



# Elephant Lands

Evaluation of Interpretive Elements  
July 2017

OREGON  
ZOO

# Guiding Questions



- What do visitors learn about **elephant biology, behavior and conservation**?
- What do visitors learn about Oregon Zoo's **vision for elephant welfare** as demonstrated through the Elephant Lands exhibit?
- What do visitors learn about the **shared history** of humans and elephants around the world and in Portland?
- What impact does a visit have on visitor **empathy/respect** for elephants ?
- What impact does a visit to Elephant Lands have on **visitor support** for the zoo?
- What features of the interpretive package are most **memorable/engaging** for visitors?



# Evaluation Methods

Visitor Intercept Survey

Timing and Tracking Study

Focus Groups

- Staff
- Visitors
- Volunteers



# Timing and Tracking

- Average stay-time = > 8 minutes\*
- Upper South Habitat and Forest Hall had longest residency times
- Lower South Habitat and Encounter Habitat had shortest residency times
- Elephant Pool was the only zone with more non-elephant-related than elephant-related actions

# Engagement

Average stay-time exceeding half a minute:

1. Sounds
2. Trunk
3. Elephant IDs

Most frequently-utilized:

1. Elephant IDs
2. Map
3. Feet

*“Some things everyone does, like reading who the elephants are and their ages. But then everyone picks out different things to talk about.”*  
– Oregon Zoo volunteer







Elephant hearing range 12 to 12,000 hertz

12 12 12 12 12

Human hearing range 20 to 20,000 hertz

# Sounds and calls

Elephants communicate with a wide range of sounds.

Elephants make sounds that can be heard and heard from miles away. They can also hear sounds that are too quiet for humans to hear. They can hear sounds that are too high for humans to hear.

Hear the sounds of the elephant's call.



# Heavy-duty feet

A six-ton elephant is sure-footed on land and in water.

## Cushions soften steps

With each step, cushions of fat and air in the foot support tons of weight and act as shock absorbers.



## Walking on tiptoes

Stand on tiptoes and take a step. As dirt is dug down, elephants walk on air pockets hidden in padded feet.

## Fit for traction

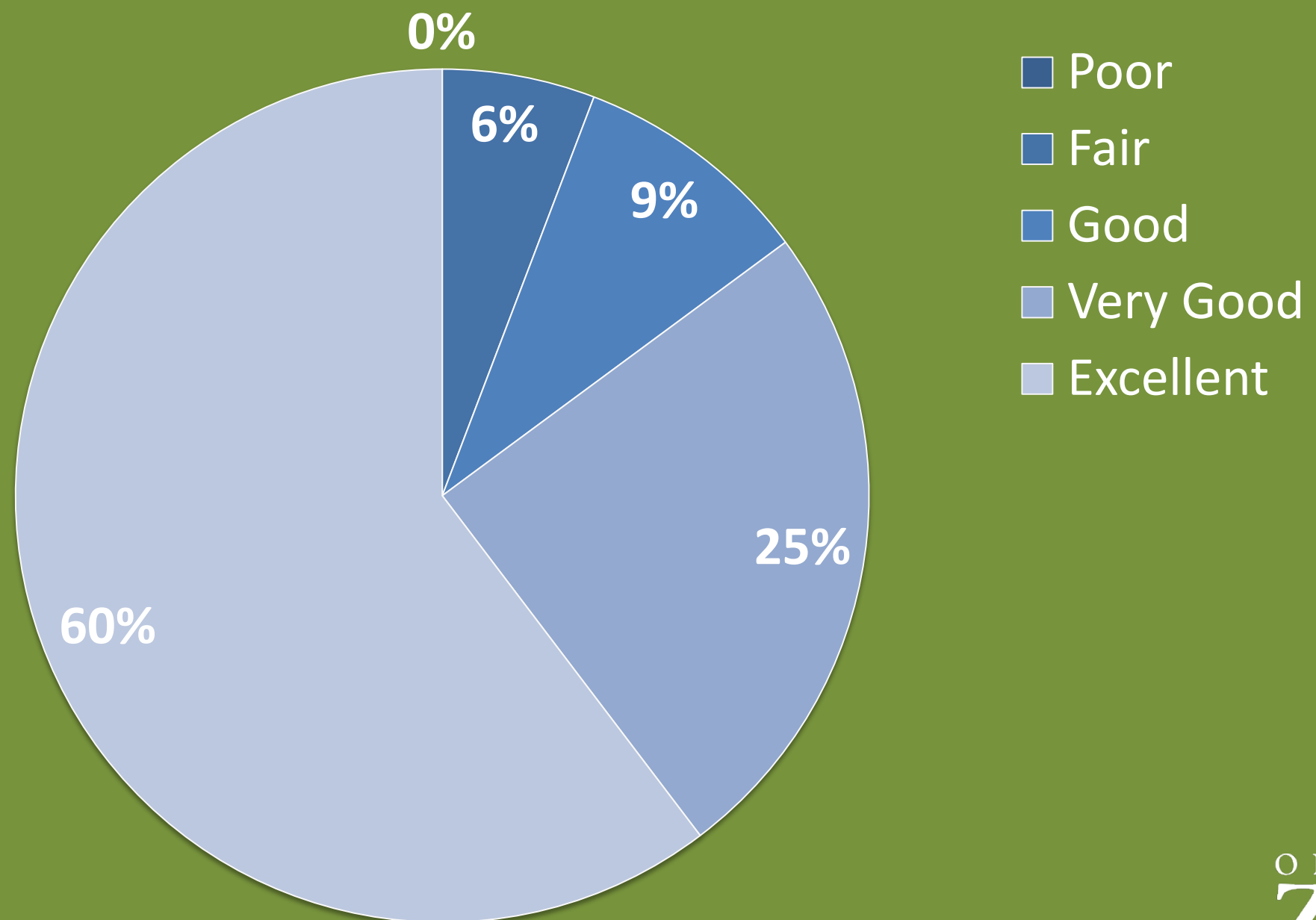
The ridges and pits your foot provides traction by walking on tracks, through mud and across water. An elephant's shape is made for the terrain.

Packy's front foot



# Overall Experience

Experience Rating at Elephant Lands





# “Oregon Zoo elephants have a good quality of life.”

## *Front-End Evaluation*

Before Elephants Lands was completed, **64%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement



## *Summative Evaluation*

After Elephant Lands opened, **91%** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement

# Appreciation for Habitat

93% of survey respondents said the exhibit design “effectively or very effectively” nurtured natural social behaviors and choices

- Greater space
- Perceived happiness of elephants
- Choices
- Increased ability for elephants to interact with each other



# Empathy/Respect

- Individual herd members are treasured. (Lily #4, Packy #8)
- 83% of survey respondents agreed that they felt a stronger connection to the elephants after their visit.
- 62% of survey respondents stated they felt increased empathy/respect towards the elephants after their visit.





# Pride in Oregon Zoo

- 80% of Elephant Lands visitors feel proud of what the zoo is doing to protect elephants in the wild.
- Felt tax money was well-spent to develop Elephant Lands.
- Focus group participants reported willingness to continue making financial contributions to support additional exhibit improvements.

*98% agreed or strongly agreed that this exhibit shows that Oregon Zoo is committed to the welfare of elephants*



# Awareness of Threats

- Most visitors were familiar with the threat of elephants poached for the ivory trade.
- 54% of visitors surveyed were not aware of the palm oil conservation crisis.



*“Chendra’s story is a big one. They can see how an animal was directly affected by deforestation. That’s powerful for people to see.”*

– Oregon Zoo staff



# How to help

- 66% more likely to urge companies to switch to wildlife-friendly palm oil
- 62% more likely to buy products that they know contain only wildlife-friendly palm oil
- 45% more likely to donate money to support Oregon Zoo's efforts to protect elephants
- 25% more likely to become an Oregon Zoo member

*84% of survey respondents felt their consumer choices made an impact on elephant conservation*





*“For a long time I was anti-zoo, but coming up here and seeing how wonderfully the animals are treated and the open spaces, and the realization that most people are not blessed to travel globally, and how else can children learn about animals up close and personal...I think Elephant Lands solidified in my mind that this is really okay. This exhibit helped me see the value of zoos.”*

– Oregon Zoo visitor



**Thank you!**

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