

Tusker Times

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ElefantAsia
Protecting the Asian Elephant



Greetings to all you Elephant lovers. It's been some time between newsletters, not because the elephants are resting, but because there's simply too much going on in the Land of a Million Elephants! We hope you enjoy the latest edition of ElefantAsia's news from the field.

June 2010 Edition

Elephant Festival

It's been a while since the 2010 annual Elephant festival was held in February, but what a success it was. Located in the remote, picturesque village of Ban Viengkeo, this year's elephant festival was a smaller, more refined affair. 40 elephants attended the festival, all receiving a warm welcome and applause from the approximate 30,000 visitors. Travellers came from all over the globe: Singapore, Australia, France, Canada and the UK to name a few. Not a single visitor was disappointed by the villager's warm hospitality, a region steeped in ancient elephant culture for centuries. [Read more about the festival here](#), and start making your travel plans for the 2011 Elephant Festival in February!



Champassak field mission



The ElefantAsia [Mobile Veterinary Unit](#) made a recent visit to the domesticated elephants living in the southern Lao province of Champassak. With only an approximate 30 domesticated elephants residing in the entire area, ElefantAsia was fortunate to be able to visit 15 elephants in 3 days. We can report that most elephants in Champassak were in very good condition, with their owners extremely interested in receiving more assistance from the ElefantAsia team. Most mahouts expressed an interest in learning more about elephant reproductive techniques in order to keep tourism in the region ongoing once their ageing elephants retired. Medicine for de-worming was also highly sought, as the dry season in Laos

means elephants have access to less clean, fresh flowing water. ElefantAsia successfully treated and microchipped all elephants observed and will be back in July for training sessions with mahouts regarding elephant reproduction.

2010 Asian Elephant Symposium, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

In late May three ElefantAsia team members attended the *Asian Elephant Breeding and Health Management in South-East Asia Symposium*. This event was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Dr Bouchard and Ms Chanthvong from ElefantAsia's Mobile Veterinary Unit attended the week-long training sessions that included theoretical and practical workshops at the Thai Elephant Conservation Centre. This was a great



opportunity to meet and share experience with other veterinarians working with Asian elephants in other range states including Indonesia, Thailand, India, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka. Among other activities, our staff learned new strategies for heat detection in females and used ultrasound to check the reproductive tracts of male and female elephants. Both techniques can potentially be very useful in Laos where reproduction is a key issue for elephant conservation and ElefantAsia's priority!



At the conference, ElefantAsia Co-Founder Mr Duffillot gave the Symposium a presentation regarding ElefantAsia and the plight of domesticated elephants in Laos. Mr Duffillot's lecture included details of ElefantAsia's Baby Bonus, of which you can read more about here. Dr Bouchard and Ms Chanthavong presented a speech regarding the veterinary care of domesticated elephants in Laos. Both talks were highly regarded at the international symposium, with ElefantAsia staff the only representatives present from Laos. Attending the symposium, the team at ElefantAsia now have further ideas on how to improve our elephant reproductive strategies, make logging techniques in Laos more humane, and standardise the registration systems of elephant on a regional scale.

Births and deaths

Good news and bad news this month for domesticated elephants in Laos. Starting with a jumbo congratulations, a calf was born only weeks ago in Hongsa, north-west Laos. We are hearing reports that mother and baby are both doing well, although we are yet to know the gender of the calf.

Sadly a male elephant of approximately 40 years of age died this week in the Chompet District of Luang Prabang Province. With mobile phone reception tricky, and post-mortems very difficult to undertake, it is hard to gauge the cause of death. We do know that the elephant had a mouth abscess which lead to possible death from dehydration. Our hearts go out to the elephant owner, with this latest death reiterating ElefantAsia's needs to be out on the field and teaching mahouts first aid as much as possible. Please help us in giving elephant owners assistance by donating to ElefantAsia or by adopting an elephant and paying for its healthcare.

Musth alert!

On the 9th of June, the ElefantAsia vet team travelled to Hongsa to assist with controlling a male elephant. The elephant had recently come into musth and had broken free from his chain. The elephant was destroying crops and posing a threat to local villages. Tragically, the elephant had also killed a man who was attempting to bring it under control before the ElefantAsia vet team arrived.

The ElefantAsia Vet team was able to use a dart gun to sedate the elephant, which was then chained properly and tied in the forest in a place with plenty of shade and access to water. The elephant will remain safe in the forest until the musth period has ended.



Musth is a natural phenomenon seen in male elephants, caused by increased hormone levels. Musth usually occurs in elephants older than 18 years and lasts between 2 weeks - 2 months in the Lao context. Some elephants can become very aggressive at this time. Consequently, it is important that elephants in musth are chained up in the forest away from people and other elephants. ElefantAsia sees the use of a dart gun to control elephants in musth as a last resort.

Mahouts are encouraged to recognize signs of musth early and act quickly to securely chain elephants in an appropriate spot before they become too aggressive.

Illegal Wildlife Campaign in Laos



Did you know that globally the illegal wildlife trade is the third largest illegal trade after arms and drugs? Sadly Southeast Asia, including Laos, is a hotspot for illegal wildlife trade such as the trade in Asian elephant parts. ElefantAsia has been a major player in the latest campaign in Laos aimed at raising local awareness to combat illegal trade. This new organisation is a conglomerate of conservation and other kind-spirited organisations such as WWF, IUCN, WCS the World Bank and Green Discovery Laos. Find out more about the Campaign Against the Illegal Wildlife Trade in Lao by visiting <http://www.wildlifetrade Laos.org> or by

becoming a fan on the Facebook page "[Campaign Against Illegal Wildlife Trade in Laos.](#)"

Big Brother Mouse



Once again ElefantAsia has joined forces with Big Brother Mouse to go on an educational jungle journey throughout Laos. Big Brother Mouse is an INGO that distributes free books to schools and villages in areas of Laos that would otherwise go without. With ElefantAsia's assistance, books are delivered via elephant – a great way for kids to learn, read and get up-close and personal with a new jumbo friend. [Read about ElefantAsia's involvement with Big Brother Mouse at this link to our website.](#)

Vietnam Swans

After working hours are over, the staff at ElefantAsia all enjoy a bit of sport to wind down the week. If not playing, staff members are still keen on supporting local sporting teams and visiting teams from the South-East Asian region. Recently the Lao Elephants Australian Football League hosted the Vietnam Swans in a rough, tough game of footy. Not having a first aid kit, ElefantAsia stepped in and supplied an Elephant First Aid Kit to support the players and clean up their elephant-sized wounds. Read all about the game, and ElefantAsia's involvement at the [Vietnam Swans website.](#)

ElefantAsia's Ellie-Shirts

Feel like a change of wardrobe? [Check out the 4 latest ElefantAsia t-shirts for sale on our website.](#) At only €15 each, these shirts are beautifully designed, unique and locally made in Laos. Furthermore, with every purchase you're helping save an endangered species. With sales already proving popular, watch this space for further additions to our shirt collection. Until then, why not grab yourself one of these jumbo bargains?



Meet the team



Please all welcome the latest addition to the ElefantAsia Mobile Veterinary Unit team, Dr Emma Zalcman. Emma's an Australian-qualified veterinarian who will be working with ElefantAsia for the next 12 months. Developing a fascination for



elephants from a young age, Emma has now combined her love of Laos, elephants and veterinary qualifications to selflessly volunteer her time with us. An avid and professional runner in her spare time, Emma's fitness skills may just come in handy one day if faced with a not-so-happy elephant!

Don't forget to keep visiting the [ElefantAsia](#) website for regular updates on our projects and programs. Thank you for supporting ElefantAsia. Without your assistance the elephants of Laos would be facing a much worse future.