

Notes from the Co-chairs IUCN/SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group

Simon Hedges and Ajay Desai

Once again we would like to begin by thanking Jayantha Jayewardene for his time and efforts as the editor of *Gajah*. Following the first-ever simultaneous publication of *Gajah* in both print and electronic (PDF) versions in June 2007, we intend that *Gajah* will continue to be published twice a year: in June and December. As ever, we encourage you all to submit articles for publication in *Gajah* as its continuing success will depend on the willingness of the AsESG's members to publish in the group's journal.

As Co-chairs, we have continued to make sure that the group's members are made aware of the funding opportunities that are available for Asian Elephant conservation projects, and to inform members about people or institutions who wish to seek help from, or work with, the group. As ever, we would be grateful if members could continue to keep us informed of such opportunities so that we can circulate them to the wider group as appropriate.

This last six month period has also seen the AsESG sponsor several Asian Elephant specialists' participation in a number of international fora. To this end we have provided travel grants for Mukti Roy to present his work on the "Use of habitat by Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in the Buxa Tiger Reserve and adjoining areas of northern west Bengal, north eastern India" at the Society for Conservation Biology's Annual Meeting in South Africa in July; as well as travel grants for Govindaraj Kannan to present his work on "Testing the efficacy of chilli-based repellents to deter crop damage by elephants in India", N. Baskaran to present his work on the "Conservation of Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in southern India: a GIS analysis of the Anamalai elephant landscape", and C Arivazhagan to present his work on the "Population structure of Asian Elephants in Kaziranga National Park, Assam, India", all at

the International Elephant Research Symposium in Florida in November.

The last six months have also seen the creation of five AsESG Task Forces and one Working Group, namely the Wild Elephant and Elephant Habitat Management Task Force (co-coordinators Arnold Sitompul and Christy Williams); the Human–elephant conflict (HEC) Task Force (coordinator Ravi Corea); the Illegal Killing and Trade Task Force (coordinator Vivek Menon); the Captive Elephant Management Task Force (co-coordinators S. Wijeyamohan and Heidi Riddle); the Veterinary Task Force (co-coordinators Jacob V. Cheeran and Susan Mikota); and the Database Working Group (coordinator Simon Hedges). Creation of this working group and the task forces will, we believe, help the AsESG deliver a number of products and services including an Asian elephant database, a human–elephant conflict mitigation review, and new methods for the standardized registration of captive elephants all of which received range state government support at the Asian Elephant Range States' Meeting in 2006. We thank all those AsESG members who have volunteered their time and efforts for these endeavours and wish the whole group a happy and productive 2008 working to conserve Asia's elephants.

Co-chairs' e-mails:

shedges@wcs.org

ajayadesai.1@gmail.com