

WWF urgently calls for more ‘Elly Allies’ this World Elephant Day to better protect Asian elephant populations

Tragedy of baby elephant death on motorway in Malaysia draws focus on need for improved measures supporting living alongside Asian elephants

Bangkok, Thailand (8 August 2025) – This World Elephant Day, a global awareness day co-founded in Thailand, WWF is calling on national governments, private companies and other stakeholders to become [‘Elly Allies’](#) and improve measures to protect Asian elephants.

On Mother’s Day, May 10, of this year, a [tragic traffic accident](#) on a Malaysian motorway led to the death of a baby elephant when it was hit by a lorry. Scenes of the mother elephant grieving by the calf’s body attracted widespread media attention and sympathy. This incident draws attention to the critical need to build infrastructure that takes into account wildlife movements and habits, and protect Asian elephants across countries in Southeast Asia and southern China.

“Habitat loss and fragmentation caused by expansion of human activity is a significant threat to Asian elephants, particularly when infrastructure like roads and railways intersect with important movement corridors”, said Nilanga Jayasinghe, Asian Elephant Specialist at WWF. “The accident in Malaysia is so tragic, but there are ways to avoid these kinds of incidents in the future if mitigation measures that allow safe elephant movement and prevent such collisions are implemented in the process of constructing roads.”

The IUCN Asian Elephant Transport Working Group has produced a [Handbook to Mitigate the Impacts of Roads and Railways on Asian Elephants](#), which is the first elephant-specific guidance aimed to help elephant range countries reduce collisions and provide safe passage for the species.

An initial workshop to introduce the handbook was held in Malaysia, and the WWF office there is working closely on implementing the principles in the handbook by working with local authorities to identify mitigation measures to prevent these types of infrastructure related accidents in the future. They are planning on launching a national campaign focused on road safety for wildlife, which aims to change driver behaviour under the theme Elephants Need Safe Roads.

““We are working closely with government ministries and other key stakeholders to address wildlife roadkill incidents, including those involving elephants,” said Dr Henry Chan, Senior Conservation Director of WWF-Malaysia. “It’s crucial that we work together to make our roads safer—not just for people, but for our precious wildlife too.”

WWF is also rolling out the [C2C - Conflict to Coexistence](#) approach, which outlines an integrated and holistic approach to managing human wildlife conflict by guiding

the development of bespoke conflict management strategies suited to the environmental and social contexts. Alongside Malaysia, other Southeast Asian elephant range countries are working to promote improved coexistence with elephants and to ensure improved connectivity for these giants in this heavily populated part of the world.

In the Eastern Plains Landscape on the border of Viet Nam and Cambodia, WWF offices and partners are liaising on how to improve transboundary management of the elephant population. This includes addressing human-elephant conflict, initially by working with local communities to promote short-term safety measures that help reduce negative interaction. Going forward, longer term measures that include all relevant stakeholders will be identified and implemented using the C2C approach. Current efforts also focus on enhancing connectivity, supported by camera traps deployed to study and better understand elephant movement and behavior. WWF-Cambodia is also organising a trip for 100 high school students in Mondulkiri Province to interact with rangers and local authorities in the elephant habitat so that they can better understand what's at stake.

Meanwhile, the government of Viet Nam has just approved their National Elephant Conservation Action Plan period 2025-2035 to further conserve Asian elephants in the country. WWF-Viet Nam is committed to partnering with them to effectively implement the plan, focusing on two of the most critical elephant conservation sites in Yok Don National Park and the Elephant Species and Habitat Conservation Area in Da Nang.

In Thailand, World Elephant Day overlaps with the Queen's birthday, and WWF will use this opportunity to celebrate the work being done in the Western Forest Complex to conserve and improve elephant habitat. The country will share the way in which highway infrastructure has been developed to accommodate elephants and other wildlife in the form of overpasses and wildlife flyovers.

In Laos, WWF is conducting DNA sampling on elephant dung to better understand the genetic diversity of the wild elephant population that lives in Nam Poui National Protected Area. In the future, this information could be used to determine the connectivity of this population with elephant populations in Doi Phu Kha National Park, which is on the other side of the national border in Thailand. This DNA sampling is also planned for the Eastern Plains Landscape in Cambodia and Viet Nam.

Indonesia will be releasing a film that looks at the elephant habitat in Jambi and Aceh provinces that will feature the influencer, Chicco Jerikho. The documentary will be part of a 'sharing space' campaign between humans and wildlife, including looking at human-elephant conflict and the interactions between private companies, local communities and wild elephants. This film is supported by Bank Permata, and will be screened on world elephant day in Jakarta.

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Notes to Editors

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About WWF

WWF is an independent conservation organisation, with more than 38 million followers and a global network active through local leadership in over 100 countries. Our mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which people live in harmony with nature, by conserving the world's biological diversity, ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable, and promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.