

Project Update: March 2018

The current project name, 'Living with Elephants', is self-explanatory to describe our objectives and activities. In the last few months, we have been moving with the migratory elephant herds to understand the changing pattern of 'conflict' with people living within the elephant habitat. This year these migratory herds expanded their period of stay to approx. 10 months – this was 3+ months in 1987-88 and 6 to 7 months in 2010-11. The elephant drivers (Hoola Team), forest officials and us worked continuously for more than 17+ nights to secure the elephant passages as well as to protect the villages during elephant movement from 'Mayurjharna Elephant Reserve' to 'Singbhum Elephant Reserve'. In the last year no elephants were killed, poached, poisoned or electrocuted in the entire range in south west Bengal. On the other hand, crop damage is higher than the previous year (estimation not completed) and there was some accidental human death due to carelessness. The population estimation of elephants is almost done and presently we are working on 'Elephant Population Distribution Map' and reviewing the existing 'Conflict' intensity map.

During field surveys, elephant tracking or elephant driving we communicated with local NGOs, administration etc. to secure the safe passage for the elephants and did awareness and capacity building programme in forest villages and conducted stakeholders' attitudinal survey, village volunteer's orientation and capacity building in sample areas.

Interestingly, the population of other herbivores like spotted deer, wild boar, etc. are increasing in elephant corridor forests. In February 2018 a tiger has been documented in the elephant corridor forest for the first time ever. We consider it a good indicator of forest health.

We are also pleased to inform that 'International Elephant Foundation' is co-funding the elephant conservation project for 2018-19 and 'Idea Wild' is supporting us by donating equipment for the project.



Left: Rainsuits donated to Elephant drivers. ©Samya Basu. Right: First documentation of Royal Bengal Tiger in Elephant corridor forests of Southern West Bengal. ©Forest Department, West Bengal.



Left: Hut damaged by loner residential elephants during NTFP collection. ©Chittaranjan Maity, Forester, Govt. of West Bengal. Middle: Person killed by elephants during NTFP collection. ©Animesh Mahato, Local Field Volunteer. Right: Elephant drivers are protecting the villages with fire torches. ©Samya Basu.



Left: The elephant heard is moving in a group at 2.30 am. Right: The loner elephant is following its group at 3.30 am. ©Samya Basu