Cambridge Assessment International Education

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FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/12**

Paper 1 Reading **October/November 2024**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

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Read **Text A**, and then answer **Questions 1(a)–(e)** on the question paper.

Text A: ***The forest elephant***

Many children can identify the savannah elephant as an inhabitant of Africa just by looking at a picture of it. However, most people are unaware that there are two different kinds of elephant living on the same continent.

Very little is known about the other African elephant: the magnificent, intelligent and highly elusive forest elephant.

In March 2021, after their population had suddenly declined by a staggering 86%, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) set the status of the forest elephant to 'critically endangered'. At the time, most people had never heard of them, let alone taken steps to aid their preservation.

Genetic analysis has demonstrated to scientists that forest and savannah elephants diverged from their common ancestor around 5.5 million years ago. It can also be observed that the two elephant types live separate existences and are as genetically distinct as lions and tigers.

In common with other rainforest-dwelling mammals of Central Africa, the forequarters of the forest elephant are lower than the hindquarters. The resulting compact shape, along with its dark colouring, allows the forest elephant to melt quietly into the rainforest, maybe explaining why the species has been less studied than its savannah counterpart, which occupies more open spaces. Compared to the larger lighter-coloured savannah elephant, the forest elephant has smaller, more rounded ears, while the savannah elephant boasts thicker and more curved tusks.

If we care about the future of our rainforests, we should care about the conservation of the forest elephant. Known as the 'mega-gardener of the forest', the forest elephant eats mainly fruit then disperses the seeds while it moves around, meaning that a range of fruit trees are spread about the rainforest and kept plentiful. They also eat small trees, thereby thinning out space for larger ones to flourish. Large trees have high carbon absorption levels and are very much associated with combatting climate change. Large trees also support the existence of primates and many other animals.

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Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Text B: *Volunteering with elephants*

Text B is a young person's account of their experience volunteering in an elephant park.

For someone like me, volunteer tourism can be an ideal first way to travel solo into a safe and structured environment. Dedicated social media sites offered me an opportunity to learn about the elephant park and make friends with other volunteers in advance.

Before I started volunteering, I already knew that some elephant species were endangered, but I naively believed that all wild animals should be free. That's a sweet sentiment, but it's just not that simple. Due to poachers and loss of wildland, it is generally better for an elephant to be in captivity than to be in the wild.

Unfortunately, some projects are unethical and frankly damaging to the well-being of elephants. I dismissed working for one elephant orphanage, as it was clearly focused on lucrative tourism rather than actual conservation. Pictures on their website showed smiling child visitors poking at baby elephants and perching on their backs. I had no intention of supporting such blatant exploitation. Fortunately, I found another elephant park that gave conservation a better image.

My first week there was mostly training, not actively helping, enabling me to realise that short programmes are not particularly useful. The money that you pay to volunteer will help the animals, but you, the animals and the programme will get a greater benefit the longer you stay. I met one girl who was just finishing up ten weeks' volunteering with elephants. In my first week, we newcomers stood round unsure about instructions, while she confidently examined a daily rota before putting herself straight to work.

I volunteered with elephants for one month straight and it was exhilarating. We saw how our elephants had such very different personalities. For example, when tourists came to the elephant park, they could buy fruit and vegetables to feed the elephants. Often, one particular elephant would amble across to the humans for food. Others in the herd were too shy to make contact, though cheekily expected the brave member of the herd to bring back any exciting goodies to share.

As time passed, we volunteers collaborated well over the daily rota and my self-confidence soared. You get to spend so much time with these animals. I cleaned elephant enclosures, prepared their food, observed and took notes on their behaviour, picked up elephant dung for research (seriously!) and input elephant data into the computer.

Our evenings and weekends were free. Fridays were a half-day. I found this a good balance. I used my free time to visit nearby towns and soak up the culture.

Read **Text C**, and then answer **Questions 2(a)–(d)** and **Question 3** on the question paper.

Text C: *River Game Reserve*

The narrator, Frances, and her husband, Lawrence, own River Game Reserve. This text is about a herd of elephants coming to live at the reserve.

Whenever Celia, the lead elephant, and her herd visit, their trunks immediately curl up like periscopes to scan our house. They start to wonder: 'Are they at home? Is that appetising whiff coming from their bountiful fruit trees? Would a daring fruit-raid be within the realms of possibility?' Our cat finds his blissful slumbers on the patio rudely disturbed, then the exuberant elephant babies gleefully charge after him along the length of the wire fence that borders our garden, their bodies a gangling bundle of floppy ears and tiny swinging trunks.

Celia has a soft spot for Lawrence. It has been a long-term comfortable friendship which, to this day, still requires regular opportunities for a gossipy catch-up. Lawrence parks his jeep a kilometre away from the herd and waits. Celia, catching human scent in the air, quietly separates from the others and ambles towards him through the dense scrubland, trunk high in delighted greeting. He tells her about his day and she tells him about hers with soft throaty rumbles and gentle trunk-tip touches.

But I need to go back a few years to when we bought River Game Reserve, a beautiful mix of river, savannah and forest sprawled over rolling hills with an abundance of animals.

Almost immediately, an animal welfare representative asked us to adopt a herd of elephants. We knew nothing about keeping elephants, nor had we anticipated the significant monetary outlay required for a secure enclosure within the reserve where elephants could stay until they adjusted to their surroundings.

But there was no one else to accommodate the herd safely, so, two weeks later in the middle of a night of torrential rain, three huge articulated trucks brought the elephants to us. When I saw the size of the trucks, I was hit by the full impact of what was arriving: two adult females and three little ones under the age of ten.

Just as the trucks pulled into the game reserve, a tyre exploded, and the vehicle tilted dangerously in the mud. My heart froze at the elephants' terrified trumpeting and screeching. It wasn't until dawn that we managed to get them into the secure enclosure.

They weren't there for long.

By the next day, they'd figured out a way to get past the electric fence's brutal 8000 volts by pushing a large tree onto it. The wires shorted and off went the elephants, pounding northwards in the direction of their previous home. Many villages dot the hills and valleys around our game reserve, so this was a serious concern.

You'd think it would be easy to find a herd of elephants, but it isn't. Animals, big and small, instinctively know how to make themselves disappear in the bush, and disappear they did. At first, people on foot, in cars and helicopters couldn't find them.

It was ten days before the herd was returned. Ten exhausting days. We survived on adrenalin, coffee and very little sleep. The pressure to settle them and avoid a repeat incident was immense. Night after night, Lawrence stayed as close to the secure enclosure as he dared, singing to those angry elephants, talking to them and telling them stories until he was hoarse.

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With tender determination and no shortage of foolhardiness, Lawrence breached Celia's terror of humans and gained her trust.

One afternoon he came home and literally bounced up the steps to me. 'You won't believe what happened,' he said. 'Celia put her trunk through the fence and touched my hand.'

I was shocked. Celia could have slung her trunk around his body and yanked him through the wires.

'How did you know she wouldn't hurt you?'

'I could sense her mood. She isn't angry or frightened anymore. In fact, she was telling me that they're ready to leave the secure enclosure. Tomorrow, I'm going to open it and let them explore the rest of the reserve.'

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