

Sumatran Elephant Problems

(2008)

1. Sumatran Elephants' population declines



The Sumatran Elephants' population in 2007 was estimated at only 2400 – 2800, and has declined at a rate of 35% each year since 1992 when there was estimated to be up to 2800 – 5000 elephants (Forestry Information Center, 2007).

2. Causal factors of the Sumatran Elephants' population decline :

- 2.1. The shrinkage of their habitat due to the forest clearing for palm oil plantations and pulp. The coverage of low land forest in Sumatra declined drastically during 1990 – 2000. This degradation triggered conflict between humans and wild animals.
- 2.2. Poaching elephants for their ivory: the ivory trade involves rogue elements among the military, the police, and also forestry officers. This trade takes place in secret. A pair of Sumatran elephant tusks is worth around 300 million Rupiah.
- 2.3. Conflict between humans and elephants: According to data from the Forestry Department, between 2002 and 2007 they recorded at least 42 people and 100 elephants which died due to the conflict.

3. Elephant Training Center (PLG)

There are many PLG throughout Sumatra which have been established by the Department of Forestry. These are:

- a. PLG Way Kambas, Lampung Province
- b. PLG Seblat Bengkulu
- c. PLG Riau: Minas and Duri
- d. PLG Sumatera Utara: Holiday Resort, Tangkahan and Semapol
- e. PLG Aceh: Sare and Sekoci

f. PLG South Sumatra: of which there are 4

3.1.Problems in PLG:



3.1.1. Elephant poaching for their ivory:

- 13th of September 2005, 2 elephants in PLG Minas Riau were brutally killed and their ivory taken.
- 17th of July 2007, an elephant was found dead with its head crushed and its ivory missing.
- Before 2007, at least 3 elephants in PLG Seblat were killed for their ivory.

3.1.2. Animal welfare for elephants in PLG:

- Generally, animal welfare for the elephants in PLG is very bad, with the slight exception of PLG Seblat Bengkulu, as FFI and International Elephant Foundation (IEF) are there helping with the elephants' medical problems.
- Several elephants in PLG Riau and South Sumatera died from tetanus as the result of an un-sterilized anaesthetic shot wound.
- Some other elephants in Riau died from digestive problems as a result of not getting enough water to drink for a long time.
- Many elephants suffered wounds caused by the anaesthetic shots, as well as leg wounds from being chained. 2 female teenage elephants in PLG Minas Riau suffered severe wounds on their legs caused by the chain.
- Seizure method using unprofessional anaesthetic makes many elephants stressed and some of them die of infection. Elephant seizure in Riau often involves the WWF.

3.1.3. Transferring elephants from PLG to zoo/ safari parks:

PLG becomes tool to provide elephants for zoo or circus. On August 2007, 8 tame elephants from PLG Minas Riau sent to Taman Safari Indonesia (Indonesian Safari Park). It was noted there were several elephants transfers from PLG to safari park or zoo.

on October 2007, an elephants initially from Grand Forest Park (Tahura) Berastagi was sent to Medan zoo, North Sumatra on foot, walking for 70 km. Formerly this elephant stayed in PLG Holiday Resort, North Sumatra. Later on, due to stress and exhausted, this poor elephant died in Medan zoo.

3. Organizations working for Sumatran elephants:

| There are several organizations working on elephant issues in Sumatra. The work of all of these organisation is based on a “conservation” mind frame, that is how will the elephants be able to survive and how can they be made use of. Issues of whether the elephants are stressed or suffering pain is not a big deal. Elephants dying due to incorrect seizure methods and poor care is also not a concern.

For how long will this situation persist? For how long will Sumatran elephants have to suffer? Will the circuses and zoos be their final home?