

A REVIEW

Demographic distribution and management of Elephant

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India, unlike to domestic buffaloes harbors more than 50% of the wild elephant population (29190) and about 20% of the captive elephant population (3600) of Asia (Table 1). The Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) are associated with the religion, myths, historical and cultural values for centuries in the country. It also has its economic significance. Hence Asian elephants enjoys a special status in the country, as tiger is our National animal; but for almost all Indians elephant is the de-facto National animal (Bist *et al.*, 2002).

The history of domestication of Asian elephants based on rock painting might be about 6000 B.C. (Choudhary, 1989). Although, Indus valley civilization (2500–1500 B.C.) suggest the presence of domestication elephant in India. The ancient literature have various references about trained elephants, which is associated with Aryans who are believed to have entered in India about 1500 B.C. and shows the references of catching taming and training of elephants.

Distribution:

The available estimates of domesticated elephants in India were very high as these was used mostly for war. The Chandra Gupt Maurya had 9000

elephants. The Mughul emperor Akbar (1556-1605 A.D.) had 32000 elephants and emperor Jahangir (1605-1627 A.D.) had 113000 elephants in captivity (Bist *et al.*, 2002).

At present, the distribution of wild and domesticated elephants in India, shows that highest population was in Southern region (approx. 15773) and minimum was in the western region (approx. 92) with the total population of about 32790 (Table 2). The estimation of domesticated and wild elephants population in the different Asian countries suggested that, maximum population of elephants were in India (approx. 32790) followed by Myanmar (approx. 8075), Sri-Lanka (approx. 5500) and Thailand (approx. 5100); while minimum number was found in Nepal (Table 1).

Feeding management:

The wild elephants use different feed stuffs available to them in the forest, while under captivity can consume about 100 to >200 kg. feed per day depending upon their age (Coung *et al.*, 2002). However, if an elephant is offered 200 kg. feed and 140 to 200 liters of water per day, can digest only 40 % of it ; while, he spents about 18 hours per day for feeding (Prasob, 2002 and Schmidt, 1986). But, Mar (2002)

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Table 1 : Status of domesticated and wild-elephants in different countries

Sr. No.	Country	Year	Number of elephant		References
			Domestic	Wild	
1.	Sri-Lanka	1994	3500	2000	Hendavitharana <i>et al.</i> (1994)
2.	Cambodia	1997	162	600	Dany <i>et al.</i> (2002)
3.	Malaysia	1999	36	1171	Daim (2002)
4.	Myanmar	1999	4075	4000	Aung and Nyunt (2002)
5.	India	2000	3600	29190	Bist <i>et al.</i> (2002)
6.	Thailand	2000	3800	1500	Singh (2002)
7.	Sumatra	2000	362	2690	Hutadjulu and Janis (2002)
8.	Nepal	2000	--	50	Kharel (2002) locit.
9.	Vietnam	2000	165	114	Coung <i>et al.</i> (2002)