Elephants are intelligent

Sarah Lee - 2025-12-02 - Comments (0) - Elephants

Elephants are able to spend substantial time working on problems. They are able to change their behavior radically to face new challenges, a hallmark of complex intelligence.

Problem-solving experiments

A 2010 experiment revealed that in order to reach food, "elephants can learn to coordinate with a partner in a task requiring two individuals to simultaneously pull two ends of the same rope to obtain a reward",[1][61] putting them on an equal footing with chimpanzees in terms of their level of cooperative skills.

A study by Dr. Naoko Irie of Tokyo University has shown that elephants demonstrate skills at arithmetic. The experiment "consist[ed] of dropping varying numbers of apples into two buckets in front of the [Ueno Zoo] elephants and then recording how often they could correctly choose the bucket holding the most fruit." When more than one apple was being dropped into the bucket, this meant that the elephants had to "keep running totals in their heads to keep track of the count." The results showed that "Seventy-four percent of the time, the animals correctly picked the fullest bucket. An African elephant named Ashya scored the highest with an amazing eighty-seven percent … Humans in this same contest managed a success rate of just sixty-seven percent." The study was also filmed to ensure its accuracy.[62]

A study on Discovery News found that elephants, during an intelligence test employing food rewards, had found shortcuts that not even the experiment's researchers had thought of.