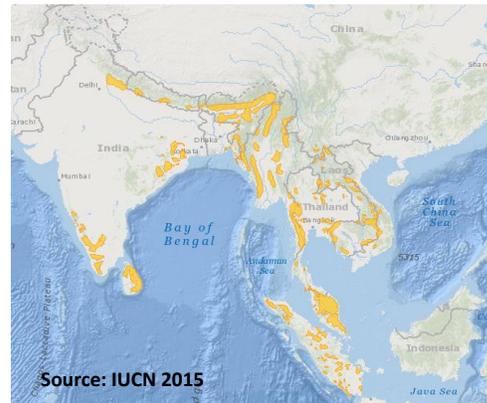


Asian Elephant Conservation Summary



State of the Species

The estimate for the global population size of Asian elephants was 41,000-52,000, with over 50% of wild elephants occurring in India. The overall population trend of the Asian elephant has been downwards with the greatest declines occurring in Southeast Asia.



Status

Range Countries

IUCN Endangered (2008)

ESA Endangered (1976)

CITES Appendix I (1975)

AZA SSP[®] Population

Elephant TAG Chair Martha Fischer

SSP Coordinator Martha Fischer

AZA Yellow SSP

AZA Population 143 individuals

The geographic range of the Asian elephant is estimated to have shrunk from more than 9 million km² to less than 500,000 km². Local extinctions began centuries ago, and the species now exists in isolated populations due to widespread habitat loss and fragmentation. Asian elephants occur in 13 countries, and apart from India, the largest populations occur in Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Approximately 13,000 Asian elephants are estimated to be in human care (i.e., as working animals) in Asia.

Primary Threats

The most critical threat to the Asian elephant is the loss, fragmentation and degradation of habitat. Landscapes across southern Asia were historically dominated by forest, but as the human population has grown over past centuries, much of the land has been logged or otherwise converted for human use. This expanding human population, coupled with elephants' massive food needs and wide ranges, has caused increased conflict between humans and elephants. Human-elephant conflicts often result in elephant mortalities. Poaching is a major threat to elephants in Asia, although estimates of the number of elephants killed difficult to calculate. Elephants are poached for their ivory even though only some males have tusks. This selective killing has dramatically skewed adult sex ratios to become female biased in some areas. Elephants are also poached for a variety of other products including meat and leather.

AZA Conservation Support

Between 2012 and 2016, 41 AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums reported taking part in a variety of field conservation projects benefitting Asian elephants, including the mainland, Bornean, Sumatran, and Sri Lankan subspecies. Over those five years, the AZA community invested over \$1.7 million in Asian elephant conservation, plus an additional \$1.4 million to projects that focused on both African and Asian elephants, such as donations to the International Elephant Foundation (IEF). The IEF, an AZA Conservation Partner, is a charitable corporation dedicated to the global conservation of elephants through allocation of funds towards projects and species in need. AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums are actively involved in collaborative projects that address human-elephant conflict, capacity building of local communities, support anti-poaching teams, and raise awareness about the illegal trade of ivory. This is not an exhaustive list of organizations, but these efforts represent the significant ties that AZA-accredited institutions have with elephant-focused conservation organizations.

