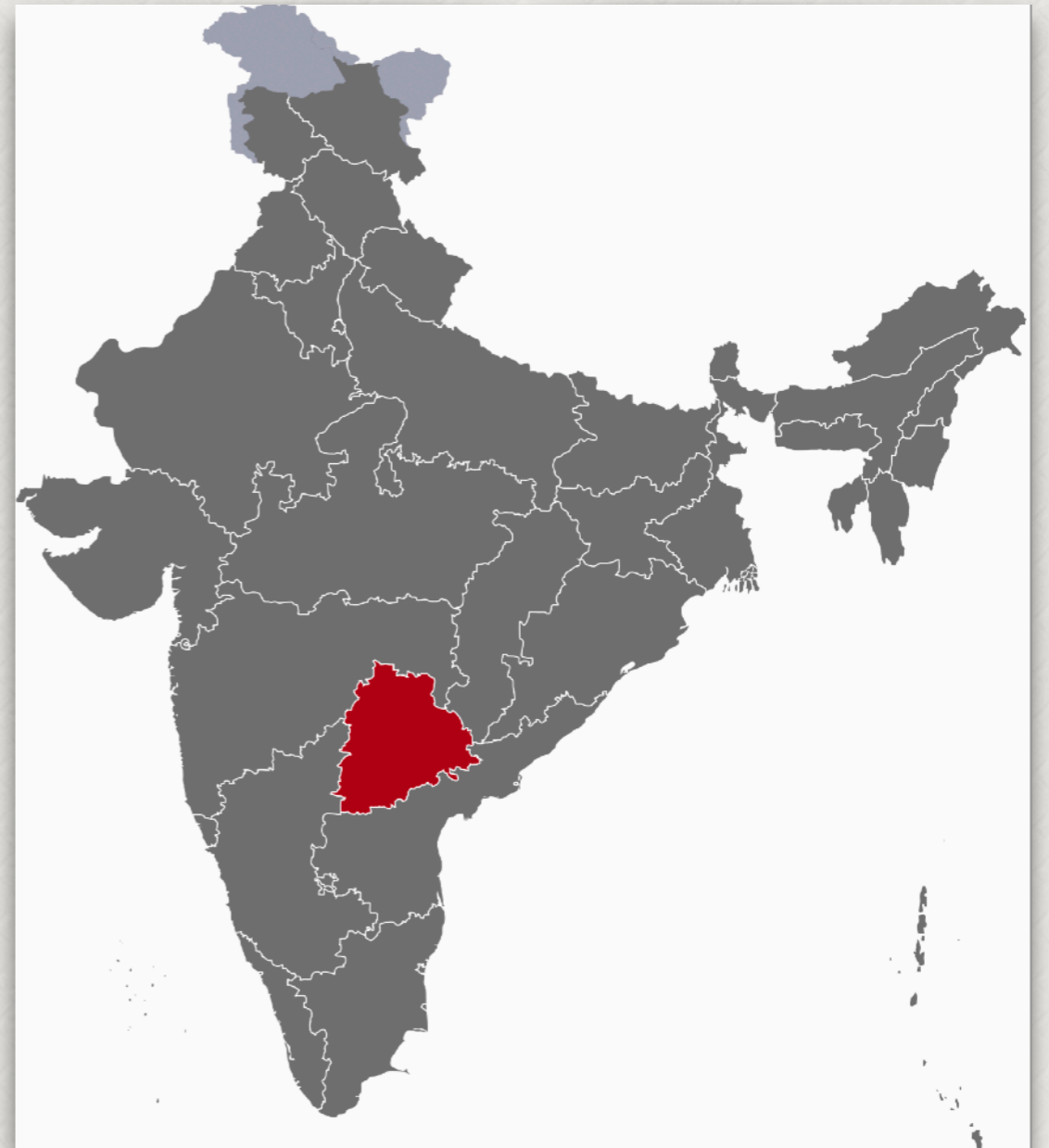
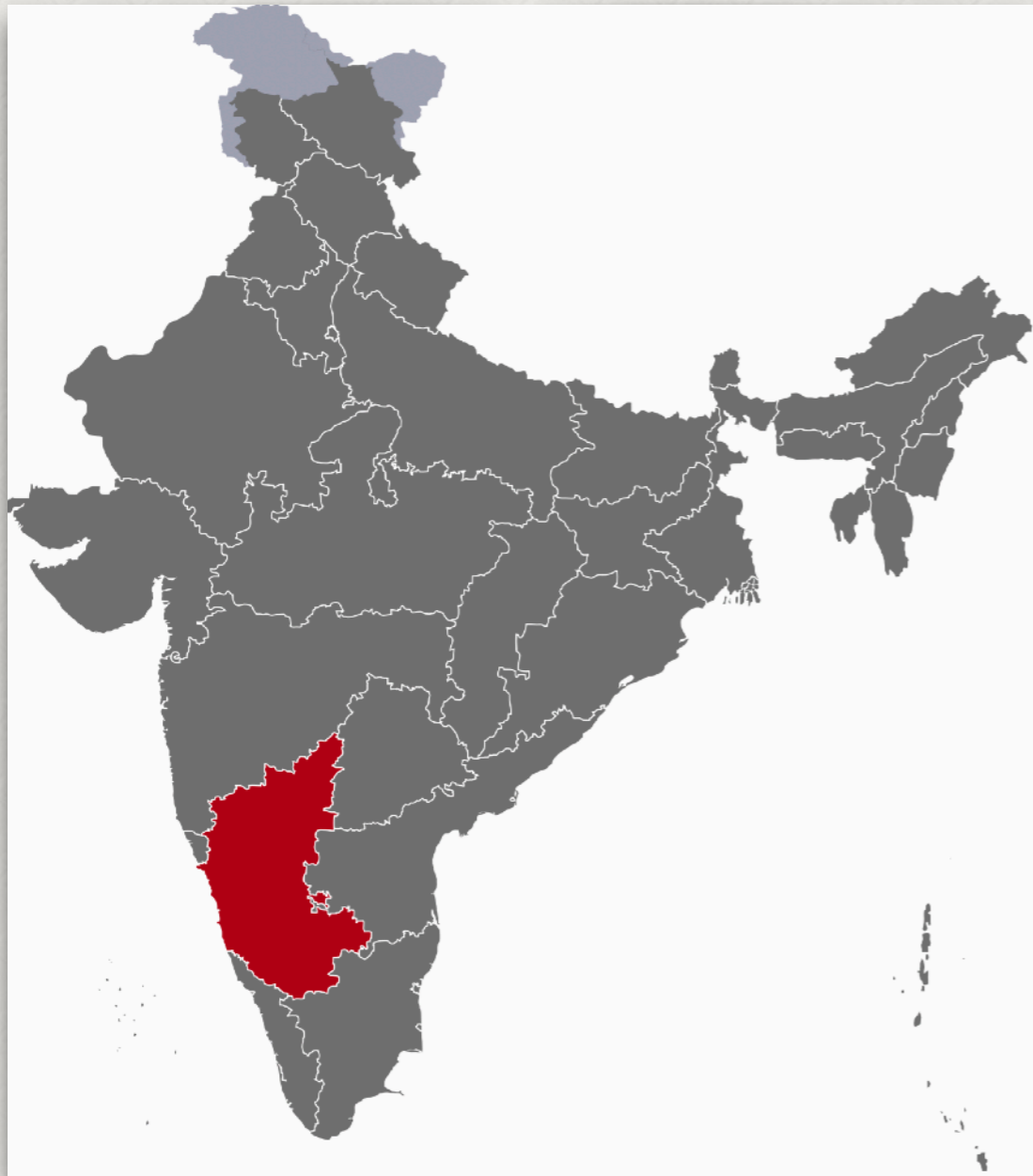


Asian Elephants

India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam





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Basile Morin



Ian Barbour



Mary!

Now an endangered species, Asian elephants are an endangered species and are in only about 5 percent of their historical range. There may be fewer than 50,000 in the wild, with about 30,000 in India and 6,000 in Sri Lanka.

Asian elephants have shorter legs and smaller, rounder ears than African elephants, and they also weigh about 2,000 pounds less, with females averaging around 7,700 pounds. They live about 60 years in the wild.

An Asian elephant spends most of its time eating grasses, roots, leaves, and tree bark, consuming up to 300 pounds a day. They also seek out cultivated crops, particularly bananas, rice, and sugarcane. The animals always stay close to fresh water, as they must drink up to 50 gallons a water a day.

Asian elephants usually sleep during the day and are most active at dawn and dusk, but African elephants sleep late at night and take short naps in the day.

Hindus believe the Buddha was reincarnated from a white elephant, and many Hindu temples in southern India, Sri Lanka, and parts of Southeast Asia include elephants in their annual festivals.

Elephants are one of Earth's most intelligent animals. Parts of their brain are like those of great apes and dolphins. They may also demonstrate several advanced cognitive behaviors, such as compassion, grief, altruism, and self-awareness.

Asian elephants use their trunks—actually a long nose—to explore their world. It's used for smelling, breathing, trumpeting, drinking, and grabbing things—especially a potential meal. They also will touch trunks to reassure each other, which experts describe as the equivalent of a hug.

Gestation is between 18 and 22 months, which is the longest gestation of any animal. At birth, elephants weigh about 200 pounds and stand about three feet tall.

Up to a third of Asian elephants live in captivity, and many suffer chronic abuse, particularly when they're trained to perform tricks or other behaviors. Festivals and tourist places featuring elephants, which are often chained and overworked, can be traumatic for the animals, due to the loud music and firecrackers and overwork. They are often poorly fed.