When they arrived, they were weaned to a group of adult elephants. This allowed them to learn from the aging females, who have the longest memories of the group. But the most important thing that Zula learned was how to climb the hills of life, and the elephants as our teachers, we too will climb that hill with grace.

We should honor her by trying to climb our hill of acceptance, because we know that’s what she would do. It’s not easy, as it still hurts so much. But with little steps and the elephants as our teachers, we too will climb that hill with grace.”

—Sandra de Rek, Lead Caregiver, African Elephants

**African Elephants: A challenge to survive no matter where they live.**

**Zula was born in 1975 in the wilds of Africa. She was employed as a result of a culling (mass killing) of all the adults and sub-adults in her family. On March 1, 1978 Zula arrived, along with another wild caught elephant named Tange, at the Chehaw Wild Animal Park in Albany, Georgia. Zula and Tange spent their entire lives, prior to the Sanctuary, entertaining zoo patrons who visited the Chehaw Wild Animal Park.**

**Early on, Zula shared her tiny barn with Tange and a full grown Asian elephant named Dottie. In 1985, Dottie was sold to a circus trainer and Zula and Tange remained. Zula was known as the calmest, more manageable of the two elephants and was used more often for special events and off grounds performances. Over the years, she developed digestive problems and had tooth and tusk surgery. Additionally, she sustained a soft tissue injury to her left hip which continued to cause her discomfort at times.**

**On February 19, 2004, Zula became the eleventh resident and second African elephant to retire to The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. Zula disembarked from the transport trailer seconds after Tange did. In addition to being the Sanctuary’s first African residents, they were also the first elephants to be retired and transported as a pair. A month later they received a surprise they had not seen in decades: another African elephant arrived to join them—Flora, also wild-caught and an ex-circus performer.**

In the coming months and years, Zula’s personality revealed her to be wise, spiritual, and kind. Her friendship with Flora remained her focus, while her bond with Flora continued to grow, despite their occasional bickering for the role of herd matriarch. Each year, Zula and Tange would expand their explorations even further into their vast habitat—eventually breaking their old zoo haunts of returning to the barn every evening and choosing to spend nights under the stars instead.

For almost 5 years, Zula flourished at the Sanctuary, enjoying the space and richness of her environment in the company of her best friend and ardent admirer, Tange. Zula became a confident individual, content to set out on her own from time to time. In 2006, Zula joined her independence. After climbing a hill that she was not confident to descend, Zula spent the night away from Tange, but she was not alone; her caregivers stood up as a hammer and shield under the stars with Zula. Known as the queen of mud, Zula loved to spend time in any form of mud, and was highly skilled at manufacturing mud walls.

In the evening of January 11, 2009, Zula passed away very suddenly. She was in the company of Tange and her caregivers and veterinarian. Her death is deeply felt, but we will forever celebrate Zula’s remarkable life and her proud, gentle soul that touched us all.

**African Elephants: A challenge to survive no matter where they live.**

**Shortened Lifespans in Captivity Researchers analysed data from over 4,500 elephants to show that animals in European zoos have far less than the median life span, and competitiveness in protected populations in range countries. “We support stress and/or obesity as likely causes of zoo elephants’ compromised survivability.” (B. Crab, O. Mason et al. 12/12/08) The median life span for African elephants in European zoos was 16.5 years, compared with 56 years for elephants who died of natural causes in Kenya’s Amboseli park.**

**Zoo require: AZA Elephant Management and Care standards state that a minimum of 400 sq. ft (37.2 sq. m) is required for single animal, (a 20-by-20-foot square), which is less than a small two car garage. No restrictions exist for the current semi-indoor or outdoor space standards, allowing them to keep elephants in even smaller spaces.”**

**Poaching and Culling**

According to researchers at the University of Washington, as reported in sciensteam.org, the negative effects of poaching persist for decades after the killing has ended. The researchers say it is unclear how long the effects will persist, especially in light of the recent increase in illegal ivory trade. But one thing is certain: poaching continues to introduce massive disruptions in the African elephant’s family tree at a substantial cost. “Elephants are a very long-lived animals. They are extremely social, and there’s a tremendous amount of group integrity and competitive ability,” said Researcher Ian Wanless, Ph.D., director of the Center for Conservation Biology at the University of Washington. “It’s been nearly 20 years since the ivory ban and there are still incredibly persistent impacts of illegal culling on these populations.”

**Population plummet**

In the last century elephant populations massively declined due to habitat destruction, increased agriculture and the bloody ivory trade. Rampant ivory poaching from 1979 to 1999 halved Africa’s elephant population from 1.3 million to 600,000. Today numbers may be as low as 450,000 (bornfreeuk.org).

**Ivory ban enforced**

After the 1989 ban, the price of ivory crashed and markets in Europe and USA closed down. But some African countries called for a re-examination of trade with Japan. In 1997, CITES approved the sale of up to 60 tons of ivory from Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe to Japan. (bornfreeuk.org)

**Conservation Status**

Poaching escalated and, according to Born Free’s evidence, showed at least 6,000 elephants were killed and 17,000 kg of illegal ivory was seized by customs in 1998-1999. Best Free estimated this represented just 10-20% of the total slaughter. In 2000, CITES approved more trade, but in 2002 gave Botswana, Namibia and South Africa permission to sell a further 60 tons of ivory to South Korea. In 2004 a proposal to further relax current restrictions on trade was put forward. (bornfreeuk.org)

**African elephants**

2000 – 10 million 1979 – 1.3 million 1989 – 600,000 2007 – 400,000 status: ‘Vulnerable’

May 2008 South Africa has lifted a 13-year ban on elephant culling, to reduce the pachyderm population.

**Hunting elephants in Zimbabwe—ZOO TIMES**

According to the Times of London, British hunters have been paying the Zimbabwean authorities thousands of pounds each to take part in a mass elephant cull. They are among groups of hunters who have been permitted to track and kill whole herds, including their calves, before taking photographs of themselves with the carcasses.

Rumors that Zimbabwe was culling its population of 80,000-100,000 elephants have been circulating for some time, but definitive proof that fences have been paying to be involved has emerged only now. Elephant calls are highly controversial. They typically involve killing every animal in a herd, usually about a dozen strung, and they are condemned as brutal and unnecessary by many conservationists.

**Elephants Communicate over Long Distances**

“It’s believed that elephants can hear sounds as far as 100 to 150 miles (160 to 240 kilometers) away,” said Michael Gaztanaga, a meteorologist at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, quoted in the National Geographic News. “When culling was being done in some of the parks, the elephants would hear the distant roar from the helicopters and identify the thump-thump-thump sound of the helicopter blades from 80 to 90 miles (130 to 140 kilometers) away, identify it as danger, and take off in the opposite direction.”

**Solutions**

According to a collaborative group of researches collectively called The Elephant Cullption Project, to control the size of elephant populations, wildlife managers have tried translocating groups of animals, but this is expensive and often ineffective. Attempts to dispense concentrations of elephants along major rivers by providing additional waterholes elsewhere have met with limited success because fences are not available. (elephantcure.org)

A long-lasting, single-dose contraceptive vaccine could become a powerful management tool for the non-lethal, humane control of elephant populations. Researchers have developed a vaccine that has delivered multi-year contraception in several species of deer, seals, and boars. They are currently scheduling field tests in South Africa and Botswana to verify whether this technology will provide long-lasting contraception for African elephants. (www.elephantcure.org/culling.htm)
Zula was born in Africa in 1975. An orphaned Zula was shipped to the U.S. In 1978, Zula was sent to Chehaw Wild Animal Park in Albany, GA with Tange, also an orphan. They were put on exhibit for 25 years. In 2004, Zula (and Tange) arrived at The Elephant Sanctuary. When Flora arrived to make it a threesome, Tange assumed the role of the good natured go-between, while Zula and Flora both eyed the role of herd matriarch.

January 11, 2009 Zula passed away.

Zula was a master at digging mud wallows!

With 300 acres, there was plenty to explore!

Each day brought new adventures. Wandering further from the barn; reconnecting with their wild beginnings.

After five years, the bonds of all three Girls had grown much closer.

Her family was called when she was an infant.

In 1978, Zula was sent to Chehaw Wild Animal Park in Albany, GA with Tange, also an orphan. They were put on exhibit for 25 years.