PublisherInfo		
PublisherName	:	BioMed Central
PublisherLocation	:	London
PublisherImprintName	:	BioMed Central

African elephants

ArticleInfo		
ArticleID	:	4186
ArticleDOI	:	10.1186/gb-spotlight-20010824-02
ArticleCitationID	:	spotlight-20010824-02
ArticleSequenceNumber	:	257
ArticleCategory	:	Research news
ArticleFirstPage	:	1
ArticleLastPage	:	2
ArticleHistory	:	RegistrationDate : 2001–08–24 OnlineDate : 2001–08–24
ArticleCopyright	:	BioMed Central Ltd2001
ArticleGrants	:	
ArticleContext	:	130592211

Jonathan B Weitzman
Email: jonathanweitzman@hotmail.com

African elephants are often considered to represent a single species, Loxodonta africana, which is distinct from the Asian elephant genus *Elephas*. In the August 24 Science, Alfred Roca and colleagues from the US National Cancer Institute challenge this assumption by presenting their results of a phylogenetic analysis of African elephants (*Science* 2001, **293**:1473-1477). They collected dart-biopsy samples from almost two hundred free-ranging elephants from 21 populations and sequenced 1732 nucleotides from four nuclear genes. Phylogenetic analysis of these sequences demonstrated that African elephants can be divided into distinct forest and savannah populations. Savannah populations were genetically closer to each other than to any of the forest populations. The genetic distance between forest and savannah elephants was 9.0, which corresponds to 58% of the distance between African and Asian elephant genera. The results suggest that the two African populations split approximately 2.63 million years ago. Roca *et al.* propose that African elephants should therefore be considered as two species, *Loxondonta africana* (savannah elephants) and *Loxondonta cyclotis*(forest elephants).

References

1. *Loxodonta africana*, [http://www.nature-wildlife.com/eletxt.htm]

2. *Science* , [http://www.sciencemag.org]

3. US National Cancer Institute , [http://web.ncifcrf.gov]

4. Comparative anchor tagged sequences (CATS) for integrative mapping of mammalian genomes.