

# Asian Elephants

THE POPULATION OF ASIAN ELEPHANTS HAS BEEN ON THE DECLINE DUE TO HABITAT LOSS, POACHING, CLIMATE CHANGE, HUMAN CONFLICT AND TOURISM.

## Why You Should Care

Elephants are some of the most charismatic creatures on this planet. They are known to never leave a member of the herd behind and always assist each other when danger arises. Unfortunately, elephants are currently facing massive threats such as poaching, habitat loss, and climate change.



### Biodiversity

- Keystone species
- Control forest understory by eating shrubs

### Seed Dispersal

- long distance seed dispersal
- Increase plant species diversity

### Culture

- Symbolize's strength, royalty, and intelligence in Asian culture

## Communicating the Science

### Habitat Loss and Fragmentation due to Climate Change

- Asian Elephant population has shrunk by **50%** since the 1900s (reported by WWF).
- As the human population grows, specie's habitat shrinks.
  - Large developments (ie. Roads, farms, dams, mines) are forcing Asian Elephants into small populations that are isolated from other elephant groups.
  - **Deforestation** is responsible for destroying **69%** of elephant habitats in Sumatra in the last 25 years (IUCN).
  - Asian Elephants are forced to move to higher elevations due to increased challenge to find water.
  - Asian Elephants live in forests and grassland which are areas that are heavily impacted by humans and climate change.

### Human-Wildlife Conflict

- Human and Asian Elephant boundaries are getting blurred resulting in more contact and conflicts.
- Asian Elephants have been found to invade agricultural fields and damage crops.
  - Farmers are killing elephants in order to protect their crops.

## Sustainability

There are many considerations when looking at why there has been a biodiversity loss of Asian Elephants.

### Ecological

There has been extreme drought causing less watering holes for locals and elephants. Along with drought, there have been numerous amounts of deforestation causing habitat loss.

### Social

Tourism has a large impact on the elephant community which has led to an increase in sanctuaries benefitting their quality of life.

### Economic

Poaching in years past has been a strong economic factor, but is not ethically right and severely cuts down the population. Recent increases in regulation has made the hunting of elephant's illegal.

## What Can We Do?

### Educate

- Share this poster with others
- Be a citizen scientist
  - record sitings

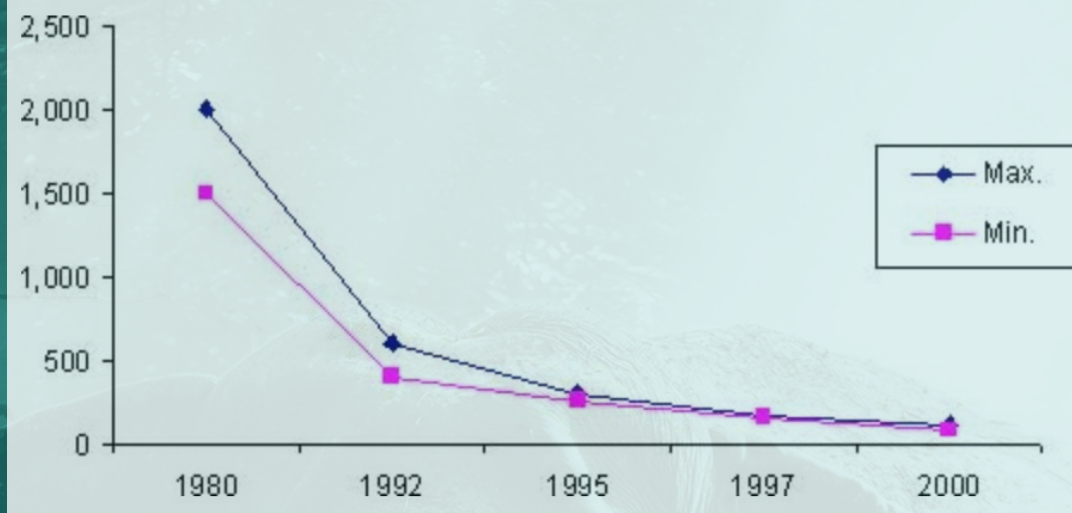
### Donate

- Checkout these organizations:
  - Save Elephant Foundation
  - Asian Elephant Support
  - Wildlife Alliance

### Avoid

- Ivory products
- Zoos/tourist attractions
- Products that contribute to deforestation (ie. palm oil)

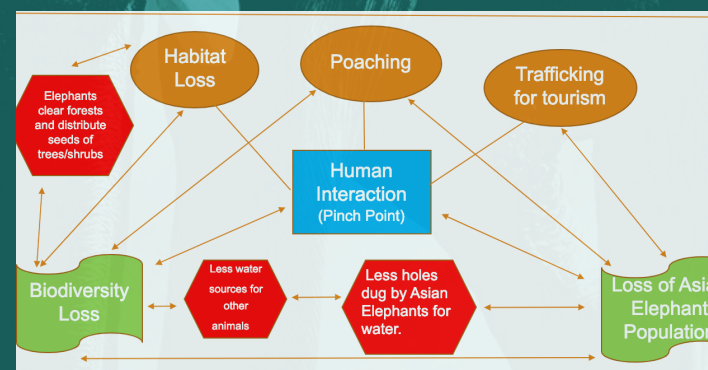
Fig. 1. The decline in the number of wild elephants in Viet Nam



### Poaching and Capture

- Elephants are killed for tusks, meat, and skin and then these products are involved in Elephant trade and tourism in Thailand
- Countries like India, Vietnam and Myanmar have banned the capture of Asian Elephants but there is a huge problem of illegal wildlife trade.
- A captured wild Asian Elephant has an average lifespan of **3-7 years shorter** compared to a captive-native elephants due to extreme stress of new a environment and inhumane capturing practices

## Systems



**Human interaction** is the pinch point in this system. Poaching, habitat loss, trafficking for tourism, biodiversity loss and the overall loss of Asian Elephant population all link back to human interaction with Asian Elephants. Habitat loss leads to land that could be used for agriculture which may seem beneficial to some people, but ecologically this will lead to biodiversity loss, which is a direct result of the loss of Asian Elephant population.