

Notes from the Chair IUCN SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group

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Dear members

In this issue of the *Gajah*, I wanted to share with you some of my ideas for our impending meet in November in Guwahati, Assam, India. I hope all of you have blocked the dates of 10-12 November and would soon be filling in the registration formalities that will kick start later this month. We are meeting after a decade or more and I feel the following thoughts of mine, modified with input from all of you can ensure that the meeting is productive and will set the tone for the next few years of active work.

The first method of contributing to a full and productive meeting is, of course, by attending all of it! I know that all of us live in a world beset with innumerable diversions, both professional and personal. I am, through this note, sending a personal plea to the membership to make this event special by attending it and thereby by playing a crucial part in setting the course forward for the group and for Asian elephant conservation.

This will not be possible without a full and well thought out agenda and preparatory papers. This is a challenge, as the time that has elapsed since we last met has been large and also much is needed to be done in terms of focussing the group onto its mandate. It is keeping this in mind that we have decided on a three day meeting that is solely focussed on the workings of the group.

To this end I have requested three members to aid me in a Working Group to set a provisional agenda for the meeting. Not wanting to impinge on this Working Groups mandate my broad idea that I wanted to share with all of you was to have one and a half days to get to know each other's work and one and half days to discuss our priorities about elephant conservation. Depending on membership attendance we can do this by having very short and to the point presentations and discussions during the first day and a half. If we have a large participation and all of us cannot speak, we can seek some representation of geographies, populations and themes.



Herd in Kaziranga National Park (Photo by Jennifer Pastorini)

The next one and a half days will be for the seven working groups to present their ideas to the whole forum and for the forum to discuss in detail and come to a conclusion about them. Please note that the working groups would have already worked for some months before coming to the meet (four groups on *Membership, Mandate of the Group, Mandate of Gajah* and the *Meeting Agenda* are already formed and this month four more are being announced on *Status of the Asian Elephant in the Wild; Guidelines and Policy Documents* of the group, *Captive Elephant Management* and *Human Elephant Conflict and Coexistence*). I expect the convenors of the group to give short presentations of the discussions and suggestions of the working group for us to deliberate and decide on them as a group.

Of course with Guwahati being near Kaziranga we will organise a post conference tour to the forest to see one of India's best loved and best known protected areas. Apart from our favourite animal the elephant, be prepared to see greater one horned rhinoceros, wild buffalo, swamp deer,

hog deer, a panoply of birds and for the luckier ones perhaps a tiger.

I have known that on the sides of this meeting, there is an annual meet on Asian elephant conservation being organised by the Balipara Foundation in Guwahati. Those who wanted to present formal papers would be encouraged to attend this meet too so that they can share their elephant conservation issues with a broader audience.

Other than the current membership, I shall use the opportunity of the meeting to call in new members who can strengthen this group once again. The working group on membership will guide me on this post the IUCN World Conservation Congress, which hopefully many of you will be attending as well.

How wonderful it is that many of us can meet up once again after such a long time and I am really looking forward to those days in Assam, India.

Vivek Menon
Chair AsESG, IUCN SSC



Looking for rhinos early morning in Kaziranga (Photo by Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz)