

ELEPHANT ECHOES

Updates from the International Elephant Foundation (IEF)

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ELEPHANT
FOUNDATION.ORG

April 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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IEF's 2023 Impact

What an impact! Last year IEF supported 28 projects in 18 countries, ranging from security and patrols to community outreach and education to research into elephant diseases. When taken together, this is the collective impact:

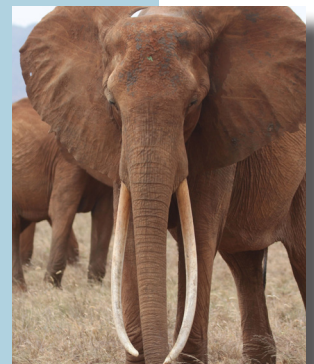


Elephant Protection Efforts

- 35,168+ African and Asian elephants protected
- 1642 rangers supported
- 66,166 patrol man days
- 6,322 snares and traps found and removed (not including Snare Mountain)
- 594 poachers and wildlife criminals caught/arrested

Human and Wildlife Preservation

- 311,626+ km² of habitat protected
- 133 camera traps deployed
- **A few of the many species** in habitats benefitting from elephant conservation projects: Rothschild giraffe, black rhino, cape buffalo, leopard, African civet, hippopotamus, lion, pangolin (multiple species), western lowland gorilla, pygmy hippopotamus, chimpanzee, Bengal tiger, greater one-horned rhino, gharial, African wild dog, Indian bison, gaur, Himalayan black bear, Sumatran rhino, Sumatran tiger, Malayan tapir, sun bear, cloud leopard, multiple species of plants, amphibians, reptiles, and birds



Conflict to Coexistence: Living with Elephants

- 262,957 community members reached
- 520+ community educational opportunities
- 5,750 people assisted with alternative livelihoods

These statistics show one view of the conservation success IEF has been able to accomplish. Looking in the eyes of farmers who now enjoy peaceful coexistence with elephants, children who are now proud of their natural heritage and will take steps to protect it, and the newly born elephant calves who have protected habitat in which to grow, we are empowered by these successes and motivated to do more!

25th Anniversary: IEF's Origin Story

In 1998, frustrated by the lack of funding available for elephant conservation and research efforts, Michael Fouraker, current Executive Director of the Fort Worth Zoo, envisioned an elephant foundation that would provide funds and expertise to worthy projects. Michael believed that an organizational structure and business plan could be developed for multiple elephant holding facilities with diverse missions to come together for a shared common goal of contributing to the long-term survival of elephants.

In November of 1998, Fouraker invited nine representatives from zoos, circuses, private elephant facilities and a university to Fort Worth, Texas to discuss how a foundation could significantly enhance current conservation efforts. From this first organizational meeting the International Elephant Foundation was born, officially incorporated in 1999.

This year, 2024, is IEF's 25th Anniversary! 25 years of protecting, preserving and promoting peaceful coexistence with elephants. We are kicking off a year-long celebration of IEF action for elephants by unveiling our 25th Anniversary Logo!

You may remember we held a logo contest last year, and this is the winning logo designed by Kirstin Cook! It features both African and Asian elephants with the subtle underlay of the continents in which they range under their images. We love the image and hope you do too! You'll be seeing a lot of this new logo as we celebrate our 25 years of protecting elephants! Keep an eye out for more!

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Our Long-term Commitment to Fighting EEHV

Few things in this world bring more joy than a baby elephant: giant floppy ears, a long trunk that chaotically flaps around, and fuzzy hair all over brand new skin that is sometimes actually pink. All at once they are silly, strong, curious, and represent the future of an endangered species. It is impossible not to fall in love. Yet when something threatens them, it is one of the most heartbreaking experiences of an elephant caretaker's life. Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus or EEHV is a viral disease that can cause illness and death in young elephants worldwide. Currently there is no cure and no vaccine (yet).

First described in detail in 1995, EEHV can cause hemorrhagic disease (HD) by damaging the inside lining of blood vessels (endothelium) which results in blood loss and rapid, often fatal organ failure. EEHVs are endemic viruses in elephants having co-evolved with elephants over millions of years. Both Asian and African elephants, whether they are in human care or in the wild, are typically and naturally exposed to EEHV as nursing calves. Elephant herds can carry multiple strains of EEHV; when a nursing calf is exposed to the virus it builds protective immunity aided by the antibodies it received from its mother. Problems arise when the calf after weaning encounters an EEHV strain for which it has not developed its own immunity. When that happens the calf's immune system alone is often unable to develop the antibodies necessary to prevent EEHV HD. This is the single largest cause of death in young elephants in human care in Thailand, North America and Europe; there is insufficient data about its prevalence in other regions at this time.

IEF was one of the first elephant conservation organizations to identify EEHV research as a top funding priority. Coming from elephant care, management, and veterinary backgrounds, the IEF Board of Directors recognized early on that this was a mammoth problem that needed all hands on deck.

Foundational Knowledge

IEF has expanded our global knowledge of EEHV through funding the research into the viral genomics and pathogenesis of EEHV. Supporting the work of Dr. Gary Hayward of Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, each type of EEHV has been sequenced and analyzed. Understanding the genetics of EEHV is the foundation for all other research. This is how we determined that the family of EEHV viruses co-evolved with elephants for millions of years and that EEHV1, EEHV4, and EEHV5 are found in Asian elephants, and EEHV2, EEHV3, EEHV6 and EEHV7 are found in African elephants.

IEF also partnered in funding the first ever EEHV International Workshop in 2005, fostering global cooperation around this crisis. We have also provided support and participated in every North American EEHV Workshop and many of the global meetings as well. Research and knowledge about EEHV has grown internationally resulting in EEHV Working Groups in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa, with the help and participation of IEF. The African EEHV Working Group was created and established at our 16th International Elephant Conservation & Research Symposium held in South Africa. In fact, many of the global EEHV meetings are held in conjunction with IEF symposia, demonstrating how deeply connected to the fight we are.



Diagnosis

Learning about the disease must be put into action. Before we can treat, we must be able to diagnose. IEF has supported research in early detection by being a primary funder of the early years of the National Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus Laboratory at the Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute, which now serves as the primary facility for EEHV diagnosis, research, training, and information in the US. We have also supported the development of serology assays for EEHV infection where scientists can detect EEHV antibodies in an elephant's blood to help determine whether an elephant is at risk or susceptible to the different types. All of these help with early diagnosis and guide treatment decisions, which we know is the best way to give a young elephant a fighting chance at surviving EEHV-HD.



Treatment and Care

Once an elephant is diagnosed with EEHV-HD, it is important to give as much rapid and supportive care as possible. IEF has supported the development of treatments like freeze-dried platelets so that elephant veterinarians could have platelets on hand for supportive care for an elephant with EEHV-HD. We have also supported research determining pharmacokinetic characteristics of the antiviral drug Ganciclovir for treatment of EEHV-HD and a technique called RNAscope ISH that can confirm EEHV1A infection in tissues and may be used to investigate viral tropism and pathogenesis in the future. Currently we are supporting a project focusing on development of EEHV specific nanobodies as a treatment option and a project looking at d-dimers as a potential diagnostic and monitoring tool. While there is currently no single method, cure, or protocol to help an elephant through the disease, early detection and supportive care have helped increase survival rates.



Vaccine Immunity

Our ultimate goal is to stomp out EEHV. Given that this disease has been around as long as elephants have been, our best hope to prevent more death is the development of a vaccine that would provide protective immunity to young elephants once maternal antibodies have waned. IEF has supported multiple efforts in this regard, including efforts to isolate EEHV cells so they can be studied for this purpose. We have long supported the work of Dr. Paul Link at Baylor College of Medicine who has taken vaccine development from the identification of candidate proteins to soon embarking on vaccine trials. This is a major development in the fight and should have a positive impact for elephants everywhere.

IEF's commitment to fighting EEHV is unmatched. We are proud of the incredible work made possible by our support—even down to the biological samples provided by our Board Member institutions' elephants in their care. Elephants in zoos and private facilities are helping scientists find solutions to a disease that threatens elephants globally. They also inspire millions of visitors each year to care about the preservation of their species, driving conservation action and support for the work that IEF does. EEHV is a global problem, but by bringing together elephant professionals, researchers, scientists, conservationists, donors and the elephants themselves, it is a problem we can defeat.

Visit IEF at the Gift Shop

Did you know that when you visit some of your favorite zoos and animal facilities you can support IEF? We are proud to share that IEF has partnered with A&F's Conservation Merchandise Program to provide IEF-branded merchandise to zoo giftshops across the United States!

The IEF Collection from hats, tumblers, shirts, totes, water bottles and more features an abstract design combining elements of an African elephant on the left side and an Asian elephant on the right side making a striking and modern image that proudly displays, "This shirt/hat/bag/mug saves elephants!" A percentage of the proceeds from this collection will go directly back to the impactful work that IEF supports around the world on behalf of elephants.

Currently, the IEF Collection is available at the Milwaukee County Zoo, the Dallas Zoo, the Columbus Zoo, and the Rosamond Gifford Zoo. When you visit their gift shops, please look for the elephant conservation merchandise, and of course wear it proudly because that shirt saves elephants and so do you.

Any organization can choose to carry these products! If you are interested in having these products for sale at your business, please contact jbates@elephantconservation.org.



Monterey Zoo Demonstrates the Value of a Wooden Quarter

Preserving and protecting elephants is a lifelong endeavor. To quote Bill Murray's character in the film *Larger Than Life*, "They say an elephant never forgets. What they don't tell you is you never forget an elephant." This is especially true at Monterey Zoo and Vision Quest in Monterey, California where they support global elephant conservation even though elephants are no longer a part of their zoo.

In 2022, Monterey Zoo introduced their unique and rewarding Conservation Hall project to connect visitors with their own personal conservation impact. Each daily visitor is given a wooden quarter out of their price of admission and directed to the Conservation Hall. This area is lined with visual displays that represent over 40 different animal conservation efforts worldwide. Some are for projects that the zoo is directly involved in, and some are for organizations like IEF that the zoo has vetted and believes in. Charlie Sammut, the zoo's founder, says that this program "enables visitors to become part of an important conservation decision that all zoos must face each year, who to support and how. By the end of November 2023, our Conservation Hall display proudly raised over \$11,000.00, all of which was contributed to those animal conservation efforts world-wide."

The Conservation Hall has brought a new layer of conservation messaging to the zoo. Not only do visitors learn about animals as they experience them, but they are inspired to discuss what they've learned as they make their funding decision in the Conservation Hall. Since this exercise of choosing a charity began, Sammut reports that every day he sees children discussing, debating, and explaining to their parents, siblings, and friends why they want to support a particular species thereby witnessing the very thought process the program was designed to stimulate. Sammut adds that "We have found that affording people the ability to decide which species to help brings them closer to both that species as well as our zoo. For this reason we also hope other zoos will explore this method of allowing visitors to participate in their conservation decisions."

Curating the NGOs and conservation organizations to include in the Conservation Hall is an important task. Monterey Zoo carefully researches the organizations it includes in the program, looking at everything from financial responsibility to organization history to number of animals it helps. They want to maximize what they referred to as "bang for the buck" with the largest reach for the conservation dollar (or rather wooden quarter). It is important to note that their conservation philosophy is not limited to the species in their collection, stating that, "no responsible zoo can house ALL species of animals, nor should they try, but that doesn't mean the species that are not currently in our inventory are any less deserving of our support and protection."

Integrated into modern zoos is a mandate to conserve and protect wild things in wild places, especially endangered species, and no zoo is too small to make a difference. When asked what role zoos, including Monterey Zoo, play in the global efforts to protect wildlife, Sammut was very clear:

"The Monterey Zoological Society Board of Directors believes that zoos are in fact the "insurance policy of all remaining animal species", a challenge we take very seriously. To accomplish that task, zoos must share their animals with visitors who obviously cannot travel the great distances that might enable them to see and learn about such animals in their native habitats. By sharing, we educate and inspire visitors to recognize the tremendous value of those animals and to hopefully contribute to their conservation. We also feel that Zoo's contribute to the survival of all animal species by participating in breeding and management programs, both captive and in the wild. We need to perfect breeding programs for every remaining species in order to assure the continued existence of every remaining species should catastrophe strike in the wild. To accomplish all the above, funding is a vital ingredient that once again, zoos are charged with helping to solicit and distribute to those accomplishing this vital task."

Even though Monterey Zoo no longer has elephants, they believe it is important to stay active with elephant conservation. When asked about his previous elephant inhabitants, Sammut professed, "As anyone who has worked with elephants will attest, they quickly become family and family is forever!" Monterey Zoo recognizes that elephants are charismatic megafauna—physically large animals with wide public appeal—and therefore are important to inspiring the general public to care about animals and habitats. Iconic species like elephants serve as a means to draw people in and educate about the great number of lesser-known species we lose to extinction each year. "Should we lose a species as iconic as the elephant, all zoos will and should be held accountable therefore we must all support the conservation of some species regardless of whether or not we display them in our zoos, elephants being one of the most important," adds Sammut, showing that his facility truly has a long-term view about their responsibility to be good stewards of nature.

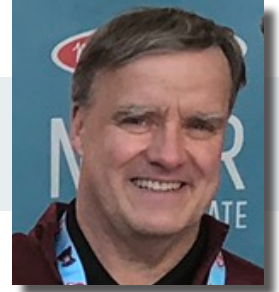
Building connections with wildlife can have a positive global impact, and IEF is proud to have the support of a diverse array of animal educators, animal ambassadors, zoos, and facilities. Monterey Zoo is channeling their history of animal encounters and ambassadorship to help elephants for generations to come, and global elephant populations are benefitting because of their support of IEF.



Board Member Spotlight

Tom Albert

The IEF Board of Directors is composed of individuals who have dedicated their lives to animals, often working hands-on as a trainer, keeper, or veterinarian. We often forget that there are other ways to help elephants that involve putting on a suit instead of work boots. Meet Tom Albert, lawyer, animal advocate, and IEF Board Member.



What is your background?

My professional background is as an attorney who has been practicing for about 35 years. I have also worked as a federal lobbyist. Much of my work as both a lawyer and lobbyist has focused on the regulation of animals and species conservation with a heavy focus on elephants.

Unlike many on IEF's Board of Directors, you were never an elephant keeper or trainer. How did you get involved with elephants and conservation?

I had been working on federal legislative and regulatory matters involving, among other things, the Endangered Species Act, CITES and the Asian Elephant Conservation Act (AECA). Those were my initial introductions to the world of elephants.

How did that lead you to the International Elephant Foundation?

In 2003 I joined FELD Entertainment as the VP of Government Relations. FELD is the owner and producer of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus. At the time Ringling had the largest herd of Asian elephants outside of Asia and one of the most successful breeding programs in the world. Because of the historical significance of the elephant to Ringling Bros., FELD had played a key role in two very important achievements in the area of elephant conservation: the enactment of the Asian Elephant Conservation Act (AECA) and the creation of the IEF. FELD/Ringling helped found IEF and was a major supporter for many years. I worked as an outside lawyer/lobbyist on the AECA on behalf of FELD and when I joined the company my background made it a natural for me to join the IEF board.

Can you tell our readers what the AECA is, what it did, and how it came to exist?

The Asian Elephant Conservation Act was enacted to establish a funding program to provide grants in support of Asian elephant conservation projects in range states. It is one of several such programs established for such purposes with other funds established for African elephants, rhinoceroses and tigers, and Great apes, among others. These funds are all managed by the US Fish and Wildlife Service under the umbrella of the Multinational Species Conservation Fund. The AECA and its African elephant counterpart were important milestones in elephant conservation as not only did they provide for the first time direct US government support of conservation projects, but in doing so it helped projects attract other monies but also incentivized more range country governments to support and sponsor elephant conservation projects. By establishing an infrastructure for vetting and supporting projects they help facilitate IEF support for worthwhile projects.

Since you have worked on behalf of elephants legally and legislatively, how does that connect with elephant conservation?

The world is interconnected on so many levels. Having been through various legal and legislative battles related to elephants I quickly came to understand the important role being able to see (and touch) elephants is tied directly to the commitment that many people feel about them. Somewhat ironically that even included many of the animal rights minded folks who don't like elephants in zoos and circuses. But without the opportunity to see and engage with them in person it is hard to see people caring as much about elephants and elephant conservation as they do and the vast majority of people will never get the chance to see elephants in person otherwise.

Do you feel that coming to the elephant community as somewhat of an outsider (not involved in the day-to-day management of elephants) gives you a unique perspective? If so, can you share your thoughts/insights?

From day one I have been impressed by how much the people who work with elephants care about not just the animals in their charge but fate of the species. In addition, I see the things that they often take for granted: how hard they work and how their animals' needs always come first. That is second nature to them but for an "outsider" like me it is very admirable.

Do you have any stories or experiences regarding your work with/for elephants that you think our readers might enjoy?

I have so many interesting experiences involving elephants it is hard to zero in on one. Maybe transporting semen for an AI [artificial insemination] procedure? That was a very unique experience! More importantly I can tell you that the people I have gotten to know and work with at IEF and in the larger elephant community are among the best people I know and I am very proud to be associated with them at all.

Is there anything else you would like to share with our readers?

Just to remind people that every little bit helps and that one of the best ways to support IEF and help elephants is to visit the zoos and other

facilities with elephants that are part of IEF. There are still some places where you can up close with elephants and I encourage everyone to do so if you ever get a chance, and there are also some really great zoos that are not part of IEF that you should visit too. You will get to see and learn about elephants and help all of those places contribute to elephant conservation.

Donor Spotlight

Elizabeth Jackson

What inspires someone to become a champion for elephants? Today, we meet Elizabeth Jackson, a remarkable individual who is helping IEF secure a brighter future for these majestic animals. Our donors are the foundation of our success, and Elizabeth's story is a testament to their incredible impact. Let's hear directly from Elizabeth:

Tell us about yourself, Elizabeth.

After 15 years working in architecture administration and operations, I realized I was happy enough but I wasn't living my once childhood dream of working with animals. It was a dream that never faded and always lingered somewhere in the back of my mind. Sometime around 2020, even though I was comfortable in my current career, I decided to make my dream a reality and applied to grad school. Now, I am nearly done and will be graduating summa cum laude with a master's degree in biology, focusing on wildlife conservation and animal science. I don't know where the wind will take me once I graduate, but I really hope it blows me in the direction of elephant rehabilitation and conservation. A career spent working with bears would be up there, too.



Do you own any pets?

I have two flame point Siamese cats (brothers) named Louie and Bo who I adopted as kittens in 2021. A lot had to fall into place for them to come into my life and I am forever grateful that they did. They bring me happiness every single day.

What inspired you to care about elephants?

There was no moment of inspiration, per se. I have always loved elephants and the more I learned about them, the more I fell in love with them. Their capacity to feel, nurture, bond, and display empathy, all make them such special creatures. Scientifically speaking, their ability to maintain and shape their ecosystems and contribute to rich biodiversity makes them integral to our environment, which I find pretty incredible. Mostly, though, I care about elephants because I feel innately drawn to them.

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

What has surprised me most about elephants isn't necessarily a factoid, rather a story. *The Elephant Whisperer* by the late Lawrence Anthony was full of surprises about a herd of wild elephants that had been written off by an entire country and marked for death. Mr. Lawrence, who owned his own wildlife refuge in South Africa, refused to let the government put the herd down, and long story short, rehabilitated the entire family through years of patience, kindness, and love. In the end, the herd was released back into the wild but never forgot the bond they made with Mr. Lawrence. They came back every year, always near the anniversary of their leaving the refuge, to give their thanks to the man who saved their lives. Amazing.

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

I went on a school research trip to Kenya last summer and saw dozens of wild elephants in the savanna, among many other species. The summer before, I went to Borneo and witnessed a family of elephants grazing along a riverbank. I've been lucky enough to do some pretty extensive travel in my life, which has allowed me to see many, many animals in the wild. Moments I will never forget and will always cherish.

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

I've been involved with IEF for a long time now, making monthly donations and attending web talks whenever I can. Honestly, I found IEF years ago, through my then obsession with Shark Tank. A couple of young entrepreneurs pitched their company The Elephant Pants and mentioned that they donate a portion of their proceeds to an organization called International Elephant Foundation. [Editor's Note: The Elephant Pants was a supporter of IEF for a limited time but unfortunately is no longer in business.] Naturally, I went onto The Elephant Pants website, ordered about 4 pairs of pants, and then went right over to IEF's website and signed on as a donor. I happily give what I can and know that it is going to one of the best causes in the world.

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