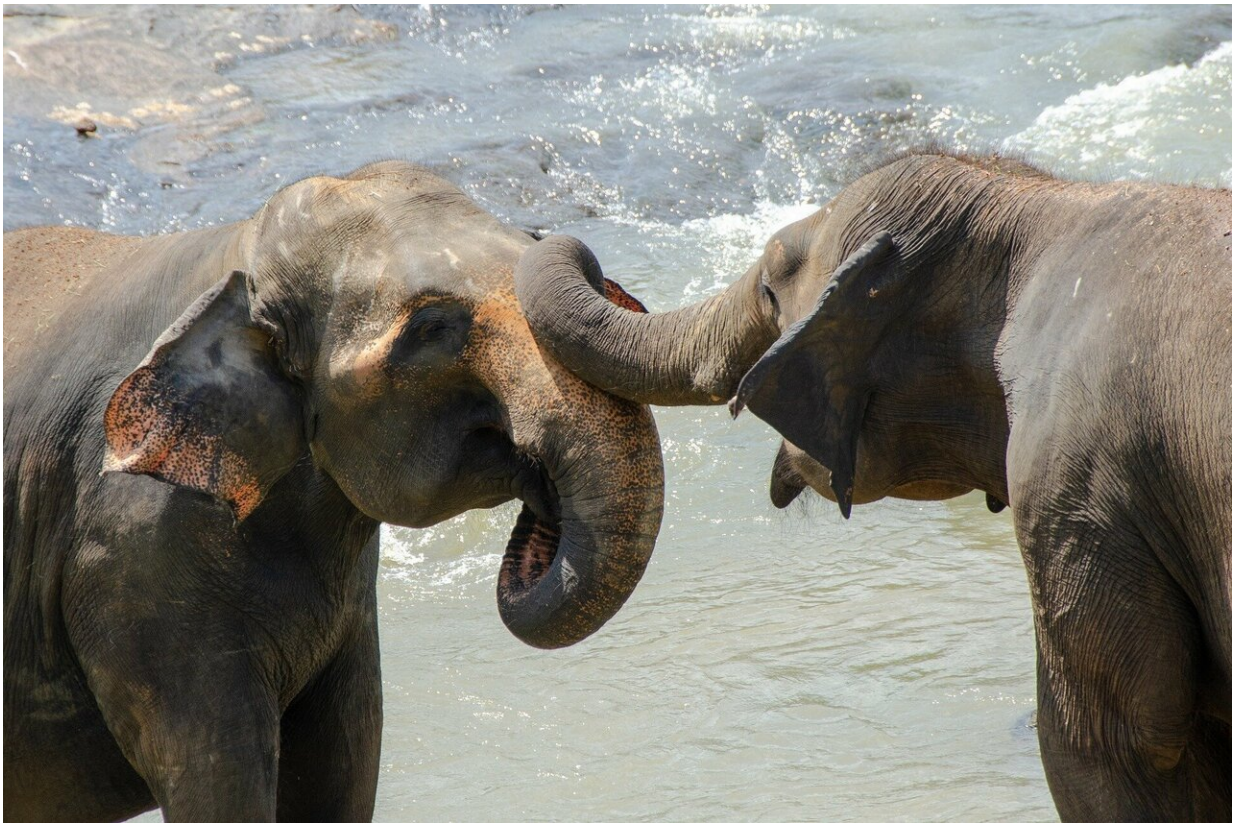


Young Asian elephants form all-male groups to survive

July 8 2019, by Bob Yirka



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A team of researchers affiliated with several institutions in India has found evidence of young Asian elephants forming all-male groups as a way to survive. In their paper published in the journal *Scientific Reports*,

the group describes their study of the elephants in different parts of India, and what they found.

Asian [elephants](#) are not doing well—as humans increasingly encroach on their territory, elephants find survival more difficult. Some die due to poaching, but others are killed when they damage croplands or wander into populated areas. The researchers with this new effort report that some of the young male elephants have been adapting their behavior to give themselves a better chance of surviving—they have been forming groups instead of hanging out alone.

In the past, as male elephants grew old enough to become sexually mature, they would wander away from their families and head off alone into the wild. Typically, they would look for an area with enough food and locally available, sexually mature females. But now, [conditions](#) are changing, the researchers report—instead of heading off alone, [young males](#) have started joining up with other young males, forming groups.

The researchers began their study after hearing about groups of young male elephants running around together like human gangs. To learn more, they looked at photographs taken of elephants all across India during the year 2016 to 2017—from farmlands, forests and urban centers. In all, they analyzed 1,445 photographs of 248 individual young [male elephants](#). They report that they did find evidence of young males forming groups. They also found a particular behavior pattern—the more dangerous a given area was for a young male elephant, the more likely he was to join a group. Thus, elephant groups in areas with more people were larger than groups in other areas. And in some places where elephants are known to be relatively safe from human harm, the [males](#) continued to head out on their own. The researchers conclude that the elephants in India are forming groups out of behavioral necessity.

More information: Nishant Srinivasaiah et al. All-Male Groups in

Asian Elephants: A Novel, Adaptive Social Strategy in Increasingly Anthropogenic Landscapes of Southern India, *Scientific Reports* (2019).
[DOI: 10.1038/s41598-019-45130-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-45130-1)

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Citation: Young Asian elephants form all-male groups to survive (2019, July 8) retrieved 15 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-07-young-asian-elephants-all-male-groups.html>

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