

Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG)

The Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) is a global network of specialists concerned with the study, monitoring, management, and conservation of Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in its 13 Range States across Asia.

A Brief Background of AsESG

Given below are the key facts and information about the Asian Elephant Specialist Group in detail:

Objectives of AsESG

- The main aim of this group is to promote the long-term conservation of elephants across Asia and also encourage their population recovery to a viable level, where ever possible
- It acts as the Red List Authority for the Asian Elephant, carrying out Red List assessments for inclusion in the IUCN Red List
- It is also liable to provide evidence that is scientifically and abundantly available about the existence of this animal, and also analyse the demographic status of the Asian elephant population in all its 13 range states
- Apart from this, it also releases a bi-annual journal, named 'Gajah', which mentions the population, conservation and other measures related to the IUCN/SSC's Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG)

Who are its Members?

- The AsESG consists of 110 specialists from 18 countries across the globe as a member of the group with diverse skill sets
- Almost 1/4 th of the memberships are females
- It also has Ex-officio officials from all Range States nominated by the Ministry looking after elephant conservation in the country

Given below is the list of 18 member countries of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's AsESG:

Australia	India	Nepal
Bangladesh	Indonesia	Singapore
Bhutan	Japan	Sri Lanka
Cambodia	Lao PDR	Thailand
China	Malaysia	United Kingdom

Germany	Myanmar	Uniter States of America
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Mandate of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group

The Asian Elephant Specialist Group is an integral part of the Species Survival Commission (SSC) of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

The mandate of the AsESG is thereby derived from the four objectives outlined by the SSC which are to:

1. Assess and monitor biodiversity

- Provide suitable scientifically-grounded evidence on the status of the Asian Elephant population
- Make periodically compiled range-wide assessments available on its official website (<https://www.asesg.org/>)
- Serve as an information hub for providing data on the importance of conserving Asian Elephants

2. Analyse the threats to biodiversity

- Analyse threats to wild populations and raise awareness
- Set standards or guidelines for management and welfare of wild and captive elephants

3. Facilitate and undertake conservation action

- It can use its advisory mandate to guide conservation and welfare issues of Asian elephants by governments or other civil societies
- Each member shall work in their area of expertise with the assistance of AsESG

4. Convene expertise for biodiversity conservation

- The member countries or the concerned authorities can meet periodically to meet the needs for the conservation of biodiversity
- Workshops can be conducted to promote the conservation measures along with specific and relevant themes

What is the Species Survival Commission (SSC)?

The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) is a science-based network of more than 9,000 volunteer experts from almost every country of the world, all working together towards achieving the vision of, "*A just world that values and conserves nature through positive action to reduce the loss of diversity of life on earth*".

SSC's major role is to provide information to IUCN on biodiversity conservation, the inherent value of species, their role in ecosystem health and functioning, the provision of ecosystem services, and their support to human livelihoods.

10th Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) Meeting

- The last Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AsESG) Meeting which was its 10th edition was held in Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, Malaysia in December 2019

- The meeting was attended by over 130 elephant conservationists, the group's partner organisations, and scientific experts
- Issues discussed in the meeting included:
 - A National plan of action by the range states for the conservation of Asian Elephants
 - Light was thrown on the measures that can be taken to manage the conflict between human being the Asian Elephant
 - Mechanism to monitor the illegal killing of elephants and the involvement of group members in stopping the same was also one of the key topics of discussion

About the Asian Elephant

- The Asian elephant is the largest land mammal in the Asian continent
- As of March 2021, their status is endangered and multiple measures are being taken for the conservation of this species of animal. Its population has declined by an estimated 50 percent over the past 75 years, and there are an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 Asian elephants left in the wild
- They are generally found in areas surrounded by forests as they consume grass, large amounts of tree bark, roots, leaves, and small stems
- Threats to wild Asian elephant populations include habitat loss from deforestation and agricultural development, as well as conflict with humans as elephants seek space and raid crops grown close to their forest habitats
- There are three subspecies of the Asian Elephant: Indian, Sumatran, and Sri Lankan. Of these three, the Indian accounts for the majority of the remaining elephants on the continent