

Indonesian Mahout Workshop - Forum Komunikasi Mahout Sumatera, Indonesia

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The 6th Indonesian Mahout Workshop hosted by FOKMAS (Indonesian Mahout Communication Forum) was held November 26-29, 2013, in Sumatra at the Tangkahan Conservation Response Unit (CRU) elephant camp, located on the border of the Gunung Leuser National Park.

The Mahout Workshops were initiated in 2006 at a government forest elephant camp in Sumatra to provide a better opportunity for mahouts to share information, strengthen their professionalism, and influence elephant conservation in Indonesia more effectively.

The Sixth Indonesian Mahout Workshop was attended by 62 participants. All of the Sumatran government forest elephant camps (ECC or Elephant Conservation Centers) and elephant patrol units in Sumatra were represented. Additionally several zoos and safari parks from Sumatra, Java, and Bali sent mahouts. The majority of participants were mahouts, but some camp and private facility managers also attended.

The Mahout Workshop is recognized by the Indonesian government conservation agencies and was opened by the head of the Gunung Leuseur National Park, Pak Andi Basrul.



Mahouts participate in a demonstration of proper elephant foot care during the Mahout workshop.



Vet Dr. Stremme shows mahouts measurements taken to calculate body weight

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Additionally the Director of Biodiversity for the Indonesian central government conservation. Several NGOs offered workshop support, instruction, and teaching materials to FOKMAS to provide this professional training opportunity for mahouts. Issues discussed during the workshop included problems mahouts encounter in their elephant work and habitat conservation efforts, finding solutions to improve the care and management of Indonesia's wild and captive elephants, and means to create an information network with colleagues through Asia.

Presentations addressed captive elephant care and management, as well as information from some of the patrol units in Sumatra provided by the head of FOKMAS, Pak Nazaruddin. Indonesian mahouts are interested to hear from colleagues in other regions and for this workshop FOKMAS invited a representative from the

Elephant Conservation Center in Lao PDR, established by NGO Elefant Asia. Center Manager, Sounthone Phitsamone, spoke about the facility.

In addition to the presentations there were practical sessions such as training in field navigation using maps and GPS units. This training was conducted by the CRU Tangkahan team leader Edy Sunardi and divided into two parts: theoretical background and hands-on practice in locations within the Tangkahan area. All mahouts were instructed about various skills to deal with wildlife monitoring and illegal activities such as data collection and recording, GPS instruction, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation techniques.

Practical demonstrations also addressed the need to train elephants for medical procedures. These demonstrations were conducted by a veterinarian, Dr.

Christopher Stremme from the Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation, and included weighing elephants (using body measurements and confirming with a scale), foot care, and using ultrasound to assess internal organs. All of the 8 Tangkahan CRU elephants (1:7) were used for demonstrations. For mahouts these sessions underscore the importance of health, welfare, and medical care for their animal partners as they are integral components of the patrol units. In addition, this information is applicable in the mahouts' monitoring of wild elephants and in the rescue of injured wild elephants.



Participants at the Sixth Indonesian Mahout Workshop with Pak Bambang Novi, Director of Biodiversity Conservation for the Indonesian government.