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NORTH AMERICAN ZOOS SUPPORT WORLDWIDE ELEPHANT CONSERVATION

2010 International Elephant Foundation Grants Backed by Zoo Donations

Silver Spring, MD (January 6, 2010) – The International Elephant Foundation (IEF) and the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) today announced their support for 16 elephant conservation projects for 2010.

IEF-supported projects help to mitigate human-elephant conflict, combat poaching, protect habitat, prevent disease, advance research and educate people. IEF grants for 2010 total about \$200,000 adding to the \$1.6 million total since its founding in 1998.

“Elephants need our help,” said IEF Executive Director, Deborah Olson. “Essential elephant conservation work will continue thanks to the elephants here in North America that inspire support for the International Elephant Foundation. In addition, protecting elephants and their habitat also safeguards many other species big and small who share the same territory and migration routes.”

IEF supports and operates elephant conservation and education programs both in managed facilities and in the wild, with emphasis on management, protection and scientific research. IEF is a non-profit organization established in 1998 by a group of zoos and other elephant exhibitors to support elephant conservation around the world and receives a substantial portion of its funding from AZA-accredited zoos.

“Elephants in AZA-accredited zoos are wildlife ambassadors who educate the public and raise money to support vital IEF conservation efforts,” said AZA President and CEO, Jim Maddy. “AZA is proud to support the efforts of the International Elephant Foundation.”

“IEF is helping the Uganda Conservation Foundation to invest in proactive and catalyst projects to strengthen elephant management across Queen Elizabeth National Park”, explained Michael Keigwin, Founder, Trustee and Director of the Uganda Conservation Foundation. “Without IEF, UCF would be unable to support the Uganda Wildlife Authority in recovering critical elephant populations from poaching, communities from crop raiding and habitats from illegal activity.”

“The International Elephant Foundation partners with the Northern Rangelands Trust to support community-led conservation in 15 community conservancies covering a vast 6000 square kilometers in northern Kenya,” said Ian Craig, Executive Director for the Northern Rangelands Trust, “In the last decade, the International Elephant Foundation has provided more than \$265,000 for African elephant conservation activities in Kenya.”

The following elephant conservation projects are recipients of 2010 IEF grants:

ASIAN ELEPHANT PROJECTS

Kouprey Express Program: Assam Elephant Education and Public Outreach, Cambodia

Education standards in Cambodia are among the poorest in the Asia/Pacific region with adult literacy at only 64% and rural literacy even lower. Many rural families subsist on scarce natural resources, living below the poverty line. With an increasing population, competition for resources between wildlife and humans will become increasingly confrontational if rural populations do not become more aware of the needs and importance of wildlife and the environment. This project will connect young people directly with wildlife conservation issues and provide detailed information about elephant education and wildlife conservation efforts to 300,000 Cambodians and international visitors.

Consultation on Trans-boundary Agreement to Develop Indo-Nepal Elephant Conservation Plan, Nepal

This project will start a consultation on a transboundary agreement along the Nepal and India (West Bengal) border to develop a joint conservation plan for long term conservation of elephant populations. This will be done by a series of workshops with all transboundary stakeholders. Additional an educational program will be initiated to generate tolerance among local communities.

Promoting Human-Elephant Coexistence in Coimbatore, South India

This project will educate all people living in or near elephant habitat of Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu to improve their attitudes towards wild elephants so as to avoid conflict, adapt innovative educational tools to bring about attitudinal and behavioral change to people living near elephant habitat, train 90 key educators to use these tools effectively, and make this project sustainable through workshops and other active learning techniques.

ElefantAsia: Domesticated Elephant Advanced Registration, Laos

This project will microchip the entire domesticated Asian elephant population of Laos which will help to monitor the illegal capture of elephants from the wild, the smuggling of elephants to neighboring nations, strengthen skills and capacity of local government departments, and will provide a greater ability for population forecasting, scientific study and breeding opportunities for the elephant population in human care.

Assessing Elephant Population Viability and Mitigating Human-Elephant Conflict in Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains, Cambodia

This project will lend support to the Human-Elephant Conflict response team who are currently responding to conflict events and providing mitigation tools and delivering improved elephant friendly farming strategies to local people. This project will also use camera trapping at various saltlicks to obtain photographs of the area's elephants to ascertain the sex and age structure which will help to determine the herd's long-term viability as a sustainable population.

Sumatra Elephant Conservation Response Units, Indonesia

This ongoing project by IEF in Sumatra mitigates negative human-elephant interactions in order to improve local perception by utilizing once neglected captive elephants and their mahouts (handlers) for direct field based conservation interventions for wild elephants. The main objectives are: 1) mitigating human-elephant conflict; 2) reducing wildlife crime through forest patrol and monitoring; 3) raising awareness among locals of the importance of conserving elephants and their habitat; 4) establishing community-based ecotourism to ensure long-term CRU financial sustainability.

AFRICAN ELEPHANT PROJECTS

Elephant Kisima and Lturoto Crews, Ndoto Ranges, Northern Kenya

Kisimas are deep excavations (made by elephants and people) to gain access to much needed water in the arid land of Kenya's Northern Frontier District. Nomadic peoples often construct kisimas of over 25 feet deep which become hazardous to wild elephants and other animals. This project will create a network of crews from the local Samburu and Rendille communities who will, with the guidance of 24 community scouts, restructure and monitor the current kisimas into elephant-friendly water holes as well as create new iturots (small water reservoirs).

Improving protection for Nigeria's largest elephant population in Yankari Reserve, Nigeria

Yankari Game Reserve contains the largest surviving population of elephants in Nigeria and is also home to populations of lion, buffalo, hippo, and many species of antelope. Since management of the reserve has been neglected, there has been a resurgence of poaching, especially of elephants for the ivory trade. This project aims at building capacity by helping to increase anti-poaching patrols, establishing a Cybertracker monitoring system and surveying human-elephant conflicts.

Monitoring and Outreach for the Desert Elephants of the Southern Kunene, Namibia

This project implements population census and distribution surveys of the southern Kunene desert elephants, integrates this information in the Kunene Regional Ecological Assessment – an ongoing multi-stakeholder project to develop synchronized, incentive-driven, community and science-based land management plans, and fosters sustainability by ensuring all activities are cost-effective and fully supported by the stakeholders.

Establishing an elephant sanctuary in the Omo-Shasha-Oluwa forest of SW Nigeria

The Omo-Shashah-Oluwa Forest Reserves contain some of the last remaining forests in south-western Nigeria which harbors a remnant population for forest elephants. This area is being severely threatened by logging and over-hunting and studies show that this population of forest elephants is in danger of becoming extinct within five years. This project will survey communities living around the natural forest areas to understand the human pressures on them. It will recommend ways to work with communities to

protect the forests. The project will also support liaison with the three state governments to re-gazette the forests and assist with their protection.

Save The Elephants

IEF funding supports the core operation of Iain Douglas-Hamilton's Save The Elephants (STE) conservation organization that operates projects throughout Africa. STE does basic research on elephant behavior and ecology and has pioneered GPS radio tracking with elephants, assists wildlife departments in their fight against ivory traders and poachers using aerial surveillance and radio-tracking, involves local people in research and education to develop a conservation ethic based on local knowledge and elephant needs, and disseminates information through films and publications.

Capacity building by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), Kenya

The role of the NRT is to develop the capacity and self-sufficiency of its constituent community conservancies in biodiversity conservation, natural resource management and natural resources based enterprises. The multi-year partnership between IEF and NRT is helping both elephants and people in the Northern Kenya region.

Elephants, Crops and People and the Waterways Project, Uganda Conservation Foundation (UCF)

This multi-year partnership between IEF and UCF has resulted in the development of a system of fencing and trenches that keep elephants out of fields and villages while protecting human lives and allowing children to attend school without a fear of elephants. This project has also constructed and equipped multiple marine stations on the shores of Lake George in Queen Elizabeth National Park which already is having a significant impact on the ability of law enforcement to reverse elephant and hippopotamus poaching, illegal fishing and to initiate water rescue for the communities that make their livelihood from the resources of the lake.

RESEARCH and EDUCATION

IEF Elephant Research Symposium

Support will go towards the 2010 International Elephant Conservation and Research Symposium (January 25-29, 2010 in Pretoria, South Africa) where scientists and researchers will have the opportunity to learn from others and share information in order to further conservation efforts of elephants in the wild.

Elephant Edotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV) Research

IEF is the primary funder of the National Herpesvirus laboratory at the Smithsonian National Zoo and directs and funds multiple studies aimed at identifying the causes of EEHV in an effort to prevent future EEHV fatalities. Studies include identifying the status of EEHV in individual elephants and their potential for further transmission, and identify predisposing factors that make specific elephants more susceptible to the disease and identifying effective treatments. EEHV effects both wild and managed elephant populations.

Publication of the Gajah the Journal of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group

Gajah is the Journal of the IUCN/Asian Elephant Specialist Group. Gajah shares best practices and builds capacity amongst managers, conservationists, researchers and to those interested in the management and conservation of the Asian elephant, both wild and those in human care.

As a non-profit organization dedicated to elephant welfare, IEF solicits donations to fund worthy conservation and research projects worldwide. To learn more about IEF or to contribute to elephant conservation efforts, please visit IEF's website at www.elephantconservation.org/.

Founded in 1924, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement of zoos and aquariums in the areas of conservation, education, science, and recreation. Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you, and a better future for all living things. The AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation, and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. To learn more, visit www.aza.org.

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