

One Elephant

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One elephant began to play
Upon a spider's web one day,
He found it such tremendous fun
That he called on another elephant to come.

Two elephants began to play . . .

[Ten] elephants began to play
Upon a spider's web one day,
But sad to say the web gave way
And that was the end of a perfect day.

Coll. 1959 from a 16-year old girl from Motherwell, Lanarkshire. One child starts singing, then a second joins on behind, holding by the waist, and singing ("Two elephants" etc.), and so on, till all are involved. The movements mimic a grotesquely lurching pachyderm (point foot, back to first position, forward three paces; repeat). Cf. "One little elephant balancing" in Fowke SGS (1969), 42 (no. 40), from Toronto. Opies Singing Game (1985), 367, with tune (Manchester, 1975); and refs. to foreign versions.

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