



elephant
conservation
center

ANNUAL REPORT
2023

& 2024 perspectives

2023 ELEPHANT CONSERVATION CENTER 2024





OUR JOURNEY AND IMPACT

Since 2001, the ECC team has been actively involved in a range of initiatives aimed at protecting Asian elephants. These efforts include setting up a **registration system for captive elephants**, **mobile veterinary clinics**, **emergency response cards**, **protocols for the immobilisation of elephants in ‘musth’**, an **elephant care manual**, **national anti-trafficking campaigns**, **good practice guides for elephant tourism operations**, and **environmental education projects for local communities**.

In 2010, the ECC opened to the public with just one elephant and a concession of 105 hectares. By 2017, we had 13 elephants. In early 2018, the government halted the illegal sale of 12 elephants, sending them to the ECC and extending our land concession by a further 435 hectares. **Today, our 27 elephants live in a 530-hectare land concession and have access to 6,000 hectares of forest for pastures. They are the largest herd under human care in the country.**

ACES Conservation Leadership Award



We are proud to announce that the Elephant Conservation Center has been honoured with the **“Conservation Leadership” Award 2024** from the **Asian Captive Elephant Standards**. This esteemed recognition underscores our steadfast commitment to elephant care, conservation, and rewilding.

It highlights our leadership in advancing these efforts and reinforces our determination to **continue pioneering sustainable solutions for the future of Asian elephants**.

This award not only celebrates our achievements but also amplifies our impact, enabling us

to collaborate with other leaders in the field. In addition to **meeting all 116 mandatory criteria** in our elephant camp management, ECC has also fulfilled **all of the conservation-specific criteria**, and **more than 80% of the advanced criteria**. All areas of our facilities have been thoroughly audited by ACES. This includes camp and staff management, elephant welfare and enrichment, camp quality, visitor safety and experience, community relations, and conservation.

Elephant Conservation Center is a social enterprise that focuses on responsible stewardship, such as in environmental education, herding and rewilding, elephant breeding, scientific research, and high standards of elephant welfare.

Out of 10 elephant facilities audited across Asia by ACES, ECC was the only one to earn this honour.

<https://www.elephantstandards.com/accredited-camps>

MISSION STATEMENT

The 7 'Rs'
RESCUE - REHABILITATE - REPRODUCE
REHERD - REWILD - RESEARCH
RESPECT

Our mission and accomplishments are centred around our 7 Rs: Rescue, Rehabilitate, Reproduce, Reherd, Rewild, Research, and Respect. These principles guide our comprehensive approach to preserving and protecting Asian elephants, reflecting over two decades of dedicated work. Our mission continues, and our commitment to the 7 Rs guides our efforts to create a sustainable future for Asian elephants. Together, we can ensure a brighter future for these remarkable animals and their habitat.

RESCUE



At the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC), our conservation work begins with rescue. All of our elephants, except those born at the center, have been rescued and brought here for a second chance at life in a natural environment spanning over 530 hectares. Until 2018, most elephants in Laos were employed in the **logging industry**. When the government banned illegal logging, many elephants were left without work and were either sold to tourist venues or kept for breeding. To ensure their safety and well-being, we strive to purchase these elephants whenever they are put up for sale. **Among our residents, 12 elephants were rescued from an international trafficking ring.** In a decisive act, the then Prime Minister of Laos halted the traffickers just as they were about to board a plane in Vientiane, directing that the elephants be brought

to ECC for care. We gladly welcomed them into our center. Additionally, we have rescued elephants that were being exploited in a laser night show at a Chinese-owned casino near the northern border of Boten. In another instance, we took in an elephant handed over by our partner organisation, Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife (LCTW), as the conditions at ECC were deemed more suitable for the animal's well-being. These rescues mark the beginning of our commitment to providing a safe and natural habitat for elephants in Laos.

REHABILITATE

Once rescued, elephants often require extensive physical and psychological care. As the only elephant hospital in Laos, our **dedicated Vet & Biology Department**—consisting of one permanent Laotian vet, one vet technician, and three biologists—delivers high-quality medical care and rehabilitation. Equipped with a **state-of-the-art treatment facility, laboratory, and pharmacy**, our team is well-prepared to provide the best possible care. We utilise positive reinforcement techniques in training, ensuring a safer care process for both staff and elephants. Our hospital is open to any elephant in need and also serves as a training ground for veterinary students. **In 2024, we are launching a brand new Mobile Veterinary Clinic (WILDMED)** to extend our care beyond the Center. This initiative, in collaboration with our partner Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife (LCTW), is supported by the IUCN ProBioDev programme, the Wyss Academy for Nature, UNIVET Nature, the British Embassy in Laos, Eurofins Foundation, and the NGO Des Éléphants & Des Hommes.



REPRODUCE

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Conserving an endangered species like the Asian elephant requires not only protection but also proactive efforts to ensure a sustainable and genetically diverse population. At our facility, we operate **the only elephant breeding programme in Laos**, a critical initiative aimed at maintaining genetic diversity and increasing the elephant population within a controlled and secure environment. A major challenge in this endeavour is the **low natality rate among an ageing elephant population**, with current figures indicating only two births for every ten deaths annually. This demographic imbalance poses a serious threat to the long-term survival of the species. **Our breeding programme integrates the traditional knowledge of mahouts—who have centuries of experience managing elephants—with advanced scientific techniques to**

optimise reproductive success. This includes the use of **hormonal assays**, such as progesterone and oestrogen level monitoring, to accurately determine optimal breeding windows and diagnose pregnancy at an early stage. Additionally, we employ **semen analysis** to enhance breeding outcomes. By combining these approaches, we aim to address the critical reproductive challenges faced by the Asian elephant population, thereby contributing to the species' conservation and long-term viability.

REHERD

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Establishing **social groups** within our elephant population is a process grounded in a comprehensive understanding of their **natural behaviours and social dynamics**. Many of the elephants rescued and brought to the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC) have endured significant psychological **trauma due to prolonged isolation, exploitation, and overwork**. These adverse experiences can lead to a range of behavioural issues, making the reintegration of these elephants into social groups a delicate and complex task. At the ECC, our team of **caretakers and biologists conducts meticulous observations of each elephant's behaviour**, paying close attention to their interactions, communication patterns, and social preferences. This detailed behavioural analysis is crucial for identifying potential bonds between individuals and **determining**

the most compatible groupings. The goal is to **replicate the social structures found in wild elephant populations, which are vital for their psychological well-being.** The creation of stable, well-integrated herds is not only essential for the elephants' current well-being but also for their **future potential rewilding.** A strong, cohesive social group provides the foundation for successful reintroduction into natural habitat, **where social bonds play a critical role in survival and adaptation.** Our work in this area highlights the importance of understanding and supporting the complex social needs of elephants, ensuring that they can thrive both in captivity and, eventually, in the wild.



REWILD

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Rewilding elephants stands as **one of our most ambitious and transformative objectives.** Our groundbreaking rewilding programme is uniquely positioned as the **sole initiative in Laos dedicated to the successful reintroduction of elephants into their natural habitat**, thereby contributing significantly to regional biodiversity conservation. In **2019**, we achieved a landmark milestone by successfully reintroducing **four elephants into the Nam Pouy National Protected Area.** This historic endeavour involved a meticulous and multi-faceted approach, ensuring that each elephant was not only physically prepared but also socially and behaviourally equipped for life in the wild. Key components of our rewilding strategy include the formation of a compatible

herd, which is critical for social stability and survival in natural environments. The process required extensive behavioural assessments and the application of advanced enrichment techniques to foster natural social bonds and interactions among the elephants. Additionally, our programme emphasises the development of essential survival skills, such as foraging, navigation, and self-defence, which are crucial for their adaptation to the wild. Our rewilding efforts are underpinned by **rigorous scientific protocols and continuous monitoring to evaluate the elephants' adaptation and overall well-being post-release**. This comprehensive approach not only aids in the successful integration of these elephants into their new environment but also enhances our understanding of the broader ecological impacts of rewilding initiatives. By pioneering this rewilding programme, we aim to **restore ecological balance and contribute to the preservation of elephant populations, setting a precedent for future conservation projects in the region.**

RESEARCH

Our dedication to research seamlessly integrates traditional knowledge with contemporary scientific methods, advancing our understanding of elephant biology and conservation. At the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC), we are equipped with state-of-the-art research facilities, including a **cutting-edge endocrinology lab, a sophisticated diagnostic lab, and a DNA lab, developed in collaboration with The Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute**. These advanced laboratories play a pivotal role in supporting pioneering scientific research, providing critical insights into various aspects of elephant health and behaviour. Our efforts are significantly strengthened by **our team of three experts who are active members of the IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group**, ensuring that our work adheres to the latest global standards and practices. Our research capabilities have been further enhanced through **strategic partnerships with renowned international institutions**, supported by contributions from the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, UK Embassy in Laos, Australian Aid, Wyss Academy for Nature, and private donors. These collaborations have facilitated the **development of precise methodologies for monitoring hormonal cycles, studying the physiological and behavioural effects of musth and stress hormones, and optimising our breeding programmes**. Through these concerted efforts, we aim to deepen our scientific knowledge and improve the effectiveness of our conservation strategies, ensuring the well-being and preservation of Asian elephants.



RESPECT



Respecting elephants means **safeguarding both their natural habitat and the cultural heritage of their human caretakers**. At the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC), we prioritise the protection of elephants in their natural environment by training and supporting a dedicated ranger team in the Nam Poy National Protected Area, tasked with conserving wild elephant populations and their ecosystem. Equally, we hold Lao mahouts and their traditional knowledge and way of life in high regard. Beyond creating a safer environment for wildlife, the **ECC collaborates closely with local communities, fostering scientific tourism, delivering environmental education to schoolchildren, and promoting alternative agriculture projects to generate sustainable income**. Our ranger team, supported by the Government of Laos, also conducts anti-poaching patrols and vital habitat protection efforts.

*“Meet and interact with elephants
the ethical way at the Elephant
Conservation Center”*

– The Independent





Over the past year and a half, we have made significant strides, from the **successful “Save Boua” campaign**, securing young Mae Boua Ngeun’s future, to our groundbreaking **rewilding programme celebrating five years of success**. Our dedicated **Ranger Patrol Team** continues to safeguard the **Nam Poy National Protected Area**, and new partnerships and educational initiatives are enhancing our conservation impact.

The **Covid-19 pandemic** presented an **unprecedented challenge** for the Elephant Conservation Center. With tourism halted, our primary source of funding disappeared, putting us on the brink of bankruptcy.

In response, we launched several rescue initiatives, including crowdfunding campaigns and calls for help, to secure the future of our 27 elephants and dedicated team. Thanks to the **overwhelming support from our generous donors**, we managed to keep all our staff employed, unlike other elephant camps that sent their mahouts home with their rented elephants. Only a few hospitality staff were temporarily laid off, but we rehired them once the crisis passed. This unwavering commitment to our team and elephants underscores the strength of our community and our dedication to conservation, even in the face of immense challenges.

The Elephant Conservation Center works on the preservation of the Lao elephant population, both wild and those under human care. With the former increasingly under pressure from poaching and deforestation, and the latter declining due to aging, lack of breeding incentives, and overexploitation, solutions are urgently needed.

We must secure a healthy population of elephants under human care to act as a genetic reservoir if the wild elephant population were to collapse. To achieve this, **we need improved veterinary care and elephant welfare regulations** to increase their **birth rate**. We also need to **secure natural habitats** for wild populations and captive elephants suitable for rewilding.

In the years to come, we will continue to develop the **on-site hospital** and invest in improved training and treatment facilities, as well as a fully equipped **laboratory for parasitology, hormonal research, DNA analysis, diet, and reproductive research**. With the advantage of knowing the cycle of each of our female elephants, several sires can be hired or bought to ensure a genetically diverse herd. Although young elephants born at the Center are not ‘broken’ through the traditional training process to later work in logging or tourism, they do need to be controlled by their mahouts. This is achieved through positive reinforcement training.

Elephant welfare does not only refer to their physical condition. Elephants are very **social animals with a complex group structure**. For them to be able to live a fulfilling life, we strive to recreate an environment where a social group can be formed.

The socialization project is one of the initial stages towards the reintroduction of captive groups into the wild, which is our ultimate goal.

SEBASTIEN DUFFILLOT
FOUNDER, CEO

MEMBER
IUCN SSC ASIAN
ELEPHANT SPECIALIST
GROUP (ASESG)



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Sebastien DUFFILLOT
- Inthy DEUANSAVANH
- Jean-François REUMAUX

PRESIDENT
DES ELEPHANTS
& DES HOMMES NGO



“The work of the ECC (...) offers some hope for the future survival of Laos’ largest mammal.”

– The Diplomat



MEET THE

ECC TEAM

LAO ELEPHANTS BEST FRIENDS

Mr. Sebastien DUFFILLOT

General Manager

Mr. Khemphet XANAPHAN

Administration Office

Mrs. Céline GIBERT

Finance Officer

Mr. Anthony PHILIPPE

Site Manager

Elizabeth TOMPSON

Marketing & Sales

GUIDES

Mr. Khamphout SISONKHAM (Lar)

Mr. Bounxuang THAMMAVONG (Xou)

Xayphone Chithakhone (Phone)

OFFICE CLERK

Mrs. Pok XAYYAPHETH

HOUSE KEEPERS

Mrs. Aonh SAENGPACHANH

Phonesavanh SOUKTHAVONE (Pia)

Phonesavanh SENGPACHANH (Tik)

COOKS

Mrs. Chan KUNTHAVONG

Mr. San (to) KANHTHAVONG

Mr. Sone VANNAVONG

Ms. Thavee VANNALAR (Lar)

Ms. Chilananh SOPHAKOUN (Dam)

MAINTENANCE

Mr. Peng PANYAPHENG

Mr. Bounthan SIVONG

Mr. Sisawas VANNALAR

Mr. Khamphoo (dam) PANHYAPHENG

Mr. Souliyanh (Suer) XOYVANH

Mr. To LUCKSYVEE

Mr. Somlith PANHYAPHENG

Mr. Somchit PHANHYAPHENG

DRIVERS

Mr. Thavone KEOVIMON

Mr. Viengkone XAYASITH (Khone)

GUARDS

Mr. Bounthan KHONESAVANH

GARDENERS

Mr. Xem BOUNYAVIENG

Mr. Alout SIPHANH

Mr. Somlak PHIMBOUATHONG

Mr. Soum VILAY

Mr. Be PHOUTSADEE

Mr. Bop VILAYTHONG

*“One of the world’s best places
to see elephants”*

– Wanderlust

Mrs. Anabel LOPEZ PEREZ
Head of Education & Research

Mr. Sounthone PHITSAMONE (Kan)
Elephant Manager

Moukthida VILASITH (Mouk)
Veterinarian

BIOLOGISTS

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Pavina Chalernshouk

MAHOUTS

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Mr. Norkeo INTAPHOM
Mr. Kamsouk SOMVILAY (Souk)
Mr. That KENKHAM
Mr. Xang DITOU
Mr. Bounma OUPAVANH
Mr. Noy CHANTHAVONG
Mr. Khamhack HOUMPHENG
Mr. Noymone KHAMKEUANG
Mr. Somphone PHOMATHEP
Mr. Noyvung CHANTHAVONE
Mr. Inthone PHOMMATHEP
Mr. Thongsack THONGPADAP
Mr. Khaow SAYAVONG
Mr. Som THONGKASEARN
Mr. Lang SENGPHEP
Mr. Somphone KAENKEO
Mr. Noyda CHANTHAVONE
Mr. Naly ONSI
Mr. Khampout DUANGMANY
Mr. Keo INTHAVONG
Mr. Pone DOANGKEO
Mr. Soulin KHAMMOUNTHA
Mr. Mone INTHAVONG
Mr. Phanousone ONSI
Mr. Saleum KHONGSAVANH
Mr. Ban KHAMMONGKHOUN
Mr. Moun CHAMPAPHENG
Mr. Xing CHANTHAVONG

“An innovative project to utilise Laos’ elephant experts in service of protecting the country’s natural treasures”

– Geographical

WITH OUR PARK RANGERS

ON PATROL

SECURING THE NAM POUY NATIONAL PROTECTED AREA



In Sayaboury Province, there is still a biodiversity hotspot where a wild elephant population roams free. We need to make sure this area is safe and secured. This means running **ranger patrols**, understanding and preventing the causes of human-elephant conflicts, and monitoring the movements of elephants using **camera traps and GPS tracking**. To ensure the validity of its projects, the Center will have to house multiple elephants at different levels of its rewilding programme. A constant group of 20 to 30 is optimal, providing plenty of food and space to our elephants before they can be released into the 192,000 hectares Nam Pouy National Protected Area. The ECC is responsible for training and equipping the current Ranger Team. In collaboration with the Sayaboury Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, the ECC organizes **field missions to strengthen law enforcement in the Nam Pouy National Protected Area**, which houses Laos' second-largest wild elephant population. These patrols mark the beginning of

a safer habitat for elephants and other species. We aim to secure additional funds to increase the number of rangers patrolling this vast area. Currently, running both the elephant release project and ranger patrols is made possible thanks to the long-term support of the **International Elephant Project**. **From January 2020 to February 2024, the team spent over 939 days on patrols resulting in 69 arrests, 33 firearm confiscations, and the shutdown of 51 logging operations.**

FREEDOM AT LAST!

REWILDING

RELEASING ELEPHANTS IN NAM POUY PROTECTED AREA

The ECC made Lao history by releasing **4 elephants into the wild in the Nam Pouy National Protected Area**. After a lengthy process aiming at creating a compatible elephant herd, elephants were eventually released on March, 18th, 2019. March 18th, 2024, marked a significant milestone in the release project's journey, celebrating **five years of success in reintroducing elephants Dor Khoun Mueang and Mae Mah to their natural habitat within Nam Pouy National Protected Area**. The **ongoing monitoring efforts have revealed a remarkable story of resilience and thriving wildlife**.

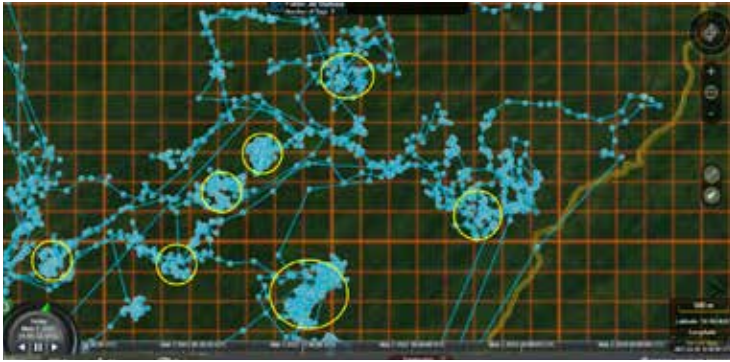


Over the past five years, both elephants have flourished, exhibiting robust health and engaging in behaviours characteristic of their species, such as foraging, socializing, and exploring the vast 20,000-hectare expanse they now call home. As part of the continuous monitoring initiative, **new GPS collars** have been fitted onto Dor Khoun Mueang, Mae Mah and the other two adult females that are part of the programme, providing invaluable insights into their movements and habitat utilization patterns within the park. This technological advancement has empowered the mahouts with real-time data accessible via mobile phones, enabling them to **track the elephants' whereabouts and make informed decisions regarding their care and management**.



“The ECC team are now working towards their rewilding goal”

– The Telegraph UK



Dor Khoun Mueang, now transitioning into a sub-adult male, is gradually embracing independence, often venturing alone while still maintaining close ties with his aunties. The deployment of the GPS collar serves as a vital tool in ensuring his safety and the well-being of neighboring communities during this exploratory phase of his life. The long-term objective is for Dor Khoun Mueang

to establish his own territory and form social bonds with wild females for eventual mating. Meanwhile, Mae Mah’s journey has been marked by encounters with a wild male, a recurring phenomenon over the years. Despite these interactions, there has been no indication of pregnancy thus far. With Mae Mah nearing the age of 40 and never having birthed a calf in her younger years, the prospect of motherhood grows increasingly uncertain. While hope remains, the reality looms that her role as a surrogate mother to Dor Khoun Mueang might be the closest she comes to experiencing motherhood herself. Yet, the team perseveres, holding onto optimism for future possibilities while acknowledging the intricate dynamics of wildlife reproduction.

Outside the forest, **the release project team have been lobbying the government to consider elephant reintroduction as a part of their national elephant conservation strategy.** Thanks to financial support from the **Wyss Academy for Nature**, the project team took some of Laos’ decision makers from the Wildlife, Forestry and Protected Area Management Divisions to see a successful reintroduction project in Thailand. This 3-day workshop saw **representatives from Laos, Myanmar and Thailand discuss previous and future elephant reintroduction efforts.**



We hope these sorts of discussions can help push towards formal elephant releases in Laos in the future.

We are pleased to announce that **Michael Falshaw, our Head of Conservation**, has recently published two significant papers in **Gajah**, the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group’s magazine:

- **Camera trap study of wild elephants in Nam Pouy National Protected Area**
(Pages 23-25) - DOI: 10.2305/KXDW8438
- **Using satellite tracking for health monitoring and treatment of released work elephants**
(Pages 26-29) - DOI: 10.2305/YCVY9414

<https://www.asesg.org/gajah.php>





The ECC is collaborating with the **Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute** to expand our current laboratory capacity by establishing a **DNA lab**. This lab will enable us to **monitor the genetic diversity of both captive and wild populations**.

The **Denver Zoo** and **EUROFINS Foundation** are supporting the **training of our Lao veterinarian and biologist, Mouk and Pavina**, in various fields to better prepare them for future laboratory and fieldwork. Additionally, the **ECC, in partnership with**

Free the Bears and the Lao Conservation for Wildlife Trust, has successfully integrated a **wildlife module into the veterinary curriculum for fifth-year students at the Faculty of Agriculture of the National University of Laos**. With the support of the **Denver Zoo** and **EUROFINS Foundation**, we can provide improved education for future veterinarians in the country. Mouk and Pavina will be better equipped to teach this course, which will have a direct impact on conservation efforts in the coming years. Education is crucial for conservation, and by supporting the training of local veterinarians and laboratory technicians, the Denver Zoo and EUROFINS Foundation are helping us build capacity in the country, which will significantly enhance conservation outcomes in the future. We are also pleased to welcome two Laos vet students who undertake an internship in parasitology and hematology in elephants.

International Veterinary Workshop at the ECC. In December 2023, ECC and Yaboumba NGO from France organized the first international workshop on elephant veterinary medicine and surgery at our Center. Led by prominent wildlife veterinarians Endre Sos and Norin Chai, the workshop welcomed a group of a dozen young vets from the world over, providing **lectures and hands-on courses in the fields of diagnostic, ophthalmology, parasitology, foot and mouth care, and the use of an ultrasound machine**. We warmly thank **UNIVET Nature, Fuji Film and EUROFINS Foundation** for their valuable contribution to the veterinary training courses undertaken at the ECC.



The **ECORE Project**, launched by the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC) in 2022, integrates **education, conservation, and research** to advance environmental research and elephant conservation in Laos. The initiative aims to protect the environment while fostering scientific research across wildlife, biodiversity, social sciences, and community development. Ecore strives to create sustainable strategies for long-term conservation and ecosystem protection.

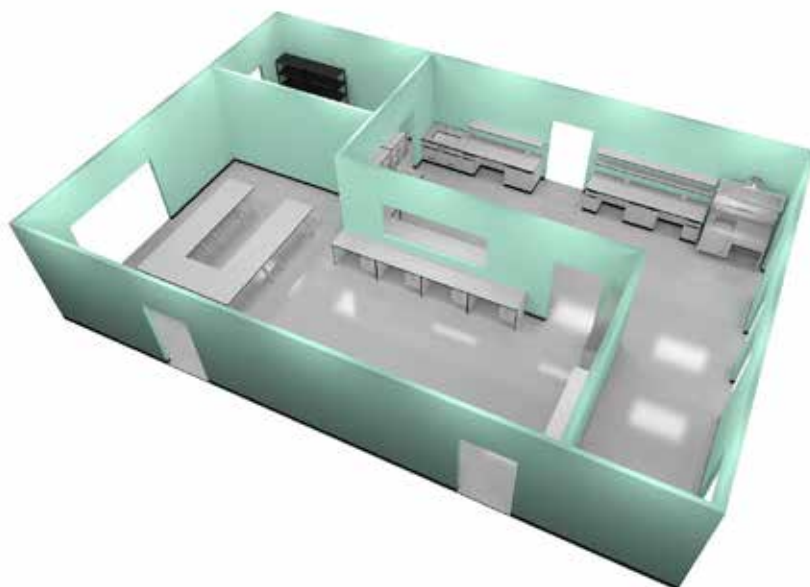


A key goal of the project is to **establish the ECC as a premier hub for conservation education and research, attracting global students and researchers** to build future conservation leaders. Significant milestones include engaging 233 international schools in Asia through educational outreach, updating the Ecore website and materials to reflect programme developments, and organizing a **workshop in November 2024 in Laos for conservation stakeholders**. This workshop will be held from November 10-14 with 25 participants from many prestigious universities and research institutions.

<https://www.elephantconservationcenter.com/ecore/>

ECORE has also made strides in collaborating with the **National University of Laos (NUoL)** by supporting 25 students and a teacher from Vientiane to attend a **wildlife course** at the ECC in 2023 and 2024, in partnership with Wyss Academy for Nature, Free The Bears, Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife and EUROFINS Foundation. These efforts aim to position ECC as a global center for education and conservation research while actively contributing to elephant and biodiversity conservation.

The Ecore initiative has also led to the entire upgrade and refurbishment of the original “Elephant Hospital” into a **new building that will accommodate Ecore’s workspaces** where students and researchers will be able to work individually and in groups. Part of the building will be used as ECC’s elephant **diagnostic lab and pharmacy**.



BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

KIDS IN CONSERVATION

ELEPHANTS: A KEYSTONE SPECIES & NATIONAL EMBLEM

The ECC is proud to welcome local students from schools across the Sayaboury province to our **educational day programme**. As part of our “**Kids in Conservation**” initiative, students learn about Asian elephants and the importance of conservation. The programme includes visits to the Elephant Nursery, Elephant Bath, Elephant Museum, Elephant Hospital, and Elephant Skeleton display, as well as a tour of the surrounding Center. Students also tour Nam Tien Lake to observe the effects of deforestation in areas not managed by the ECC, learning about the critical need to conserve this tropical forest.



This programme is vital for educating future generations about Asian elephants and conservation efforts. For many students from Sayaboury, this will be their first encounter with elephants, despite the province having the largest number of elephants under human care in Laos. **This year, we have welcomed 27 groups, totalling over 640 students, thanks to the generous sponsorship from the Wyss Academy for Nature.**

FREE AT LAST

ELEPHANT RESCUE

IN NATURE IMMACULATE

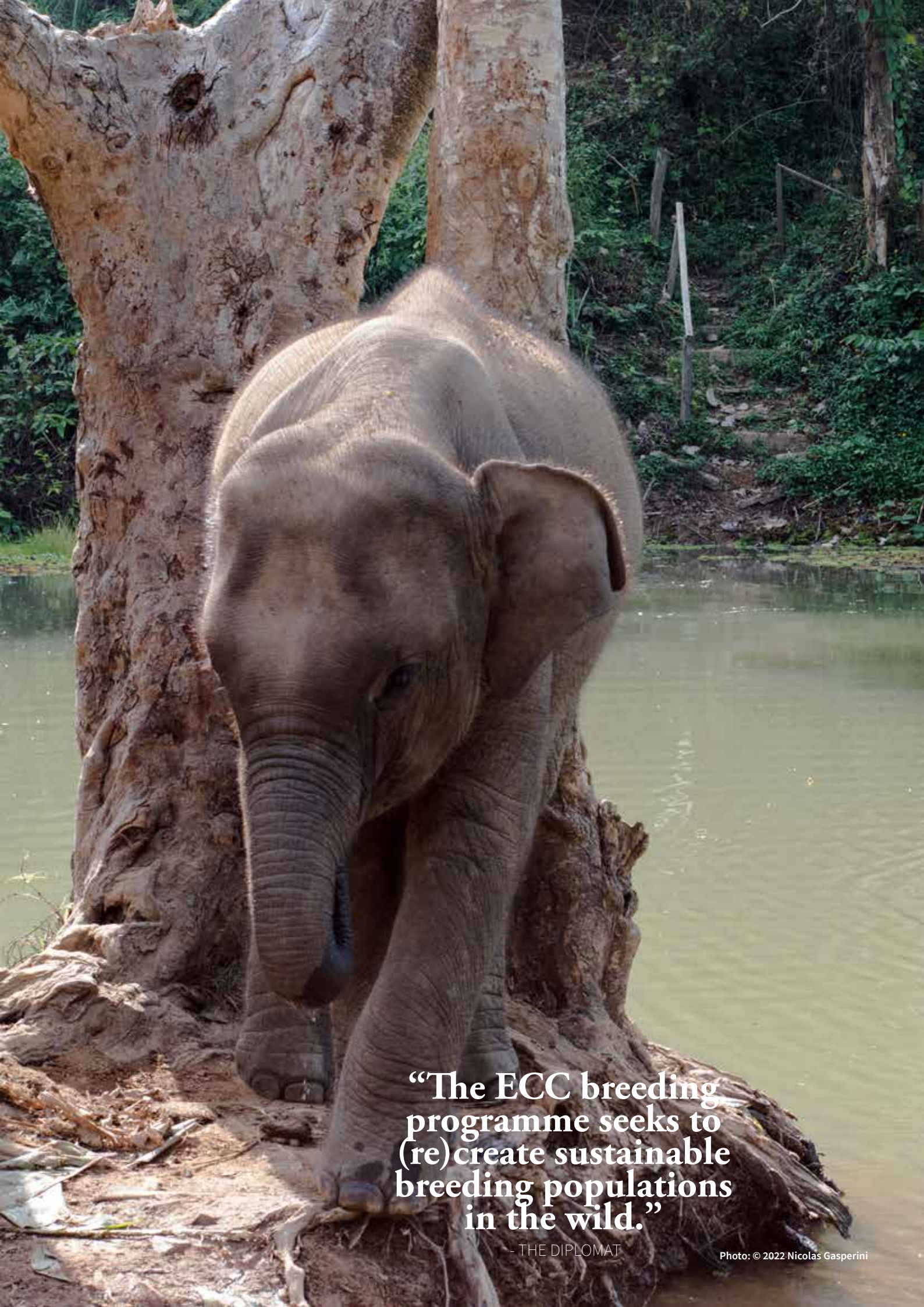
We are thrilled to announce the success of the ‘**Save Boua**’ fundraising campaign for Mae Boua Ngeun, culminating in the transfer of \$90,000 on April 30, 2024, and the **official transfer of ownership to ECC on May 8, 2024**. Thanks to the generosity of hundreds of donors, Mae Boua Ngeun will continue her peaceful life at ECC, free from exploitation. Despite the flawed system that requires us to purchase elephants to save them, we can celebrate that Mae Boua Ngeun will never endure a life of servitude. **We give a heartfelt thank you to all who donated, ensuring Mae Boua Ngeun’s safe future.** We give a special thanks to **Sun Bear Outreach and Work for Wildlife** non-profits who partnered with ECC for this campaign, driven by empathy and guaranteeing that 100% of donations directly supported Mae Boua Ngeun. We are also thankful to receive the **donation of elephant Keo Khoun by Laos Conservation Trust for Wildlife to the ECC**. This elephant is now in Nam Pouy National Protected Area.



New Food Plantation: In 2022, a staffing shortage delayed the planting of our food plantation. This issue was compounded by a particularly dry season with minimal rainfall, resulting in insufficient food production for our elephants. Consequently, we had to purchase supplies from local growers at a significantly higher cost. The main reason we need to plant additional food is the increasing deforestation caused by people cultivating cassava and feeding their cattle during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before the pandemic, we employed farmers to grow elephant fodder and allowed elephants to graze on private land after harvests. However, the pandemic forced farmers to return to their land, creating competition for food and grazing areas between elephants and cattle. Additionally, farmers expanded their crops during this period, further reducing the available grazing space for the elephants. This year, with support from the NGOs **Elephant Care International** and **Work for Wild Life**, we have been able to **replant our food plantation on a much larger scale**. At our center in Sayaboury, we have planted banana, napier grass, and sugar cane to feed our herd. Despite a dry start to the season, we remain hopeful for more rain to ensure a bountiful harvest throughout the coming year.





“The ECC breeding programme seeks to (re)create sustainable breeding populations in the wild.”

- THE DIPLOMAT

Photo: © 2022 Nicolas Gasperini

A ground-breaking initiative, the WILDMED Project, has been launched in Laos to revolutionize wildlife conservation efforts in the country. This project, a **collaborative endeavour between the Lao Wildlife Conservation Trust (LCTW), the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC), and the French NGO Des Elephants & Des Hommes (DEDH)**, seeks to address the urgent need for veterinary care and emergency response in the nation's rich but vulnerable wildlife.



Addressing a Critical Need: Laos is recognized as a biodiversity hotspot, yet it faces a significant crisis due to increasing threats from **human-wildlife conflicts, illegal trafficking, and zoonotic diseases**. One of the major challenges has been the near-complete lack of veterinary capacities in conservation medicine. The WILDMED Project aims to fill this gap by **establishing a Wildlife Mobile Emergency and Diagnostic Unit**, designed to respond swiftly and effectively to wildlife emergencies across the country.

Innovative Solutions for Conservation: The core of WILDMED is the creation of a **Wildlife Emergency Response Team capable of deploying to any location within 24 hours**. This team will be equipped with two mobile wildlife ambulances—capable of delivering immediate medical care in the field. This rapid response capability is crucial in mitigating the impacts of emergencies on wildlife, ensuring that animals receive timely and appropriate treatment.

In addition to emergency response, the WILDMED units will engage in **disease surveillance**, sample collection, and ongoing health assessments, contributing to a broader understanding of wildlife health in the region. This data will be invaluable in shaping future conservation strategies and policies.

Building Local Capacity: The project is also focused on building local capacity by training Lao veterinarians and offering internships to veterinary students from the National University of Laos. This approach not only addresses immediate conservation needs but also invests in the future by empowering local professionals to lead conservation efforts.

Special Focus on Elephant Conservation: Elephants, one of Laos's most iconic species, are a focal point of the WILDMED project. The initiative integrates a **One Health approach**, which recognizes the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. This is particularly important in the context of semi-wild elephant populations, where close contact with humans poses both conservation and public health challenges. The project will conduct preventive health checks for these elephants and organize tuberculosis screening for community members who frequently interact with them. This dual focus on animal and human health exemplifies the holistic approach that WILDMED is pioneering.

A Collaborative Effort Supported by a Pool of International Organisations: The WILDMED Project is one of 11 initiatives selected for funding under the **IUCN ProBioDev** programme, an effort supported by a coalition of public and private partners, including the French Development Agency (AFD) and the French Office for Biodiversity (OFB). The project has been awarded a grant of €195,000 for a 24-month period, underscoring the international community's commitment to enhancing biodiversity conservation in Laos. Other partners supporting the WILDMED initiative include the **Wyss Academy for Nature** (US\$ 75.143), the **UK Embassy in Laos, via the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office** (US\$ 30,000) and other partners such as France-based **UNIVET Nature** and **Des Elephants & Des Hommes** NGO.

Looking Forward: The launch of the WILDMED Project represents a significant step forward in wildlife conservation in Laos. By combining emergency veterinary care with community involvement and capacity building, the project sets a new standard for conservation efforts in the region. As WILDMED units begin their work, they not only provide immediate benefits to wildlife but also lay the foundation for a sustainable, long-term approach to conservation in Laos.

<https://uicn.fr/eleven-new-projects-supported-by-probiodev/>

THE ELEPHANT BAMBOO FOREST

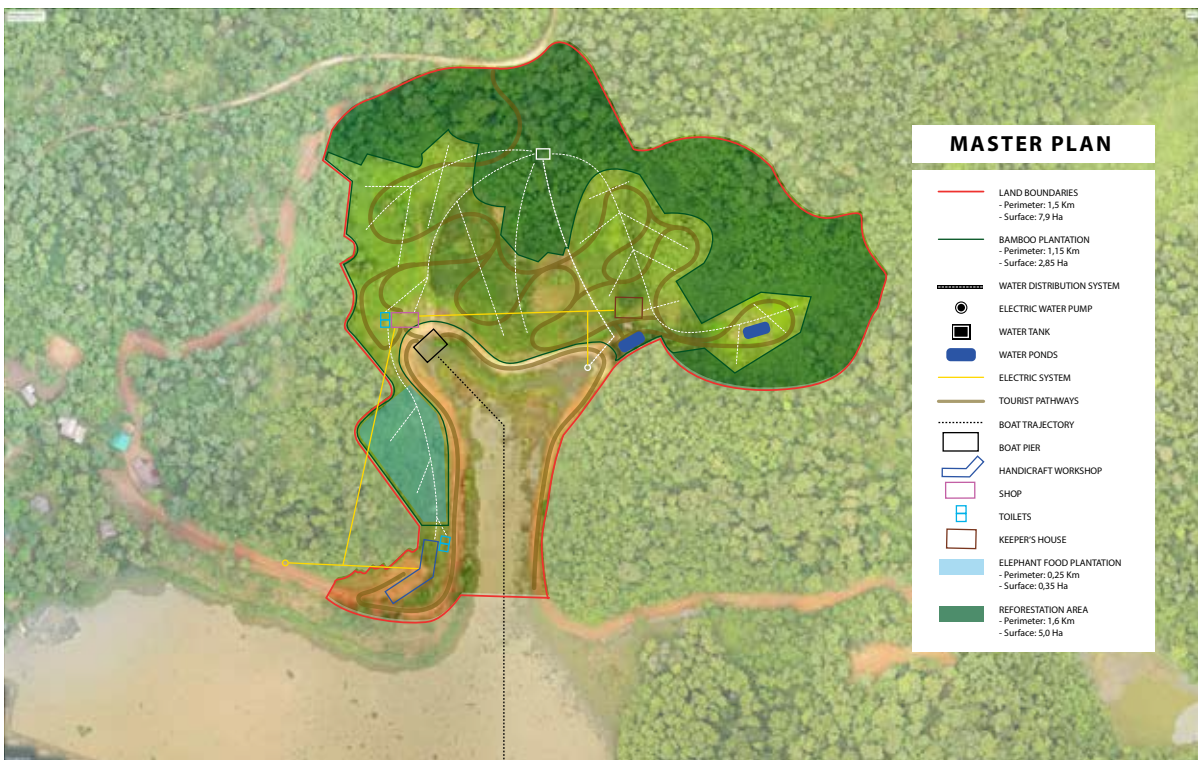
NEW IN
2024



The partnership between the Wyss Academy for Nature and the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC) is geared towards testing innovative solutions to mitigate land-use conflicts and enhance community livelihoods, while ensuring conservation of land of ecological value. The **creation of a Bamboo forest for tourism, handicraft and research purposes** in Nam Tien meets these objectives.

The project was initiated with Mr. Michel Saada, a specialist in Bamboo and NFTPs working and living in Laos for 30 years. Mr. Saada traveled to China and Thailand to identify species of bamboo suitable for the project, visit botanical gardens and bamboo forests, meet their managers and other bamboo specialists across the region to gain additional expertise and widen our network of bamboo experts. Having gained additional knowledge, Mr. Saada designed the bamboo forest masterplan together with ECC Director Sebastien Duffillot and ordered seeds and seedlings that were later kept at a tree nursery established at the ECC site for the purpose of being planted as the rainy season started. Land has since been levelled at the designated site, walkways have been created and cement stairs installed, holes have been drilled. Staff has been hired to help with plantation and guarding the site. Over 370 seeds and seedlings have been planted on site with help from ECC farmers as the rainy season has just began in Laos.

Sayaboury Head of Information, Tourism and Culture was officially presented with a description of the project and its environmental, social and economical value. So was the Governor of the Province. Both received the project with enthusiasm and were supportive of its development. Our team has completed the construction of the **handicraft workshop** that will welcome tourists and members of the local communities willing to learn bamboo handicraft production. The workshop is expected to be **operational in October 2024**, quickly followed by 'training of trainers' sessions.





“ECC rescues elephants from the logging industry”
– The Guardian

*“A chance to observe the elephants
from morning until evening”*

– Lonely Planet

24 YEARS IN THE FIELD

KEY NUMBERS

ANIMAL WELFARE. POPULATION MANAGEMENT. HABITAT PROTECTION.

For the past 24 years, we have used a mix of traditional local knowledge and science to improve the well-being of the Lao captive elephant population. Since 2018, our main focus has been on creating the conditions necessary to return elephants to the wild. Our achievements are shown here and we hope that, with the continued help of our supporters and local communities we can continue our work in Laos and beyond.

24 YEARS. Our team started work in Laos with the ElefantAsia NGO back in 2000. In 2010, the ECC was born. From humble origins, our conservation programmes now employ 68 people.

450 Captive Elephants microchipped & registered in a **NATIONAL DATABASE** at the Department of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture & Forestry of Laos (90% of the captive population.)

60,000 Lao **CHILDREN** reached via our “Kids in Conservation”, “Mobile Elephant Library” and “Elephant Caravans” educational projects & publications.

192,000 monitored and protected hectares of forest in the **NAM POUY** National Protected Area.

12 elephants **RESCUED** from illegal trafficking rings operating in Laos, China and the Middle-East.

27 ELEPHANTS and **68 STAFF** under our care on the **6,000 HECTARE** Nam Tien concession used by the ECC in Sayaboury Province.

91% of our staff is **LAO** from the **SAYABOURY** Province.

“An innovative project to utilise Laos’ elephant experts in the service of protecting the country’s natural treasures.”

- GEOGRAPHICAL UK -

4 elephants **RETURNED TO THE WILD** in the Nam POUY National Protected Area in March 2019.

3 PHDs since Year 2007. **3** Staff members of the **IUCN ASIAN ELEPHANT SPECIALIST GROUP**

11 RANGERS working alongside ECC conservationists in the Nam POUY NPA.

25,000 FOLLOWERS on social media and the Internet.

11 MALE ELEPHANTS under our care at ECC.

ONLY elephant sanctuary in Asia to be granted the **CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP AWARD** by independent auditing organisation **ASIAN CAPTIVE ELEPHANT STANDARDS**.

Kyoto University's Wildlife Research Center

On May 20 and 23, 2023, Sebastien Duffillot, founder of the Elephant Conservation Center, presented past, current and future research projects and conservation work undertaken in Laos to protect Asian elephants to an audience of international environment conservation students. We extend our warm gratitude to Dr. Hidefusa SAKAMOTO, Director General of **Kyoto City Zoo** and Dr. Masayuki TANAKA, Director of the **Wildlife Research Center** for their support in organising this cycle of lectures in **Kyoto, Japan**.



International Elephant Project

In August 2023, we were glad to welcome a **delegation from International Elephant Project**, our main partner in our elephant release programme and key supporter of the Nam Pouy National Protected Area ranger patrols. IEP supports the equipment and training of the rangers as well as the salaries of the former mahouts now running our wild elephant monitoring unit.

<https://www.internationalelephantproject.org/>



Wyss Academy for Nature

Thank you to **Wyss Academy for Nature (WAN)** for your visit to our center, and for your ongoing support. WAN is a Swiss-based organisation that was ECC's largest contributor in 2023, supporting a range of projects from habitat protection to social-economic development and income generating activities for rural communities, wild elephant monitoring and conservation, elephant reproduction, and promotion of science-based conservation programmes.



Fujifilm & UNIVET Nature donate new ultrasound machine



SAS Fujifilm Vet Systems and UNIVET Nature support elephant reproduction in Laos. In 2023, the ECC faced a significant challenge: the absence of a crucial **ultrasound machine to monitor the gestation of elephants**. In response to this urgency, SAS Fujifilm Vet Systems decided to collaborate with the ECC by donating a state-of-the-art ultrasound machine. This new partnership enables the center's veterinarians to closely monitor elephant gestation, contributing to increased chances of reproduction and the preservation of this endangered species.

<https://univetnature.org/2023/11/20/un-partenariat-inedit-entre-des-elephants-et-des-hommes-et-fujifilm/>

IUCN Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Captive Elephants

A major milestone for reintroduction of captive elephants into the wild. Thank you to all participants who contributed to this publication of the IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group, and contributors Anabel Lopez Perez and Michael Falshaw from the Elephant Conservation Center who shared their experience with the group after successfully releasing 4 elephants into the Nam Poy National Protected Area, Lao PDR since March 2019! These guidelines provide informed advice to decision-makers in Asian elephant range state governments, managers on the ground, non-governmental organisations, donors and other practitioners wishing to rehabilitate and reintroduce Asian elephant populations for the primary purpose of conserving wild populations in the long-term.

<https://www.asesg.org/images/WG%20report-%20Rehabilitation%20of%20elephants.pdf>



ECC on TV



On July 13, 2024 Asian Captive Elephant Standards' Nicolas Dubrocard discussed the importance of tourism in Asian elephant conservation in this piece for **TF1** (in French).

<https://www.tf1info.fr/international/videos/video-elephants-d-asie-sauves-par-le-tourisme-9995-2308555.html>



Follow the Elephant Conservation Center in this documentary film about Laos by ARTE. You can view it via the **ARTE** app. It was broadcast live on ARTE TV on July 1, 2024. (French and German languages)

<https://www.arte.tv/.../10349.../laos-l-elogue-de-la-lenteur/>



The Elephant Conservation Center was honoured to be featured on Paul O'Grady's final ever episode on **ITV1**. "The star made Paul O'Grady's Great Elephant Adventure in the months before his sudden and unexpected death. The two-part series followed him as he travelled through Thailand and Laos learning about the work done by elephant conservation centers to rescue, rehabilitate and protect the gentle giant animals."

Lonely Planet's top 10 must-visit spots in Laos



We're thrilled to be **#8** on Lonely Planet's top 10 must-visit spots in **Laos**. ECC stands out as a leading destination for tourists in Laos. Come to the land of elephants in Sayaboury to learn about our conservation programmes and to observe elephants in their natural habitat.

<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/articles/best-places-to-visit-in-laos>

Trip Advisor Travellers' Choice Award

We are proud to announce that the Elephant Conservation Center has been recognized by TripAdvisor as one of the **top 10% of things to do worldwide!** As Laos' ONLY Elephant Conservation Programme, we offer a unique experience where you can see elephants in their natural habitat. Every visit to ECC contributes directly to our conservation efforts, including our exclusive breeding programme and successful rewilding of elephants. Thank you to all our visitors for your incredible reviews and support. This achievement is a testament to our shared commitment to elephant conservation. Come visit us and be a part of something truly special!



ECC on Klook



Elephant Conservation Center is now featured on the renowned travel platform, **Klook!** This milestone reflects our dedication to elephant conservation and quality ecotourism. <https://www.klook.com/fr/activity/115775-elephant-conservation-tour/>

ECC New Deluxe Lodges

After several months of construction by our dedicated team, we are thrilled to announce the completion of two new Deluxe Lodges. Experience unparalleled comfort in our modern wooden lodges, each fitted with one double bed and two twin beds. Enjoy exclusive infinity views of the serene Nam Tien lake from your private balcony, relishing seclusion from neighboring bungalows. Our deluxe cabins offer **a refined retreat immersed in Laos' natural beauty.** With a private bathroom, air conditioning, fan, and private Wi-Fi, our lodges comfortably sleep 1-4 people, making them ideal for couples and families.



Elephant Information Center



Our **exhibition on elephants' biology, ecology and role in Asian culture** is now installed in the central sala of the ECC. The exhibition presents the biological characteristics of Asian elephant, their role as a keystone species in their ecosystem and the millenia old interaction they have had with Mankind throughout history. The exhibition is in Lao and English languages with a printed booklet available in French.

Conferences & Events



On 13 May 2024, ECC's Head of Research & Education, Anabel Lopez Perez discussed 'A Scientific Approach For Elephant Reproduction in Laos'. at the Global Pint of Science festival 2024. During two nights, participants enjoyed fascinating science-themed talks from researchers across Laos – from a deadly soil bacteria to space exploration, and from wildlife conservation to green energy.



Nov 2023. Anabel Lopez Perez, Head of Education and Research at Elephant Conservation Center participated in the 19th International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium organised by International Elephant Foundation in Chiang Mai Thailand.



From 14 to 17 March 2023, Elephant Conservation Center's Head of Education and Research Anabel Lopez Perez attended the 11th IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group Members meeting in New Delhi & Corbett National Park in India. Anabel presented her work to the Group, focusing on ECC's elephant socialisation and rewilding programmes. It was the occasion to meet and network with world's top Asian elephant experts, meet some old friends and partners and share experiences.

Lao Youth on a Mission for Nature Conservation



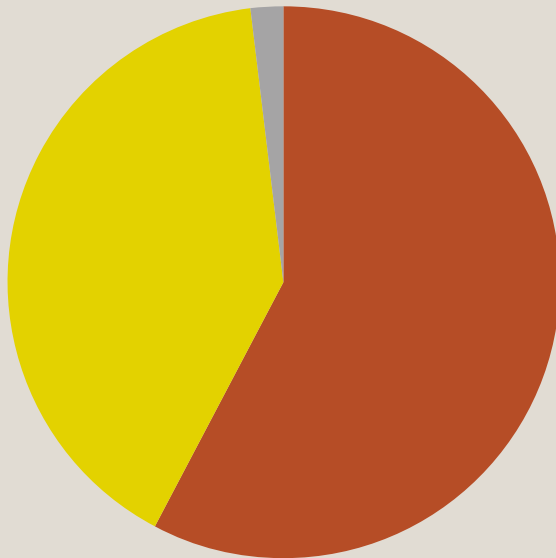
In July 2024, we had the incredible opportunity to participate in a youth training event organized by Econox Laos and Anoulak Association. Our Lao Veterinarian and Biologist, Ms. Pavina Chalernsouk & Ms. Moukhida Vilasith, shared insights on the scientific approach behind our elephant breeding and release programme, empowering Lao youth to explore careers in biodiversity conservation. This project aims to inspire Lao youth to pursue careers in biodiversity conservation, while also providing them the opportunity to network with conservation actors in Laos. Through these connections, participants have the potential to become interns or

volunteers with NGOs, further strengthening their role in future conservation efforts. Through engaging activities and knowledge exchange with experts, these young participants learned about animal welfare, elephant rewilding, and the vital role science plays in conservation efforts. We hope to inspire them to join the movement and take action to protect Laos' rich biodiversity.



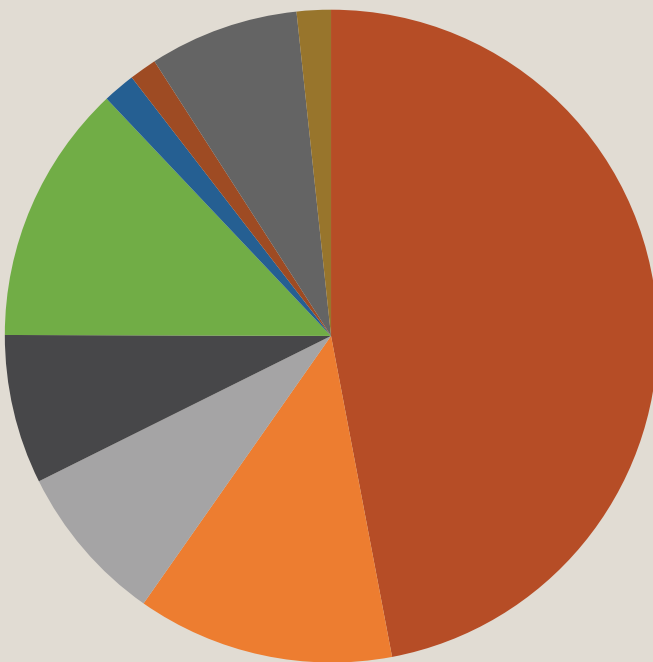
FINANCES

2023 Revenue



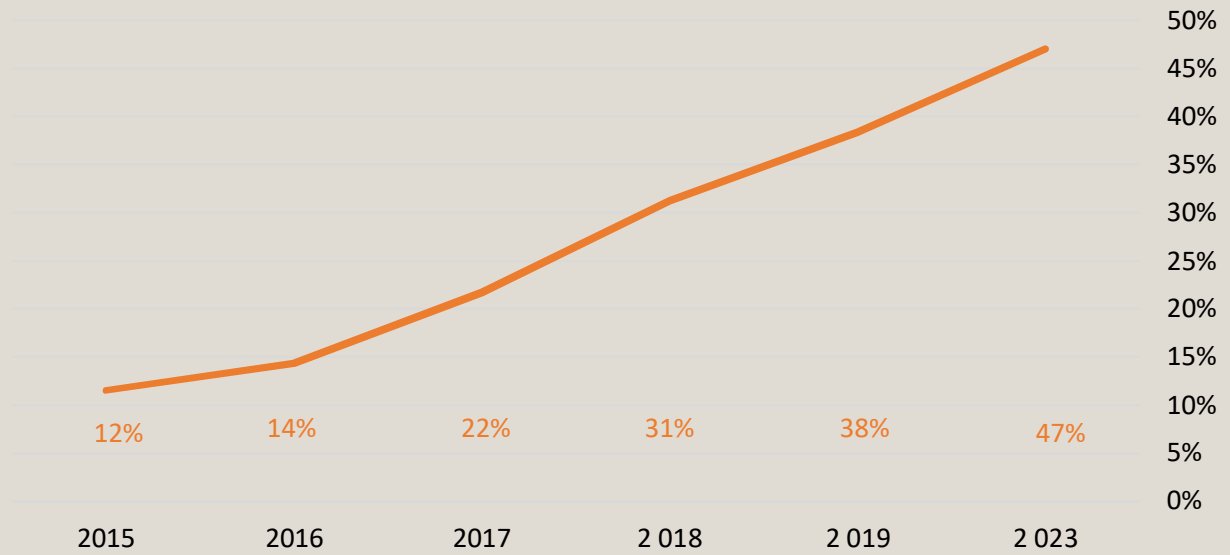
- 58% Your Visit
- 40% Donations
- 2% Sales at Shop / Bar

2023 Expenses

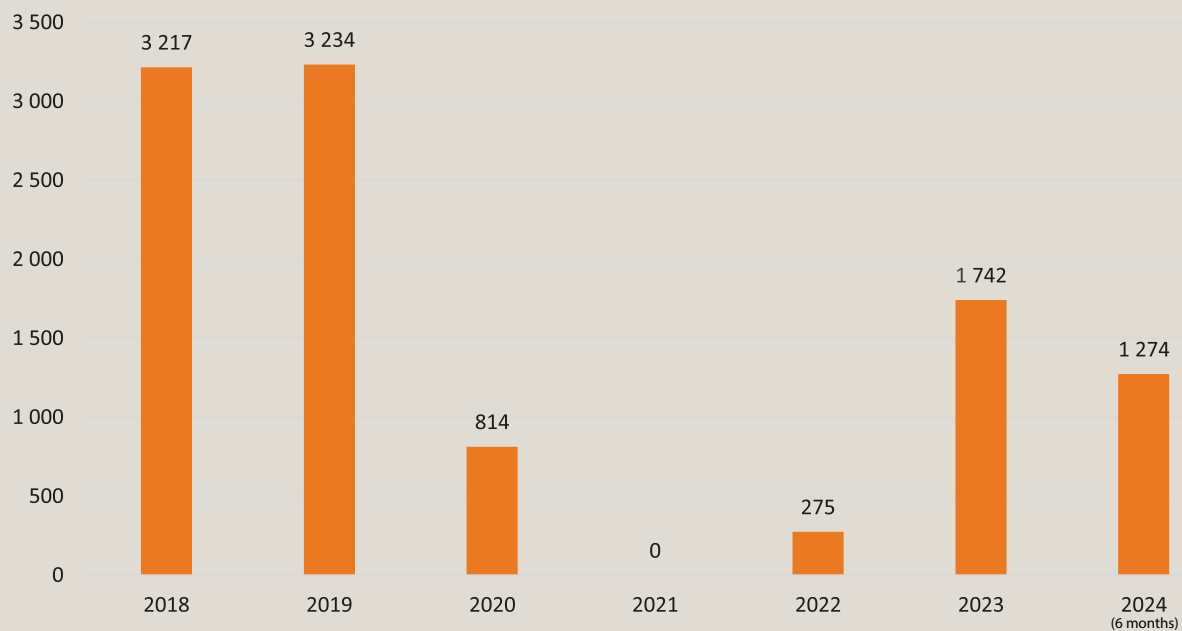


- 47% Elephant Care & Management
- 13% Staff Salaries
- 8% Food for visitors
- 7% Transportation (incl. fuel & maintenance)
- 13% Equipment / Buildings / Land
- 2% Shop purchases
- 1% Marketing & Communication
- 7% Administration Costs (incl. taxes)
- 2% Energy

Evolution of Elephant Care & Management Expenses (% of Total)



Visitors' Attendance



———— COVID-19 ————

MEDIA

ARTE (FRANCE / GERMANY)

ÉPIZOOTIES - LA NATURE FACE À LA CONTAMINATION (EPIZOOTIES - NATURE FACING CONTAMINATION)

Documentary

June 2022

NETFLIX

Asian Elephant Behaviour

WSP Wild Water Productions, St Stephens Avenue, BS1 1YL Bristol

ZDF/ARTE (FRANCE / GERMANY)

COCOA FILM GmbH, Catherine Jenkins, Laurinsteig 31, 13465 Berlin, Germany

2-3 February 2023

VAKITA

CEO & Founder of ECC, Sebastien Duffillot interviewed by VAKITA in France about the inhumane living conditions of a temple elephant in India

30 Millions d'Amis article / Hugo Clément tweet

May 2023

ITV UK

Paul O'Grady's Great Elephant Adventure

The two-part series followed him as he travelled through Thailand and Laos, learning about the work done by elephant conservation centers to rescue, rehabilitate, and protect the gentle giant animals."

ITV1

April 2024

ARTE (FRANCE / GERMANY)

Description: Filming Documentary about Elephants' Cultural Transmission

DOCLAND YARD, 155 rue de Charonne, 75011 Paris, France

7-17 February 2024

SPEKTRUM TV (HUNGARY)

SOS Wildlife Vet, documentary on elephant veterinary care and reproductive health

Filmduzsongel Studio. Commissioned by: AMC Networks Central Europe

18-21 August (shoot at ECC)

WANDERLUST

10 of the world's best places to see elephants

Mar. 22, 2020

<https://www.wanderlust.co.uk/content/10-worlds-best-places-elephants/>

NEW STATESMAN

Why domestic elephants are being rewilded in Asia

By India Bourke / Jan. 15, 2020

<https://www.newstatesman.com/world/asia/2020/01/why-domestic-elephants-are-being-rewilded-asia>

OUTSIDE MAGAZINE

I Bought an Elephant to Find Out How to Save Them

By Paul Kvinta / Nov. 12, 2019

<https://www.outsideonline.com/2405236/asian-elephant-trafficking-captivity-laos>

NPR

'A Million Elephants' No More: Conservationists In Laos Rush To Save An Icon

By Ashley Westerman / May. 12, 2019

<https://www.npr.org/2019/05/12/707525699/a-million-elephants-no-more-conservationists-in-laos-rush-to-save-an-icon?t=1587206095780>

GEOGRAPHICAL UK

Crazier than Fiction: the Elephant Rangers of Laos

By Melody Kemp / Mar. 11, 2019

<http://geographical.co.uk/nature/wildlife/item/3120-laos-elephants>

THE DIPLOMAT

Can the Land of a Million Elephants Survive the Belt and Road?

By Kearnin Sims and Chrisantha Pinto / Jan. 03, 2019

<https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/can-the-land-of-a-million-elephants-survive-the-belt-and-road/>

THE OUTDOOR JOURNAL

Bringing Back the Giants in the Land of a Million Elephants

By Jahnavi Pananchikal / Sept. 29, 2018

<https://www.outdoorjournal.com/featured/environment/bringing-back-giants-land-million-elephants/>

EL PAIS

Pedagogía animal en la industria turística de Laos

By Dani Salva / Jun. 14, 2018

https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/07/13/album/1531472121_933563.html#foto_gal_1

INDEPENDENT UK

Meet the heroes fighting to put a stop to the cruel practice of elephant riding

By Richard Waters / Dec. 19, 2016

<https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/asia/tourist-elephant-rides-laos-animal-protection-conservation-centre-sainyabuli-a7474296.html>

THE TELEGRAPH

Meet the people determined to save the elephants of Laos

By Nigel Richardson / Feb. 20, 2016

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/laos/12159543/Meet-the-people-determined-to-save-the-elephants-of-Laos.html>

OUR PARTNERS



HOW TO

SUPPORT THE ECC

*“The ECC is not your typical tourist elephant camp.
It is run by people with a passion for the animals”*

– Lonely Planet

FUND TRANSFER IN US DOLLARS

BENEFICIARY'S BANK

Bank's Name: Banque Franco Lao Ltd

SWIFT Code: BFLLLALA

Bank's Address: LANEXANG AVENUE, HATSADY VILLAGE,
CHANTHABOULY DISTRICT, VIENTIANE CAPITAL, LAO PDR

BENEFICIARY

Account number (IBAN): 012 0002819 11 01 00 32

Account Name: LAO ELEPHANT SANCTUARY CO LTD

A photograph of two elephants wading in a lake at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, pink, and blue, with mountains visible in the distance. The water is calm, reflecting the colors of the sky. The elephants are in the foreground, with one partially visible on the left and another in the center, both facing away from the camera.

More Rewilding

Reintroducing elephants into the wild comes at a cost... The herding programme required prior to releasing elephants can last up to two years and employs a team of vets, behavioural biologists and one mahout per elephant.

Once elephants are released in a sustainable group, mahouts remain employed to follow up on their former charge, track and report elephant movements to the rangers and the ECC for improved protection. **THE YEARLY COST OF RELEASING AN ELEPHANT IS ABOUT \$20,000.**

Protected Area Surveillance

To ensure the protection of both the elephants and their habitat, a well-trained and highly equipped team of rangers is required. There are currently 11 rangers employed in the Nam Poy National Protected Area. Although their wages are paid by the Lao Government, the ECC pays for training costs and equipment, patrols per diem and bonuses when arrests or confiscations are made. **A TYPICAL MONTHLY BUDGET FOR THE RANGER TEAM ADDS UP TO \$6,000.**

Breeding

Keeping a healthy and sustainable captive population of elephants is necessary should wild members of the species disappear in the wild. Although elephants born at the ECC will never be used for work or entertainment, breeding is essential to maintain a viable population for future reintroduction into the wild. It takes 20-24 months for a cow to deliver her calf. Another 3 years before the calf is weaned. Pairing elephants is not an easy task either. We need to monitor cows' progesterone levels with constant blood and faecal sample collections and analyse them at the lab. Finally, when an opportunity arises, we need to hire sires when our own males show no signs of interest in the ovulating cows... The process is very lengthy... and expensive. Mahouts and biologists wages, laboratory costs, sire rental, food for mother and calf during 3-4 years...

GIVING BIRTH TO A BABY ELEPHANT COSTS A MINIMUM OF \$60,000!

*“ECC is a bright light in an increasingly dark landscape
for wildlife conservation in the region”*

– Lonely Planet



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www.elephantconservationcenter.com
Facebook: [elephant conservation center](https://www.facebook.com/elephantconservationcenter)
Instagram: [#elephantconservationlaos](https://www.instagram.com/elephantconservationlaos)

