

ELEPHANT ECHOES

Updates from the International Elephant Foundation (IEF)

INTERNATIONAL
ELEPHANT
FOUNDATION.ORG

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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.



International Elephant Foundation Staff:

Deborah Olson

Executive Director

Sarah Conley

Director of Conservation

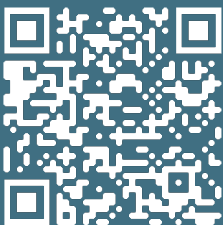
Julie Bates

Donor Relations Manager

Chase LaDue, PhD

Special Projects Manager

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Announcing Our 2026 Global Conservation Projects

The International Elephant Foundation is proud to share our 2026 portfolio of Conservation Projects—an inspiring collection of initiatives that span continents, cultures, and ecosystems, all dedicated to one shared goal: ensuring a future where elephants and people thrive together. From the grasslands of Kenya to the rainforests of Gabon and the river valleys of Sri Lanka, these projects carry forward IEF's longstanding commitment to collaborative, science-driven conservation.

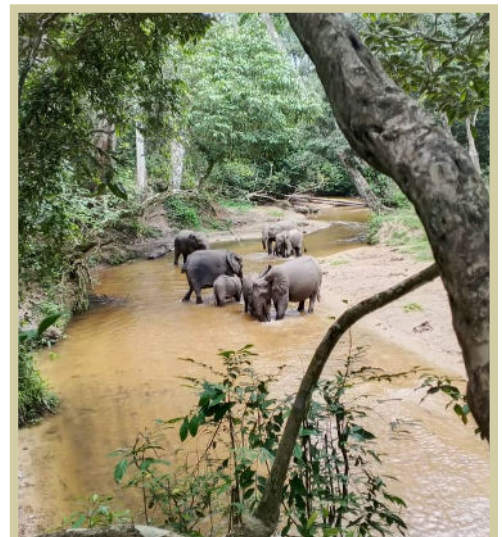
Across Africa's diverse savannah ecosystems, IEF supports a network of local partners and communities to reduce conflict, improve security, and protect the elephants who define these landscapes. Projects focusing on African savanna elephants include:

- ▶ Human-Elephant Conflict Mitigation in the KAZA Transfrontier Conservation Area, Zambia
- ▶ Conservation of Elephants in Murchison Falls Conservation Area, Uganda
- ▶ K9 Unit Operations in the Lower Zambezi, Zambia
- ▶ Elephant Conservation and Communities in Namibia
- ▶ Facilitating Human-Elephant Coexistence around Ruaha National Park, Tanzania
- ▶ Big Tusker Project, Kenya
- ▶ Increased Elephant Security and Monitoring in the Tsavo National Park, Kenya
- ▶ Mount Elgon Elephant Project (MEEP), Kenya and Uganda
- ▶ Mitigating Conflict with a Growing Elephant Population in Nsumbu, Zambia
- ▶ Next Generation K9 Elephant Guardians for the Place of Elephants, Zimbabwe



In the dense forests of West and Central Africa, IEF continues to strengthen conservation for the continent's lesser-known but critically endangered forest elephants. This year's efforts include:

- ▶ Assessing the Status of Digya National Park's Elephant Population and Corridors, Ghana
- ▶ Disrupting Ivory Trafficking Networks in Lambaréné, Gabon
- ▶ Strengthening Forest Elephant Conservation through Science and Outreach, Ghana



As urban development in Asia increases, Asian elephant habitat decreases, often causing human-elephant conflict, competition for resources, and increased wildlife crime. In 2026, IEF continues to invest in sustainable community-based conservation to promote coexistence and safeguard critical habitats. Our support for Asian elephant projects features:

- ▶ Elephant Response Units (ERUs) in Way Kambas National Park, Indonesia
- ▶ Building Community Capacity for Conservation: Transforming Scientific Research into Action, Sri Lanka
- ▶ Elephant Conservation in Koshi Tappu and Surrounding Areas, Nepal
- ▶ Project Asian Elephant: From Crisis to Coexistence, Bangladesh
- ▶ Community-Based Action for Human-Elephant Coexistence in Aceh, Indonesia
- ▶ Elephant Coexistence in Bhutan's Jomotsangkha Wildlife Sanctuary, Bhutan
- ▶ Community-Led Elephant Habitat Restoration and Coexistence Efforts in Assam, India

Bolstering IEF's global conservation strategy, we continue our support of critical research initiatives into Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV). These projects focusing on the pathogenesis and genomics of EEHV and the production of the EEHV1A vaccine are helping scientists better understand and combat this devastating disease that affects young elephants worldwide. This work has the potential to help every elephant on the planet.

Each of these 2026 projects reflects the power of partnership and the impact of donor support. Every contribution to IEF fuels solutions that save lives, strengthen communities, and protect the magnificent elephants that connect us all. Whether tracking herds, training rangers, or empowering communities through education and research, each project moves us closer to a lasting harmony between elephants and humans.

IEF is honored to support these incredible people and organizations whose projects protect elephants everywhere they roam.



Elephants, Art, and Beer!

What do elephant people do with their free time? Continue to help elephants of course! The Houston Zoo elephant team recently led a fundraiser for the International Elephant Foundation that included partnering with a local brewery!

The fundraiser was held in December at Saint Arnold Brewing Company, a craft brewery named after the patron saint of brewing, Saint Arnulf of Metz. After this event, we might have to call the Houston Zoo elephant team and Saint Arnold Brewing Company the patron saints of elephants. Brewery patrons were able to round up for conservation for the 10 days leading up to the event, allowing everyone to contribute their pennies for pachyderms.

Even the elephants at the zoo were represented at the event through their artwork. Elephant-painted pint glasses, cocktail glasses, trunk prints, skin prints, canvas art, and Christmas ornaments were available to purchase at the brewery. They were even displayed on a tablecloth painted by the Houston Zoo elephants! The zoo's volunteer department got involved too by promoting the event in their monthly newsletter.

All proceeds from art sales, round ups, and donations at the event will go towards protecting Asian elephants in range countries, including habitat patrols, education sessions, and promoting peaceful coexistence with communities.

IEF is lucky to have such phenomenal supporters who give their time to create magical events like this one. The Houston Zoo has a deep commitment to elephants whether it be through serving on the Board of Directors of the International Elephant Foundation or their long collaboration with Dr. Paul Ling at Baylor College of Medicine to fight Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV), they are continuously building a better world for elephants. We are so grateful!

If you are interested in hosting your own fundraiser to help elephants, contact jbates@elephantconservation.org.



Elephant Experts Descend on Dallas-Ft. Worth

21st International Elephant Conservation & Research Symposium

by Gwen Thomas

Trumpets and rumbles echoed across the Metroplex as 160 elephant researchers, practitioners, and students from around the world — plus 20 who joined virtually — gathered at the Fort Worth Zoo for the 21st International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium. Organized by the [International Elephant Foundation](#) and hosted by the [Fort Worth Zoo](#) in collaboration with Global Conservation Partner [Vantara](#), the four-day symposium (December 5–8) brought together representatives from 27 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas to share ideas and experiences advancing the conservation of both captive and wild elephants.

Daily keynote speakers anchored discussions and framed a wide range of presentations. Richard Moller, Co-Founder and CEO of Tsavo Trust in Kenya, shared insights from safeguarding the Tsavo Conservation Area, home to 40% of Kenya's elephants, including its iconic big tuskers. His address set the stage for sessions on technological innovations such as GIS, AI, and drones used for better understanding elephant behavior and to fight poaching. Sarah Maisonneuve, Founder of Wildlife Connection in Tanzania, highlighted her work in Ruaha National Park blending ecological research, education, and community engagement to promote coexistence between people and wildlife. Rachel Harris, Founder and Managing Director of Elephant Human Relations Aid (EHRA) in Namibia, focused on peaceful coexistence between desert-adapted elephants and local communities.

The keynote speakers set the stage for 74 presentations ranging from human–elephant conflict (HEC) addressing crop predation, local livelihoods, and local solutions from Kenya to Cambodia, to infrastructure and governance in elephant conservation with perspectives from India, Nigeria, Uganda, and Indonesia, and to on-the-ground conflict mitigation in Sri Lanka, Nepal, Mozambique, and Ghana. The symposium also focused on elephant genetics and advancing elephant healthcare in veterinary science particularly centered on Elephant Endotheliotropic Hemorrhagic Disease (EEHV), a highly contagious and often fatal virus, especially affecting young elephants. The 4-day symposium concluded with a behind-the-scenes visit to the Fort Worth Zoo's elephant facilities, including the reproductive science and EEHV serology lab, and a close-up visit with the zoo's newest resident—Birdie, (short for Lady Bird) a spirited four-month-old Asian elephant.

Between sessions, participants enjoyed Texas hospitality, from cocktails in Fort Worth and longhorn photo ops, to cowboy roping, boot scooting, and local entertainment. The International Elephant Foundation and the Fort Worth Zoo delivered an engaging, informative, and memorable symposium—sending participants home with fresh ideas, strengthened connections, and renewed commitment to elephant research and conservation worldwide.

Gwen Thomas is a Science Teacher at Shelton School in Dallas, a former state-wide Director of the Texas Society for Ecological Restoration, and a Texas Master Naturalist. She spent part of her childhood living in Kenya where she developed a passion for elephants and a concern for human–elephant co-existence.



Remembering Iain Douglas-Hamilton

At the end of last year, the elephant world lost one of its greatest champions with the passing of Iain Douglas-Hamilton. A visionary conservationist, a steadfast friend to elephants, and a cherished partner of the International Elephant Foundation, Iain is widely regarded as the father of modern elephant conservation. His early warnings about the ivory poaching crisis brought global attention to a tragedy that was devastating African elephant populations and too often ignored.

Born in Scotland, Iain went on to become one of the world's foremost authorities on African elephants, devoting nearly six decades to their study, protection, and understanding. His founding of Save the Elephants set a new standard for excellence in conservation. The International Elephant Foundation is honored to have supported the organization during its formative years and to have collaborated with Iain on numerous projects in the years that followed.

Throughout his life, Iain received many accolades, including a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) and the prestigious Indianapolis Prize. During his visit to Indianapolis to receive the award, he toured the Indianapolis Zoo with IEF's Executive Director Deborah Olson, who also served as the Zoo's Director of Conservation and Science Programs. Olson and the Indy Zoo elephant team had spent a decade advancing the science of African savanna elephant reproduction—work that led to the first and second African elephant calves born through artificial insemination, a milestone for the species. Iain was eager to meet one of these extraordinary young elephants.

That meeting became a profoundly meaningful moment for Iain. Despite a lifetime dedicated to protecting elephants, he had never before met, touched, or interacted with a young elephant in such an intimate way. It was a quiet, unforgettable encounter—one that revealed the depth of his devotion and the tenderness behind his life's work. Even for legends, meeting an elephant face to face is a life changing experience.



Donor Spotlight Doug Terranova

Meet Doug Terranova, whose lifelong devotion to wildlife began in childhood and led to a remarkable career traveling the world as an animal caretaker. From his first job at a small zoo to years spent with the circus, Doug has developed a profound and unique connection with these magnificent creatures. Driven by the fear that future generations might only know elephants through books and videos, Doug is a passionate supporter of elephant protection and a dedicated donor to the International Elephant Foundation (IEF). Read on to learn about the experiences that shaped his love for animals and why he is a dedicated champion for elephant conservation and what inspires him to give back.



Tell us about yourself:

My love for animals began as a young child. Growing up my family always had a dog, cat, and the occasional rabbit and gerbils! My fascination with wild animals was fostered by my grandfather. At the age of six he bought land on an island in Northern Michigan and built what has become our family cottage. We spent hours hiking in the woods looking for deer, raccoons, and any other wildlife we could find. Over the course of my life, I've been fortunate to share that place with my children too. At the age of 12 I started working in a small zoo in Muscatine Iowa. It was there I first fell in love with an elephant named Dolly. Upon graduating High School I joined the circus as an animal caretaker working with a great variety of animals including camels, llamas, horses, chimpanzees, lions, tigers, bears and, of course elephants! Over the course of my career, I traveled to all 50 states as well as 13 countries with these animals.

What inspired you to care about elephants?

Living and working with elephants is one of the most exhilarating experiences you can imagine. It's not even a career choice as much as it is a lifestyle. Anyone that has had the opportunity to interact with an elephant, whether feeding, washing, riding, or just observing them in their natural habitat feels a connection that is difficult to explain.

Why do you think it is important to protect elephants and wildlife?

Throughout my lifetime I've been fortunate to share elephants and other animals with people all over the world that may never have had the opportunity to interact with them otherwise. With the political changes that have come about over the past several years it is increasingly more difficult for people to have those experiences and, I fear, with the poaching, disease, and shrinking habitats in the wild that if we can't stem that tide our next generation will only learn about them through books and videos after they're gone.

Do you own any pets?

Yes, I have a few domestic animals at home. Dogs, birds, horses, ponies and donkeys. We also raise sheep and cattle.

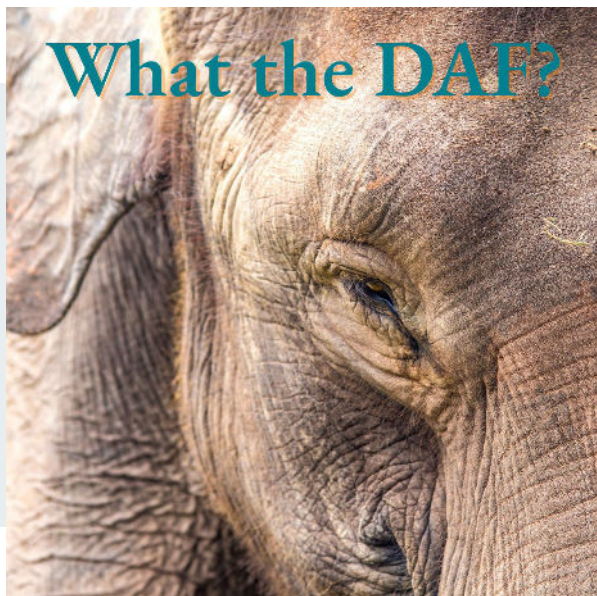
Tell us about your interactions and experiences with wildlife. Have you seen elephants or other favorite species in their natural habitat?

Living, working, and traveling with animals has given me so many memorable experiences that it's hard to list! Some of my most memorable were giving a lady a ride on an elephant for her 100th birthday. She said that was on her bucket list! Another very memorable experience was taking an elephant to a blind school and watching the children's reactions as they felt the trunk, ears, tusks, and even wrapped their arms around her legs to feel how thick they were. Sadly, in all my travels I have yet to see wild elephants in their natural habitat.

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

To me IEF is one of the top animal charities if you care about wildlife, especially elephants. When donating to ANY charity we all want as much of our donation as possible to go towards what it was intended to go to. Unfortunately, many charities use much of your dollar to cover "administrative costs" including huge salaries for their executives. That is definitely not the case at IEF and it means the world to me that IEF backs that up by posting the Charity Navigator link for people to check out where their donation goes themselves. I donate because I want future generations to be able to feel the same connection with these creatures that I have been fortunate enough to have. There are SO many different ways to make a difference with IEF... so many sponsorship opportunities, and I feel blessed that I'm in a position to be able to help out.

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



A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) is one of the fastest growing ways Americans choose to give. If you already have a DAF, you know it functions like a charitable investment account created solely to support the causes you care about. You can make a contribution, receive an immediate tax deduction, and then recommend grants from your fund over time.

Giving from your DAF is now easier than ever through our new website integration. Visit <https://elephantconservation.org/donate/> and select the DAF Pay option to make your gift.

On the Frontlines: How Community-based Programs and Technology are Shaping Elephant–Human Coexistence

Community based programs and innovative technologies are transforming elephant–human coexistence around the world, especially in regions where growing human populations and habitat loss place elephants at increasing risk. In many areas, the International Elephant Foundation supports efforts that help communities and elephants share landscapes more safely. These initiatives emphasize human–elephant conflict mitigation through education on elephant behavior, conflict prevention strategies, and the use of non lethal deterrents such as solar powered lights that activate when elephants approach, creating safer conditions for both people and wildlife.

Educational outreach remains a cornerstone of this work. Community workshops and hands on training sessions help residents better understand elephant behavior and learn how to interpret warning signs. Activities such as observing elephants in their natural environment foster respect, reduce fear, and build confidence—key steps in easing tensions that often stem from misunderstanding or uncertainty about elephant movements.

Recognition and incentive programs also encourage local participation in coexistence efforts. Households that adopt elephant safe practices or demonstrate peaceful coexistence are often acknowledged and supported with practical tools, including solar lighting systems and poli-wire electric fencing that protect homes and gardens at night. These community driven solutions highlight how local leadership and innovation can create meaningful, lasting change.

Across Africa and Asia, coexistence strategies increasingly incorporate advanced technology. GPS satellite collars help track elephant movements and identify potential conflict zones, enabling communities to take preventive action before elephants reach farms or villages. When combined with community patrols, anti poaching efforts, and the establishment of wildlife corridors, these tools contribute to a comprehensive approach that enhances safety for both elephants and people.

Wildlife patrol teams in many regions now rely on real time conservation software that integrates field observations and sensor data into a single operational picture. This technology improves situational awareness, accelerates responses to threats such as poaching or conflict incidents, and supports long term, data driven conservation planning. By connecting information across ranger stations and patrol units, it strengthens coordination and increases the effectiveness and safety of field teams.

Together, these efforts demonstrate the power of mutual understanding, local engagement, and technological innovation in advancing elephant conservation. By equipping communities with the knowledge and tools needed to coexist peacefully with elephants, these initiatives help create sustainable environments where both people and wildlife can thrive. Continued investment in community partnerships and emerging technologies remains essential to achieving long term human–elephant coexistence.

