

## News Briefs

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### **1. Assam expert team to visit Bangladesh to bring back the elephant washed away by the Brahmaputra (India)**

*Times of India - 20.7.2016*

Assam forest department has constituted a three-member experts team to bring back a wild elephant which was washed away by the Brahmaputra last month and reached a sandbar in Bangladesh's Kurigram district. Kurigram is the nearest district in Bangladesh from Dhubri in Assam. Till last week, information from Bangladesh said, the elephant was found on sandbars in Chikajani union in Jamalpur district, after the female elephant swam through Brahmaputra (known as Jamuna in Bangladesh) from Kurigram's Chilmari sub-divisional area.

District forest officials in Bangladesh, who are in touch with their Assam counterparts, have also informed that the elephant became weak and significantly stressed as locals drove the jumbo away from their cropland on the sandbars. "Bangladesh has already informed us about the presence of our elephant in that country. We are waiting for the permission from the state government for the expert team to travel to Bangladesh and bring the elephant back," Assam principal chief conservator of forest (wildlife) Bikash Brahma said.

Brahma said that the ministry of environment, forest and climate change's project elephant has also been informed after the elephant from the state crossed over to Bangladesh. Elephant expert and veterinarian, K. K. Sarma, who is also part of the three-member expert team, said that it would be one of the most challenging wildlife rescue operations.

### **3. Snared elephant dies of wounds in Cambodia**

*Gulf Today - 25.7.2016*

An endangered Asian elephant died in eastern Cambodia after sustaining a severe foot wound caused by a snare trap, officials said on Monday. "The young male-elephant died on Sunday, a day after he was rescued from the gory snare in the jungle," Xinhua news agency quoted Sin Vannavuth, Governor of Mondolkiri province's Keo Seima district, as saying.

The elephant was trapped inside the Keo Seima Wildlife Sanctuary for days before he was found by locals, he said. "The elephant died of serious injury on his front, left foot and no food and water when he had been in trap for days," the governor said. He said that hunters set snare traps with aims to kill smaller wild animals, but unfortunately caught the wild Asian elephant.

Cambodia is home to over 500 wild elephants, according to the Forestry Administration.

### **3. Human-elephant conflict threatens wild elephant population (Myanmar)**

*The Irrawaddy - 15.7.2016*

Dr. Myo Min Aung, veterinarian and head of the Myanmar Timber Enterprise's (MTE) Emergency Elephant Response Unit in Irrawaddy Division, says Burma is home to 4000-5000 wild Asian elephants and has the world's largest captive elephant population with nearly 5000, according to the UK-based EleAid Asian Elephant Conservation. The country's wild elephant population has been in dramatic decline throughout the past few decades, due to loss

of habitat and illegal poaching and trading of elephant body parts, EleAid said.

Human-elephant conflicts happen when wild elephants come close to villages where there could be paddy fields, in search of food because of the loss of their original habitat he added. "When wild elephants come close to humans, people shoo them away or capture them," he said. "Our plan is to find ways that could minimize harm for both parties, in areas where the possibility of frequent conflict between the two sides exists." He explained that the conflict will not cease completely. But when working toward conservation efforts, people who live in communities near elephant habitats need to be educated in order to adapt their behaviors during such conflicts, he added.

Burma started designing the Myanmar Elephant Conservation Action Plan (MECAP) last year in coordination with international environmental conservation groups and the draft is almost complete, according to WWF-Myanmar.

It is necessary to implement effective control of illegal hunting and limit access to forests in order to reduce conflicts, said Khin Maung Win, chairman of Save Elephant Foundation-Myanmar. Under Burma's wildlife and natural area protection laws, violators can face imprisonment from three to seven years.

#### **4. In a first, train pilot booked after speeding train kills elephant (India)**

*Times of India - 30.7.2016*

For the first time in Coimbatore forest division, forest officials have registered a case against a loco pilot under the Wild Life Protection Act 1972 on Friday for killing a wild elephant by a speeding train near Navakkarai here. A female elephant aged about 15 years, tried to cross the railway track near Puthuppathi area, at 5:50 am on Friday. The West Coast express, heading towards Chennai from Mangalore, hit the female elephant that sustained severe injuries on its ribs and back. The animal was found dead 20 feet away from the railway track. After the train hit

the animal, the loco pilot informed officials at the Palakkad railway division.

I Anwardeen, conservator of forests, Coimbatore circle, A Periyasamy, district forest officer (in charge), Coimbatore forest division and other officials rushed to the spot. Forest department officials alleged that railway authorities had not taken any steps to reduce speed limits between Walayar and Madukkarai section. "The railway authorities have installed sign boards indicating elephant movement areas near the tracks between Madukkarai and Walayar. The loco pilots were asked to blow horns while crossing the section. But most drivers don't follow the instructions.

Now, we have lost another female elephant," said Periyasamy. "Both Tamil Nadu and Kerala forest department had asked the railway authorities to operate the train at a speed of 30 km/h on the stretch between Madukkarai and Walayar. But the railway department has not made any attempt to reduce the speed limit," said conservator of forests, Anwardeen. "We have registered a case against the loco pilot under the wildlife protection act and further investigation is on," said DFO Periyasamy.

#### **5. De-worming drive for wild elephants commences (India)**

*Times of India - 3.8.2016*

The Forest Department has started a de-worming drive for wild elephants from last weekend. The drive has started in the Mettupalayam and Sirumugai Range with personnel placing salt licks and de-worming pellets near 19 water bodies where jumbos drink water regularly. Camera traps are used to monitor the elephants consuming the pellets. This is an initiative to prevent elephant deaths due to worms in the intestine. In the last 40 days the district lost seven elephants. While the cause of death varied, one of the factors was identified as ill health as a result of worms in the intestine. This was revealed in the post-mortem report of two elephants.

While salt licks build immunity, the de-worming pellets that are mixed with minor millets and

jaggery (a treat for elephants) wash away the worms from the intestine. Stating that it would be sufficient even if the elephants consumed a little quantity of the salt licks and de-worming pellets a couple of times, department personnel said that it will not harm the animal if the intake was more. Herbivores such as deer and bison are also directly benefited in the de-worming drive for elephants, as they too suffer from worms in the intestine and the mixture helps them. Stocks of salt licks and de-worming pellets are placed in a visible place near water sources and are replaced every day. They have been placed at 15 places in the forest in Mettupalayam range including seven natural water sources for wild animals and the rest are artificially created water sources.

#### **6. ‘Hurdling’ jumbo captured following five day operation (Sri Lanka)**

*Ceylon Daily News - 4.8.2016*

Wildlife officials yesterday succeeded in capturing the wild elephant, which stormed into Morantenna, Nildandahinna by jumping over the electric fence around the Victoria and Randenigala forest reserve, following an operation spanning nearly five days. The wild elephant had killed more than six villages and caused extensive damage to their harvest during the past several months.

People living in Morantenna, Theripehe and Kalanwatta who feared this wild elephant, were confined to their houses after dusk. N.M. Walahena, in charge of the electric fence told the Daily News that there are hundreds of wild elephants living in the forest reserve and they do not enter the villages as they fear the electric fence. “Only this wild elephant had got used to jump over the electric fence,” he said.

#### **7. Rare ‘saber-toothed’ elephant found in Sabah (Malaysia)**

*New Straits Times - 11.8.2016*

The Sabah Wildlife Department has made an unusual discovery - an elephant with turned down tusks, almost resembling that of a prehistoric

saber-toothed tiger. The department’s assistant director Dr. Sen Nathan said the team found the elephant while translocating a herd from Felda Umas in Tawau to a new area. “This is a rare find, but all elephants are unique on its own,” he said. The elephants will be released in an undisclosed protected forest. Bornean Pygmy elephants are listed as endangered species under the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources or IUCN.

Check out this link for a photo: < <http://www.nst.com.my/news/2016/08/164799/rare-saber-toothed-elephant-found-sabah>>

#### **8. Elephant preservation week launched in Quang Nam (Vietnam)**

*Vietnam Net Bridge - 3.8.2016*

A week on elephant protection was launched in Nong Son district, the central province of Quang Nam on August 3 with myriad activities. As part of a project to urgently conserve elephants and restrict ivory trading in Vietnam by 2020, the event will feature competitions and workshops that seek solutions to forest and elephant preservation, and ecotourism development in Nong Son.

The week, to run until August 5, aims to raise public awareness of elephant protection and help local authorities with economic development in forests and elephant-inhabited areas. Latest statistics show that Que Lam and Phuoc Ninh communes in Nong Son district are now home to four to six elephants.

Elephants have been listed in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. Vietnam has banned the trade in ivory since 1992.

#### **9. Four elephants killed by Sri Lankan train**

*Agence France-Presse - 17.8.2016*

A passenger train hit and killed an elephant and three calves in northern Sri Lanka on Wednesday, the latest deadly accident involving the venerated

animals. The herd was walking across a newly upgraded railway line that runs through a jungle area when the accident occurred at Cheddikulam, about 260 km north of Colombo. "One of the baby elephants was dragged about 300 m along the track after being hit," a local police official told AFP, adding that it was thought to be Sri Lanka's worst accident involving the animals. No passengers were injured in the collision.

Although elephants are considered sacred in Sri Lanka and are legally protected, nearly 200 are killed every year, many by farmers after the animals stray onto their land. Marauding elephants also claim the lives of about 50 people annually, mostly by trampling through villages built near their habitats. In 2011, three baby elephants were killed by a passenger train along the same track in a forest area about 150 kilometres north of Colombo. In May this year, four elephants including two calves were killed by lightning in the country's north.

#### **10. Solar fencing: Nepali villages relieved, but more tusker terror on Indian side**

*The Kathmandu Post - 4.8.2016*

The solar fencing erected last November from Jhiramale in Ilam district to Mechi River along the Nepal-India border has helped communities in Jhapa to keep the wild elephants at bay. But it has not bode well for those living on the other side of the border, with Indian villages complaining about the rise in tusker terror in recent months.

"No movement of wild tuskers from the Indian side into the villages in Nepal has been reported since the installation of the fence. This has significantly reduced the damage to crops and related human-elephant conflict during that period," said Bodh Raj Subedi, district forest officer, Jhapa.

The human-elephant conflict in Jhapa has been reported for almost four decades. During the initial days, the number of elephants entering the villages in Nepal was reported to be around 30 and 40 individuals, but the number exceeded 120 in the areas, according to locals.

"The herds enter Bahundangi at late evening for grazing and go back across the border into India before early morning," said Siddhartha Bajracharya, director at National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), the implementing agency of the project. "They enter as tourists, go on rampage causing damage to houses, crops and even injure or kill people. It had been Nepal's problem for almost four decades, but it has now shifted to India," he said.

Indian media reported last month that the West Bengal government raised serious objection over the erection of fence saying that it had blocked the natural movement of the elephants. The West Bengal government has written to the centre to raise this issue with the Nepal government. However, Nepali authorities claim, the fencing was put to shield away the tuskers that wander through the settlement areas, but not to break the corridor movement along the forests. "The elephants went on rampage, destroying crops for nutritious food. We have not blocked the traditional route," said Subedi. He further said that the Nepali authorities will discuss the transboundary issues with Indian counterparts to mitigate the problems related with human-elephant conflict.

More than 21 people lost their lives and 24 were injured in Jhapa in the last four years due to the conflict with elephants. The government has released Rs 7.5 million in the same period as compensation for the affected families from the elephant conflict.

#### **11. Seven jumbos die in mud pool (Sabah, Malaysia)**

*Daily Express - 15.9.2016*

Seven pygmy elephants died after being stuck inside an abandoned quarry pit for over a week near a timber camp in Rinukut, Tawau. The seven elephants were part of a herd of nine, which could not come out of the nine to eleven foot deep mud pool. Wildlife rangers were only able to rescue two of the elephants as five were already dead when they arrived and two others had to be put down.

Sabah Wildlife Department Director Augustine Tuuga said they received a report from an individual passing the route on Sept. 10 on nine elephants being unable to get out of a deep mud pool near Berkat Saga Timber Camp, there.

“Unfortunately when our team managed to reach the location, five (2 adult, 1 juvenile and 2 newborn) of the nine trapped elephants were already dead. “With the use of heavy machinery from the timber camp, two of the stronger adult elephants were pulled out to safety, and instantly, ran back into the forest,” he said. Tuuga pointed out two others had to be euthanised as they were too weak, dehydrated and blind. “The elephants probably went in the mud pool to cool themselves and bathe. “Unfortunately they probably underestimated the depth and thickness of the mud which could have caused them to become trapped inside the pit,” said Tuuga.

## **12. Helicopters and excavators help rescue elephants from reservoir (China)**

*CRIENLGLISH.com - 12.10.2016*

A southwest China reservoir became the site of a harrowing mission to save three wild Asian elephants that were trapped there for more than two days. The forestry department of Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan Province received a call at 10:40 am Monday, saying three elephants, two adults and a baby, were trapped in a reservoir in a nearby village. Staff from the department speculated that the baby elephant might have fallen into the reservoir, while the two adult elephants were trapped after trying to rescue the baby.

A dozen more wild elephants began to surround the reservoir, attempting to pull their companions out by the nose. After several failed attempts, they became agitated. Li said there are about 70 wild Asian elephants in the area. Villagers were organized immediately to observe the trapped elephants' vital signs and keep an eye on the elephants that had gathered at the scene.

Meanwhile, rescuers worked out three potential plans to save the elephants. The first would use

helicopters to lay a path of sandbags for the elephants to walk out of the reservoir. A second would use helicopters to chase away the elephants gathered on the bank, allowing rescuers to dig out a path from the side of the reservoir using excavators. If the helicopters could not be used, rescuers would have to drive away the elephant onlookers on foot to make way for excavators.

Amid the deafening sound of helicopters and firecrackers, excavators finished digging out a “life channel” from the side of the reservoir at 3:40 pm. Protected by the two adult elephants, the baby elephant finally walked out of the reservoir via the path.

## **13. Can drone technology save the Sumatran elephant?**

*Phys.org - 29.11.2016*

Fauna & Flora International has acquired two quadcopter drones to help reduce incidents of conflict between humans and wild elephants in Sumatra, Indonesia. The acquisition of two quadcopter drones is helping Fauna & Flora International's (FFI) Aceh team to monitor the location of Sumatran elephants in Aceh, Indonesia, and respond quickly when elephants are approaching community farms to minimise potential conflicts.

A quadcopter is a type of remotely controlled drone (unmanned aerial vehicle) that has four rotors each with its own motor and propeller. One of the main advantages of using drone technology is that it allows field staff to easily reach inaccessible areas. As well as monitoring elephants, FFI's Aceh team is also using the quadcopters to support forest patrols and produce detailed ground maps of community forest areas.

FFI has been working to protect both elephants and local communities in Ulu Masen since 1998 including establishing three Conservation Response Units in conflict hotspots. These teams help respond to calls from community members and drive elephants away from community farms. The use of new drone technology will allow FFI to build on these efforts and make the response



process more effective by monitoring where the elephants move to, to ensure they have not just transferred the problem to other community residences.

#### **14. Electronic fence installed to protect elephants (Vietnam)**

*Viet Nam News - 11.11.2016*

The Natural and Cultural Reserve in the Central Highlands Province of Dak Lak has completed building an electronic fence around the reserve campus to protect the habitat of elephants. Huynh Trung Luan, director of the reserve, said an electronic fence was set up within 14 days with the support of technical staff of Viet Nam-based Animals Asia. The electronic fence, with capacity of between 6.4 kW and 8.4 kW, will cover an area of some 6000 m<sup>2</sup> of the reserve, releasing the elephants from an iron leash and helping them integrate into nature.

The fence has a length of 1320 m, including five iron pillars and had four electronic lines, with 220 V power lines and two large capacity batteries backup, which could cause panic for the elephants but not threaten their lives. Luan said the electronic fence had been used effectively at many animal reserves around the world and would help the animals move freely and comfortably. Currently, there are two wild elephants in the reserve. In February 2014, a five-year-old male elephant was found trapped in a forest in the province. Its left foot was seriously injured and ivory was nearly fractured. The animal, named Jun, was treated and raised by the reserve.

#### **15. Sri Lanka bans use of young elephants for work**

*Agence France-Presse - 23.11.2016*

Sri Lanka unveiled tougher laws Wednesday, including a ban on using young elephants for logging and other physical work, as part of a crackdown on cruelty to domesticated wild animals. The cabinet approved new regulations imposing tough conditions on owners of elephants, which are considered sacred by

Buddhists in Sri Lanka. The animals are also legally protected but are often subjected to cruel treatment by some owners.

Under the new regulations seen by AFP, owners are banned from using working elephants below the age of 10 years while those under five years cannot be used in parades, even at religious festivals. There are 41 new conditions aimed at ensuring minimum standards of care, including the daily diet that should include fresh fruit in addition to leaves and vegetables.

The new laws come into force as the authorities investigate allegations that over 40 baby elephants had been stolen from national wildlife parks over the last decade and are being kept as pets. Asian elephant expert Jayantha Jayewardene said the new rules were welcome. "The regulations are a step in the right direction, but it will be difficult to enforce things like the quality and the quantity of food that should be given to each animal," Jayawardene told AFP.

Many rich Sri Lankans keep elephants as pets to show off their wealth, but there have been numerous complaints of ill treatment and cruelty.

#### **16. Kraal to train unruly wild elephant (India)**

*The Hindu - 18.11.2016*

After around two decades, the Forest and Wildlife Department is preparing to train a wild elephant at the Muthanga kraal under the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WSS). "The work on a temporary kraal at Muthanga, at a cost of Rs. 1.4 lakh, has been completed to train an unruly tusker which has been posing a serious threat to public at Kallur and Muthanga in the district," P. Dhaneshkumar, Warden, WSS, told The Hindu. The animal had attacked a farmer on Tuesday, following which Forest Minister K. Raju directed the officials to catch the elephant and shift it to the new kraal.

The kraal is constructed with eucalyptus wood under the supervision of experts from the adjacent Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) in Tamil Nadu. The department has also asked the MTR authorities to provide the services of

trained mahouts and 'kumki' (trained) elephants to train the newcomer.

When the animal started to create panic among villagers in the area two years ago, the Forest personnel attached a radio collar on it but, it got lost apparently in a fight between elephants, he said. They tranquilised the elephant and attached a new radio collar a few weeks ago. Later, the officials tried to drive it back to forest with the help of 'kumki' (trained) elephants, but in vain.

"We are planning to shift the animal to the kraal after capturing it by applying tranquiliser dart," says Arun Zachariah, a veterinary expert leading the tracking operation. A similar operation was carried out at Muthanga in 1994 to shift an unruly elephant to the kraal, but it was a failure.

### **17. Three wild elephants fall into pit at Herbal & Food Park (India)**

*Press Trust of India - 23.11.2016*

Three wild elephants, including one calf, have been injured after they fell into a pit dug at the construction site of a Herbal and Food Park in Assam's Sonitpur district today. A calf came out of a herd and ran towards the construction site with the mother and another male elephant rushing after it when they fell into the pit dug for laying the foundation of a building.

The male elephant managed to come out while the calf was rescued by forest employees and translocated to Kaziranga National Park after being provided treatment. The mother elephant is still stuck in the pit with veterinarians attending to it. "The vets suspect that one of the rear legs of the elephant may be fractured and her condition is being closely monitored," Barooah said.

The forest department has made adequate arrangement for continuing treatment during the night by installing floodlight and providing other facilities, he added. "Our people along with the forest department personnel regularly guard the site against elephant depredation during the night and the herd was not there for the last couple of days but suddenly appeared near the site this

morning," park coordinator and spokesman Uday Goswami said.

### **18. Captive elephants help save wild cousins on forest frontline (Indonesia)**

*Agence France-Presse - 7.12.2016*

It was the middle of the night when the villagers sounded the alarm: a huge Sumatran elephant was raiding their rice fields, and they needed urgent help to drive it back to the forest. Dodot – a veteran Indonesian elephant keeper trained to handle such emergencies – rushed to the scene. "It was the king," Dodot said of the hungry bull male that had strayed from the forest in southeast Sumatra in search of food. "He's not afraid of humans, or weapons. He owns the territory." It was the third such intrusion in a month.

Confrontations between elephants and humans can quickly turn violent in Sumatra, where competition for space has intensified as the island's forests have been rapidly cleared for timber and farming. Nearly 70% of the Sumatran elephants habitat has been destroyed in a single generation, says conservation group WWF, driving them into ever-closer contact with humans. Villagers have been trampled and killed by stampeding herds, but it's the elephants that have suffered most as their habitats have shrunk.

In 25 years, half of Sumatra's wild elephants have been wiped out. The species was upgraded to critically endangered in 2012, with experts blaming the twin drivers of deforestation and conflict with humans. Ivory poachers have long hunted bulls for their tusks but many elephants are killed simply for trespassing on land.

### **19. Bangladesh-India agreement on 'elephant corridor' soon (Bangladesh)**

*Dhaka Tribune - 14.12.2016*

A border fence erected by India has been blocking the elephants' natural routes, triggering deadly confrontations as the animals often veer into human settlements. Bangladesh and India are in the final stages of an agreement to

allow wild elephant's free passage through their shared border, in a move aimed at reducing fatal confrontations between the animals and humans.

Seven cross-border routes used by elephants have been identified in the Indian states of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram. "Elephants will not harm anyone if they are left alone." At least 226 people and 62 elephants have been killed in such conflicts in the country in the last 13 years.

On January 26, the New Indian Express reported that the Indian home ministry had agreed to sign an agreement with Bangladesh to open the borders to form a cross-border natural elephant corridor, after receiving the approval of the forestry department. In Bangladesh, the forestry ministry then contacted the Home Ministry for collaboration with the law enforcement agencies, especially the Border Guard Bangladesh, regarding the corridor.

## **20. Vietnam launches last ditch effort to save its wild elephants**

*VnExpress International - 14.12.2016*

The giant mammals will disappear from the country forever unless poaching is stopped and their habitat is preserved. International conservationists and Vietnamese forest management officials on Wednesday kicked off an urgent action plan to protect the country's last wild elephants that involves better monitoring and law enforcement. Around 60 elephants in Yok Don National Park, some of the last left in the wild in Vietnam, face constant threats from poaching and deforestation.

The Central Highlands is home to around 70% of Vietnam's wild elephants. This big herd is the last chance of saving the animals in a country that has repeatedly failed to implement a ban on the trade of ivory and other elephant parts. According to figures from the Vietnam Forestry Administration, the country's wild elephant population has shrunk by 95% since 1975. At least 23 wild elephants have died over the past seven years, and nearly 75% of them were less than a year old.

One of the biggest threats to the elephants is the sale of souvenirs made from elephant parts that are available all over Dak Lak and at Buon Me Thuot Airport, just 40 km from the park. The items are believed to bring good luck or act as a status symbol.

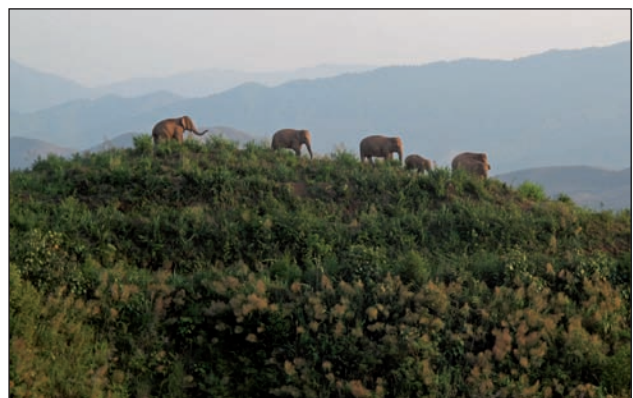
"The action plan is the last chance to save Vietnam's wild elephants," Thinh said. "Or they will end up like the Javan rhino which became extinct in 2010, or the tigers that have shown no signs of reproduction in the wild in recent years."

## **21. Anthrax major reason for jumbo's death: forest officials (India)**

*Press Trust of India - 24.12.2016*

A tusker found dead in the Madukkarai Forest range was suffering from Anthrax besides having serious injuries on its back as per the post-mortem done on the carcass, officials said Saturday. The post-mortem carried out by veterinarian Manoharan revealed that the 20-year-old pachyderm was suffering from Anthrax, which was the major reason for its death, forest department officials said. It was found dead near a dry stream in Madukkarai Forest range yesterday, they said.

The jumbo had also serious injuries on its back due to a fight with other elephants a few days ago, officials said, adding, the skin and intestine was affected by Anthrax, an infection caused by bacteria. Efforts are on to sanitise the area and also administer preventive injection to cattle in the surrounding areas, they said.



Elephants in Jiangcheng County, Pu'er City, Yunnan, China (Photo by Patrick Giraudoux)