

Getting along with Elephants workshop for Bardiya National Park, Nepal - Revisited

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A three-day educator skills training workshop on Human Elephant Coexistence HECx was conducted by Zoo Outreach Organization from 3-6 November 2016 in Bardiya National Park, Nepal. The workshop was coordinated and organized by the National Trust for Nature Conservation NTNC in collaboration with Taru Women Upliftment Centre TWUC, Gulariya, Bardiya and Bardiya National Park with the financial support of Asian Elephant Support AES.

In February 2009, Zoo Outreach Organization, conducted a series of Human Elephant Coexistence and conservation education program and trained about 120 educators in different elephant range areas in Nepal, in collaboration with the National Trust for Nature Conservation, Central Zoo, Kathmandu, Nepal, and with aid from US Fish and Wildlife Service. The workshop series in 2009 was



The BNP Director Ramesh Thapa, (2nd from right) presiding over the inaugural

NGO, teachers, volunteers and forest personnel. Heidi Riddle, Riddle's Elephant Sanctuary, USA, Naresh Subedi from NTNC and the author were the main resource persons.



Heidi Riddle explaining the difference between Asian and African elephants

found to be very effective and useful as evidenced by the reports that we received after the project period and by different published and unpublished documents elsewhere. However, it was felt that similar kind of training is necessary in certain other parts of Bardiya National Park and hence a workshop on Human Elephant Coexistence HECx was organized. The programme provided dynamic training and education materials to the educators who live in Bardiya National Park.

Success of this kind of programmes lies on the involvement of the stakeholder participation. Careful selection of the participants is one of the key tasks. TWUC, which is based at Gulariya, in consultation with NTNC, took the responsibility to select and invite the participants. The group had a mix of the Nepalese participants such as village heads, village council members, teachers, Nepal Armed Forces that deal with inter border wildlife issues, members from

In an informal inaugural function the Park Director Ramesh Thapa said that the Park is doing all efforts by all means for the mitigation of the human animal conflict however, incidental conflict happens at some unavoidable situations that can be prevented and the incidence of conflict is in an increasing trend. He said this kind of workshop will help the Park authorities to do their job more efficiently with the support of the local community. Naresh Subedi, NTNC recalled his association during 2009 HECx workshop series. He said many of the trained participants are still practicing what they learned and in particular have widened their interest in other areas of wildlife and conservation. Heidi Riddle who has vast experience with human elephant conflict issues and also one of the associates of the 2009 workshop series said that



A group indoor activity to understand the historical and present distribution of Asian elephant

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An outdoor activity to understand the behaviour of wild elephants

this workshop is a timely effort after about seven years. The author thanked Asian Elephant Support for coming forward with a quick response to support this workshop. Ms. Prisma, the Secretary of the TWUC thanked all participants and their institutes for the interest shown to take part in this workshop. The workshop also had a senior army chief for both the inaugural and also valedictory function.

During the workshop a variety of education materials developed exclusively for Nepal was used. The materials include 'Getting along with Elephants' teaching guide, Ele-kit Education packets in Nepali and supporting materials like mask and activity sheets. The manual has a chapter devoted exclusively for Nepal briefing the status of HEC in the country. The manual in addition to species information has activities related to Asian culture and Asian elephant, human elephant conflict case studies and morals, history of HEC in Nepal and other Asian elephant range countries, species and taxonomy and biology of the elephants, activities related to research methodology and observations, various mitigation measures taken in Asia, exercises on species conservation conference and species status assessments, some important do's and don'ts that the people should follow who live elephant range areas, and tips for people to carry out to help



The program coordinator Naresh Subedi (standing), during registration

mitigate HEC. The important aspect of the manual is the teaching method. Throughout the training period active teaching tool has been employed that kept the spirit of the workshop.

Some of the major activities covered during the workshop are: assessment tools – attitude assessment, content survey; Elephant taxonomy; Drama on biology, HEC and conservation education; mapping: past and present Asian elephant distribution; Elephants in art, mythology, culture and festival; activities to understand elephant behavior; Illustrated history of elephant; Role play: peoples perception of elephants; Understanding elephant tolerance: elephants Vs rodents; Role of elephants in Asian culture; Asian elephant conservation initiatives in Nepal; Mock conference on Asian elephant conservation; Dos and don'ts in HEC situation; planning education programs; ways to use ele-kit packets and pledge. In addition to it guest speakers



Drama on poaching

were invited to learn about elephant habitats, HEC causes and country level population status in Nepal. During the training care was taken that the participants get enough time to practice during the workshop.

The training module has assessment tools to know the impact of training on individual participants, and it is measured through content survey that tells the knowledge that the participant gained after the workshop. As per this assessment method the highest difference before and after the workshop ranged from 9 to 90%. The group average score about the subject before the workshop was 38.98% and after the workshop was 82.35%. At the end of the workshop each participant was provided with a pledge card to commit to practice teaching whatever they learned in next three to four months. The coordinating institutes committed to follow up with the trained educators to spread the word of human elephant coexistence with their audience. The workshop evaluation was also done at the end using a questionnaire.



The trainees committing to practice HECx and educate others as well

The untiring work during the preparation of the workshop materials by ZOO staff is very much appreciated. Thanks are due to the Park Director, Bardia National Park and the Forest Department of Nepal for their support throughout the project period.

During the valedictory, the participants expressed that the workshop that they attended was unique that taught even the high technical information through play way method. They also enjoyed the hospitality and thanked the organizers for creating an opportunity to make new friends of like-minded people whose skills can be utilized during future education programs.

Thanks to Asian Elephant Support for their timely assistance. Thanks are due to Sally Walker who initiated HECx projects in 2008 that has reached almost all Asian elephant range countries.



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Participants group photo. Photos: B.A. Daniel