



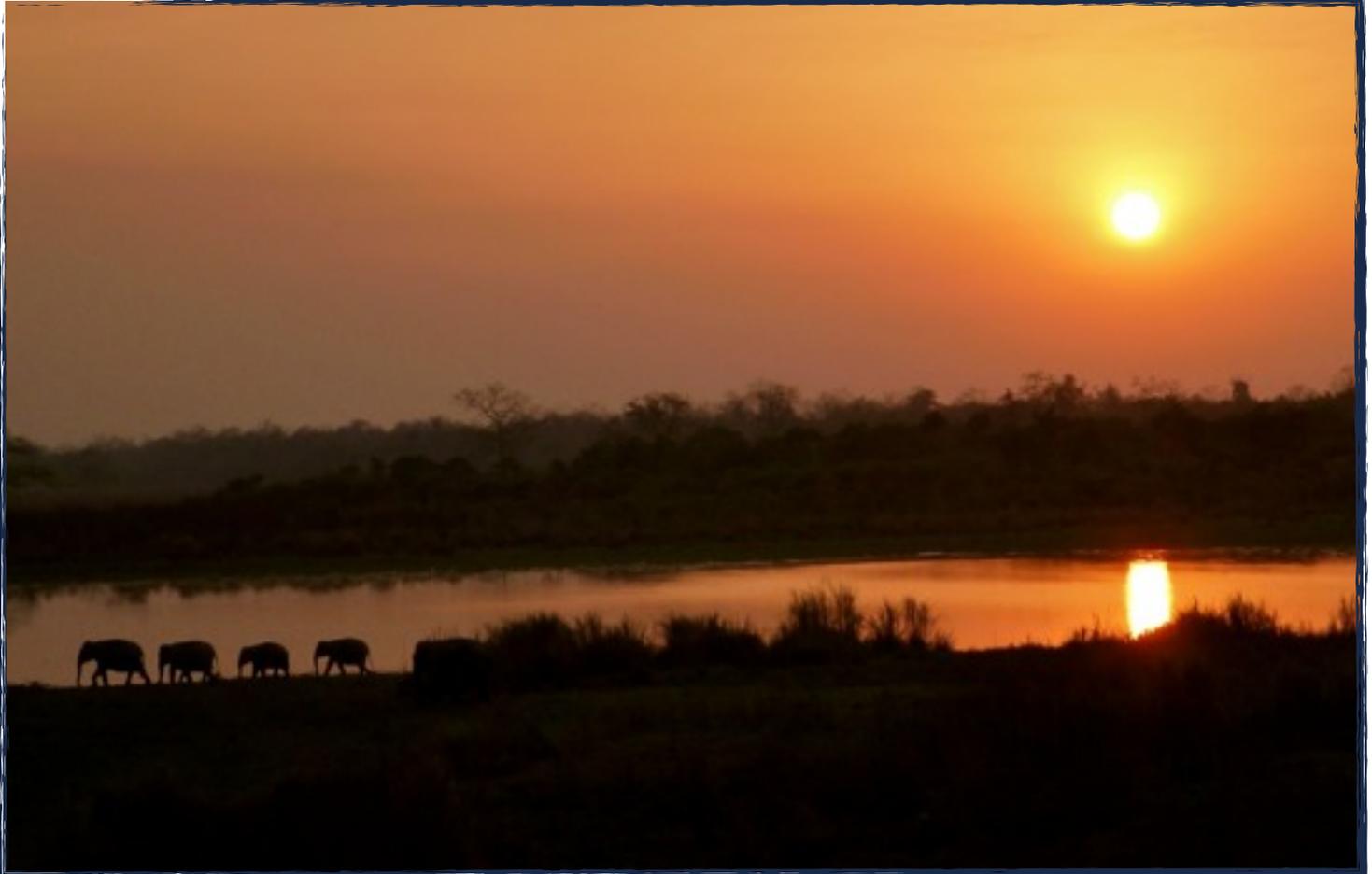
MEME

Updates

Management & Ecology of Malaysian Elephants

Issue 4

Feb - Mar 2012



Because we can only manage what we measure — working towards an evidence-based conservation of Malaysian elephants.



ELEPHANT CONSERVATION GROUP (ECG) — the 2nd ECG workshop was held in Kaziranga NP, Assam, in March 2012.



MEET THE 3 NEW MEMBERS! — Ami, Ning and Ee Phin, our latest addition to the MEME team!



10 DAY COLLARING OPERATION— Experience to be shared.

ONE YEAR ON

One year has already past since we deployed the first GPS collar on a Malaysian elephant. It was on the morning of March 26 2011 in Bukit Mior, Gua Musang. The elephant was a strong adult bull named Castello — funny name for an elephant. Twelve months later we have collared seven more elephants and, although having more collar failures than expected, we are gathering a large amount of valuable data about the behavior of Asian elephants in tropical rainforest and their responses to human disturbances.

Many other things have happened in this period. Between April and August we conducted a questionnaire survey to understand the perception and attitudes of farmers to elephants and human-elephant conflict. We are currently analyzing our results with data from other six Asian countries, as part of the Elephant Conservation Group work. Between September and March we have also conducted a very exciting camera-trap study about the role of elephants and other forest mammals on the seed dispersal of mangos and durians. Two interns, Wiwit and Anders, are working hard in the analyses and their respective reports. Soon this will become a valuable paper about frugivory and seed dispersal in Malaysian selectively logged forests.

It is certainly exciting to see the team grow with the incorporation of Vanitha (our starlet from the social sciences), Steven Lim (intrepid field project manager), Ami (daredevil elephant tracker), Ning (multipurpose problem solver), and Ee Phin (first PhD student). And of course Reuben, our partner from the very beginning. In 2012, we expect some more growth — perhaps one or two more people — but that's it. The team is ready and we are now fully-focused on gathering useful data for the conservation of Malaysian elephants!

I like to think that MEME Updates has improved gradually since the first issue in August 2011, and this fourth issue marks a tipping point. From now on the newsletter will appear **quarterly**, will include contributions from several MEME-ers, and will be coordinated by *the Ningster*, MEME Updates' new *editor-in-chief*. Ning has done a fantastic job with this issue — thanks a lot Ning!!

In Kuala Lumpur, 10 April 2012



Ahimsa Campos-Arceiz
MEME's Principal Investigator
School of Geography
University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus



THE THREE NEW MEME DUETTES!



The word '**meme**' was coined by Richard Dawkins' "*The Selfish Gene*" in 1976, which means an idea that spreads. Not from a genetic way but from the ways of traditional passing ons of knowledge from generation to generation. We would like to welcome that tradition into our philosophy and to spread the idea of the love for nature because we need it. Here we introduce our brightest elephant members! Welcome ladies!

Ami is one of MEME's earlier members, taking the role as an elephant tracking officer. Her main task is to monitor the movement of our collared elephants via

satellite and on ground tracking. She graduated from the University of Queensland, Australia in 2010, having had her Honours year studying on the spatial ecology of urban Koalas using, hey, GPS collars too! As much as she adores exploring our beautiful tropical rainforest, she still has a long way to go in making peace with the leeches. It has been two months now since she joined MEME, and her respect for the elephant kingdom grows deeper and deeper every day. Nowadays she is spending most of her time joining Steven & the Perhilitan staff to collar elephants- both translocated and non-translocated, if not trying to make friends with them leeches, that is.

Ee Phin our latest addition to MEME's growing team. She joins as a PhD Candidate at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus (UNMC) and will be working with Dr. Ahimsa on developing non-invasive methods to monitor wild Asian Elephants. A graduate from James Cook University, Australia with Masters (App Sc) in 'Wildlife Biology and Management'. She has also worked with World Wildlife Fund for Nature and Wildlife Conservation Society in Malaysia under various conservation projects such as Integrated River Basin Management, conservation of painted terrapins (*Callagur borneoensis*) and green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), and wildlife enforcement. Among all her experience of working in the field, the most valuable lesson that she's learnt is that wildlife conservation is a lot about people as well, and the success of wildlife conservation depends on good collaboration with local communities, government agencies, private sectors and academias. Here at UNMC, she is excited by this new PhD program and is looking forward to make a difference.

Ning a fresh graduate on BSc Wildlife Conservation of Nottingham Trent University, UK. She joined MEME as a Research Assistant and will be based in UNMC but when there's short of hands in the field, she'll be there. Her interest for the tropical realm gives her a sense of belonging which also allows her to understand and agree upon that homo sapiens can only function because of the interaction with nature, hence the goal to bring her experience into the education of our society. Working with MEME has revealed to her more and more wonders.

Ning

The 10 Day Collaring Operation



On March 12th, Steven, several Perhilitan staff and myself embarked on MEME's first collaring operation for this year, for a duration of 10 days. The operation took place along the East-West Highway (No. 4), stretching from the town of Gerik, Perak to Tasik Pergau at the border of Kelantan. From the operation, we managed to collar a healthy adult female elephant from a herd of 5, within the area of Air Banun. As the name suggests, we named her Mek Banun.



Steven mentioned that more sightings were recorded throughout this operation as compared to previously. At least one sighting was recorded a day, with an exception on the last day when a twist of fate actually brought us to spot a tapir instead! As you can see from the picture, she/he was happily munching on the *Macaranga* leaves when we spotted her/him. Overall, this operation definitely didn't hit the aim as we got to deploy only one collar. Nevertheless, we have narrowed down the weaknesses and hope to tweak them the next time around for a higher collaring rate.

On another note, it was also a pity that we stopped receiving information from *Rafflesia* and *Limau Kasturi*. Again, we believe these casualties are bound to happen in the Research Avenue. It not only made us ponder on what could have went wrong, but also the things that we can do in the future to not let these casualties repeat themselves.

Ami



BECAUSE IT IS ALL ABOUT PEOPLE... VANITHA'S CORNER

Belum Temenggor is a home to vast number of species of flora and fauna. This pristine forest is a wonder of nature for many but also is emerging as a plethora of opportunities for unbridled capitalist. The forests are also home to various indigenous group, who are predominantly of Jahai and Temiar tribe. They have lived there for generations and moved to the edge of the forests in 1970s due to the hydro-electric dam.



Upon reading and hearing such alluring descriptions of the forest, I visited the forest and it was both breathtaking and a bit daunting. The indigenous communities for years have lived in harmony with nature. Their rituals, traditions and daily life are widely influenced by elements of nature. I was lucky to be serenaded by folk songs which were inspired by nature in two of the villages visited. There is a strong respect for nature and they practiced specific rituals while hunting and gathering in order not to damage the earth.

However, the hunters and gatherers are slowly losing faith in their traditional economic activities with the advent of modernization. They have roof over their head, but very little on their plate. Such vicissitudes of life tempt them to explore mainstream economic activities, like smallholding. They are trying to plant rubber within the vicinity of their village. There is no clear system of planting hence it is on trial and error. I noticed some clearance of land near the perimeters of the village for rubber. The social construction of the forest had clearly changed over the years from one that provides naturally to one that needs to be altered for the purpose of survival.

As a MEME, I was curious about HEC in the new economic activity. According to the villagers, it is a part of life and they have to live with it. They appear to be tolerant of HEC but I wonder for how long. It will be interesting to enquire their perceptions of mainstream economy in relation to forest and HEC

Vanitha



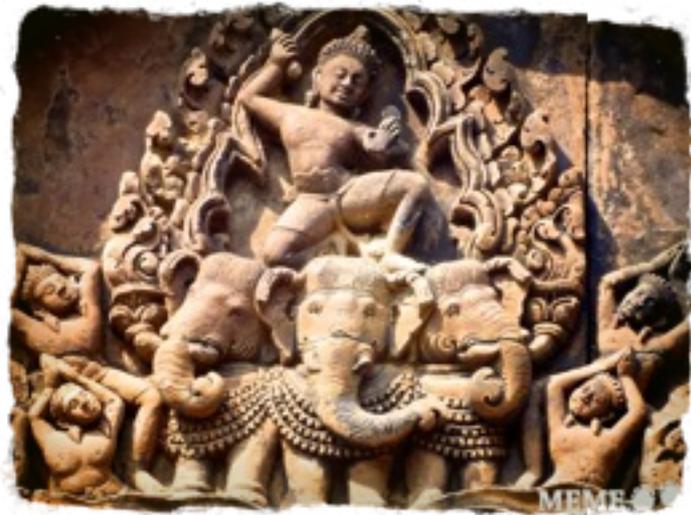


Clockwise from top: Elephant Conservation Group members in Kaziranga, Assam, on 30 Mar 2012. Elephant ride safari in Kaziranga Central Gate. Rangers and elephant patrolling the park for poachers. Kaziranga is home for the largest population of Indian rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) in the world.





Facade of Angkor Wat (Cambodia) showing a prominent Palmyra palm (*Borassus flabelifer*) on the left. This palm has very large fruits and seeds that only elephants can swallow and defecate in viable conditions (see below).



Elephant carvings in Angkor City (Cambodia)



Palmyra fruits for human consumption in Cambodia (above) and palmyra seed germinated after being defecated by a wild elephant in Sri Lanka (below).



Woman selling roasted seeds of *Irvingia malayana* for tourists in Cambodia (above) and seeds of the same species in wild elephant dung in Malaysia (below).





A lazy binturong (*Arctictis binturong*) spotted by Param, one of our field assistants, in the forests of Kenyir Wildlife Corridor.



Limau Kasturi, a large translocated bull collared on Feb 22nd. Unfortunately the collar failed for unknown reasons just one month after being deployed.



Unusual group photo of MEMEers at the University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus. From left to right: Steven Lim, Reuben Clements, Ami Fadhillah, Hii Ning, Anders Kromann-Clausen, Ee Phin, and Ahimsa.

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