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TRUMPET

PROJECT ELEPHANT DIVISION
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE 2020



Project Elephant Division & Elephant Cell

Chief Advisor:

Mr. Brijendra Swaroop

Editorial Team

Dr. Parag Nigam

Dr. Prajna Paramita Panda

Dr. K. M. Selvan

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MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE 2020





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आर पी गुप्ता
R P Gupta



सचिव
भारत सरकार
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
SECRETARY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE



MESSAGE

Elephants have been revered for centuries in Asia and play a vital role in maintaining ecological balance in its habitat. Elephants are referred to as ecosystem 'engineers', as they shape, build and rejuvenate natural landscapes. Elephants indirectly help in maintaining nutrient cycles and enrich biomass productivity. Due to these crucial ecosystem functions, elephants serve as important keystone species in biodiversity conservation. If elephants were completely eliminated from their landscape, these ecosystems will cease to flourish. They will become less diverse and, in some places, will collapse to over-simplified impoverishment. So, before it's too late, it is important to reflect how useful and vital to the environment these magnificent creatures are.

The newsletter "Trumpet" is an important step in disseminating the efforts made towards elephant conservation. I wish the very best to the editors of Trumpet in bringing out this issue.

[R P Gupta]

New Delhi, the 28th June, 2021

संजय कुमार
SANJAY KUMAR



वन महानिदेशक एवं विशेष सचिव
भारत सरकार
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FOREST & SPL. SECY.
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND
CLIMATE CHANGE



MESSAGE

Asian elephants once roamed across most of Asia, now are restricted to only 15 percent of their original range. Fragmented and isolated populations now abound in South and South-East Asia. Elephants are an important cultural and religious icon in Asia, and their numbers are also growing and so are the incidences of conflicts. There is an urgent need felt to harmonise development with elephant conservation. Not only the natural habitats of elephants need to be protected, conserved and developed to accommodate the growing population of elephants but development infrastructure also need to be made more elephant friendly. Far more efforts are needed to synergise such co-development pathways, alongwith capacity building of stakeholders right from the village to the national levels.

The publication of Trumpet is one step in this direction. I wish the messages of this publication reaches the widest of our population in a regular and effective manner, and that the editorial team of Trumpet would continuously strive for the same!

(Sanjay Kumar)

Place: New Delhi

Date: 24.6.2021



इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड, नई दिल्ली-110 003 फोन: (011) 24695278, फैक्स: (011) 24695412
INDIRA PARYAVARAN BHAWAN, JOR BAGH ROAD, NEW DELHI-110 003, Ph.: 011-24695278, Fax: 011-24695412
E-mail: dgfindia@nic.in

सौमित्र दासगुप्ता
SOUMITRA DASGUPTA



अपर वन महानिदेशक
भारत सरकार
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FOREST
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND
CLIMATE CHANGE



MESSAGE

The magnificent elephant is truly an important champion of the wild. It is one of the world's most iconic wild animal, a symbol of strength, might as well as empathy. Elephant functions as an umbrella species for the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem functions in the forest systems of both Asia and Africa. As a flagship species of the country, it is our constant endeavour to strike a balance between conservation of elephants in the wild and the people living around their habitat.

Understanding stakeholder perspectives towards elephants is a key endeavour in the conservation of the species. It is important to build sync in stakeholder attitudes and underlying beliefs towards the endangered Asian elephant with that of the policy makers for the landscape-scale conservation and management of the species.

This issue of "Trumpet" quarterly newsletter enunciates the perceptual differences amongst communities and its interface with the elephants, strategies to enable conservationists to engage various stakeholders towards land management and wildlife policies creating a safe sustainable future for elephants and humans. The success case story of human - elephant co-existence in the North Eastern state of Assam and prospects of elephant rehabilitation in the Indian subcontinent, Tamil Nadu, elucidates the various conservation efforts made for saving the iconic species. The newsletter for the first time has touched upon the welfare and management issues pertaining to captive elephants and looks forward for better management and welfare standards to be developed for upkeep of the elephants in captive facilities.

I applaud the efforts of the team of Project Elephant Division and Elephant Cell in bringing out this issue to communicate the issues relating to the status of the elephant and the conservation challenges it faces in the country.

(Soumitra Dasgupta)

New Delhi, the 29th June, 2021



J-505, जल विंग, इंदिरा पर्यावरण भवन, जोर बाग रोड़, नई दिल्ली-110 003
फोन : 011-24695416, फैक्स : 011-24695417

J-505, Jal Wing, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jor Bagh Road, New Delhi-110 003
Ph.: 011-24695416, Fax: 011-24695417, E-mail : adgwl-mef@nic.in



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Asian elephants: A Historical Perspective

Brijendra Swaroop, IGF & Director, Project Elephant

Elephas maximus once occurred from the Tigris-Euphrates in western Asia, east through Iran and south of the Himalayas; throughout south and southeast Asia including the islands of Sri Lanka, Sumatra and Borneo, and into mainland China northwards at least as far as the Changkiang (Yangtze river). Asiatic elephants at present have disappeared entirely from western Asia, Iran, and most of China and are now distributed throughout the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia from India in the west, Nepal in the north, Sumatra in the south, and to Borneo in the east. There are three subspecies of Asian elephants of which the Sri Lankan elephants occurs in Sri Lanka; the Mainland Asian elephant or the Indian elephant occurs in Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam; and the Sumatran elephant resides in Sumatra.

The name "Elephant" originated from the Latin "elephantus" which was derived from a Greek word meaning "Ivory" or "Elephant". It was first used in English in the 14th century, replacing the earlier term 'oliphant' which came from Old French. In Sri Lanka it is called the "Gajah" and the term "Gaja" is also used in Sanskrit for elephants. "Haathi", is a however, an Hindustani word for elephant, from Sanskrit, hastin or hasta meaning hand or trunk. In spite of the several names accorded to the elephants across its distribution areas, it holds a special status in the history, culture and ethos of human civilization.

In 1811, Carl D. Illiger coined the name Proboscidea due to the most distinguishing organ of the elephants – the proboscis. Natural selection has provided elephants with 'fingers' at the tip of their 'hands' – the trunks – which have helped them to adapt to diverse habitats. The genus *Elephas* and *Loxodonta* both originated in East Africa. While *Loxodonta* migrated throughout Africa, *Elephas* originated in Sub-Saharan Africa during the Pliocene and spread throughout Africa before expanding into the southern half of Asia.

Asian elephants have been an integral part of Buddhist and Hindu mythologies. The folk lore goes back to the birth of Lord Buddha (Prince Siddhartha) after Queen Maya dreamt of a white elephant with a lotus in its trunk that went into her womb. The white elephant "Airavat" of Lord Indra holds special importance in Indian mythology. White elephants are since regarded as symbols of power and fertility and as most auspicious of all animals in Laos, Thailand, Burma and Cambodia.



BRIJENDRA SWAROOP
IGF & DIRECTOR, PROJECT ELEPHANT

Kingdom:
Animalia

Phylum:
Chordata

Class:
Mammalia

Order:
Proboscidea

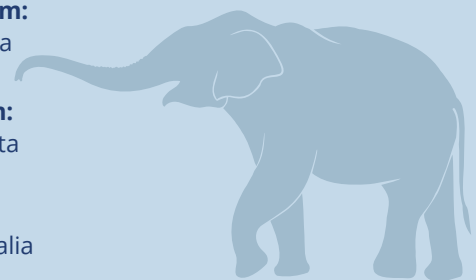
Family:
Elephantidae

Subtribe:
Elephantina

Genus:
Elephas

Species:
Elephas maximus (Asian elephant)

Sub species:
E. m. maximus (Sri Lankan elephant)
E. m. indicus (Mainland elephant)
E. m. sumatranus (Sumatran elephant)





Elephants were used in wars in the ancient times in Asia. There are several references made in Hindu mythology depicting the use of elephants in Mahabharata. The Mughal emperors were known to have around 1,30,00 elephants used in battlefields. Elephants were domesticated by the kings to carry heavy materials, religious ceremonies logging and were also traded. Even till date, captive elephants in India and many other Asian countries are adorned with festive outfits and used in religious ceremonies, in temple rituals, cultural festivities and marriage functions.

Elephants are known to have been tamed by humans since 6000BC and historical edicts substantiate the capture and taming of elephants in the times of Aryans and Mauryans and also in the ancient scriptures of Rig Veda, the Upanishads, the Gajashastra and the Arthashastra. Bones of Asian elephants excavated at Mohenjo-Daro in the Indus valley indicate that they were tamed in the Indus valley civilization and used for work. Decorated elephants

are also depicted on seals and were modelled in clay. The elephant plays an important part in the culture of the subcontinent and beyond, being featured prominently in the *Panchatanta* fables and the Buddhist Jataka tales.

In Asia, humans have had close associations with elephants over many centuries, and elephants have become important cultural icons. According to Hindu mythology, the Gods (*deva*) and the demons (*asura*) churned the oceans in a search for the elixir of life so that they would become immortal. As they did so, nine jewels surfaced, one of which was the elephant. In Hinduism, the powerful deity honored before all sacred rituals is the elephant-headed Lord Ganesha, who is also called the "Remover of Obstacles". Since time immemorial, elephants are revered as a symbol of prosperity, destroyer of evil as well as strength, power, wisdom, memory, and vitality and it is us who needs to make concerted effort in saving the last bastion of the species for the future generations.

Penny for a Thought: Experts on Elephant Conservation



DHANANJAI MOHAN,
DIRECTOR, WII

Elephants capture human imagination in many ways. In Asia, elephants are revered as cultural icons. Elephant lore is deeply ingrained in mythology and society as typified in India. Elephants play a crucial functional role in the tropical forest ecosystem as ecosystem engineers that exert direct influence on the vegetation structure. They are found to be irreplaceable seed dispersers in the tropical forests as they consume far more seeds and tread great distances. Elephants indirectly help in maintaining nutrient cycles

and enrich biomass productivity. Due to these crucial ecosystem functions, elephants serve as important keystone species in biodiversity conservation. Elephant conservation in India is an enigma. Despite the country's population pressure on natural resources, it holds more than 60% of the 40,000 to 50,000 Asian elephants left in the wild. Elephant populations in India have been far more stable in comparison to other range countries in Asia. This achievement was far from easy as elephant conservation rests on protecting large forested landscapes and at the same time effectively addressing human–elephant conflict. This achievement has been possible due to concerted efforts by the Central and State Governments, civil society, and highly tolerant local communities that share the landscape with elephants. The future persistence of elephants in India would depend on the paradigm of tacit coexistence. This would require reconciling human welfare along with elephant conservation priorities in a pragmatic manner by actively involving with local communities that share the landscape with elephants. As elephant habitats serve as carbon sinks, water catchment areas and provide numerous ecosystem services that are crucial for human well being in the face of climate change, saving elephants and their habitats have become critical than ever before.



SAROJ PATNAIK,
FORMER CHIEF WILDLIFE WARDEN,
ODISHA

Elephants have been part of our culture, ethos, religion and history. But with loss of elephant habitat and its fragmentation, there is increasing conflict between people and elephants resulting in casualties of both. In a situation like this the role of vibrant Project Elephant in national level is extremely important. Under these circumstances it is felt that 'Trumpet' shall play the role of a vehicle for communication among the elephant managers and others involved in elephant conservation. I wish this newsletter a great future.



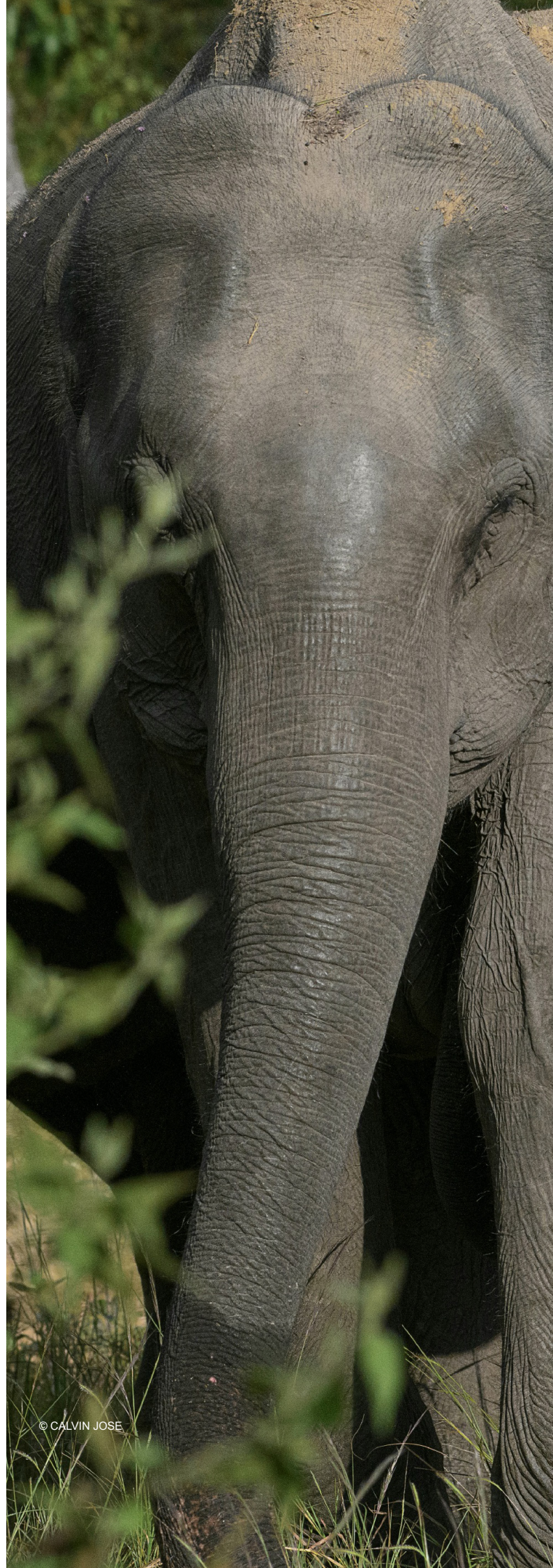
VIVEK MENON,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, WTI

The Asian Elephant or Gajah is to the Indian consciousness so much more than just an animal. It is a National Heritage Animal as the ties with the Indian goes back at least 4000 years to the Indus Valley civilisation. We have to respect this Big, Intelligent, Social Nomad by giving it Right of Passage and not by chasing it around our fragmented forests and making it a refugee.



DR. P. S. EASA,
RETD. DIRECTOR, KFRI

The elephant, the nature's most beautiful creations, is unique in shape, gait and strength. The animal has appeared in mythology, has been the part of Indian history, culture and people revered and loved. The relationship between humans and elephants has a very long history. Elephants are now struggling for survival for want of undisturbed contiguous space. In the worst scenarios, it is crammed into isolated small patches of natural habitat leading to a very bad fate for the animal and also the people. The culture of the people of a country would be reflected in the conservation programmes for its wildlife, especially the flagship species like elephants, which would in turn ensure peace in the wild and also for the people.



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DR. A.J.T JOHNSINGH,
ELEPHANT CONSERVATIONIST

Habitat degradation in the form of abundance of inedible plants and lack of regeneration of forage plants is one of the serious threats that elephants face in the country. This can be easily understood if one assumes himself/herself as an elephant and walks in the elephant habitat looking for forage. Very little quality forage he/she will find!



DIPANKAR GHOSE,
DIRECTOR, WILDLIFE & HABITATS
PROGRAMME, WWF-INDIA

Elephant, the National Heritage Animal of our country deserves much more attention than it is getting now. The Project Elephant Division within the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India upholds the foundation for conservation of this species, and it needs adequate funding through Centrally Sponsored Schemes and other innovative means for supporting the states to conserve elephants. Collectively, we need to work together for reducing elephant deaths due to retaliatory killing, accidents on railway tracks and death through electrocution from power transmission lines. Identified elephant corridors, and notified Elephant Reserves need to have legal provisions so that those are conserved for posterity.



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Conflict to coexistence: A success story of Human-elephant interaction in Assam

Alolika Sinha and Bibhuti P. Lahkar

The Asian elephants throughout its native range are often caught in the crossfire of the shrinking habitats and ever-increasing human population. The story is no different in Assam. While the latest elephant population estimation exercise in 2017, put Assam as one of the strongholds of the Asian elephants, nonetheless of late the state has also emerged as one of the human-elephant conflict (HEC) hotspots, where both the species are bearing the brunt. In the last 10 years, more than 760 people and approximately 250 elephants have died across the state because of HEC. There has been an increase in both the intensity and frequency of HEC in the state. The rise in HEC is gradually eroding the traditional cultural reverence towards the species, which can undermine the conservation efforts.

Mitigation of HEC and facilitating coexistence is a tedious job, where one has to be always innovative and enterprising. The traditional measures such as noise-making, use of fire-crackers to keep the elephants at bay from human habitation and crop-fields have in most cases outweighed the measures. For sustainable conservation and garnering people's support, the involvement of the local communities in the conservation process is the key. The Elephant Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak since its inception in 2002 has identified that any conservation framework, whether conserving a species or an ecosystem must have people's participation. As a result, besides the ecological studies on the elephants, we have parallelly worked cohesively with the local communities



Checking of installed solar fence at Paharpur village in Baksa district, Assam



Supporting torch lights to high conflict areas like Goalpara

to enable coexistence. Around Manas National Park, from 2009 onwards Aaranyak has worked with the local farmers and encouraged a community-guarding system for their crop fields. In this initiative, the neighbouring crop-field owners would guard their crops jointly, which significantly increased the efforts of guarding and protecting their crops. Additionally, this also reduced pressure on the framers as they can take turns to guard their produce.

In more recent years, we have used the community based solar-powered fences around human habitation and farmlands in high HEC areas to protect the crops, properties and lives of both human and elephants. The fences are effective in deterring the elephants venturing into crop-fields. Recently, a rise in use of deliberate illegal fences, powered through high-tension domestic electric lines in Assam was observed. During the harvest season, people install these fences mostly during night and when elephants come in contact with these fences elephants are electrocuted to deaths. A sharp rise in elephant electrocution has been reported across the state. The technology of using the powered-fences can be used to our advantage with modifications that would be non-fatal to the elephants. Tapping this resource, we in 2014, at a site called Subankhata, in the eastern part of Chirang Ripu Elephant Reserve, held dialogue and convinced the local communities to convert their illegal electric fences into proper solar-powered fences. With active participation from the local communities we installed 14-km solar-powered fences, which are still

functional today. Looking at the benefits of the people and elephants (no casualties in last 6 years) incurred by the fences, we were encouraged to expand our work. Over the years, we have erected approximately 50 kilometres of low-cost community solar-powered fences at different sites to protect crops and property of local communities. The fences were erected in such a manner, where the crop fields and human habitation were surrounded, without obstructing the movement paths of the elephants. The solar-powered fences installed by us made tangible differences, benefitting approximately 13,000 people and some 300-odd elephants. The HEC affected people, to protect their crops, properties and lives spent considerable amount of time at night, mostly during the crop season, without sleep. The prolonged deprivation of sleep often had negative impact on health, education and social life. Even after the deprivation, there is no assurance that the villagers can save their crops or properties from the wild elephants. The hard work and the sense of deprivation of the already poverty-stricken farmers frequently lead to retaliation. Through our efforts we ensured food security, social security and also aid in elephant conservation.

At another occasion, we provided solar-powered fences, surrounding a school premise at Nagaon district of Assam, which was frequented by wild elephants as many as 18 times. Scared and worried, the parents had stopped sending their wards to the school. The fences provided by us have facilitated proper function of the school again.



Alternative crops testing plots in Golaghat District



Alternative crops testing plots in Golaghat District

In Golaghat district of Assam, we experimented with the alternative crop cultivation as a tool to resolve HEC. The district is prone to HEC and many lives were claimed because of this. To come-up with a long-lasting solution to this, in 2018, we initiated an experiment of testing the efficacy of certain species that are elephant-deterrent, commercially viable and would aid in income-generation of local farmers. Five such species, *Homaloma aromatica*, wild turmeric (*Curcuma aromatica*), citronella, chilli and lemon grass were planted in two experimental plots at two sites of the district for two years. We have successfully demonstrated that these crops deter elephants and can be cultivated by the local farmers. As a follow-up step, we are identifying the farmers who are willing to take-up cultivation of these crops. In addition to that we have been promoting Assam lemon as biofence in around boundary of houses and crop fields in areas like Manas landscape, Golaghat, Sivasagar etc.

Resolving HEC needs multipronged approaches. We are closely working with the Village Defense Parties (VDPs), formed by the Police Department, which consists of members from the villages. The VDPs are the first line of contact for any administration related issues. As most

of the HEC occurs outside the protected areas and thus often remain out of the Forest Department jurisdiction. Involving VDPs, through sensitization and empowerment has helped in minimizing HEC in HEC-prone areas of Assam.

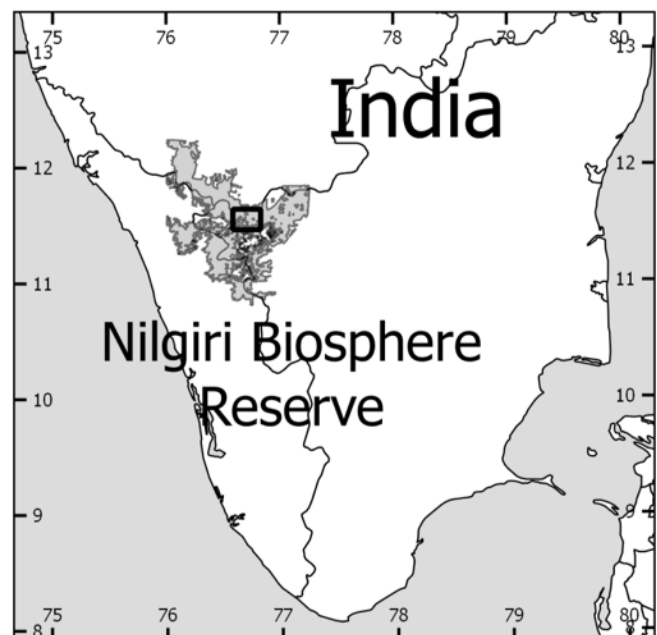
From our experience, we can clearly say that involvement of local communities and bridging the gap between local communities and government line departments can go a long way in mitigating HEC and ensure sustainable conservation. Having said this, we are also working for habitat restoration and enrichment, as habitat loss is one of the primary drivers of HEC. Through this effort we are trying to arrest the spread of invasive alien species and reverse habitat degradation, enrich the habitats with plantation of native plant/fodder species, revive the wetlands in the elephant habitat to facilitate availability of water jointly with Assam Forest Department. Through our cumulative efforts, we had a positive impact on both elephants and humans. The crisis unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many more challenges to be addressed for species conservation and people's wellbeing. We continue to tap resources and direct them towards sustainable conservation.

Rehabilitation of an elephant named “Rivaldo” in the Sigur Region, Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve, India

Priya Davidar¹, Shermin de Silva², Jean-Philippe Puyravaud¹

Wildlife in general naturally tends to avoid people. In order to attract cryptic wildlife, tourists with limited schedules and budgets encourage the regular providing of food at particular locations. The consequences of feeding wildlife can be negative. They can become habituated to human food, turn aggressive and face increasing fatalities. In Udawalawe National Park (Sri Lanka), people started feeding a wild makhna (tuskless male elephant) named Rambo in 2003. Because of this, other elephants started coming to be fed. The display then became a regular tourist attraction that proved to be lucrative for the local vendors. Although some researchers have claimed this to be a “win-win” situation for all parties, the long term impacts of such provisioning of food is very dubious for the animals. It was observed by the Udawalawe Elephant Research Project (<http://elephantresearch.net/index.html>) that Rambo’s behaviour changed from 2016 onwards after more than a decade of roadside begging. He became aggressive, started breaking through electric fences in order to raid the sugar cane plantations that were near the feeding site. Other instances of elephant habituation were reported in a coffee estate in Kodagu, Karnataka (Malavika Narayana pers. comm.), and in the region of Gudalur, Nilgiris (Bantan, forest watcher, pers. comm.), both in India. We are convinced that many more elephants throughout the present range are habituated.

The Sigur plateau, the buffer zone of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve (Figure 1), is among the network of protected areas that supports the highest elephant population in the world. The Tamil Nadu Forest Department has notified the major and minor elephant corridors in this important place ([\[www.livelaw.in/top-stories/sc-upholds-tamil-nadu-governments-elephant-corridor-notification-164471\]\(http://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/sc-upholds-tamil-nadu-governments-elephant-corridor-notification-164471\)\). However, this region is pockmarked with settlements, with high densities of people and livestock, degraded forests dominated by invasive species.](https://</p></div><div data-bbox=)



The large floating population of tourists numbers in hundreds of thousands per year. The accompanying mushrooming of resorts has fuelled incentives for quick wildlife viewing with among other means, the provisioning of food for elephants. Many adult male elephants, among



(Left) Makhna Rambo being fed in Udawalawe Sri Lanka; (Right) Rambo in Udawalawe National Park Sri Lanka

which an iconic tusker called Rivaldo, have become thus habituated to fruits such as jackfruit, pumpkin, watermelon and others. This has led to raiding of houses by some elephants, and retaliatory attacks by people. The latest victim being a huge tusker who was injured and later died when a fire bomb was thrown at him by resort personnel in January 2021 (<https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/trends/40-year-old-elephant-dies-after-being-set-on-fire-in-tamil-nadu/story/428845.html>).

Rivaldo has been fed by people since 2008. In January 2013 he was seriously injured when about 30 cm of his trunk was severed, possibly when he went begging for food. After his trunk healed, he was slowly weaned away from

food provisioning, by gradual shifting to coarse vegetation and then the additional feeding was stopped. He would visit the premises where he underwent treatment and waited to be fed, sometimes for hours. When no food was forthcoming he would leave. His visits became sporadic and shorter. After 6-months, he would stop by for a few minutes and then leave. He was again injured in 2015 by a wild tusker. Again he was treated at the same place without restraint, and the same pattern of visitation was recorded after the feeding was stopped. Besides, it was observed that during the COVID lockdown, tourism in the region crashed, and after the lockdown was lifted, he had stopped begging for food in the roadside. This is one more indication that he can be de-habituated.



(Left) Rivaldo and gaur Oct 2010 before injury; (Right) Rivaldo foraging in the wild Nov 2014.

Table 1: Suggested protocol to rehabilitate an elephant that has been fed by humans

Emergencies

- A hot line should be available 24/7 to alert day or night of an intrusion wild elephant near habitations
- A rapid response vehicle of the Forest Department should be ready to handle emergencies
- The Forest Department and the Police should penalize people feeding elephants

Awareness

- The District authorities and local administration should be informed of the objectives
- A team of volunteers or social scientists should visit household to inform about the hot line and best practice with elephants
- School children should be informed about elephant behaviour
- Best practices with elephants should be explained in short videos in local languages

Village management

Waste management should be improved to avoid elephant visits to dumping sites

Tourism

Tourist operators and tourists should be made aware that feeding elephants change their behaviour a may lead to its death

De-habituation of the elephant

- Progressive reduction of provisioning of fruits and replacement with coarser fodder
- Food should be provided progressively away from the original base and towards the elephant's regular habitat
- Places regularly visited by the elephant should consider being fenced
- Incidents/locations of the elephant should be recorded with the hot line. Radio-collaring the elephant should be envisaged on a priority basis

Assessment

The assessment about the success of the rehabilitation should be made based on data analysis, in particular on the number of incidents over the course of at least two months.



Rivaldo treated for injuries 2015



Rivaldo treated for injuries 2015

After his second injury, Rivaldo started to become a roadside tourist attraction in the region. His visits to villages increased and although tolerated, some people attacked him, injuring his right eye, resulting in partial blindness. He has never retaliated to our knowledge. Now Rivaldo's freedom is at stake. He is the target of a well-meaning campaign from a recent settler. This person, invoking the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), campaigned to have Rivaldo "rehabilitated" in an elephant camp on the basis that the elephant was disabled and cannot exist in the wild. Rivaldo is perfectly capable of surviving in the jungle without human assistance and "rehabilitation" cannot involve captivity since captivity is a dead end for a male elephant in his prime.



Rivaldo in the wild feb 2021

This proposal culminated in a court case, where the justices observed that the elephant cannot be taken permanently into captivity. However, a kraal (a cage) was constructed by the authorities to capture him. Astonishingly, for months, all mitigating efforts were directed at luring the elephant to a location very close to a village and trapping him. We advised that based upon our observations if feeding was stopped, the elephant could reduce his dependence on handouts but no organized alternative plan was envisaged.

The plan to remove Rivaldo without concerted effort of rehabilitating him back to the jungle is questionable. Firstly, the process of capturing and “domesticating” an elephant (make it obey orders) is cruel. The elephant is restrained and is deprived of water, food, and any remaining relative freedom as long as he does not obey. It defies the purpose of fighting cruelty to animals by the SPCA member to propose a cruel treatment for the “own good” of the animal, especially if the animal does not need it. Secondly, removing an endangered wild animal into captivity based upon dubious health claims amounts to a form of “culling by concern”. This practice, “culling by concern” could become a convenient way of removing animals from the wild without any further consideration for facts. Lastly, for threatened species like the elephant, that have complex social systems, cannot have their older and capable members captured unless the efforts that

must be made, are really made. An ailing animal may recover, but once captured, the animal is as good as dead because it cannot reproduce.

For this reason, we propose a short protocol with a management plan, awareness program, de-habituating the elephant, and follow-up of the elephant’s behaviour, that can be improved and adapted to local circumstances (Table 1).

The rehabilitation program must ensure that the animal is not captured and changes its behaviour and there is reasonable evidence that the animal does not represent more risks to people than any other elephant. Both of these objectives can be quantified with such a protocol and be synthesized for the administration and the public. It is only on the basis of such systematic efforts and rigorous assessment that anyone can ascertain whether Rivaldo should be taken into captivity or not.

The question may arise why a single animal should be the target of so much attention and efforts. Rivaldo is famous and iconic, and his case has received a lot of media attention. But other elephants are habituated and unless people providing food are punished, the trend will aggravate in future. Consequently, opportunities to systematic learning on such instance will help frame best-practice management in future events.

Advocating compassion for captive elephants: A World Animal Protection perspective in India

Shubhobroto Ghosh, Wildlife Projects Manager, World Animal Protection

Ganesha, the elephant headed God is one of the most pervasive cultural icons of India and the elephant is the real life manifestation of this deity. India has around 27,000 wild elephants and about 3,000 captive elephants. Many of these animals are used for joyrides and ornamental displays in different venues, including those in Rajasthan and Kerala. Elephants are also used in National Parks and forests where tourists ride them to see wildlife.

Elephants have been revered in Indian history and culture for centuries. Ironically, this same culture has seen the capture and taming of these gentle and noble creatures for millennia.

As per the records of MoEF&CC there are 2,675 captive elephants in India. Among these, 1821 are reportedly in private custody, whilst the rest are under the care of the Forest Department of various states. Among captive elephants in private custody, some are owned by individuals, and some by institutions like temples and private owners who keep elephants as status symbols.

Elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are a Schedule I species under the Indian Wildlife Protection Act. The Asian elephant is also listed under Appendix I of CITES, the Convention of International Trade in Endangered Species, that regulates the trade in wild animals and plants. The Asian Elephant is





(Left) Sonepur elephant calf; (Right) Shankar Delhi Zoo African Elephant 23 August 2015

listed as “Endangered” in the Red List of Threatened Species of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Under Section 1(5) of the Wildlife Protection Act, a captive animal is ‘captured, or kept or bred in captivity.’

The Indian wildlife protection law has an exemption under Section 40 for transactions in live elephants and it is alleged that traders regularly take advantage of it to illicitly deal in live elephants. Captive elephants in Sonepur have been highly in demand in the private elephant ownership circle in India, including in Amer Fort in Jaipur in Rajasthan, Kerala and until recently, circuses.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) has persistently been trying to improve the condition of elephants in India, in captivity and has issued the comprehensive guidelines for care and management of captive elephants on 8th January, 2008.

In August 2019, a study assessing physiological stress in captive elephants was published by scientists at CSIR- Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB), Hyderabad. The study measured the amount of stress hormones called glucocorticoids (cortisol and corticosterone) in 870 dung samples from 37 elephants. The samples were collected from elephants that were engaged in different activities from various locations in captivity and the wild.

The study revealed that elephants from the Mysore Dussehra camp, which were made to perform during ceremonies, had a higher amount of stress hormones than others. The study stated that heightened levels of stress can cause infertility, hyperglycemia, suppression of immune response, imperfect wound healing, and neuronal cell death.

World Animal Protection wholeheartedly welcomes the efforts of MOEF and all associated organisations in promoting humane treatment of captive elephants. The directive of the Forest Department of Rajasthan to retire nineteen sick elephants from rides in Amer fort in February, 2021 is also a positive step forward. World Animal Protection also appreciates the efforts made by the Government to bring compassionate care to captive elephants and enhance protection for wild elephants as stated in the Gajah report published in 2010. MoEF&CC has also been instrumental providing technical, financial and moral support to apprehend traders of live elephants and businessmen dealing in elephant ivory. Significant educational efforts have been undertaken by the MoEF&CC to highlight the plight of elephants in the wild and in captivity, including the Gaja Mahotsava held in New Delhi, 2018. The Central Zoo Authority of India, a body under the MoEF&CC, has initiated notable endeavours to improve the condition of captive elephants in zoos, comprising of both Asian elephants and African elephants. World Animal Protection appreciates the CZA directives and believes that the African elephants in Indian zoos, in Delhi and Mysore, should be accorded the best possible treatment.

Captive elephants are many times subjected to abuse by their owners. Several studies, including World Animal Protection reports, ‘Taken For A Ride,’ and ‘Elephants Not Commodities’, highlight captive elephant abuse comprehensively.

World Animal Protection believes that the tourism industry is in a unique position to reset the current status quo and restart tourism the right way. The elephants could be retired to genuine sanctuaries which also offer tourism opportunities for ethical travellers.



Across Asia, there are over 3,800 captive elephants exploited for tourist entertainment in 357 camps. Thailand is home to three quarters of these elephants and has seen a 70% increase in their number in just 10 years, according to WAP report, 'Elephants, Not commodities.' The study compares research into elephant tourism which spans a decade, assessing venues across Thailand, India, Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. The findings reveal that 2,390 (63%) elephants are subjected to minimal welfare standards at 208 venues across the countries studied, and of those just 279 (7%) elephants are kept in high-welfare venues.

India is home to the second highest number of elephants used in tourism, and of the 21 venues housing 509 elephants, our research found 45% (225) of the elephants kept in captivity requires better welfare and management standards. Whilst highlighting attention on the plight of captive elephants, World Animal Protection also remains mindful of the plight of wild elephants and especially those in conflict situations. The motto of World Animal Protection is 'wildlife belongs in the wild.'

Anecdotes from the Elephant Man of Assam

Padmashree Dr. K. K. Sarma



In an interactive session following a conservation lecture in a school, a little girl asked me a question, “Sir, elephants neither give us milk nor are they used for ploughing our fields; instead they damage our paddy in the fields, destroy properties and even kill people, why then should we protect or conserve them?”

Amazed by the little girl’s inquisitiveness, I tried to reason with her the very essence and need to save the megaherbivore. Elephants are among a few remaining species of animals on earth that were original inhabitants of this planet. They came much before humans and ethically, have the priority claim on it. But that is just a moral reason; there are many more important reasons which are actually for our own benefit, our own survival. Elephants represent a green earth; they also ensure survival of the greeneries and ensure supply of water for all of us. During the dry season, elephants use their legs and tusks to dig for water. This not only allows the elephants to survive in dry environments and when droughts strike, but also provide water for other animals that share harsh habitats. Elephants are thus the keystone species, playing an important role in maintaining the biodiversity of the ecosystems.

When elephants in forests forage, they create gaps in the vegetation. These gaps allow sun rays to reach the bottom of the forests, creating an ambience for the growth of new plants and create pathways for other smaller animals.

A friend from the royal family in Thailand, who works for rehabilitation of captive elephants “Back to the Wild” once,

narrated a small but significant anecdote from his own life. Once his young granddaughter saw an elephant drop a pile of faecal boli on a road in the city of Bangkok while it was being walked. The girl asked her grandpa, as to why the elephants like to pooh on the road! Not knowing how to respond to the innocent question, the grandfather replied, “Because they wish a forest here, as it used to be before, prior to the people turning them into a city” and how true that was! Elephants are known to be the engineers of forest through seed dispersal. Some tree species rely almost entirely upon elephants for seed propagation.

Scientists have observed an interesting phenomenon in elephants that they do not suffer from cancers. Years of serious quest in this has led the scientists to belief that the P53 gene in elephant has the code for cancer prevention, in fact they have already identified an anti leukaemic (blood cancer) factor in this, raising the hope that the day is not far before we find an answer to cancer in the elephant. Is it not an important reason why we should conserve the elephants?

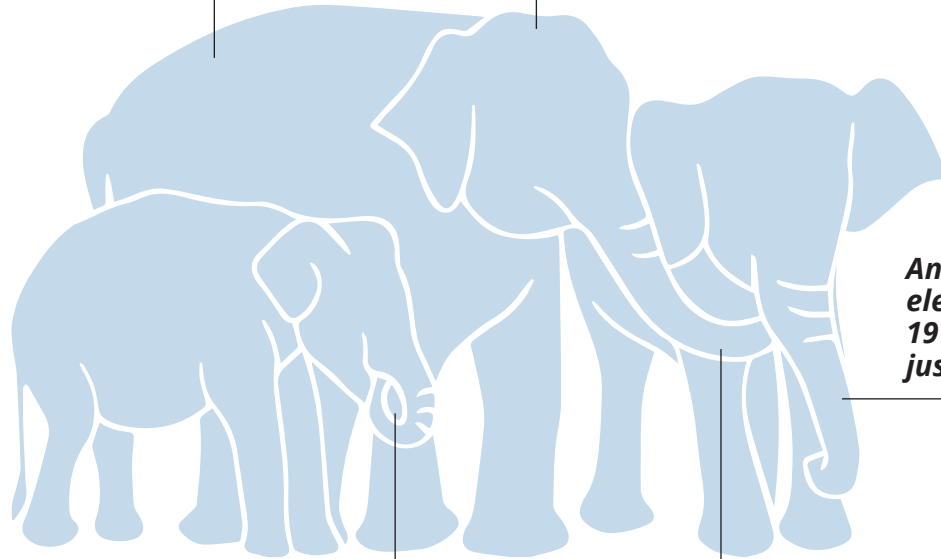
Elephants are among the most intelligent of the creatures with complex consciousnesses that are capable of strong emotions. Across Asia and Africa, elephants have strong cultural significance and are revered by the people that share the landscape with them. Also as icons of these continents, elephants attract tourism that has generated revenues used in protection of wilderness areas.

I urge everyone to come and join hands for conservation of elephants for securing a healthy planet!

Facts on Elephants

Indian elephants weigh between 6,000 and 8,000 pounds as an adult, measuring between 18 and 21 feet in length. This length includes their body, head, and trunk. Even a baby is fairly large, measuring weighing up to several hundred pounds as well.

Mothers have the help of other females in their herd to raise their calves. These helpful females are referred to as aunts, and the fathers play a less significant role.



An Indian elephant spends 19 hours a day just eating.

The trunk of an elephant contains no bones. Though it includes both the upper lip and the nose, the entire trunk is made up of 40,000 muscles, which is about 62 times the number of muscles in the entire human body.

During the hot months, an they can drink up to 200 litres of water per day. This heavy drinking suggests that the mammal can drink their weight in water almost three times a month

Conservation News

Investigation of death of elephants in Tamil Nadu

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) is one of the major elephant habitats in the Southern India, which holds around 900 wild elephants. It has an area of 321.00 Sq.km. under the two divisions, Masinagudi and Mudumalai Division. Unfortunately a disturbing video recorded on a mobile phone of people hurling a burning cloth on a 50 year old tusker in the Tiger Reserve surfaced in the social media leading to the death of the elephant. Responding immediately Project Elephant Division, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change visited Mavanallah village, Singara Range, Masinagudi Division from 23.01.2021 to 26.01.2021. Meeting was held with Collector, Nilgiri District regarding the death of elephant and was requested to take necessary step to close illegal homes stay, control the cattle population and regulate the loud speakers which results in disturbance to animals. Ministry has proposed both short and long term human – elephant conflict mitigation measures to manage human – elephant interface in the area.



Investigation of death of elephants in Odisha

In the wake of sudden death of seven elephants in Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary, Kalahandi South Division in Odisha from 1st to 14th February, 2021, a Central Investigation Team constituted by the Project Elephant Division, MoEF&CC visited Odisha between 18th to 22nd February, 2021. Investigation of the site revealed the death of the elephants to have been caused due to Haemorrhagic Septicemia, caused by *Pasteurella multocida*. Ring vaccination against available susceptible hosts i.e., cattle, sheep and goat against HS was conducted by the Animal Husbandry Department in villages and around the sanctuary.



For sensitizing the field veterinarians and the ground staff on types of infectious diseases prevalent in elephants, appropriate strategies that need to be adopted to prevent the spread of the disease and the laboratory facilities available to conduct the investigative disease need to be further strengthened, MoEF&CC has constituted a Technical Committee to develop a Technical guide to prevent spread of infectious diseases which shall serve as base reference for the Forest Veterinarians to refer to in field conditions.





