

## Correspondence

With very great pleasure I read carefully the last issue of Gajah. Congratulation! It is really very good – *hari hari hondai!* I read the volume word by word from the first to the last contribution. Some of the contributions I read several times. Already the cover picture is great. The 14 contributions from seven countries of origin are not too long, well readable (text and print) and cover different interests. Your “Editorial” as well as the “Notes of the Co-chairs” clarify the position of AsESG. There are highly technical articles like e.g. the “Practical Guidelines for Users of the ARGOS Satellite – Telemetry System” or the “Investigation of Asian Elephant Semen”, but there are also contributions interesting for a wide public like e.g. Prithiviraj Fernando’s excellent “Tsunami and Elephant ‘Sixth Sense’ in Sri Lanka” or the outstanding “Commentary” of Simon Hedges, concerning the recent report of Charles Siebert in the New York Times on Gay Bradshaw’s PTSD – hypothesis and HEC. Every member of AsESG should be proud of the high standard of Gajah.

Of course, one finds always some reasons to grumble. I miss a consequent system of the addresses of the authors. Furthermore I miss pictures of Bets Rasmussen and Lyn de Alwis in the appreciation. But these are tiny shortcomings as compared to the contents of the present issue. Their mix is perfect and the authors and their findings and backgrounds are so diverse and so inviting for discussions that you should receive some comments from the readers. I believe it is a characteristic of a good journal when authors are allowed to publish their own opinions and the texts are stimulating readers for thinking and critical comments. Here 2 comments from my side:

Page 16: Several authors, including myself, believed so far that “bounce trunk tip on the ground” (Sukumar 2003) is a threat display. Now I can read: “Do not approach the animal until and unless the animal shows welcome response signs, which is expressed by making the grunting sound as well as by repeatedly tapping the trunk

on the ground.” Is “repeatedly tapping the trunk on the ground” really a “welcome response sign”?

On page 31 I read: “Reproductive technologies such as artificial insemination (AI) and sperm crytopreservation (i.e. freezing) have become high priorities for increasing reproductive success in captive elephants throughout the world.” Although I admire the results on many studies on elephant reproduction in context of AI, I can hardly believe that AI and “freezing” are becoming so paramount for captive elephant reproduction throughout the world. It can be the case for North America, but already in Europe captive elephant reproduction has become increasingly successful after facilities were improved and elephants were finally considered as captive wild animals and not domesticated animals like cattle, horses or pigs (Kurt & Garai 2007). Accordingly their social and ecological environments were adapted to nature-like conditions.

In the countries of origin some populations live under nature-like conditions and breed on a regular basis. They are socially heterogeneous, live in or close to forests, and a considerable number of captive offspring have a wild father. Accordingly these populations function as gene traps, i.e. their genetic diversity is relatively high, as compared to the offspring created by AI, where suitable sperm donors are rare. I am well aware that there are many more pros and cons of AI.

Once more, I find the new Gajah just great.

Fred Kurt

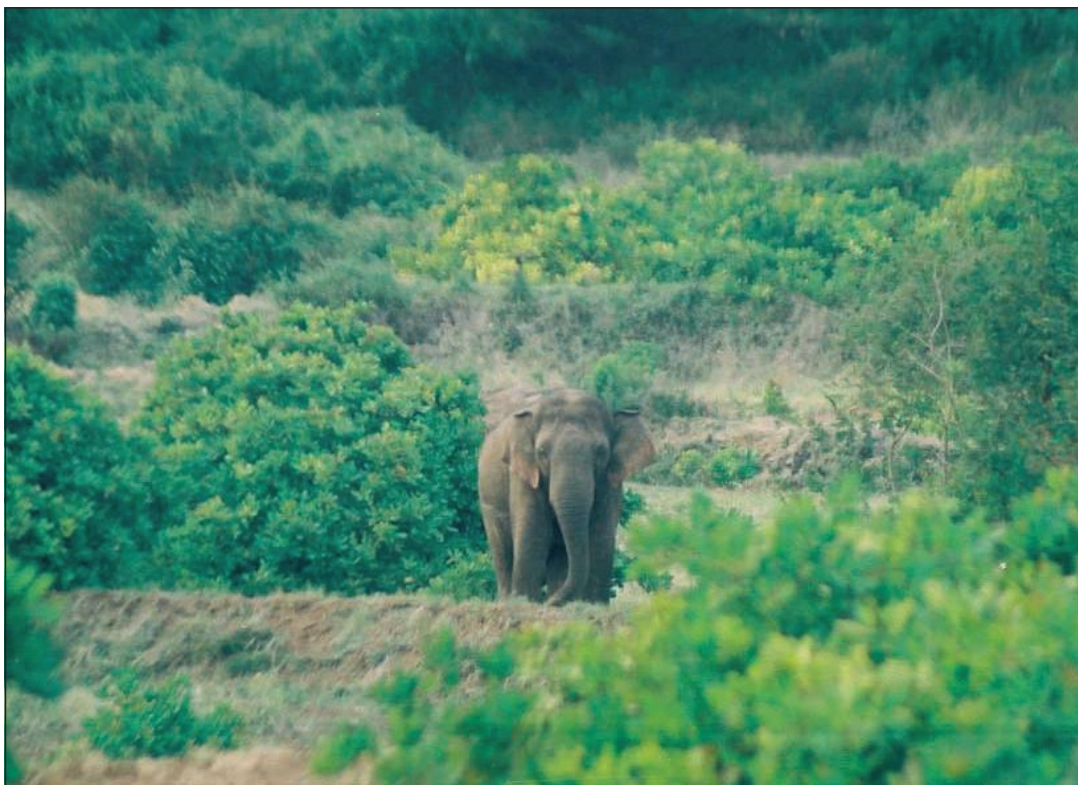
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Congratulations for this great piece: layout, collection of articles, pictures. I did not read all the articles in detail in great details but I took the time to read Jayantha's editorial and Ajay's and Simon's contributions.

I have a few comments about your editorial if I may. I found errors (date of the last meeting for example, which I attended, in 2002) and a misunderstanding of the relationship between IUCN Secretariat and SSC Specialist Groups regarding finances. There is no budget for any Specialist Group but the Secretariat can assist to secure and manage funds for the Specialist Groups and we have done this in the recent past. I found your tone very negative and was wondering why after a decision had been made to change the management of the Group, to keep Gajah alive you did not show a more positive tone and optimism.

Something happened last year which I think was a key achievement and was a strong support to the AsESG: the Range State Dialogue that IUCN (AsESG, SSC, Regional Office and Headquarters) facilitated. It could have been highlighted and was mentioned in the note from the Chairs. I found odd to have their essential note among short technical documents towards the end of the journal. Gajah is the "Journal of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group" and I think that as such the note from the Chairs, detailing achievements, future plans and thanking Charles and Jayantha should have come in first position.

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A rogue makhna in Cumbum valley, Tamil Nadu, which is responsible for five human casualties and several lakhs of crop damage during his regular visit to a cashew plantation at dusk  
Photo by Kannan Govindaraj