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GAJAH is the Journal of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AESG) of the IUCN-Species Survival Commission (SSC).

GAJAH aims to promote the conservation and management of the Asian Elephant both in the wild and in captivity. It also provides a forum for communication among the members of the **AESG**.

GAJAH welcomes original manuscripts dealing with conservation and management of the Asian elephant. All original manuscripts will be reviewed by referees. Contributions should be typed, double spaced on one side of A4 paper, or submitted on disks.

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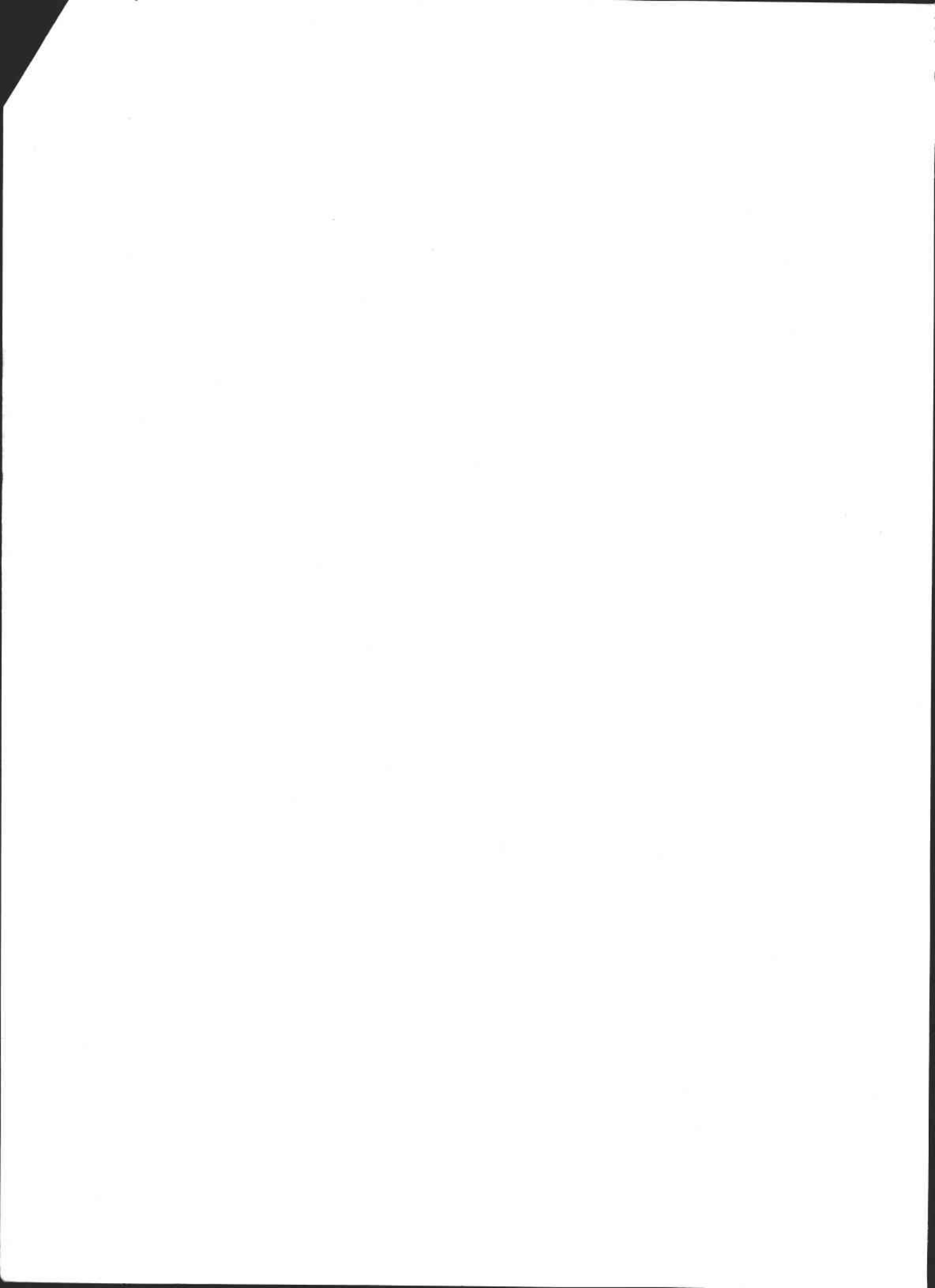
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The Elephant Training Centre at Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra: a review of its operations and recommendations for the future

Pusat Latihan Gajah di Taman Nasional Way Kamabs, Sumatera. Evaluasi operasi pusat dan rekomendasi masa depan.

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Introduction

More than two million Asian elephants have been captured throughout history, with approximately 16,000 elephants in captivity today or 0.8% of all elephants ever captured (Sukumar, 1992). In the past elephants were used as draft animals to transport people and goods, to haul timber in logging operations and in cultural and religious ceremonies. Today the elephants are little used as draft animals and most elephant camps in Asia accommodate elephants that work in logging operations. A significant number of captive elephants are not kept in state controlled camps but are owned by private individuals and mahouts. Mahouts hire their services to logging operations and for tourist activities and they participate in religious and cultural ceremonies. Other privately owned elephants are used in circus troupes, zoos or simply kept by wealthy individuals as a remembrance of the status they previously conferred on kings and sultans.

Elephants were kept in Sumatra largely in the royal stables as status symbols and for use in ceremonies. Most elephants were caught young with the use of trained 'khoonkie' elephants after first killing the mother (van Heurn, 1929). In 1621, the King of Aceh had 900 elephants who were trained to kneel in supplication and raise their trunks three times as he passed. They were not frightened of fire or shooting and were used to haul timber, heavy anchors and pull the King's galleons (van Heurn, 1929).

At the funeral of Sultan Iskander Thani in 1641, 200 elephants were present bedecked in silks and gold, with elaborate riding canopies and decorated tusks (Poniran, 1974; van Heurn, 1929). Indeed, so valued were these elephants that upon death their mahout was stuffed alive inside their charge's stomach and together thrown into the sea (van Heurn, 1929), contrary to somewhat more humane reports that the mahout was killed beforehand (Santiapillai & Jackson, 1990). Around that time elephant fights were staged with around 150 elephants forming an arena around two notoriously aggressive bulls who were each tied to two adult females by their hind legs, to aid their removal after the fight (van Heurn, 1929). van Heurn relates this story from Mundy (1919, in van Heurn, 1929) who believed that such fights were similar to how wild elephants fought and more amazingly that elephant testicles were to be found behind their ears! Around 1598 captive elephants were also used to rip apart people unwilling to convert from Christianity to Islam (van Heurn, 1929). As the reign of the Aceh Kings weakened so too did their use of elephants. Marsden (1811, in van Heurn, 1929) states that few elephants were kept in captivity outside of Aceh. Therefore it is unlikely that many captive elephants were to be found elsewhere in Sumatra when by the early nineteenth century hardly any elephants were left in the Aceh stables (van Heurn, 1929).

Captive elephants were used as draft animals by the Sultans to haul timber and anchors but also by the Dutch

colonisers to haul artillery in times of war and telegraph poles in times of peace (Santiapillai & Ramono, 1993). Studies by Temminck (1847, in van Heurn, 1929) proclaimed that the Sumatran elephant in addition to being more intelligent and useful; was as easy to tame as the Indian elephant these sentiments were supported by Lekkerkerker (1916, in van Heurn, 1929). Around 1906 after the army had successfully trained elephants to haul timber, wild elephants were caught using pitfall traps of 3 metres width and breadth and with very steep walls. Only elephants greater than 1.6 metres high were kept, as they were neither too young nor too old to train and use. These elephants were used by the army to pull long carts and in road building as they were deemed more economical than local manpower. By the late 1920's very few elephants were used by the army in Indonesia with some army elephants having been given as gifts to the Sultans of Yogyakarta (van Heurn, 1929). Blouch & Haryanto (1985) report that elephants were kept mainly for ceremonial purposes right up until the first part of this century. They stated that captive elephants held by Aceh royalty were not trained for or used in work, differing from Lair's view (1997) that if captive elephants were used by Dutch colonisers, then it was probable that they were also used by local people and Sultans. By this century the tradition of elephant-keeping in Indonesia was lost as evidenced in 1982 when a nationwide search turned up not one native mahout (or 'pawang' as they are called in Bahasa Indonesia) (Sterba, 1989).

The Indonesian Government's capture program

The Indonesian government's response to the ever-growing human-elephant conflict throughout Sumatra has relied primarily on capturing 'problem' elephants to be trained in useful work at elephant training centres. Today there are six such centres in Sumatra, the first to be established, in 1985, was the centre at Way Kambas National Park (Fig. 1).

In addition, the establishment of 3 new centres was recommended at the 1993 "Asian elephant in Sumatra, Population & Habitat Viability Analysis (PHVA)" workshop

(Tilson *et al.*, 1993). The workshop assessed the status of the wild and captive elephant populations in Sumatra and concluded that all non-viable wild populations and populations inhabiting production forests should be captured between 1994 and 1998 for training. Soemarna *et al.* (1993) detail where captures are to be made (Table 1). This program will result in approximately 715 wild elephants being introduced to the existing captive population, with 30% of all captures to be brought to the centre at Way Kambas. This will necessitate the transfer of captive elephants from present centres to establish new captive populations and the distribution of trained elephants to both government and privately owned populations throughout Indonesia to prevent exceeding the capacity of existing centres. The workshop report was regarded as the most recent representation of the Indonesian government's policy regarding the Sumatran elephant in captivity available.

Table 1. Population estimates of wild elephant populations in Lampung, and proposed captures between 1994 and 1998.

<i>Location</i>	<i>Modified estimate</i>	<i>Proposed no. of captures</i>
S. Buaya – Blok 45	110	110
Way Terusan – Blok 47	40	40
Rebang – Blok 42	30	25
S. Muara Dua – Blok 44	20	20
Way Hanakau – Blok 46	20	20
Total	220	215

Source: Soemarna et al., (1993)

Many reasons dictated that a centre for elephants be established in 1985. The pressures on land from local people and growing numbers of transmigrants increased the existing conflict between wild elephants and the human population. Areas throughout Sumatra particularly in Lampung and Riau, were subject to constant elephant depredation with wild elephants regularly raiding the crops of local cultivators and plantations. Fatalities were common

and public opinion demanded action. The Forest Protection & Nature Conservation Department of the Ministry of Forestry (PHPA) decided to establish elephant training centres near conflict areas, where wild-born problem elephants could be brought to be trained for use in logging, agricultural and tourism activities. The tradition of elephant-keeping which eventually returned to Sumatra in 1985 with the establishment of the centre in Way Kambas National Park was introduced from Thailand with the arrival of two Thai 'khoonkie' elephants and four mahouts from the Northern province of Chaiyaphum. The aims of the centre as stated by Santiapillai & Ramono (1991) were to "promote the breeding of elephants in captivity so that some animals will be available for use in Forestry and nature-oriented tourism" which was later expanded to "re-establish the elephant as part of Sumatra's myths, history and cultural heritage (Santiapillai & Ramono, 1991). The PHPA were helped in their efforts by Taman Safari Indonesia (TSI) who were involved in the successful selection and translocation of the two khoonkie elephants and mahouts from Thailand to Way Kambas National Park (Manansang, 1993).

The Elephant Training Centre in Way Kambas National Park.

The 1000 ha facility was established in Way Kambas National Park after the capture of a young female elephant 'Kartija', in 1984, which had fallen into a disused well. An additional three elephants were captured by PHPA in response to the killing of a young boy by a crop-raiding elephant in Sukadana near Way Kambas. This response by the PHPA avoided the need to kill any elephants and was seen to actively address the problem (Santiapillai & Suprahman, 1984). This exemplifies Santiapillai & Ramono's (1993) reasoning that "capturing 'problem' elephants and training them for useful service to man seems more humane than shooting them as pests".

Way Kambas was an ideal choice for the first elephant training centre (ETC, Pusat Latihan Gajah) as it was in an area plagued by constant human-elephant conflict and
Gajah 21 (2002)

near to Jakarta which was important when considering the potential for tourism. The centre is funded through the government's annual budget, after submission of a proposal each year (Suprahman, 1993), and received approximately 1 billion rupiahs (\$83,333) in 1997 (Pak Nyoman, pers. comm.). The cost of keeping an elephant and mahout in 1993 was estimated to be 6,583,000 rupiahs per year (Suprahman, *et. al.*, 1993), but it is not clear if this figure includes the overheads of maintaining other staff, health care and infrastructure upkeep. These costings when applied to 1997 for a minimum of 120 elephants estimates a total cost of \$65,830 not accounting for significant increases as a result of the economic crisis. In 1993 there were more than 68,000 visitors to the centre generating approximately \$50,000 from entrance fees alone and not including additional revenue from the entrance fee to the 'atraksi' show, safari rides and goods purchased. It is not clear how much of this money is directed to the centre itself.

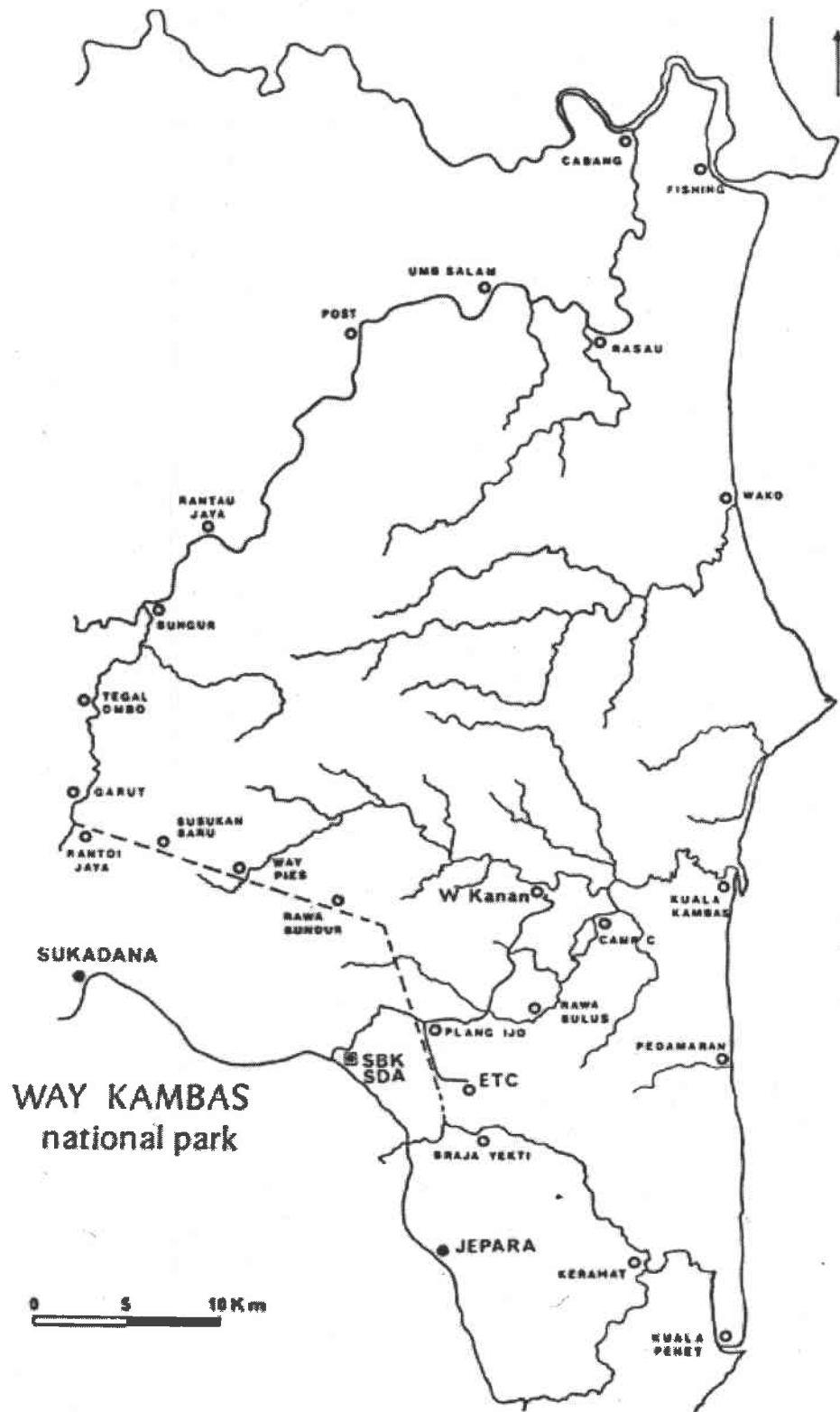


Figure 1. Way Kambas National Park, Lampung Province, Sumatra.