for example, those by Douglas-Hamilton (1990, #6), Goodall (1991, #7), and Moss (1997, #23)—were clearly intended to tell stories about particular elephants rather than serve as general guides to the natural history of the species. Not surprisingly, the preschool books were the least comprehensive.

### Book list

1. Arnold, C. (1993), *Elephant*, New York: Morrow Junior Books, William Morrow.
2. Barkhausen, A., and Geiser, F. (1994), *Elephants*, Milwaukee, WI: Gareth Stevens, Animal Families.
3. Barrett, N. S. (1988), *Elephants*, New York: Picture Library series, Franklin Watts.
4. Bright, M. (1990), *Elephants*, New York: Project Wildlife, Gloucester Press.
5. Dorros, A. (1994), *Elephant Families*, New York: Let's Read And Find Out Science, HarperCollins.
6. Douglas-Hamilton, O. (1990), *The Elephant Family Book*, Saxonville, MA: Picture Book Studio.
7. Goodall, J. (1991), *Elephant Family*, Toronto, Canada: Animal Series, Madison Marketing.
8. Grace, E. S. (1993), *Elephants*, San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Wildlife Library, Sierra Club Books for Children.
9. Harrison, V. (1990), *The World of Elephants*, Milwaukee, WI: Where Animals Live series, Gareth Stevens.
10. Johnson, J. (1991), *Elephants*, Columbus, OH: Highlights for Children.
11. MacMillan, D. M. (1993), *Elephants: Our Last Land Giants*, Minneapolis, MN: Nature Watch Book, Carolrhoda Books.
12. Markert, J. (1991), *Elephants*, Chicago, IL: The Child's World, Encyclopedia Britannica.
13. Moss, C. (1997), *Little Big Ears: The Story of Ely*, New York: Books for Young Readers, Simon & Schuster.
14. Patent, D. H. (1991), *African Elephants: Giants of the Land*, New York: Holiday House.
15. Payne, K. (1992), *Elephants calling*, New York: Face to Face with Science, Crown Publishers.
16. Petty, K. (1990), *Elephants*, New York: Gloucester Press.
17. Pfeffer, P. (1987), *Elephants: Big, Strong and Wise*, Ossining, NY: Young Discovery Library.

**Table 1. Summary of book features**

<i>Book #, Eval.</i> (* = excellent)	<i>Date</i>	<i>Length, Font</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>African, Asian</i>	<i>Field, Captive, Work</i>	<i>Glossary, Index</i>	<i>Evolution, Anatomy</i>
1*	1993	46, M	E, M	AF, AS	FCW	I	E, A
2*	1994	43, S	E, M	AF, AS	FCW	G, I	E, A
3	1988	27, L	E	AF, AS	FCW	G, I	E, A
4	1990	28, M	E	AF, AS	FCW	I	A
5	1994	28, L	P	AF, AS	FW		E
6	1990	54, M	P, E	AF	F		
7	1991	12, M	P	AF	F		
8*	1993	59, S	E, M	AF, AS	FCW	I	E, A
9*	1990	30, L	P, E	AF, AS	FW	G, I	E, A
10	1991	29, L	P, E	AF, AS	FCW	I	
11*	1991	42, M	E, M	AF, AS	FCW	G, I	A
12	1991	26, L	P	AF, AS	FW		
13	1997	30, L	P, E	AF	F		
14	1991	36, M	E	AF	F	I	
15	1992	35, M	E	AF	FC	I	
16	1990	23, M	P	AF	F	I	
17	1987	32, M	P	AF, AS	FW	I	E
18*	1990	30, S	E, M	AF, AS	FCW	G, I	E, A
19	1989	21, L	P	AF, AS	F	G	A
20*	1995	44, L	P, E	AF	F	G, I	A
21	1987	29, S	E	AF	F	I	
22	1990	29, S	E, M	AF	F	G, I	E, A
23	1989	19, S	E	AF, AS	FCW	I	E, A

Book # = Book's order in the reference list. The detailed references for these books are provided at the end of the review.

Eval = Overall evaluation for accuracy and comprehensiveness: Excellent = (\*)

Date = Publication date

Length = Length of text, in pages

Font = Size of type: Small (S), Medium (M), Large (L)

Level = Educational Level: Preschool (P), Elementary (E), Middle (M)

African (AF), Asian (AS) = Species of elephant discussed in the book

Field (F), Captive (C), Work (W) = Environment in which the elephant is described

Evolution (E) = describes fossils/ancestors of living elephants and/or related species

Anatomy (A) = describes anatomical characteristics (teeth, trunk, etc.) and functions

Glossary (G), Index (I) = glossary (G) or index (I) is present.

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| <p>18. Redmond, I. (1990), <i>The Elephant in the Bush</i>, Milwaukee, WI: Animal Habitats, Gareth Stevens.</p> <p>19. Sheehan, A. (1989), <i>The Elephant</i>, New York: Animal Life Stories, Warwick Press.</p> <p>20. Smith, R. (1995), <i>African Elephants</i>, Minneapolis, MN: Early Bird Nature Books, Lerner.</p> | <p>21. Stidworthy, J. (1987), <i>A Year in the Life: Elephant</i>, Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett Press.</p> <p>22. Taylor, D. (1990), <i>The Elephant and the Scrub Forest</i>, New York: Animals and their Ecosystems Series, Crabtree.</p> <p>23. Wexo, J. B. (1989), <i>Elephants</i>, Mankato, MN: Creative Education.</p> |
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