

Proposed Eastern Extension to Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary

Adding forest land to protect elephants and other endangered species



Based on a 2012 survey report



These five elephants belong to a family of sixteen individuals, four of them young calves, seen drinking at a pond on the east side of *Thung Salakpra* in 2010.

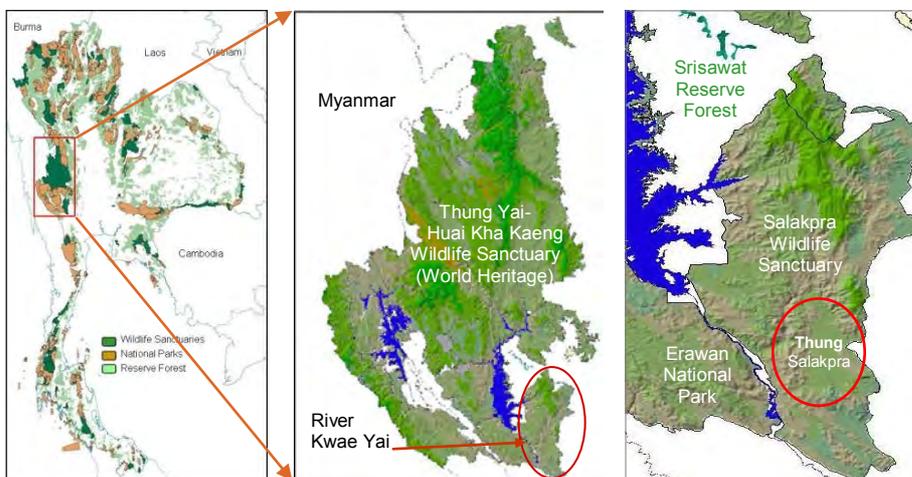
We urge the government to:

- Extend the southeast boundary of Salakpra to include all the unprotected forest habitat.
- Stop, and where possible reverse, all recent land clearance within 5kms of the Salakpra boundary.
- Improve protection and elephant monitoring in this area to reduce human-elephant conflict.



Salakpra: a past and future conservation gem

Salakpra was Thailand's first wildlife sanctuary. Created in 1965 at the same time as Khao Yai (the first national park), it was the pride of the country's newly established protected area system, famous for its elephants and other large mammals so close to Bangkok. Today Salakpra is home to around 200 elephants, a sub-population of the much larger number living in Huai Kha Khaeng, Thailand's most celebrated conservation area and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Salakpra fulfills an essential role as the southern dispersal zone for the wildlife of Huai Kha Khaeng, strengthening the long-term viability of this area's large mammal populations.



The present threat to Salakpra

Wildlife in Salakpra is extremely vulnerable because the sanctuary is narrow and has a long, exposed boundary that is easy to cross on foot, by motorcycle and, in some places, by truck. This makes exploitation easy and protection difficult. This is especially true on the eastern side of *Thung Salakpra*, the southern heartland of the sanctuary, where the natural boundary (the limestone ridge that delineates the outer edge of this lowland basin) is outside the sanctuary.

The land east of *Thung Salakpra* is controlled by the Army but is completely unprotected. At present, most of the area surveyed by the Elephant Conservation Network (ECN) is still forested (see maps overleaf). But settlers and land speculators are starting to clear the forest to claim the land as their own, planting cash-crops such as sugarcane and maize that are attractive to elephants. Now human-elephant conflict is increasing where, until recently, there was none. And in June 2012, a female elephant died slowly of septicemia caused by gunshot wounds all over her lower body.

We urge the government to extend the southeast boundary of Salakpra before it is too late in order to protect the heartland of the sanctuary.

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This forest land is critical wildlife habitat

From 2006-11, ECN monitored crop-raiding and other forms of human-elephant conflict within 5kms of the Salakpra boundary. In that 5-year period, crop-raiding east of the sanctuary increased from 0.3% to 43% of all recorded incidents (orange stars on map).

In 2011, ECN surveyed the land itself and found evidence that herds of elephants with very young calves regularly feed outside the eastern boundary of *Thung Salakpra* (map left, in the red-hatched zone). As female elephants rarely risk taking young calves into places that are unfamiliar and may be unsafe, this finding reveals not only that this forested land is part of the Salakpra elephants' traditional home range but also that human use of the area is recent. Once land is fully settled, only bull elephants risk going there often. Females fear for the safety of their calves.



Left: fresh elephant calf dung photographed by the ECN survey team in the forested habitat east of *Thung Salakpra*.

The natural character in the topography

Topographic maps of Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary reveal that *Thung Salakpra* is a lowland basin encircled by hills. This explains why it is the conservation heartland of the sanctuary and a core area for elephants and other large mammals. Level, well-watered land is the best habitat for herbivores and the carnivores that prey upon them. The unprotected zone hatched in red (above) is a critical area for elephants and has long been part of their traditional home range. The hilly zone hatched in purple is important for other threatened species such as serow (*Capricornis sumatraensis*) and pangolin (*Manis javanica*), both of which were seen during this survey. Thus the conservation integrity and effectiveness of Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary would be greatly improved if both zones were included in the conservation area so that this forest habitat and its wildlife can be protected in perpetuity.



Right: fresh prints of an elephant calf walking beside its mother beyond the eastern boundary of *Thung Salakpra*.

For more information

- The full report (2012) in English & Thai is available at: www.ecn-thailand.org

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