

Darwin Initiative for the Survival of Species 3rd Half Year Report (31 October 2007)

Project Ref. No.	14-024
Project Title	Afro-Asian Elephant Community Conservation Network
Country(ies)	Thailand and Kenya
UK Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Partners	(1) Elephant Conservation Network: Kanchanaburi (Kanchanaburi, Thailand) (2) Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (Thailand)
Collaborator(s)	(3) Jumbo Travel (Kanchanaburi, Thailand)(4) MIKE Programme (Thailand) (4) Wildlife Conservation Society (Thailand) (5) DICE-WWF Transmara HEC Community Scout Programme (Kenya) (6) Fauna & Flora International HEC & Livelihoods Programme (UK) (7) Friends of Conservation (UK)
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Project website	currently part of ZSL site only (http://www.zsl.org/field-conservation/deserts-and-rangelands/asian-elephant-conservation-in-thailand)



1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (Apr to Sept) against agreed project timetable

Progress against agreed milestones for the 8th and 9th quarters:

- *Support admin:* year-end report prepared for DI and modified for Friends of Conservation and Cecil King Memorial Foundation. Much delayed, in part due to late receipt of drafts of key outputs (socio-economic & tourism studies) and huge task of editing them.
- *Info-gathering:* crop-raiding data collected by village monitors, with ECN staff, wherever and whenever incidents were reported. ECN is even more confident that they are being told of every incident. Data logged into database.
- *Info-gathering:* crop-protection trials, started in late March, were fully established in all HEC zones around Salakpra and checked daily by ECN's village-based staff. Data recorded on standardised forms and logged in weekly.
- *Info-gathering:* 2nd year set of forest surveys suspended pending review by Dr Simon Hedges, WCS Asian elephant coordinator (originally scheduled April 07, but postponed twice by Dr Hedges). Now planned for Jan 08). We have great difficulty finding a qualified replacement researcher to lead the forest surveys - BSC stepped in but cannot lead them full-time – so we have recruited a UK intern to work with an experienced but under-qualified local recruit.
- *Info-gathering:* final draft of ecotourism feasibility study submitted June 2007. Edited by BSC in UK, working with the author to add additional analysis, guidelines, diagrams, maps, photographs. Translated into Thai in October.
- *Info-gathering:* rough draft of outsourced socio-economic report submitted in June 2007 but with separate text and tables, no maps and incomplete introduction. Report edited, checked and augmented by Belinda and Jittin.
- *Info-gathering:* land-use maps prepared using aerial photographs and ground-truthing by ECN team and village monitors, with help from focus groups village by village. Key HEC villages in project area almost complete.
- *Info-sharing:* report from Dr Noah Sitati edited and maps / photographs added. Report translated into Thai to be shared with ECN's HEC field team.
- *Info-sharing:* paper submitted to Dr Matt Walpole (FFI) for inclusion in the proceedings he is editing of the Nairobi HEC workshop he organised for this project in late September 2006
- *Info-sharing:* community feedback workshops delayed until socio-economic/ tourism studies and land-use maps available for sharing. Five meetings scheduled for November when the planting and wild mushroom collecting seasons are over to facilitate attendance by more people.
- *Network development:* we have made good progress in working with local leaders (elected and appointed) and in developing community groups keen to undertake conservation and alternative livelihood projects, but they need help planning actual projects, and getting funding. No group will really evolve without a project to evolve around.

Activities not included in agreed timetable:

- *Capacity building:* following the planning visit to Thailand by Drs. Glyn Davis & Richard Kock, and their recognition of a chronic need for more staff to support Jittin & Belinda, ZSL agreed some additional budget and ECN recruited three more local project staff (one of whom speaks & writes English) and a UK intern to help with forest surveys.
- *Media coverage:* two illustrated op-ed features about project activities and key findings written by Jittin Ritthirath for two leading Thai newspapers, Matchon and Krungthep Thurakit, plus a half-page illustrated profile of Belinda and ECN in the In-Sight section of the Bangkok Post.
- *Info-sharing & network development:* to raise the profile of ECN and publicise its work, Belinda and Jittin actively engaged in three international conferences, preparing posters for the second two (i) Poverty Reduction and Forests - Tenure, Market and Policy Reforms, organised by the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (ii) managing the Health & Reproduction of Elephant Populations in Asia organised by Kasetsart University Vets (iii) The Future of Forests in Asia-Pacific, organised by FAO
- *PR/communication:* hosted a field visit from the director of the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) and his team who spent two days with us learning about the project and visiting key sites. It is normal for NRCT to visit approved projects, but unusual for the director himself to come or for the visit to last 2 days. ECN was selected because it focuses on HEC which is recognised as a growing issue and a priority conservation problem.
- *Info-sharing:* all ECN's reports are produced in Thai and English so they can be shared with staff and collaborators as well as with donors. These include: 2 community feedback meetings, 2 study trips (Kenya & Kuiburi), 6-month reports to DNP and NRCT, training reports from Dr Noah Sitati on crop protection trials and Dr Susan Canney on GIS/data management, the ecotourism feasibility study and socio-economic survey. Thai translations are done by Jittin and, now, Nattaya because it takes almost as long correcting the inaccuracies of outside translators.
- *Collaboration:* BSC took the ECN team that will work on the next forest survey to meet their counterparts at WCS Thailand to learn about the survey methods, field logistics and GIS outputs used by WCS in Kaeng Krachan NP.
- *Collaboration/outreach:* the ECN community co-ordinator continues to serve as a member of Mahidol University's National Environmental Education Curriculum Development Project team working with schools in our project area.

Milestones not yet fully reached:

- *Community conservation groups:* still in process, with three groups formed and others interested, but they cannot really develop until they have a project plan (and some seed funding) to implement. We will discuss projects, and help generate some funds, after the next community feedback meetings.
- *Forest surveys:* we completed one 3-season set of forest surveys in the 3 target zones, but the lack of a survey leader and some doubt over the usefulness of continuing with that approach, prompted us to postpone the next survey pending a review by the WCS Asian elephant coordinator (with whom we have had some discussions)

- *ECN website*: an intern will start in Jan 2008 to help develop a web-site & regular newsletter system.

Summary:

Although behind with some milestones, we continue to make good progress in gaining the respect and support of local people for our participatory, research-based approach to tackling HEC and for our commitment to finding a sustainable solution. In the last few months, we have also gained the respect and support of the new governor, departmental director and protected area chief, all of whom now contact us when they need information or help with the elephant or HEC issue. In turn, we must now lobby for the government and local leaders to do more.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

ECN has experienced two notable problems which have affected the timely delivery of outputs:

- a) Difficulty recruiting qualified field researchers to lead forest surveys. To date, three people we recruited then pulled out: one to go to the US, one to take up a job at his university and, most recently, one to help care for her grandmother who had a severe stroke two weeks before she was due to start. She still wants to work with us but does not know when she can. For now, our compromise is for our qualified UK intern who speaks no Thai to work with our under-qualified admin assistant/translator who speaks English. By the time we start the next set of surveys in January, this team should be comfortable working together.
- b) Producing good bilingual reports/outputs: editing reports to be accurate, comprehensive, and well laid out is more time-consuming than expected, especially when they are large and detailed (e.g. ecotourism & socio-economic studies) But they are key outputs that serve as building blocks for future planning, so they need to be good to impress. However this does add considerably to our workload.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

No, as there isn't much they can do, except to understand and forgive us for submitting tardy reports.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: N/A

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: Web-site & newsletter system to be developed Jan 08

3. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?

After 2.7 years, we have collected enough data to provide a more accurate understanding of the 'HEC equation' and that has earned us the trust & respect of villagers, local leaders and officials. We can now start to make a real difference by lobbying government and by helping community groups develop alternative conservation/development ventures such as the planned ecotourism initiative. But we need help with funding!

Yes, renewed support to help us get the planned tourism initiative going!

