

## 2. INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE CONSERVATION OF THE ASIAN ELEPHANT

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The Bombay Natural History Society has been involved in the conservation of the Indian Elephant for the past two decades. In the late seventies when I was the Chairman of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group of the Species Survival Commission of the IUCN, the group undertook a status survey of the elephant populations in various regions of the sub-continent. The basic data obtained indicated the perilous status of the species and the possible areas of conflict with man. It was established that with a continually shrinking habitat, the status of the elephant in India and elsewhere in its distribution would continue to deteriorate unless urgent conservation measures were undertaken.

This period also saw the commencement of extensive scientific research into the ecology of the elephant, initiated by Dr R Sukumar of the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. and later on a long term basis by the scientists of the BNHS with funds and collaboration provided by the Fish and Wildlife Service, USA, and sponsored by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and the Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu.

This project of continuous study over a period of nine years ended in September 1992 and voluminous data on the ecology of the Indian elephant and the problems facing it has been obtained from populations in Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, peripheral populations in the border areas of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and a population inhabiting a degraded habitat in the Dalma Sanctuary in Bihar. During this period, research on elephant ecology has also been undertaken by the Wildlife Institute of India and the Kerala Forest Research Institute.

It was therefore felt by the Society that at this point of time when the Project Elephant of the Govt. of India is to come into operation, it would be useful to review the status of the elephant on the basis of available information through an international seminar.

We feel that the conservation of the species would be best served by holding a seminar where status of the species throughout its present range and the problems faced by it can be examined and discussed in detail. Presently the following organisations have agreed to sponsoring or collaborating with the Bombay

Natural History Society in the organisation of the seminar: (1) Forest Department of Tamil Nadu (2) Forest Department of Karnataka (3) Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (4) Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science (5) Kerala Agricultural University (6) Kerala Forest Research Institute.

The Bombay Natural History Society is planning to organise an International Seminar at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu, India in June 1993 on the theme "The Asian Elephant - Present Status, Problems and Future Prospects"

It is felt that there should be an interaction between the Asian Elephant Specialist Group, Wildlife Managers and Scientific community. It is hoped that such an interaction will also include members of the African Elephant Specialist Group.

The tentative programme is as follows:-

- 1st day: National Status Reports
- 2nd day: State-wise Status Reports (India)
- 3rd day: Elephant Research in Asia
- 4th day: Elephant Research in Asia (continued)
- 5th day: Management Problems:-
  - a) Man-elephant conflicts
  - b) Habitat conservation
  - c) Project elephant, India
  - d) Translocation
- 6th day:
  - e) Elephant and human economy
  - f) Recommendations

Those interested in attending this International Seminar on Asian Elephants, should write to:

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