

## Notes from the Co-chairs IUCN/SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group

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Firstly, we would like to take this opportunity to thank Jayantha Jayewardene for his time and efforts as the new editor of *Gajah* and to thank the former editor, Charles Santiapillai, for his sterling efforts over the preceding years. We intend that *Gajah* will be published twice a year, in January and July. It will be published in both hard copy and electronic (PDF) versions available for download from the World Wide Web. The International Elephant Foundation, Singapore Zoo, and the US Fish & Wildlife Service have all indicated a willingness to fund *Gajah*. We encourage you all to submit articles for publication in *Gajah* as its success will depend on the willingness of the AsESG's members to publish in the journal.

Last year was characterized by the increasing participation of the group's members in AsESG activities, starting with the debate over the future of *Gajah* and continuing through the whole-group review of the IUCN Global Mammal Assessment (GMA) entry for the Asian Elephant and related preparations for an updated IUCN Red List entry for the species, and including the group-wide review of the proposed Elephant Rescue Centre for Project Elephant (in India). This last example is particularly heartening as it shows that Governments are willing to look to the AsESG for support and advice; this willingness was also evident during the Asian Elephant Range States' Meeting in Malaysia in January, which was facilitated by an IUCN/SSC team including the AsESG's two co-chairs.

In the latter part of 2006, the group also discussed the creation of AsESG Task Forces, and again it was heartening to see a diversity of views expressed. A final review of the various inputs is now in hand and by the time you read this the Task Forces should have been created and begun their work. An AsESG listserv/forum board was proposed by us but the membership thought that this was

unnecessary (citing low participation in other related listservs). Nevertheless, we feel that with time it may be useful to review that decision as members are increasingly drawn into the group's activities, particularly those of the Task Forces.

As co-chairs, we have endeavoured to make sure that group's members are made aware of the funding opportunities that are available for Asian Elephant conservation projects, and to inform members about people who wish to seek help from or work with the group – be it students, film makers, or other information seekers and potential collaborators. We would be grateful if members could continue to keep us informed of such opportunities so that we can circulate them to the wider group as appropriate.

Looking to the future, we hope to organize a Sumatran elephant conservation strategy workshop in 2007 and funds have been secured from WWF and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to that end. We are also looking at the possibility of holding an AsESG meeting in 2007 particularly if an opportunity to “piggy-back” on another meeting presents itself. Other activities that we hope will bear fruit in the near future include a “Human–elephant conflict in Asia” review publication, prepared by the AsESG and partners in Governments and NGOs, the purpose of which will be to provide a review of past Asian human–elephant conflict mitigation practices and a discussion of successes and failures. The US Fish & Wildlife Service has informed us that it would be happy to fund such a review. Another likely group project will be the creation of an Asian Elephant Database similar to the widely used African Elephant Database. Both the database and human–elephant conflict review ideas received governmental support at the Asian Elephant Range States' Meeting in 2006.

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Elephants in China  
Photos by IFAW

