

ELEPHANT ECHOES

Updates from the International Elephant Foundation (IEF)

INTERNATIONAL
ELEPHANT
FOUNDATION.ORG

January 2024

The International Elephant Foundation is the catalyst for creating a sustainable future where elephants thrive by linking people and elephants for their mutual long-term benefit.

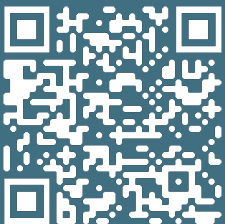
Founded in 1998, IEF is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation of individuals and institutions dedicated to the conservation of African and Asian elephants worldwide. IEF creates a sustainable future for elephants by generating and effectively investing resources to support elephant conservation, education, research, and management programs worldwide. Through our passion, expertise, knowledge, and partnerships, we inspire and engage people to ensure a vibrant future with elephants everywhere.



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19th International Elephant Conservation & Research Symposium in Chiang Mai

During the third week of November 2023, IEF was proud to host the 19th International Elephant Conservation & Research Symposium in Chiang Mai, Thailand! It has been four long years since we last met in-person, with two virtual symposia in between, and we were eager to see everyone's faces, make new connections, and build bridges all for the betterment and preservation of elephants around the world! This year IEF was able to partner with the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Chiang Mai University, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine at Kasetsart University, and the National Elephant Institute Forest Industry Organization to host this prestigious and one-of-a-kind event.

Nearly 250 people from 25 countries attended, making this one of the most successful and diverse symposia ever. There were almost 100 speakers covering topics like Wild Elephant Populations, Habitat and Human Development, Elephant Behavior, Genetics, Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV), Human-Elephant Conflict, Elephant Physiology and Veterinary Medicine, and much more.

The four full days of talks were kicked off by keynote speaker Dr. Janine Brown who heads the Endocrine Research Laboratory at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. Janine shared her nearly 40 years of research experience, along with her extensive work in Asia, including Thailand, Borneo, and Laos. Her talk was dynamic and inspirational, showing everyone in the room how a career with elephants can be all consuming and rewarding. While she only scratched the surface of the wealth of knowledge she has to impart, Janine set a perfect tone for the rest of the week. It's worthy to note that Janine was at the very first IEF symposium in 1996 held at the Indianapolis Zoo, making her keynote speech a full circle moment.

Many IEF-supported projects presented their latest findings. Mike Keigwin of the Uganda Conservation Foundation spoke about Snare Mountain and reclaiming the heart of poaching country in Uganda. Resolve Wildlife's Mike Hensman made a splash talking about the early results and successes of Training Village Dogs for Wildlife Protection, a project implemented with Conservation Lower Zambezi at the urging and support of IEF and The Berry Family Trust. Dr. Christopher Stremme of Komunitas Untuk Hutan Sumatera presented about the highly successful Elephant Response Units in Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra that have been used as a conservation model elsewhere in range countries. Susie Weeks and Enock Ochieng from



IEF's Executive Director Deborah Olson shares remarks with local host Chatchote Thitaram.



Janine Brown shares her keynote address at the 19th International Elephant Conservation & Research Symposium.

Mount Kenya Trust spoke about MKT's wholistic approach to community conservation and the integral role the Mounted Horse Patrol Team plays in protecting habitat and wildlife.

One day before the symposium, IEF teamed with Mandai Nature to support the 5th Asian EEHV Working Group Meeting held at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Chiang Mai University. International experts in Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus attended to discuss their needs, approaches, and advancements. Dr. Paul Ling of Baylor College of Medicine (and longtime recipient of IEF support) gave an update on the development of a vaccine, estimating the initial testing of a prototype in the United States to begin in early 2024. This announcement represents over two decades of work developing a means to protect calves and young elephants from the devastating impacts of EEHV.

IEF is proud to have presented our 19th International Elephant Conservation & Research Symposium and is grateful to everyone who helped make it a jumbo success!



EMA x IEF BREW Off 2023!

For the second year, IEF teamed up with the Elephant Managers Association to host the EMA x IEF BREW Off at their annual conference. Elephant keepers, conservationists and enthusiasts from around the United States worked with local breweries to develop beers to benefit elephants—hence the name Beer Representing Elephants Worldwide or BREW—and held trivia nights, silent auctions, and other fundraising events to benefit IEF's global elephant conservation efforts.

Participants pulled out all the stops! Some made beers using the flavors of pumpkin and melon to mirror foods elephants like to eat. Others named their beers after an iconic elephant in their local zoo's herd. Entries in this year's tasting included "You Don't Know Jack" by Trailhead Brewery (Pittsburgh, PA), "Foilage Finder" by Nocterra Brewing Company (Columbus, OH), "Elephantastic" by Meier's Creek Brewing Company (Syracuse, NY), "Guava Hefeweizen" by Turning Point Beer (Fort Worth, TX), and "Elephant Valley Hazy IPA" by Mike Hess Brewing Company (San Diego, CA). A panel of experts thoughtfully tasted and scored the beers, as well as the EMA conference attendees. While every entry was delicious, this year's winners were:

Best Brew: Elephantastic by Meier's Creek Brewing Co.

People's Choice: You Don't Know Jack by Trailhead Brewery

Best Label: Elephant Valley Hazy IPA by Mike Hess Brewing Co.

IEF extends our sincere gratitude and thanks to every single organizer, keeper, brewery and institution who helped make this year's event a success! Cheers to each and every one of you; together we work to build a world where elephants thrive!



Building Generational Conservation Empowerment in Cambodia

Cambodia is a key player in the illegal wildlife trade, including as a source, destination and transit country. Recognizing the need for on-the-ground efforts to address the factors fueling demand, IEF supported the “Elephant Protection through Strengthened Capacity and Community Engagement” program in Cambodia with Wildlife Alliance. This work focused on building conservation awareness and education from the ground up, reaching out to communities and building conservation bridges with the people whose actions will make a long-term difference. Currently approximately 70% of Cambodia’s human population is under the age of 30. Educating youth and instilling conservation messaging early on in life lays the groundwork for foundational change on the national level.

Conserving elephants and wildlife in Cambodia faces a number of challenges. One factor is the increase in the trafficking of ivory and animal parts. Following China’s ivory ban in 2017, illegal consumers looked for alternative markets to both sell and buy these products. There has also been a marked increase in Chinese investment in Cambodia and an increased presence of wealthy Chinese nationals, a circumstance that is likely driving demand.

Another factor is human-elephant conflict. With a population that is roughly 80% rural and 20% below the poverty line, many people turn towards illegal harvesting, laying snares, and wildlife crime to try to make ends meet. As the human population grows, these pressures become more intense and lead to dangerous situations between humans and elephants and wildlife. Since there is a lack of community understanding for the consequences of these actions, there is a huge need for education and outreach.

The Wildlife Alliance’s Kouprey Express program raises awareness and engages with communities on protection of forests and wildlife. One objective trains teachers to build conservation ethic from the ground up. This project trained 200 teachers from 5 schools in two provinces through comprehensive capacity-building workshops covering core environmental concepts like habitat protection, wildlife protection, sustainable livelihoods, pollution prevention, and more. These multiday sessions are followed with mentoring and support further encouraging good stewardship of their natural heritage. Teacher training builds sustainability so that the progress of this work has longevity independent of project leaders.

Another essential element to this program is the hands-on interactive student lessons. Covering habitat, and “big picture” issues on species like Asian and African elephants, Pileated Gibbons, Sunda pangolin, and more, these sessions use the example of charismatic species to energize students to support the protection of all wildlife. Through art activities, wildlife-themed games, presentations, and field trips, students are empowered to transform their world and spread that message throughout their communities. In the span of one year, over 32,000 students from 39 schools participated in this incredible program.

IEF is proud to support this excellent work for Cambodia, her people, and her wildlife.

Recently, IEF was honored to have four team members of the Kouprey Express as featured guests on a recent Conservation Chat. If you are interested in watching a replay of that chat, visit: <https://elephantconservation.org/ief/whats-happening/conservation-chats/>



Board Member Spotlight

Lou Barreda

Growing up with elephants is a privilege that few get to experience. Even fewer are lucky enough to have that experience outside of elephant range countries while growing up in the United States. With that experience comes the responsibility to share your knowledge, passion and conservation ethic with those to whom elephants are not an everyday part of life. IEF Board of Directors member Lou Barreda does not take that responsibility lightly. Lou is a 2nd generation elephant trainer, manager, and conservationist. Let's hear more about his life and commitment to elephants in his own words:



How did you start with elephants?

Elephants have been part of my family since 1985. I was born in 1993 so in my eyes I thought it was somewhat normal to have “pet elephants”. I actually begged my parents for a dog when I was growing up.

How many generations has your family worked with exotic animals?

I am 3rd generation working with exotic animals. My grandfather started with all types of animals. My dad got his first elephants in 1985. I really don't consider myself an elephant trainer but more of an elephant caretaker.

What was it like growing up with elephants? How did that affect things like holidays, vacations, etc.?

For me growing up around elephants was very special. Elephants require constant care and attention so you end up spending a majority of your time with them. With all this time spent with such intelligent animals you really build a bond and they become part of your family. But yes when you have elephants as part of your family it becomes hard to do normal things like go on vacation.

Tell us about your family background. How did it lead you here?

My parents acquired their first elephants in 1985 from a cull from Kruger National Park in South Africa. Back in the '70s and '80s countries in Africa would measure their natural resources and their wildlife populations. If the natural resources were thought to not be able to maintain the wildlife, the government would thin the elephant population (culling) by destroying an entire herd but spare the babies who were adopted out around the world. My parents were given the opportunity to adopt some of these orphans and provide them a home in Florida. I was just really fortunate to be able to grow up around such amazing animals.

Tell us about Myakka Elephant Ranch, what you do, and why you founded it.

Myakka Elephant is a 501c3 not for profit organization. Our main goals are to raise money for elephant conservation along with educating the public about elephants. We found that the best way to accomplish that mission is to connect people with elephants. Guest are welcome to come to the ranch and help with the elephants' daily care along with learning all about these amazing animals. Our hope is that education coupled with a once-in-a-lifetime experience will plant a seed in each of our visitors that grows into solid conservation efforts to protect the species for years to come. We have teamed up with other non-profits, specialty groups, and schools to maximize our efforts while also providing outreach programs to enhance our community.

Why did you get involved with the International Elephant Foundation?

For years my family and I were on the search for the best elephant non-profit organization and we finally come across the International Elephant Foundation in 2017. In 2019 I was able to attend the IEF Conservation and Research Symposium in South Africa. I instantly fell in love with all the great things IEF was doing for elephants and knew I had to find a way to support such an amazing organization.

Do you have any interesting stories or examples of people meeting your elephants and being inspired to care?

This is part of a story from a military Veteran battling with PTSD that told us that meeting our elephants changed his life:

“I can't believe that elephants changed my life. It started when I saw a random event on Facebook that offered yoga classes for veterans at a local elephant sanctuary in my hometown of Sarasota, FL. At that time, I struggled to find meaning in my life and didn't think that yoga would help. But something about the invitation sparked my interest, so I decided to take a chance and go.”

Little did I know that this experience would be transformational. The opportunity to practice yoga in such a unique environment was cool enough, but I was introduced to Operation Warrior Resolution (OWR), the nonprofit that hosted the event. OWR is made up of veterans with the primary mission of providing holistic treatments for those dealing with PTSD and other mental health issues. I found my tribe."

As you can see, there are many paths to elephants. Not everyone is lucky enough to be born into working with elephants, but those that are know how truly special it is and dedicate their lives to spreading that love with the world, benefitting both elephants and the humans who meet them. IEF is proud to have Lou on our Board of Directors.

Donor Spotlight

Linda Stark

Our donors are the backbone of IEF. They make all of IEF's elephant conservation work, education, and outreach possible. We are grateful for every donor that gives their support for elephants around the world. Today we highlight Linda Stark to learn more about her in her own words:

Tell us about yourself, Linda.

My favorite memories of life as a kid center on happy-go-lucky times at Cordry Lake in Brown County, Indiana, where my parents owned a sliver of property. My grandparents' rustic cabin in the Manistee National Forest was the summer destination of unrivaled delight. The wilds were alive with fresh pine, sandy paths, plentiful fish, bramble berries, and, warned Grandpa, bears down by the outhouse. I credit my sense of exploration – and wonder – to those early days. I'm proud to pass on stories of and invitations to those kinds of experiences to my son and his young daughters.



Do you own any pets?

My husband and I share our Indianapolis home with a black lab, a beagle/basset mix, a Chihuahua, and a brother/sister pair of cats with Maine Coon lineage. Our geriatric pet population includes a sole goldfish in a 20-gallon tank. (S)he's at least 15 years old.

What inspired you to care about elephants?

Before I began my volunteer career with the Indianapolis Zoo 26+ years ago, my knowledge of wild animals was limited by what I could hear second hand or study via someone else's account. As a retired editor (decades in corporate communications and book publishing), I always looked forward to my own narrative, a first-person experience. I've pitched in with the Indy Zoo's African elephant animal care team now for a long time and been a part of some powerful stories, such as the birth of the world's first African elephant calf as a result of artificial insemination (AI). Our seventh calf was born Labor Day this year, his mother also conceived by AI. Baby, mom, and grandmother are among those who continue to teach me what it means to be wild about elephants!

What have you learned about elephants that surprises you the most?

Communication among elephants is extraordinary, as is their deep emotional connections to each other and to those considered herd members. I like to think of myself as part of the family with those I know personally.

Have you seen elephants or other favorite species in the wild?

A visit to Kenya in 2008 flooded our senses with everything wild and wonderful. My husband and I stayed at conservation-focused Lewa and Il Ngwesi camps, where we were astounded by natural abundance. The first night in our tented bedroom, we awoke to heavy hooves on our verandah. Grevy's zebras were trotting within feet of us! I got to bottle-feed a white rhino calf. We carefully caught full views of lions escaping the sun and elephants coming in for a closer look at us. Baboons ran away with our lunches, and an Africanized honey bee flew up my shirt sleeve. (The sting was treated by one of our guides. The natural remedy worked like a charm.) Unforgettable moments to cherish!

What is your experience with IEF been like? What led you to donate to us?

When I get word that IEF will be providing another listening and learning opportunity via a Conservation Chat, I clear the calendar. The presentations are well organized – and well worth my time. I always come away with insight and information that freshens my perspective and sharpens my appreciation for those who are all in, every day. Their passion speaks volumes. Their work well deserves my attention and investment.

If you are interested in joining Linda as an IEF donor, please visit our website www.elephantconservation.org or contact Julie at jbates@elephantconservation.org

Advisor Spotlight

DR. WENDY KISO

Dr. Wendy Kiso is an incredible asset to the International Elephant Foundation. She's one of our Advisors who is willing to help with anything whether it be symposium planning or quick expert advice like a "phone-a-friend". Wendy is the "phone-a-friend" for many within elephant world, both in the United States and internationally. We are excited to share a little more about her here.

Tell us about your background. How did you get started in elephants?

I received my undergraduate B.S. degree in Biological Sciences from the University of California, Irvine, after which I attended the Exotic Animal Training and Management (EATM) Program at Moorpark College. At EATM, I met Dr. James Peddie, an exotic animal veterinarian who is now retired, and was hugely influential in guiding my initial path to pursue elephant research. I started my studies in elephant reproduction under my advisor and mentor, Dr. Dennis Schmitt (IEF advisor, DVM, PhD, theriogenologist) at Missouri State University where I received a Master's in Natural and Applied Sciences. I then went on to study under Drs. Budhan Pukazhenthi and Janine Brown at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute where I received a Ph.D. in Environmental Science and Public Policy at George Mason University. My master and doctoral studies focused on elephant bull reproduction and sperm cryopreservation.



What kinds of things have you studied/researched pertaining to elephants?

My work with elephants has been very focused on reproduction, but other related topics (like Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus or EEHV) became a focus. Everything is connected to an extent. Here are some of the topics I've focused on:

- Elephant reproductive soundness exams via ultrasonography
- Elephant artificial insemination
- Elephant semen collection
- Sperm cryopreservation of Asian and African elephant sperm
- Establishment of first Genetic Resource Bank for Asian elephants (at Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation)
- Sperm sex sorting
- Seminal plasma analysis of elephant semen
- Elephant fetal sex determination from maternal serum in late gestation
- EEHV research and treatment
- Sri Lanka – Elephant Transit Home (aid in facilitating elephant orphan care)
- Pharmacokinetic activity of various drug treatments in elephants
- Role of elephant P53 gene and anti-cancer studies with Schiffman Laboratory at Huntsman Institute in Salt Lake City, UT
- Present at 12 elephant births
- Assisted in 18 elephant necropsies
- Endocrine analysis and monitoring (musth and estrous cycles)
- Advanced assisted reproductive techniques for elephants
- Ovum pick-up in elephants

Your work with elephants has taken you around the world, can you tell us about some of the field work and projects in range countries that you've been involved with?

I wouldn't claim I have directly been involved in elephant projects in range countries. I've been peripherally involved in my roles with the Center for Elephant Conservation and with the International Elephant Foundation, and now, Colossal Biosciences. I am also a member of the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG). Elephant range countries I've been to are India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Botswana, including field visits to Sumatra, South Africa, Kenya, and Uganda for IEF.

I have been to Sri Lanka over a dozen times to consult with the Elephant Transit Home that cares for orphaned baby and juvenile elephants, and to work with colleagues at Rajarata University and University of Peradeniya. This was a long-term conservation project funded by Ringling Bros. Center for elephant Conservation. More recently I served as a PhD co-advisor for a field study project of IEF Advisor, Chase LaDue, again in Sri Lanka.

As someone who works in reproduction of an endangered species, what effect do you see elephants in human care having on the overall conservation of the species?

Elephants under human care are ambassadors to their wild counterparts. Elephants under human care allow us the ability to learn many aspects

of elephant behavior, care and management, including their reproductive behavior, assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs), husbandry, drug efficacies, veterinary treatments, musth behavior, socialization, and EEHV monitoring and treatment. By increasing our knowledge of elephants under human care, we can apply this knowledge for better management and help elephant conservation in range countries both in the wild and under human care. Having reliable, consistent access to these elephants has a global positive impact.

You have been involved with IEF for a long time. How have you seen IEF grow and develop over the years? What impact have you seen IEF have?

IEF has increased international awareness and connectivity amongst veterinary professionals, scientists, zoologists, biologists, ecologists and elephant enthusiasts. IEF has also brought financial funding to in situ projects, workshops, and brought awareness to elephant issues and topics through their symposia. IEF has also facilitated global awareness on elephant issues and topics and facilitates a forum for elephant researchers, veterinarians and caretakers to get together and share information and ideas on elephant behavior, husbandry management, wellness, and veterinary care. I am very proud to be associated with IEF.

What is your current position and what are you working on?

I am a Principal Scientist in Assisted Reproduction for Colossal Biosciences. Through our work in the basic understanding of reproductive biology, we are developing assisted reproductive technologies for current wildlife species and using these technologies to bring back extinct species, including the Woolly Mammoth, Thylacine and Dodo.

There has been a lot of media attention pertaining to the efforts to “de-extinct” the mammoth. As someone who’s been involved in research and elephant conservation for decades, how do you think de-extincting a mammoth or the process in doing so will benefit our current endangered species?

The Woolly Mammoth is one of the core de-extinction species of Colossal Biosciences. In order to achieve such a feat, assisted reproductive technologies (ARTs) in elephants still needs to be developed. ARTs such as ovum pick-up, in vitro fertilization (IVF), in vitro maturation (IVM), in vitro embryo production (IVEP), somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT), and embryo transfer (ET) have yet to be developed for elephants, and we are currently investigating these ARTs. The development of these ARTs can be adopted to assist in the genetic preservation and reproduction of the extant but endangered Asian and African Savannah and Forest elephants and other species on the brink of extinction, and can also be applied to bring back extinct species, including the Woolly Mammoth.

Even though elephant people tend to be extremely focused on elephants, do you have any hobbies or interests outside of elephants that you are passionate about?

On my free time, I like to spend time with my 2 black Labradors. My goal is to one day own an RV so that my dogs and I can visit National Parks around the U.S.

As you can see, Wendy is extremely accomplished and is very busy—IEF is lucky that she always makes time for us. Her work has helped countless elephants, elephant facilities, and the keepers and conservationists who work with them. The more we learn about elephant physiology, reproduction, and care, the better informed all of our work is towards preserving and conserving them. Thank you, Wendy!

It's Our Silver Anniversary!

Did you know that 2024 is IEF's 25th Anniversary? That's 25 years of protecting elephants. 25 years of patrols, helping communities, expanding our knowledge of elephant physiology, building ranger stations, researching elephant diseases, and connecting elephants and people for their mutual benefit. We are planning a year-long celebration, covering the incredible work we have done, and continue to do, and the important folks who have helped along the way!

Stay tuned!