



We've helped  
**HUNDREDS** of elephants.

Now we're going **TO** help  
**THOUSANDS.**

**HUNDREDS TO THOUSANDS**

# The Human-Elephant Learning Programs Annual Report



Human Elephant  
Learning Programs

We move from hundreds and aim for thousands.

## A personal word from Dr Andrew McLean

2017-2018 saw a pleasing increase in H-ELP personnel and revenue. At the 2017 AGM we farewelled Wiebke Hendriksen as chair of the H-ELP Foundation who sadly resigned and whose position as chairman was re-taken by myself. Ben Fulton-Gillon was voted in as Vice Chairman. We also farewelled our valued Secretary/Treasurer, Mel Boot, who had to leave as she had begun a new accounting business and welcomed Tara Clegg as our new Secretary along with Helen Coleiro as our new Treasurer. We felt that our growth now required the Secretary/Treasurer role to be separated. This was followed by welcoming Alexander Lilley whose legal credentials and experience enabled us to gain our Deductible Gift Recipient status and who has capably filled the important role of Corporate Governance Officer.

The fundraiser that we held in June 2017 was a huge success and my congratulations to Marlee, Ben and their team. This meant we had much needed funds and could afford our workshop in Thailand in October 2017 which was very successful. A second trip to Thailand and Laos led to an important meeting with the organisations, Asian Captive Elephant Working Group and Travelife to assist in auditing and thus supporting sustainable and welfare-friendly elephant camps.



## Our Vision

That the enormous share of the Asian elephant *Elephas maximus* species that are in captivity may live the best life that they can. We hope that someday all Asian Elephants can live in free-range environments that will no longer require human interaction. However, until that time comes, the H-ELP Foundation is committed to creating the best life for elephants possible, using scientific, evidence-based training techniques and frameworks.

## Our Mission

To expand the number of Asian elephants that we are able to assist by educating mahouts on how to continue with our training techniques. To introduce our techniques by sending trainers into the field to share the principles and methods of scientific training, in such a way that their cultural and traditional elements are preserved and don't have a negative impact on elephant welfare.

For example, the way mahouts mount elephants varies across Asia. We don't aim to unify the way the mahouts mount the elephants, but ensure that each method used for training elephants to be mounted uses evidence-based training processes. We also aim to disperse the best practices we have encountered across other organisations.

Donations and funding assist us to carry out this work across South-East Asia, and to re-develop our training book with new editions and translations into relevant languages.



## Our Investment Strategy & Projects

Our investment strategy has widened from conducting elephant and mahout training workshops to delivering an ever improving simple and affordable level of education for elephant training schools throughout Asia.

Dr Andrew McLean has been invited onto the **Asian Elephant Specialist Group** (AESG). The AESG is a branch of the The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) under the umbrella of the Species Survival Commission.

Andrew was nominated by Vivek Menon of the Wildlife Trust of India and Senior Advisor to International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW). The nomination was a result of Andrew's tireless work in spreading humane training, anti-poaching and habitat conservation throughout South-East Asia (Nepal, India, Thailand, Myanmar and now Laos).

With this new title, we plan to expand our network further to help and contribute meaningfully to the current debates that surround elephant riding, tourism and human-elephant conflict.

Regarding elephant tourism, we will be raising informed questions about the sensitive topic of riding elephants. Our stance is that this can be done humanely and we believe that to ban it outright has major negative repercussions to the local economies, domestic life and ultimately feeds the high demand for elephant meat and bones in China for food and traditional medicines.

We are currently investing in a new edition of our '*How To Train An Elephant*' manual, concentrating on developing strong foundations and connections in Australia as well as overseas.

Our project to improve the elephants saddles in partnership with saddler, Peter Horobin, has made some progress. During the November 2017 Thailand workshop, the team measured individual elephant's back length, shape and circumference.

The next stage of the project requires days spent on the ground to investigate further the working environment of the mahouts, how they keep their saddles, the materials they use, what is best in tropical climates, weights, durability and costs. We had aimed to do this already, but due to the economic constraints in Myanmar and catastrophic flood in India the second stage of the saddle project has been postponed to a later date.





## Field Reports

### November 2017 Workshop – Thailand

In November 2017 we returned for the second round of workshops at the National Elephant Institute (NEI) in Lampang, Thailand.

Following our successful workshops some of the same mahout returned which made for a good mix of new and returning students. We had a much better understanding of the constraints such as the daily workload of mahouts and their level of education which is quite different to other countries we work in. Thailand differs to India and Myanmar where elephants are used for national park patrolling and logging respectively.

Dr Andrew McLean and Ben Fulton-Gillon attended the workshop along with founding board member Dr Portland Jones and professional event rider, horse trainer and coach, Sophie Warren, who has been teaching with Andrew's methods for a number of years.

The workshop followed a similar fashion to others. Elephants were presented with several behavioural issues such as not laying down or lifting their feet for their daily tasks or veterinary needs. We taught the elephants basic techniques using operant conditioning, emphasising that we could resolve the issues presented without the use of an ankus (metal hook). Due to the larger number of participants the workshop broke into several groups and after some

theory it was quite practical to rotate the mahouts through the positions of giving commands and giving rewards.

It was a very productive workshop with mahouts becoming visibly more attentive and engaged over the course of the workshop. It was the most instructors we've had at a workshop and the additional help of Dr Jones and Sophie ensured a greater level of detail and one to one assistance was given to any mahout with questions or difficulties. Since the mahouts that attend the workshops are selected because they hold leadership roles in their regular work environment, this extra attention will most likely lead to better dissemination of the knowledge to others.

After working with mahouts Andrew gave a lecture at the elephant hospital where he showed mahouts how to use clicker training to help vets with various treatments especially around eye treatments.

We also took tools with us supplied by Peter Horobin Saddlery for measuring the profiles of elephant's backs. We took 24 profile measurements to gain an idea of the variation in shape we could expect between individual elephants. This data will be used to ensure a basic saddle design meets a general specification and can cater to the entire range of sizes within the dataset.

After the workshop Ben, Portland and Sophie continued to visit elephant camps in the area but attending as general public and not identifying themselves in order to gain more insight into the industry. Some of the youngest elephants they encountered were displaying aggressive behaviour such as kicking and swinging their trunks at the public which was not effectively handled by the mahouts.

If these mahouts are not trained to control the development of these bad habits, these young elephants will learn behaviours that will ultimately deem them too dangerous for use in tourism. This will most likely mean the elephant will be destined for a life in logging, used in camps that use more severe punishment or in extreme cases, traded on the black market for "parts" prescribed as traditional medicines.

## January 2018 ACEWG Audit – Chiang Mai

In January 2018, Dr Andrew McLean was invited to attend the ACEWG (Asian Captive Elephant Working Group) meeting at the University of Chiang Mai, in Chiang Mai, Thailand. This meeting is mostly for a group of the largest operators in Elephant Tourism across Asia including Myanmar, Laos, Thailand and members that

work with many elephant related projects from Singapore and further afield.

Andrew delivered a talk on his experience and the value and importance of investing in mahout education. His talk coincided with a talk from Naut Kusters, Travelife, a sustainable tours and agents tourism organisation. Naut presented an auditing system he had put together with a team of experts and asked Andrew to attend the meeting as well as joining several camp audits, in an attempt to test the standard and see where it excelled and where it required further development before being presented as the auditing benchmark for all South East Asian elephant camps used for tourism.

Andrew and Ben attended two camps that had volunteered complete access to their facilities in order to gain feedback on the areas where they could improve. It was an extremely interesting process for all parties involved. There were areas identified where the standard was not extensive enough for measuring, for example, training, understanding and knowledge of the mahouts against the techniques we had developed, and also incorporating a scientific baseline for elephant measurement such as the Five Freedoms.

Overall it was an excellent process to be involved in and highlighted the recognition that H-ELP has ascertained as a driving force in elephant welfare across Asia.

## 2018 – Laos

Bjarne Clausen from the Danish Welfare Society, kindly facilitated our new start in Laos where it was a real pleasure to meet Michael Vogler, Head of the Elephant Conservation Centre in Luang Prabang. Mr Vogler is extremely genuine in his efforts to improve the training of elephants in captivity and his vision for elephant welfare is outstanding. The elephants in his care get a minimum of 7 kilometres of exercise per day, have access to adequate forage (they are careful not to overload the elephants with high carbs/sugar) and he has begun construction of a huge pen with the aim of allowing elephants to engage in normal social behaviours. With attention focused on humane training, this facility demonstrated best practice of training according to Dr Andrew McLean. This was all very good news. The H-ELP Foundation has donated a powerful electric fence unit to assist with the steps towards satisfying the social needs of elephants at this facility.



## 2017 – Fundraising Activities

We had an eventful year in 2017 for fundraising activities. With a talk by Dr Andrew McLean in South Australia hosted by one of our board members, Nicki Stuart, to an intimate gathering in the U.K. Along with private donations we are forever grateful for the contribution people have made over the 9 years we have been operating.

Our inaugural Black Tie Ball at the Mornington Racecourse raised a total of \$22,449. Thank you to all those who supported us.

### Our Supporters

#### MAJOR CHARITABLE DONATIONS RECEIVED FROM:

- Lisa Cochrane - Major donation (which sponsored a workshop)
- Kersbrook Equestrian Centre
- Peter Horobin Saddlery
- Equitation Science International
- Toyota Australia
- Danish Welfare Society

**CORPORATE DONORS (CASH AND “IN KIND”  
PRO BONO SUPPORT IN 2017/2018):**

- Minzenmays Mornington
- Greedi Lulu
- Flowers Girls & Co
- Bendigo Bank Mount Eliza

**KEY MEMBERSHIPS:**

- The Vet Society
- The Danish Welfare Society
- Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AESG).
- Travelife

## THE BOARD

**DR ANDREW MCLEAN** – Chair

*PhD in animal cognition and ethology, Bsc, Dip Ed.*

**BEN FULTON GILLON** – Jnr Vice Chair

*Photographer, Fellow of the Australian Conservation Foundation*

**NICKI STUART** – Director

*Journalist, trainer, business proprietor*

**MARLEE HOROBIN** – Director

*Creative Director, Peter Horobin Saddlery*

**DR PORTLAND JONES** – Director

*PhD, Author, lecturer, trainer*

**TARA ROSE CLEGG** – Board Member

*Secretary and equine enthusiast.*

**ALEX LILLEY** – Board Member

*Lawyer*

**HELEN COLEIRO** – Board Member

*CPA Accounting*

## Volunteer Profiles

**SUZIE BATTEN**

*Corporate communications specialist with a passion for animal welfare*

**SOPHIE WYLLIE**

*Business Manager, Equitation Science International*

**UTE RAABE**

*Graphic Design & Communications*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' STATEMENT

This Annual Report and its contents is endorsed and approved by the H-ELP Foundation Ltd Board.

Signed for and on behalf of H-ELP Foundation Ltd by its Authorised Delegate:

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr Andrew McLean

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_