



ASIAN ELEPHANT S U P P O R T

Dear friends and supporters,

We are pleased to announce that we recently funded the Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation (Vesswic) \$4,500 for their Elephant Health Care Program, which provides care to elephants in the Conservation Response Unit (CRU) in Way Kambas National Park, Sumatra. The CRU integrates wild and captive elephants in a synergetic elephant conservation strategy. This program is improving the care of captive elephants and their mahouts (elephant caregivers) and is helping the wild elephant population via forest patrols, census gathering, and human-elephant conflict mitigation efforts. These activities are important for sustainable implementation of wild and captive elephant conservation and welfare needs in Way Kambas. The program is fully operational, but is in need of funds to continue their operations and widen the scope of their medical care. *We hope that, as individuals who also care about elephants and conservation, you will join with us to keep this program going through a small [donation](#).*

Please read our project story below and please visit our website, www.asianelephantsupport.org or [contact us](#) to learn more.

Elephants Helping Elephants in Sumatra (CRU)



CRU patrolling Way Kambas boundaries

History, Geography & Partners in this effort:

The Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation (Vesswic) is a registered non-profit organization founded in 2003 by a group of Sumatran veterinarians with a special interest in wildlife medicine and

conservation. To legally conduct its activities, Vesswic has signed a MoU (memorandum of understanding) with the national Agency for Forest Protection and Nature Conservation (PHKA), which provides Vesswic the legal authority on behalf of the Government of Indonesia to implement its programs and activities in Sumatra.



Home destroyed by wild elephants in Way Kamabas

This project operates in and around the Way Kambas National Park on the southeastern coast of the Lampung province. Way Kambas National Park is home to about 10% of the remaining 2,000 - 2,500 wild Sumatran elephants. The Way Kambas Elephant Conservation Center (ECC) is currently home to 62 captive elephants. The ECC was established in 1985 with the goal of reducing human-elephant conflict (HEC). Wild elephants were captured from areas of HEC between 1985 and 2000, but the capture program ended in 2000 because the government authorities recognized that the capture strategy did not solve the HEC problem. Unfortunately, the government funds allocated for ECC maintenance and captive elephant care was insufficient and there was no clear strategy for managing these captive elephants. The result was poor management, lack of food and medical attention for the elephants, insufficient staff qualification and training, lack of activity and socialization of the elephants, and ultimately poor condition and sickness in many elephants.



CRU mahouts and their charges

In 2006, at the request of the Way Kambas National Park, the Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation (Vesswic), through its Elephant Health Care Program (EHCP) began providing technical and

financial assistance to the Way Kambas ECC to improve the health and management of their captive elephants. The program successfully utilizes captive elephants for HEC mitigation and forest patrols. The Conservation Response Unit (CRU) program integrates wild and captive elephants as the forest patrols made by the captive elephants help to protect their wild counterparts. In addition, the captive elephants benefit from interactions with their mahout and the exercise and stimulation of outings into the forest where there is an opportunity to feed on a wide variety of natural food plants. This program also utilizes the mahouts and captive elephants to address HEC mitigation and education. Finally, the mahouts have the opportunity to develop their elephant care skills, to become educated and engaged conservation workers, and to serve their people in resolving conflict.



CRU elephants herding wild elephants out of area of HEC

Since the Way Kambas Conservation Response Unit (CRU) began operating, it has significantly contributed to the reduction of HEC and habitat encroachment. It has improved the health of the captive elephants taking part in this program, and has built the knowledge and skill of the mahouts involved. Therefore, the continuation of these activities is important for both the wild and captive elephants of Way Kambas National Park. External funding is required as Way Kambas National Park and its Elephant Conservation Center are not able to provide sufficient resources to ensure the continuation of this important and successful program.

Asian Elephant Support is pleased to partner with Vesswic, the Way Kambas National Park, and the Elephant Managers Association (EMA) in this undertaking. Our initial \$4,500 donation will help keep the Conservation Response Unit in the field for a few more months. This is an exceptionally well run effort making positive progress for both wild elephant conservation and improved care of captive elephants.



CRU patrolling Way Kambas boundaries

Going Forward:

We would like to be a more sustainable supporter of this effort as it is one that is definitely making a difference for both captive and wild Sumatran elephants. In addition, the veterinarian group always needs additional medical supplies and the addition of two portable scales would help immensely in their care for this large number of elephants. Knowing the weight of an elephant is vital for medicating, establishing proper diets, following the progression of pregnancies, and as an alert to possible illness. While weight can be estimated via formulas based usually on shoulder height and chest girth, none are precise for all age groups and estimation inaccuracies can vary greatly, which is not a good scenario when medications need to be prescribed. In addition, weight estimation is time consuming, and with 62 elephants in Way Kambas and other elephant camps for which Vesswic provides care, it is easy to see that this 'wish list' item is not frivolous!

We know this is a difficult time for both non-profit organizations and the good people who support them. Do know that even quite modest [donations](#) add up and, together, we can truly make a difference!

Thank you for your Support!

Photos from Vesswic archive, provided by Christopher Stremme, DVM.