



The Elephant Conservation Network

Kanchanaburi, Thailand



The ECN Newsletter

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ECN Mission

To understand the causes and effects of human-elephant conflict and establish an inclusive and collaborative approach to seeking solutions and planning interventions



ECN is a small non-profit organisation which relies on grants and private donations to do its work. Any financial support you give will be gratefully received

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

By the time we got round to writing this, Jittin was not only a finalist for the prestigious Whitley Conservation Awards, she had **won** the Friends of Whitley Award! We are hugely proud of her. Not only has she won GBP30,000 to study the cattle issue in Salakpra (an issue in many protected areas) she has also raised the profile of ECN worldwide and gained valuable recognition for our work with villagers and rangers.

The week-long Whitley Award events in London rounded off a super busy dry season. This is when elephants raid crops and cattle ponds most often, when forest trees flower and fruit, and when farmers have no time to plan projects except at night. By mid-February it was already horribly hot, so our HEC, FORRU and SEECA teams started work early or finished late, retreating indoors by midday. After our March monthly meeting, when we share grilled chicken, sticky rice and spicy papaya salad, the heat prompted us to enjoy our ceiling fans while organising our reference library. It had been muddled for months. For a small NGO we have acquired a lot of books and papers! In labelled bookcases, they can be more useful to us and to others.

As ever, our heartfelt thanks to you all for your support, with special thanks this month to Whitley Fund for Nature, Keidanren and USFWS.

Belinda Stewart-Cox
ECN Director

1. Elephant visits our nursery

One night, when the monks could not activate the electric fence that borders the forest edge, a bull elephant broke through and visited our nursery in



Jittin Rithirat receiving her Whitley Award from HRH The Princess Royal, Princess Anne.

Kaeng Plakod village. Pushing over a section of bamboo fence, he stepped inside, walked between the blocks of saplings, peered into the germination hut - a light bamboo structure - saw nothing worth eating (we assume), backed out, turned around and left the way he had come in, flattening a few saplings as he pirouetted to leave. No other damage! Yet he could so easily have flattened everything. How polite is that! But villagers have now put a new electric fence around the plot to avoid tempting fate again.



2. Keidanren FORRU grant

We are thrilled that [Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund](#) will again fund our Forest Research Restoration Unit, a collaboration between ECN, Kaeng Plakod village and Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary, with training provided by the parent [FORRU unit of Chiang Mai University](#). This project now has two tree nurseries, a labelled phenology trail, and a fully-fledged research programme run by ECN and Kaeng Plakod villagers. The team is working feverishly hard to prepare enough saplings to plant out in June this year. Two more local villages are joining this forest restoration scheme



3. Phenology training

In the blistering heat of late March, J.F.Maxwell, senior plant taxonomist of FORRU-CMU, came for a week to give our forest restoration team (ECN staff and villagers) additional training in how to record phenology data and store tree specimens for the project reference collection. The team has been working flat out for two months because so many deciduous forest trees flower and fruit at this time of year. To deal with the heat, the team checked the phenology trail each morning, dividing the 120 trees into zones. Retreating to shade, they then did the paperwork for each specimen, and planted seeds into various soil formulae in labelled germination trays



4. New bird joins SEECA

Saravaree Namsupak, or Nok ('Bird') joined ECN to manage the Salakpra Elephant Ecosystem Conservation Alliance (SEECA) project funded by [USFWS](#). A trained tourist guide with a background in computer science, Nok adds valued skills to our team. So far, she has held 12 workshops (usually at night) to train SEECA groups from 8 villages to plan new non-forest livelihood projects so that they can seek funding themselves. She enjoys helping villagers develop sustainable jobs that do not rely on forest resources. "It's fun, it's really practical and I learn a lot too!" Four more villages have now asked to join this SEECA self-help scheme.



5. HECx training in Nepal

Jittin Ritthirat (ECN's community conservation coordinator) joined a USFWS-funded HECx (human-elephant coexistence) workshop run by Sally Walker of [Zoo Outreach](#) and Heidi Riddle of the [International Elephant Foundation](#). Using novel environment education techniques, ZOO tackles human-elephant conflict by teaching different ways of looking at the problem so it doesn't seem so hostile or unmanageable. Jittin came back bubbling with enthusiasm for this inspiring approach saying "we need this workshop in Thailand too!". So that's what we aim to do.



6. Mahidol MSc student visit

A group of students and lecturers from the [Environmental Science MSc](#) of Mahidol University spent two half-days with ECN to learn about our work with villagers & rangers reducing human-elephant conflict in Salakpra. They were an international bunch with students from Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal & Thailand, all countries with HEC problems. One evening,

they visited crop-raiding areas to see crop-protection measures *in situ* and meet affected farmers. Inside the forest, they also met rangers. The next day, Jittin gave a presentation and led a discussion on lessons learned for each of their countries.



7. USFWS field trip visits ECN

In February Dr Meenakshi Nagendran and Rebecca Callahan of US Fish & Wildlife came to learn about our work with Salakpra, its elephants and local communities, and meet some of the villagers and rangers we work with. Of course they also wanted to meet some of the elephants we help, but that was harder to arrange. The best we could do was to camp at the guard station inside the sanctuary so that at least they would see some elephant habitat, footprints and dung. But soon after our arrival, a tuskless bull strolled across the clearing less than 30m away and hung around for over an hour scuffing up soil from a mineral lick. So obliging of him!



8. Ricoh donates copier

When we decided that we ought to have our own colour copier to print A3 posters of our newsletter for distribution to the villages we work with, our first thought was to contact Julian Fryett, President of Ricoh Thailand. [Ricoth \(Thailand\) Ltd](#) has been a loyal supporter of our work since 2000 and, despite the turbulence of this troubling time, the company once again helped us out by giving us a superb quality colour copier that has so many functions it can almost do the layout and editing for us! 'Always a pleasure' was Julian's response to our grateful note of thanks. And it is. It really is.



9. British women help rangers

The [British Women's Group](#) (BWG) of Bangkok provided funds for ECN to buy backpacks, fly-sheets and army hammocks for the 8-man patrol team of Thung Salakpra, the sanctuary's interior guard station. Each ranger was given a set of gear by Mrs Jenny Beattie on behalf of BWG. The station chief, Mr Nui Maneenil, showed us the ropey old backbacks they would replace, held together with tape and string! No wonder they were so pleased with this donation! Before leaving Salakpra, Jenny was rewarded by the sight of a tusker spraying himself exuberantly with the muddy water of a stream pool nearby



10. Proud members of KIPA

ECN founders, Belinda Stewart-Cox and Jittin Ritthirat, are now members of the provincial Governor's KIPA-group (Kanchanaburi improvement promotion advisors). A great honour. So far we have been consulted over two key projects: restoring dignity and historical accuracy to the annual River Kwai Bridge Festival, and making Kanchanaburi town's oldest street a historic pedestrian walkway to help preserve its old buildings. In her free time, Jittin facilitated the street community planning meetings. In its first 10-days, resident vendors took six million baht (\$172,000) from the 3,000 visitors a day! The next challenge is to tackle rubbish.



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