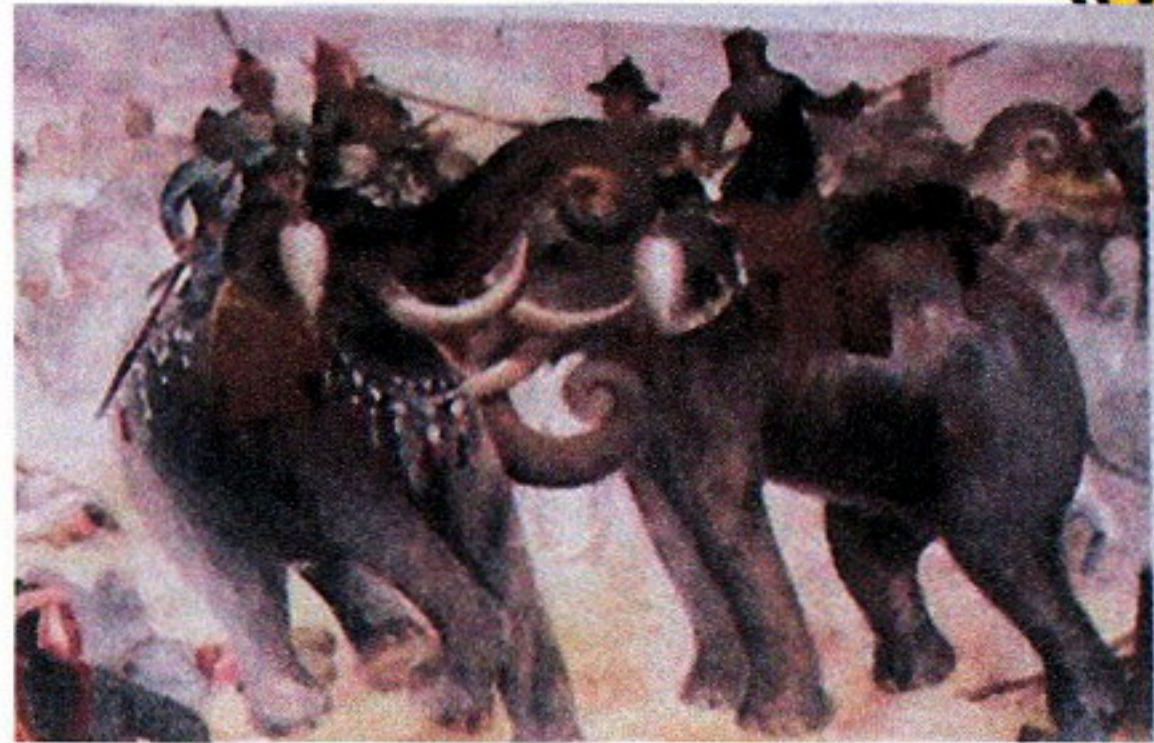


Importance of elephants

Symbol of a Nation

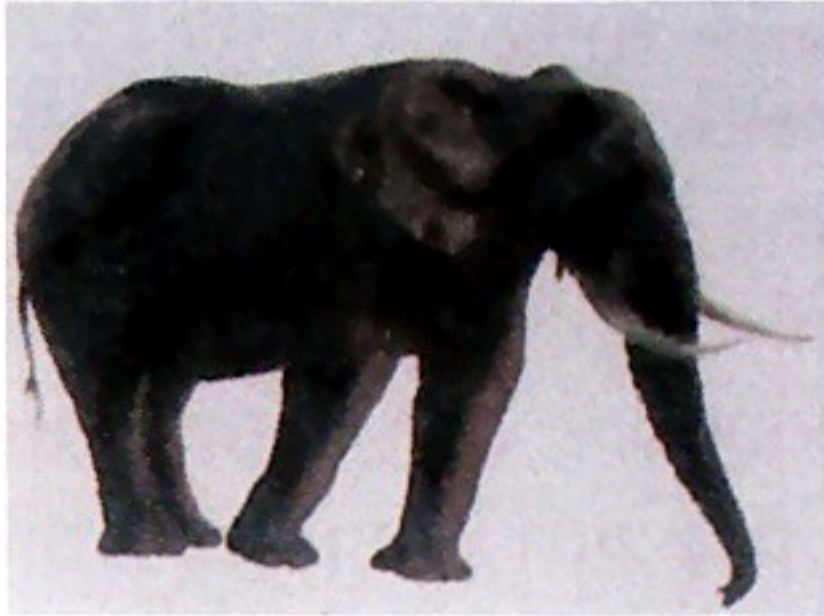
Elephants have been revered in Thailand for many centuries. Famous as the strongest beasts of burden, in Thailand they were important in battle, with kings mounted on Elephants fighting the Burmese to defend Thailand on many occasions.



They have also been noted for their intelligence, memory and pleasant nature. A Thai legend has it that a marriage is like an elephant-- the husband is the front legs, that choose the direction, the wife the back legs, providing the power.



main species of elephant in the world.

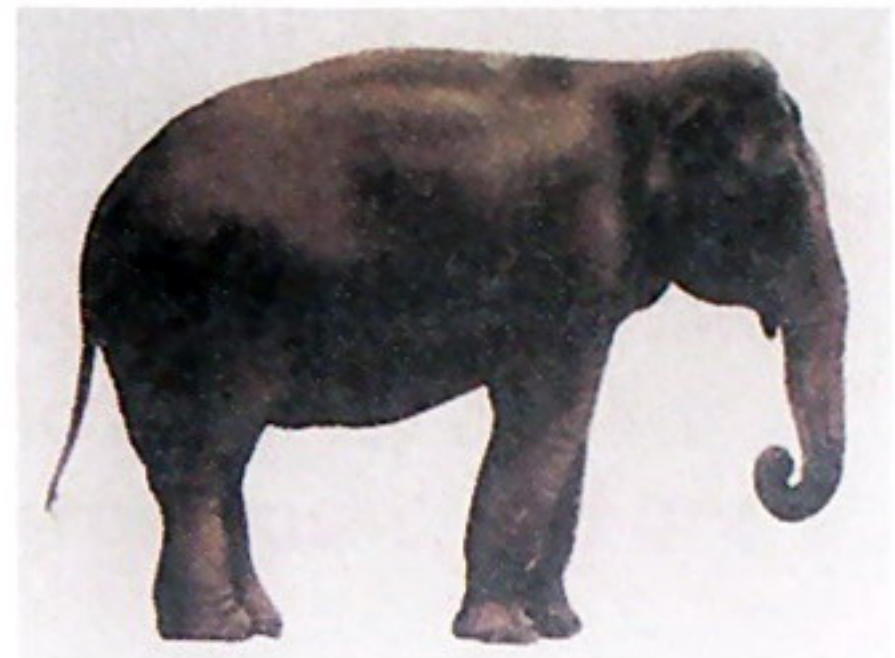


Africa species

in Kenya, Tanzania,
Uganda, etc.

Asia species

in India, Nepal, Laos,
Cambodia, Thailand, etc.





There are two main species of elephant in the world. The African Elephant -- *Loxodonta*, which is larger with bigger ears and a less docile nature. The ears help the animal to lose heat on the sunny open country it inhabits in Africa. The Indian elephant-- *Elephas*, is a native of thick forest, so is smaller, with much smaller ears. There have also been reports of pygmy elephants in South East Asia, only 1.5 metres tall, but these are probably extinct. The Indian elephant is 3 metres from the ground to the highest point of the shoulders (males 50 cm bigger). They weigh about four tons, and need 250 kgs of food a day, and 60 gallons of water. They are vegetarians, eating a wide variety of plants. In Thailand, their favourite food is tamarind, but as anyone who has been to an elephant camp knows, they seem to love bananas and sugar cane. Both sexes have tusks, although they are far larger in the male. Some males do not grow tusks, and are supposed to be better workers.



White elephant ivories

A white elephant is even included in the flag of the Royal Thai navy, and the "order of the white elephant" is one of the highest honours bestowed by the king. White elephants.



in fact, are very rarely completely white. The skin has to be very pale in certain areas to qualify as a "white elephant"