



The Asian Elephant Specialists Group of IUCN

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Hashti

Newsletter of the Asian Elephants Specialist Group

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Dear Members and Friends,

I am indeed sorry that this Newsletter has been so long delayed. It should have reached you in January but my health which had been poor for some time, began rapidly failing by late December and, as Group Chairmen are few in number anyway, I had to be quickly placed in Appendix I. But thanks to rigid protection given by physician and family and with two weeks of British "hospital(ity)" I have survived to sign this comment, albeit six months off target.

But let me assure you that the next issue is not far off and should bring you up-to-date by September. The Group has not been idle by any means, and I received many progress reports from several members. Some of these have been held over for September.

Besides, there is an increasing concern for Asian elephants by Governments, scientists and conservationists, some of whom have only recently come to realize that elephants (or for that matter, wildlife) occur outside Africa! News reaching us tell of active protective measures being taken by the Governments of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea which may result in the creation of a unique National Park, the boundaries of which will cross national frontiers. This apparently is the only answer to saving the Indo-Chinese subspecies of elephant which migrate from country to country.

It will be seen from this issue that Captive Breeding has been stepped up, thanks to the scientific advances made in the study of reproductive biology in Zoos. The experience in Zoos in Europe, the United States and Canada point to the possibility of organized breeding programmes, where earlier the birth of an Asian elephant was an isolated incident. This situation is bringing Zoo Directors and Wildlife Conservationists closer together, and not a day too soon.

It is likely that our membership will soon include specialists from Vietnam, Laos and China. There is no doubt that our knowledge about Asian elephants will be further enriched and our work rendered more meaningful.

Members may observe that our Newsletter now has a name. "Hashti" in many Asian tongues means "Elephant" or "Tusker" and I thought it an appropriate title. I hope you will agree.

Lyn de Alwis
Chairman.