

Notes from the Chair IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group

Vivek Menon

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Dear members

This has been a particularly exciting few months for me and the AsESG. First, I have had the opportunity of representing all of you at the Asian Elephant Range States Meeting at Jakarta, Indonesia coordinated by the Indonesian government and our very active members Dr. Wahdi Azmi and Ms. Heidi Riddle. Mr. Ajay Desai and Dr. Simon Hedges also attended from the membership. We had very fruitful discussions and the Jakarta Declaration that you will see in this issue is the product of this conference.

When range countries come together and make unanimous statements, the future of the elephant is at least to that measure safer, one would presume. I followed that up by going with our new Programme Manager Dr. Sandeep Kr Tiwari to two ranges of the elephant in Sumatra and Sabah, Borneo. While I saw some very fine forests left in Gunung Leuser and Way Kambas in Sumatra and Kinabatangan in Sabah, the elephant itself seems to be on the decline and alarmingly so in Sumatra. Coupled with my previous visit to Vietnam I can only surmise that Sumatra and Vietnam are possibly two of our more endangered elephant populations.

I was fortunate to meet most of the members of Indonesia and Malaysia (this included meetings in Jakarta as well as in Kuala Lumpur) and also in Thailand on the way back home. I must thank all the members including Sen Nathan, Benoit Goossens, Marc Ancrenaz, Heidi Riddle, Wahidi Azmi, Salman Sabaan, Chatchote Thitaram, Mattana Srikrachang and Wayuphong Jitvijak “Aek” for making the meetings a grand success. Special thanks to non-members Rudi Putra (Sumatra), Nurzhafarina Othman (Sabah) and John Edwards (Thailand) for local hospitality.

If there is one thing I was wiser to after the tour was that Bornean elephants are not dwarfs by any means and not that safe either as people have postulated. Farina, Sandeep and I were mock charged at rather close distance by a makhna that demolished that hypothesis rather effectively!

I am happy that since my last writing to you some progress is there also in the formation of working groups as well as in the appointment of a Red List Coordinator. Dr. Christy Williams is now our Red List Coordinator for the group. I wish him all the best in that important task.



Elephant Range States Meeting in Jakarta, April 18-20, 2017 (Photo by REGAIN -KLHK).



Elephants in Sabah (Photo by Sandeep Kr Tiwari).

Following working groups have also been set up during this period:

1. Sumatra Elephant Conservation Action Plan
2. Arresting the decline of elephant population of Vietnam
3. Sabah Elephant Conservation Action Plan
4. Developing guidelines for rehabilitation of captive elephants in the wild as a possible restocking option
5. Developing manual for the management and care of captive elephant in musth
6. Developing guideline for the welfare and use of elephants in Tourism
7. Developing guidelines for creating artificial water holes in elephant habitats
8. Human-elephant conflict guidelines
9. Communications
10. Mapping the distribution of Asian elephants
11. Involving AsESG members to strengthen MIKE patrol information

As a group, we have also submitted a report to the CITES Standing Committee for their 69th

meeting of the Standing Committee from 27th Nov to 1st December 2017 and held a consultation meeting for MIKE South Asia in India on 25th September 2017.

Finally while the Sri Lanka meeting is still not confirmed, I am pleased to announce that we will meet from 25th to 27th April 2018 followed by a two day field visit in Bangkok, Thailand and I would request all of you to keep your calendars free for this important second meet of the membership in this triennium.

Vivek Menon
Chair AsESG, IUCN SSC

Keep the dates

**Meeting of the IUCN SSC
Asian Elephant Specialist Group**

Bangkok, Thailand

25. – 27. April 2018