

# Evolution of the *Loxodonta africana* and *Elephas maximus* and how they could lose their tusks

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The rapid evolution of the family Elephantidae throughout time has been extensively researched in the past decades and has resulted in many new discoveries and lineages between the genera of Elephantidae. Throughout evolution, a majority of the species of Elephantidae have become extinct, leaving only *Loxodonta africana*, *Loxodonta cyclotis*, and *Elephas maximus*. The number of these species, however, has dwindled significantly in the past years due to the high number of deaths of elephants due to poaching. The continuation of poaching has a possibility of a new evolutionary event within the elephants, elephants without tusks.

Ancestors of the extant *Loxodonta africana* and *Elephas maximus*

The family of Elephantidae shows a high rate of evolution, early stages of which were confined to Africa, while later stages occurred in Eurasia (Kalmykov & Mashchenko, 2006). Numerous studies have been conducted to understand the phylogeny of Elephantidae, and many of the researches have concluded different answers. Maglio, Beden, and Todd each concluded their research with phylogenetic trees that contrasted with each other. According to Maglio (1972), the lineages of *Loxodonta*, *Elephas*, and *Mammuthus* all

evolved from the ancestor *Primelephas gomphotheroides*. *Loxodonta* first evolved from the *Primelephas* in the Pliocene time period, leaving an *Elephas-Mammuthus* lineage. Soon after the separation of the *Elephas* lineage and *Mammuthus* lineage took place during the Pliocene time period. Very little evolution has occurred within the *Loxodonta* genus in the past two and a half million years, since the only ancestor of the living *Loxodonta africana* is *Loxodonta adaurora*. The *Elephas* lineage however has numerous events of evolution within the genus. Ac...

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...ith elephants. If poaching continues to increase as it has in the past, the elephants may not only lose their tusks, but they may also become extremely endangered or extinct.

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