

A Royal Couple, Orphaned Animals and a Painted Elephant



Comments 0



Subhamoy Bhattacharjee 14 April 2016 Updated 14 Apr 13547 views

Their Royal Highnesses William and Catherine, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, this afternoon visited IFAW-WTI's Centre for [Wildlife](#) Rehabilitation and [Conservation](#) (CWRC) near [Kaziranga National](#) Park, Assam.

CWRC, run by the International Fund for [Animal](#) Welfare (IFAW) and the [Wildlife](#) Trust of [India](#) (WTI) with support from the Assam Forest Department, is the only facility in [India](#) where orphaned and/or injured wild animals of several species are hand-raised and/or treated and subsequently returned to the wild. As of March [2016](#) the Centre had handled 4,322 [animal](#) cases, with [2,465](#) being released back to the wild – a rehabilitation rate of nearly 60 percent.

Their Royal Highnesses arrived at the Centre at half past noon and were accompanied around the grounds by WTI Executive Director Vivek Menon and IFAW [President](#) & CEO Azzedine Downes, [as](#) well [as](#) the [lead](#) veterinarian Panjit Basumatary and the centre-in-charge Rathin Barman.

They interacted with the [animal](#) keepers and even hand fed some of the orphaned animals being reared at CWRC – elephant calves Buree and Murphuli, just a few months old when they were [rescued](#) last October, now being raised on milk formula under the watchful eyes of their keepers; and Dunga, a male rhino, the youngest and newest resident at CWRC and the best of friends with the two female elephant calves.

The royal highnesses were relaxed from their early morning safari in the park and seemed at ease, feeding the orphaned animals at CWRC. The Duchess was most interested in knowing more about the youngest rhino calf at the Centre. A specially created photo album with information on each [animal](#) they saw was given to the royal couple .

“We are delighted that Their Royal Highnesses made time to visit the IFAW- WTI centre and meet staff and the animals under care,” said Azzedine Downes, [President](#) & CEO, IFAW. “With elephants and rhinos in particular facing an uncertain future due to habitat loss, human conflict and poaching, IFAW is pleased that the Duke and Duchess are able to raise public awareness of these threats to an international audience.”

“[India](#)’s biodiversity is a global treasure, and every [rescued animal](#) that we successfully rehabilitate and release helps rebuild endangered wild populations,” said Vivek Menon, Executive Director & CEO, WTI. “We are proud to share all that the CWRC staff have accomplished with the Duke and Duchess, and grateful that the Royal couple is using their influence to share it with the world.”

Urgent Corridors and the Birth of Aana

Their Royal Highnesses were then escorted to the site of the upcoming [Kaziranga Discovery Park](#), a clinic for (and learning centre on) Asian elephants being developed by the [UK](#)-based [NGO Elephant Family](#) in collaboration with WTI.

[Elephant Family](#) has also partnered with IFAW, WTI, World Land Trust and [IUCN](#) Netherlands to form the **Asian [Elephant Alliance](#), a partnership of conservation organisations [launched](#) last year to [arrest](#) the [crisis](#) facing the world’s remaining Asian elephants, of which 60 percent (an estimated 30,000) are in [India](#).**

While [India](#) has long [celebrated](#) and revered its elephants, its rapid economic development has meant that traditional elephant lands are now being used by people for [agriculture](#), [roads](#), railway lines, mines, dams and the like. Conflict between humans and displaced elephants presently costs the country [over](#) 400 human and 100 elephant lives every year, and millions of rupees in [crop](#) and property damage.

As the Royal couple sat on cane *murahs* (chairs) under a thatched sit-out, WTI CEO Vivek Menon briefed them about the importance of elephant corridors, which allow elephants safe passage between and adjacent to protected habitats without intrusion into human-use areas. The Asian [Elephant](#) Alliance has prioritised the securement of 100 such corridors identified in [India](#), and aims to raise £20m for this cause.

It is estimated that 500,000 Indian families are affected by Human [Elephant](#) Conflict annually and people who live in [elephant](#) corridors [fear](#) for their lives and livelihoods. **Ruth Powys, CEO of [Elephant](#) family introduced Their Royal Highnesses to villagers from Ram Terang**, located in the autonomous tribal Karbi Anglong hills in Assam, which earlier lay right in the middle of an ancient elephant route. [Elephant](#) Family, WTI and the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council came together to build New Ram Terang, a better equipped and safer village [6](#) km uphill from the corridor. The villagers shifted into their new homes in November 2015, and their representatives here, including children, spoke with the Royal couple about their experiences before and after the relocation.

Finally, Their Royal Highnesses were taken to be introduced to **renowned Indian artist Bulbul Sharma, 15 schoolchildren (and their headmistress) from the nearby village of Panbari, and a large painted model elephant named Aana.**

Aana, which simply means ‘elephant’ in Malayalam, is a collaborative creation between Bulbul Sharma and the schoolchildren. It depicts the joy of children celebrating elephants in the vibrant colours of [India](#), and the myriad flora and fauna that are protected by conserving the elephant [as](#) a keystone species. It also marks a call to action for other Indian creative artists to participate in [Elephant](#) Parade 2017 – an event where life-sized baby [elephant](#) statues, painted by artists and celebrities, are exhibited in international cities to raise awareness for [elephant](#) conservation.

Their Royal Highnesses were handed paintbrushes to put the finishing touches to Aana. **Prince William broke open a coconut to signify, in auspicious Indian style, the launch of the [Elephant](#) Parade in [India](#).**

“We are thrilled Their Royal Highnesses have been able to join [Elephant](#) Family and the [Wildlife](#) Trust of [India](#) at [Kaziranga](#) Discovery Park to see first-hand the important [animal](#) conservation work that goes on here”, said Ruth Powys, CEO, [Elephant](#) Family. The Royal visit also marks [Elephant](#) Family’s call to [India](#)’s creative artists to participate in creating the [Elephant](#) Parade 2017 – where 300 model elephants will be hand painted with stunning designs and showcased across Mumbai and Delhi to raise funds and awareness for [India](#)’s [National](#) Heritage [Animal](#).”



Subhamoy Bhattacharjee

BY SUBHAMOY BHATTACHARJEE

Relocated rhino gives birth to calf

Growing Wild: the rescued rhino calves

Elephant specialists to meet on Nov 10-12

Dr Borah stresses literature's unifying role

107 Wild rescue cases in Kaziranga Flood

ON THIS DAY

Raijor Dal on the doorstep

Heroin smugglers arrested

Gandhi Jayanti celebrated by Army in Lingibore

Cleanliness Drive By FCI and SOS Children's Village marks Gandhi Jayanti in Hojai.

PoK editor bats for more exchanges

RELATED

People's consultation on agroecology, climate adaptation concludes in Jorhat

USTM concludes workshop on academic writing and scholarly publishing

'Grit & Glory' released in Guwahati, highlights RSS work in Northeast

Young poet Avinash Bastabha's 'The Tale of Termites' unveiled in Jorhat

Art exhibition raises awareness for vulture conservation in Jorhat
