



Standard Operating Procedure For Reuniting Separated Elephant Calf



Published by Elsa Foundation

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First Limited Edition: Sep 2010

Latest Limited Edition: Mar 2023

About us:

Elsa Foundation is a non-profit charitable trust that focuses on the conservation of biodiversity, prevention of cruelty to animals and animal rights issues of both domestic and wild animals. It opposes keeping wild animals in captivity.

We have travelled to several countries to study best practices and implement them in India.

The foundation supports various government bodies, in informed policy-making and decision-making on critical issues impacting biodiversity and the rights of animals.

Our work areas are research, advocacy, awareness, publication, support in policy and decision-making.

Website: www.elsafoundationcharity.org

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Introduction

In multiple instances across the country, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was not followed to reunite separated elephant calves with their mothers. This document gives an SOP for reuniting separated elephant calves with their mothers in all elephant habitats in India

Reasons for healthy calves getting separated from the natal herd

- ✚ Washed away by the river and carried to a different location
- ✚ Falling into a deep human-made trench (or) natural trench and the herd unable to lift the calf (If the trench is near a village, the herd will try its level best to rescue during the night time. Once the sun rises, afraid of the humans, the herd moves deep into the forest. They come back again, the next night, for rescue)
- ✚ Falling into a well

Note: The majority of incidents in which calves are separated are due to calves falling inside human-made trenches (A Wild Life Trust of India's publication confirms the same).

Other reasons for calves getting separated

- ✚ The calf is having some irrecoverable disease (or) physical disability and is unable to walk along with the herd. (have to be shifted to a rehab centre for further medical treatment)
- ✚ Herd chased with crackers / other scaring methods in which the calf is left out (in this scenario the crackers and noise-making instruments (drum, horn etc.) usage should be immediately stopped and people should move out of the vicinity of the elephants. The herd will come back to pick up the calf.)

In scenarios of healthy calves getting separated:

Doing the below actions have led to serious negative consequences

- ✚ Leaving a few months / few weeks' old calves, alone in the forest and expecting it to search the natal herd by itself.
- ✚ After rescue from trench / pit / river bank, immediately shifting the calf to zoo / elephant camp, without allowing the natal herd to come back and take the calf.
- ✚ Spreading false news that the natal herd abandoned the calf (when no genuine efforts were made to reunite) and sending the calves to a zoo / an elephant camp.

The consequences of the above actions are:

- ✚ Calves do not get united with their natal herd.
- ✚ Exposing calves to further danger (i.e. falling into a well / trench / river, falling from a cliff of a mountain, washed away by a river etc.)
- ✚ A large number of calves end up in lifelong captivity in zoos and elephant camps.
- ✚ High death rates of calves kept in captivity
- ✚ Expenses of several crores per year for forest departments, in maintaining captive elephants
- ✚ Expenses of several crores per year, for forest departments, in paying salaries to mahouts and his assistants
- ✚ Captive elephants are sold to temples / private people, which leads to miserable life till their death (Ref: Book by the foundation – "Captive elephants living conditions and solution to the problems")
- ✚ Extreme difficulty in managing captive male elephants during the musth period
- ✚ Elephants undergoing enormous cruelty in captivity
- ✚ Contravenes the Wildlife Protection Act and conservation of species.
- ✚ Several crores of taxpayers' money is wasted on maintaining captive elephants.



Leaving the calf alone will expose calves to the following dangers:

Falling into a well / trench / river.

Falling from a cliff of a mountain

Washed away by a river

Solution:

We suggest implementing the “Standard Operating Procedure” provided here to reunite the separated calves. There is a Tamil Nadu High Court directive (2012) to consider this procedure. This procedure has yielded multiple successful results in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Please refer appendix for a sample success story.

Prevention

Forest department (or) the public should not

- a.) Dig elephant trenches
- b.) Use crackers, devices making a loud noise or any such scaring methods on herds with calves.

Standard Operating Procedure

For reuniting a separated healthy elephant calf with its mother (to be deployed immediately after spotting the calf)

The below SOP was suggested by Elsa Foundation, based on elephant communication methods and best practices followed in various countries, to reunite the separated elephant calf with its mother. This SOP is successful. There is a Tamil Nadu High Court directive (y 2012) to consider this procedure

Procedure A: When a potential herd is visible near the rescue spot

- This process is done ONLY during day time
- Multiple teams have to search for the potential herd with a lactating mother, nearby the rescue spot
- Once a potential herd is spotted, leave the calf close to the herd and watch if the herd is picking up the calf.
- If the herd is noticing the calf and not picking up, then it is not the natal herd. In such scenarios remove the calf from that spot and keep it in the safe custody of operation staff.
- Search for other potential herds nearby and repeat the process
- The members leaving the calf near the herd need to be very cautious and maintain a safe distance to avoid elephant attacks.

Procedure B: When the potential herd is not visible nearby

- This procedure is done during night time
- During the daytime construct a bamboo / timber enclosure (which is similar to a goat enclosure in villages) very close to the spot where the calf was rescued. This enclosure should be made in a way such that it is strong enough that the calf cannot break it, but the mother should be able to break it (to take the calf).
- Keep the calf inside the enclosure (maximum up to 8 hours, as the calf becomes exhausted by crying). This enclosure prevents the calf from wandering and moving out of the vicinity, falling into pits etc.
- The calf will cry intermittently and attract the natal herd's attention
- Elephants also use infrasonic (low frequency not heard by humans) and seismic (vibration) communication, which travels several kms. These forms of communication will help the mother to identify the calf's location.
- The above setup facilitates the mother to come to the calf's spot, break the enclosure and take the calf. Normally the mother comes during nighttime when humans are not present

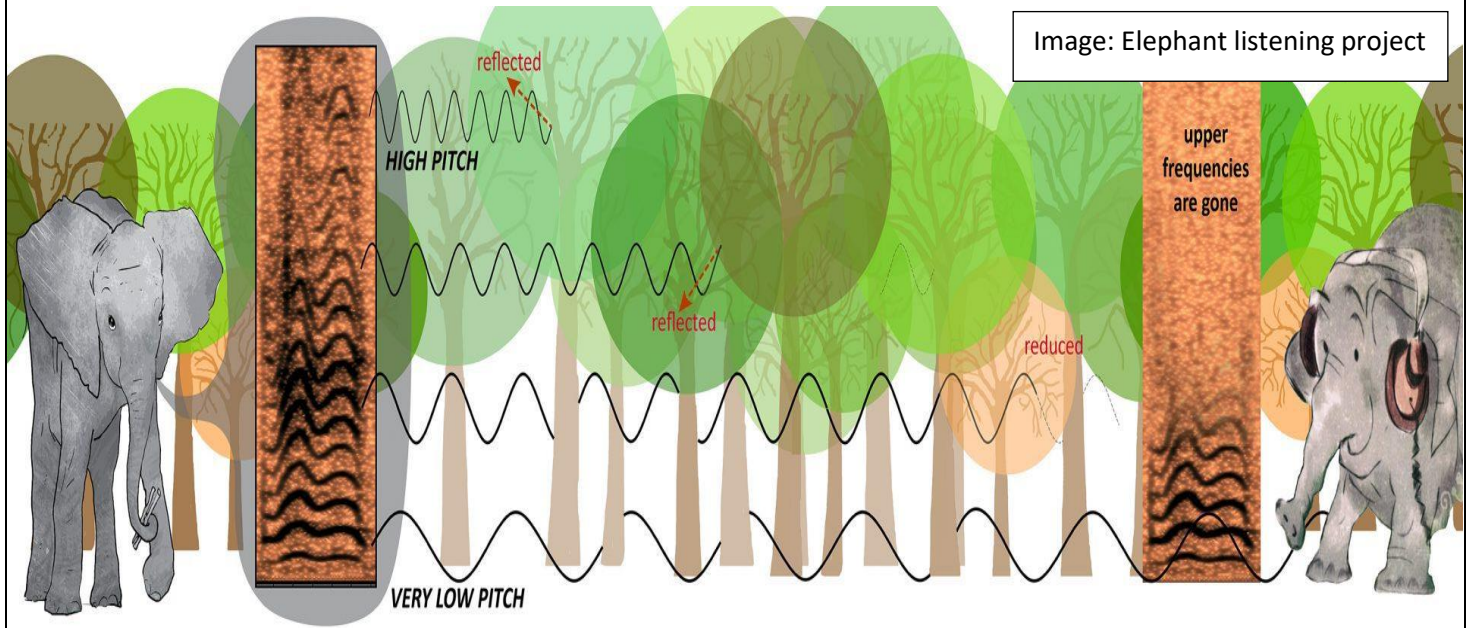
Infrasound communication

Elephants communicate with other elephants, several kilometres away, by infrasound communication (frequencies less than 20 Hz) a.k.a. rumbles. **This sound cannot be heard by humans.**

Due to its large wavelength (very low pitch), infrasound crosses the lower portion of the trees without any obstructions.

Mothers can listen to the infrasonic sounds of the calf and come to the spot for rescue.

This infrasonic sound travels underground also, which is sensed by the elephants using their foot.



Do these

- Smear the calf's dung and forest mud on the calf's body, to remove the human scent from its body.
- Please try this SOP for about 72 hours, immediately after spotting the calf.
- From the moment the calf was rescued, continue feeding the calf as per suggestions by a calf dietician (or) elephant vet doctor
- An experienced elephant doctor needs to be physically present till the operation is fully complete
- Start the medical treatment immediately after rescue and continue (as needed) during the process.
- Only a couple of forest department staff should handle the elephant. The others can act as support members. Too many people handling the calf may lead to infection
- Construct the kraal(enclosure) below a large tree, this will act as a roof in case of rains
- After every failed attempt, take the calf back to the nearest ear-marked building to continue feeding the calf and providing medical treatment.
- Have a special large bottle with long nipples for feeding the calf. This has to be manufactured (or) imported from abroad.
- Sterilize all the vessels, spoons feeding and bottles used for feeding the calf.



Strictly avoid these

- The calf is too small and does not have any idea about moving in the forest, so never leave the calf “alone and unrestricted” in the forest and expect the calf to search for its natal herd. This may lead to the calf getting seriously injured (or) dying due to a fall from a cliff (or) fall into a trench (or) fall into a river / lake.
- If the calf is seriously injured, then do not try the reuniting procedure.
- Strictly avoid any time delays in following any of the procedures mentioned here.
- Human presence near the calf, when the mother approaches, will lead to failure
- Strictly prevent overcrowding of people and media at the rescue spot.
- Do not construct a roof for the kraal (enclosure), as the roof will fall on the calf when the mother breaks the kraal. This is dangerous.
- Avoid using iron nails for constructing the enclosure, this may injure the calf and mother
- Do not smear any other animal’s dung (or) any other elephant’s dung on the calf’s body
- Ban visitors / public from going near the calf / touching the calf. This needs to be followed strictly throughout the operation to prevent infection.

Sample Calf Enclosure Photos



Appendix 1: Newspaper article about the wrong procedure followed and the calf sent to the zoo

In this case, the calf was left alone in the night, in the forest, without any barriers. The calf not knowing where to go, entered a village near the forest border, at night. The calf was captured at night and immediately shifted to Chennai zoo (550 kms. away) without giving any opportunity or putting any genuine effort to reunite with its mother.

THE  HINDU

TAMIL NADU

Rescued elephant calf sent to zoo

JANUARY 02, 2010 00:00 IST

UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 17, 2010 13:24 IST

Staff Reporter

Coimbatore: A six-month-old female elephant calf that strayed into Viraliyur in Narasipuram area of Thondamuthur on Friday was captured by forest officials and taken to Vandalur Zoo.

The calf that ventured into a trench was left behind by its herd on Thursday morning.

A team of forest officials, Conservator of Forests, Coimbatore Circle, R. Kannan and District Forest Officer I. Anwardeen deputed a team led by Forest Veterinarian N.S. Manoharan and Range Officer Selviah Vijayakumar.

The team tried to lead the calf on to its herd's track, hoping that it could reunite with its mother. However, on Thursday the calf struggled to find its mother and on Friday morning officials, with the help of villagers, captured the calf. The calf was sent to the Vandalur Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Chennai.

Captivity was the only option, officials said.

Follow-up news: Mother elephant searching for calf sent to the zoo (on next page)

Appendix 2: Tamil newspaper says “The mother elephant is searching for the calf sent to the zoo”

The below news articles published in Dhina Thanthi Tamil daily say “The mother elephant is searching for the calf sent to the zoo (news article in the previous page) and trumpeting near the village during night time. The forest officials are driving away this elephant with crackers and fire torches.”

விடபுருஷோத்தம ஸ்டேடியம் மறுபுது ஆஸ்தானா

குட்டியானையை தேடும் தாய் யானையை விரட்ட வனத்துறையினர் நடவடிக்கை தீப்பந்தம்-பட்டாசுகளுடன் ரோந்து

தொண்டாமுத்தூர், ஜன.8-
கோவை அருகில் குட்டி யானையை தேடி வந்து கதறும் தாய் யானையை விரட்ட வனத்துறையினர் அதிரடி நடவடிக்கை எடுத்து வருகின்றனர்.

காட்டுயானைகள் கூட்டம்
கோவை அருகில் மேற்கு தொடர்ச்சி நிலையம்மன் கோவில் மலை அடிவாரத்தில் மத்தியானையம், கரடி மடை, சென்னனூர், கிராமங்கள் உள்ளன. இந்த கிராமங்களில் வசிக்கும் மக்கள் பெரும்பாலானவர்கள் விவசாய நிலங்களை நம்பித்தான் உள்ளனர்.

விவசாயிகள் தோட்ட நிலங்களில் தென்னை, வாழை, மஞ்சள், தக்காளி, திராட்சை, பயிறு வகைகளும், மானா வாரி நிலத்தில் சோளம், சாமை, துவரை, அரசாணிக்காய், பயிறுவகைகள், பயிர் செய்து வருகின்றனர். சில ஆண்டுகளாக இந்த பகுதியில் காட்டுயானைகள் கூட்டம், கூட்டமாக வந்து விளை நிலங்களில் விவசாய பயிர்களை தின்று மிதித்து நாசப்படுத்தி வருகின்றன.

தற்போது காட்டுப்பன்றிகளும் அதிக அளவில் புகுந்து பயிர்களை சேதப்படுத்தி வருகின்றன. இதனால் விவசாயிகள் மிகவும் கவலை அடைந்து வருகின்றனர்.

தீப்பந்தம்-பட்டாசு

இந்த நிலையில் கடந்த சில நாட்களுக்கு முன்பு யானைகளுடன் வந்த குட்டியானை வழிதப்பியது. தொண்டாமுத்தூர் அருகே உள்ள விராலியூர் குதிரைக்காரன் தோட்டத்தில் வெட்டப்பட்டிருந்த குழியில் மொத குட்டியானை சில நாட்களுக்கு முன் விழுந்தது.

இந்த யானையை வனத்துறையினர் மீட்டு வண்டலூர் மிருக காட்சி சாலைக்கு அனுப்பி வைத்தனர். இந்த நிலையில் குட்டியை பிரிந்த தாய் யானை இரவு நேரங்களில் குதிரைக்காரன் தோட்டத்திற்கு வந்து சுற்றிப்பார்த்து பிளிறுவது வழக்கமாக உள்ளது.

இதனால் அந்த யானையை விரட்டுவதற்கு போளுவாம் பட்டி வனச்சரகர் செல்லையா விஜயகுமார், நரசிபுரம் வனவர் துரைசாமி மற்றும் வனத்துறை அதிகாரிகள் தீப்பந்தம் ஏந்தியும், பட்டாசு வெடித்தும் நடவடிக்கைகள் மேற்கொண்டு வருகின்றனர். இரவு நேரங்களில் தான் அந்த தாய் யானை வந்து சத்தமிடுவதால் வனத்துறை அதிகாரிகள் இரவு நேர ரோந்து பணியையும் தீவிரப்படுத்த உள்ளனர்.

ஊர்காவல் படை மண்டல தளபதியாக விருப்பமா?

கோவை, ஜன.8-
கோவை மாவட்ட போலீஸ் சூப்பிரண்டு கண்ணன் வெளியிட்டுள்ள அறிக்கையில் கூறியிருப்பதாவது:-
கோவை மாவட்ட ஊர்காவல் படை மண்டல தளபதியாக பணிபுரிய விருப்பமுள்ளவர்கள் வருகிற 20-ந் தேதிக்குள் நேரிலோ, தபால் மூலமாகவோ கோவை மாவட்ட போலீஸ் சூப்பிரண்டுக்கு விண்ணப்பிக்கலாம்.

மனுதாரர் 20 வயது முடித்தவராகவும் 45 வயதுக்குட்பட்டவராகவும் இருக்க வேண்டும். நன்னடத்தையும் உடல் தகுதியும் பெற்றிருக்க வேண்டும். தமிழ்நாட்டில் இருப்பவராக இருக்க வேண்டும். எந்த குற்ற வழக்கும், சிவில் வழக்கு, கட்சி, தொழிற்சங்கம் ஆகியவற்றில் ஈடுபடாதவராக

Next Page: There are multiple success stories of implementing SOP and reuniting the calf. One sample success story is provided here.

Ooty: Elephant calf reunited with mom

DECCAN CHRONICLE. | B RAVICHANDRAN (/byline/b-ravichandran-1)

Published
Updated


Jul 5, 2017, 6:42 am IST
Jul 5, 2017, 6:42 am IST

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As foresters' efforts to find its mother and herd in the nearby jungle vicinity went in vain on Monday.



 The two-month-old abandoned wild jumbo calf in Gudalur. (Photo: DC)

Ooty: The near two-day battle for the two-month-old male abandoned wild elephant to reunite with its mother came to an end on Monday. The baby elephant which accidentally fell into a trench along the forest fringes in Houndale area in Gudalur in Nilgiris border was found abandoned on Sunday night and the foresters rescued the animal on Monday.

They have embarked on efforts to reunite the baby with its mother and herd, which is believed to be roaming around the area and expected to come in search of the young one.

As foresters' efforts to find its mother and herd in the nearby jungle vicinity went in vain on Monday, they set up a temporary kraal in the jungle fringes and lodged the baby elephant there.

On Tuesday around 5.30 am its mother came near the kraal and rescued the baby elephant and took it along with it and vanished inside the woods, Mr Ganesan, Forest Range Officer at Gudalur said. The forest team which was on duty near the Kraal watched this and informed the higher ups, he added.

The two primary sources of wild elephants coming in to captivity is

1) Capture of wild adult elephants 2) Bringing separated elephant calves to captive elephant camps.

Lack of “Standard Operating Procedure” in reuniting separated calves with their mothers’ leads to enormous increase in captive elephants, which in-turn leads to loss of several crores of rupees spent on running captive elephant facilities. Captive facilities are not suitable for fulfilling even the very basic biological and psychological needs of an elephant. Enormous cruelty is inflicted on captive elephants.

A simple and doable “Standard Operating Procedure” described in this document addresses the above issues and supports conservation of elephants.

Elsa Foundation