

Getting along with Elephants, HECx: Educator Training in Human Elephant Coexistence in Thailand

R. Marimuthu¹ and B.A. Daniel²

Zoo Outreach Organisation (ZOO) in collaboration with Elephant Conservation Network (ECN) organized a series of three "Getting along with Elephants" training workshops in Thailand. This was ZOO's seventh series of workshops and the previous workshops were held in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia and Nepal. Totally 20 HECx workshops have been organized and 597 people were trained.

The workshops were held at The Pavilion, Rim Kwai Resort, Kanchanaburi, Thailand from 15-24 August 2011. ECN selected participants representing all sectors of the community. Ninety persons (90) participated from 35 different institutions. They all live near villages of Chaloeem Rattanakosin National Park, Erawan National Park, Kui Buri National Park, Sai Yok National Park and Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary, which are major human elephant conflict areas. They were community leaders & members, teachers, other school staff and management, farmers, forest/wildlife department staff, NGO representatives, education officials, Sub-district Associate Organisation officers, university students, village head and its staff, women community leaders and volunteers.

US Fish and Wildlife Service under the Asian Elephant Conservation Fund chiefly funded the workshop and other sponsors were Columbus Zoo, USA and Koln Zoo, Germany. The local supporters were Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary, Regional Protected Area Administration Office (Baan Pong)-Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plants Conservation, Kanchanaburi Provincial Government and Provincial Education Office, Ministry of Education, Kanchanaburi.

The programme was attended by Ms. Sally Walker, Founder and Director of ZOO and Project Officer of this workshop series, Ms. Belinda Stewart-Cox, Founder and Executive Director of ECN, Mr. Oeb Cheongsaard, Wildlife Director, Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation-Regional Protected Area Administration Office, Ban Pong Region and Mr. Khanchit Srinoppawan, Chief of Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary.

Dr. Mattana Srikajang, Senior Researcher, Wildlife Research Division of Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation gave a



Understanding elephants past and present distribution through a map activity



A participant explaining his illustrations on elephant history

presentation in all three workshops on "Asian Elephants-Habitat and Conservation scenarios in Thailand". Dr. B.A. Daniel and R. Marimuthu of Zoo Outreach Organisation and Ms. Jittin Ritthirat of ECN were the major trainers and few of ECN staff were intern trainees. Ms. Jittin had been invited to the Nepal HECx workshop in February 2009 as a participant and subsequently she became one of our intern trainees.

The main goals of the training are to bring about attitudinal and behavioral change for people afflicted by elephant visits. They are taught to avoid

confrontation and conflict and embrace peaceful coexistence between human and elephant. They learn to understand the cultural and ecological

importance and conservation issues associated with elephants in Thailand. Active learning techniques were used as they are very effective along with a range of education materials.

Education Materials

Teaching Guide: this is the primary tool kit used in the workshops. The training manual contains a variety of active learning modules or techniques to reach a wide range of ages and educational and social levels, including illiterate or non-English speaking persons. It was developed in English and translated into Thai.

¹Education Officer, ZOO, Coimbatore.
marimuthu@zooreach.org
²Scientist ZOO, Coimbatore.
badaniel@zooreach.org



A mini drama performance of rescuing elephants



Ele-kit education packet: individual "Ele-kits" are developed in both English and Thai. Some 100 packets are given to participants to take back and use for their own teaching to facilitate their organization of education programmes independently in their home place and to practice what they learned in training.

Drama & Finger puppet kits with guidelines of usage: A drama kit contains 17 masks of different characters to play mini dramas pertaining to elephant conflict issues and do's and don'ts in the elephant areas. Drama guidelines are given to help them create their own drama themes. Special finger puppets kit was also developed and given to participants for their own teaching programmes.

Activities

Assessment tools: there are several assessment or evaluation tools in the manual, which are designed to help organizers/educators determine how much and whether participants learned.

Species information: factual differences between Asian and African elephants are covered as well as more details of Asian elephants which enable people to better understand their behaviour.

Mini-drama: help participants understand the complexities of human and elephant behaviour in the context of HEC/HECx.

Country Chapter: a general overview of important elephant habitats is included in the manual to reinforce this a lecture was given by a local elephant expert.

Learning to Live with Giants-HECx: A Power Point presentation takes participants through a logical train of thought about HEC, encouraging them

to think in new ways and establish priorities. They are challenged to decide what is more important, a sugar cane crop or their life or life of their family. The obvious truth is that you must be careful with your life and person. Only if you are alive and whole, you can replant a crop and rebuild a house. This simple truth eludes villagers who often disobey simple common sense. Many deaths are due to unnecessary careless action; this has been documented. Our programme attempts to teach people not to take risks with their lives.

List of MANY "Ele Do's and Ele Don'ts" learned from people living in HEC areas in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Indonesia are included in the Power point presentation as well as in the manual.

Many other activities are carried out some of which include using Elephant Characteristics, Mapping ranges of elephants, History of Asian elephants,

Role playing, understanding different tolerance levels, presentation by guest expert, various energizers involving the theme, role-playing exercise to unravel conflict issues, make believe conference on protection and management of HEC affected areas in Thailand, tips for planning an education programme, a personal commitment, and a post assessment.

Follow-up: Refresher Course

A refresher course will be organized for the selected participants within six months of the training. The main objectives of the refresher course will be: to understand the effectiveness of the HECx training programme towards changing the behaviour and attitude of the people who live in HEC areas; to evaluate the educators through questionnaire to understand the utilization of the training; to know their education activities on HECx; to teach additional active teaching/learning tools.



Ms. Sally Walker distributing certificates and Ele-kit packets