

Name _____



Elephants and Their Relationships with Other Species

Elephants are fascinating creatures known for their intelligence and strong social bonds within their herds. But did you know they also form relationships with other species? These connections can be symbiotic, meaning two species interact closely and one or both benefit.

One type of symbiotic relationship elephants have is mutualism, where both species benefit. For example, birds called oxpeckers often perch on elephants. The birds eat insects and ticks off the elephant's skin, which helps keep the elephant healthy. The oxpeckers get food, and the elephants stay clean and comfortable.

Another type of relationship elephants experience is commensalism. In commensalism, one species benefits while the other is unaffected. An example of this is when smaller animals use pathways created by elephants through thick vegetation. Elephants clear the way while searching for food, making travel easier for other animals without being directly affected themselves.

Elephants can also experience parasitism, where one species benefits and the other is harmed. Parasites like certain worms or insects can live on or inside elephants, causing discomfort or illness without any benefit to the elephant.

These relationships show how elephants interact with their environment and other animals. They help keep the ecosystem balanced. Protecting elephants means protecting many other species that depend on these relationships for survival.