

Drunken elephant myth exposed

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Folk lore has it elephants can get drunk by eating fermented fruit rotting on the ground, but a study debunks that claim, despite "eyewitness" accounts.

The study -- to appear in the March-April issue of the journal *Physiological and Biochemical Zoology* -- says anecdotes of drunken elephants go back more than a century.

Steve Morris, a biologist at the University of Bristol in England and a co-author of the study told *National Geographic News*, "People just want to believe in drunken elephants."

The tales say elephants eat rotten fruit that falls from African marula trees, a member of the same family as the mango.

But Morris says it's unlikely an elephant would eat fruit if it were rotten, more-or-less wait for it to ferment.

In any case, producing a liter of marula wine requires 200 fruits. So an elephant would have to eat more than 1,400 well-fermented fruits quite quickly to start to get drunk.

National Geographic News commented: It may make for a good story and a durable myth, but you're not likely to ever see a drunken elephant sitting under a marula tree.

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