

**Framing Conservation, Colonialism and Care:
Captive Endangered Asian Elephants (*Elephas maximus*)
in Nepal**

Submitted by Michelle Leigh Szydowski to the University of Exeter
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Abstract:

Captive elephants face numerous challenges as they navigate life in Nepalese elephant stables, or *hattisars*. Used as human conveyance, government anti-poaching patrol team members and rescue vehicles, these elephants work with and for humans. Numerous NGOS and INGOs are active in the lives of these animals. The United Elephant Owners' Cooperative (UEOC) oversees the day-to-day operations of tourist safaris, while the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) offers VIPs elephant rides and transport for researchers needing to access Chitwan National Park. In addition, numerous elephant advocacy organizations have arisen with the goal of changing the riding culture and improving the lives of captive elephants.

This thesis seeks to examine the motivations of these NGOs and INGOs, along with their ethical approaches to elephant health and welfare, asking are the motivations of these organizations similar enough to work together towards a common goal? Or are their ethical norms so different that get in each other's way? Using an ordinary language and ordinary ethics theoretical framework, this thesis attempts to identify norms consistent across cultures and organisations and reframe them in ways which allow those organisations to create more successful outcomes.

This study also includes an assessment of the elephant stables in the Sauraha area of Nepal. These stables, and their multi-species occupants, serve as cynosures for an examination of the health and welfare of captive elephants and mahouts. By connecting these stables, their occupants and NGOS/INGOS interested in elephant care, this study can offer suggestions to improve the health and welfare of tourism elephants.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	7
Why Elephants?	10
Situating Nepal's Elephants	13
Overarching research questions, aims and objectives	15
Potential impacts of this research	19
Positioning myself within this research	23
Overview of chapters and structure of thesis	27
ONE: THE YAM BETWEEN TWO ROCKS	35
Brief physical history	36
An introduction to elephant history in Nepal	43
Conclusions	53
TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS	55
Theories of Language and Words	59
Ordinary Ethics	64
Avenues of research: Using animal biographies	69
Implications for methodology	77
Research Methodology	80
Terminology	90
Conclusions	92
THREE: ETHICS, CARE AND COMMODIFICATION	94
Conservation and biodiversity maintenance: neoliberal commodification or a path to environmental justice?	95
Ecotourism in Nepal	110
Social science and environmental justice discourse	123
Wild elephants and tourism	137

Conclusions	143
FOUR: THE ADVENT OF ELEPHANT TOURISM IN SAURAHA	146
Where it all began	146
The rise of captive elephant care and disease in Sauraha	158
Laws and debates surrounding captive elephants in Sauraha	164
Conclusions	172
FIVE: HAPPY, HEALTHY HATTI	174
What is welfare?	175
Health and Welfare: Two Inseparable Ideas	179
Conclusions	185
SIX: COLONEL HATTI IN NEPAL	187
The Government of Nepal and the National Trust for Nature Conservation	188
Discourses surrounding the Government and NTNC Hattisars	219
Conclusions	237
SEVEN: OWNING HATTI	240
The United Elephant Operation Cooperative Limited (UEOC)	240
‘Rudra Raja’, independent owner	259
Conclusions	262
EIGHT: HATTI HELPERS?	264
INGO4 and INGO6	265
Hotel1 and INGO2	275
NINE: THE HATTI HOME	288
INGO5 biographical information	289
HATTI BIOGRAPHY ONE: ‘SANANI GAJ’	313
Conclusions	322

HATTI BIOGRAPHY TWO: DHONU GAJ	323
Conclusions	331
HATTI BIOGRAPHY THREE: LISWINI (IDHA) KALI	332
Liswini's story	334
Conclusions	360
TEN: THE HATTISAR ASSESSMENTS	361
Considerations	365
The lowest scoring stables	368
The second group of hattisars	371
Group three	373
Stables with mid-range scores	380
The highest scoring hattisars	382
Discussion	386
Recommendations	388
Conclusions	391
ELEVEN: THE SANCTUARY SUMMIT	394
The coffeehouse	396
Conclusion	402
TWELVE: A HATTI ENDING	403
Contributions to knowledge	404
Seeing elephants through a variety of lenses	405
Common language and ordinary ethics	413
Limitations of this study	423
Final conclusions and the way forward	424
APPENDIX I: MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON HEALTH AND WELFARE	428

APPENDIX II: ELEPHANTS IN ASIA	439
Part 1: Acts impacting elephant health and welfare in Asia	439
Part 2: India	442
Part 3: Elephant care and welfare in Thailand	450
The Thai elephant manual and other guidelines	460
Conclusions	465
APPENDIX III: EXPANDING UPON ELEPHANT HEALTH AND WELFARE CONCERNS	467
Key health and welfare impactors	467
Measuring welfare	474
Available measurement tools	475
Welfare measurement conclusions	483
Stable and husbandry concerns in Nepal	484
Conclusion	488
APPENDIX IV: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS	489
Part 1: Ethics approval	489
Part 2: Acronyms	502
Part 3: Data collection and handling	502
Part 4: Supplemental materials (forms and sample questions)	505
Participant Information Sheet (सहभागी सूचना पत्र)	505
CONSENT FORM (सहमतिका लागि)	507
PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT FORM	509
Sample questions	510
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	513
LIST OF FIGURES	515
WORKS CITED	516

Introduction

While on a jeep safari through Chitwan National Park in Nepal, I heard the guide from the vehicle ahead yell something back to us. I turned to our guide and asked what was said. 'He said "porcupine,"' our guide explained. I was excited! I had never seen a wild porcupine, and as the jeep stopped my companions and I jumped out to join the rest of our group. As I drew near to the rest of them, one woman whispered, 'Stay close.' I was confused. 'Are the porcupines in Nepal dangerous?' I asked. 'Porcupine?' she said, 'It's a cobra!' I looked at the ground in front of me, and saw it was riddled with snake holes. I turned to another travelling companion and without needing to speak a word we backed up together until we reached our jeep and climbed aboard. We later discovered that the guide in front had yelled back a word—in Nepali—which sounds a lot like 'porcupine' in English. For some reason, our Nepalese guide 'heard' in English instead of Nepali. From that day on, my companions and I yell 'porcupine!' in any potentially dangerous situation.

I share this vignette as an introduction to this work for several reasons. First, language is often not reliable when spoken across cultural boundaries. As Annemarie Mol (2014: 107) so poetically stated, words are 'not spoken in language but in daily life practices', taking on a life of their own dependent upon 'the unique combination of sites and situations' in which they are used. The words themselves become 'participants' in each situation, but do not 'form a coherent system' with which to define cultural differences in understanding (Mol, 2014: 110).

Throughout this thesis, various stakeholders use both Nepali and English words to discuss topics such as conservation, ethics and care in Nepal, but these words often transform depending upon both the situation and the listener. When a Nepalese veterinarian describes a 'good stable' or 'quality food' for animals, his definition of the word is not what many external welfare workers would describe as even mildly acceptable. Finding a common language and a common ground for conservation groups—including those from other countries—is not an easy task given the fluidity of spoken words, but it is a worthwhile one when trying to study groups focused on 'saving' animals.

Despite creating communication issues, the variability of meaning allows for an exploration into what Marilyn Strathern (1992: 72-73, 76-79) calls merography—bringing in seemingly disparate entities which in fact share connections once followed down exploratory trails. While Strathern coined her neologism to describe biological and societal roles in English kinship, it has since been applied to everything from the 'social meaning of DNA' to fungal spores (Franklin, 2003: 65; Strathern 1992: 72-73, 76-79; Tsing, 2014: 223). In this case, the porcupine in the above story is not simply a cobra suffering from a case of mistaken identity, nor is it in fact a porcupine at all. It is, instead, two animals linked together through the words and actions of those present during the sighting and those to whom the story gets repeated again and again. This non-porcupine also serves to demonstrate how the connections between very diverse people—in this case drivers, guides, Americans, Canadians, Nepalese, tourists, researchers, veterinarians, conservationists and businessmen—create similarities through

shared experiences which are greatly influenced by the choice of words used to describe them.

This thesis will examine these connections as they weave throughout practices of conservation and care enacted by people of many ethnicities, nationalities and beliefs. For example, writing merographically allows me to explore the meaning of ‘marginalized’ groups or ‘best’ practices by bringing in the stories of individuals and organizations, analysing the connections between conservation and captive animals and the ties between American women and female Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*). These explorations also allow for me to approach elephants as members of ‘vast evolutionary lineages stretched cross millions of years’ but also as ‘fleeting and fragile individual’ beings involved in meaning-making with humans (van Dooren, 2014: 23).

Secondly, the porcupine narrative above demonstrates how what one group of people sees as an appropriate activity—such as pursuing a deadly snake across a field—is not acceptable to others, even others with the same nationality, interest in wildlife and cultural background. Vitally important to this thesis is the idea that what is appropriate care of or behaviour toward humans, captive animals or wildlife is not easily definable nor universally practiced. For example, basic animal welfare guidelines, such as the ‘five freedoms’ (Brambell, et al., 1965; FAWAC, 1979: 2) have been adopted by many organizations, including the Government of Nepal (Government of Nepal, henceforth GoN, 2016a: 4). However, these freedoms are often ignored in everyday practice. This may be because the idea of

'appropriateness', like 'care', is fluid, location specific and value-laden. Therefore, while these freedoms can provide a starting point for discussions surrounding the ethical treatment of animals, studying the practices of caregiving and interacting with animals in international settings should be done with a great deal of reflexivity (Mead, 1934: 90-91). Differences in methodology, belief systems and cultural background all inform what each person might deem appropriate interaction, good welfare or adequate care.¹

Analysing these interactions between human and non-human animals is a complex and daunting task, made more difficult by the variety of international interests involved in a small county like Nepal, and the even smaller village of Sauraha, which serves as one field site for this study. As this thesis proceeds, the ribbons of ethics, care, conservation and the language which surrounds Sauraha and its elephant residents will intertwine and unwind, much like the paths of humans and animals through the jungles of Nepal.

Why Elephants?

Vinciane Despret² describes being drawn to ethology because of problems with language much like those mentioned in the porcupine anecdote above (Buchanan, et al., 2015: 166). But rather than an issue with the translation of words from one language to another, Despret describes the challenge of translating non-human

¹ See Borges de Lima and Green's (2019) work on wildlife tourism for an excellent discussion of current issues in the field, many of which will be examined in detail in the follow chapters

² In an interview with Buchanan, et al., 2015

languages into stories with which humans can identify and understand (Buchanan, et al., 2015: 166). Furthermore, Despret warns ethologists against trying too hard to see behaviours and languages as fitting into existing theoretical frameworks, instead encouraging them to embrace the ‘story’ itself—and allow themselves to be surprised by what they find (Buchanan, et al., 2015: 166). Like Strathern, Despret suggests following the stories along whatever path they take, instead of attempting to arrive at a predefined destination.

Many of the stories in this thesis will twist and turn in unexpected directions. To tell the stories of humans and elephants, I will often adopt a biographical approach. Not only does this meandering style fit more with my own biography—that of high school literature teacher turned veterinary technician turned college professor—but it also allows me to examine what is happening in Nepal with an eye toward individuals. As Krebber and Roscher (2018: 2) explain, writing animal biographies is one way to experience animals as individual beings without having to ‘read their minds’.

Elephant individuals in Nepal are members of one species which could benefit from this type of biographical approach. Due to their long, shared history with humans, their status as an endangered species, and their identification as a charismatic animal throughout Asia (both religiously and culturally), captive elephants are an ideal cynosure for a study of ethics and care. Captive elephants in Nepal find themselves in situations vastly different than their wild counterparts (Desai, 2008; Kharel, 2002; Sukumar, 2003) and are often viewed by stakeholders

as an entirely different 'caste' of animal (Szydlowski, in press). The issues surrounding these owned, captive endangered species will be examined from the viewpoints of various stakeholders interested in the future of these pachyderms. It is vital that the laws and ethics surrounding the ownership of these individuals be examined from the perspectives of community members, the owners themselves, and individual elephants.

It is also important that this thesis document the health and welfare of captive elephants in Nepal. Except for a few small studies of specific populations of elephants (Gairhe, 2012; Locke, 2017b; Shrestha and Gairhe, 2006) these topics have been overlooked in Nepal (Kharel, 2002: np; Varma, 2008; Varma and Ganguly, 2011). Therefore, information regarding individual health, welfare and husbandry practices will be carefully examined regarding current global veterinary views on nutrition, care and safety in captivity.

These elephants find themselves the focus of many smaller NGOs in Sauraha which list as their goals 'saving' elephants or finding alternatives to their 'traditional' use. Hoping to end elephant-backed safari, these organizations are often at odds with private elephant owners and one another. A thorough examination of these and other organizations' websites, promotional materials and mission statements form the initial groundwork for discovering their stated, public motivations. For example, do these websites sell the idea of 'western enlightenment' over traditional practices? Is participation in certain programs going to 'change the world' or simply 'save elephants'? Participant observations,

attendance at events, examination of social media posts and interviews with staff will provide insight into these organization's hidden motivations. By examining both overt and covert motivations behind these organizations' efforts, as well as the ways in which their messages are interpreted by local community members and other stakeholders, we may find the key to a more unified approach to captive elephant welfare.

Situating Nepal's Elephants

Due to space constraints within the main body of this thesis, an extensive comparison of management styles, legislation, environmental politics, historical use and elephant-human relationships between Nepal and other countries (both range and non-range states) can instead be found in Appendix I and II. In brief, captive elephants in Nepal represent a much smaller population and reside in vastly different conditions than those in other range states (see chapters five and ten, Appendix II). For example, while India and Thailand are home to approximately 3,500 and 3,700 captive elephants, respectively, Nepal has only 120-150 (AERSM, 2017; CEWR/UWN, nd; Elephant Task Force, 2010; Menon and Tawari, 2019; Sarma, et al., 2012).

Rather than being housed in villages or grouped in camps as they might in India or Thailand, Nepal's privately-owned elephants are kept in small stables behind human residences or hotels, and live singly or in pairs (see Tipprasert, 2002; chapter ten). With few exceptions these individuals are kept chained when not working and are not allowed physical contact with each other when stabled (see

chapter ten). Other differences include the use within Nepal of unhulled rice as a food staple³, a lack of provisioned forest product, and a lack of stabling within/near forested areas or free-choice foraging in natural settings (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 6; Vanitha, et al., 2010: 120; see also chapters five and ten, this thesis). Another major difference arises from the types of elephant usage found in range countries. Elephants in Nepal are not currently employed as street-beggars (Duffy and Moore, 2010; Long, 2019) or used for farming, nor do they face lives as 'living statues' outside temples as they might in other range states (such as in the Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states of southern India) (Varma, 2008; Varma, Avinash and Sujata, 2009; Vijayakrishnan and Sinha, 2019; see also Appendix II). In addition, there are no mahout-owners in the Chitwan area of Nepal, nor are there village-dwelling elephants of the type described by Lainé (2020) in his discussion of Laos.

The origins of elephant usage also vary by country. Thai elephant camps traditionally began amidst larger scale logging practices and transitioned to tourism following the logging ban of the 1980s (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 8). In contrast, use in Nepal began with elephants first as instruments of war, then as mounts for hunting, logging and farming practices, and later in forestry work and conservation activities (see Kharel, 2002; Locke, 2008; Mishra, 2008). The use of elephants in Nepalese tourism practices, however, only arose in the 1960s (see chapter four, this thesis). Current similarities between Nepal and other range states include employment gaps among forestry personnel and elephant staff, a

³ See 'Rice is not elephant food' section in Appendix III

lack of registration or CITES enforcement, the use of a breaking ritual (see chapter four), a lack of experienced mahouts, a lack of adequate husbandry, and a lack of legislative oversight codifying care practices or training methods (Bansiddhi, et al., 2018: 13; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019; Laohachaiboon, 2010). In addition, Nepal is among the approximately half of range states which do not have any form of management guidelines (AERSM, 2017: 51-52). As in other range states, elephant care in Nepal is intimately tied to tourism dollars (see Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019: 56; chapter four this thesis). These similarities and differences, and the ways in which they create unique issues and opportunities within Nepal, will be discussed further in the following chapters.

Overarching research questions, aims and objectives

This thesis attempts to identify the similarities and differences in ethical approaches to elephant welfare used by NGOs active in Nepal and determine how these approaches impact the welfare of humans and nonhumans in the area. It also attempts to identify key areas of overlap between governmental, non-governmental, local communities, and national/international volunteer organizations interested in conservation and animal care.

The overarching research questions ask: can the health and welfare of captive elephants and their caregivers be improved through an examination of the similarities and differences in ethical approaches used by elephant owners and NGOs active in Sauraha, Nepal? Are the ethical norms of each group so different that they are getting in each other's way? Is it possible to identify norms that are

consistent across cultures and reframe them in a way that will aid organizations in finding a 'common language' for conservation and care efforts?

This information is vital to determining how to link organizational goals and practices to create more successful outcomes for both wild and captive animals.

The knowledge gained from this study will ideally contribute to improving the welfare of non-human animals in areas of conservation focus.

To that end, the aims of this project are as follows:

1. to understand the motivations of local, national, and international conservation and elephant advocacy groups active in/near Chitwan National Park, Nepal.
2. to compare the stated aims of these organizations with the ways in which they practice elephant care.
3. to understand the perceived efficacy of these organizations and how their aims overlap, support, contradict or undermine each other.
4. to document elephant welfare status and indicators at captive elephant stables in Sauraha, Nepal
5. to explore ways in which this research might contribute to improving the welfare of the non-human animals in areas of conservation focus.

The first objective of this research is to examine the motivations of local, national and international conservation programs active in Nepal, through the lens that everyone is doing what they feel is ethical or best for animals and communities, but everyone's best is different. Michael Lambek (2010: 1) calls this 'ordinary

ethics'. Lambek (2010: 40) explains that many people not only feel a strong *desire* to do the right thing, but also believe that they are *behaving* ethically as well (see chapter two). Personnel from organizations active in conservation may not only profess a desire to do the right thing, but may also deeply believe that their methods are ethical—or even *more* ethical—than someone else's. This thesis will explore whether the common refrain of 'doing the best for the animals' means the same thing to each organization. Or more likely, does the cultural background and baggage of each group inform their definition of 'the best', and do they try to apply this definition to workers from other cultures? Sometimes even when organizations do their best, they are unable to succeed. Will finding a common language of conservation—or perhaps using a common language of ethical behaviour—aid these organizations in helping animals?

Each of these organizations has their own mission statement or promotional motto, style of messaging and organizational ethics. While each of the organizations contacted for this study lists some type of conservation activity as their focus, they differ in methods, resource use, funding and relationship with the local peoples. With regard to aim three above, this research will discuss the perceived efficacy and examples of best practices of each type of welfare or conservation organization through an examination of community attitudes toward the group, the successes and failures of meeting their stated goals, and their ability to work with or around the larger community.

This thesis also attempts to identify key areas of overlap between government, NGOs, local communities, and national/international volunteer organizations. I would like to identify norms that are consistent across cultures and reframe them in a way that will aid organizations in finding a common language for these animal-related efforts (Lambek, 2010: 49; Mol, 2013: 102,110). This thesis contributes information vital to determining how to link organizational goals and practices to create more successful outcomes not only in Nepal, but in other areas of conservation focus.

Captive Asian elephants serve as the focus around which to examine the first three of the above-stated aims. This research examines the complex situation surrounding the ownership and care of captive endangered elephants used in both tourism and park management, and the similarly complex situation facing organizations that wish to help these animals. It also examines the motivations and aims of these groups, the ways in which they practice conservation and the ways in which they complement or counteract each other's efforts. It is my hope that through this examination, a common language or common ground for conservation can be identified, leading to more appropriate living conditions for captive elephants and their caregivers through improved communication between stakeholders.

With regard to aim four above, a survey of 25 elephant stables in the Sauraha area was conducted in an attempt to ascertain the health and/or welfare status of these captive individuals. A discussion of the ways in which stabling and

husbandry impacted elephant welfare at these facilities resulted in the development of guidelines for improving these stables to increase positive elephant health and welfare in the area. This survey brings attention to a small but important marginalized community of elephants who are commonly overlooked in research.

Lastly, this thesis contributes to the larger body of academic work on nutrition, health, and care of Asian elephants in captivity within Asia. The application of this knowledge, and the potential identification of areas where further study is needed will support aim number five above.

Potential impacts of this research

Ralf Buckley (2011: 409) describes the desperate need for integration between academic fields such as biology, tourism studies and psychology in the research of ecotourism, conservation and environmental impact. Tourism researcher David Fennell (2013: 336) calls for or an immediate, interdisciplinary approach to animals used in tourism. He cites a need for more diverse information regarding the biological, behavioural and emotional needs of animals used for human entertainment (2013: 336). The lack of scholarship on the unique and complex needs of these animals is directly impacting their welfare (Fennel, 2013: 336; see also Garrison, 2016; Masson, 2010), and the field is ripe for the current study and its use of my unique biology-based, anthrozoologically-filtered lens.

While ecotourism, NGOs and conservation are all separate topics of much academic debate, this thesis uniquely combines these issues in a way that will contribute to conservation efforts by identifying key motivations, beliefs and words used by organizations interested in conserving nature and environment. Finding commonalities in the motivations and practices of parties active in Nepal will hopefully allow for a better understanding of each group's ordinary ethics and bolster these organizations' abilities to work together more efficiently. In turn, any improvement in the efficacy and cooperation of these organizations may lead to better living conditions for both captive elephants and their caregivers in Nepal.

Impacts on the lives of captive elephants

The use of captive endangered species for tourism activities is also a complex and problematic concept, the examination of which has been a focus of research in other Asian countries but has been rarely studied in Nepal. Earlier studies concerned themselves with discovering methods to track potential disturbance to wildlife by tourists in Chitwan National Park (Curry, et al., 2001), providing insight into the management of stables (Kharel, 2002; Gaihre, 2012) or tracking disease transmission (Mikota, et al., 2015: 12). Other studies merely acknowledge the draw of elephants in bringing tourism into the park (Bhusal, 2007: 71). According to Dr Vidanta at the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC), one reason for the lack of studies on animal health and welfare within Nepal is due to the relatively small number of elephants held there. In comparison to the over 2000 captive elephants working in Thailand's tourism industry (on top of another 2000 domestic elephants working in other parts of Thailand), the 200 captive elephants

living in Nepal are of less concern for activists and conservationists alike (interviews, 2019).

This is not to say that Nepalese elephants themselves have not been represented in anthrozoological research. Since 2001, Dr Piers Locke has been studying the history of the elephant stable and the relationship between mahouts and elephants in Nepal. His work on 'ethnoelephantology' has been the primary source of data regarding these pachyderm pairings for many years (Locke 2008, 2011, 2013, 2017), and his other academic works involving multispecies ethnography (Locke and Buckingham, 2016; Mackenzie and Locke, 2012) have provided a wider base for the study of nonhuman informants. In addition, Dr Lynette Hart has completed several ethnographic papers on the history of mahout-elephant relationships in Nepal, and the effects of the tourist gaze on the human side of the relationship (Hart, 2005 and 2015; Hart and Locke, 2007).

As recently as 2009, elephant husbandry had not yet been established as an 'integrated field of academic enquiry' (Locke, 2009: np), but this is no longer the case. Husbandry in both western and eastern facilities has been the topic of a massive variety of papers over the last two decades (Bansiddhi, et al., 2018, 2019, 2020a, 2020b; Brown, et al., 2020; Carlstead, et al., 2000, 2013; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Desai, 2008; deVries, 2014), and has resulted in national and international conferences.⁴ However, little progress has been made in defining the

⁴ For example, the Elephant Managers' Association annual conference or the Composing Worlds with Elephants conference.

specific health and welfare needs of elephants held in captivity (Bansiddhi, et al., 2018, 2019, 2020a; Brown, et al., 2020; Carlstead, et al., 2000 and 2013; Desai, 2008). Efforts are being made to establish both proper husbandry methods and positive welfare impacts for elephants, and finding metrics which can be applied in a variety of elephant management positions has become the goal of several researchers (see Varma, 2008; Veasey, 2017, 2020).

Optimising population-level information is necessary, but what is still lacking from earlier studies is an examination of the care and ethics surrounding elephant *individuals* with regard to their unique health, welfare and husbandry. Secondly, examination is needed of local and international groups wishing to influence the daily lives and livelihoods of elephants, owners and mahouts. This thesis will add to the overall body of work in both ethics and anthrozoology through an examination of the potential for elephant husbandry improvement, the potential benefits and pitfalls of sanctuaries, the ability of organizations active with elephant tourism to consider the bigger picture of mahout livelihoods, and the ethical concerns which arise when outside organizations attempt to change things within marginalized communities. This research may lead to more appropriate living conditions for captive elephants and their carers through improved communication between stakeholders.

This thesis also contributes to the public and academic debates surrounding the ethics of using captive wild animals to draw both funding, organizations and volunteer workers into areas of conservation focus (Bhusal, 2007; Buckley, 2011;

Nepal Tourism Board, 2019; Newsome and Hughes, 2016). The interactions between tourists, NGOs and INGOs, and how these interactions benefit or harm captive elephants will add to discourses surrounding NGO work as a neoliberal pursuit which may further commodify animals. I will also examine the benefits and pitfalls of the cosmopolitanism of villages which follows an increase in tourism and conservation efforts.

Positioning myself within this research

Because of my familiarity with travel in the Chitwan National Park area, I am well positioned to undertake this research. Having visited the area four times over the last eight years, I have developed relationships within the local communities and with various conservation groups active there. I have made friends and organizational contacts, and have maintained an ongoing email, phone and social media connection with individuals of various species there.

As a former veterinary technician, I have both training and background in human/non-human medical relationships, experience with companion and wild animal health and welfare, and the ability to see the agency of animals from various perspectives. I have also spent more than 26 years as an animal care volunteer at the Denver Zoo, with the last eight spent working with river hippos (*Hippopotamus amphibious*), Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) and two species of rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis* and *Diceros bicornis*). Long hours of observing, training, feeding, working and 'becoming-with' (Despret, 2008; Haraway, 2008: 27) these animals has allowed me to develop personal

relationships with individual pachyderm persons, who I see as simply Bert, Mahali, Samantha, and my good friend Rudy. I have embodied knowledge of these persons from our hours spent in physical contact. My time in Nepal has allowed me to establish relationships with elephant persons such as Idha, Feba, Sibi and Pariti. While my personal feelings on the ownership (especially private ownership) of endangered species remain fairly consistent, because of my familiarity with the culture in Nepal and my relationships with both owners, caregivers, and activists, I am able to consider the perspectives of various stakeholders. For example, my first trip to Nepal involved meeting several businessmen with whom I developed a professional relationship—and who later turned out to own safari elephants. I did not understand the complexities of what I call the ‘elephant situation’ in Nepal at that point. I made friends with mahouts, veterinary staff, and tourism workers before I had any knowledge of what exactly their jobs, lives and belief systems entailed. Because I met these people first as individuals and not as potential research subjects, I got to know them without any associated baggage.

I feel that meeting these human and non-human individuals first, before they became the focus of my research, allows me to better understand and relate to their world view. It keeps me from viewing the elephant situation from an *exclusively* outsider, western or activist view. I can empathize with the elephant owners’ views of good business practices while still understanding the anger of the animal activists fighting to free these captive animals. I can empathize with the sadness of the veterinary staff when they lose an elephant to disease after fighting to save her for weeks, while still understanding how westerners view the veterinary

care in Nepal as inadequate and resulting in needless death. Of course, it would be impossible for me to be completely unaffected (consciously or subconsciously) by my own pre-existing notions based upon my past. Likewise, I expect that my Nepalese participants (both elephant and human) are affected by their prior experiences with visitors who preceded me.⁵

Lastly, as both a PhD student and an instructor of future anthrozoologists, I understand and maintain a commitment to reflexivity and metacognition regarding my research. I have a stake in the outcome, as someone who plans to return to Nepal time and time again to visit old friends of numerous species. However, this desire to remain in the lives of my friends in Nepal, both human and elephant, means that I must now write myself into their story. I cannot feign innocence of the events which unfold in many stables throughout Nepal, and can't simply walk away at the end of my field work. My field work has always taken place within the boundaries of acceptable Nepalese behaviour, and has been limited by the Nepalese tendency to tell people what they want to hear (Johnson, interviews 2016; Brown and Vidanta interviews, 2019, Gwala PC⁶, 2020). Because I am now part of their story, I must practice what Scheper-Hughes (1995: 415) calls a 'militant anthropology' and become 'politically committed and morally engaged' with the human and non-human beings living in Sauraha. I therefore must think about the social practices in Nepal both as an academic and as one who stands with those of many species who suffer. Halfway through my writing up, simply

⁵ See further discussions of reflexivity in following paragraphs and on pages 10, 87-92, 255, etc.

⁶ As noted in the methodology of this thesis, personal communications such as email and texts will be noted as PC for in-text citations.

reporting my findings ceased to be the main goal of my project. Shining a light on the lives of elephants and mahouts was no longer enough, and the story requires critical reflection on what was experienced, with an eye toward taking part in changes that have long been needed. How to accomplish this without resorting to neo-colonialism? I turn again to Scheper-Hughes (1995), who asks that we *do* take sides, as non-involvement is not truly a neutral or objective position, but rather a way to avoid becoming involved, setting the researcher 'above and outside' human events (1995: 415). This position outside of humanity is of course completely impossible for a human to inhabit, and the presence of an observer changes the observed (Martin and Bateson, 1986). Becoming involved means that after critical reflection, the researcher offers a conclusion based on their experience. A 'field of knowledge' joins a 'field of action' (Scheper-Hughes, 1995: 419). I will continue to study mahouts and elephants co-working in Nepalese national park patrol and conservation practices in order to gain perspective on these unique interspecies relationships, especially how they differ from the same practices in other range states. However, while I will also continue relationships with private elephant owners and support them as they face a changing world, I am honest with them that my interests now lie in ending the use of elephants for private tourist safari. Transitioning elephants and mahouts off tourist safari is, however, far from simple or quick, as readers will discover as this thesis progresses.

Overview of chapters and structure of thesis

One:

Chapter one examines the unique physical characteristics which make Nepal an area of biodiversity concern and international conservation focus (Kharel and Dhungana, 2018; Olson and Dinerstein, 2002). With over 118 official ecosystems, Nepal features landscapes ranging from just 60 metres above sea level to the highest point in the world—Mount Everest (Kharel and Dhungana, 2018). This chapter also discusses how Nepal's history has influenced its relationship with both the environment and the wide diversity of non-human animal life found within its borders.

Examining Nepal's physical and political history is absolutely necessary to understand the conservation efforts currently underway within this small country. Nepal has grown from a series of small kingdoms to the federalist democracy it is today, but not without conflict from both internal and external pressures. British, Chinese and Indian governments have all played roles in Nepal's development, yet it has never been formally colonized (Whelpton, 2005; Brown, 1996; Jha, 2014).⁷

This chapter also examines the natural history of elephants (Sukumar, 2003) and their shared history with humans which dates back thousands of years (Locke, 2011). While the use of elephants for hunting parties aimed at royal guests has

⁷ Of course, there are differing definitions of colonization beyond the occupation and rule of an outside political entity. See chapter one for more on the influences of Britain and India on Nepalese politics.

been around since at least the early 1900s (Mishra, 2008), private elephant tourism only began in the early 1960s as the government of Nepal decided to limit usage of governmental elephants to forest patrol and conservation efforts (Gaihre, interviews 2019; GoN, 2015a).

Two:

Chapter two introduces the theoretical framework for this thesis. The care and ethics surrounding conservation in Nepal will be viewed through a lens of what Michael Lambek (2010) calls 'ordinary ethics' (2010). Drawing from Wittgenstein's (1922,1958) ordinary language philosophy, Lambek (2010: 40) describes how people desire to do the right thing, and believe (or convince themselves) that they are behaving in an ethical way. It has been my experience throughout my travels to Nepal that people describe their work with animals as the right or best thing, and their animal treatment as ethical, which in turn sets up those who are not doing the same work as doing the wrong thing or behaving unethically.

This chapter will also examine how social facts or situated knowledges (Haraway, 1988) inform the treatment and care of animals in Nepal. Drawing on Durkheim's (1982) work with how living in communities creates pressure to believe or behave in a certain way, I will examine how the social facts surrounding captive elephants in Nepal influence the ways in which they are treated. O'Connor and Weatherall's (2019) work on how misinformation and social truth spreads through societies will serve as a basis for further review.

This chapter introduces the concepts of animal biography (see Keen, 2012; Krebber and Roshcer, 2018; Meister, 2017) and autoethnography as tools for examining animal lives. A description of the methodology used in this thesis follows, and a discussion of the implications of this theoretical framework on the methodology rounds out the chapter.

Three:

A review of relevant literature follows in chapter three, including an examination of related current debates and the gaps within these areas that apply to this thesis. These topics include neoliberalism in conservation practice, the impacts of ecotourism on the Chitwan area (Bookbinder, et al., 1998; Puri, 2019) and colonial attitudes towards communities of humans and other animals. This chapter also includes discussions of conservation and tourism as colonial or neoliberal pursuits (Ganti, 2014; Mostafanezhad, 2016), and the commodification of non-human animals.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have historically played a large part in the lives of endangered species in Nepal. First, when USAid assisted the government of Nepal in eradicating Malaria in the areas surrounding what is now Chitwan National Park, leading to near extinction for several species as humans moved into the area; and later in working towards the preservation of species and landscapes (Karkee and Comfort, 2016; Mishra, 2008; Shrestha, et al., 2010). The perceived efficacy of NGOs in conservation will be examined here, along with the ways in which NGOs and INGOs have been associated with neoliberal thought.

Lastly, this chapter offers discourse surrounding the variety of lenses through which elephants can be viewed. These elephants may be seen as cosmopolitans with whom we share landscapes (Barua, 2014; Chaudhuri, 2017; Hurn, 2015), as co-workers (Coulter, 2016a and 2016b), or as individuals to become-with (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Haraway, 2008: 27).

Four:

This chapter examines the advent of elephant safari in Nepal and draws upon data collected from interviews with management at the original safari lodge, along with interview data from veterinarians, elephant owners and welfare workers to paint a picture of the relatively short history of large-scale elephant-backed safari. Tiger Tops, the first hotel to offer private elephant backed safari in the areas surrounding Chitwan National Park, serves as a focal point for this chapter. One of the first hotels to provide chain-free elephant corrals, they now market themselves as pioneers in 'environmentally responsible tourism' and have now eschewed all elephant riding (Tigertops.com, 2019)

The rise of elephant tourism resulted in the spread of disease among these elephants (and their caregivers), which in turn led to an evolution in veterinary care. This care is provided to privately-owned elephants through the quasi-governmental Nature Trust for Nature Conservation due to a unique relationship forged in the 1990s. The chapter ends with a discussion of the applicable laws surrounding ownership of captive elephants in Nepal, and the ways in which these laws are disregarded.

Five:

Next follows a discussion of the health and welfare needs of elephants. Because the number of both captive and wild elephants in Nepal is miniscule compared to other Asian countries, any assessment of health and welfare must begin with research from areas with greater populations (Desai, 2008; Varma, 2008). In addition to Asian range states, US and European zoos will serve as a basis for a discussion of health and welfare parameters (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Harris and Harris, 2008).

There is a need to develop welfare standards and measurements which can be applied to captive elephants in a variety of situations (Kagen et al., 2015; Mason and Veasey, 2010b; Veasey, 2020). The specific elements of welfare and physical wellbeing which can be applied to captive elephant stables in Nepal are the primary focus of chapter five, and led to the creation of a checklist which was used to assess these stables (see chapter ten).

Six:

The primary groups one needs to discuss with regard to conservation in Nepal is the government and the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC). The original founders of the national parks system, the government—whether the monarchy or the current federalist republic—has typically held ultimate control over conservation efforts in Nepal (NTNC, 2018: np). The government of Nepal has tasked the conservation of care of wildlife and landscapes to the NTNC, an

'autonomous not-for-profit' organization focused on nature conservation (NTNC, 2018: np).

Both the NTNC and the government also own and use elephants in their daily practices. Chapter six includes a look at these stables and the health and welfare of their occupants. This chapter will begin to examine the ways in which these organizations interact with one another, the wider community, and captive elephants. This examination will continue throughout the following chapters.

Seven:

The ways in which various organizations care for elephants in Nepal depends greatly on their organizational ethics, and the personal motivations of those involved, and the stories they tell themselves and others. The social facts (Durkheim, 1982) which exist in Nepal may limit the ability of those who seek to practice conservation of endangered species and get in the way of positive change. This chapter will begin to connect the study of elephant organizations through the lens of cooperation toward a common goal, and introduces the United Elephant Owners' Cooperative in Sauraha.

Eight:

Numerous smaller organizations are active in elephant care and welfare in Sauraha, Nepal. Biographies of a few of these organization will be given in order to paint a clearer picture of the wide variety of groups operating within Nepal, many of whom have origins in international locations. The many differing ways in

which these groups perceive themselves as caring for animals, as well as the ways these efforts are perceived by local people and other organizations will lead to a discussion of the difficulties in getting these organizations to work together in efficient way, and the need for a common language of care. Through an examination of promotional materials, face to face interviews and participant observations, this thesis will paint a picture of several NGOs focused on elephant welfare, endangered species conservation, and sustainable development, among others.

Nine:

Chapter nine examines the discourses and practices of INGO5, the only INGO whose founders are permanent residents of Nepal. With more than two years of interviews and communications, I have created a detailed biography of this organization, their practices and the ways in which they are impacting elephant care in Sauraha. INGO5 recently welcomed the first elephant residents to their facility, and this chapter examines the ways in which this organization identifies and addresses the needs of both elephants and mahouts. INGO5 may be able to act as a model for future sanctuary-style elephant venues, and demonstrate new ways for elephant owners to preserve income while improving elephant health and welfare.

Ten:

This chapter discusses the 'sanctuary summit', a get-together hosted by the author in an attempt to facilitate discussion among the various individuals and

organizations interested in elephant welfare in the Sauraha area. This summit offered the opportunity for a variety of advocates, veterinary personnel and owners to describe their visions for the future of elephants in Nepal. The relationships and communication which took root at the summit may provide the basis for inter-agency cooperation in the future.

Eleven:

Chapter eleven examines 25 elephant *hattisars* (stables) surrounding Chitwan National Park. The majority of these *hattisars* do not meet the basic health and welfare needs of elephants as described in chapter five of this thesis. Using the welfare impactor checklist which was developed for this study (mentioned above), a detailed discussion of several of these stables offers insight into current elephant care practices, and the differing views of adequate care held by Nepalese and non-Nepalese owners. What is needed to improve these stables and provide better health and welfare for captive elephants is outlined in the conclusion to this thesis.

One: The Yam Between Two Rocks

With British influence pushing hard northward from India and the Chinese government moving south through Tibet, Prithvi Narayan Shah, the ‘creator of modern Nepal’, referred to his landlocked country as ‘a yam between two rocks’ (Whelpton, 2005: 36; Stiller, 1968: 42). This pressure from foreign powers helped forge the modern political and social structure of Nepal, and continues to influence the government today (Whelpton, 2005).

This chapter offers a brief physical and political history of Nepal and a discussion of how conservation practices have changed over the years. It then discusses the field sites used in this study and the need for a multi-sited, multi-species ethnography. Lastly, it contains a description of the natural and religious history of elephants in Nepal, and how their lives are impacted by both conservation practices and rapidly expanding tourism. An examination of the label ‘domestication’ and the ways it affects elephant lives rounds out the discussion.

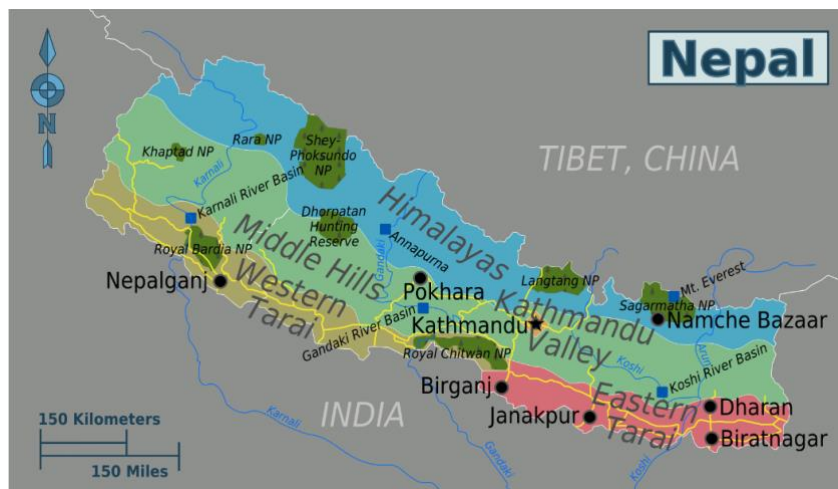


Figure 1: Map of Nepal showing national parks.

Brief physical history

Nepal is a small country, just over 143,000 km², sandwiched between India and the Chinese region of Tibet. Nepal's unique physical location, stretching south from the Himalayas down to the grasslands on the border of India, has resulted in a massive variety of altitudes, climates and habitats (Kharel and Dhungana, 2018: 23). These in turn foster an ideal environment for extreme biodiversity (Jnawali, et al., 2011; Kharel and Dhungana, 2018: 23). Nepal's climates range from subtropical to arctic; its elevation transitions from just 60 metres above sea level to the highest point in the world—Mount Everest—8,848 metres above sea level. This small country features biomes as diverse as tundra, broadleaf and mixed evergreen forest, rivers and savanna. In fact, there are 118 'official' ecosystems in Nepal, and 45% of its land is forested (Kharel and Dhungana, 2018: 23). Despite inhabiting only a tiny part of the total global land area, about one tenth of one percent of the world's land, Nepal is home to more than three percent of the world's plants and just over one percent of the world's animals (Kharel and Dhungana, 2018: 23).

With a history of wildlife-related regulations since at least the 6th century CE—in large part due to the ruling class' desire for a guaranteed supply of animals for hunting—Nepal has long focused on conservation (Locke, 2011: 59). Since at least 1846, when rhino were declared 'royal game' and a crackdown on poaching began, some species of wildlife have been officially protected in Nepal (GoN, 2015a: 10). The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL)⁸, where many of these protected

⁸ Terai is the Sanskrit word meaning 'lowlands'

species are found, is 51,000 square kilometres of savannah, grassland and forest (GoN, 2015c: 1), and has been called one of the ‘world’s most diverse landscapes’ (Wikramanayake, et al, 2010: 79). Until the 20th century, the Terai was viewed more as a ‘colonial possession’ or a leftover part of India than a true cultural part of Nepal (Brown, 1996: 9). The Terai was a no-man’s land—it was flat and hard to defend—separating the British East India Company and the ruling class of Nepal, and this status as a buffer zone helped keep the area socially and developmentally separate from the hills (Brown, 1996: 9).

In the mid-1950s, Nepal’s King Mahendra issued an invitation to the American Peace Corps requesting their assistance in eradicating malaria in the Terai (Mishra, 2008: 55-56; USAid, 2018: np). Mahendra’s plan was to relocate many of the poverty-stricken hill-dwellers to the Terai region (Mishra, 2008: 55-56; USAid, 2018: np). Before this time, only indigenous Tharu people—with their alleged immunity to malaria—could form settlements here (Mishra, 2008: 55; Mieke and Pendry, 2015: 255). The United States Operation Mission (now re-named USAID) brought anti-malarial medications, laid the first roads, and was granted a sawmill operation (Mishra, 2008: 55; USAid, 2018: np). With the elimination of malaria, the population on the Terai grew exponentially (Mishra, 2008: 55). Other factors further contributed to this rapid rise in population. Flooding in the hill country resulted in crop failure and the urgent migration of more hill people to the Terai. In addition, thousands of Nepalese families—including former military personnel—returned home from India and Myanmar (Burma), and land reforms created opportunities for Indian nationals to operate as migrant labour and eventually

settle permanently in the area (Kansakar, 1979 in GoN, 2009). This massive human migration led to the rapid deforestation of almost 65% of the forest in some sectors (GoN, 2015a: 10-12; Mishra, 2008: 55).

As prime habitats were cleared for agriculture, animal populations plummeted (Kharel, 2002; Mishra, 2008: 55; Sharma, 2012: 12). Heavily hit were the areas surrounding Royal Chitwan National Park, where barasingha deer (*Rucervus duvaucelii*), and wild water buffalo (*Bubalus arnee*) completely disappeared, and wild elephant populations dwindled to less than 200 (DNPWC, 2008; GoN, 2015a; Yadav, et al., 2015). Current elephant populations are now estimated at between 109-170 individuals but are hard to accurately assess, due to the passage of elephants across the India-Nepal border and the difficulty accessing the more remote habitats in far-western Nepal (GoN, 2009: 2).

Today, Nepal is also home to 208 species of mammal, over a quarter of which are threatened (Jnawali, et al., 2011; Kharel and Dhungana, 2018: 23). Charismatic species found in Nepal include the Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*), Greater One-Horned Rhino (*Rhinoceros unicornis*), Royal Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*), and two species of the most-trafficked animal in the world, the pangolin (*Manis pentdactyla* and *Manis crassicaudata*) (WWF, 2017: np). Pangolin are hunted not only for their meat—which some believe increases human health and vigour—but for their scales, which are used in traditional Chinese medicine (Liou, 2008: 11,13). A consideration of disease transmission is especially important in the national park areas of Nepal where wildlife, livestock and human landscapes

overlap and interactions are inevitable. In addition, the impact of the zoonotic disease commonly called COVID-19 on elephant tourism proved dramatic, and continues to change the face of Sauraha. This disease, along with others of concern will be discussed in chapter four.

Over the last 50 years, Nepal has evolved from a philosophy of individual species-focused management to a landscape-scale approach to conservation which includes consideration of human health and livelihood (Sharma, 2010: 11-13; GoN, 2015c: 1). The Terai Arc Landscape (TAL), the Sacred Himalayan Landscape, and the Chitwan-Annapurna Landscape, among others, have been designated for biodiversity conservation, sustainable development and local community asset-building (Dhakal, 2018: 19). In addition, Nepal has changed focus from centralized, national control of forestry and wildlife programs to a system of community-based conservation efforts. The amount of conservation land in Nepal is still on the rise. The last report from the Ministry of Forests and Soil reports that as of 2017, 23.23% of Nepal's total land area is protected, with 1.65 million hectares of national forest managed by community forest 'user groups' (GoN, 2017: np). While this sounds like good news, one must remember that of this total land area, less than 2% represents a continuous expanse of natural areas (Wikramanayake et al, 2010: 164).

Field sites

Located within the south-central portion of the Terai Arc Landscape conservation zone, lies Chitwan National Park (derived from the Sanskrit 'Chitta Vana' roughly

meaning ‘heart of the forest’) (Puri, 2019: 70). This protected area serves as the primary field site for this thesis. The main entry point for this national park is located in the small town of Sauraha (GoN, 2015a: 53), where most of the elephants participating in this study reside. With a permanent population of only 2,600 but boasting over 80 hotels and lodges, Sauraha is the small but bustling hub of Chitwan National Park (GoN, 2015a: 15). Sauraha provides an ideal site for this thesis as it combines protected forest, community-use lands, the National Trust for Nature Conservation (NTNC) offices and the most tourists of any national park in Nepal—nearly 150 thousand people per year (GoN, 2015a: 52). Across the park, on the far northeast edge of the park, lies the small town of Kwasoti, the second area of focus for this thesis.



Figure 2: Nepal outline showing location of Chitwan National Park (GoN, 2015a: 67)

The animals found in and around Chitwan National Park (henceforth CNP or Chitwan) make up a large proportion of the total biodiversity of Nepal, including 37% of Nepal’s total mammals, 65% of all birds, 34% of all amphibians/reptiles and 65% of all fish (IUCN, 2019; GoN, 2015a: 2-8). Why does Chitwan host this large variety of animal life? Along with both seasonal and stable water sources,

Chitwan encompasses alluvial flood plains, hills, riverine forest, grasslands, and wetlands—all of which create a wide variety of habitat zones that are alluring to a host of wildlife, and tourists (GoN, 2015a: 2-8) . Because it is the ‘last surviving example of the natural ecosystems of the Terai region’ (GoN, 2015a: 2), this area is vitally important to biodiversity efforts.

Like many areas of conservation focus, Nepal is a hot spot for both biodiversity preservation efforts and nature-based tourism (Bhujju, et al., 2007; Kharel and Dhungana, 2018: 23; MOFSC/Govt of Nepal, 2002). Numerous well-known conservation projects around Chitwan National Park in Nepal—such as the Smithsonian Tiger Ecology Project or the World Wide Fund for Nature’s rhino conservation project—began with the help of international conservation groups, and continue today due to funding largely linked to both tourism and NGOs (GoN, 2015a: 10-11; WWF, 2019: np).

The introduction of these tourist and conservation groups to areas of biodiversity focus can be fraught with potential pitfalls which affect both human and non-human animals alike. Increased foot traffic in protected areas, the impact of global flights on the environment, increased demand for resources to feed and house visiting groups and the introduction of non-traditional ways of living are just a few of the potential problems that surround areas of conservation interest (Buckley, 2011: 409; Carrier and Macleod, 2005: 320). Non-human animals may be poached, relocated, or unable to survive predation thanks to habituation to humans (Geffroy, et al., 2015: 755,763). At times, conservation efforts may even

take place against the express wishes of local communities (Liu and Leung, 2019: 125).

In addition to a vast array of free-roaming wildlife, Chitwan is home to 160 of the estimated 170 captive elephants in Nepal. This number includes the more than 60 captive government and NTNC elephants and the approximately 50-60 privately-owned elephants owned by members of the United Elephant Owners' Cooperative (henceforth UEOC) (Rao, Vachan, and Vidanta interviews, 2019; see chapter seven). These numbers are approximations only, provided by staff at the NTNC and members of the UEOC. Due to the lack of registration requirements for captive elephants, no one is entirely sure how many captive elephants may be residing in Nepal at any given time (Rao, Vachan, and Vidanta, interviews, 2019). Captive elephants, who serve as the literal and metaphorical vehicles for researchers and tourists as they explore Nepal, find themselves at the centre of debates over their future. These elephants, as a group and individually, will serve as this thesis' focal point.

A note about multi-sited fieldwork

Multi-sited ethnographies 'follow the people', 'follow the life' or 'follow the conflict', all of which will happen in this thesis (Marcus, 1995: 106-110). Following these trails through cultural and social contexts is important to constructing a story that is as adaptable as the life it represents (Marcus, 1995: 109-110). In addition, it allows the ethnographer the opportunity to rethink and reconstruct their own place in the study as it proceeds (Marcus, 1995: 109-110).

Marcus (2012: 24) states that multi-sitedness involves not only being 'out there' in the field, but also fieldwork from whatever locale in which one finds themselves—before travel to a field site, after returning home, etc.. Upon returning from my own fieldwork, I discovered that I needed further detail, and continued to reach out to former participants in Nepal. My communication with these individuals continued throughout the year(s) following my return, and is ongoing. Relationships with these individuals grew, and even the non-human participants in my study are in contact today via video. Marcus discusses this type of multi-sited work as based in 'location of time' instead of location in space (2012: 23). Furthermore, this type of approach proceeds with an understanding of the fieldwork as being a collaboration with one's participants (Marcus, 2012: 10).

An introduction to elephant history in Nepal

According to a study of religious literature by Ramanathapillai (2009: 29), animals have long held important roles in Buddhism, in part due to their connection with wild spaces and natural elements. The elephant became a dominant figure in iconography due to its connection to Buddha himself. Elephants found in Buddhist documents are represented as intelligent, caring, loyal individuals who work together to support the herd, but who can be deadly when provoked (2009: 31). Buddhists seeking enlightenment in forest shared with elephants soon learned that an angry elephant was a dangerous thing, and soon began to train and 'tame' them. However, male elephants go through a period of hormonal surge, called musth, when they become unpredictable, driven to mate and often dangerous

(Ramanathapillai, 2009: 32; Chave, et al., 2019). Because of this lack of control over their sexual drive, the elephant became a symbol of one's passions, the taming of which is an important tenet of Buddhist training (Ramanathapillai, 2009: 32). The white elephant, seen as the opposite of the elephant in musth, is depicted as the earthy embodiment of Gautama Buddha. Elephants are further represented in Buddhist literature as divine creatures capable of reaching the ultimate Buddhist goal of enlightenment (2009: 32).

Elephants are also sacred beings associated with Hinduism, in the form of the elephant-headed god Ganesha—the remover of obstacles and god of learning (Kharel, 2002; Sukumar, 2003, 2016). One of the more recent gods, originating during the fourth century and missing from any mention in the epic texts of the Mahabharata and the Ramayan, the benevolent Ganesha is held in high esteem throughout Asia and Indonesia (Sukumar, 2016: 4,6). Sukumar posits that the figure of Ganesha evolved from the dominant presence of elephants in shared landscapes, and is the embodied combination of ecological, political and economic life (Sukumar, 2016: 8). As the modern form of Ganesha evolved, he underwent a transformation from a troubling, evil creator of obstacles to a benevolent deity (Sukumar, 2016: 6). Further evolution of elephants from a symbol of high status and prized gift to a source of revenue, research topic and tourist entertainment is fairly recent (Kharel, 2002: np). A discussion about these changing roles must begin with a short introduction to the historical role of elephants and humanity's desire to control them.

Captive elephants and the domestication debate

While many excellent histories of elephants in Asia are available, from Edgerton's (1931) *Elephant Lore of the Hindus* to Sukumar's (2012) *Story of Asia's Elephants*, works which specifically deal with Nepalese elephant-keeping are significantly rarer. In work documenting the history of elephant stables and captive elephants in Nepal, authors rely in part on a 1985 report produced by the Jaanch Bujh Kendra (the palace task force). This report cites evidence of elephant-keeping practices dating back to the fifth and sixth centuries CE (Kharel, 2002; Locke, 2008).⁹

Elephants have served for centuries as symbols of Nepalese royalty, power and wealth (Kharel, 2002; Locke, 2008; Sukumar, 2003,2016); only members of the royal family and their guests could hunt them (Sukumar, 2003). While all elephants in Nepal officially belonged to the king from the 6th century CE to the 1990s, their use was allowed by indigenous people for logging and farming, sometimes as a reward for acts of service to the crown (Krauskopff and Meyer in Locke, 2008; Locke, 2011). In addition, the right to capture wild elephants (who would still belong to the king but offered good financial incentives to their captors) was given as a reward to private citizens (Krauskopff and Meyer in Locke, 2008). By 1903, 328 of these captive elephants were living in thirty-one lowland stables (Kharel, 2002: np). These elephants had been captured and trained using various breaking techniques, and this removal of elephants from the wild continued until the 1970s (Bibhag and Durbar, 1986 in Kharel, 2002: np). Occasionally, once too old or weak

⁹ This work is only available in Nepali, and so I will have to rely upon the above researchers' information for this portion of my history.

to work, these elephants were released back into the forest (Bibhag and Durbar, 1986 in Kharel, 2002: np; Varma and Ganguly, 2011: 8).

Elephants living with humans are referred to as habituated, captive, enslaved, or domesticated depending on the situation (Cohen, 2015; Bansiddhi, et al., 2020b; Lair, 1999). The choice of words one uses is powerful—as words like ‘enslaved’ illicit feelings of torture, ‘tame’ seems to indicate friendliness towards humans and ‘domesticated’ indicates that an animal is now completely reliant upon human care. These words are important when discussing elephants in captivity, as they seem to define what rights humans have over non-human animals. If elephants are domesticated, then they should be treated as livestock or draught animals—as indeed they are in India and parts of Nepal (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020b; Thailand/DOLD, 2014). However, if they are *not* domesticated but rather captive or enslaved, then their treatment by humans requires further reflection. The debate over the true meaning of domestication, from an anthropological standpoint, has been raging for ‘well over a century’ (Ingold, 1994: 3).

Ingold (1994: 5) describes domestication as a state of being under human control, deliberately manufactured and modified for human use. This modification creates a sense of ownership, as the evolution of these animals is determined by humans (1994: 5). Palmer (1997: 412,416) describes domestication as a ‘special contract relationship’ entered when animals transition from the ‘wild’ into human ‘culture’. This ownership and control seem to bestow the human with power over every aspect of the domesticated life. If elephants can be convincingly described as

domesticated, then any arguments for their freedom disappear in a puff of semantics.

Unlike domesticated animals, wildlife remains 'out of control' (Ingold, 1994: 3). The wild nature of the undomesticated wolf serves as a foil for the domesticated dog; the majestic wild bull elephant a world apart from the female forced to sit on a ball at the circus. The use of 'domesticated' as a foil to 'wild' becomes increasingly important to those interested in seeing welfare improvements in the lives of captive elephants. This importance becomes obvious when reviewing the literature regarding elephants in Nepal. Elephants have never undergone selective breeding to change their wild temperament, and can therefore only be considered captive, not domestic (Lair, 1999: np). But there remains a problem with the language of elephant care, when biological and legal definitions do not mesh with commonly used phrases. Many of the papers presented at the 2001 International Workshop on the Domesticated Asian Elephant were invaluable in the production of this thesis. However, the term 'domesticated' was often used during the proceedings as a 'power word', a neologism I coined while discussing domestication and wildness (see Hill, et al., in press). These power words are wielded in attempts to control animal bodies. By employing the word domestication in this way, speakers attempted to convert wildlife into human-owned 'valuable capital' via cultural politics (Suzuki, 2020: 242).

Using 'domesticated' to control the narrative

While elephants have been living around humans for over 4,000 years, most of them have been wild-captured or sired by wild males (Cohen, 2015; Poole and Granli, 2008: 7). There has been no attempt to create elephant breeds and there have not been significant generations of captive-bred elephants for the physical or behavioral changes required to indicate domestication to occur (see below, also Bansiddhi, et al., 2019; Poole and Granli, 2008; Price, 2003). They have instead retained their wild biology, behaviors, social needs and emotions (Lair, 1999: np; Poole and Granli, 2008; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). Rizzolo and Bradshaw (2018: 114) believe that humans have been 'culturally conditioned' to see these captive elephants as domesticated, and that many have tried to legitimize their use through normalization of the term. Further muddying the waters is the fact that Asian elephants are rarely legally defined in Nepalese governmental documents, but African elephants are listed as a domestic livestock species (Kharel, 2002: np; Wilson, 1997). In fact, African elephants often pop up in Nepalese cultural references, and were even represented on the Nepalese 500 Rupee note until this year.¹⁰

Locke (2014: 12) describes the lives of these wild and non-wild elephants as 'interwoven' in what he calls the 'incastrant domestication debate'. Locke's (2014) take is that due to the overlap between existential states, the captive elephant has not been completely separated from the wild. Rather, elephants have submitted to humans without 'having been fundamentally transformed' (Locke, 2014: 12).

¹⁰ There is no documentation on the reason an African elephant was initially used, nor could I find an explanation for the presence of the African elephant on either the rupee bill or the livestock list.

Mackenzie and Locke (2012: 1) call for anthropologists to lay aside the need to define the status of elephants and asks instead that they focus on the interconnections between humans and elephants, embracing our 'ethical obligation' to see both species thrive (Locke, 2014). Locke (2014) suggests we view elephants as a companion species and examine them with a more integrative approach. From a European or American standpoint, Locke's (2014) argument to cease the debate might make sense, but for those of us working in Asia it must continue. By ignoring the use of 'domestication' as a power word, we may allow governments the option of lumping this endangered species in with livestock or transportation (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020b; GoN, 2019b; Tipprasert, 2002). Neither of these options is suited to addressing the unique needs of captive elephants.

For example, Lair (2002: np) explains that 'ethically and intellectually' he recognizes elephants as wild animals but feels that 'practically' they are better taken care of as domestic animals because livestock departments typically have better resources. I disagree that elephants benefit from being considered livestock; this definition may keep them from receiving species-specific appropriate care. These animals suffer when grouped in with other traditionally 'owned' animals instead of with their wild counterparts. Lair (1996: np) acknowledges that there are differences between cultural and legal definitions, which was often the case during fieldwork for this thesis. In conversations with Nepali elephant owners, elephants were often referred to as a domesticated animal, with some claiming that the domestication process happened 7000 years ago (Rao interviews, 2019). The Governmental 'Nepalese Elephant Conservation Act of 2009' defines 'captive' as

those individuals who are wild-caught, and 'domestic' as those bred and raised by humans (2009: 11). In contrast, organizations such as INGO6 focus on elephants as 'undomesticated', using this power word as proof that elephants should not be in captivity (Schmidt-Burbach, 2017). These conflicting beliefs make discussions regarding care difficult, with stakeholders disagreeing upon the foundational elements of the common language necessary to discuss the future of these individuals.

Price (2003: 22) points out that humans have truly domesticated few species and describes a set of characteristics that makes some animals 'unfavorable' candidates for domestication. Many of these characteristics describe elephants, such as the importance of female family groups, the need for prolonged parental care, shelter-seeking behaviour and a large home range (2003: 23). Additionally, elephants show an aggressiveness toward humans when encountered in the wild and certainly qualify as difficult to control or contain (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011). In fact, the only 'favorable characteristic' for domestication which applies to Asian elephants is the domination of females by bulls during mating, and the promiscuous nature of these interactions (Price, 2003: 23).

Breeding

Because the future of Nepal's captive elephant population relies on insemination by wild males, the lives of wild and captive individuals remain entwined.

Approximately the same number of captive elephants reside in Nepal as their wild

counterparts, with around 112 individuals living in the Chitwan National Park area (GoN, 2009: 11; Rao and Vidanta interviews, 2019). Female captive elephants in Nepal are not typically bred to captive males¹¹ (GoN, 2009: 12; Kharel, 2002: np); instead, these females are hobble-chained (both front feet chained together) near the edges of the jungle to be mounted and inseminated by wild bulls. Hobble-chaining serves to ensure that even if the bull breaks the females free, they cannot get far (Vidanta interviews, 2019; observations, 2014, 2017, 2019). This practice conflicts with the peaceful environment that former Nepalese government veterinarian Gairhe (2012) says mating requires. Instead, it sounds rather like rape to interlocutors, as the females are unable to choose whether to be mounted (Crane and Zed interviews, 2017 and 2019; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; Szydlowski, 2017, unpublished MA thesis; Varma and Ganguly, 2011). It is unethical to breed females in this way, as it may create lasting physical and psychological trauma (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018: 119), but the government of Nepal has had some success with this method, and so it continues (Varma and Ganguly, 2011). While this might be perceived as humans having some control over the reproduction of elephants, in fact it drives home the point that these elephants are not bred for desired characteristics or modified in any (physical) way through this parentage (Locke, 2013; Price, 2003; Schmidt-Burbach, 2017). Instead, they rely on wild individuals to choose where, when and with whom reproduction happens. Humans must further consider the fact that 'captivity' is a state in which elephants used in tourism activities are likely to remain (Veasey,

¹¹ Only two calves resulting from captive male/female pairings have been born in Nepal since 1980; see chapter seven (Kharel, 2002: np).

2017: 422), as it is no longer realistic to simply release safari elephants into the wild when they are no longer useful (Varma and Ganguly, 2011). For one reason, this would be placing the small remaining population of wild individuals at greater risk of communicable disease, as Nepal is not currently treating its TB positive elephants, and captive elephants share space with livestock who carry a variety of other diseases (Gairhe and Vidanta interviews, 2019; GoN, 2009; Mikota, et al., 2015). In addition, there is no currently available plan in which to provide mahouts, the traditional elephant handlers, with alternative employment or owners with alternative income were they to find themselves suddenly without elephants. With reintroduction therefore beyond reach, the focus must be on providing the maximum reasonable welfare standards for captive elephants, which take into account the needs of all stakeholders (Veasey, 2017: 42; see chapter ten).



Figure 3 An NTNC-employed female wearing hobble chains on her front feet. Photograph taken by the author. Sauraha, Nepal. April 3, 2019

Conclusions

Captive elephants in Nepal have been broken, tamed, or have become subservient to humans (Cohen, 2015; Locke, 2013; Sukumar, 2006: 7), but are 'not yet domesticated' biologically (Sukumar, 2006: 7). For the purposes of this thesis, I will refer to elephants kept in stables throughout Nepal as 'captive'.

Because these individuals have not chosen to affiliate with humans willingly, are wild-caught then sold or wild-sired and confined, I feel that 'captive' accurately describes their situation while avoiding the emotional context of 'enslaved' or the inaccuracy of 'tamed'. It is my hope that the elephants in this thesis can be seen instead as a 'powerful symbol for achieving broader conservation objectives in a biologically rich tropical region' (Sukumar, 2006: 7).

The next chapter contains the theoretical framework of this thesis. Throughout my travels I have heard people describe their work with and treatment of animals as 'the right thing' and their behaviour 'ethical'. This attitude implies that those who are not doing the same work (or in the same way) are 'doing the wrong thing'. This attitude will be explored through the lens of what Lambek (2010) calls ordinary ethics. This concept of ordinary ethics is broadly based upon Austin's (1975) and Wittgenstein's (1922) ordinary language philosophy. The chapter will also draw on Durkheim's (1982) work on social facts, whereby living in communities creates pressure to believe or behave in a certain way. The social facts and spread of misinformation surrounding captive elephants in Nepal may influence the way in which they are cared for.

This 'care' is itself a culturally and situationally dependant concept. Our care of animals is dependent upon the ways in which we view them, as co-creators of meaning, cosmopolitan beings or as others whom we have no hope of understanding. The following chapter will discuss these concepts of care, along with how animal biographies can be used to paint a picture of animal lives. Lastly it will explore how the various elements of this theoretical framework influence the methodology used to complete research for this thesis.

Two: Theoretical Framework and Methods

‘We want what is best for the animals.’ Working with a wide variety of species over the last several decades I have heard innumerable individuals and organizations repeat this mantra as they find themselves in dispute with other organizations who also claim to want the ‘best’. Animal rights activists versus zoos interested in ex-situ conservation (Keulartz, 2015; Maynard, 2017: 185-188), overwhelmed animal shelters versus advocates of ‘no kill’ systems (Arluke, 2003: 67; Kass et al., 246, 247), the ‘good death’ of euthanasia versus a slim hope of adoption or recovery from illness (Hurn and Badman-King, 2019: 151-152; also see Arluke, 2003).¹² Individuals on both sides of these conflicts are, in fact, doing the best for animals, at least from their viewpoint.

Even in discourses with similarly focused individuals, irreparable rifts may occur between organizations that could best serve animals by pooling their resources and working together. Occasionally, despite one’s best efforts, harm or loss of life may still befall the animals in one’s care (see chapter three). As I spent time with people and communities dedicated to treating their animals with care, respect and even love, it occurred to me that the problem was not only an issue with translation, but rather with the language surrounding animal care itself.

¹² See also Patricia Morris’ excellent discussion of euthanasia in *Blue Juice*, 2012

This is not exclusively a problem with the linguistic system, wherein people from vastly different backgrounds and primary tongues attempt to converse in a common oral language, in many cases during this study, English. Instead, the words we use to discuss care, welfare and conservation have a life of their own. Care, for example, is a word which is culturally and situationally specific. Care work, according to Kendra Coulter (2016b: 199), involves the daily tasks involved to physically, mentally and emotionally support another individual. Lori Gruen (2009: 25,31) suggests that care is one way to 'attend to nature', and requires 'empathetic engagement' to achieve. This empathy is, according to Gruen, an 'ethical response to the natural world' (2009: 33). What we care about, according to Schrader (2015: 685), may depend on either 'random encounters' or situations imposed upon us, but requires that we, as Haraway (2016: 3) suggests, 'stay with the trouble'.

Schrader (2015: 669) highlights discourse surrounding how humans can 'begin to care' about non-human beings, especially those who are geographically or taxonomically far separate from humans. She suggests 'dissociating embodiment' from the activity might improve the human capacity for compassion (2015: 670). This dissociation involves letting go of the need to take action or to speak for another being (2015: 684). Instead, we should conduct science with 'humility and care' (684). Schrader (2015: 668) further explains that 'caring for' another is possible without actually 'caring about' them, and this is an important distinction when considering the care offered captive elephants in Nepal. In some cases, not caring might be better understood as not knowing how to care in appropriate ways

(2015: 684). Those who care for elephants in parts of India, for example, understand that they are in a committed relationship (Lainé, 2019: 88). This relationship includes the understanding that abuse or neglect which negatively impacts elephants also negatively affects the condition of humans (Lainé, 2019: 88). In Nepal, however, this relationship appears broken or misunderstood (see following chapters), and the connection between healthy elephants and healthy humans unseen.

Applying 'care' to species conservation, Thomas van Dooren (2015: 6) describes the physical 'care' which is required to keep captive, rare crows alive—the day-to-day duties surrounding feeding, cleaning, and support of biological functions such as reproduction. The care of these crows requires the 'violent-care' of other species, in the form of mass-produced mice who serve as food (van Dooren, 2015: 9). This type of violent care is also required for landscape-level conservation efforts, in which certain species are killed or removed to maintain ecosystems (van Dooren, 2015: 9). The right of an individual or species to receive protection in global biodiversity preservation efforts largely depends on its both its rarity and its ability to draw in political, economic or scientific interest (van Dooren, 2015: 10). Species which can convincingly be called 'rare' or 'native' stand a better chance of receiving care or protection over common, feral or invasive species (van Dooren, 2015: 16; Hill, et al., in press; Soules, 1985: 728). These situationally specific concepts of care are central to discussions in the following chapters regarding the care offered to elephants in Nepal, and further discussion on care can be found in the literature review of this thesis.

The current chapter will explore the concepts of ordinary language and ordinary ethics, and the ways in which these ideas interplay with conservation and care. It will then proceed into a discussion of the reasons I have chosen to use biographies to help tell the stories of elephants in Nepal. Finding a language to describe a species so vastly different than our own is challenging, and biographical writing allows for better representation without relying upon anthropomorphism (Harel, 2012). Anthropomorphism has been the topic of much academic debate, thanks to its relationship to anthropocentrism, creating the feeling that by applying human characteristics to non-humans (or to gods, as in its original meaning {de Waal, 1999: 272}) we are promoting ourselves as the centre of everything; seeing humanity reflected in all creation (Daston and Mitman, 2005: 3-4; De Waal, 1999: 260; Regan, 1988: 6; Wynne, 2004). While Daston and Mitman (2005: 15) feel that anthropomorphism can be an effective tool in some cases, for example when it draws focus to the fact that humans are, themselves, animals (de Waal, 1999: 261) it is still not considered a 'constructive' or 'well-developed scientific system' by others (Wynne, 2004: np; Milton, 2005: 259-260). The biographies included in this thesis will attempt to avoid anthropomorphism, while accepting that the elephants represented within them are capable of thinking-with, feeling-with, and relating to humans (Daston and Mitman, 2005: 10-19). This chapter also includes a detailed description of the methodologies used in this thesis, including autoethnography. The final section also revisits the need for a merographic style of research (Strathern, 1992), and details the steps taken to collect and analyse data.

Theories of Language and Words

To examine the practices of care and conservation in Nepal, I will use an ordinary ethics approach (Lambek, 2010) along with an examination of the ways in which language usage influences our perceptions and care of animals. In order to fully appreciate these approaches, it is important to examine their origins. The current thesis is predominantly interested in the changing concepts of language and its application to communication between people who use the same words in the same situations, but mean very different things. In order to explain how language is key to this thesis, a brief history of ordinary language philosophy and language as practice, as described by Wittgenstein (1922) and Austin (1975), is needed.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922) is a list of statements which at first glance seem to be simple aphorisms or reflections. It is instead a treatise on symbolism, language and philosophical meaning (see Addis, 2006; Hanfling, 2000; Russell, 1922; White, 2006). Early in his writings, Wittgenstein hoped to fix the problems in philosophy which he felt ultimately stemmed from a failure to understand the essential characteristics of language (Addis, 2006: 1; Wittgenstein, 1922: preface). Wittgenstein (1922: 3.221, 4.003) accused philosophers of improperly analysing words, and trying to use them to grasp the *essence* of an object (Hanfling, 2002). Wittgenstein argued that words do not function this way in everyday life (2009: 53 item 116). The names of objects, he argued, are primitive and cannot reflect their reality (1922: 3.221, 3.26-3.263; 1958: 192-193, 29^e).¹³ Wittgenstein (1922: 3.032) felt that when one studied the grammar of language—

¹³ Wittgenstein labeled the sections of *Philosophical Investigations* using this alphanumeric code.

as he defined it, not necessarily how a dictionary might—one would realize that the failure of philosophy was in abusing language (Addis, 2006).¹⁴ Philosophers should instead realize that natural language had a set of rules which anchored the meanings of words when used in a grammatically correct sentence (Addis, 2006; Wittgenstein, 3.14,3.24-25). This anchored meaning determined the ‘truth’ value of each sentence (Addis, 2006; Wittgenstein, 1922: 2.18,2.223,3.01).

Despite leaving philosophy after having, in his mind, solved all major philosophical problems with his *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein (1958: vi) returned to philosophy about six years later and recanted much of his earlier language work (Addis, 2006: 15). Wittgenstein (1958: 31^e; 2009: 53) now postulated that meaning is not derived from a direct link between the physical item and the mental picture of the item, but rather the circumstances surrounding its utterance (Addis, 2006). He suggested we ‘bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use’ (Wittgenstein, 1958: 48^e). Rules of language should stand as signposts which point us toward meaning, but like actual signposts, leave room for interpretation based upon where one is ‘standing’ (Wittgenstein, 1958: 39^e, 82^e). Hanfling (2002: 37) suggests thinking of a map as a metaphor for language; a map is judged by how closely it resembles reality, and by looking at the map we can guess what the ‘corresponding reality’ is like. The same is true of language; by using words we are able to explain the corresponding reality of our perceptions of the world (2002). However, like a map, language contains a multitude of paths which may be

¹⁴ Merriam-Webster (nd) defines ‘grammar’ as ‘the study of classes of words, their inflections and their functions and relations in a sentence.’

confusing as you translate them into reality; from one direction you know exactly where you are, but if you approach from another, you are hopelessly lost (Wittgenstein, 1958: 82^e).

Agreeing with Wittgenstein's revised view of language as practice is Foucault (1970: 39,339), who states that language has no role in knowledge itself, but rather holds meaning only in relation to the ideas it represents (see also Gutting and Oksala, 2019: np). Knowledge is 'rooted in a life, a society, and a language that have a history' {sic} (Foucault, 2005: 406). Language is a tool for thought; a representation of an idea, and a way to link our knowledge across time (Foucault, 2005: 90, 125, 339, 383; Gutting and Oksala, 2019: np). Foucault (1970: 33) suggests a two-pronged approach to understanding and unifying modern language: the elimination of confusing meanings via formalization (1970: 96) and the use of hermeneutic interpretations to uncover the 'fundamental truths' hidden within the words (Foucault, 1970: 38 and 39, 372; Gutting and Oksala, 2019: np).

The language to which the current thesis refers is not the 'language as knowledge' (Halliday, 2017: 81) or the personal language that takes place within one's head. Nor is it speaking of the letters which make up words and sounds. This language goes beyond signs, grammar and syntax and takes into account what the speaker does and means in real life (Halliday, 2017: 86,90; Hanfling, 2002; Ingold, 2000). Sidnell (2010: 124) eloquently explains that ordinary language usage begins 'not with the dictionary but with the details of social interaction'. It is inseparable from social systems (Halliday, 2017: 98), inseparable from the physical performance of

speaking and the 'situational context' in which the speech occurs (Ingold, 2000: 399). Speech, as Ingold (2000: 405) explains, is a 'dynamic phenomenon'. As such, the process of communication requires commonalities of experience and relies upon the rules of society for understanding (Halliday, 2017: 98; Winch, 1990: 86).

Language and society

Instead of the world existing somewhere beyond us fully formed, Ingold (2000: 5) suggests that we are constantly creating meaning through our interactions with other beings as we move through it. In this 'dwelling perspective', the meanings we derive from our surroundings depend upon our day-to-day actions, interactions and observations (Ingold, 2000: 5; Kohn, 2015: 312,322-323). Like language, social institutions and relationships can only be understood via the context of some sort of social rule or agreement (Winch, 1990: 87-88). Otherwise, the social scientist has no way to measure whether what she is studying is 'like' something she has seen before and thereby classify it (Winch, 1990). The act of observation by its nature not only influences the event, but also presupposes a common language which provides a way to understand the event (Halliday, 2017: 98; Winch, 1990: 86). Those who purposely observe an event are participating in something about which they have some sort of prior knowledge and have 'learned' about the event's characteristics in a way that enables them to communicate about it (Winch, 1990: 86). Jakobson and Halle (1956: 58) explain that users do not have free agency in their words but must instead choose their words from the 'storehouse' that they share with their addressee. If the listener doesn't have the

same 'symbols' in their storehouse, then the message is meaningless (Halliday, 2017: 98; Jakobson and Halle, 1956: 62). In addition, the words must be formed into phrases, which themselves are more than the 'sum of their parts' (Jakobson and Halle, 1956: 59). These phrases can't be broken down into separate words and still carry the same meaning.

Annemarie Mol (2008: 34) suggests that rather than spending time worrying about our words and their meanings, we should 'cultivate' and allow them to move around to different situations where we can get a different view of them. There is the need to experience words in different contexts and numerous locations to determine their true meaning (2008). It is this pragmatic view of language, that a word takes on new meaning depending upon who is speaking and the circumstances surrounding the utterance, that applies to the following chapters. Throughout this thesis, the word 'elephant' is one that tends to move around, much like the 'real' elephants of Nepal. For example, wild elephants are fiercely protected by anti-poaching patrols, nature guide networks, and governmental agencies (GoN, 2009: np). But captive elephants of the same biological makeup as their wild brethren have no such protections in place, and find themselves completely at the mercy of humans (see following chapters). This thesis will move around the words elephant, care and welfare to examine how a word's employment alters the perception of its meaning. These words and those who use them often do so through a lens of doing what is 'right' for elephants. The next section examines how this language intersects with the practice of elephant care and keeping in Nepal.

Ordinary Ethics

Ethnographers commonly find that the people they encounter are trying to do what they consider right or good, are being evaluated according to criteria of what is right and good or are in some debate about what constitutes the human good. Yet anthropological theory tends to overlook all this in favour of analyses that emphasize structure, power, and interest (Lambek, 2010: 1).

Like ordinary language, ordinary ethics rely both on our broad prior knowledge of societal behaviours as well as the specific context in which we find ourselves. Our personal morals gained through exposure to our families, media, educational system, friends and experiences influence the ways in which we respond to ethical questions in our lives (Bergan and Davis, 2020; Durkheim, 1975; Hart, 2020; Krcmar and Cingel, 2020; Padilla-Walker and Memmott-Elison, 2020). These morals are participatory actions, like words, and are tools to understand our surroundings. Morals and ethics are grounded in the ordinary events and actions of human lives, and rather than being a set of enforceable rules are more of a social agreement (Lambek, 2010: 2). This agreement doesn't need to draw attention to itself to function, and happens regularly without intent or advance planning (Lambek, 2010: 2). Much like ordinary language, which is used daily by people as they describe the world around them effectively, ordinary ethics are used daily to create liveable situations within families and communities.

Because of the often inconsistent distinctions between the words 'ethics' and 'morality' within the fields of anthropology and philosophy, like Lambek, I have chosen to use ethics when speaking of a person's or organization's belief system and actions (Lambek, 2010: 9). Lambek explains that the word ethical has more

real-world, ordinary language usage (2010: 9). Ethics implies more of a focus on the human actions of doing good and using practical judgement, whereas morality might imply a universal right or wrong (Lambek, 2010: 9). He suggests an examination between what is ethical or good in any given situation while being aware of the potential for falling into the trap of cultural relativism.¹⁵ Lambek compares our use of ethics to that of language, and the ways in which 'we don't speak language in general, but one particular version of it at a time' (2010: 13). To properly study ordinary ethics, one needs to approach ethnography from both a philosophical and a sociocultural perspective. Lambek (2010: 5) argues that the study of ethics also needs to include linguistic anthropology because ethics are as fundamentally tied to speaking as they are to actions. In fact, viewing speech as action is needed to adequately understand how ordinary ethics function (Lambek, 2010: 5). But rather than view ethics in isolation, as a specific area of study, social scientists should examine how including the ethical in our studies might 'deepen our understanding of social life' (Lambek, 2010: 7).

Ordinary ethics, put simply, is the belief that one wants to do the right thing. This *desire* to do right is often followed by the *belief* that one is, in fact, behaving in an ethical manner (Lambek, 2010: 40, 42). These beliefs may lead individuals and organizations to believe that their own methods are more ethical than someone else's. This thesis will explore whether the idea of doing the best for the animals means the same thing to each organization. Or more likely, does the background

¹⁵ For an excellent (and humorous) take on the pros and cons of relativism, indigenous voices and questionable histories, see Hacking (1999) *The Social Construction of What?*

and baggage of each group inform their definition of the best, and do they try to forcibly apply their definition to those who care for or work with animals in other cultures? This thesis will examine the disparity between organizational or individual discourse and practice surrounding welfare, care and behaviour through the dual lenses of ordinary language and ordinary ethics.

Social Facts and Invented Traditions

There are numerous 'social facts' which affect the treatment of elephants in Nepal (Durkheim, 1982). These social facts are the beliefs, tendencies and practices of a collective group which are accepted due to a belief that they represent authoritative knowledge from our ancestors, which in some cases they do (Durkheim, 1982: 50-51). Some of the social facts in Nepal do have their origins in traditional knowledge passed down from experienced mahouts to younger generations, but much information is now lost or confused due to high mahout turnover and the loss of familial continuity in elephant care (Thakur, interviews 2019; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2020). For example, there is a widespread belief that dominance training, bull hook use, or beatings are the only appropriate method to train elephants within Nepal, despite evidence to the contrary (see chapter six and Appendix I this thesis).¹⁶

The impacts of these social beliefs and traditions are especially apparent in a small town like Sauraha, Nepal. For example, despite the reality that mass-scale

¹⁶ A bull hook is also known as an ankus or ankush, a metal or wooden handle with a curved metal tip used for elephant control in a wide variety of countries.

elephant-backed tourism only started in the 1960s (see chapter four), elephant owners regularly repeat the ‘fact’ that elephant tourism is so engrained in their society that removing it would irreparably harm their culture (Rao and Sama, interviews, 2019). This social fact may also arise from what Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012: 1) call an ‘invented tradition’. These traditions are intended to create a sense of belonging or cultural identity and are found in societies around the world (2012). For example, the clan tartan, a symbol of identity recognized globally as a sign of Scottish pride, was actually invented by an Englishman (2012: 19). Social pressure and the desire for conformity within one’s social group, or in support of national pride, can lead to the persistence of these false beliefs or invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 2012; O’Connor and Weatherall, 2019). Durkheim referred to these types of social pressures as currents, which arise and ‘sweep us along in spite of ourselves’ (Durkheim, 1982: 51-52).

Alternatively, professing that elephant tourism is a centuries-old tradition may be an example of what Barua (2017:281) describes as ‘spectacular accumulation’. This practice uses representations of animals, often larger (or healthier) than life, to generate a desire for real-world encounters. In the 1960s, Nepal’s King Mahendra suggested that conservationists link saving the rhino to poverty reduction efforts, and images of greater one-horned rhinoceros soon became synonymous with Nepal (GoN, 2015; Mishra, 2008). Nepal’s use of the massive, armoured rhino for its national identity, however, may instead increase commodification of ‘real’ rhino by driving tourists’ desires to seek out these solitary beings. Likewise, creating a positive narrative around lively capital (Haraway,

2008) and living labour (Barua, 2017), such as elephants, may offer owners a convenient way to justify their use. By focusing on promoting Sauraha as a destination where elephant labour serves as the literal vehicle for conservation practice and close encounters with rhino, owners may hope to ensure that visitors believe working elephants are happy, devoted and serving the greater good of conservation. By controlling the narrative in this way, owners are using public perception to fuel the further commodification of elephants.

In addition, owners regularly bemoan the high cost of their responsibility to sustain elephant-backed tourism. Purchasing an elephant is extremely costly—up to 10.5 million Nrs or 90,000 USD in a country where the average annual income hovers around 116,000 Nrs or 1000 USD (Rao, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019; GoN, 2019a: 15; OnlineKhabar, 2020).¹⁷ However, the ability of hoteliers to pay cash for these elephant purchases serves to highlight the socio-economic divide between business owners and the poor or landless people of Nepal. When asked about the potential for stopping elephant-backed tourism, these owners complain about the cost of keeping elephants and the need to continue rides in order to finance their purchase and care, long after the elephants have repaid their initial debt (Rao and Vidanta interviews, 2019; Bames PC, 2020). The widespread message spread by elephant owners, that they are losing money on elephant-back safari, does not appear to hold up to scrutiny (see chapter seven). According to interlocutors in this study, one explanation may lie in the Nepalese belief that investments should

¹⁷ For ease of reading, I have used commas in monetary amounts in the style of the US or UK. In Nepal, the comma is typically replaced by a period. This was done to prevent reader confusion.

constantly create dividends. These owners do not see elephants as a commodity which is paid off after a certain amount of income is generated (Vidant interviews, 2019), but rather see any stable or stagnant investment as money lost. Lastly, these owners cite social pressures, such as the need to meet tourist expectations, to continue elephant-backed safari practices (Rao and Vidant interviews 2019).

It is important to note that belief in a set of social facts is not limited to elephant owners. The inability of outsiders to grasp the 'truth' of the social facts surrounding elephant use and care in Nepal creates conflict between elephant owners and self-described elephant rescuers. These rescuers come with their own facts and beliefs, perhaps that elephants are sentient as well as intelligent (Boyle, 2009; Lorimer, 2010; Regan, 2005: 83-86; Pearce, 2015; Plotnik, et al., 2011; Plotnik, et al., 2006) or even that western knowledge is superior to traditional practices (Adas, 1989; Levy-Bruhl, 1923: 96; Lossky, 1926: 145; Street, 2016).¹⁸ How the differing facts and beliefs held by each group inform the way they interact with elephants, owners and each other is a key topic of this thesis.

Avenues of research: Using animal biographies

In order to discuss elephants in Nepal and the unique ways that social facts, language and ethics intersect in their lives, I need a technique which enables me to frame organizational and individual stories. By using biography as a tool, I can paint a more complete picture of the organizations as well as the individual

¹⁸ For a fascinating review of indigenous versus western knowledge, see Agrawal's 1995 *Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge in Development and Change*.

elephants I encountered in Nepal. Representations of animals in human literature can be useful tools for examining the possibility of conscious thought in animals (Hamington 2008: 182; Hediger, 2012; Mar, 2010: 73-75; Szydlowski, 2018). These accounts help readers understand animal minds, allowing them to experiment with experiences shared across species, such as death and family (Hediger, 2012; Szydlowski, 2018). Exploring the similarities between the emotions of humans and the emotions of animals can lead readers to examine their own feelings through a new lens (Hediger, 2012: 41). Of course, over-sentimentality may also lead readers to focus on the fictional characteristics of these literary animals and completely forget the physical being which they represent (Hediger, 2012: 39).

Biography allows us to 'account for the individuality' of an animal without needing to 'reconstruct their feelings or infer their intentions' (Krebber and Roscher, 2018: 2). This method has the potential to interrupt humans' tendency to place all animals together under one, albeit large, umbrella. Krebber and Roscher (2018: 5) call upon the animal biographer to create meaning from 'fragments and sources' across the disciplines of natural and social science in order to build individual animal identities. These identities should demonstrate the agency of these individual animals and make the role of each animal visible in society (2018: 7). When constructing animal biographies, subjects must be allowed to 'actively respond' to what is asked of them and be able to 'co-produce' their identity and change or grow as their life progresses (Chrulew, 2018: 26). Recording the ways in which this happens is key to building a larger body of knowledge on natural

group and individual behaviour which can then be accessed by those working in research settings or biological facilities such as zoos (Chrulew, 2018). Having access to these biographies allows carers of captive animals to better assess not only the husbandry needs of animals, but also their psychological needs (Chrulew, 2018: 23). For example, knowledge of a past trauma might change the way carers introduce new stimuli or approach a change in housing. Biographical writing requires the interaction of biographer and subject, but is more than just a series of life events (Chrulew, 2018). The interactions between the subject and his/her peers, the larger community, the environment, and the biographer herself become important in the discovery of 'who' the individual animal is (Chrulew, 2018; Ingold, 2000 and 2014; Leach, 2012).

There are, of course, difficulties in writing truly representative animal biographies, not only due to the obvious differences in spoken language versus other nonverbal forms of communication, but also because we are still not entirely sure how non-humans think. One can study animal behaviour but understanding animal thought processes is fraught with potential misunderstanding. But does it matter? Hilda Kean offers the examples of social historians writing about workhouses, the poor and inmates, even though these authors have never experienced the situations which they describe (2012: s62). Indeed, many historians write narratives drawn from scant primary materials, using their own experiences to imagine what earlier humans might have felt (2012). Understanding other humans' thought processes is not without the risk of potential misunderstandings, but these works still contribute to the overall knowledge of the field (de Waal, 2011; Nagel, 1974: 440).

While writing about the psychological aspects of animal cognition is not a new concept, the emotional lives of animals were largely ignored until recently (de Waal, 2011: 191; Masson, 2010). Understanding that animals have complex mental lives, as do humans, allows an author to find similarities in responses without resorting to anthropomorphism (de Waal, 2011: 199). De Waal (2011: 199) suggests that we can begin to understand the emotions of animals by watching how they make decisions and respond to their environment based on their personal wants and needs (Veasey, 2006). For example, watching elephants control their emotional state when placed in stressful situations gives one insight into their cognitive ability (de Waal, 2011: 196). Learning elephant body language along with their responses to stimuli and social situations offers insight into their emotional states, which allows one to postulate their feelings accordingly (de Waal, 2009: 175; de Waal, 2011: 199,202). These methods are especially useful when dealing with highly social animals, like elephants, who share extended family bonds in much the same way as humans (de Waal, 2009: 175; de Waal, 2011: 198-199).

But is it really possible to *understand* animal minds? Some comprehension of animal thinking must, of course, be available to humans, or coevolution and domestication of species might never have happened. Swart (2002: 202) explains that humans domesticating horses must have learned to 'think like a horse' or else domestication and training would have been impossible. However, the need for whips and saddles demonstrates the horses' continued attempts at rebellion (2002: 202). Swart (2002: 202) points out that acts of defiance such as bucking,

biting and kicking must be included in biographical writing as important examples of an animal's agency, instead of as 'throwaway and incidental' facts, as they often were in historical documents. Authors should use animal behaviours as the basis for biographical writing, and if one wants to paint an accurate picture, one must be sure to include behaviour that might be labelled 'naughty' by the animal's caregiver (Swart, 2002: 202). This behaviour is an indicator that we are dealing with a complex living being who joins our story complete with their own unique history (Buchanan, et al., 2015). The *everyday* lives of animals need to be recorded in as accurate a form as possible. Therefore, recording elephants' living situations, rebellions, food preferences and interactions with others is needed. The lives of what—in the larger picture—amounts to a very small group of elephants in a very small country may not have the global-scale impacts of say, the current extinction event involving the loss of a million of the planet's estimated eight million species (IPBES, 2019). However, these 112 elephants are a major contributor to the livelihood of numerous marginalized populations throughout the Sauraha area.

Returning to my original question of language and contextuality, it is important to realize that the ethnographer herself becomes 'both translator and author of that which is being translated' (DeMello, 2013: 5). This translation is therefore 'enmeshed in conditions of power, with the anthropologist inevitably holding the power in the relationship' (DeMello, 2013: 5). This power differential is even greater when the subject being interviewed or observed belongs to marginalized communities such as mahouts or, one could argue, captive elephants. Captive elephants had little choice in their employment status, and similarly, mahouts often

took the job due to a lack of other options (Coulter, 2016a: 78; de Vries, 2014; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2020; Szydlowski, 2017). Writing these stories forces us to re-examine the narratives upon which we base our understanding of marginalized groups throughout history, for example homosexuals, women and non-human animals (Fudge, 2002a: 6; Kean, 2012: s62). The nuances of our attitudes towards these groups might not be as accurately recorded as first thought (Fudge, 2002a). As the histories of these groups are debated, we must take a hard look at the ways in which we create others in society, and how this otherness impacts historical writing (Fudge, 2002a: 16). To that end, Fudge (2002: 14) argues that to end anthropocentrism, we need to work *within* anthropocentrism. This sounds like a paradoxical concept but makes sense when one accepts that humans can only see through a human lens. Many historical records simply record animals by virtue of the way in which they were used by humans—as religious symbols, food, recipients of cruel treatment, bodies for vivisection (Fudge, 2002a: 7). We must instead abandon the belief in our own superiority over other beings (Fudge, 2002a: 16). We must realize that it is through our interactions with other animals that we gain perspective and can thus understand our own history (Fudge, 2002a). In this way, we can relocate ourselves *with* animals instead of *above* them. We can tilt our understanding of what being human is and lead ourselves to a better understanding of our shared history from a more critical viewpoint—one which views the connectivity of human and non-human animals instead of their separation (Fudge, 2002a).

One example of this can be found in Thailand, the practice of writing dog biographies has improved the welfare of Bangkok's street animals (Savvides, 2012). Soi Cats and Dogs (SCAD) is a non-profit seeking to help homeless companion animals. They capture, neuter and release these animals while educating community members about pet ownership and kindness toward animals (Savvides, 2012: 232). SCAD writes biographies of the dogs as well as a blog—ghostwritten in the voice of a former stray—to individualize and humanize street animals. This use of anthropomorphism is a tool for helping humans understand animal lives in the hopes of fostering emotional connections and inspiring adoptions. These connections also serve to help humans view street dogs and cats as unique individuals with their own history (Savvides, 2012: 234). This view of anthropomorphism as a tool for understanding is not without issue. Milton (2005: 255) argues that using anthropomorphism is problematic given that it uses 'humanness' as the main way to understand non-humans. It also suggests that humans can better understand animals by '*attributing* characteristics *to* them', when we should instead be '*perceiving* characteristics *in* them' (2005: 255, emphasis in original). This attributional approach may create difficulties, using the example above, when the real dog an adopter meets fails to act as expected based upon his or her ghostwritten blog (Savvides, 2012).

There are also issues inherent in being a western, white woman studying Asian cow elephants which complicate attempts to write adequately. Writing animals for this thesis is made more difficult by the fact that the words used to describe their lives are inadequate in any human language. Because the elephants also live in a culture which uses different

words than I do, this language is translated and retranslated. I will try to honestly represent these elephants...but I am putting their life-worlds in the language of my own. Finding contextual 'common ground' in these situations relies heavily on the ability of humans to imagine how others feel, such as Kean (2012) described above about historical writing. While this type of writing will not be perfect, it will still contribute to the larger body of research into elephant-human relationships (Nagel, 1974: 440).

The same issues arise in multi-species ethnography, where the human attempts to understand the non-human experience. The researcher can misuse this power, as she may 'ignore what animals are saying, making them silent', or can try to 'interpret for them', creating data which inevitably reflects a human viewpoint (DeMello, 2013: 5). The argument that we can't speak each other's language leads to the argument that we than cannot understand each other, and that indeed understanding semantic meaning is not enough. Wittgenstein (1958: 223^e) famously stated that 'If a lion could speak, we could not understand him'.

Wittgenstein is making the point that understanding someone goes beyond simply decoding a language. It requires an understanding of its meaning in the context of cultural background, body language and referencing schema (Wittgenstein, 1958: 228^e). Fudge responds by asking if we would really *want* to understand the lion, because he might 'upset all kinds of assumptions by saying something we don't want to hear' (Fudge, 2002: 89). Anthropomorphism, says Fudge, has ethical implications (2002: 89).

To balance this potential anthropomorphism while painting a more complete picture of elephant lives, auto-ethnography (see below) will be combined with biography for this thesis. It is here that a merographic approach should again prove helpful. For example, the biographer and the subject can be 'at once similar and dissimilar', related only by their efforts to find connections and by their 'recognition of difference' (Strathern, 1992: 72). The writer can be acknowledged as both 'scientist and social being' and the biography an 'intersubjective construction' (Leach, 2012: 257; Strathern, 1992: 72). This style of biographical research is reminiscent of Ingold's (2000: 5) 'dwelling perspective', mentioned in previous sections. Kohn (2015: 312) uses this world-building or meaning-making process as his version of ontology, while acknowledging that others prefer the 'becoming' of Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 238 and 248) or Haraway's (2008: 3) 'becoming-with' and 'response-ability' (Haraway and Kenny, 2013: 230,231). These methods allow me to 'attend' to my participants as part of the dynamic observations which will be described below (Ingold, 2014: 389).

Implications for methodology

The area surrounding Nepal's Chitwan National Park was the logical choice for this study because its environmental and social diversity creates a unique nexus of national and privately-owned animal tourism activities, community-based conservation activities and international conservation group involvement. My research took on a participatory action research (PAR) style, where humans, organizations and elephants all became both objects and subjects in my research.

These subjects then had the option to become partners in the co-research of issues and solutions surrounding captive elephant health and welfare.

Ingold (2014: 387) calls for us to 'attend' to what others are doing—to go along with them as they proceed with whatever it is they are doing; to practice paying attention and ask questions. One must let others keep 'humaning', or in this case, 'elephanting' (Ingold, 2014: 389). Ingold (2014) also calls for dynamic participant observation, which for my purposes I will term 'participatory observation'. My participatory approach means that local people and elephants influence my questions and guide where I both mentally and physically go next.

Although initially planned out in detail, I allowed my research, and my subjects, to proceed organically—that is to follow exploratory trails searching for connections and commonalities of practice. This approach nicely incorporated both the responsive interviewing practice mentioned in the introduction to this thesis and the PAR style mentioned above. These trails allowed me to explore the 'best' of each individual or organization, analyse the connections between conservation and captive animals and address how elephants fit into their complex role as both endangered species and captive animal.

Proceeding in the above ways also enabled me to employ autoethnography as a tool to incorporate my own knowledge, history and personal experiences into this thesis. Chang (2013: 108) describes autoethnography as a way to 'expand the understanding of social realities through the lens of the researcher's personal experiences'. These personal experiences create opportunities for social critique,

and offer a chance to explore the 'social forces' acting upon the autoethnographer as she explores her data (2013: 109). This is especially important in this thesis, which draws upon multiple prior trips to Nepal, relationships with elephants and humans over a period of 8 years, and my prior experience with exotic species' health and welfare. Autoethnography also allowed me to incorporate a variety of writing styles which reflect my background and experience in both natural and social sciences (Chang, 2013: 119).

Autoethnography uses existing literature, theory and research as the basis for rigorous study, while allowing one's understanding and experience to inform his or her scholarship (Bochner, 2013: 55; Hughes et al., 2012). It is also an acknowledgment of the hope that one's work might be 'meaningful' and perhaps make life a little better for participants (Bochner, 2013: 53; Kohn, 2015: 323). This style of writing also allows the researcher to 'keep the conversation going' (Bochner, 2013: 53) as encounters with others continue beyond fieldwork and lives remain entwined. In the current study, in situ 'fieldwork' ended in spring of 2019, but emails, video calls, updates and other communication continued well past the writing of this thesis. Autoethnography for this thesis began with reflexive journaling and field notes while in Nepal. Upon returning home, I undertook a holistic revisitation of my data in the forms of field notes, transcripts of interviews, photos and emails (See Chang, 2013: 116). Being reflexive about my changing perceptions of what I call the 'elephant situation' both in the US and Nepal allowed me greater depth of understanding as I read existing literature and later wrote about Sauraha's stables and elephants.

Research Methodology

Research was divided into three categories:

1. preparations, permissions and data collection at a distance (via email)
2. participant observation/face-to-face interviews while in Nepal
3. email interviews/follow-up questions once back home.

Category one: preparations, permissions and data collection at a distance

A preparatory and permission-gathering trip took place during 2017, and fieldwork occurred over a seven-week period in March and April of 2019.

From November 2018 to January 2019, interview questions were piloted via email with eleven individuals already familiar with the researcher from prior research projects and travel undertaken between 2012 and 2017, to establish whether the style of question was easily understood and would elicit the type of information sought for this project. These individuals were then asked to offer any suggestions or insight they might have into other potential contacts, the workings of organizations such as the National Trust for Nature Conservation, or any potential cultural issues with this style of research. These preliminary questions are attached at the end of this thesis. The eleven individuals participating in this phase of the study included elephant drivers, NGO staff, hoteliers, retailers, nature guides, and Nepalese PhD students. Following these emails, questions were altered or clarified before use with others. There were no recommendations from participants for further questions to be added to my survey.

In January and February of 2019, seven people were contacted via email to discuss the process for applying for governmental permission to conduct research in the areas surrounding Chitwan National Park. These contacts included NTNC staff members and leadership from three locations in Nepal, PhD students, and faculty from Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu. After this round of discussion, a consensus was reached that since research was taking place entirely outside the boundaries of the park—in the buffer zone and community forest—governmental permission was not required. All of the field sites for this project were places which tourists could access, and therefore I was not required to submit an official application with the government. As a safety measure, an application was completed and sent to the above mentioned NTNC staff members, and a copy carried with me at all times while in Nepal. Permission was sought via email and granted by the project manager at the Central Zoo and the NTNC in Chitwan for research to proceed as planned. Additionally, these individuals offered clarification of whom and where to meet at each field site.

Emailed requests for information regarding the mission statements, availability for and willingness to participate in interviews were sent to former volunteers, current administrators and staff from various national and international organizations.¹⁹

Emailed questionnaires were then sent to ascertain their plans, goals, and motivations. The websites of these organizations were reviewed using discourse analysis regarding the stated motivations and reach of these organization. This method of analysis considers that language is more than a way to convey

¹⁹ The names of these organizations have been anonymised, unless otherwise noted.

information, but helps create the 'real world' (Potter and Edwards, 1990: 419; Fairclough, 2013; see also Ingold, 2000: 399). Discourse analysis also allows for consideration of language and stories as part of a social system (Halliday, 2017: 81; Ingold, 2000: 399, Potter and Edwards, 1990: 420). It also allows the researcher to incorporate social perspectives and practices into their analyses (Fairclough, 2013: 11). The information gathered in these interviews and website studies will be examined in detail in chapter three of this thesis.

In February 2020, emails were sent to nine NTNC staff members requesting interviews during my proposed visit. Emails to staff in Nepal were often answered with a simple statement such as, 'sure, we can talk when you are here' and very few responses to the questions. This has also been the case in my past research projects in Nepal. Upon arrival in Nepal, emails were once again sent to the staffers, and arrangements made for face-to-face interviews. Those participants who did not respond via email were approached by knocking on their office doors or sending a personal request through the reception staff at the NTNC—methods recommended to the researcher on prior trips, and methods which have proven successful in the past. Others provided their phone numbers and were contacted, with their permission, via Whatsapp. All emails, Facebook and Whatsapp messages are noted in the text of this thesis as 'PC' to indicate personal communication.

A Nepalese university researcher studying in the US provided translations for the participant observation forms and information sheets. These forms are attached in

Appendix IV. Upon arrival in Nepal, these translations were reviewed by a professor at Tribhuvan University for accuracy.

Category two: data collection in Nepal

All human participants in this research were adults with the capacity to give informed consent, and both consent forms and participant information sheets were offered to each. For participants who read only languages other than English or Nepali, or were illiterate, the project was described in detail and informed oral consent obtained (See ethics application in Appendix IV, section I for further details). As expected (see Appendix IV, section I), some human informants were wary of signing official-looking documents and oral informed consent was sought in these cases.

Negotiating consent from pachyderm persons²⁰ was one area not covered in the University of Exeter ethics approval process. I attempted to reflexively engage with the potential problems arising from this lack of university oversight of non-human participants via co-development and presentation of a workshop on problematizing the ethics process for the 2021 Research Ethics Conference at Exeter (Hooper, Hill, Oxley-Heaney and Szydlowski, 2021), in a podcast (The Anthrozoology Podcast, 2021) and via planned workshop at the 2021 Reframing Anthrozoology as Symbiotic Ethics conference. How I approached obtaining consent from pachyderm participants in the current study will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters.

²⁰ A neologism created for an article on liminality (Szydlowski, in press)

Initial interviews with humans consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions in face-to-face interviews. Interlocutors were chosen using a purposive sampling method, and these interlocutors directed the author to other key individuals involved in conservation efforts or elephant welfare. These face-to-face interviews were first piloted with nine individuals in each field site with whom a good prior relationship was already in place. These individuals included community leaders, hoteliers, elephant owners, NTNC staff and leadership, shopkeepers, former government staff and nature guides. Following these interviews, questions were altered/deleted/extended before use with other participants.

Next, face to face interviews took place with 54 members of NTNC staff and leadership, community members, Chepang leaders, elephant drivers, college students, Central Zoo veterinary staff and keepers, nature guides, hoteliers, employees and volunteers from elephant, dog and tiger welfare organizations in Nepal. These interviews focused on their conservation motivations and methods, rescue and rehabilitation efforts currently in place for wildlife, and their hopes for future facilities, support, partnerships with international conservation groups and expansion goals. These interviews also asked questions regarding the personal motivations of each individual in pursuing a job in conservation or animal work. These interviews took place after permission was sought from each individual's oversight committees or senior staff.

Because it was necessary to identify certain participants by their job title or organization during the writing up process (i.e. to separate staff from management

perspectives), permission to do so was sought via written or oral informed consent, and this information used only with express consent. These informants were given a written participant form, the project explained to them orally in brief, and their participation undertaken voluntarily. Anonymity for some individuals or organizations was difficult given their easily identifiable positions or status within the community (such as the single veterinarian employed by the NTNC and the UEOC, see chapters four and seven, this thesis). In these cases, the potential implications of participation (such as retribution by elephant owners, loss of job or livelihood, and potential for changes in community perceptions of the individual) was discussed in detail with each interlocutor. In some cases, interlocutors requested that their names and/or positions be used in order to provide public access to information about their program or role in elephant care within Nepal. However, following discussions with University of Exeter staff, the decision was made to anonymise all NGOs and pseudonymise their personnel to protect them and the researcher. For one retired government employee, Dr Gairhe (see chapter four for further details), permission was given to use his name and job title, as he is an authority on elephants in Nepal and an author of several academic articles.

Stable visits

I also toured twenty-five out of the forty private elephant stables in the Sauraha area. An opinion of each stable was obtained from the veterinary staff at the NTNC, and the reasons for their ratings recorded. Considerations included but were not limited to access to adequate shelter, substrate, food, access to water, distance to safari/amount of walking in crowded areas needed, mahout staffing

and mahout shelter. Notes, recordings and photographs were collected with permission. The biographical data of twenty-five individual elephants was collected from social media, owner or carer interviews, and via participant observations of human and elephant individuals. An in-depth analysis of available data on Asian elephant health and welfare served as the basis for a chart used to describe conditions found in Sauraha stables (see chapter ten).

The names of elephants in this thesis have been pseudonymised, however it should be noted that due to the presence of identifiable physical characteristics, it may be possible for those familiar with the area to identify them. Many of these elephants are in situations which, according to their caregivers and other experts residing in Nepal, do not place them in danger of retribution or increased abuse, but stating their names might result in their human caregivers, former or current owners being identified. In several cases, the elephants (and often their caregivers) have since left the country.

[A note about data collection in Nepal](#)

I do not speak Nepali. No matter how long or hard I study, I have found the language inaccessible. Luckily, the amount of tourism in Nepal means that most people speak a great deal of English. This does not extend to many mahouts, however, who often speak only Hindi, Nepali or their tribal language. Therefore, much of my communication with mahouts, especially older mahouts, has been via other Nepalese or professional translators. If I could grasp the language, it might remove some of the obstacles with being told what interlocutors expect that I want

to hear. In addition, it might serve to balance some of the power differentials which are inherent in being a researcher from the global north working in Nepal and writing exclusively in English (see DeMello, 2013; Foucault, 1984 and 2008). Further reflexivity is needed regarding the pre-eminence of English among stakeholders and what the use of English as a medium might mean with regard to stakeholders' access to tourism-based dollars (see chapters three and ten for further discussion of this topic; see also Walton, et al., 2016).

Based upon respect for the inherent value of elephant and mahout interlocutors, I have learned ways to communicate with both over my ten years of research in Nepal, but there are obvious issues and inherent power imbalances (see page 73, this thesis; DeMello, 2013: 5). As ordinary language is expressed through its practice and, as mentioned previously, 'rooted in a life, a society, and a language that have a history' (Foucault, 2005:406; see previous sections), I acknowledge that I may be missing some richness of detail and historical nuance in my interactions with these interlocutors.

Category three: data collection and follow up after research trip

Upon return to the US, two additional people from organizations purporting a desire to be active in Nepal and/or advertising a presence there were contacted via text and email. Questions were sent to these individuals, and they completed a written survey and answered questions via email and text. Follow up emails were sent requesting further information from many participants in this study.

Correspondence prior to January of 2021 was used in this thesis, and further updates may be made prior to publication.

Some interlocutors continued email, message and phone communication in the years following fieldwork for this thesis. Consent to use the information provided during these conversations was renegotiated as time passed, with the author seeking further verbal informed consent or consent in writing via email.

Analysis of Data

Transcriptions of interviews were created to more easily find data when needed. These interviews were analysed using a combination of narrative analysis and an intuitive qualitative approach, which allows the researcher to use her subjective understanding of the situation as a source of data. (Firestone and Dawson, 1982). In an intuitive approach, data is still scrutinized without bias, inasmuch as that is possible for any researcher. Data is analysed after the researcher becomes familiar with the field site, communities, and subjects. This data is then compared to prior studies in the subject area, looking for patterns (Firestone and Dawson, 1982: 4). Immersion is followed by deep reflexivity, making this style of analysis perfect for use in anthrozoology studies.

Narrative analysis approaches allow the participants' stories, and the way in which they tell these stories, to become part of the data (Bleakley, 2005; Thornborrow, 2013: 51). This is a natural approach for a study involving large numbers of interviews, as more analytical methods 'lose the concrete story and its emotional

impact' (Bleakley, 2005: 534). These methods are no longer relegated to the social sciences; they are used in medicine and medical education due to narrative analysis' usefulness as a tool to encourage empathic engagement and reflect upon the human mind (Bleakley, 2005; Hiles, et al., 2017). Rather than a basic set of rules, narrative approaches follow the research question through biographical and informational interviews. These interviews are transcribed, and the researcher listens, reads and rereads several times in order to infer explanations and visualize themes (Hiles, et al., 2017).

Recorded interviews and transcripts were analysed using the above methods to obtain historical data on each organization and individual human or animal. This data was used to construct biographies of each. In particular, the motivations for organizations and individuals becoming involved in conservation activities and the words used to describe these motivations were noted to discover commonalities across different types of organizations and cultural backgrounds. Included in these biographies are data regarding the stated goals of each organization, descriptions of how participants feel they are meeting these goals, and information regarding how participants feel that other organizations support/counteract these goals.

Next, information regarding the way in which these individuals/organizations practice conservation was compared and contrasted to their stated goals. The stated goals of these individual organizations and individuals from both their promotional materials (i.e. websites, social media, advertising) and their interviews will be compared to their perceived success in meeting these goals. The way in

which these individuals and organizations perceive their own success or failure will be compared to the perceptions of them by external organizations.

Descriptive data of government and privately-owned elephant stables, facilities at the NTNC, facilities at sanctuaries and available health and nutrition information from field notes and interview transcripts was compiled in order to gain a more complete picture of the care offered to animals in Nepal. Next, I examined how humans from each organization felt that these facilities fulfilled the needs of each animal, how they perceived the mental status of each animal, and what they felt were the successes and failures of their own organizations.

I then combed the transcripts for suggestions from stakeholders regarding methods of 'appropriate care' ideas for captive elephants in Nepal. The descriptive words used by each ('good' grain, 'happy' mahouts) were intuitively compared in an attempt to identify differences in their perceived meanings of these words. Plans for sanctuary facilities, stable and husbandry upgrades and suggestions for a 'common language' of conservation followed, with the goal of improving the living conditions for all stakeholders.

Terminology

Travelers quickly experience the people of Nepal alternately referring to themselves and their products as both Nepali and Nepalese. According to informants, this is a common practice which is also applied to food, language, customs and products. For the purposes of this thesis, I will continue their practice.

Furthermore, to streamline this thesis, non-human animals will be referred to as 'animals' and human animals as 'humans'. In addition, only one species of elephant (*Elephas maximus*), one species of tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*) and one species of rhinoceros (*Rhinoceros unicornis*) are found in the wild in Nepal. For this reason, they will be referred to simply as elephant, tiger and rhino for the remainder of this thesis. While horseback riding and horse festivals are common in some areas of Nepal, there are no 'wild equids' found in the Sauraha area of Nepal--nor any stables catering to equestrian activities. Therefore, any mention of 'horses' in this thesis refers to those domestic horses being used to pull carts for tourist activities (*Equus ferus caballus*).

Mahouts

Elephants in Nepal have historically had three 'elephant-men' assigned to each individual. These men include the driver (Phanti), the game-spotter/walker (Pachhuwa), and the stable cleaner (Mahout) (Bhusal, 2007: 73). Additional men work at the stables, such as the supervisor (Subba). Traditionally, calling a driver a 'mahout' was seen as an insult, as the mahout was the lowest ranking staff member, but this appears to be changing (Mishra, 2008: 94). On my recent fieldwork trip, I experienced many NTNC, government and foreigners referring to all elephant caregivers as 'mahouts'. Therefore I will follow the current fashion and use the three names—driver, elephant-man, and mahout—interchangeably.

Conclusions

Finding a common language with which to discuss doing 'the best' for animals is complex and situationally dependent. This is not a problem with the linguistic system itself, but rather with our ability to find shared context in which to communicate (Halliday, 2017: 98; Winch, 1990: 86). In addition, we are beings constantly creating meaning through our interactions with others (Ingold, 2000: 5). Ethnographers must be attentive to the ways in which their observations and interactions become a part of their study. Reflexivity, autoethnography and animal biography are tools one can use to tell a research story which involves beings from very different backgrounds.

Like language, personal ethics rely heavily on influences from one's past, and therefore require an approach from both a philosophical and sociocultural perspective. Lambek (2010: 40,42) explains that most people believe they are ethical beings, and that they behave in ethical ways. These beliefs may lead individuals (or organizations) to see their actions as more ethical than someone else's. This thesis will explore the way in which these individuals, and the organizations they represent, feel they are doing the best for elephants, and how these perceptions might get in the way of cooperation towards a common goal.

The next chapter introduces relevant literature and current debates in anthropology, anthrozoology, and philosophy which apply to this thesis. It includes a discussion of conservation efforts in biodiverse areas, and how these efforts are

intimately tied to ecotourism in Nepal. Whether these efforts are perceived as effective will be discussed through the lens of neoliberal theory.

NGOs and INGOS active in the Chitwan National Park area serve as focal points for this thesis, and so the next chapter includes a discussion of these organizations' perceived impact and efficacy, especially in areas where participatory development and government intersect. These intersections are also where discussions of environmental justice occur, and lend themselves to further discussion of neoliberalism.

Lastly, the next chapter introduces several lenses through which to view the captive elephants in this study. Are these elephants simply conveyances to be traded? Or are they cosmopolitan beings involved in meaning-making with humans? Whether humans view these beings as co-workers, commodities or endangered species is highly dependent upon one's personal history, societal pressures and the context of living in shared landscapes with elephants.

Three: Ethics, care and commodification

To thoroughly examine the topic of animal care and ethics in Nepal one must draw upon several diverse areas of inquiry. This literature review will engage with the broader fields of conservation, care and ethics as well as the more specific issues surrounding elephant-human relationships in Nepal. Included is an examination of the current push toward community-based conservation and local sustainability, and how this push has led to the description of tourism as a neoliberal pursuit. The ways in which animals are commodified in the name of both tourism and conservation, and the concept of environmental justice and its application to elephants will be explored. Discourse surrounding environmental justice, work and care round out the chapter.

While there appears to be no lack of knowledge regarding these *individual* areas of interest²¹, further study into the way these fields work—or fail to work—together is needed. This thesis will attempt to fill various gaps in knowledge which will present a more unified view of the current situation in Nepal, in the hope of finding a more effective way to ‘do’ conservation. Ultimately, the purpose of this thesis is to provide data which will result in higher welfare outcomes for captive elephants and those who care for them. This data will then be shared with interested stakeholders, especially those within Nepal.

²¹ For example: see Bajracharya, S. and Dhakal, M., 2018 for information on biodiversity efforts over the last 25 years in Nepal; Stronza, A., Hunt, C., Fitzgerald, L., 2019 for a review of literature on ecotourism’s relationship to conservation; Mishra, H., 2008 for the story of Chitwan National Park and its wildlife; etc.

Conservation and biodiversity maintenance: neoliberal commodification or a path to environmental justice?

Used originally to describe a political economy theory, neoliberal thought touted ownership of private property and access to competitive markets as the foundations of a strong economy (Castree, 2008a: 142-143; Ganti, 2014: 92).

Foucault (1970) saw neoliberalism as another way for governments to use power to problematize governing practices and achieve objectives aimed at ensuring their success (Foucault, 2008: 131; Gutting and Oksala, 2019: np). This type of government is focused on very specific objectives, including the creation of an 'economic subject' (Foucault, 2008: 175), an enterprise which both encourages and produces self-interest and competition (Foucault, 2008: 147; Harvey, 2005: 65).

Early neoliberal thinkers such as Friedrich von Hayek (2008) claimed to be concerned with what he saw as a loss of moral standards surrounding one's rights to think for oneself, and felt that maintaining private industry was the only way to ensure innovation and thereby raise the living standards of the entire population (Ganti, 2014: 92; Harvey, 2005: 20 and 64). A fear of political bias as inherent in governmental decisions created a desire among these economic elites to maintain private control of markets (Castree, 2008a: 142; Harvey, 2005: 21 and 76).

Neoliberalism described a new type of class warfare, wherein economic elites attempted to wrest control of state-owned resources by claiming that the average, ordinary individual—i.e. anyone but themselves—would not be able to handle these resources properly (Ganti, 2014: 93; Harvey, 2005: 65). Competition

between these economic elites was allegedly key to creating quality products in efficient ways, while maintaining the usefulness of formerly public resources such as land or water (Harvey, 2005: 65). Naturally, the working class quickly became fed up seeing their efforts lining the pockets of economic elites instead of their own, and freedom of choice became key (Ganti, 2014). Neoliberalism became a predominantly negative term, associated with economic collapse and class inequality (Ganti, 2014: 99).

The term found its way into anthropological literature in the mid-2000s following societal changes such as sweeping economic reforms and financial crises, and continues to gain momentum (Ganti, 2014: 93). According to Ganti, 80% of the uses of 'neoliberalism' can be found in scholarly works from the last 15 years (2014: 90). According to Castree (2008a: 134), confusion arises from the term's application to a wide variety of unrelated and incomparable conditions. It is therefore important to understand the history of this term, and demonstrate reflexivity when applying it to societal studies (Ganti, 2014). Anthropological studies define neoliberalism as the marginalization of groups which has occurred as public resources became privatized, welfare programs were discontinued and poorer groups were swept up in market economies (Ganti, 2014). Neoliberalism can be used as a framework to examine how policies affect people, as well as the ways in which people respond to these changes (Ganti, 2014: 94). For example, the marginalization of people due to neoliberal restructuring may result in activism surrounding social justice or development which forces neoliberal organizations and state bodies to make 'remedial action' which improves living conditions

(Castree, 2008b: 162; Ganti, 2014: 95). Care must be taken not to assume that specific case studies are universally applicable, due to the unique set of intersections of governmental policy, human response and the 'biophysical influence of nature' on the process (Castree, 2008a: 137). Discussions of neoliberalism and NGOs in this literature review, for example, rely in part on data from outside Nepal thanks to the country's small size and lack of large-scale research. Nepal's unique biophysical location and political structure will naturally influence the interactions between its government and communities. Because the term neoliberalism began as an economic one, neoliberal scholarship often focuses on those areas where government is involved in the management of nature—such as at the interface between governmental conservation or natural resource departments and NGOs (Castree, 2008a: 140 and 142; Ganti, 2014: 96) as seen in the current study.

Neoliberalism as a path to 'saving' nature?

Neoliberalism is often tied to the development of ecotourism and conservation practices (Castree, 2008a: 150; Campbell, 2007: 99). Allowing the privatization and marketization of nature as a way to preserve it seems paradoxical—it simultaneously results in both the protection and destruction of the 'biophysical world' (Castree, 2008a: 150; Castree, 2008b: 162). Rather than serving to raise the living standards of entire societies as intended (Ganti, 2014: 92; Harvey, 2005: 6,20), neoliberal conservation practices may further expand the gap between socio-economic classes or limit access of poorer communities to natural resources (Castree, 2008b: 163-166; Campbell, 2007: 83; Mehta and Heinen, 2001).

Community-based conservation (CBC) efforts are a key area where neoliberalism and top-down guided development create conflicts in areas of high conservation focus (Castree, 2008: 145). For example, park management in Nepal was traditionally run by the federal government, and denied local people access to forest provisioning, management positions or input on park usage (Campbell, 2007: 83; Mehta and Heinen, 2001). Community attitudes towards this type of traditional park management have historically been overwhelmingly negative (Heinen, 1993; Mehta and Heinen, 2001). CBC programs, which have gained popularity in Nepal since the 1990s (Campbell, 2007: 99), were part of an ongoing effort in Nepal to allegedly decentralize governmental power, defend property rights and local resources and link socioeconomic development to biodiversity preservation (Kellert, et al., 2000). However, these CBC efforts have also been met with negative feelings from locals due to their failure to provide promised outcomes (Heinen, 1993; Kellert, et al., 2000).

For example, initial studies of the Annapurna Conservation and Makalu-Barun Conservation areas found that on average 85% of local people supported these community-based projects, in part due to the perceived impact of infrastructure development and tourism in the areas surrounding these national parks (Mehta and Heinen, 2001). However, despite this widespread support, both programs failed to achieve their goals (Kellert, et al., 2000). Both resulted in an unequal distribution of benefits, with areas closest to the management offices receiving the most profit (2000). Instead of community interests being served, power was used to promote personal interests, and local elites were given the highest positions

(2000). Local people reliant on grazing were not consulted as promised, and farmers were given production quotas that could not be sustainable in the long-term (2000). Educational programs on the environmental and socioeconomics of community-based resource management were offered to local communities, but the focus in some areas quickly switched from biodiversity preservation to a jockeying for power positions and financial gain (Kellert, et al., 2000).

Local programs were not given clear goals by the federal government, and there appeared to be more focus on procedure than practice and strategies (Kellert, et al., 2000), a common problem during other studies as well (Roka, 2012).

Participants felt that any positive effects of NGOs were slight, or limited to 'small geographic areas' (Roka, 2012: iii,188,192). Projects started by non-locals often resulted in abandonment, and their efficiency never assessed (Roka, 2012: 134,177). Marginalized communities in Kellert et al.'s (2000) study, especially women and members of lower castes, were excluded from the administration of community-based programs, and did not benefit from the switch from national to local oversight. Furthermore, the forest and its wildlife remained possessions of the national government, meaning that federal bodies could step in at any time they were unsatisfied with local progress, creating the feeling that communities were not truly empowered but rather again victims of neoliberal policy (Kellert, et al., 2000).

Over the last 16 years, both globally and in the small villages of Nepal, the terms 'development', 'conservation' and 'biodiversity' have become entangled with

neoliberal discourse, and have become synonymous with 'big business' and the selling of environmental experiences and conservation quick fixes as consumable goods (Ganti, 2014: 90; Sullivan, 2006: 108). Furthermore, neoliberalism has become so intertwined with conservation, according to Sullivan, that most researchers no longer notice it as they study the 'global environment' (Sullivan, 2006: 109). Projects combining tourism and conservation have become so commodified that the scientific pursuits of these projects are themselves considered suspect (Cousins, et al., 2009). These combinations create an atmosphere where the science may be driven by consumer desires, rather than gaps in the field of knowledge (Cousins, et al., 2019).

NGOs and neoliberalism

National and International non-governmental organizations (NGOs and INGOs) working within Nepal find themselves embroiled in the above debates, as they are often involved in conservation activities and voluntourism experiences which combine leisure travel with non-profit efforts (Fletcher, 2013; Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011; UNWTO, 2016). For example, office workers can take a 'sabbatical' and travel to the Himalayas for a 'self-actualization' experience as a 'guest manager' for a sheep ranch with the goal of reducing human-snow leopard conflict (Goat Village, 2020: np).

Neoliberalism is commonly associated with these types of environmental and conservation experiences, which often find themselves in areas where political liberalization has led to a push towards civil action (World Bank, 1998: 3). NGOs

and INGOs are often connected with participatory development, which may benefit vulnerable populations (World Bank, 1998), but are also linked to global financial powerhouses like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The IMF is an organization made up of 190 countries hoping to ‘ensure the stability of the international monetary system’ (IMF, 2020: np). The IMF purports to maintain economic oversight through surveillance of the financial policies of member nations, loans to member countries, capacity development, and as the largest ‘official’ holder of global gold reserves (IMF, 2020: np). The World Bank, which is controlled by developed nations and touts itself as a knowledge manager (World Bank, 2020), faces criticism for its ‘top-down control’ over development processes (Plehwe, 2007: 514-515). Money from organizations like the World Bank and the IMF is distributed to under developed nations via INGOs on a massive scale, including through partnerships with large global organisations like the World Wildlife Fund (Ganti, 2014; World Bank, 1998). Surprisingly, more development aid is sent to the Global South²² via NGOs than through the World Bank and the IMF combined (Agrawal, 1995: 416).

Regardless of where the aid originates, funding from INGOs is considered vital to conservation and development practices in Nepal (GoN, 2020c: np; SpotlightNepal, 2012b). However, researchers studying INGOs over the last decade have wrestled with the changing ways in which these groups portray themselves, and how they are perceived by the public (Elyachar, 2005; Walton, et

²² The Global South has nothing to do with hemispheric geography but refers to under-developed nations and replaces the use of terms like ‘Third World.’

al., 2016). Instead of icons of community empowerment, NGOs may be painted as co-contributors to neoliberalism instead of as alternatives to state oversight (Walton, et al., 2016: 2772,2766). In some cases, by establishing microeconomic boosts, pushing for a free-market culture, offering better jobs which create further class distinctions and appropriating cultural practices into profitable offerings, NGOs may benefit people other than their originally intended social group (Schuller, 2009: 97). Schuller (2009) questions the current elite status of NGOs active in the Global South, and sees them as agents who may reproduce inequalities and create barriers against participation by local community members, or weaken the social contract between state and individual by situating themselves to provide services that should be provided by the government.²³ In both Haiti and Nepal, turf wars between NGOs have created tension and an unwillingness to collaborate for the good of the community which these NGOs purport to serve (Gautam, 2020; Schuller, 2009). NGOs who focus on charismatic issues like schools and clinics may inadvertently draw support away from much needed infrastructure and clean-up organizations (Gautam, 2020; Schuler, 2009).

In addition, some NGOs now use paying volunteers to complete projects in under-developed countries under the guise of creating global citizens, tasked with studying and managing global resources for the good of all (Lorimer, 2010b: 312). These pay-to-save nature programs appear neoliberal in nature, seemingly insinuating that private, typically white, consumers are somehow more adept at

²³ Schuller (2009: 96-97) uses two cases from Haiti to demonstrate his points but paints a picture of the global 'NGO class' which is used transnationally to promote a 'vision of globalization' reliant entirely upon outside influences.

managing resources than local governments (Lorimer, 2010b: 319). These programs often rely on charismatic animals or ‘appealing causes’, to direct the flow of funding and may serve to cut already marginalized populations of humans and non-humans out of the new order (Lorimer, 2009 and 2010b: 319-320). These types of NGOs are also criticised for their practice of dropping predominantly western, young volunteers into areas where they have little experience with the language or culture they purport to serve (Guttentag, 2011; Illich, 1968; Lorimer, 2010b). Instead of solving issues in their areas of interest, these NGOs may instead ‘inadvertently’ contribute to the expansion of neoliberalism (Mostafanezhad, 2016: 4-6).

Thanks in part to social media platforms, there are now more opportunities for people around the world to contribute to human and non-human welfare advocacy on a global scale (Di Lauro, et al., 2019; Rodak, 2020; Stronza, 2004: 492).

Animal-focused NGOs may find themselves at odds with the public and each other throughout Asia (Salwala, 2002; Gautam, 2020). But because elephants in different types of captivity (i.e. timber camp elephants versus beggar elephants) require vastly different types of help, there is more than enough work for NGOs to share, and greater communication between and recognition of similarly-focused NGOs and their roles in improving the lives of captive elephants is desperately needed (Salwala, 2002: np). NGOs could fill gaps in advocacy as well as physical support if they could learn to work with the government and each other, a rarity in both Thailand and Nepal (Gautam, 2020; Salwala, 2002; Brown, Minsky, Rao, Sama, INGO5, Thomas interviews, 2019).

Animal NGOs are not the only organizations struggling with public perception. Some humanitarian NGOs in Nepal have been accused of supporting or increasing ethnic strife (SpotlightNepal2012a) and often do not seek required permission from concerned municipalities before operating (SpotlightNepal, 2012a). Nepalese ministry representatives acknowledge that It is often not practical for INGOs to request this permission, and admit that maintaining oversight of the various organizations working in Nepal is difficult (SpotlightNepal, 2012a). B. Paudel, secretary of Nepal's Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, feels there is a lack of understanding among some governmental agencies as to the role of NGOs in different sectors, as well as confusion about which governmental arm should be in charge of regulating them (SpotlightNepal, 2012a).

Current scholarship also questions the legitimacy of these NGOs and INGOs due to the perception of power imbalances resulting from the connection of these groups to both western interests and local governments (Walton, et al., 2016: 2770). There is concern regarding NGOs' ability to influence governmental change by exploiting their sense of legitimacy as international organizations and financial powers (Walton, et al., 2016). NGOs may stimulate and expand neo-liberal messaging through the promotion of consumerism and self-interest, and there are concerns that these groups benefit their donors more than their intended recipients (Ganti, 2014; Walton, et al., 2016). Likewise, conservation-based NGOs may be promoting conservation against the express wishes of local communities, or

imposing their own conservation ideals through a sense of 'cultural superiority' (Liu and Leung, 2019: 125).

There are three main concerns that call into question the effectiveness of INGOs. First, these agencies may simply be too close to state institutions to be truly focused on civil rights issues (Walton, et al., 2016: 2770). Secondly, INGOs may be becoming irrelevant as local grassroots organizations take up the mantle of exposing corruption and inequality (Walton, et al., 2016: 2780). Lastly, and in contrast to the first issue, those INGOs which rely on international funding may find themselves out of luck as local governments clamp down on foreign finances (Walton, et al., 2016: 2779-2780)

Despite these potential pitfalls, NGOs have an important role to play in sustainable development, conservation and animal welfare in Nepal. The number of NGOs in Nepal has increased over the last 30 years, with over 51000 now registered, along with an additional 229 INGOs (GoN, 2020c: np). Active in sectors as diverse as sustainable development, education, peace, security, energy and trafficking, these organizations bring needed human labour, materials and resources to Nepal (Karkee and Comfort, 2016; GoN, 2020c: np). INGOs supply first responders in emergent situations such as floods, and often supply the necessary relief packages which allow governments to support citizens following natural disasters (SpotlightNepal, 2012b: np). In addition, NGOs are able to operate in remote areas where governments have little reach (SpotlightNepal, 2012a: np). What is lacking, according Ministry secretary Paudel, is oversight and monitoring of the various

organizations operating within Nepal (SpotlightNepal, 2012a). Oversight of NGOs/INGOs falls to the Association of International NGOS in Nepal (AIN) and the governmental Social Welfare Council (SWC), and the boundaries of the two organizations are not clearly defined (SpotlightNepal, 2012b: np). These organizations suffer from a lack of communication, a lack of organization and a lack of understanding of each other's mission (SpotlightNepal, 2012b). Further troubled by an unsteady government (see chapter one), the AIN/SWC faces struggles to monitor and evaluate the multitude of NGOS registered in Nepal (SpotlightNepal, 2012a). Paudel sees the role of NGOs to 'carry out the mandate of the government', and to reach the people the government cannot (SpotlightNepal, 2012a: np). To this end, Paudel recommends that the government provide a framework to better oversee the operations of NGOs (SpotlightNepal, 2012a).

The lens of neoliberalism may offer social scientists a common language with which to discuss cultures, practices and organizations (Castree, 2008a: 133 and 137; Ganti, 2014). The word can sound judgmental, however, and researchers must be careful not to assume that anything labelled as neoliberal is negative, because this might cause them to reframe their studies too narrowly (Ganti, 2014). Using Marcus's suggestion to 'follow the people, the thing, the metaphor' (Marcus, 1995: 106-110), as described in chapter two of this thesis, social scientists can examine neoliberal issues from a critical perspective through the various agents involved at the base level, while not simply studying the economic elites themselves. Of course, the first step is to be aware of neoliberalism's existence

and the fluidity of the term's definition (Castree, 2008a: 134). One must then acknowledge that it is inextricable from conservation discourse (Sullivan, 2006: 106). In this thesis the term will be used as a tool to discuss how NGOs/INGOs are perceived by local communities, governmental agencies and each other. While many INGOs have come under fire due to their transformation from small volunteer-driven groups to large, well-funded agencies, the INGOS in the current study are predominantly smaller organisations funded by crowdsourcing, smaller grants or family foundations. How these smaller groups compare to governmentally-funded agencies is a key aspect that will be covered in chapter eight.

The NGO 'dogfight' in Nepal

Offering perspective on the NGO situation in Nepal comes from the Nepalese executive director of the Jane Goodall Institute-Nepal, Manoj Gautam (2020).²⁴ Gautam has strong views about NGOs active in Nepal, and has had a variety of negative interactions with them in his attempts to coordinate street dog care programs via his own NGO, ManuMitra. Gautam also plays a part in the discussion of captive elephant sanctuaries in the following chapters. According to Gautam, the role of NGOs, especially INGOs, should be one of technical assistance, fundraising, acting as a watchdog or a catalyst for change. He feels that NGOs need to claim both their good and bad outcomes, plan initiatives, research options and relate all of their work to a one health/one welfare platform.

²⁴ This information was presented in a paper presentation at the International Society of Anthrozoology Conference in September, 2020 (Gautam, 2020).

Furthermore, Gautam feels that foreign NGOs need to keep their hands off the day-to-day operations of local projects, a feeling shared by some scholars (i.e. Karkee and Comfort, 2016).

Instead, NGOs active in street dog care in Kathmandu are thought to actively hide their limitations, 'bloat' themselves to attract attention and appreciation from the public and their donors. These donors provide the 'bones' that NGOs fight over, says Gautam, and donors soak up the loyalty shown to them by their NGOs. But the donors themselves do not enter the community to assess the problem or verify that their finances are helping create solutions.

Gautam says that once these NGOs reach capacity, they stop taking calls or refuse to help, creating hard feelings within the community. Instead of a solution, the NGO now looks like a problem. Out of frustration, other people then form NGOs thinking they can solve the problem. These NGOs multiply, create competition and simply mask the symptoms of a deeper problem. What these NGOs should be doing, according to Gautam, is telling the community that these problems are not the responsibility of the NGO or government, but instead belong firmly to community members. The NGOs lack the 'moral courage' to speak openly about the community's responsibility to fix the problems it created.

Gautam feels that many NGOs function solely for the benefit of their social media followings. Instead of showing positive images of dogs (such as the 98% of the dogs in Kathmandu who have no physical issues, according to Gautam), these

NGOs engage in 'misery pinging', sharing and re-sharing posts of miserable animals and collecting 'likes' (or funding) on social media.

These problems are intensified by a general distrust of the Nepalese government. The government has culled street dogs for years (2 million in the last decade, according to Gautam) and yet the number of dogs is still rising. The key, says Gautam, is changing the interactions between the government, the NGOs and the community. Identifying what is an 'animal problem' versus a 'human problem' is the first step. Next, research is needed to identify the issues and solutions in order to create a plan that deals with the underlying issue.

Nepal is not the only country to see these conflicts between NGOs impacting their stated goals. Kontogeorgopoulos (2009: 16) reports that there are numerous groups in Thailand who purport to serve elephants. These groups have faced personal disputes and claim that divergent beliefs make them unable to work together (2019:16). Much like Nepal, Thai society frowns on direct confrontation, and NGOs who wish to help within Thailand should perhaps focus on supporting research into the preferences of tourists or working within camps where they are welcomed (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 16). Flexibility and cooperation among NGOs are key to truly 'advance the interests' of captive elephants (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009 and 2020: 61), and rivalry between individuals and methodologies must end. This thesis attempts to solve similar problems in Nepal, by finding common ground among organizations operating in the Sauraha area, and thus improve welfare for captive elephants and mahouts.

Ecotourism in Nepal

Ecotourism is discussed here due to its intimate ties with both conservation practices, NGOs and elephants in Nepal. Ecotourism is an area that has not escaped the label of neoliberalism, and is a key field which could benefit from further study (Buckley, 2011; Castree, 2008a and 2008b; Wondirad, 2019). The United Nations has called ecotourism the 'key to eradicating poverty and protecting environment' and 'a vital force for world peace' (UN, 1980: 1; UN, 2012: 1), and tourism itself is listed as a 'principal export' for 83% of developing countries and represents more than a tenth of the global economy (Buckley, 2011; TIES, 2016: 1). Many developing nations rely on the 6 trillion USD international tourism market for survival, yet little hard data exists on the true impacts of this travel, and the industry remains largely unregulated (Buckley, 2011; UNTWO, 2017: 15).

Tourism researchers have long-standing concerns surrounding the power differentials between locals and tourists (Stronza, 2001). Local people are thought to lack agency in these relationships and are represented as unduly influenced by visitors, almost as if they could not escape the 'tourist gaze' (Stronza, 2001: 272). There is concern that locals may change their thoughts or behaviour in response to interactions with tourists (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010; Stronza, 2001).

However, recent studies may present a more balanced view of the tourist-local relationship. For example, Stronza and Gordillo (2008) found that community members saw both positive and negative outcomes from their interactions with tourists. Exposure to tourists and touristic experiences reportedly empowered local women to try new roles outside the household, and other community members

appreciated the opportunity to 'develop professional relations' and gain experience with outsiders (Stronza and Gordillo, 2008: 457-458).

Conservation outcomes, cultural identity and poverty reduction are other contested elements of ecotourism (Wondirad, 2019: 1054). Some studies showed an improvement in local conservation attitudes and outcomes (Newsome and Hughes, 2016: 13; Oglethorpe and Crandall, 2009: 8; Sedhain and Adhikary, 2016: 58; Waylen, et al., 2009: 348-349), poverty reduction (UNWTO, 2016: 2) and the reinforcement of cultural identity (Smith, 2015: 177). Others cite only 'environmental exploitation' (Carrier and Macleod, 2005: 319; West and Carrier, 2004: 484), the loss of land (Carrier and Macleod, 2005: 325; Kharel, 1997: 132), and the siphoning off of income from local communities (Bookbinder, et al., 1998; Puri, 2019: 78). This lack of consensus surrounding the impacts of ecotourism on local communities would benefit from more rigorous research through an interdisciplinary lens (Buckley, 2011; Castree, 2008a, 2008b; Wondirad, 2019)

For example, Raif Buckley's (2011) in-depth review of relevant tourism literature found more than 1500 articles on tourism and the environment, yet few offered the necessary 'rigor, insight, and significance' needed to identify trends in the field (2011: 409). Stronza et al. (2019: 245) argue that data on ecotourism's benefits may be skewed, perhaps due to a lack of rigor or confusion with other outdoor travel, and a systematic review by Wondirad (2019: 1059) found that ecotourism is more a 'marketing tactic' than an effective way to encourage sustainable development. However, despite 25 years of data suggesting that ecotourism is

'ineffective' at helping local communities of humans, Stronza et al. (2019: 236, 245) continue to claim that ecotourism can 'protect landscapes and entire wildlife populations' thanks to its support of endangered species conservation in protected areas.

Perhaps the disagreement regarding the true effects of ecotourism may stem from what Buckley (2011: 409) describes as the practice of 'biologists, geographers, psychologists and economists' interested in tourism tending to publish only in their own journals, and tourism researchers seeing environmental impacts as secondary to tourism practices. Buckley (2011: 409) feels this separation of tourism studies into separate fields 'limits the penetration of broader academic knowledge into tourism'. An examination of ecotourism through an interdisciplinary lens is desperately needed (Buckley, 2011; Wondirad, 2019: 1058), as these practices add to already overtaxed infrastructures in developing countries, creating stress on sewage treatment (if available at all), an increase in refuse, greenhouse gasses, energy consumption and water usage along with displacing wildlife for resorts and damaging flora and fauna in the name of ecotourism (Carrier and Macleod, 2005; Subedi, 2010). Ecotourists fail to take the environmental costs of their travel into account, or consider how travel-related climate change impacts the biodiversity of the fragile areas they desire to visit (Buckley, 2011; Lorimer, 2010). Buckley (2011) also argues that the ecotourism industry is actively encouraging the placement of private facilities inside protected areas, as with the government of Nepal's initial support of private hotels within its national parks (see chapter four). Some private operators also buy land under the guise of protecting it from

development, which instead results in said land being taken out of the hands of locals or used for money-making activities, thereby continuing the neoliberal cycle (West and Carrier, 2004: 485; Castree, 2008a: 142; Fletcher, 2015). Others have done the opposite, taking private or communal land and earmarking it for conservation (Buckley, 2011). Whether this conversion from communal property to conservation land has positive or negative effects remains to be seen, but ecotourism has been successful in protecting biodiversity in some areas by outcompeting industries with greater environmental impact, such as oil-drilling, farming, mining or fisheries (Buckley, 2011).

Some critics, such as Castree (2008b: 172) and West and Carrier (2004: 484), do not see the expansion of neoliberalism as an accidental outcome of ecotourism, but instead see the tourist industry purposefully trying to create the sense that local communities benefit greatly from the practice. West and Carrier (2004) argue that tourists are encouraged to embrace this sense of supporting local people, and are sold the narrative that they are working around ineffective governments. Instead, ecotourism may actually result in fragmentation of families and communities as local people move away from busy areas or seek less traditional ways of life (Carrier and Macleod, 2005). Areas of conservation and ecotourism focus may end up redefined through a neoliberal lens, seen as commodifiable resources (Castree, 2008a: 147; West and Carrier, 2004).

Conservation education and awareness

The larger body of work on outdoor and environmental *education* has also largely ignored ecotourism's role in nature conservation. Ecotourism is often promoted as a means to encourage nature conservation via education, both of tourists and locals, especially in fragile areas (Fletcher, 2015; Wondirad, 2019: 1054; see also UNWTO, 1980). According to Fletcher (2009: 271), most ecotourism is undertaken by white, upper-middle class people from developed countries who have a very specific ecotourist gaze. These ecotourists have been told that by visiting conservation areas and supporting local communities, they will become a part of sustainable development and community awareness in the area (Fletcher, 2009: 279; Stronza, et al., 2109: 245). This type of ecotourism is often sold as an educational experience, wherein the traveller and the local community both benefit. The traveller gets to learn about conservation and nature in situ, and in turn the influx of money from tourism will allegedly encourage the local community to protect said conservation areas; continuing a cycle of visitation and conservation (Fletcher, 2009 and 2015; Stronza, et al., 2019: 230; Sullivan, 2006). Sadly, the amount of money that makes it into the pockets of most local families is very low, while a few members of the community get rich (Puri, 2019: 78; Sullivan, 2006).²⁵ Under the guise of convincing rural poor to conserve internationally valuable resources, these activities often promote competition, along with encouraging the privatization of utilities and trade (Sullivan, 2006).

²⁵ This has been seen in studies from Nepal (Bookbinder, et al., 1998; Puri, 2019; Roka, 2012), Africa (Sullivan, 2006); Chile (Fletcher, 2009), etc.

Fletcher (2009: 275) explains that participants in these environmental education vacations often desire very specific experiences— wishing to give up their comfortable lives to seek struggle and discomfort in untamed areas, albeit for a short period of time. Many of these excursions sell experiences instead of products, and often involve a great many outdoor activities which serve as a contrast to their guests' everyday lives back at home (Fletcher, 2009). The participants in these activities want to observe human/non-human relationships in the wild, as it were, as a foil to the stressful and 'alienating' western world from whence they arrived (Fletcher, 2015: 339). In addition, ecotourism vendors tout their activities as ways to convert tourists into conservationists, but there has been no evidence that exposing tourists to conservation areas will turn them into advocates (Brookes, 2003: 59; Buckley, 2011; Wondirad, 2019: 1059). Reisinger and Turner (2003) explain that the psychological needs of these travellers are not often considered in studies, but play an important part in tourist satisfaction. Tourist satisfaction leads to repeat visits and relies heavily upon the perceptions of culture experienced on holiday (Reisinger and Turner, 2003). People often wish to experience cultural differences at their destinations, and the increasing homogenization of cultures may impact their experiences (Reisinger and Turner, 2003).

Ecotourism promoters and guests, in discourse with local communities, emphasize the local economic benefits of their touristic activities (Fletcher, 2009: 271). Their actions, however, reflect their desire to perpetuate a 'culturally specific perspective' which encourages support of ecotourism itself (Fletcher, 2009: 279;

see also Wondirad, 2019: 1049). This attempt to influence cultural beliefs and perceptions of self is subtle, and seems to contradict another discursive aim of ecotourism outfitters—that ecotourism is key to saving nature (Fletcher, 2009). Rather, by encouraging local young people to enter the tourism field via environmental education programs or ecotourism-based job training, ecotourism operators may be simply serving to ensure that ‘nature’ continues to be commodified (Fletcher, 2009). It is in this way that environmental education changes from its perceived goal of escaping one’s first-world reality to learn about nature, and becomes simply another neoliberal facet of conservation and environmental travel (Fletcher, 2015: 346).

Tourism may be seen as a way for under developed countries to tout their importance to the global community (Nyaupane and Timothy, 2010: 971), and has been promoted as the best way in which conservation funding can be achieved, but Fletcher (2015: 346) argues that this is circular logic. Certainly we can’t expect to fix conservation issues which have been caused by over-consumptive practices by selling these very same over-consumptive practices (Fletcher, 2015: 346). This thinking, according to Fletcher (2015: 346), is exactly what makes ecotourism a neoliberal, capitalistic practice. This cycle of consumption and conservation is key to the following discussions of biodiversity in Nepal.

Ecotourism’s role in biodiversity preservation within Nepal

Although Nepal has spent years reducing its poverty rates and attempting to raise the standard of living for its population, it remains one of the twenty poorest countries in the world (USAid, 2015: np). The good news is that Nepal is reducing

its poverty at a much faster rate than other developing countries and has cut the poverty rate in half over the last seven years. However, poverty is still widespread, with just under 19% below the absolute poverty line—down from 21% in 2017 (GoN, 2018a: 50 and 2019: 15). The average annual income in Nepal remains around 116,000 Nrs or 1000 USD but is rising—up nearly 12% since 2016 (GoN, 2018a: 7 and 2019a: 7,15; OnlineKhabar, 2020).

While more than 69% of Nepalese are involved in agricultural production, agriculture is only responsible for about a third of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product (USG/CIA, 2018: np). The rest is mainly made up of service-based industries, including tourism (USG/CIA, 2018: np). Tourism represents about 7.5% of Nepal's GDP, and about 6% of Nepal's total employment (nearly a million people) is tourism related (Worldbank, 2018: 4). In 2017, nearly a million international tourists visited Nepal, and that number is expected to continue climbing (Bajracharya and Dhakal, 2018: 31-35). The government of Nepal poured money into infrastructure—including airports—in support of the 'Visit Nepal 2020' social media campaign, which aimed to bring two million tourists into the country in the year 2020 (GoN, 2019e: np).²⁶

Nepal's vast biodiversity is a primary selling point for ecotourism operators (Bhaju, et al., 2007; Fitzgerald and Stronza, 2016; Kharel and Dhungana, 2018). 45% of

²⁶ Nepal did not meet its intended goal, as the country closed its borders temporarily during the) outbreak. International flights were again resumed in September 2020 (Nepal Tourism Board, 2020). Nepal saw a total number of 230,085 international visitors (GoN, 2020b: np). 20,000 of those visitors were from China and 40,000 from India (GoN, 2020b: np). Airports were again shut down for portions of 2021 (Brown, Thomas, PC, 2021).

all visitors to Nepal—and 60% of international tourists—visit protected areas, so the need to balance environmental concerns with the need for tourist dollars has become a major concern for the government of Nepal and its numerous entities (Bajracharya and Dhakal, 2018: 35; Dhakal, 2018: 21). Promoting conservation and biodiversity in Nepal therefore means understanding and supporting sustainable development and ethical tourism practices. The government of Nepal has developed a national biodiversity strategy which includes mitigation of habitat loss, pollution and invasive species control (GoN, 2014a).

As one of the continually most popular tourist activities in the area, elephant safaris bring in the second highest revenue from tourists following only park entry fees (Subedi, 1999: 15). As tourist demand rose steadily from 840 visitors in 1973 to over 100,000 by 1999, so did the number of safari elephants entering the park (1999: 16). These park entry fees annually contribute over 81.1 million Nrs (~698,000 USD) to the Nepalese government and forest users groups (GoN, 2015a: 108), and are purportedly reinvested into the park and surrounding community forests (NTNC, 2015: 51).

The true impacts of these types of tourism practices on wildlife within Chitwan national park have not been well-documented over the last decades (Bhandari, 2012). Older studies by Subedi (1999) and Subedi and Devlin (1998) warned of disturbances caused by elephant-backed safaris, while also acknowledging that they are an important means of income for the park. One study recommended zoning elephant paths and rotating paths over twenty years ago, and these

recommendations have been largely ignored (Subedi, 1999), as have more current calls for an examination of mahout health and welfare (Subedi, 1999; Barnes, Brown PC, 2019).

Safaris must now encroach further into protected areas due to declining numbers of desirable animal sightings, as several species have moved further afield to avoid oft-used tourist tracks (Baral, 2013: 143; Subedi and Devlin, 1998; Subedi, 1999). Some species have become habituated to the constant traffic, allowing for safaris to approach at closer than recommended distance (Kishab, interview, 2019; personal observations, 2014-2019; Baral, 2013: 107; Subedi, 1999). This habituation to human disturbances eventually reaches a level of intolerance for wildlife such as rhino and sloth bear, who eventually abandon areas frequented by tourists (Curry, et al., 2010). Species in areas of high conservation interest are 'greatly affected' by wildlife-viewing tourism, and the 'normal' behaviours of species are affected by the very presence of tourists in their habitats (Buckley, 2011: 404; Orams, 2000: 561).

Another concern with elephant-backed safari is communicable disease. At least 23% of captive elephants in the Sauraha area carry TB, Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus (EEHV), and a variety of other bacteria and viruses (Gaihre, 2012; Mikota, et al., 2015; Paudel and Sreevatsan, 2020; Sainsbury, 2015; Vidanta interviews, 2019). The constant incursions of captive individuals into wild pachyderm habitats may be increasing disease prevalence in wildlife (Gaihre, 2012; Mikota, et al., 2015; Vidanta interviews, 2019; see chapter five).

Endangered rhino in isolated populations of Nepal are of special concern and one has tested positive for TB upon necropsy, while others have shown signs of disease, but were not tested for a variety of reasons (Vidanta interview, 2019; Thapa, et al., 2016).

Ecotourism's financial impact in Nepal

Despite the lofty goals of the UN to alleviate poverty via ecotourism, the true economic benefits of this practice continues to be limited in the Chitwan area (Bookbinder, et al., 1998; Puri, 2019). Prior to 1996, none of the income from park entry fees went to local communities, and little was reinvested in the park (Bookbinder, et al., 1998). In addition, employment opportunities from ecotourism were limited to about 1% of the workforce, and had little impact on local household finances (Bookbinder, et al., 1998). Most of the potential income from ecotourism instead goes to agencies in other countries, continuing the cycle of neoliberalism (see Ganti, 2014; Plehwe, 2007). Bookbinder, et al. found that 54% of hotel bookings were paid in advance, to agencies outside the Sauraha area (Bookbinder, et al., 1998). In 1996, new bylaws required that 50% of all park entry fees go to local communities (Bookbinder, et al., 1998). However, the benefits to community members have still not reached local people (Puri, 2019).

While an earlier paper touted a positive link between tourism and financial support for conservation projects and community empowerment around Chitwan National Park (Nyaupane and Poudel, 2011), more recent studies on the socio-economic impacts of wildlife tourism in area instead found that the expectations of local

communities did not match actual outcomes (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014; Puri, 2019). Chitwan National Park is the main 'natural asset' (Puri, 2019: 75) for promoting tourism in the area, and the expectation of local community members was that increased wildlife tourism in the area would lead to greater opportunities for financial stability, an increase in infrastructure development, increased demand for a local workforce and local products, and a reinforcement of cultural identity (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 17; Puri, 2019: 75). Instead, local produce and animal products were declined as hotels sought 'higher quality' goods from outside the area (Puri, 2019: 75). Rather than an increase in overall employment opportunities, local people were only hired for low-level positions, while upper-level staff were brought in from outside (Puri, 2019: 76). Larger hotels are typically owned and managed by investors from outside the community, meaning the income from these activities tended to benefit a few select people, with most of the income being 'siphoned' away from local villages (Puri, 2019: 76,78). Access to the national park and its potential for income is strictly controlled by governing bodies, limiting the income potential for many families and decreasing local satisfaction with the park (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 22; Puri, 2019). The location of retail establishments in relation to the park also greatly impacted income, as those businesses outside the regular flow of tourist traffic did not realize the same profits as those with access to tourist entry and travel points (Puri, 2019: 77).

Puri (2019: 75) found several positive benefits of ecotourism, which included an increase in demand for local products, a change in mindset which included putting money in savings and minor increases in infrastructure development, especially

roads. However, other areas of infrastructure, such as sanitation, saw negligible improvement (Puri, 2019: 75). Local community members felt that improvements to transportation infrastructure would not help to increase tourism until facilities like information centres, ecological parks or trails were created (Puri, 2019: 76). Other benefits included the perception of increased exchange of cultural information and an increased interest in rebuilding historical sites (Puri, 2019: 78).

Participants in Puri's (2019: 77) study indicated that local community members felt the influx of foreign people with differing religious and cultural beliefs or practices threatened traditional belief systems. The Tharu are the oldest Nepalese ethnic culture, and one of the marginalized communities in Chitwan (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 15). The Tharu expressed concern that the use of their language is now declining, and worry it may be lost (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 17). Cultural styles of dress are changing in response to western influence, and while some of the Tharu respondents felt that western clothes were comfortable, others felt that they could no longer continue wearing traditional clothing as they would be seen as strange (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 17).

The growth of crime was cited as a concern for locals in tourism-heavy areas, including the solicitation of Tharu girls for sexual tourism in the areas around Chitwan National park (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 18; Puri, 2019: 77). Residents also expressed concern that tourists and guides alike were treating indigenous Tharu rudely (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 18). Poverty was rampant, with 88% of the Tharu in Lipton and Bhattarai's (2014: 18) study stated that they could no

longer afford gas and had to rely on firewood for fuel, the gathering of which is now controlled by park management. Prior to the opening of the park, these villagers felt that they had plenty of forest provisions, but since the advent of Chitwan as a tourist destination, they could no longer access the parts of the forest they needed for medicinal herbs, fishing, wild fruit gathering and firewood collection (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 20). They also reported feeling that the park had taken away their earning potential. Further concern arises from the knowledge that indigenous groups like the Tharu are inequitably represented in tourism operation ownership (Lipton and Bhattarai, 2014: 61). At the time of their survey, Lipton and Bhattarai found that only 6 out of 61 hotels in Sauraha were Tharu owned, while 80% of the nature guides (half of whom are day laborers and half salaried) were Tharu (2014: 61). More attention to equitable distribution of income from tourist activities, and the use of local products at tourist venues is needed (Puri, 2019: 75). An increase in locally-owned and operated retail and tourism venues should be the focus of future development schemes in the area (Puri, 2019: 76).

Social science and environmental justice²⁷ discourse

Kopnina (2018: 7) argues that there is a perception among social scientists that the current push toward conservation and biodiversity preservation is driven exclusively by 'western elites'. Claiming a need to protect indigenous cultures and

²⁷ Environmental justice refers, broadly, to the fact that poor communities or communities of color are disproportionately affected by pollution and other health risks and are underrepresented in organizations purporting to solve these problems via policies, laws or regulations (see Mohai, et al., 2009).

their human rights against the desires of these so-called elites to save environments becomes problematic when one considers that the assumptions that these groups need protecting or that these groups are not concerned with the environment, are themselves neo-colonial in nature (Kopnina, 2018). Another potential neo-colonial aspect of the environment justice movement is the attempt to provide what Chaudhary, et al. (2017: 99) call 'aggregate benefits', those which offer a homogenized sense of justice for poor or marginalized communities, without taking into account the socio-political differences between castes and cultures within each community. These aggregate benefits may instead serve to create 'greater inequalities'(Chaudhary, et al., 2017: 109), which was indeed the case within Nepal (Bookbinder, et al., 1998; Puri, 2019). Kopnina (2018: 7) suggests that because environmentalism is a 'universal phenomenon', not a western concept, we should focus instead on issues such as the 'neoliberal industrial economy' and preventing the 'commodification of nature'.

Kopnina (2016: 344) further argues that anthropologists fall into a paradoxical trap when they claim to defend 'vulnerable, poor communities' while at the same time excluding vulnerable non-human animals from these communities. This moral double standard creates an environment where critics are bound to fuse environmentalism and colonialism together when proclaiming the need to maintain traditional practices while simultaneously promoting the neoliberal 'salvation' of natural resources (2016: 344). Anthropology, claims Kopnina (2016), has taken a firm stance against injustices such as colonialism, racism, and the oppression of marginalized communities. It has not, however, boldly embraced advocacy for

non-human animals despite the fact that humans are causing extinction rates somewhere between 1000 and 10,000 times the natural rate (Kopnina, 2016; WWF,nd).

Schrader (2012), however, argues that the need to fix the environment to meet our own narratives of nature is itself an inherently anthropocentric idea. If we hope to break the cycle of human exceptionalism, Schrader (2012: 76) suggests we must go further than simply acknowledging nonhuman agency or seeking environmental justice 'now'. There is a need to acknowledge that other species have long histories and experience unique temporalities. These 'other species' must be given equal consideration as agents of environmental change and recipients of environmental justice (2012: 79). Examining marginalized communities of multiple species through the lens of environmental justice therefore means acknowledging their intrinsic value as co-creators of the environment and their place in discussions regarding conservation.

Elephants in need of environmental justice

Why then, have anthropologists not made a moral commitment to change the oppression of non-human animals, especially elephants? Perhaps it is because elephants are, as Lorimer (2010a: 492) argues, 'too social and sagacious to be objects; too strange to be human; too captive to be wild, but too wild to be domesticated'. Modern elephants find themselves common subjects of biological study but are cast to the peripheries of academic discourse regarding their welfare, captivity and the moral implications of their use. Their long-shared history

with humans, which will be described in the following chapters, focuses nearly exclusively on human ownership and use (Kharel, 2002; Locke, 2008; Sukumar, 2003). The conversation needs to be reframed to include elephant interests which include their need for agency, lifetime social bonds of their choosing, and access to large swathes of connected habitat (see chapter five and appendix III).

Captive elephants are central to debates on ecological justice and species interdependencies, yet some scholars seem 'actively opposed to discourses regarding their suffering' (Kopnina, 2017: 222). In fact, some anthropologists have argued that studies, especially conservation-based studies, are too elephant-centric and should include more consideration of humans and human-elephant pairings (Lainé, 2018, 2019: 82; Locke, 2016b). In some ways, these studies appear to have given up on the concept of environmental justice for elephants, instead seeming to imply that human reach is now so extensive that the term 'wild elephant' is obsolete (Locke, 2016b: 5).

Lainé (2020) begins to address this issue by reminding researchers that elephant and mahout relationships are far from homologous. Relationships between pairs living in tourist facilities, for example, differ greatly from those living in villages (Lainé, 2020: 1). He suggests that each of these types of relationships needs to be considered separately in light of their unique characteristics. Lainé (2020: 2) further suggests there is a need to consider problems with the language like those discussed earlier in this thesis. 'The western concept of animal health and needs in terms of "welfare" and "well-being"' may not equate to indigenous perceptions of elephants and elephant care (Lainé, 2020: 2). To avoid ethnocentric thinking,

Lainé suggests ‘immersive fieldwork conducted in the local language’ (Lainé, 2020: 2). Immersive fieldwork was undertaken by the author in past and employed in the current studies, but this work used a translator, which may have resulted in a loss of some richness of understanding (see discussion in chapter two).

Fieldwork for this thesis used a variety of methods in an attempt to counteract these issues (see pages 60-63, 87).

It is important to note that Lainé (2020) is referring to elephants living in some Indian and Laotian villages. These elephants do not spend their days restrained, as do elephants in Nepal, nor are they relegated to chains in their stables at night. Instead, they are allowed to choose to return to the forest in the evenings (Lainé, 2020: 1). While it is true that one cannot study captive elephants without studying the dynamic elephant-mahout relationship, some anthropologists may fail to consider that perhaps elephants should not be living with humans at all. Instead of a companion species, some might consider elephants indentured servants or kidnapped members of another culture (Carey, 2020; Garrison, 2016; Robbins, 2002; Spiegel, 1996). Interdisciplinary studies, such as those found in anthrozoology, may help bring in captive elephants to the larger discourse on conservation and allow recognition of these individuals as their own marginalized populations (Satoo and Changchui, 2002; Szydlowski, in press).

Captive elephants in Nepal exist in a liminal space—half wild, half captive, largely unprotected by law (see following chapter). Seeking justice for these individuals is fraught, as criticising traditional cultural practices—even illegal practices like

poaching, torture or hunting of animals by indigenous peoples—may result in threats of violence or accusations of neocolonialism (Kopnina, 2017). Both poachers and elephant owners represent organized and determined (and in the case of poachers, armed) advocates for maintaining elephants as useful commodities (Kopnina, 2017; Rao, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). Narratives of increasing human-elephant conflict in these areas typically show human victims suffering crop loss, injury or death at the feet of elephants (Acharya, et al., 2016; Sapkota, et al., 2014; Yadav, et al., 2015), and leave out the narrative of elephants as community members who are themselves threatened.

A final reason for the seeming avoidance of discourse about elephants may be the fear of criticising societal issues, such as rapid human population growth in areas of high conservation focus (i.e. areas where large populations of marginalized people live) (Kopnina, 2017: 226). However, no real change can occur without addressing the increasing human populations in elephant habitats which result in the deaths of both species due to human-elephant conflict and the competition for resources which are often denied to one species in order to protect the other (Choudhary, 2004; Kharel, 1997). Saving elephants is meaningless if they have, as Kopnina (2017: 227) fears, 'nowhere to go'. As this thesis argues, there are no easy answers to these problems.

Marginalized communities

Researchers may refrain from placing elephants in the mainstream of welfare discourse due to the perceived reliance of marginalized human communities on

tourism (see chapter two). Tourism activities create livelihoods for over a million Nepalese, so criticising any activity which provides income for marginalized communities, such as mahouts, must be done reflexively (Worldbank, 2018: 4; chapter two).

When considering environment and conservation, it is important to acknowledge that the 'poorest and least powerful' (Cassidy, 2012: 30) communities are likely to be the hardest hit by climate change and suffer the greatest number of casualties (Elliott, 2013: 96). Developing countries tend to be found in geographical locations which already face a great deal of climate variability and rely more heavily on agriculture (such as Nepal, where nearly 70% of the population is involved in agricultural production), making them more likely to suffer from ongoing climate change (Elliott, 2013: 94 and 107). Countries with high poverty levels are likely least able to adapt and change causes of climate change, and the Global North owes a debt to the Global South due to over-consumptive practices (Elliott, 2013: 43 and 112). Critics of conservation have not wanted to blame the drive for energy and industrialism for the resulting inequalities in local economies (Kopnina, 2016: 226). Critics tout the 'struggle' between environmental NGO's 'conservation elites' and poor communities, thus reframing the narrative as one where humans are the only victims, and the only solutions are those which serve exclusively human interests (Kopnina, 2016: 226). But in the case of Nepal, the opposite is also true: the protection of animal species over that of humans has created feelings of injustice (Campbell, 2007: 88; Kharel, 1997: 132). Marginalized groups of humans are forced out of protected areas, and as animal populations grow thanks to these same protective measures, these displaced people are faced with crop loss or

injury due to animal incursions (Campbell, 2007: 88). The narrative needs to be changed to include both human and non-human animals, especially marginalized groups of individuals impacted by both the neoliberalization of conservation and anthropogenic pressures such as climate change (Cassidy, 2012: 30).

There is also a need to acknowledge that practices such as deforestation and poaching are more than just local people's consumptive use of nature. With expanding populations and widespread poverty in areas of high conservation focus, one must consider that these consumptive uses are necessary to the survival of many families (Campbell, 2007: 85; Elliot, 2013: 94; Government of Nepal, 2015: 65; WWF, 2017b). Due to high levels of indebtedness, countries put pressure on communities to overexploit their natural resources as a short-term measure (Elliott, 2013: 170). In addition, the globalization of agriculture leads to further pressure to convert forested areas to crop land (Elliott, 2013: 209). These communities may have been accused of over-consumption of resources, but may be instead trapped, having been expelled from certain areas as they were earmarked for conservation (such as was the case in the Chitwan National Park area of Nepal, see McLean, 1999: 40; and Langtang National Park, see Campbell, 2007). 70% of the world's poor are 'highly dependent' upon 'provisioning services of ecosystems', such as wood for fires, food production, water, etc. (Elliott, 2013: 97). A combination of national pressure and the need for marginalized families to survive on forestry products leads to a decrease in the potential for sustainable development (Elliott, 2013: 94,100). Biodiversity preservation efforts which occur

at the cost of poverty mitigation and livelihood and are 'ethically problematic' at best (Benjaminsen, et al., 2006).

It is hard to find balance between involving local communities in forest protection while keeping people out of protected areas (Campbell 2007: 88; Chaudhary, et al., 2017). Habitat restoration and reforestation should serve not only to provide non-human animal habitat and biodiversity preservation, but also allow greater access to forestry products, land and other natural resources by local communities (Coria and Calfucura, 2012: 53; Elliott, 2013). Promoting local community involvement in sustainable development and conservation is problematic, however, when one considers that many of these communities did not willingly choose to be involved in these projects, but rather had the decision thrust upon them by tourism salespeople or national governments looking to promote conservation and conservation travel (Fletcher, 2009 and 2015; Gellner, 2007; Sullivan, 2006). This 'top-down, profit-motivated conservation' (Kopnina, 2016: 233) style of sustainable development leads to the marginalization of local peoples, and Kopnina (2016: 202,235) instead calls for something which offers more environmental justice for human and non-human animals; she suggests the inclusion of both deep ecology (Naess, 1973) and animal liberation philosophy (Singer, 2009) in environmental and conservation discourse.

Colonial attitudes toward communities of humans and other animals

Tourist interactions with local populations may be fraught with conflict arising from the differing backgrounds of each (Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020; Puri, 2019;

Szydłowski, 2017). Humans consider the cultural customs which they learned from family members to be good or helpful to their society (Lambek, 2010; Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020), but consider the views of others to be less valuable—the very definition of ethnocentrism (Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020), but an interesting view of the ordinary ethics practiced by humans in daily life. Some take a culturally relativistic view of this process, claiming that tourists must not see the treatment of animals in these cultures as ‘barbaric’, but rather as an offshoot of cultural views that animals are a commodity to be used by humans (Malchrowicz-Mosko, 2020: 27).

These types of animal use for human entertainment take place globally, and therefore indicate that several factors are likely responsible for their attraction (Garrison, 2016; Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020). One reason this commodification continues is likely due to the lack of visitor knowledge regarding the history, living or working conditions of animals used in tourism (Garrison, 2016; Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020; Szydłowski, 2017). In other cases, controversial forms of tourism may actually become a draw for those who wish to stand out from the crowd in terms of their travel adventures (Lorimer, 2010b; Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020). These tourists want to experience creative and potentially exploitive types of tourism, such as sexual tourism, drug tourism or animal abuse in order to fulfil their ‘cultural omnivorousness’ (Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020: 26; Peterson, 1992). This hunger for exploitive types of tourism, especially those that cause harm to animal bodies, should create an urgency among scholars to gain a deeper understanding of why these types of venues attract tourists and how

visitors perceive the use of animals for entertainment (Fennel, 2013).

Interdisciplinary research focussing on the biological and behavioural needs of animals (such as the current study) in these venues is desperately needed (Fennel, 2013).

Even those ecotourism activities which do not encourage direct harm to animals, such as jeep or on-foot photo safaris, may be detrimental to animal health. The sight, sound and smell of humans can be quite disturbing to the very wildlife being observed and may interfere with normal behaviours or induce stress (Buckley, 2011: 404; Curry, et al., 2010; Fennell 2012; Subedi, 1999). This type of animal commodification may be less invasive, but still needs to be critically considered by ecotourists and researchers alike (Fennell, 2012). Fennell suggests that all ecotourists start their travels by accepting that all tourism is a business, and will inevitably lead to animal commodification (Fennell, 2012).

While one does need to consider that animal use may stem from the survival needs of very poor local communities, it is important to realize that it is the continuing supply of income from tourists that maintains the activity (Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020). Practicing ethical tourism by avoiding animal-related venues is one way to use tourist dollars to create change (Intrepid Group, 2020; Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020), however, one must realize that an immediate stop to some activities may result in humans and animals finding themselves in worse situations (Pabin, Paudel and Taraswin interviews, 2019; Bames, Brown, Gautam PC, 2020).

Elephants, work, and exploitation of marginalized communities

Most humans, Coulter (2016a: 78) argues, are not 'free' to choose their labour. Instead, they find a position due to a need for income, and one which they are allowed by society to perform. This position may be limited by discrimination due to ethnicity, forced migration, cultural influences, etc. (Coulter, 2016a: 79). In Nepal this discrimination is seen in mahout society, where a lack of education, a low-caste birth and few job options lead young men to careers in elephant handling (Hart, 2005; Hart and Locke, 2007; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2020; Locke, 2008, 2011, 2016; Szydowski, 2017).

This lack of freedom in job choice extends to animals (Coulter, 2016a) such as elephants, who did not choose to work for humans but instead were removed from their natural habitat and instructed in appropriate behaviour and lifestyle. These elephants continue to attempt to express their agency (Coulter, 2016a), by eating while on safari, attacking or killing their human handlers (Gopali, 2003: 28), or destroying shelters built by humans (observations, 2017 and 2019). These elephants must often be forced to perform their work and punished when their behaviour doesn't meet human expectations (Coulter, 2016a: 79). Continued defiance may result in pain or even death (Coulter, 2016a: 80). Elephants working for humans must perform 'emotional labour' as well (Coulter, 2016a: 73, 76; see chapter six) repressing their instincts, such as foraging or asserting dominance, while on duty. Some may see this forced labour as animal exploitation (Coulter, 2016a: 81). Malamud (2013: 39) describes human use of animals as an example of 'our sense of entitlement to these services' and argues it is the epitome of

Singer's 'speciesism' (Singer 1975: 8-9). This speciesist view is important when considering human-elephant co-work in following chapters.

Balancing neoliberalism and environmental justice with cosmopolitan thinking

Perhaps one method of reconciling humans with the animals they wish to 'save' is to view their interactions through the lens of cosmopolitanism. From the Greek word for 'citizens of the world', these cosmopolitan actors find themselves experiencing an increasingly globalized life (Kleingeld and Brown, 2019: np). While there are a few differing schools of thought on the definition of philosophical cosmopolitanism and its relationship to globalization, I am particularly focussed on the belief that all (albeit human, in the case of traditional cosmopolitan thought) beings are citizens in a single community (Kleingeld and Brown, 2019: np) and how these beings connect via 'moral norms or relationships' (Kleingeld and Brown, 2019: np). Haraway (2008) described this cosmopolitanism as a 'knot of species' (2008: 42) whom we 'become-with' (2008: 4) by practicing 'becoming worldly' (2008: 3). In *Cosmopolitan Animals* (2015), Nagai suggests that animal welfare and the climate crisis have led humanity into a shared 'cosmopolitan agenda' (2015: 2). This type of cosmopolitanism leaves behind city or national citizenship (Haslanger, 2015: 32; Rooney, 2015: 58) for 'travel and cultural exchange' (Sleigh, 2015: 44), but is not without issue.

Perhaps sadly, the inclusion of animals in cosmopolitan life may result in the loss of their identity as individual living beings. One example of globalization and cosmopolitanism stripping identity is seen with charismatic species who end up as

stuffed animals, home décor, and symbols of international movements, perhaps none so recognisable as the panda in the World Wildlife Fund's logo (Jalais, 2008; see wwf.org). These animals may cease to exist as individuals and instead become global ambassadors for environmental justice or pawns in political agendas (Jalais, 2008). For example, the WWF 'panda' is no longer a member of *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*, but has been de-animalized to become instead a social construct. The meaning of the word 'panda' in this case has become fluid and culturally specific, and discovering its 'fundamental truth' made more difficult (Foucault, 1970: 38 and 39, 372). Like the porcupine in the introduction to this thesis, the word panda has moved around and now we must look at it from another angle (see Mol, 2008). Sadly, in the case of the WWF panda, the living, breathing animal is no longer involved in the construction of its identity (Mol, 2013).

In the Sundarban region of India and Bangladesh, tigers were embroiled in similar debates over their identity (Jalais, 2008). These tigers existed simultaneously 'out there' as exclusively social constructs and 'in the forest' as physical, living beings (Jalais, 2008). The physical beings have a history of attacking and killing humans, while the social constructs serve as a 'rallying cry' for conservation efforts (Jalais, 2008). Named as the national animal for both countries, tigers became 'constructed' by NGOs, the government and 'urbanites' as 'high-status' animals worthy of conservation (Jalais, 2008: 36). Local people found themselves suddenly located below these constructed tigers in terms of importance, yet still suffered losses at the claws of real tigers' (Jalais, 2008).

These constructed tigers and de-animalized pandas serve as an introduction to the ways in which elephants who find themselves in shared landscapes with humans may suffer from conflicting identities. As creatures who migrate across large ranges, wild Asian elephants find themselves passing through human-dominated landscapes as they cross political and geographic borders which place them in the centre of conservation and land-use debates (see Barua, 2014; Government of Nepal, 2009; Government of Nepal, 2015b).

Wild elephants and tourism

Elephants find themselves portrayed in recent academic literature as cosmopolitan actors who mobilize ideas, people and money from one area of the globe to another (Barua, 2014; Chaudhuri, 2017: 11; Lorimer, 2010). The conservation of elephants and their habitats lends itself to a cosmopolitan view due to their large presence—physically and with regard to their need for landscape-scale preservation as well as their large presence as a charismatic species in both conservation literature and pop culture (Jalais, 2008). The conservation of real elephants requires governmental and public input, and often includes the imposition of outside ideals on local communities (Barua, 2014; Government of Nepal, 2009; Government of Nepal, 2015b).

Thanks to human population growth in former habitats, elephants find themselves losing literal ground to humans at an alarming rate (Menon and Tawari, 2019). In Nepal, the loss and fragmentation of elephant habits is forcing herds into narrower migration routes which run alongside, and through, human villages (GoN, 2008;

GoN, 2009; Yadav, et al., 2015). As elephant-human contact escalates into conflict, these herds find themselves being governmentally-managed. Humans created non-physical boundaries between protected areas and across national borders, and the elephants choose to ignore these boundaries, remaining cosmopolitan in their choice of dwelling places (GoN, 2008; GoN, 2009; Yadav, et al., 2015). Humans create property lines for croplands and farms, yet continue to plant crops which elephants desire while simultaneously pushing the herds into smaller habitats (GoN, 2008; GoN, 2009; Yadav, et al., 2015). Humans create national parks to protect wild elephants and forcibly relocate human settlers, but elephants continue to roam beyond their assigned spaces (GoN, 2015a; Kharel, 1997). Like the tigers above, these cosmopolitan elephants respond to humans and human barriers much the same way they would natural barriers or any unfamiliar beings in their path.

The conservation of these cosmopolitan wild elephants is of global concern and mobilizes personnel and finances (see AERSM, 2017; Chaudhari, 2017; Menon and Tawari, 2019; Santiapillai and Jackson, 1990; Sukumar, 2006). Conservation efforts which focus on the landscape-level projects which endangered animals require are often backed, or controlled, by NGOs and INGOs (Barua, 2014; Chaudhuri, 2017; Heatherington, 2010; West, et al., 2006). The organizations create or destroy boundaries, displacing people and animals in the process and forcing nations to restructure their lands to fit an 'externally imagined set of categories' (West et al., 2006: 256). The creation of these boundaries also

influences the ways in which humans experience the environment (West et al., 2006).

As discussed in earlier sections of this literature review, ecotourism and conservation-focused travel is commonly promoted in these areas, and is touted as a way to finance environmental or species protection (see above section). This travel is promoted by governments, ecotourism operators and NGOs as a way to promote the conservation of global resources by good cosmopolitan citizens (Chaudhuri, 2017; Fletcher, 2009 and 2015; Government of Nepal, 2009; Sullivan, 2006). Instead of concerning themselves with bringing in tourists, Chaudhuri suggests that NGOs should instead focus on supporting the 'rural poor who are rooted in place' (Chaudhuri, 2017: 13). In this way, NGOs can change their focus from consumption to ecological connectivity (Chaudhuri, 2017). Approaching ecology through the twin goals of sustainability and social justice would truly be a cosmopolitan approach (Chaudhuri, 2017).

Captive elephants, mahouts, and communities

Captive elephants might also benefit from a cosmopolitan approach to their care and welfare. These individuals share their homes, meals and work with humans (participant observations, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019; Szydlowski, in press). As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, data on the captive elephants of Nepal is limited to several small studies of specific populations²⁸, and much of this data

²⁸ According to informants, this is likely due to the small numbers of both captive and wild elephants in Nepal compared to Thailand, India or Myanmar (Vidanta interviews, 2019)

refers exclusively to biological or bacteriological studies (Gairhe, 2012; Kharel, 2002; Locke, 2017b; Shrestha and Gairhe, 2006; Varma, 2008; Varma and Ganguly, 2011).²⁹ Anthrozoological studies of captive elephants in Nepal only began with Hart's (1994, 1995) examination of drivers' perceptions regarding their elephants' social behaviour and interactions. These drivers felt that while they were 'loved and trusted' by the elephants, the elephants would still rather be 'free' (Hart, 1994: 297, 309). Hart (2005 and 2015) conducted further studies into the effects of the tourist gaze on the human member of the team (see also Hart and Locke, 2007).

Locke (2008, 2011) began working in Nepal in 2001, with studies of elephant-mahout relationships at the breeding centre hattisar. These studies focused on the stable as a multi-species institution in which elephants and humans face rites of passage and gain 'new competencies and status roles' (Locke, 2008: 87). Locke (2011: 36) explains that elephants in this hattisar are seen simultaneously as 'animals, persons and gods', and mahouts relate to their charges through the seemingly irreconcilable ideas of dominance, devotion and companionship (Locke, 2011: 27-28). According to Locke's informants, elephants even 'seem to willingly collude in their captivity', making them appear to embrace their status as human co-workers (Locke, 2011: 27-38).

Coining the neologism 'ethnoelephantology' for these unique studies of mahout-elephant pairs, Mackenzie and Locke (2012: 3) call for a multidisciplinary

²⁹ Much of this data will be discussed in chapter five.

approach to documenting the traditional knowledge and training practices of elephant handlers. Locke (2008: 80) explains that elephants and humans both 'dwell in sentient and affective lifeworlds', and have co-evolved in ways that leave their 'social, historical, and ecological relations' intertwined. This shared history means, according to Mackenzie and Locke (2012: 4), that humans have an 'ethical' obligation to discover which conditions are 'healthiest' for elephants, and to create 'spaces where both species can thrive'.

Captive elephants often serve as a rallying cry for NGOs, much like the Sundarban tigers discussed previously (Jalais, 2008), and enter other cultures as 'ontologically diverse bodies' instead of living beings (Barua, 2014: 570). Lorimer (2010: 498-501) suggests that while 'wild' elephants are well protected by global efforts; 'companion', feral or cosmopolitan elephants are instead at the mercy of human interests in shared landscapes. These elephants live in a hybrid natural-anthropogenic world, in which humans often invoke the name 'elephant' to control the flow of 'financial resources and political potential' (Lorimer, 2010: 500). Lorimer (2010: 503) suggests that instead of focusing on a 'universal solution' which only accounts for the 'current identity' of elephants, we might instead accept that cultures, organisms and landscapes are dynamic. Rather than using captive elephant population as a rallying cry for welfare or a fund-raising opportunity, Lorimer (2010) argues that we should focus on the well-being of individual elephants in whatever situation they are found. However, the dynamic relationships Lorimer (2010) describes in Sri Lanka often involve free-ranging elephants, which differ from the tightly restrained elephants of Nepal. While

consideration of Nepal's elephants as cosmopolitans might result in their being offered greater financial support or access to shared landscapes, improving the lives of individual elephants requires a different approach. These individual elephants, and their relationships with both individuals and organizations, likely require an interdisciplinary, multi-sited, multi-species ethnography such as the current thesis.

New identities

Perhaps there is a need to introduce entirely new definitions for the elephants who share life-worlds with humans. Lainé(2019: 84) describes those elephants sharing lives with the Khamti people of Laos as 'village elephants', thanks to their 'intersubjective engagement'. Following capture, breaking and socialization, these elephants begin a new life as human co-workers. Lainé (2019: 86) argues that thanks to the difficulty forcing an elephant to do something she prefers not to, this captivity can't be seen 'solely as a form of enslavement', but rather as a form of negotiation and consent to shared labour. This shared working environment requires both caring for and about each other.

Lainé (2019: 92-93) argues that the (predominantly western) need to 'save' elephants from these villages has resulted in a poorer quality of life for the 'rescued' elephants. Removed from their semi-wild village existence and placed in elephant camps, these individuals suffer as camp-mandated non-traditional feeding, medication, and management styles are enforced (Lainé, 2019). Their historical mahout-elephant relationship is damaged as the pair navigates the new

world of the camp, and the elephant is transitioned from family member to member of a new 'artificially' recreated herd (Lainé, 2019: 97).

While I agree that the elephants in many range states have been well-integrated into a type of multispecies community (although I do not necessarily agree that they have chosen this life freely), the elephants and elephant-mahout pairs of Nepal do not fit neatly with those found in other range countries. As this thesis will demonstrate, the relationships between elephants and mahouts, community members, and owners in Nepal have become enmeshed in power struggles and disagreements over appropriate care and ethical treatment.

Conclusions

Discourses surrounding conservation and biodiversity preservation have become entangled with neoliberal critique. Originally used to describe the privatization of markets, neoliberalism is now used in anthropological literature to describe how policies affect people and how people respond to these changes. Neoliberal scholarship often focuses on the areas where government is involved in managing natural resources, and is tied to areas where participatory development and conservation areas intersect, such as in the protected areas of Nepal.

Ecotourism in biodiverse areas, especially in the global south, is often tied to conservation efforts, and is one area where academics are divided. Touted alternately as a force for world peace, the key to wildlife preservation and nothing more than the exploitation of nature, ecotourism's effects on local

communities could benefit from a more rigorous, interdisciplinary approach. While ecotourism and community-based conservation practices in Nepal have largely failed to improve living conditions for the majority of families, there may be positive aspects to encouraging visitors to the area. Further study into changing perspectives on ecotourism's effects in the Chitwan National Park area are needed.

Ecotourism is also tied to the lives of elephants throughout Asia. Elephants inhabit a liminal space, as tourist or research conveyance³⁰, endangered species, and a construct around which to build welfare activism. These elephants may be seen as cosmopolitans responsible for the movement of money and humans around the globe, as co-workers, community members, enslaved beings, sources of zoonotic disease or as individuals to become-with. Concepts of 'care' and 'welfare' are intimately tied to the differing definitions of elephants above, and often rely upon the observer's country of origin. The status of elephants as endangered species in need of conservation is often at odds with the view of elephants as captive animals. How each of these concepts serve to construct elephants will again be encountered in the individual and organizational biographies portion of this thesis.

The next chapter examines the genesis of both elephant safari and elephant disease in Nepal. It draws upon data collected from interviews with management at the original safari lodge, along with interview data from veterinarians, elephant owners and welfare workers to paint a picture of the relatively short history of

³⁰ See Baker, 2016, for an interesting discussion of elephants as participants in and instruments of research

large-scale elephant-backed safari. Tiger Tops, the first hotel to offer private elephant backed safari in the areas surrounding Chitwan National Park, serves as a case study for this chapter. The chapter ends with a discussion of the applicable laws surrounding ownership of captive elephants in Nepal, and the ways in which these laws are interpreted or disregarded.

Four: The advent of elephant tourism in Sauraha

This journey through the elephant stables of Sauraha must begin with the story of how elephant-backed safari came to be common practice in Nepal. This chapter examines the advent of privately-owned elephant tourism in Sauraha and the challenges faced by these elephants and their caregivers. It also documents the rise in captive elephant numbers and the subsequent increase in disease.

With a lack of applicable Nepalese legislation to protect elephants, their welfare relies on a variety of social codes and management policies. While government-owned elephants are protected by acts ensuring they receive a minimum level of care, private elephants have no such protections in place. A discussion of the practices and policies surrounding elephant care, and how they impact elephant welfare round out this chapter.

Where it all began³¹

As discussed in chapter one, the human-elephant relationship in Nepal has a long and storied past (Kharel, 2002; Locke, 2008; Sukumar, 2016). While individual privately-owned elephants have been recorded in what is now Chitwan National Park (CNP) since the early 1900s, the use of elephants for tourism is not nearly as

³¹ This chapter is based upon an examination of Tiger Tops promotional materials, face to face interviews with key players, and email conversations over a period between March 2019 and January 2021. See methods section in chapter two for more information on the processes used to examine data.

old an institution as many elephant owners seem to want visitors to believe (Kharel, 2002: np; Mishra, 2008: 82-87; Thakur, Gairhe, Vidanta interviews, 2019). When speaking with Nepalese informants about elephant-backed safari, one common refrain was heard: Nepalis have been using elephants as tourist conveyance for so long that it is a culturally-ingrained practice and therefore cannot—and perhaps should not—be easily changed. This refrain extended across economic lines (NTNC vet staff and management, shop owners and mahouts), sexes, and castes (Rajesh, Rao, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019), and bears discussion. While records do show that elephants were used to ferry royal guest on hunting parties for the past several hundred years, private tourist safaris did not start until the early 1960s (GoN, 2015a).

According to Hemanta Mishra (2008: 82), the story begins in 1963 with two Americans on a tiger hunting trip. The Americans met a Russian hotel owner and enjoyed a few drinks (Mishra, 2008: 82). This chance meeting of John Coapman, Teddy Lee Wynne and Boris Lissanevitch led to plans for a joint partnership focused on tracking tiger and rhino—not to kill, because this was too easy—but to photograph. The government of Nepal treated this idea with a great deal of scepticism—tourists generally avoided the Terai due to fears of Malaria and flooding. The trio first had to befriend and convince Prince Basundhera that their plans were sound, and the prince then convinced the government to extend sole rights for tourism in Chitwan to Coapman for a fee of five hundred USD annually (Mishra, 2008: 83).³² Tiger Tops Lodge was built within the boundaries of Royal

³² Figure was not given in Nrs, so the conversion at that time is unknown.

Chitwan Park (Mishra, 2008: 83), and a landing strip laid for the planes of rich clientele. To ensure that guests experienced wildlife, Coapman used bait to draw predators into the area (2008: 84). Thus began the practice of allowing foreign interests access to government-owned protected areas and encouraging private commerce within Chitwan National Park, which ushered in an era of neoliberalism (Campbell, 2007: 99; Castree, 2008a: 140,142, 50; Ganti, 2014: 96).

According to the government's long-term veterinarian, Dr Kamal Gairhe³³, rides on government-owned elephants became quite popular in the 1960s, which created competition among tourists for tickets (Gairhe interview, 2019). Despite the popularity of these rides, the government decided that they should be using their captive elephants for patrols and animal censusing instead, and offered the elephant-backed tourism trade to Tiger Tops (Thakur, Gairhe interviews 2019; Mishra, 2008: 83). Tourism in this part of Nepal was hardly booming during this era, so the level of competition for rides was in no way comparable to the current situation. For example, in 1962 only 6000 tourists visited Nepal (Bhattarai, 2005: 672). By 1970, however, this number had skyrocketed to 70,000 (Bhattarai, 2005: 672). As discussed in the previous chapter, this number continues to rise, with pre-COVID projections estimating over 2 million visitors in 2020 (visitnepal2020.org).³⁴

Pioneering private elephant-backed safaris was not enough to keep Tiger Tops afloat, however. According to Mishra (2008: 5), Coapman's passion for alcohol,

³³ Gairhe's name and position are used with permission.

³⁴ Of course, the global spread of the COVID-19 changed the tourism landscape in Nepal. These changes are discussed in following chapters.

feasts, and lavish gifts for women led to his downfall. Coapman only held on to Tiger Tops until 1971 when it was sold to Brit Jim Edwards, who converted it to a wildlife observation company. Edwards' partner Chuck McDougal is credited with creating a 'more ethical' company view which remains a marketing point today (see below; Tigertops, 2019: np). A few years later, the Government of Nepal asked the owners of Tiger Tops to act as advisors during the formation process for Chitwan National Park (Tigertops, 2019: np).

In 1980, Edwards founded the International Trust for Nature Conservation in an attempt to preserve wildlife in areas of high human-wildlife conflict (ITNC, n.d.; Tigertops, 2019: nd). This UK trust is active globally, but focuses primarily on Nepalese and Indian projects including a 'vulture restaurant' and rehabilitation centre for injured birds (ITNC, n.d.). The same year, the government turned to Tiger Tops for help converting the former royal hunting grounds on the southwestern Terai into Bardia National Park—even today one of the least developed parts of Nepal (GoN/MOFSC, 2017). In 1982, Tiger Tops completed its 'Tharu Lodge' in Kawasoti on the edge of Chitwan National Park, which remains in operation and served as a field site for this thesis (Spotlight Nepal, 2012).

Tiger Tops was forced to relocate its original Jungle Lodge in 2012 when the government of Nepal decided to remove all hotels from within the boundaries of Chitwan National Park (Thakur interviews, 2019; Spotlight Nepal, 2012). This move came amid tourism operators located outside the park boundaries ongoing complaints that those hotels located outside the park were unfairly penalized by

the high entry fees required for hotel-owned elephant safaris to enter the park (Grimm, 2012: np). Originally slated to move out in 2010, these lodges gained a reprieve when the government announced Tourism Year 2011, and allowed the lodges to stay until 2012 to handle the influx of visitors (Grimm, 2012: np). This tourism campaign was extremely successful, raising the number of tourists visiting Nepal to over 330,000—up 18% from 2011 (spotlight Nepal, 2012).

The Tiger Tops company is now run by Edwards' sons. While many of Tiger Tops contributions no doubt benefitted the wildlife of Nepal, one specific creation has led to protests which continue today—Elephant Polo. Elephant polo was played in India during the early 1900s, but fell out of favour with the disappearance of the ruling class (Mishra, 2008: 87). In an attempt to attract wealthy clientele, Edwards partnered with Pan American Airlines to revive the game, bringing in celebrities like Ringo Starr and Margaux Hemingway, and sponsored by such lofty names as Cartier. British teams originally played against locals, but more recent games include teams formed by the World Elephant Polo association, which claims to support over 25 charities focused on conservation (WEPA, nd). WEPA (nd) also lists a number of questionable statements on their website, including 'strict rules against harsh treatment by drivers' and that elephants 'eat a diet similar to that of wild elephants'. According to biologists, polo is very dangerous for elephants. Being forced to run heavily and switch directions quickly can be harmful to their health (Varma and Ganguly, 2011: 42). In addition, the types of training necessary for these events, and to achieve the unnatural behaviours needed for polo play, are stressful to elephants (Varma and Ganguly, 2011: 42). Some members of the

elephant owners' cooperative agree, with one describing elephant polo as 'not nice' and explaining that it requires too much 'hitting and bleeding' (Vachan interviews, 2019). In 2017, citing support for movements against animal cruelty, Tiger Tops stopped its elephant polo games after 35 years (Prasain and Poudel, 2017: np).

Chain-Free pioneers³⁵

Tiger Tops' marketing materials now carry the tagline 'pioneering environmentally responsible tourism'. I had the opportunity to spend time conducting interviews and participant observations at Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge (henceforth TTTL), on the edge of Chitwan National Park. This lodge is located several kilometres away from Sauraha, and is a destination resort located in a small village. A conversation with Tiger Tops' owner led to an invitation to tour the Tharu Lodge facility and speak with management, staff and mahouts about their history and transition to a chain-free facility.

Perhaps ironically—given their status as the first private safari organization in the area—TTTL was the first hotel in the Chitwan area to use chain-free corrals for all of its elephants. In 2016, the lodge began building chain-free elephant corrals (in which elephants are allowed to move freely rather than being chained in one place) on their property. According to manager and 21-year employee 'Mr Thakur', Tiger Tops ownership believed that the safari mentality was changing, and had

³⁵ The following information comes from phone conversations and emails with the K Edwards, hotel owner, and face-to-face interviews with Thakur, a pseudonym, unless otherwise cited. .

transitioned to two safaris a day in contrast to the four to nine that took place in Sauraha. Guests however, Thakur explains, did not seem to differentiate between a few daily safaris and massive overuse of elephants. In addition, Tiger Tops staff realized that 'elephant back safari is not animal appropriate or environmental {sic}'. Owners started to ideastorm ways to improve the quality of life for captive elephants, and hoped to provide tourism opportunities with 'very minimum impact' on elephants. Thakur says there was no real pressure from outside organizations to stop elephant-backed safari, rather the change was driven by an internal sense of needing to pay back the elephants ('we have used them so long', says Thakur) and offer something new in the tourism arena.

Releasing the elephants from their chains was a learning experience, according to Thakur. TT ownership initially reached out to INGO3 for help and guidance building chain-free corrals. This INGO offered to build numerous enclosures, but Thakur says they didn't want to commit to a full scale change in case the new corrals made the elephants' or drivers' lives 'worse' or 'more difficult'. Having not seen chain-free corals in large-scale use, they were concerned that the experiment might fail.³⁶ After the original corral was completed, the hotel hired a technician from India to continue expanding the chain-free areas. This technician trained the staff, and they now build and maintain these structures themselves.

Changing what he calls the 'drivers' 50-years riding culture' {sic} was challenging. Introducing new ways of motivational training to the mahouts and reducing

³⁶ Which it did at the NTNC facility, see chapter six.

dominance training required some convincing. Thakur felt that showing the mahouts examples of successful training techniques using positive reinforcement, and not forcing rapid change upon them, was key to the successful transition.³⁷ Management approached the changes as an experiment, and told the mahouts that nothing was written in stone; 'if it doesn't work, doesn't work'. After being encouraged to try walking the elephants a bit farther each day without yelling or bull hook use, the mahouts came to their own conclusion that it was possible. Even though hitting with sticks has also been condemned, many of the mahouts still carry one with them. Apparently, having the stick accessible has a psychological effect on both mahout and elephant. The mahouts report feeling safer just in case of emergency, and report that the elephants know the stick is there, leading them to behave. This is an example of sensitization training, in which an elephant has realized that a tool causes pain (Boakes, et al., 2011: 15). The elephant may exhibit fear or stress upon having the tool in visual range, and is inspired to behave in a way which will prevent its use (Boakes, et al., 2011: 15,227).

According to Thakur, the biggest and most disheartening learning experience took place when staff first released the elephants into their new chain-free corrals. After meetings involving both management and mahouts, the crew came up with groups of elephants that they thought would do well together—elephants who were 'good friends' in the past. Staff assumed, given the shared history of these elephants,

³⁷ This type of training offers treats or physical attention as a reward for a requested behaviour. See appendix I for a discussion of PRT and other methods.

that they could simply release females into enclosures together to explore. Some elephant grouping resulted in physical altercations, and after one female killed her companion, they saw that being chained nearby or working together did not elicit the same responses to one another as being free did. The staff has learned to respect the elephants, accepting that while some 'get along' fine, they do not wish to share corrals. Some of the elephants seem to prefer living alone, and so they are housed individually.

Perhaps these issues could easily have been avoided if ethological studies of the Tiger Tops herd had been conducted, or literature on the topic consulted. For example, the importance of clear social bonds along matriarchical lines, and the resultant problems associated with the early breaking of these bonds, is well documented in literature (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Kurt and Garai, 2006; Prado-Oviedo, et al., 2016; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; Vanitha, et al, 2016). Females who have been separated from their maternal herds may later be unable to deal with stressful stimuli, and the addition of unrelated or unknown herd members can cause stress, anxiety and disrupt sleep (Evison, et al., 2020: 400). Aggression toward other elephants may arise due to frustration, stress, enclosure size or a myriad of other conditions, and is more common in captive elephants (see Clubb and Mason, 2002; chapter five, this thesis).

Modern chain-free living

Thakur says it is clear that elephants 'are sensitive, and psychologically we can understand how happy they are'. He has seen a change in this happiness in both

elephants and mahouts since the transition to chain-free corrals. Thakur feels that both human and elephant lives have become easier, not only because the amount of work required to maintain elephants in chain-free enclosures is less³⁸, but because their stress level is now lower. The mahouts no longer need to be 'yelling all the time' to keep the elephants in control and on time to safaris. Instead, the elephants 'have a very good attachment' with the mahouts, and can build upon this relationship. In fact, in contrast to other elephants in the area (see following chapters), these elephants do not need to be chained to eat.

Guests at the lodge can relax and watch the elephants from outside their enclosure, or accompany elephants, mahouts and naturalists on guided walks. Thakur points out that this is not a final fix for elephant tourism, and if Tiger Tops later comes up with a way to engage tourists that is better for the elephants they will embrace it. It should be noted that at the time of this study, not all Tiger Tops owned elephants were chain-free. Four other elephants reside in different towns, and while they are not taking part in elephant-backed safari, they have not yet been transitioned to chain-free enclosures.

The ownership of TT has agreed that they will not purchase additional elephants as their current herd passes away. Instead, they will focus on 'trying to keep [the current herd] happy' for the rest of their lives. Thakur credits Tiger Top's successful change to a more 'responsible' form of tourism to their current

³⁸ Other elephant specialists disagree, stating that changing management styles requires specialized training to avoid confusing the elephant (Desmond and Laule, 1994), and an excellent grasp of herd structure (Clubb and Mason, 2002).

ownership. Having someone at the top who is concerned with animal welfare, he says, makes a difference in the way the company runs. Because they are not part of the United Elephant Cooperative, which will be discussed chapter seven, (or any cooperative group) due to their location on the other side of the park from Sauraha, TT is under no obligation to supply elephants for Chitwan's cooperative-run tourist safaris.

The welfare of animals is not the only concern shared by Thakur and Tiger Tops ownership. A medical clinic for the local human community is located in the front of the resort. When there were no other clinics or hospitals in the area, this facility operated four times a week. Now that there are alternatives, the TT facility opens only once a month, offering free medications and check-ups. In addition, they will provide first aid at any time and offer the lodge vehicles as ambulances when needed. Tiger Tops staff want to share their sustainable development message with other hotel owners, mayors, municipalities and anyone else they can invite to the table. The hope is that by establishing a focus on wildlife and community they can change the focus of tourism from money to conservation. Thakur feels that this is one reason for the success of the lodge—their care for the community has resulted in a 'place in people's hearts'.

Another major reason that TT has had success establishing non-riding tourism is the ethnicity of their clientele. As a high-priced tourist destination, most of the

visitors to TT are Europeans and Americans.³⁹ Tourists from these countries appear to be drawn to ride-free facilities (Aadita, Bames, Thakur and Prakash interviews, 2019; see also Long, 2013). One elephant welfare advocate feels that the success of Tiger Tops in bringing in this high-end clientele is changing the mindset of other owners in the area. However, she is quick to point out that Tiger Tops doesn't market their facility as 'a sanctuary'. Interlocutors point out that Tiger Tops (and other ride-free facilities) still earn a great deal of income from elephants (Gwala, Prakash, Raj and Vidanta interviews, 2019). Thakur says that he was concerned that when frequent guests first heard that elephant-backed safaris were stopping, they would be upset. Instead, tourists readily accepted management's decision to stop the rides, and some commented on how nice it was to visit their 'old friends' now living in chain-free corrals. Others commented that they preferred the new method of walking behind elephants rather than on top of them.

The original purveyor of privately-owned elephant safari in Chitwan, Tiger Tops has continued to be responsive to changes in human attitudes toward animal activities. An evaluation of how their elephant stables meet the needs of its residents aligns with considerations for positive welfare and good health will be discussed in the 'hattisars' chapter (ten) of this thesis.

³⁹ In the rest of Nepal, the largest group of international tourists come from India and China (15% and 13%, respectively), which because of the perceived increasing demand by these cultures for elephant-backed safari, leads to further complication of the 'captive elephant issue' which will be discussed in following chapters (MOF, 2018: 80, World Bank, Interviews, 2019)³⁹. Domestic tourism is also on the rise, with 56% of the travel and tourism GDP contribution coming from this sector (WTTC, 2017: 1).

The rise of captive elephant care and disease in Sauraha⁴⁰

When Dr Kamal Gairhe came to Sauraha in 1990, it was with the understanding that his focus would be on the care of the nearly 60 elephants owned by the government. At that point, there were no other captive elephants in the Sauraha area, and these government elephants were used solely for the entertainment of tourists. In addition to daily care such as feeding and watering the elephants, Gairhe was tasked with doing physical exams and post-mortems.

Gairhe says that the 1960s 'push' by the government to promote private elephant-backed safari led to an influx of elephants from India into the CNP area. Many of these elephants were 'leased' from Indian owners, and often came complete with their own Indian mahout. Because the Nepalese businessmen who leased these elephants had little idea how to care for them, they relied solely on the mahouts' judgement. These mahouts were 'traditional', says Gairhe, and suspicious of science and medicine. Many elephants died, and the government stepped in to insist upon medical intervention for the remaining individuals. Routine medical care was undertaken at the stables, which were—and still are—open-air and publicly accessible. Gairhe felt that providing 'modern' medical care in front of the community was a big step in getting locals to buy into the use of western medical interventions. Not only did the mahouts begin to trust the veterinary staff, but the

⁴⁰ Information included here comes from interviews, personal communications and participant observations with Kamal Gairhe and 'Prakesh Vidanta', unless otherwise cited. Dr Gairhe's name and position are used with permission. As the only veterinarian for a 30 year period, as as an author of a great deal of literature, it was important to maintain his identity here. Dr Vidanta's name has been pseudonymized.

community members did as well. This trust led to veterinary staff being allowed to use (in Gairhe's words) 'modern' methods on livestock as well.

According to Gairhe, a majority of the marginalized population in the area relied on livestock such as chickens, ducks and goats for survival. Many of these people have hired veterinarians in the community for health care. Sadly, many of them could not afford to pay for veterinary visits or medication, and instead had to watch their animals suffer and die from treatable illnesses. The government of Nepal partnered with the Zoological Society of London to provide free care and medications for domestic animals in four stand-alone clinics (Sainsbury, 2015: np). They were able to keep the program running for two years, and then switched to a subsidised rate program. In 2003, the program was turned over to the community as a non-profit and is still in place today. As a result of this successful program, community members developed bonds with the government veterinary staff, and began to report injuries and illnesses of wildlife. Now, Gairhe explained laughingly, they report the smallest scratch on the body of a rhino and worry that the national park staff is not doing its job. The technicians at these clinics are vital informants for the NTNC, alerting them to livestock disease outbreaks that could jump into wildlife (Sainsbury, 2015: np).

In 1984, an elephant breeding centre was established near Chitwan National Park (Gairhe, 2012: 28). Despite the annual rise in successful births at the centre, there were not enough elephants to go around, and their price skyrocketed. Soon, the 60 government-owned elephants were joined by 60 private elephants, as some

community members realized the soaring profits that could be made from tourism (Gairhe, interviews 2019). There were numerous wounds and ‘incidents’ within the elephant camps as the population rose and elephants unfamiliar with each other were suddenly thrust into close quarters.

Then came the elephant tuberculosis (henceforth TB) epidemic. The worst cases were euthanized, and a massive testing survey undertaken which showed that 13% of captive elephants were infected (Mikota, et al., 2015). Between 2002 and 2014, ten elephants died of TB (Mandal and Khadka, 2013; Thapa, et al., 2017). By 2012, approximately 23% of all captive elephants in the area tested positive, and are still housed with the general population despite veterinary urging that positive individuals be segregated (Gairhe, 2012: 29). While Nepal has made major inroads in treatment and prevention of human TB, around 45% of the human population remains infected (GoN, 2016b). The presentation in both humans and elephants is similar, and the bacteria appears to be zoonotic in both directions—which makes sense given that the first cases were likely due to a human pathogen passing into elephants centuries ago (Davis, 2001; Michalak, et al., 1998; Paudel and Sreevatsan, 2020). TB is a major concern in the area, due to its potential for spread into populations of wild elephants and captive livestock species (Mikota, et al., 2015: 12), and its implication in the deaths of endangered wild rhino in Nepal (Thapa, et al., 2016). Despite these dangers, Drs ‘Vidanta’ and Gairhe confirm that there is no current testing being done on the captive elephant population in Sauraha. The ‘urgent need’ (Mikota, et al., 2015: 12) for testing and control is being ignored, because it angered the elephant owners. Owners felt that the test

was unreliable and gave too many false positives, resulting in costly treatment (400,000 Nrs or ~3400 USD), difficulty in accessing repeat testing and the potential stigma for private owners (de Vries, 2014, Rajesh interview 2019). While there are multiple issues with the TB assays used on elephants, including ‘suspect but incongruent’ test results (Mikota, et al., 2015: 9) and a lack of lab facilities able to mediate testing issues; it is still vital to continue screening both elephants and mahouts, as there are documented cases of elephant to human transmission, including an outbreak at an elephant refuge in the US (Murphree, et al., 2011; Paudel and Sreevatsan, 2020) and suspected transmission to chimpanzees (Stephens, et al., 2013). Ironically, during research for this study I was the recipient of TB bacterium—likely from the time spent interacting with TB positive elephants during fieldwork. Two months after my return from Nepal, I was diagnosed with latent TB requiring more than three months of antibiotic therapy. These antibiotics can have severe side effects, and in my case resulted in two separate emergency hospital visits during treatment. My TB was discovered via an annual test which is required for my work with pachyderms, supporting findings that annual testing is key to TB prevention (Mikota, et al., 2015; Paudel and Sreevatsan, 2020)⁴¹. My case seems to reinforce the ease of spreading TB bacterium, even through casual contact, and perhaps underlines the importance of considering One Health objectives in captive elephant management (Cassidy, 2018; Davis, 2001; Schwabe, 1984).

⁴¹ During writing up this study, several more government patrol elephants succumbed to TB (PC, 2020). This is a pressing concern given their incursions into the forest, where wild elephants live.

On top of chronic TB concerns, elephant endotheliotropic herpesviruses (henceforth EEHVs), are becoming more common throughout Asia, and are the leading cause of death among captive Asian elephant calves between the ages of one and eight (Murray, nd). This emerging group of diseases has killed more than 50 elephant calves in western countries and more than 45 calves in Asia (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Hayward, 2014; Vidanta and Gairhe interviews, 2019). EEHV is symptomatic in 20% of the global Asian elephant calf population and is present in almost 10% of the European elephant population (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Hayward, 2014).

There are at least nineteen types of elephant herpesvirus (some of which infect only Asian elephants, and some only African), and juveniles may recover from one strain only to be infected with another (EEHV advisory group, nd). Because the disease has a latent form which is undetectable, a cure is impossible (Smithsonian, nd), and latent strains carried by adults may become active years later and be transmitted to calves (EEHV advisory group, nd). This disease is particularly concerning in Nepal, where a jump into the wild population could have disastrous results (Dastjerdi, et al., 2016; Smithsonian, nd). Also of concern is that EEHV is considered zoonotic (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Hayward, nd; Vidanta and Gairhe interviews, 2019).⁴²

Nepal saw its first documented case of EEHV in 2002, but no one there at the time knew what the disease was called. Even with decades of experience, veterinarian

⁴² Transmissible between humans and other animals

Dr Ghairhe wasn't sure what they were seeing. The next case didn't appear until 2009 and another in 2011. Nepalese vets tried famciclovir at that point but were unsuccessful in saving the calves. In 2015, another case appeared in the NTNC stable. This calf was born to the same mother of a prior case, and as Vidanta explains, Ghairhe was out on a call, and Vidanta had no idea what he was seeing. EEHV was not covered in veterinary school, he says, and he had never heard of it. Although the veterinary technician recognized the symptoms, they were unable to save the calf. This launched Vidanta's interest in the disease, and he started studying EEHV. When the next case showed up in 2016, he was ready. This calf, Deepak Gaj, survived and remains with his original herd. When I interviewed the current owner of this calf, I was told that he survived thanks to his mahout and the patient application of heated mustard oil and herbs (a traditional treatment for nearly every ailment, according to Vidanta) after the government vet 'gave up'. When I mention this to Vidanta, he says 'nobody will give credit to the doctors' with a laugh. He elaborates that veterinary staff spent days and nights treating Deepak with famciclovir⁴³, but his breathing remained labored—even on oxygen. Vidanta tried diuretics as a last-ditch effort and the calf urinated large amounts of fluid. As his owner explained, he was 'unplugged' and recovered (Kumar interview, 2019).

Vidanta says this is a common issue—that he treats patients with allopathic medicine, but this medicine is often accompanied by ethnomedical support. However, when discussing treatments, Vidanta says the ethnomedical approach always gets the credit for the cure. Documents mentioning the use of medicinal

⁴³ An antiviral medication

plants in Nepal date back more than 6,000 years (Kunwar, et al., 2008: 2), and these plants still serve as a 'readily and cheaply available' alternative to allopathic treatments in areas of marginalized communities (Kunwar, et al., 2008: 5). Vidanta feels that preserving this indigenous knowledge is vitally important. Examples of current ethnomedical use, including minerals and local plants, can be found in the following chapters of this thesis.

Laws and debates surrounding captive elephants in Sauraha

Before COVID-19 hit in fall of 2019, approximately 112 captive elephants lived in the Sauraha area. Approximately 60 of these were privately-owned, and the rest belonged to the government or the NTNC. This number varies slightly each year as new elephants are brought into town and others sold to buyers in India.

Elephants are marketed by the government of Nepal as vital to providing safe viewing of wildlife on safari, and that 'adventure activities' such as elephant polo and the annual elephant races create 'value-added' tourism (GoN, 2009: 11). The Elephant Conservation Act of 2009 planned to 'maximize economic and environmental benefits through the management of domestic elephants', bring 'private entrepreneurs and others into domestic elephant management', and 'uplift the living standard of resident communities through equitable sharing of profits' gained from elephant activities (GoN, 2009: 12).

However, Asian elephants have been listed as a Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) appendix I animal since 1975, and this

status prohibits trade of these animals across international borders for commercial uses (CITES, nd). CITES (1973) allows for the trade of appendix I animals for non-commercial uses, such as scientific research, but requires an export and import permit. The offspring of captively bred individuals (even if one parent is wild) are considered 'appendix II species', and the trade in these requires a permit or certificate from both the 'scientific authority of the state of export' and the management agency of the state of export (CITES, Article IV, 1997: np). Furthermore, these state agencies must verify that the individuals will be 'prepared and shipped as to minimize the risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment' (CITES, Article IV, 1997: np).

Despite these protections poaching, illegal trade in body parts and the exchange of live individuals continues to reduce wild populations in both India and Nepal (AERSM, 2017). CITES documents repeatedly reinforce the need for better regulation of trade in wild fauna (CITES, 2019c). They 'urge' governments to inspect certificates, 'encourage' parties to prioritize ending trade in endangered species and 'recommend' that any suspicious documents be reported (2019c: 2,9,17). This language leaves much to be desired, as everything in the CITES updates is worded as mere suggestion—leaving the interpretation entirely up to each nation (2019c).

In the town of Sauraha, Nepal, there is little attempt to hide illegal trade in elephants (Bames, Brown, Raja, Randy, Thomas and Vachan interviews, 2019). Westerners, locals, and even news agencies are aware when an elephant has

been bought from or sold to India (Brown, Raja, Randy, Thomas and Vachan interviews, 2019; NepalNews, 2019). In the course of writing up this thesis, each time an elephant would leave or arrive, a flurry of messages would appear on my phone, 12,000km away. It is for this reason that it seems impossible that governmental agencies and CITES officers are not aware of these practices.

While one owner explained that ‘nobody wants to buy new elephants’ and claims that the practice has stopped (Rajesh interview, 2019), in fact two or three new elephants appear in the Sauraha area annually, and according to NTNC staff, these individuals find their way into Nepal in a variety of ways (Brown, Sama, Sona and Thomas interviews, 2019). Some are described as ‘legally’ purchased from people in India who hold dual citizenship, thereby making it appear that Nepalese are selling to other Nepalese and not across international borders (Vidanta interviews, 2019). Locke (2011b: 33) found that private buyers could also avoid the perception of illegality by simply exchanging ‘gifts’ of elephants in exchange for a ‘cash donation’. Some elephants are simply listed as captive-born on their paperwork (if asked for any when crossing the border) (Baral interviews, 2019). Owners claimed that they simply trade elephants among themselves, since ‘it’s not allowed to buy or sale {sic}’ elephants (Vachan PC, 2020). However, there is a general acknowledgement among owners and the community that elephants are illegally obtained, with the elephant cooperative president freely admitting to Nepal News that, ‘We make various excuses to buy elephants from India. This is illegal’ (Nepalnews.org, 2019). The same article also quotes Nepalese police as

saying they have no knowledge of any illegal trade in elephants (Nepalnews.org, 2019).

Government documents also recognize that new elephants enter the country each year, and in fact tell owners exactly where to go to purchase them (GoN, 2009). The governmentally endorsed Conservation Act explains that breeding elephants in captivity is difficult, but buying them is easy (2009: 11). They acknowledge that most private owners head to India's annual cattle fair in Sonepur of Bihar, where 'huge numbers' of elephants are 'traded' (2009: 11)⁴⁴. However, in the same document the government of Nepal admits that this act is prohibited by CITES (2009). It is this acceptance of both the illegality of elephant purchase and its practice that confuses visitors to Nepal (Crane, Pabin, Randy, Thomas, Zed interviews 2019 and PC 2020).

In addition to CITES, the government of Nepal has several documents recommending the development of frameworks to more tightly control the illegal trade of elephants, mitigate human-elephant conflict and save wild elephants (GoN, 2009: 11, 16). What is lacking is the enforcement of existing laws regarding this trade of endangered species (Gautam, 2020). Government documents (the Domesticated Elephant Management Policy) from as early as 2003 called for the registration of captive elephants in Nepal, with all registration data to be sent to the CITES secretariat (GoN, 2015b). However, this registration process has been

⁴⁴ There is, allegedly, a long-standing ban on the sale of elephants at this fair. However, elephants continue to arrive in Nepal following the event (GoN, 2009: np; Roy, 2019; Raja, 2020 PC)

unsuccessful, and elephants continue to be traded across the India/Nepal border without any paperwork (Brown, Raja, Randy, Thomas interviews, 2019). During the compilation process for this thesis, three new elephants arrived from India, and nine elephants have been returned or sold back to India, and two others have been sold to Indian buyers and are awaiting transport (Raja, Randy, Thomas PC, 2020). These transports, according to interlocutors for this study, often happen in the middle of the night, when elephants quietly disappear from stables (Brown, Randy, Thomas 2019 and PC, 2020).

Other laws applicable to elephants

While wild elephants are protected under both international and national regulations, such as the *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2029* (1973), captive individuals have no enforced legal protections (Kharel, 2002: np). A 1966 bill passed rules for the treatment and management of captive elephants, but the Civil Service Act of 1993 (CSA-1993) replaced these protections (Kharel,2002: np). The CSA-1993 applies only to government and NTNC-owned elephants, and outlines caregiving tasks and stipulates specific amounts of food and water for captive elephants (Kharel, 2002: np). It requires that each elephant have three caregivers, several stable managers and a national-level oversight officer (Kharel, 2002: np). Again, these protections apply only to government-owned and NTNC elephants—and as will be discussed in following chapters are not, in fact, enforced. Privately owned elephants have no such protections currently in place. The Chitwan National Park Management Plan does call for attention to be paid to the husbandry of captive elephants, such as their need for

space, hygiene, food, regular vaccinations, deworming and medication (GoN, 2015a: 72). In addition, regular check-ups for all elephants and their mahouts are suggested, as is regular veterinary care for TB positive elephants and an improvement in 'housekeeping' in stables (2009: 72).

In addition, the *Nepal Veterinary Council Act of 1999, section 9*, lists standards of education for animal care providers, and briefly mentions the council's ability to make suggestions to the government regarding animal medicine, veterinary and animal health issues (GoN, 1999). Like other legislation, this section is vague with regard to actual actions which can be undertaken and mentions nothing specifically about elephants (1999). This legislation accompanies the *Animal Health and Livestock Services Act 1999* allowing the government to create a committee for the prevention of cruelty to animals via a notification in the Nepal Gazette (much the same way the NTNC is able to act as an oversight committee for wildlife) (Tewari, 2016: 14). This act outlines treatment of animals in quarantine but fails to address any other welfare needs (2016: 14,23).

The Domesticated Elephant Management Policy (*DEMP*) 2060 (2003), mentioned above, acknowledges the terrible health condition of elephants in captive breeding centres, such as malnutrition, lack of sleep, and common reproductive issues such as miscarriages and stillbirths. The policy describes the need for more research and says that the government will act to facilitate and regulate private elephant owner involvement (2003). The DEMP also reinforces earlier restrictions on private elephant access to national park land (2003). Privately owned elephant safaris do

not, in fact, enter the national park itself, but instead travel through the buffer zones and community forest (GoN, 2015b; Szydlowski, 2017). Private elephants have not been allowed in the national park since the expulsion of the lodges from within park boundaries (GoN, 2015b). Citing the need to maintain a distance between wild and captive elephants to prevent disease passage, these elephants are allowed only in the buffer zone and community forest areas surrounding the park (GoN, 2015b). This document claims that the elephants are allowed to play and bathe in the protected areas for 6 hours a day, but these activities do not happen in reality (Brown, Minsky, Sama, Taraswin, Vachan interviews 2019 and 2020; observations, 2019).

The current legal situation

The more recently created (but not yet adopted) *Animal Welfare Directive 2073 (2016)* specifically lists working elephants as covered animals, and advises use of the five freedoms as a guideline for welfare (GoN, 2016a: 4). The act was written and filed by the Government's Ministry of Livestock Development under the authority of the previous Animal Health and Livestock Services Act, 2055 (GoN, 2016a), but appears to be stuck in limbo awaiting approval from higher government (see lawcommission.gov.np; PC, 2020). According to Animal Nepal, they assisted in the preparation of this document which, while endorsed by the government, has yet to be implemented for any species except working equines (PC, 2020).

The welfare directive specifies that sick animals be kept from work, and states that healthy animals may not be used in extreme temperatures or for more than eight hours in any day (2016: 6). When in their stable, elephants must be able to turn around, but no provision is made for lying down (2016). Cruelty to elephants is specifically prohibited, including beating with sticks, knives or axes (2016: 9). In addition, there is a call for coordination with government and NGOs in implementing this directive, indicating that NGOs active in Sauraha might have the opportunity to positively impact captive elephant welfare on a population level (2016: 10). Specifically, the directive instructs international NGOs to raise awareness of animal welfare concerns and report cruelty (2016: 12). This would seem to indicate a willingness on the part of the government to allow NGOs more of a voice in elephant welfare, but many individuals active with welfare in the Sauraha area felt threatened by members of the elephant cooperative (Taraswin interviews, 2019; Smith PC, 2019, 2020). One NGO head explained that in ‘almost 20 years of traveling the globe going into the worst areas of the world...I have never left a town early scared for my life’, yet had to do just that in Sauraha (Smith, PC 2019).

The Animal Welfare Directive (2016: 12) reinforces the requirement for the registration of animals listed in prior legislation. It provides an animal welfare measurement index for use in assessing animals, but sadly, this welfare index is actually a health and husbandry measurement tool, asking only for physical condition statistics, amount of food offered, condition of shelter and length of restraint used (2016: 13). No true welfare metric is offered. This may be a problem

with the language of care found in Sauraha, and uncovering a way to increase communication between organizations active in the area is a key objective of this thesis (see introduction).

Conclusions

Elephant-backed safari has been a popular, and competitive, activity since its privatization in the 1960s and is now a large part of the annual income of Chitwan National Park. Beginning with the transfer of tourism activities from the government to Tiger Tops, elephants have become synonymous with tourism in the area. Growing numbers of elephants have resulted in an increase in communicable and zoonotic diseases, especially in areas of human-wildlife or wild-captive interface. In addition, a lack of testing or commitment to treatment for diseases such as tuberculosis has led to high infection rates. While improvements in stabling and veterinary care have taken place over the last decades, Nepal lacks appropriate legislation or enforcement of existing laws regarding elephant husbandry, sale and welfare. The existence of the Animal Welfare Directive may signal that governmental agencies are willing to consider changes in elephant health and welfare standards.

In addition, the transformation of Tiger Tops to a chain-free, ride-free facility may serve as an example for other hoteliers wishing to continue their elephant-based income while addressing 'western' concerns for elephant welfare. Further studies on the continued feasibility of this model, especially as the current herd passes away and is not replaced, are needed.

Before beginning a discussion of the other organizations involved in elephant ownership or advocacy, these elephants must be viewed as biological organisms, with very specific physical and emotional needs. The next chapter offers a view into these needs. It includes an examination of legislation, health and welfare data from the US, Europe and Asia. Given the low numbers of both captive and wild elephants in Nepal, data from other range country camps, US and European zoos will serve as a basis for comparison. This data will allow the construction of a set of health and welfare parameters applicable to the unique situation surrounding captive elephants in Nepal.

Five: Happy, Healthy Hatti⁴⁵

In the previous chapter, Thakur described how he felt that the conversion from foot chains to chain-free corrals resulted in happier elephants and easier, less-stressful lives for mahouts (Thakur interviews, 2019). Thakur describes the sensitivity of elephants and our ability to ‘psychologically’ understand when they are happy. But how can we really tell if an elephant is healthy, happy and stress-free?

The answer is both incredibly simple and unbearably complex. Like the words ‘necessary care’, ‘sanctuary’ and ‘welfare’, which I will return to in future sections, perceptions of health and happiness may be culturally dependent and value laden. As animals ourselves, we can certainly understand that behaviours such as play, sex and sleep can be measurable ‘pleasures’, curiosity about other individuals a sign of engagement, and having the space to express natural behaviours allows for observation of the ‘realisation’ of goals (Balcombe, 2009: 210,212; Yeates and Maine; 2008: 297). This chapter offers a discussion of the available impactors of and metrics for health and welfare assessment in captive elephants. Because the number of both captive and wild elephants in Nepal is far less than that of most other South Asian countries, available research into their health and welfare has taken place in other countries (Bansiddhi, et al, 2020; Varma, 2008). Any assessment of elephant welfare therefore needs to begin with research from more populated pachyderm habitat such as India and Thailand even though large-scale assessments of pachyderm welfare in any country are rare (Varma, 2008: 7). In

⁴⁵ Elephant in Nepali

addition to these range countries, the health and welfare parameters as described by larger organizations tasked with assessing the needs and welfare of captive elephants, such as the American Zoological Association (AZA) and the European Association of Zoos and Aquariums (EAZA) will serve as a basis for the discussion of what constitutes good health and positive welfare. It is important to remember that some negative welfare outcomes happen despite handlers attempts to provide positive welfare, and some animals thrive despite caregivers that don't really care (see Mason and Veasey, 2010). This chapter will focus on how humans and human-created facilities affect elephant health and welfare, in order to create an outline for discussion in later chapters of individual animals, stables in general and an overall assessment of captive elephant care in Nepal.⁴⁶

What is welfare?

A quarter of the world's Asian elephants live in captivity, and individuals of this species have been used by humans for at least 4000 years (Desai, 2008: 67). The roles of elephants in ceremonies and their use as transportation and labour need to be reconsidered considering humankind's changing attitudes and the availability of alternatives to this labour (Desai, 2008: 68). Elephants used in zoos, tourism venues and circuses may have, in the past, been used as ambassadors for their species, bringing awareness to conservation issues but the use of these individuals for these purposes is now in question (Desai, 2008: 68).

⁴⁶ Further discussion of health and welfare, and available measurements of both, are available in the appendices to this thesis.

Human definitions of welfare have changed over the last three decades, as have perceptions of what beings deserve our concern regarding both their use and their welfare (Balcombe, 2009; Brambell, et al., 1965; Broom, 1986: 524, FAWAC, 1979: 2). Broom (1986: 524) described welfare as one's 'state as regards its attempts to cope with its environment'. If an individual fails to cope, or must expend a great deal of energy coping, then his or her welfare is poor (Broom, 1986: 524). Broom (1986: 524) recognized the impact of housing, nutrition and treatment on the welfare of animals, and suggested that both population level and individual welfare be assessed. Welfare is assessed external to ethical concerns, but once welfare is measured the decision must be made whether the welfare state is ethically 'tolerable' (Broom, 1991: 118). Broom's (1991: 121) early descriptions of welfare acknowledged that the subjective feelings of animals can be hard to assess.

An early attempt to ensure good welfare, which began in the UK and spread globally, took the form of the Five Freedoms which originated with the 'Brambell Report' (Brambell, et al., 1965; FAWAC, 1979: 2). This report suggested that prior laws were inadequate to ensure that intensively farming animals did not suffer (Brambell, et al., 1965: 60-61). The five freedoms were developed by the Farm Animal Welfare Council and written for the layperson in order to provide general guidelines for animal welfare—rather than as a structured set of instructions for animal carers (FAWAC, 1979; Meehan, et al., 2016; Mellor, 2016). These freedoms include: 'freedom from thirst, hunger or malnutrition; appropriate comfort and shelter; prevention, or rapid diagnosis and treatment, of injury and disease;

freedom to display most normal patterns of behaviour' and 'freedom from fear' (FAWAC, 1979: 2).

Critics of the five freedoms argued that they focused more on the prevention of suffering rather than an increase in positive well-being (FAWC, 2009: iii; Mellor, 2016a: 3). To this end, the Farm Animal Welfare Council updated the five freedoms to include 'provisions' which further define appropriate conditions for farmed animals (FAWC, 2009: 2). These provisions expand upon what is required for mental and physical health and include having access to fresh water and a healthy diet, shelter and resting areas, an avoidance of mental suffering, adequate space and the company of other individuals of the same species (FAWC, 2009: 14-16). The five freedoms and their provisions have become a generally accepted basic measure of welfare and are therefore a good place to begin a discussion regarding elephant care and ethics (FAWC, 2009; Meehan, et al., 2016: 2; Mellor, 2016a: 2).

Mellor (2016: 3,9) suggests that the freedoms are lacking details necessary to balance both positive and negative states and suggests a model which includes quality of life indicators such as eating and drinking pleasures, excited playfulness and sexual gratification. Other welfare assessments are beginning to delve further into the area of positive psychology that has become popular in assessing human well-being (Seligman and Csikszentmihaly, 2000). This discipline focuses on creating a pleasurable life instead of merely one free from pain and suffering (FAWC, 2009; Seligman and Csikszentmihaly, 2000: 5). Yeates and Maine (2008:

297) recommend thinking of welfare in terms of 'everyday sensational pleasures' such as play, sex and sleep, along with curiosity about and engagement with other individuals. As tactile creatures, elephants' desire to touch each other demonstrates that like other animals, touch can be an observable source of sensory pleasure (Balcombe, 2009: 213). Space for the expression of these natural behaviours and the agency to make choices, for example in food items, allows for the realisation of goals (Balcombe, 2009: 210,212; Kagen et al, 2015: S2; Yeates and Maine; 2008: 297).

Zoo governing organizations such as the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria and the American Zoological Association have also begun exploring the need for welfare assessment, and have adopted metrics of their own (AZA.org; Carlstead, et al., 2013: 321; EAZA.org; Greco, et al., 2016; Kagen, et al., 2015; Veasey, 2017). What is lacking, however, is a universal measurement that is applicable to all captive situations, and one which focuses on individual instead of exclusively population-level needs (Carlstead, et al., 2013: 321; Greco, et al., 2016; Kagen, et al., 2015; Veasey, 2020).

One common refrain from animal welfare and animal rights groups participating in the current study is that captivity itself has negative effects on welfare (PETA,nd; INGO6, nd). Some scientists use nature as a guide—believing welfare is highest in captive habitats which most closely reflect the natural ecology of the animal (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Varma, 2008). It is hardly that simple, especially when considering individuals—such as captive-born

elephants—who have never experienced life in the wild. This consideration adds a layer of complexity to an already difficult measure of welfare. One must further consider that animals in captivity benefit from protection from predation, disease, starvation, etc., and that these benefits may balance the reduction in welfare that may be presumed due to a lack of ‘wildness’ (Veasey, 2006: 66; Veasey, 2017). Conversely, it should not be assumed that a lack of these problems (i.e. predation) has a positive effect on welfare (Veasey, 2020: 4).

Despite having access to better health care, financial support and updated information, population-level studies indicate that elephants in western zoos had poorer overall welfare than those in well-run sanctuaries and reserves located within Asian elephant range states (Mason and Veasey, 2010b; Sukumar, 2003: 397; Veasey, 2020). This information needs to be reflexively considered by those studying captive elephants both in Asia and abroad. Further studies are needed to determine why this phenomenon exists.

Health and Welfare: Two Inseparable Ideas

Assessing captive elephant health and welfare, in Asia or western countries, is not an easy or consistently undertaken process due to a lack of data on normal stress levels and affective states in the wild (Brown, 2020; Pokharel, et al., 2018: 178-185). Health and welfare do not exist separately but rather influence each other both positively and negatively (Mason and Veasey, 2010: 238; Veasey, 2006). Furthermore, poor health is not necessarily indicative of poor welfare, and elephants in perfect health do not necessarily experience good welfare (Mason

and Veasey, 2010: 238; Veasey, 2006: 64). Therefore, a discussion on what is necessary for both good health and positive welfare will naturally weave together health measures, husbandry concerns and environment.

A review of relevant literature seems to indicate that the health of elephants in captivity throughout southeast Asia is inadequate, due in large part to poor husbandry, and their maintenance in facilities that do not adequately meet their biological and ecological needs (Menon and Tawari, 2019: 25; Miller, et al. 2015: 3; Sarma, et al., 2003: ii). In a study of veterinarians from range countries, over two-thirds felt that improving basic husbandry for captive elephants was important, and 71% felt that supplementation and/or nutrition needed improvement (Miller, et al. 2015: 5). A lack of available diagnostics and a shortage of trained staff created the biggest problems for participants working with elephants (Miller, et al., 2015: 4-5). Other basic items needed for good overall health, such as appropriate shelter, were deemed inadequate by 64% of participants, and concerns regarding access to clean water were mentioned by more than half (Miller, et al., 2015: 5).

A review of relevant literature indicated that there are several key areas considered important by elephant health and welfare specialists. Among these are protection from the elements (FAWAC, 1979; Greco, et al., 2016; Yadav, et al., 2015) access to fresh water for drinking and bathing (Miller, et al., 2015; Phangkum, et al., 2005), availability of a variety of natural browse (Sukumar, 1989), and appropriate nutrition which includes seasonal dietary changes (Chandrasekharan et al., 1995; Angkawanish, et al., 2009; Mikota, et al., 1994;

Sukumar, 1989; Vancuylenberg, 1977). Socially bonded groups of related females (Greco, et al., 2016; Poole & Granli, 2008; Vanitha, et al., 2016; Prado-Oviedo, et al., 2016; Sukumar, 2003; Vidya & Sukumar, 2005; Williams, et al., 2015; Clubb & Mason, 2002), freedom of movement (Clubb & Mason, 2002; FAWC, 2009; Poole & Granli, 2008) and the ability to make meaningful choices are considered key elements of elephant welfare (Foerder, et al., 2011; Poole & Granli, 2008). Other major impactors include having experienced trauma such as early separation from the maternal herd, experiencing the Phajaan or another breaking ritual (Garrison, 2016; Gautam & Khatiwada, 2011; Greco, et al., 2016; Rizzolo & Bradshaw, 2016) or being handled with dominance-based management (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019; Clubb & Mason, 2002; Gautam & Khatiwada, 2011; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009; Vanitha, 2012; Vanitha, et al., 2016).

Key issues in Nepal: Sleep

Sleep is important for all mammals, and a combination of non-REM and REM sleep is needed for good health (Tobler, 1995: 35). It is mentioned in detail here thanks to the lack sleep opportunities seen in captive elephants in Nepal (see chapter ten). In elephants, a combination of shorter bouts of standing sleep need to be combined with recumbent deeper sleep for good health (Tobler, 1995: 37; Gonfalone and Jha, 2015: 67). Sleep in herbivores is inversely correlated to their body mass, meaning that elephants typically only sleep for 3-4 hours a night in several cycles (Siegal, 2005; Gonfalone and Jha, 2015: 65,67). Mammals who are sleep deprived suffer from a variety of ailments from skin lesions to a loss of focus and ability to perform survival functions (Siegal, 2005: 1268). REM sleep serves to

reset and restore thermoregulatory systems, and regulate emotions (Siegal, 2005: 1269).

Land-dwelling mammals experience a loss of muscle tone (atonia) during REM sleep, and must therefore be in recumbency to safely attain REM sleep (Gonfalone and Jha, 2015: 66; Siegal, 2005: 1265). Therefore, the ability to lie down to rest is an important element of elephant welfare in captivity (Asher, et al., 2015; Kurt and Garai, 2006), and synchronized recumbent sleep within a social group indicates a higher level of social integration (Evison, et al., 2020: 402; Kurt and Garai, 2006). Sand, preferably in piles or mounds is an ideal substrate which allows for recumbency (Asher, et al., 2015); these mounds support the process of getting up and down (Schiffmann et al., 2018: 141). When lateral recumbency is not possible, items for leaning upon should be placed in a horizontal position to allow for the adequate rest (Schiffmann, et al., 2018: 143). The presence of other herd members during periods of rest is important to welfare (Williams, et al., 2015: 416), and in facilities where multiple elephants reside, multiple mounds, piles or resting structures are needed (Schiffmann, et al., 2018: 143). These should be placed where subordinates have access to equally restful areas (Schiffmann, et al., 2018: 143).

Key issues in Nepal: Feet

According to Fowler (2001: 3), 'foot problems constitute the single most important ailment of captive elephants'. Elephants in any type of captivity are prone to foot issues including overgrown nails and pads. These issues occur in 50% of captive

elephants even with good foot care, and should not automatically be seen as a sign of neglect (Csuti et al, 2001; Roocroft and Oosterhuis, 2001). Elephants who are regularly chained showed an increase in foot problems compared to unchained individuals (Clubb and Mason, 2002: appendices X-XI). These foot problems have been documented in as many as 80% of UK elephants, similar to numbers found in Indian camp elephants (Harris, et al., 2008: 44).

Asian elephants dig, kick, dust bathe and rake their feet as they forage, and a lack of opportunity to exhibit these behaviours results in poor foot health and a decrease in mental well-being (Miller, et al., 2016; Poole & Granli, 2008; Roocroft & Oosterhuis 2001; Schiffmann, et al., 2018; Veasey, 2006; Yadav, et al., 2015). Digging in soft surfaces such as mud strengthens leg and foot structures, decreases the incidence of degenerative joint disease, and leads to better foot health throughout their lives (Miller, et al., 2016; Roocroft and Oosterhuis 2001: 54). In addition, mud serves to clean between nails and around cuticles (Roocroft and Oosterhuis, 2001: 21). A lack of these substrates in captivity may result in overgrown cuticles and nails, cracked nails and uneven pad growth which then require human intervention to prevent deep cracks, infection and fluid pockets which result in pain, gait adjustment, and potentially toe deformations (Miller, et al., 2016; Roocroft and Oosterhuis, 2001: 35-38; Sarma, et al., 2012; West, 2001; Veasey, 2006: 74-75). As elephants get older, they are more prone to foot abnormalities (Miller et al., 2016: 14; Roocroft and Oosterhuis 2001: 21), making substrate choices even more important for aging populations. Ideal substrates are those such as sand which drain well, allow the elephant lie down and allow

standing weight to be evenly distributed across the pad surface (Veasey, 2006: 74). Appropriate substrate allows for wallowing, foraging and dustbathing, and enclosures should include posts for scratching feet and legs (AZA, 2012; DEFRA, 2010; EAZA, 2020). Creating habitats where foot care is performed by the elephant interacting with its environment should be the primary goal (Veasey, 2020: 3).

According to Roocroft and Oosterhuis (2001: 34,48), understanding foot anatomy is crucial in order to know how much nail to trim without exposing sensitive tissues, and should only be done by experienced persons. Excessive or incorrect nail or foot pad trimming can lead to toe deformation, gait change or pain, and elephants may be distracted by pads that feel strange after trimming and end up removing too much tissue themselves rubbing feet on surfaces (2001: 37). As you will see in the following chapters, foot care in Nepal is often undertaken by inexperienced or completely untrained individuals.

A common and serious foot health concern in Nepal is pododermatitis, or foot rot (Shrestha & Gairhe, 2006). For this reason, the composition and cleanliness of substrate are vitally important, as is the availability of dirt for digging and the expression of normal behaviours. Stationary elephants' feet develop wounds, and these wounds become purulent or develop fungal infections (Miller, et al., 2016; Roocroft and Oosterhuis 2001; Sarma, et al., 2012; West, 2001). Exposure to urine and feces has been shown to impact these infections, as the soft, wet tissues of the feet are breeding grounds for saprophytic organisms (Miller, et al.,

2016; Roocroft and Oosterhuis 2001; Sarma, et al., 2012; West, 2001). Changes in husbandry methods and alternative substrates have been shown to positively impact foot health (Fowler, 2001; Roocroft & Oosterhuis, 2001; Veasey, 2006; Miller, et al., 2016; Sarma, et al., 2012; Schmidt, 1986; West, 2001).

Conclusions

As seen in this chapter, there are several key areas which are important for good elephant health and positive welfare. Appropriate, clean substrate is vital to foot and joint health and the expression of natural behaviours. The ability to lie down for rest, protection from the elements, and free-choice, ad-lib food and water are important to overall health. Freedom of movement and the ability to make choices are needed for positive mental health. Combined with the five freedoms of animals welfare, this data will be used to assess the health and welfare of the captive elephants around Chitwan National Park. This data was also used to create a checklist for assessing the aspects of Sauraha's stables which greatly impact elephant health and welfare. This checklist can be found in chapter ten of this thesis, along with a review of 25 hattisars.

It is important to note that these key areas are not limited to research done in more developed countries but represent a high degree of consensus from a wide variety of nations and researchers. Further information on the needs of elephants and the practices surrounding their care throughout Asia, please see appendix I and II of this thesis.

What follows is an introduction to the key human players and organizations which play a large part in the complex elephant-focused melodrama of Sauraha, Nepal, in order to begin to answer the overarching research question of this thesis. Can the health and welfare of captive elephants and their caregivers be improved through an examination of the similarities and differences in ethical approaches used by elephant owners and NGOs active in Sauraha, Nepal? The next chapter introduces the government stables and examines the ways in which elephants are employed in Nepal.

Six: Colonel Hatti in Nepal⁴⁷

There are numerous non-governmental agencies active in the Sauraha area which purport to work toward elephant conservation, social change and equity. These NGOs have the opportunity to gather data from and convene a workforce of large groups of researchers, volunteers, and communities. But do these organizations share information and resources? Do they support the work of other organizations who may have the same goals? Or do they get in each other's way? Are the motivations of each group so different that they perceive a need to work separately from others who profess to share a common goal? Is there a way to frame conservation, ethics and care in a way which will lead to more successful outcomes (although, what constitutes a successful outcome may vary among individuals) by finding a 'common language' of elephant care? These questions will be considered through the lens of both interlocutors and relevant literature throughout the following chapters of this thesis.

Through an intuitive qualitative analysis (see chapter 2) of each organization's promotional material, along with narrative analysis of information gathered from face-to-face interviews along with participant observations, these chapters explore the differing ways in which each group perceives themselves as doing what is 'right' for the animals, and their methods of determining what are their best practices for 'care'. As will be revealed, the perception of each group's care and

⁴⁷ The title of this chapter is a nod to Kipling's (1894) *The Jungle Book*, which features colonized elephants in service to the government.

treatment of non-human animals, especially ‘privately-owned’ endangered species, varies drastically depending on the cultural background, educational history and embodied knowledge of their members.

How various organizations fulfil their stated aims and demonstrate their best practices in elephant care will be examined using both organizational and individual elephant biographies in the following sections. Beginning with an examination of the quasi-governmental National Trust for Nature Conservation, we can begin to untangle the complex story of captive elephants and NGOs in Nepal.

The Government of Nepal and the National Trust for Nature Conservation

Thanks to relationships built on early trips to Nepal, my initial contact during this study was with the National Trust for Nature Conservation (henceforth NTNC), and the elephants who reside at their two hattisars.⁴⁸ The first, the NTNC hattisar, houses only four to five elephants at any given time. These elephants serve as conveyance for researchers and ‘special guests’ of the NTNC. The second hattisar is the government-owned and NTNC-managed Elephant Breeding Centre. This centre is not only a major tourist attraction, but the only location where new-born elephant calves are currently found.⁴⁹ These two herds occasionally intersect, as NTNC females of breeding age are sent to be inseminated at the breeding centre. Before describing these hattisars and the unique situation of the captive

⁴⁸ Hatti is Nepali for elephant, thus a hattisar is an elephant stable

⁴⁹ There are two juvenile elephants in outside stables, around 5-6 years of age

individuals residing at each, a brief history is necessary. This history must begin with notes on the government of Nepal and how the NTNC came to be in charge of the wildlife (and captive elephants) of Nepal.

As seen in chapter one, the original founders of the national parks system, the Nepalese government—whether the monarchy or the current federalist republic—has typically held ultimate control over conservation efforts in Nepal. Part of the governmental support of protected areas—and much of the reduction in poaching activities on protected lands—comes through the posting of Nepalese Army platoons at bases within the national forests, and deployment of regular army anti-poaching patrols through the parks (GoN, 2015a; Nepal Army, 2020). These patrols are undertaken on foot, motorcycle, and elephant back.

While the government of Nepal has been historically unstable (Brown, 1996: 3; Nepali Congress, 2018: np; Whelpton, 2005: x-xi, 1, 35-45), a platform focused on conservation has been a mainstay of many, if not all, modern regimes. Currently, it is the governmental Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (henceforth MFSC) and the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (henceforth DNPWC) which oversee conservation efforts and biodiversity in Nepal. Wording in its 1973 National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act allows the government to ‘entrust the management of any conservation area’ to any outside conservation interests simply by posting a notification in a Nepalese newspaper (NPWCA, 1973: 1). Currently, the implementation and oversight of the primary ecological

maintenance and conservation activities falls to the National Trust for Nature Conservation (henceforth NTNC) (NTNC, 2019c).

The NTNC was first established in 1982 as an 'autonomous not-for-profit' organization focused on nature conservation, and currently manages projects focusing on biodiversity preservation, cultural heritage protection and ecotourism (Pokharal interviews, 2019; NTNC, 2018: np). Their overarching mission, according to their website, is to link nature conservation with ethical community development, while supporting alternative methods of income production (NTNC, 2018: np; NTNC, 2019b: 61). They claim to impact over 80,000 local communities in this manner (NTNC, 2019b: 61). The NTNC is also responsible for wildlife rescue, census and translocation, community and professional education programs, reforestation efforts and wildlife veterinary care (NTNC, 2019c). The NTNC functions as the primary manager for about 33 percent of the total protected areas (henceforth PAs) in Nepal, including national parks and their buffer zones. In the rest of the PAs, the NTNC is involved with various stakeholders in research, anti-poaching, and capacity-building (NTNC, 2019; np).

While described by non-Nepalese informants as an NGO, many Nepalese employees and locals refer to this organization as a 'quasi-governmental' entity, due to its close connection to, and oversight by, the government (Naresh, Paudel, Phuyal interviews, 2019). One NTNC employee described the organization as a 'government NGO' (Rao interview, 2019). Nepalese informants were asked to explain the differing responsibilities of these groups, and only a handful could

identify where one ended and the other began (Gwala, Naresh, Paudel, Zed interviews, 2019). In fact, many thought that the World Wildlife Fund and the NTNC were one entity, or that the NTNC was simply a branch of government. According to government employees, the easiest explanation is to consider the government the owner of all flora and fauna, and the NTNC the manager employed by them (Gairhe and Tika interviews, 2019). One employee explains that while the NTNC can offer 'informal' suggestions on animal or environmental issues to the government, the government is the 'more powerful' party (Phuyal, interview, 2019). 'Phuyal' explains that the role of the NTNC is 'to assist with resources and monitoring, knowledge' (interview, 2019). Another interlocutor described the relationship in terms of wildlife care: the government sends their vet to check on an injured animal, but he takes an NTNC employee as specialty technical support and a WWF employee to ensure financial support (Phuyal, interviews, 2019).

The NTNC is not alone as it attempts to practice conservation, having numerous international entities offering research and project support. These entities include the Zoological Society of London, the Chester Zoo, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Smithsonian, The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the joint USAid/WWF Hariyo Ban. (NTNC, 2019b and 2019c: np). One NTNC conservation officer explains that there is a pressing need for these collaborations, as larger organizations 'can have high impact' on conservation (Phuyal interview, 2019). He is thankful for the role of the Smithsonian in training the NTNC as 'technical experts' and wants observers to

understand that without the Smithsonian's guidance, there would be no NTNC (Phuyal, interview, 2019).

The involvement of the Nepalese government with NGOs and foreign governments in the formation and continuing support of Chitwan National Park needs to be considered through the lens of neoliberalism. As discussed in the literature review of this thesis, NGOs are often associated with conservation movements and accompany participatory development efforts, such as Nepal's goal of linking conservation to poverty reduction (Mishra, 2008; World Bank, 1998). Nepal's approach has historically created conflict between park management and local communities, and this type of park management has denied local people access to forest provisioning (Campbell, 2007: 83; Mehta and Heinen, 2001; Plehwe, 2007). Nepal continues to work on community-based conservation efforts, but often under the influence of and financing by foreign aid organizations (GoN, 2015a; NTNC, 2020a).

In the case of the government-owned Chitwan National Park, entities from the global north, such as USAid and the US-based Smithsonian Institute continue to have a say in its management and research today (Phuyal, interview, 2019). The United States government sends approximately 146 million USD in aid to Nepal yearly, 13 million of which is aimed at environmental protection (USAid, 2020b: np). USAid and the USFWS fund wetland management, human-elephant conflict mitigation training, technician training and rhino and tiger habitat protection, among other projects (NTNC, 2020a: 4-11).

The National Trust for Nature Conservation is the recipient of a large amount of this conservation-aimed funding, but interlocutors in this study express concern with how this money is being spent (Gwala, Minsky, Thomas interviews, 2019). While there is little doubt that assistance with natural resource management has positively impacted rhino and tiger populations (USAid, 2020a: np), other expenditures on items such as lab and radiography equipment—which sits idle thanks to a lack of staff training on its use—has resulted in non-Nepalese informants reaching out to the US government demanding that they no longer supply funding to the NTNC (Dora, Minsky, Thomas, Zed interviews, 2019 and 2020).

One Nepalese interlocutor expressed concern about the USAid Hariyo Ban program's far-reaching initiatives in Nepal (aimed at biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation). He feels that 'USAid initiatives have fostered corruption in the country' and refers to Hariyo Ban as 'one of the most corrupt programs' (Gwala interview, 2020; USAid, 2020c). These feelings are not atypical. In the neoliberal culture of NGOs, financial benefits from programs like Hariyo Ban are often inequitably distributed and power used to promote the interests of local elites (Kellert, et al., 2000; Schuller, 2009). This inequitable distribution of funds is also reflected in the distribution of profits from entry tickets purchased by tourists riding elephants, with everyone from elephant owners to nature guides expressing concern that funds are not benefitting local families (Puri, 2019; Raja, Shor, Vachan interviews, 2019). Non-Nepalese interlocutors expressed concern that the US is funding, even inadvertently, the captivity and use of an endangered species

for profit (Crane, Minsky, Thomas, Zed interviews, 2019). These captive endangered elephants, and how they fit into conservation efforts, will be discussed in the following section.

The Biodiversity Conservation Centre and the NTNC hattisar

The area which encompasses the NTNC offices in Sauraha and the surrounding open space is known as the Biodiversity Conservation Centre (henceforth BCC) (Sainsbury, 2015: np). NTNC staffers described this centre as a ‘learning laboratory’ (Phuyal interviews, 2019), and it is a vital field site for researchers from universities around the world as well as local scientists (Sainsbury, 2015: np; NTNC, 2019c: np; NTNC, 2019b). This research is undertaken with the help of captive elephants, and just beyond the BCC courtyard lies the elephant hattisar. While this hattisar is not technically open to the public, there are no perimeter fences (or warning signs) and tourists are often seen wandering through to look at the elephants. Staff largely accept the practice, as long as tourists listen to mahouts and avoid touching the elephants (Sama, Pokharel interviews, 2019; observations, 2017 and 2019). While I have spent time with the Subba—or mahout manager—on several prior trips, I had no idea who was currently in charge of the oversight and use of NTNC-owned elephants. The long-term Subba had been diagnosed with TB and given new duties, leaving the running of the stable undefined (Rao and Vidantainterviews, 2019). When asked, the primary NTNC officer, stated that he, too, had no idea who was currently overseeing these elephants (Rao interviews, 2019).

For decades, these NTNC-owned elephants were used for tourist safari, but are now allegedly reserved for researchers who wish to enter the national park, as well as for VIP guests (Rao and Vidant interviews; observations, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019). According to staff members, these VIP guests include visiting family, dignitaries, researchers, conservation groups and any donors to the NTNC. These rides are offered to anyone else connected in any way to the NTNC or who is, as Rao described, 'very interested' (Rao interviews, 2019; observations, 2017 and 2019). On my first two trips to Nepal, I was travelling with a conservation group which was offered rides on these NTNC elephants, for a slightly higher price than rides on privately-owned elephants. On subsequent visits, I was offered rides as a 'special guest' even as I discussed ending elephant safari with NTNC staff. During fieldwork for this thesis, staff were flummoxed as to why I refused the honour of these rides. While I tried to explain my position regarding saddling up and riding these elephants for fun, not research, staffers felt that it was part of the experience and should be enjoyed. These offers were polite and generous, but as I explained to staff, counter to my goals. Instead, I spent a great deal of time with the mahouts and elephants at this stable, and experienced their connection along with their shared work. These elephants were my initial view into animal labour in Nepal, and will serve as focal points for a discussion of work, care, ethics and perceived violence.

Hattisar co-workers

In 2017, I happened to spend time with another researcher focused on mahout-
elephant relationships, who described the multispecies occupants of this hattisar

as 'co-workers' (Gragg, 2018 unpublished). Her definition is still applicable today, and like most work situations, the employees, in this case both human and elephant, are interdependent (Coulter, 2016a: 1; Gragg, 2018), but the distribution of work is not always equitable or peaceful. These elephants and mahouts have a variety of duties, the most important of which is to provide quiet, fossil-fuel free transport for guests interested in visiting the forest (Rao, Larina, Phuyal and Vidanta interviews, 2019). Elephant-back incursions allow these guests to get closer to wildlife than a noisy jeep would allow (Rao, Larina, Phuyal, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). In addition, these safaris provide income, which is then, according to the National Trust, reinvested into the Biodiversity Conservation Centre to assist with injured wildlife rehabilitation and the conservation of wild elephants (NTNC, 2015: 51).

These elephant-human co-workers provide transport and tracking of wildlife for translocation, animal census, and any other research needs. In return, the elephants are covered by the Nepalese Civil Service Act, which requires that each receive a standardized amount of food and water, along with a staff of three drivers (Kharel, 2002: 107). These elephants and their mahouts are involved in what Kendra Coulter (2016a: 31) might call 'body work'. Mahout bodies are instrumental not only to lifting heavy howdahs and placing them on or off elephant backs, but also in the backbreaking daily tasks of cutting and collecting grass to feed their charges, cleaning stables and preparing kuchis.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Grass bundles filled with rice, salt and molasses. See Appendix III for more on rice and nutrition.

Elephant body work requires the carrying, for up to 12 hours a day, of heavy howdahs which may contain four tourists or researchers along with a mahout. These elephants may spend long days wandering in search of wildlife for census, study, or simply for the pleasure of tourists. Like other working animals, these elephants are forced to control their 'instincts and feelings' while on duty, such as browsing, scratching against trees while walking or interacting with conspecifics, thus performing emotional work as well (Coulter, 2016a: 73,76; see chapter five). Mahouts also face emotional work, initially through the ritual forging of a bond with their elephant (see Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Locke, 2011b: 37) and later by facing caste-related prejudice along with accusations of violence towards their charges (Hart, 2000; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2020; Lipton and Bhattari, 2014; Varma, 2008).

According to Coulter, 2016a: 1), shared workplaces can be 'where the most widespread and extreme examples of violence against animals occur', and the hattisars of Nepal are no exception. As for-profit industries⁵¹, both NGO and privately-owned hattisars inherently contain potential for animal exploitation (Coulter, 2016a: 82). But like other industries, they are also sites of compassion, care and love (Coulter, 2016a: 82; Raja, Rao, Vachan, Vidanta interviews, 2019). Therefore, the work of elephants must be examined through both their suffering and the care they receive (Coulter, 2016a: 84). This work should also be viewed through a lens of individual preferences and needs, as like humans, animal

⁵¹ The irony of this statement is intentional. The NTNC elephants, purported to be for research use, are instead another money-making venture.

emotions and desires exist on a spectrum (Coulter, 2016a: 85). Participants in an earlier study described the relationships between elephants and elephant drivers at the NTNC hattisar as highly dependent upon the individual personalities of each (Szydlowski, 2017). While some reported witnessing mahouts 'yelling', 'beating' and 'smacking' elephants, others reported 'quiet' and 'amazing' shared experiences (Szydlowski, 2017).

Elephant-human relationships, and the words used to describe them, are highly dependent upon the situation in which they are observed and who is observing. Many times, the intensity of dominance exhibited by these mahouts was reduced when non-Nepalese—in this case tourists on elephant-backed safari—were present (observations, 2017 and 2019; Bansiddhi, et al., 2020). According to Gragg, the NTNC mahouts were much less 'violent' toward elephants than mahouts employed by private facilities (Gragg, PC 2020). Gragg feels that the amount of outside 'influence' in the form of financial support, and the great deal of observation by outsiders created an 'understanding of what westerners expect' among the NTNC mahouts, which results in less aggressive behaviour towards these elephants (Gragg, PC, 2020). Gautam and Khatiwada (2011) described similar findings in their study undertaken at the elephant breeding centre, at least while mahouts and elephants were in view of the public (see below). Perhaps this change in behaviour is akin to Foucault's (2008: 4,10) idea of 'disciplinary power', wherein actions can be controlled via surveillance.

In addition, Gragg feels that the NTNC offers significantly more infrastructure support to their mahouts than do private stables (i.e. in the form of elevated, wooden housing; an outdoor kitchen, and a break/tack room), resulting in less need for power-based struggles between human and elephant (Gragg, PC, 2020). The stable maintains the specific chain of command mentioned in previous sections, which is no longer found in other stables due to the massive turnover in mahout staff (see Locke, 2011b: 34). This style of management relies upon the retention of experienced mahouts, and many of the current drivers have been employed at the facility since before my first visit in 2012. Elephant handlers have large impacts on the welfare states of their charges, and therefore consistency in care and mahout retention is important to positive keeper-elephant bonds and positive elephant welfare (Carnahan, 2019: 22; Carlstead, et al., 2019; Desai, 2008: 71-72). Carlstead, et al. (2019) found that elephant keepers in zoos who described having strong bonds with elephant individuals or positive relationships with their herd had higher job satisfaction, resulting in greater retention. Zoo elephants with strong keeper bonds demonstrated less fear and stress, indicating that carer-elephant bonds are mutually beneficial (2019: 110).

During observations for this thesis, it appeared to me that these NTNC-employed mahouts function more as the 'enclaved community' Locke (2011b) describes as 'spatially separated and socially segregated' from the larger community (2011b: 35). This group gathers in their communal kitchen, where they take turns brewing tea to be passed around. They prepare and eat meals together, and gather to watch sporting events (observations, 2017 and 2019). During observations for my

prior study as well as the current one, I did not witness mahouts working at the National Trust stable engaging in beating or overt abuse of elephants.⁵² Instead both humans and elephants employed much embodied knowledge as they went about their day, acting around each other much the same way as they would around their conspecifics. The elephants knew when and where to follow their mahouts, and when to wait, standing patiently by. Human and elephant knew when touch was appropriate, and when to remain aloof. The mahouts performed their duties—such as feeding, harnessing and dusting off elephants—in much the same way they performed their duties to other humans at the stable. The only difference seemed to come when the elephants returned to their specific stable—at which point they were hobble-chained for extended periods of time, including overnight.

Many of the mahouts interviewed for this and prior studies (Szydlowski, 2017) referred to themselves as ‘elephant drivers’, and compared their job to that of bus drivers in the US. This took place more frequently in the private stables, where the description of elephants as busses, jeeps or trucks was more common (mahout group interviews, 2017 and 2019). While these mahouts spent a great deal of time caring for elephants, it appeared that to many this care-work was the same as performing maintenance on the boss’s car. Non-Nepalese often expanded upon the metaphor, saying that owners invested the minimum—putting in gas and washing the jeep but not caring if the jeep was covered in dents and roughly

⁵² Of course, the act of chaining an elephant in place and removing her daily choices might be considered a type of violence.

driven (Crane, Thomas, Zed and anonymous interviews, 2019). Much like bus drivers or mechanics, these mahouts do not own their vehicle, but rather drive it along pre-determined routes for the benefit of others.⁵³

Another unique characteristic of the NTNC facility is the retention of an elderly female elephant who is 'retired' and another 'semi-retired' individual used only when there are 'large numbers of guests' (Rao interview, 2019). Typically, elephants too old to work are sold back to India to become beggar or temple elephants (Rao, Brown, Thomas, Vidanta interviews, 2019). 'Rao', the director of the NTNC in Chitwan, stated that 'of course' they would keep these retirees at the facility. He states that the NTNC has received offers for the retiree, but they feel that she deserves to stay in her home (Rao interviews, 2019). She requires special care and support from mahout staff, as she has lost her final set of teeth⁵⁴ and can no longer eat much solid food. Her mahouts cook large tubs of rice for her daily, and the amount of work involved in her day-to-day care demonstrates a dedication to her health and wellbeing.

The location of the NTNC stable, between an army base and the Biodiversity Conservation Centre, offers its residents a quieter existence than the stables located on the main street of Sauraha, or that of the Elephant Breeding Centre which will be discussed below. NTNC elephants face a much less frenetic safari loading and unloading process than do privately-owned elephants—they load and

⁵³ Thanks to Jonathon Saha (pers. comm., 2021) for helping me expand this metaphor in his thoughtful comments on this thesis.

⁵⁴ Elephants get six sets of molars throughout their lives. When the last set falls out, they can no longer consume large quantities of plant material and often experience a loss of weight and eventual death.

unload within the stable area, and do not face the crowds of tourists gathering at the tourist gates. Because they enter the buffer zone for safari via a different location than private elephants, these elephants do not face the 'rush hour' traffic or its associated stress.

Another hattisar: The Elephant Breeding Centre at Khorsor

Owned by the government and managed by the NTNC, the Elephant Breeding Centre is located adjacent to Chitwan National Park. The site was established in 1985 to serve as a base for scientific study and reproduction of captive elephants (Kharal, 2002). This centre also serves as a cultural attraction for many tourists visiting Sauraha, as well as a training facility for calves born to captive mothers (Naresh, Pradip, Shor interview, 2017). The male calves born at this facility will eventually become working government elephants, serving in anti-poaching units, census and translocation efforts, and search and rescue operations. The females will go to the NTNC, the government or remain at the breeding centre.

Piloted by an initial population of 4 captive males and 16 captive female elephants imported from India, Myanmar and Thailand, this government program produced 33 calves over the last 35 years (GoN, 2015a: 16; Kharel, 2002). Sadly, between 1979 and 2002, 13 calves died or were stillborn (Yadav, 2003: 27).⁵⁵ This represents over a 40% mortality rate, and first-time mothers had a higher rate of stillbirth (Gairhe, 2012: 29; Yadav, 2003: 27). This calf mortality rate is common in

⁵⁵ This is the most recent study containing this data Yadav (2003: 27) blames these deaths on the mothers being taken off work .

captive environments around the world, and is likely due in part to the early breaking of family bonds (Clubb et al., 2008; Clubb and Mason, 2002; GoN, 2015b; Kurt and Garai, 2006: 121; Sukumar, 2003). Mothers at the Centre also face challenges in performing other functions of their 'care work' (Coulter, 2016a: 63, 65). They are unable to keep their calves in close physical proximity for the period of time they would in the wild (a lifetime for females or 10-20 years for males; see Sukumar, 2003; Vidya and Sukumar, 2005), and are unable to offer reassurance or pleasure via touch to their offspring-in-training or other captive mothers (see Balcombe, 2009: 213; Yadav, 2003: 30).

Mahouts at the breeding centre also face daily work struggles. These men work up to 17 hours each day, and typically live adjacent to or in the stable and away from their families, for an average of 2450 Nrs monthly (about 21 USD) (Yadav, 2003: 28; Cheetri, mahout group interviews, 2017 and 2019; observations 2014, 2016, 2019). This work period is more than 2.83 times what a normal 'peon' (the lowest work level designation in Nepalese civil service) performs, and mahouts do not get regular holidays like other civilian staff, who are allowed 70 days of vacation time for religious festivals, including Saturdays (Yadav, 2003: 28). Mahouts also lack life insurance, a major concern as at least four mahouts have been killed by elephants, and numerous others injured at this facility alone (Cheetri, Larina interviews, 2017; Yadav, 2003: 28). This lack of adequate pay and the inherent danger is a major cause of mahout resignation (Yadav, 2003: 29). These mahouts face emotional labour as well, forced (Locke, 2009) to use only dominance-based

elephant handling practices which rely on maintaining both physical and emotional control of their charges, which can lead to retaliation from elephants.

Female mahouts face additional stress and emotional labour. There were, at one point, five female mahouts serving at the government stable (only one remains)⁵⁶, and in town there is one female tourist safari driver (Pokharel, 2020; Larina interviews, 2019). A new development, these mahouts are facing discrimination from other mahouts as well as tourists, who regularly question their abilities (Kafle, 2018).⁵⁷ One female mahout from Bardia National Park, Himani Tharu, has faced such discrimination and harassment that she has taken to the media, encouraging other women not to follow in her footsteps (Pokharel, 2020). As a member of the marginalized Tharu ethnic group she faced further harassment, despite the fact that mahouts have traditionally been Tharu (Hart and Locke, 2007: 512; Locke, 2011a: 68 and 75). Her human co-workers have abandoned her in the jungle, and have taken and abandoned her elephant as well (Pokharel, 2020). Thinking she was getting a stable government job, Tharu instead faced sharing her dorm with fifteen men (Pokharel, 2020). She has since sought another job outside of the elephant field (Pokharel, 2020).

Creating biocapital

Income from the conservation fee charged to enter the Elephant Breeding Centre is mixed with income from the Gharial crocodile breeding centre, and this fund

⁵⁶ Due to a combination of factors, this driver was unavailable to participate in this study

⁵⁷ For an examination of women facing discrimination in another non-traditional role, bullfighting, see Sarah Pink's (1997) *Women and Bullfighting: Gender, Sex and the Consumption of Tradition*.

pays for staff salaries, construction and operational support of both facilities (GoN, 2015a: 16). The presence of baby elephants and the low entry fee at the elephant centre (less than 1 USD) results in large numbers of tourists—up to 25000 annually (Yadav, 2003: 28, observations, 2019).⁵⁸ The noise from these visitors, especially during mating activities, has resulted in attacks on humans (Gairhe, 2012: 28), and has also been attributed to general stress and welfare reduction among captive elephants (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a).

The centre currently houses 17 individuals: 10 adult females and 7 sub-adults of both sexes (NTNC, 2019b: 69). Reproduction now relies upon wild males to impregnate captive females (see chapter one), as captive bulls have not been kept at the facility since 1996. These males now reside at government outposts and serve on anti-poaching patrols or in other conservation-focused activities.

Breeding Centre elephants represent a large amount of biocapital,⁵⁹ 'lively capital' (Haraway, 2008: 46; Rajan, 2012: 2) or 'undead capital' (Saha, 2017: 173). This particular undead capital is found at the intersection of commodification, tourism and ethics. Elephants in Nepal tick two boxes: that of 'meaty machines to be captured, trained, worked, bought, sold' (Saha, 2017: 172; see also Locke, 2011a: 61, 62), and half of a much studied, often romanticised duo vital to Nepalese tourism practices (Haraway, 2012: 93; Locke, 2017a: 362-365; Locke, 2011b: 36-39).

⁵⁸ As the author of this thesis is American, USD have been offered as a comparison instead of GBP.

⁵⁹ While initially used to describe the 'systems of exchange and circulation' in the life sciences, especially with regard to the development of pharmaceuticals (Rajan, 2012: 10), it is a nod to Foucault's (1978: 139) 'biopolitics.'

While raising these elephant calves is ‘very expensive’, the centre more than covers its costs during non-COVID years (Gairhe, 2012: 28; Yadav, 2003: 30). Yadav (2003: 30) estimates that the breeding centre brought in over 1.2 million Nrs during the 2001/2002 fiscal year (around 256,000 USD, at that time).⁶⁰ In addition, calves were born adding assets worth approximately 5.6 million Nrs, and joined a captive herd worth approximately 19.3 million Nrs (approximately 4.13 million USD at the time), while the annual operating costs of the facility, including staff salaries and elephant food, were only 7.8 million Nrs (Yadav, 2003: 29-30). The cost of supplies for training each calf was estimated at 30,000 Nrs, with another 15000 Nrs set aside to buy supplies, such as sacrificial animals for the breaking ritual (Yadav, 2003: 30). The prices associated with raising calves and the financial and emotional cost of ‘breaking’ them is considered necessary for what Suzuki (2020: 242) calls ‘converting wildlife into valuable capital’. This capital serves as reproductive labour, in patrol work or as tourism marketing.

Breaking elephants

The Elephant Breeding Centre serves as the location for the training of all young elephants born in private, government or NTNC stables who will spend their lives working with humans (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np). Even the most recent calf from Hotel1—the home of the INGO2’s ‘chain-free’ and ‘rescued’ elephants (Gautam and Minsky interviews, 2019) has undergone ‘breaking’ at the breeding centre.⁶¹ The Nepalese breaking ritual (or hattiko talim; see Locke, 2009: np)

⁶⁰ The most recent data available

⁶¹ More on this juvenile elephant follows in the next chapter

follows a similar pattern to ceremonies practiced in Thailand and India called the Phajaan or Pha Jaan (Cohen, 2015; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Laohachaiboon, 2010; Randy interviews, 2019;). This ritual involves the separation of mother from calf, and in some areas is thought to drive out bad spirits that could hurt the baby (Mahout and Thai Elephant Development Education College, 2005). Locke (2009: np) argues that instead of a 'humanly-imposed modification and control', this process might instead be viewed as a 'ritually-sanctified mutual attunement', wherein the elephant becomes bonded to humans.

This ritual needs to be examined both through a lens of human tradition and one of elephant welfare. As van Dooren (2015: 3) explains, situations in which 'decisions with ethical consequences' are being made need to be examined to prevent them from becoming commonplace and invisible. The refrain of traditional or ritual behaviour becomes dangerous when it involves socially-sanctioned violence against other living beings. In Nepal, captive elephants are a vital part of conservation work aimed at preserving endangered species, including wild elephants (see above; Kharel, 2002). For captive elephants to be 'usable' by humans, they must be broken (Mar, 2020: np), and this breaking process regularly takes place without any 'conscious reflection' (van Dooren, 2015: 3) by elephant handlers. The need to capture or birth, tame, break and train an endangered species in order to preserve the same endangered species in the wild did not make sense to non-Nepalese informants or to those Nepalese not involved in elephant tourism (Aadita, Brown, Minsky, Thomas, Zed interviews, 2019; Szydlowski, 2017). But to elephant handlers, veterinarians, researchers and

owners interviewed for this study, elephants employed in shared labour with humans 'must' be controlled for the safety of tourists and mahouts, and this control is achieved by their ritual breaking, subsequent dominance-based training, and the use of tools such as the bull hook (Cheetri, Larina, Sama, mahout group interviews; see also Bansiddhi, et al., 2020). Mahouts and employees believe that this 'violent care' (van Dooren, 2015: 9) is absolutely necessary to sever the relationship between mother and calf and create the bond between baby and humans (Cohen, 2015, Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Laohachaiboon, 2010).

The initial phase of the Nepalese breaking process is the physical separation of mother and calf, wherein calves are tied several feet away but within their mother's (and other siblings') line of sight (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Locke, 2011b: 37). After days of crying and trying to reach her mother, the calf eventually gets used to its seclusion, but the mother may continue to be distraught (Minsky interviews, 2019; Locke, 2011b: 37). Forced to watch and hear their calves undergo this ritual has resulted in lasting trauma for some mothers and in one case, an ongoing 'mental break' according to interlocutors for this study (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Minsky interviews, 2019). Studies on the long-term effects of this breaking process on elephant mothers themselves are needed, as non-human emotion and trauma is well documented (King, 2013; Masson and McCarthy, 1995; Newberry and Swanson, 2008; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; Turnbull and Bar, 2020).

The next stage of the breaking process involves the ritual purification of the training post and the sacrifice of animals (such as goats, pigeons and roosters) to the gods before the desensitization process can begin (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np; Locke, 2011b: 37; Yadav, 2003). The calf is then tightly roped and chained by both front legs and her neck to a wooden post on a dirt mound, typically in full view of her herd (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np; Locke, 2011b: 37; observations, 2019). Hattisar employees surround the calf, wave fire at her, beat her with sticks on her body and the tip of her trunk, make noise, and roughly scrub her body. They mount her, poke her and sing ritual songs each night (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np; Locke, 2011b: 39). The calf may trumpet repeatedly out of fear, injure herself in attempts to escape, or hide her trunk in her mouth, all signs of stress (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np; Kipu interviews, 2019). During each day, the calf is freed, allowed to roam the area surrounding the stables. This process continues for two to three weeks, but the intensity may decrease over time, and end with singing and caressing as fire is waved around her (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np; Locke, 2011b: 39). Despite their harsh treatment during the desensitization stage, mahouts at the breeding centre were seen putting ointment on the elephants legs in the places where the tight ropes had caused bruising (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np). In the eyes of elephant owners, the veterinary staff and handlers, these mahouts demonstrate their care for elephants in both the performance of their violent-care duties and subsequent

gentle-care tasks (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np; van Dooren, 2014: 91; Vidanta interviews, 2019).⁶²

While 'their' elephant is undergoing training, the mahout may have to perform his own emotional work. He is expected to remain pure by staying away from women, meat and alcoholic beverages (Locke, 2011b: 38). He must also keep the elephant clear of metal objects due to their relationship with manmade processes, and may have to remake parts of the elephants harness for use during the ritual (Locke, 2011b: 38). While the mahout performs some of this work alone, the larger community of mahouts at the Elephant Breeding Centre takes part in the breaking process itself, which Locke (2009: np) credits with building stronger relationships within the 'institution' of handlers. The emotional labour of these mahouts, and how the breaking process affects their mental health is another area that could benefit from further study.

The next step in training a juvenile elephant is to pierce her ear in order to use a metal hook to 'instil the sense of direction' in her, and to act as a safety net for gaining quick control in case there is trouble (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np). In addition, a barbed shackle is placed on the juvenile elephant's leg, and this shackle is connected to the saddle so that the elephant cannot move swiftly without pain (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np). During the next phase, the calf is taken to the jungle to experience wild animals. The trainers try to encounter wild

⁶² See also Dugas and Locke's (2006) film, *Servants of Ganesh: Inside the Elephant Stable* for another view into these practices.

rhino, tiger, boar and deer in order to desensitize the calf. In addition, the calf is taken to the highway to learn not to be alarmed by vehicles. Lastly, the calf is used to perform work such as carrying logs to gain experience with their handler prior to being placed on safari or patrol (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np).

Nepalese and non-Nepalese interlocutors felt that this ritual was overly traumatic for mothers and calves, and resulted in ‘damaged’ or ‘mentally broken’ elephants (Brown, Bames, Gwala, Thomas interviews, 2019; de Vries, 2014; Gautam and Khatiwada; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). They felt that as long as this process remains the primary method of training elephants, mahouts will also continue to rely upon these ‘cruel’ and ‘outdated’ violent methods of elephant management instead of adopting less dominance-based styles (de Vries, 2014: 2; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np).⁶³

As mentioned in chapter five, breaking social and familial bonds so early can have life-long effects. These bonds are vitally important to their future ability to adapt to stressful situations, maintain physical fitness and learn to choose appropriate foods (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Kurt and Garai, 2006; Prado-Oviedo, et al., 2016; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; Sukumar, 2003; Vanitha, et al., 2016). Breaking family bonds too early may result in infanticide or infant rejection as adults, perhaps due to missing social information which would normally be imparted by older relatives (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Kurt and Garai, 2006; Rizzolo and

⁶³ There have been efforts to introduce positive reinforcement-based training methods. See following sections.

Bradshaw, 2018; Vanitha, et al., 2016). Traditional training methods, like the breaking ceremony, may result in future fights for dominance between handlers and elephants (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). This breaking process has come under fire from organizations around the world, and the PETA (2002) filming of a breaking ceremony went viral in 2002, igniting a call to boycott elephant tourism. INGO6 (2020) has also shared a video showing hobble-chained, screaming elephant calves undergoing the Phajaan in Thailand. INGO6 has stated that the ceremony has a 'significant negative impact' on the health and welfare of elephants (Schmidt-Burbach, 2017: 13). These videos are painful to watch, perhaps especially so because they involve what are easily identifiable as 'babies'.

Instead of a cruel, anthropocentric practice benefitting only the human part of the equation, Locke (2009) describes a ritual that somehow flows in both directions between elephant and handler (2009: np). Locke seems to romanticize the breaking process in his work, describing it simply as 'elephant training' and indicating that within 2-3 weeks the elephant and mahout will become magically bonded (2009: np). Locke's writings, while detailed and culturally respectful of the *humans* in his studies, perhaps miss the mark by describing this ritual separation and socially-sanctioned torture of calves as a 'joyous celebration' (Locke, 2011b: 39). Locke's arguments are predicated upon the belief that traditional knowledge has been passed along which ensures the success (and perhaps safety) of this ritual practice (Hart, 2000; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2020; Lipton and Bhattari, 2014; Locke, 2011b: 34; Varma, 2008). However, in light of the fact that elephant

handling is no longer a familial job⁶⁴ in Nepal, this defence may no longer apply (Hart, 2000; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2020; Lipton and Bhattari, 2014; Locke, 2011b: 34; Varma, 2008). Instead of 'traditional practice', elephant breaking is now undertaken by inexperienced mahouts without governmental or veterinary oversight (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Hart, 2000; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2020; Lipton and Bhattari, 2014; Varma, 2008). Rather than the happy celebration witnessed by Locke (2011b), the breaking ritual may instead have become disassociated from its cultural purpose and institutionalized for the production of 'undead capital' (Saha, 2017:173; see 'creating biocapital' section of chapter six).

Some Asian elephant biologists (such as Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a: 13) claim that no studies have been done to quantify whether breaking rituals have lasting impacts on elephant psyches, or whether there are any lasting differences between positive reinforcement training and traditional methods. There is, however, empirical evidence of greater calf mortality around the time of weaning and training, leading some to blame these deaths on the methods used during breaking rituals (Mar, et al., 2012: 4). Studies have found Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in both African and Asian elephants who have undergone breaking rituals and dominance training, and elephants may show lifelong symptoms of this PTSD if not handled properly (Carnahan, 2019; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2016). According to Rizzolo and Bradshaw (2016), it is possible to

⁶⁴ Except for mahouts at Tiger Tops Tharu Lodge, according to Mumby, 2019, and observations and interviews, 2019).

mitigate expressions of PTSD through appropriate husbandry techniques, and via post-trauma interventions and positive relationship building with mahouts.

There are viable alternatives to the breaking process in use in Thailand and Nepal (Bansiddhi, et al. 2020; Varma and Ganguly, 2011). Several years ago, the World Society for the Protection of Animals and the World Wildlife Fund piloted a humane training program for mahouts in Sauraha (Locke, 2011b: 39; Varma and Ganguly, 2011). This program outlines, among other things, 'pre-schooling' for calves under the age of three in order to instil an understanding of positive or negative reinforcement. The Working Elephant Program of Asia (WEPA)⁶⁵ trained five juveniles using touch, vocal cues, food rewards and pressure release training (Varma and Ganguly, 2011). However, Gautam and Khatiwada (2011:np) found no evidence that this pre-schooling was still taking place. During an undercover visit, researchers found that mahouts and centre staff behaved patiently when visitors were in attendance at the breeding centre, but resorted to violence once away from visitor view (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011). Training at the centre now appears to have returned to the same methods as before the humane training program, with the exception of the discontinuation of lowering food levels during training, and leaving fewer scars and wounds (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011). Government and NTNC employees claimed that cruel training methods are no longer in use, despite evidence to the contrary offered by interlocutors in this study (Vidanta and mahout group interviews, 2019; observations, 2017 and 2019).

⁶⁵ Strangely sharing the same acronym as the World Elephant Polo Association

Gautam and Khatiwada (2011: np) observed that there was ‘natural’ ‘love and affection’ demonstrated by mahouts for elephants, but despite training in positive reinforcement training, mahouts continued to embrace violent or dominance-based methods. Like interlocutors in research done for this thesis, participants in the 2011 study found that the deeply ingrained belief that cruel methods are necessary for training was difficult to overcome (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np; Cheetri, Larina and Vidantainterviews, 2019). According to the breeding centre training director, mahouts won’t take the chance on using different methods, as they believe elephants trained with more humane methods are more likely to kill their mahout (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np). However, Gautam and Khatiwada found two cases of young elephants successfully (or in ongoing training) trained using only ear piercing or beating. In one case, the calf was trained with nothing but the ear piercing, and is now operating as a safari elephant without issue (2011: np).

According to the Chief Warden of Chitwan National Park, elephants are such a vital part of conservation and anti-poaching activities that ‘animal welfare’ concerns simply do not apply, as compromising the welfare of government elephants is ‘inevitable’ (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np). He feels that the elephants must be ready to deal with adverse conditions, and that the government must choose conservation over elephant welfare (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: mp). There are ways, however, to increase the welfare of these elephants while maintaining their ‘usefulness’. One way is to create more oversight by experienced personnel in hattisars and during the breaking ritual. To this end, Gautam and

Khatiwada (2011: np) recommend that senior level officers and veterinary staff observe the more intense portions of future trainings. They further recommend that the separation of calves become more gradual and less stressful, introductory methods be instituted with young calves, and more training in more humane methods be offered (2011: np). The number of staff at the breeding centre should be increased to facilitate earlier training in a more playful manner, reduce the number of accidents resulting from mahouts who are in charge of more than one elephant at a time, and increase the possibility for building long-term bonds between caretaker and elephant which is lacking due to time constraints from understaffing (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np).

Offering an alternative view, Piers Locke (2009) decries the elephant-centric view of individuals in these hattisars rather than on bonded mahout-elephant pairs, and suggests that a more substantive approach is needed to recognize the 'agency, expertise and lifeworld of handlers' (2009: np). By focusing on elephant individuals, and applying phrases such as 'human use', Locke worries that researchers are offering only an 'impoverished perspective of domination' instead of a 'dynamic tradition of skilled practice' (2009: np). Because these elephant handlers view their charges simultaneously as 'animals, persons and gods' (Locke, 2016a: 1; Vidantainterviews, 2019), Locke (2009: np) feels that western researchers have wrongly misclassified treatment by mahouts as cruel. In Locke's (2009) view, the agency of elephant handlers has been taken away as the traditional practices of dominance training and cruelty were pressed upon them as the only acceptable way to work with elephants. These handlers, according to

Locke (2009: np) are trapped—forced to adopt the practices used in their hattisars, despite their personal feelings. Locke (2009: np) feels that the positive reinforcement training offered by international NGOs came about out of the ‘representation of indigenous training practice that perhaps unduly emphasized the role of fear and cruelty’, which he feels is an unjust description of these practices. Locke (2009: np) defends traditional methods of training, *appearing* to claim that as indigenous training practices they must be appropriate. Locke (2009: np) feels the rationale behind attempts to teach humane training practices is ‘critical and neo-imperialist, implying that indigenous practices are intrinsically backwards and cruel’. It is hard to determine if Locke is simply attempting to acknowledge the agency of mahouts in an evolving practice, or if he is truly claiming that ‘tradition’ serves as a defence of cruel practices. If it is the latter, this view of ‘traditional’ or ‘local’ automatically equalling ‘worthy of keeping’ is problematic (Lister, 2003: 183). Instead, a wider view of the legitimacy of disparate practices, and how different stakeholders view this legitimacy, is needed (Lister, 2003).

Rather than placing the focus on the past history of these mahout-elephant pairs, no matter how dynamic it may appear, I believe we should instead be focusing on their current practices, which are described as cruel and abusive by both Nepalese and non-Nepalese informants (Barnes, Brown, Crane, Gwala, Minsky, Randy, Taraswin, Zed interviews, 2019). While I found myself becoming less and less accepting of these methods as research progressed, I acknowledge the need to include mahout history, agency and welfare in any conversations regarding recommended changes. There appear to be alternatives to exclusively neo-

colonial approaches to ending dominance-based management in Nepal. For example, in Locke's (2009: np) study, mahouts interviewed following training in humane management methods commented that they felt they were 'working with' the trainer, and not just learning from them. These handlers seemed proud to be a part of an elephant management team, instead of feeling ignored by those interested only in their elephants (Locke, 2009: np). This attitude would seem to indicate that education in alternative training methods, and an inclusion of mahouts in decision-making, could decrease the alienation felt by mahouts while increasing the elephant-mahout bond, and perhaps encourage mahouts to develop more humane treatment methods as true partners in these programs.

In Thailand, mahouts place the blame for continuing cruel management practices on tourists' demand for elephants who engage in unnatural behaviors like painting, dancing, or sports (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018: 117,128). Mahouts argue that these behaviors are only possible after breaking and beating elephants (2018: 117). Mahouts in the study said that they prefer to work at sanctuaries, which they consider better for the elephants and themselves (better working conditions, a better family life, and the freedom to practice religion) (2018). Some said they were surprised how easy it was to communicate with the elephants without dominance treatment and described how working at a sanctuary has given them more respect for elephants and their intelligence (2018: 128). For this type of behaviour to spread, Rizzolo and Bradshaw (2018: 129) believe tourists will need to take responsibility and stop paying for unethical experiences at facilities that increase suffering and trauma.

Further studies which equally represent the health and welfare of both members of the mahout-elephant pair, and their extended families, are much needed (DeVries, 2014; Locke, 2009: np; Locke and Buckingham, 2016; Mackenzie and Locke, 2012). While the following chapters demonstrate an elephant-centric view of the situation in Nepal, due to the author's history caring both for and about a variety of non-human animals, consideration is also given to the human side of the equation. Next is a discussion of the ways in which the NTNC and government hattisars are perceived by various stakeholders, including NTNC and government employees, local community members, nature guides, ex-pats and visitors.

Discourses surrounding the Government and NTNC Hattisars

The project manager of the NTNC (during fieldwork for this thesis) is someone known to the author for nearly a decade, as the owner of a local hotel and elephant stable in which I spent a great deal of time during my master's research in 2017. 'Rao' has been described in a variety of ways by interlocutors for this study, as the most 'renowned person in Sauraha', a 'mafia godfather' and a 'big man' (Gwala, Taraswin, Randy interviews, 2019). My experiences with Rao, however, have been predominantly pleasant and respectful.

Rao was promoted to project manager of the Biodiversity Conservation Centre after a long career with the NTNC, and has far-reaching ties to the community stretching back through his father's tenure as the leader of a large community forest users group (Rao interviews and PC, 2012-2019). As the owner of a hotel close to the NTNC's Biodiversity Conservation Centre, it is convenient for

international visitors to stay at his facility, which they do. International guests staying at other hotels are asked to leave those facilities and move to Rao's lodge, creating the feeling among some interlocutors that he is using his position at the NTNC to support his hotel. This practice at first appears at odds with non-Asian perceptions of ethical practices. According to Nepalese interlocutors, the reason behind these perceived differences in 'ethical' behaviour is due to the fact that men in Nepal are encouraged to 'be big' (Gwala, PC, 2020). Parental support and community expectations and support are not directed towards following one's passions or creating community, but rather towards being well-placed and successful (Gairhe, Panta interviews, 2019; Gwala, PC 2020). It may be this social pressure that leads people in positions of power to overlook what non-Nepalese might label 'best practices' in favour of that which directly benefits their immediate family (and may represent 'best practices' for a Nepalese businessman).

Like other interlocutors in this study, I felt a sense of the fox having been put in charge of the henhouse when I realized that someone who uses elephants for money-making tourism activities oversees the welfare of wild individuals of the same species. This conflict was less troublesome to employees of the NTNC, who as mentioned above, regularly use NTNC-owned elephants to entertain their personal guests and see little wrong with it (Rao, Larina, Phuyal, Vidantainterviews, 2019). Many private elephant owners, like Rao, report no cognitive dissonance when discussing elephants both as fiercely protected endangered species and captive tourist conveyance. However, the *ownership* of captive elephants by a conservation organisation such as the NTNC draws

consternation from visitors, and while some credit these elephants with playing an important role in conservation, others state they are strictly entertainment providers—‘only an adventure for the people, nothing more’ (Larina and Phuyal interviews, 2019).

The NTNC herd is also used in for-profit ventures undertaken personally by staff. Contracting with international organizations, young people from outside Nepal visit Sauraha to experience hands-on ‘work’ with these elephants (Larina and Raja interviews, 2019; observations, 2017 and 2019; Karmalaya.com: nd). These young people make elephant kuchis, follow mahouts as they attend to matters at the stable, and accompany elephants to the river for bathing (Karmalaya.com, nd; Elsa, Doris interviews, 2019; personal observations, 2017 and 2019). These programs and other local privately-organized offshoots have something in common—they are organized by former NTNC staff or current hotel owners who have family members employed by the NTNC. This seems to be another conflict of interest between an NGO whose stated aims are to conserve endangered species, and their use of the same species for personal and organizational income. As discussed in the literature review portion of this thesis, organizations operating in this way tend to promote competition rather than conservation and line the pockets of a few elite community members (Puri, 2019: 78; Sullivan, 2006).

Veterinary staff potential conflicts of interest

As the NTNC veterinarian and technician, ‘Prakesh Vidanta’ and ‘Ravi Saroj’ are in positions that might seem to reflect another conflict of interest to an outsider.

Vidanta and Saroj receive a sum of money from the United Elephant Owners' Cooperative, which will be discussed in upcoming chapters, to care for its members' privately-owned elephants. This means that in addition to sharing responsibility for the care of every wild animal in Nepal with only one other veterinarian and technician, Vidanta and Saroj look after the 112 captive elephants who reside in government, NTNC and private stables (Rao, Gairhe, Vidanta interviews, 2019). In fact, Saroj describes the care of these captive elephants as the 'most important thing' he does (Saroj, Vidanta interviews, 2019). Saroj appears dedicated to his job, says he enjoys caring for captive elephants and is widely respected among Nepalese and non-Nepalese interlocutors as the person most familiar with each elephant's unique personality and health (Brown, Thomas, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). Saroj says he is continuing to learn new things about elephant care and has developed positive relationships with mahouts in the area.

Why does an NGO tasked with wildlife conservation provide staffing for privately owned elephants? According to NTNC project manager Rao, this practice started in 2012, when he requested a veterinarian be assigned to the Chitwan National Park team since they were using a 'CITES-listed animal' with no veterinary support (see chapter four). Rao describes the entire NTNC veterinary services as now designed for 'looking after' these privately owned elephants (Rao, interview, 2019). Rao also feels that such an 'important' endangered animal deserves better care than currently offered and explains that since the land surrounding Sauraha is 'government owned', these elephants should be afforded the same land-use within

the national park as wild individuals (see chapter four for concerns regarding this proposed practice).

The elephant owners' control of NTNC veterinary staff extends to their work hours and daily routine. Private elephant owners reported being angry when the NTNC vet staff does not respond to their queries right away. But according to veterinary staff, this delay is intentional. Staff often put off visiting an elephant until the owner has called them several times, especially for foot care. In this way, the veterinary staff feels that they are increasing the perception among owners that their care is more valuable by making it harder to access (Vidanta and Saroj interviews, 2019). The effects of these delays on elephant health and welfare were not concerning to staff, but I found them disturbing. While I understand the importance of encouraging owners to value veterinary care, delaying treatment which might decrease pain or increase welfare runs counter to my decades of caregiving experience. While I may not agree with their delays, after experiencing the difficulties Vidanta and Saroj face in providing care (such as mahouts disappearing with their elephants during scheduled visitations, or owners failing to heed recommendations), I can at least understand their desire to 'build value' into their time.

In addition, non-Nepalese interlocutors in this study were confused by the use of NTNC staff to treat privately-owned elephants and felt that because donations—especially from international organizations—are given to the NTNC to support wildlife care, using staff to care for privately owned animals seemed contrary to the

mission of the NTNC (Crane and Zed interviews, 2019). With a single exception, the care of wildlife during fieldwork for this study fell exclusively on the shoulders of NTNC 'wildlife techs' and the government veterinarian, while the NTNC veterinary staff dealt exclusively with captive elephants.⁶⁶ At first, I thought it was my presence keeping staff from engaging with wildlife, but after numerous conversations with veterinary personnel it became clear that there was currently little else for them to do. There is much down time between wildlife needs, as it is unsurprisingly an unpredictable field. I appreciated the amount of time staff was able to offer me for stable visitations.

The use of NTNC staff to treat private elephants is not the only concern expressed by interlocutors in this study, however. Expats from Europe and Canada, residents of Nepal, American and European tourists as well as researchers approached for this study felt that both the government and the NTNC were not fulfilling their stated goals (Gwala, Thomas, Zed interviews, 2019; PC, 2020). Interlocutors felt that given the amount of foreign aid sent to Nepal, there should be a much greater academic knowledge base on many of the species residing in the area, and more follow-up on procedures such as necropsies of larger wildlife.⁶⁷ Some informants explained that supplied materials (i.e., lab equipment, husbandry data from the ZSL or other partners) were wasted, sitting in storage, unused (Dora and Zed, interviews 2019). Others questioned why what they felt were readily accessible online academic and husbandry resources were not used to improve animal

⁶⁶ With the exception of the necropsy of a single leopard undertaken by Saroj and the government staff.

⁶⁷ More than 40 rhino have died in the last year, and many were not necropsied due to a lack of facilities, training, or refrigeration (Vidanta, interviews, 2019; Mandal, 2019)

health, especially given the amount of available 'down time' experienced by staff (albeit internet is sometimes spotty throughout Nepal) (Zed, 2019). Additionally, visitors were concerned that the funding of the first wildlife hospital by the WWF and various smaller organizations had not netted any results (Dora, Laye, Zed interviews and PC, 2019). While the hospital building was completed in 2018, at the time of writing it was still empty.⁶⁸ Rao and Vidanta cited a need to wait for office furniture to be purchased before moving operations to the building (interviews, 2019). A large grant for hospital supplies was awarded by the government of Nepal, and a few purchases have been made. These purchases include a radiograph machine and processor, which were obtained without protective gear and without education on their use (Vidanta and Thomas, PC, 2020; GoN, 2020a: np).⁶⁹

I consulted faculty and students at Nepal's Tribhuvan University, who shared their concerns about the NTNC, the government and their professed conservation goals. As academics, they disagreed with certain policies, such as the practice of gifting⁷⁰ endangered animals to other countries. They felt that these animals should instead be protected and kept within the borders of Nepal to allow for natural reproduction opportunities (Bhatri, Thapa interviews 2019). Furthermore, they stated that large-scale habitat preservation should be a key focus, along with sustainable conservation sites which can be locally managed by buffer zone and

⁶⁸ Update: as of Winter, 2020, the NTNC reports the building has been filled and is operable.

⁶⁹ As part of an ongoing attempt to improve elephant health and welfare in Nepal, the author has offered to arrange training for NTNC staff and has located personnel who will assist once the COVID pandemic subsides.

⁷⁰ Wherein animals are offered to foreign governments as a sign of good will.

community forest agencies. These academics also felt that local communities were suffering due to a lack of provided education on natural disasters which are becoming more and more frequent—such as fires—as well as man-made disasters such as deforestation and pesticide use. One faculty member mentioned that he would like to see local communities having more say over conservation measures instead of the top-down (and possibly neoliberal) approach currently in practice (see literature review, this thesis). He explained that the NTNC itself has a clear conflict of interest when it comes to their stated goals. Instead of focusing on the changes in animal populations or whether conservation policies are working, the NTNC appeared to focus on public-relations type items like ‘beautiful photo databases of tigers’. Instead of research into the conservation of endangered species, the NTNC’s focus has been on marketing (Bhatri, Thapa interviews, 2019).

Other interlocutors worried that the government and NTNC were missing the bigger conservation picture. ‘Phuyal Puri’, who owns a business on Sauraha’s main street, explained that due to widespread governmental corruption, funding supplied to the government and proceeds from activities like national park entry fees, were not ‘getting down’ to where they needed to be (Puri interview, 2019). In addition, he shared his worries that smaller, less charismatic species such as local birds were being overlooked in favor of more marketable species. He described the plight of urban wildlife and explained that smaller birds were dying out or moving away thanks to tourism. Because modern hotels were being built to accommodate the growing number of visitors, thatched roofs were falling out of

fashion, and these birds have nowhere to nest. He took me across the street and into a home to view an electrical pole through a window. Doves had created a nesting space among the rolled wires thanks to a lack of other options. Puri would like to see some of the park funds spent on less charismatic species residing outside the official park boundaries.

Another business owner shared similar concerns, but in his case regarding plants and perceptions (Bandhu interviews, 2019). As tourism grows, he explained, roads are getting wider and busier—but not better cared for. He felt that local government was forgetting that tourists coming to view wildlife did not want rugged roads and ugly walls instead of beautiful tropical plants and lively landscapes. ‘Bandhu’ also wanted some of the park income to go toward city-wide beautification projects and suggested including native species of plants which have been removed in favor of roads.

In contrast, Doma Paudel, the first female nature guide in Nepal and current eco-tourism business owner, feels that the governmental policies surrounding the national park fees are sound, but inadequate.⁷¹ The 30-50% of entrance fees set aside for local communities is simply not enough. Paudel explains that each community needs to make progress towards sustainable development, conservation and livelihood protection goals, but the funds are simply do not cover it all (Paudel interviews, 2019). In addition, Paudel cites a lack of ‘government policy to support people and educate’ them in ways which could increase

⁷¹ Paudel’s name and identifying information is used with her permission.

livelihoods (interviews, 2019). This lack of progress creates negative feelings among community members (Paudel, interviews, 2019; Heinen, 1993; Kellert, et al., 2000). Further creating discontent are current policies on reimbursement for human victims of wildlife attacks within the forest. Many landless people must enter the forest for survival provisioning. Currently, when a human is attacked within the park boundaries, there is no restitution from the government due to the illegality of the practice. Villages surrounding the park face 10-15 fatalities each year from this type of human-wildlife conflict (Paudel, interviews, 2019). In addition, there is no governmentally funded health care in Nepal, nor do most employers offer health insurance, leaving those whose jobs require them to enter the park at risk (Paudel interviews, 2019). For this reason, both the Chitwan Nature Guide Association and ex-pat elephant advocates are eager to develop an insurance safety net for both guides and mahouts (Bames, Brown, Thomas, Paudel interviews, 2019).

Most interlocutors (*including* elephant owners) felt that the government was failing in their responsibility to enforce existing legislation regarding the trade of elephants across the border with India (Crane, Gwala, Minsky, Thomas, Zed interviews, 2019). One explained that elephants are not 'a phone you can put in your pocket' and sneak across the border, so enforcement should not be difficult (Pabin interviews, 2019). Nepalese and Non-Nepalese interlocutors alike felt there was a complete failure to enforce any type of registration, documentation, nutrition or permit requirements for elephant owners. Concern surrounding the transmission of disease across the captive-wild interface (during breeding activities, grazing and

patrolling) and the lack of disease testing for captive individuals were cause for further concern among participants (Crane, Thomas, Zed interviews 2019).

The NTNC and INGO3: a troubled relationship⁷²

Before moving on to discuss elephant health, welfare, and the various other organizations involved in Sauraha, I would like to introduce an NGO that serves as an example of the typical relationship arc in the area. It is likely that no NGO has been as positively impactful, or drawn as much ire from residents of Sauraha, as ‘Sandra Smith’ with INGO3. Initially starting her career as an elephant trainer—who taught her elephant to roller skate for zoo and circus performances—Smith had a change of heart and became interested in elephant welfare and trauma recovery (INGO3, 2018b and 2018c). Smith is a public figure in the United States, a frequent poster on social media (see below), an excellent fundraiser for her current refuge in the US (INGO3, 2018), and has inspired a Facebook group called ‘Sandra Smith Supporters’ (2010). There can be little doubt that in the US Smith has made an impact in raising awareness of global elephant issues.

In 1995, Smith co-founded a large US elephant sanctuary which operated using what she calls a passive restraint management system (see Clubb and Mason, 2002; INGO3, nd). With this type of management, there is no attempt to dominate

⁷² This information comes from INGO3 promotional materials, social media and interviews with NTNC staff including pseudonymised personnel. Other interviewees are cited as needed. Sandra Smith (a pseudonym) declined to have my interviews with her included in this study, and we discussed the potential implications of the author relying solely on publically available data for descriptions of her activities. In the end, the decision was made to include only publically available information, social media and promotional materials.

individuals, or place oneself in a position of power within the herd (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Laule and Whittaker, 2000; see also Appendix I). Instead, the elephants are allowed to express agency by making choices in their daily activities, such as where they rest, eat and with whom they socialize (INGO3, nd:np). Smith refers to this type of management as ‘compassionate elephant care’, and notes that it requires a ‘highly skilled caregiver’ (INGO3, nd). This style of elephant management is likely to positively impact elephant welfare, but there have been no academic studies to determine whether this is the case (Clubb and Mason, 2002). Smith has been encouraging this type of management in Asia, and offers instructional workshops in Thailand and Nepal (INGO3, nd). Despite repeated visits to Nepal to train mahouts, there have been no adoptions of this system in any of the private stables of Sauraha, the NTNC or the government, with the exception of some minor use at Tiger Tops (see chapter four). Discussions with NTNC staff, private owners and westerners living or working in Sauraha paint a complex picture of INGO3’s involvement in the area, and why this type of training and the inclusion of chain-free corrals have failed to achieve results.

Why INGO3 in Asia?

After being asked to leave her original sanctuary in 2009, Smith decided to become involved with international elephant welfare and launched INGO3 (INGO3, 2018b).⁷³ Tourists—and researchers—planning to visit Sauraha may be inspired

⁷³ Smith and INGO3 are featured in a documentary movie following their work in Nepal. This film earned several award nods, including a Golden Sun from the International Environmental Film Festival (imdb.com). Sadly, there are concerns regarding this film from those who were featured in it (Raja and Thomas interviews, 2019). According to elephant owner Raja, he had no idea he was being filmed for use in a documentary (Raja interview, 2019).

by INGO3's online videos showing elephants being freed from chains and released into solar-powered corrals (National Geographic, 2016). Various online news articles claim that Chitwan is a completely chain-free village (News18, 2017; Ways, 2016). In fact, a National Geographic article (Bale, 2016: np) states that, 'When not working, elephants at Chitwan National Park in Nepal used to spend all their time in chains. Now, almost all live chain-free in corrals.' But the reality is quite different.

As mentioned in chapter four, INGO3 was approached by the Tiger Tops hotel group when they decided to build chain-free corrals for their herd, and was instrumental in getting these corrals built. After experiencing deaths due to aggression between individual elephants⁷⁴ (Thakur interview, 2019), Tiger Tops rethought their approach. Following careful consideration of individual elephant personalities and needs, they have since become successful in releasing elephants from foot chains and into large corrals. The program at Tiger Tops continues to serve as an example of chain-free management, however these methods have not proven successful in other stables.

For example, INGO3 spent considerable time and money installing 54 chain-free corrals in cooperation with the government of Nepal and the National Trust for Nature Conservation (INGO3, 2020a). If you view the INGO3 website, you might think these corrals changed the lives of elephants around Chitwan, and they did -

⁷⁴ It is important to note that these deaths were not due to INGO3 or Smith's involvement, according to Thakur, but rather due to mistaken assumptions by staffers as to which elephants would reside safely together. See chapter four, this thesis.

for a few months (INGO3, 2020a). However, as the National Geographic video (Bale, 2016) admits at its end, 'not all the corrals were successful'. In fact, within a matter of months most NTNC and government elephants returned to leg chains (Bale, 2016; Peggy, Larina, Sama, Thomas interviews and PC 2019). One reason for this rapid return to traditional methods came when, according to NTNC staff, a male elephant released into the corral abruptly broke through and killed another individual (interview, 2019). This is not uncommon - electric fences have been used throughout India, Nepal and Africa with varying degrees of success (Kalam, et al., 2018; Kioko, et al., 2008; Sapkota, et al., 2014), and locals report that wild elephants are rarely deterred by electrified fences (Cheetri, Larina, Mohan interviews, 2017 and 2019). NTNC management and private owners alike were hesitant to risk their elephants in chain-free corrals following the escape. Very few of the chain-free corrals remain functional today; the majority of NTNC corrals have been torn down and moved to trash piles (figure 4). Staffers explain that the NTNC does not want to spend the money to fix or maintain these fences, claiming that wild bulls will simply destroy them and chase off unchained females. And they have a history of doing just that - destroying corrals, mahout housing, and hattisar fences around town. The damage is extreme and widespread.



Figure 4 Electric fence posts in the NTNC trash heap.

Sauraha, Nepal. Photo by the author. April 17, 2019.

A few government-run corrals maintain their electrified areas as back-up restraint for bulls in musth, although the ability of these fences to contain hormonal adult males is regularly questioned (Larina and Vidantainterviews, 2019), and males kept in these corrals during musth are still chained (observations, 2017 and 2019). Despite the failure of chain-free corrals in Nepal, at the time of writing the INGO3 website still claimed that a ‘total of 106 elephants {sic} released from chains forever in Nepal, Thailand and India’, and that ‘the Nepali government has gone chain-free with all its female elephants at its 15 elephant facilities, freeing 54 elephants’ (INGO3, 2020a).

INGO3’s efforts in Nepal have stalled (Bames, Brown, Cheetri, Randy, Sama, Thomas interviews, 2019 and PC 2020). According to elephant owners and welfare advocates (of several ethnicities who asked to remain anonymous),

mahout classes which were being offered at the NTNC/BCC are no longer allowed, and INGO3 is not permitted to do further work with private elephants (except those maintained by non-Nepalese NGOs) in Sauraha, and was denied access to government elephants (anonymous PC, 2020). Nepalese individuals who assisted Smith on her last trip were reportedly threatened with loss of employment if they continue to communicate with her, and others were told to chase or 'drag her' out of the country (anonymous and Gwala interviews, 2020).

According to interlocutors, the reason for this hostility is due to INGO3 and Smith's social media presence (Barnes, Rao, Thomas, Vidanta, interviews 2019; PC, 2020). For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, INGO3 raised thousands of dollars purportedly to provide produce to elephants in the Sauraha area (INGO3, 2020a-c). Videos and photos showing fruit and vegetable deliveries appeared online, and Smith began to take credit for saving the privately owned elephants of Nepal by feeding 70 elephants each a 50-pound bag of produce (Smith, 2020a-e). However, when I reached out to elephant owners, they painted a very different picture. Many said they did not receive any produce, some said they refused the deliveries due to prior social media posts, and others perceived that Smith's posts really served to raise money for her interests in the US instead of feeding elephants in Nepal (Rajesh and Vachan PC, 2020). One went so far as to use the catchphrase 'fake news' (Rajesh PC, 2020). This is one example of the wide range of perspectives which make cooperation among elephant owners and advocates challenging. Efforts to help elephants may require further perspective-taking and increased communication with the owners' cooperative itself.

INGO3 (2020 a-e) videos state that surrounding villages were positively affected by these produce drops (Smith 2020a-c), which took place 4-5 times over the first eight months of the pandemic (Brown, Bames, Rajesh, Randy, Thomas and Vachan PC 2020). While purchasing local produce for the elephants did no doubt help support local farmers and pickers who are struggling following the loss of tourist income, the addition of a few kilograms of produce a day was hardly 'a snack' for most elephants, according to interlocuters (Brown, Bames interviews, 2020). While produce is a good addition to pachyderm diets, the small amount offered did little to ease dietary limitations during the lockdown (Brown, Bames, Rajesh, Randy, Thomas and Vachan interviews and PC, 2020). Some locals felt that these efforts *did* assist mahouts, however, since they were able to choose produce for their own family before offering it to their elephants (Brown, Bames, Rajesh, Randy, Thomas, Vachan PC, 2020). Further creating conflict with owners, Smith claimed on the 'Good News Network' (2020) that her efforts in alerting the Nepalese government to the need for grazing rights earned privately-owned elephants access to the protected forest during the lockdown (see following chapter). While owners also claim that this permission was granted thanks to their efforts, chief conservation officer Rupakheti claims that permission to graze was never granted to private owners, nor will it ever be (Mandal, 2020).

Perceptions of Smith and INGO3

One informant described Smith as an unfortunate 'victim', as her attempts to help elephants began to bring unwanted attention to issues with elephant health and

welfare, resulting in her vilification by owners and the NTNC (Gwala interviews 2020). Sadly, by mid-2020 all international organizations interviewed for this thesis, and many local ones, claimed to have cut ties with INGO3 with the exception of INGO2's founder (Brown, Bames, Gwala, Randy, Thomas, Vidanta, interviews, 2019; PC 2020). Other organisations have accused INGO3 of wanting a 'monopoly of foot care' in the area, and organisational leaders reported being attacked verbally or via text and email when they tried to become active in the Sauraha area, blocked on social media, or simply denied any response to communication (Bames, Brown, Johnson, Randy and Thomas PC 2020). While most people interviewed for this study described Smith as 'dedicated' to elephants, felt she wanted to 'help' them, and was attempting to do the 'right thing' (Brown, Bames, Crane, Gwala, Minsky, Randy, Thomas, Vidanta, PC 2020) only one organization described Smith's methods as effectively aiding elephants within Nepal. Smith continues to be an asset for INGO2, which will be discussed in the following chapters. In addition, staff at the NTNC stated that Smith is welcome back into Nepal at any time as long as the social media posts stop (Rao, Vidantainterviews, 2019).

An important point to consider is that these social media posts, while problematic for elephant owners, have been proven to work. A study by Swim and Bloodhart (2015: 462) found that portraying the suffering of animals and asking people to view them empathetically was much more effective at getting people to donate money to a cause. As Gautam (2020: np) pointed out earlier in this thesis, 'misery pimping' works well as a fundraising tactic. Haynes and Thornton (2004: np)

elicited similar results, finding that creating feelings of worry or guilt garnered higher donations and more support for causes (see also Swim and Bloodhart, 2015). Perhaps in this way INGO3 will be successful in bringing issues with elephant care to light, or raising funds for future elephant sanctuaries in Nepal.

Conclusions

The government of Nepal's stated aims include the preservation of biodiversity and ecological integrity in its most productive region— the Terai Arc Landscape of Nepal, home to Chitwan National Park. As the legal owner of all non-human animals throughout the country, the government has a responsibility to ensure the well-being of charismatic and endangered wildlife, as well as less popular species. Towards this goal, the government contracts with various NGOs such as the National Trust for Nature Conservation. Together, these organizations care for both wild and captive elephants.

While wild elephants are fiercely protected in Nepal, there is little legislation regarding captive individuals. Traditional elephant breaking and training procedures have come under fire for decades, yet little has changed as mahouts continue to use methods reliant upon dominance, control and violence. It is important to consider that these mahouts may themselves be trapped, forced to use methods pressed upon them by hattisar management, and with which they may not agree. Alternatively, mahouts may simply believe the social fact that beating and dominance are necessary for their safety and that of tourists.

Traditional passage of mahout knowledge along familial lines is no longer the norm, and therefore current elephant-keeping practices may need to be reexamined. What is clear is that further studies into the health and welfare of elephants, and the perspectives of mahouts, at both government and NTNC facilities are needed. In addition, research which considers both elephants and mahouts as equal working partners is overdue.

In addition, the government serves as the primary employer of captive elephants in Nepal, and their breeding centre the only facility currently able to produce the next generation of patrol and park service elephants. While these endangered individuals perform a vital function for the national parks system, their health and welfare has been largely overlooked in research. On paper, the government appears to be 'doing their best' from an ethical standpoint, providing 'necessary care' such as required amounts of fodder and provisions for veterinary care. In practice, the government is failing in efforts to enforce these requirements and are creating further problems by formally encouraging the illegal acquisition of elephants from India.

The NTNC faces similar dissonance between their stated aims and their practices. The NTNC serves to protect endangered lands and species, yet NTNC-owned elephants and their mahouts serve dual purposes—as research assistants and tourist conveyances. The use of an endangered species by a conservation organization, especially as a means of income, is concerning to both Nepalese and non-Nepalese observers. Furthermore, NTNC conservation officers disagree

about whether the use of these elephants for money-making practices is necessary, ethical, or simply entertainment.

Privately-held elephants live a very different life than government or NTNC elephants, and the next chapter introduces private owners and their cooperative. With the market in elephant-backed safari cornered, these owners have control over the stables of Sauraha, their elephants, and mahouts. As the next chapter will demonstrate, any organizations interested in making a change in elephant care will need to come to an agreement with this cooperative.

Seven: Owning Hatti

While the government is the main employer of captive elephants in Nepal, at any given time an additional 50-60 elephants reside in the private hattisars of Sauraha (Brown, Rao, Vidantainterviews, 2019). These hattisars are owned by hoteliers, restaurateurs and a variety of other community members. Typically living alone or in pairs, these elephants serve as tourist conveyances through the buffer zones of Chitwan National Park. This chapter introduces the elephant owners, their cooperative, and the single owner who refuses to join. This chapter contributes a unique perspective on elephant use in Nepal, as the story of the cooperative's origins and its evolving practices has never before been told. Thanks to a long-term working relationship between the author and several elephant owners in Nepal, they were willing to share their stories here. Not all of these stories agree upon the 'facts', however, and some directly contradict one another.

The United Elephant Operation Cooperative Limited (UEOC)

Prior to the early 1900s, captive elephant use and care in Nepal was regulated by the monarchy (Krauskopff and Meyer, 2000 in Locke, 2008; Locke, 2011). When elephant tourism began, few regulations existed regarding the use and care of these individuals (Rao, Gairhe interviews, 2019). Safari elephants spent their days under a howdah packed with as many tourists as could squeeze in, travelling back and forth through the buffer zones of the national park (Rao, Gairhe interviews, 2019). Each lodge would provide their own elephants for these tours, which left from the hotel property—some of which are 5 km from the national parks, adding

to the length of elephant and mahout workdays. These safaris continued until every guest, sometimes numbering in the hundreds, was accommodated (Rao interviews, 2019).

According to Rao, NTNC Project Manager, hotelier and elephant owner, privately owned elephants were not that common when Chitwan National Park was new. The cost of an elephant was prohibitive, but many community members saw the few owners getting rich and wanted to participate but lacked the cash to 'buy in'. Some people pooled their money and bought or rented 'shares' of elephants. In the early years, there were no established prices for these tickets, so owners could vary costs in response to demand or the ethnicity of the riders (Rao, Gairhe interviews, 2019). In an attempt to combat this disorganization and competition, two separate groups formed which loosely united owners and provided an equal cut of the profits as well as mediation for disputes (Rao interviews, 2019). These groups began to actively recruit non-elephant owners, pressuring them to buy elephants to increase their numbers (Bandhu and Raja interviews, 2019).

Rao felt that combining the two organizations would make better business sense. He approached the leader of the competition and together they formed the 'first elephant cooperative in the world' (Rao, Gairhe, Gwala interviews, 2019). Eventually, all private owners, save one, in the Sauraha area joined the new United Elephant Owners' Cooperative (UEOC). This allowed the coop to divide hotel guests among the (then) 54 member-owned elephants, allegedly cutting down on the number each elephant was required to carry (Rao, Vachan

interviews, 2019). Elephant-mahout pairs were assigned by cooperative staff to each gate, and only the number of pairs needed for that day were asked to report for duty. All of these teams cycled through rides over time, which ensured 'equal' profits for owners (Rao, Vachan interviews, 2019). Cooperative membership was not required, yet every elephant owner in Sauraha, save one whose story will be shared later in this chapter, chose to join (Raja and Rao interviews, 2019). One reason cited for this large-scale cooperation was the fact the coop guaranteed a steady income stream without the stress of racing for the gates. Another unique characteristic of the UEOC was the collection of monies from owners' shares to maintain an 'emergency welfare fund', which covered costs associated with emergencies or accidents to guests or local community members (Gwala, interview 2020 and Vachan, 2019).

When not on safari, both privately-owned and government elephants previously spent the majority of their time chained in fields without shelter (Rao interviews, 2019), and one of the first requirements of the original coop was the construction of roofs. Another positive change was the discontinuation of punishment tools such as boards with exposed nails used by mahouts to force elephants to move. Other tools, such as the tengari (or axe)⁷⁵ were formerly used to 'beat and slice' the elephant when she did not obey, and according to Rao, the blood and the elephant's pain was obvious. The cooperative declared that only the flat side of the tool could be used for striking. When I mentioned to Rao that I observed numerous drivers beating elephants with the sharp side of the axe, he told me that this was

⁷⁵ Other drivers use the traditional khurki knife, a curved metal tool that resembles a machete.

simply 'not possible' (Rao interviews, 2019). These caregiving rules—and their disregard—will be discussed in following chapters of this thesis.

According to Rao, other advances piloted by the UEOC included moving the mahouts into housing near their elephant co-workers, and having tourists mount the elephants at the gates near the forest instead of at each hotel. This change in loading areas cut down the amount of time elephants were carrying guests and was an attempt to make their work easier (Rao interviews, 2019). As demand for rides grew, tourists faced stiff competition to get tickets. Owners and mahouts also competed, rushing their elephants to be the first at the gates to ensure a full day's profits. Now that the profits are equally shared (see above), this race has ended. According to Rao and other owners, elephants now shared the walk to the safari gates with other elephants (and without guests on their backs), promoting their well-being, and their working hours were shortened (Rajesh, Rao, Vachan interviews, 2019).

With the advent of the cooperative, other changes in veterinary care and husbandry occurred. Scheduled deworming and increased veterinary care became more common and the diets of captive elephants expanded to include salt, molasses and vitamins - all necessary, according to Rao (Rao, Gairhe, Sama, mahout group interviews, 2019). The UEOC is able to purchase sugarcane, rice and straw in bulk to ensure better prices and provide a reliable source of food for their members' elephants, which many feel has increased their overall health (de Vries, 2014; Rajesh, Rao interviews, 2019; Gwala, interview, 2020).

When asked how they know what constitutes the 'best care' for their elephants, every owner participating in this study referred to the mahouts as the primary caregiver for elephants, responsible for keeping them healthy and happy. Ravi Saroj, the NTNC veterinary technician, explains that mahout-elephant bonds are getting stronger over time. He feels that mahouts 'love elephant {sic} better now than before', and have realized that when it comes to elephants, if 'you treat them better, they will treat you better' (Saroj interviews, 2019).

UEOC gate assignments

What may surprise some visitors to Chitwan National Park is that each elephant is assigned to a gate depending upon the level of danger/difficulty that may be faced by guests (Vachan interviews, 2019). 'Reliable' elephants are sent to Gate C, where they are ridden by people with physical difficulties, the very young and the elderly. Gate B is assigned to elephants labelled as 'medium' difficulty, and those elephants deemed troublesome or hard to control go to Gate A, where guests in 'good health' are loaded. Some elephants are sent to Gate A because there is 'a lot of motion' when they walk, and guests might be shaken up (Vachan interviews 2019). According to Vachan, the reason this classification is not publicized is that guests would all demand to be taken to Gate A to experience the more exciting elephants.

Former cooperative leadership

Dahal⁷⁶ is the immediate past president of the elephant owners' cooperative, and current president of the Sauraha Regional Hotel Association. During his tenure in the UEOC, Dahal claims he changed '90 percent' of the things they were doing. In his opinion, owners were too focused on money, and elephants forced to participate in safaris up to nine times daily. He felt that since there were people—including animal rights activists—concerned about the number of safaris undertaken each day, that the UEOC should cut back to twice a day, morning and evening—with a maximum of four people on each elephant. Unless, he added, there were a lot of tourists. Then the elephants should be limited to twice in the morning and twice in the evening. Unless, he says, there is a festival, and then more rides should be allowed. During the busy times of year, these elephants are still required to perform up to nine safaris a day (mahout group interviews, Vachan, 2019; observations, 2017 and 2019).

Dahal brings up a logistical issue with limiting elephants to two riders at a time—the cost for each rider would have to go up significantly. Park entrance fees are charged per elephant and cutting down on the number of riders per safari increases the number of elephants needed, and likewise the number of entrance fees due. Raising safari ticket prices would then be necessary to ensure owners generate enough income to cover their expenses. One of these expenses is appropriate shelter, which Dahal—like Rao before him—claims was a requirement added during his presidency (Dahal interviews, 2019).

⁷⁶ A pseudonym.

According to Dahal, many of the owners say they are open to cutting back on safari rides, but things will not change as long as the high safari income continues. He publicly challenged those who wish to change the riding culture to come up with alternative income opportunities for locals (News18, 2017). Dahal claims that he is working with INGO6 to create chain-free enclosures for the cooperative's elephants and is looking for donors to fund a private corral for his elephant.

Dahal explains that during his term, the UEOC decided that they needed to hire their own veterinarian⁷⁷, and now allegedly pay Dr Vidanta to perform weekly checks, maintain records and prescribe any needed medications. In addition, the former government veterinarian, Dr Gairhe, is reportedly contracted to attend to these elephants. According to Vidanta, he does receive a salary from the coop, but there are no 'scheduled' weekly checks; health care is simply provided as needed (interviews, 2019). When I pushed Dahal about these visits, he told me they might be more likely monthly checks, or simply as-needed visits (interviews, 2019).

Dahal was very vocal about elephant treatment during his tenure as vice-president and president of the UEOC, and was cited in numerous news and travel articles speaking about the cooperative (MSN, 2020; Ways, 2016). One article claims that all of the female elephants in Sauraha are chain-free during the day, living 'as freely as humans', and that questionable calf-breaking techniques are no longer

⁷⁷ Again, Bhattarai is not the only president to have made this claim

used in the area (Putatunda, 2017: np).⁷⁸ Dahal, like other past presidents, claims to have discontinued use of the metal bull hook, and says that all of the captive cooperative elephants are 'healthy'. Older elephants are said to be retired, and spend their days grazing or resting in the stable with their mahout. However, neither myself nor any interlocutors in this study could find any of these private, retired elephants in Sauraha (Rao, Vachan interviews, 2019; observations, 2014, 2017, 2019). When asked, Dahal explained that in reality these elephants are 'sometimes' 'sold to India' (interview, 2019).

When asked about his public claim that all female elephants are chain-free during the day (Putatunda, 2017: np), Dahal tells me that they have 'only a small chain', 'a normal chain they could break', which is 'not really a chain' at all. Some, he says, are tied with only a rope. When I mention the fact that every elephant but two that I have visited has been chained, he says he simply can't enforce the rules—and he can't afford to build a chain-free corral for them all. He also suggested people take up issues with the government, claiming that the government is ultimately responsible for implementing change (Ways, 2016)—despite his claims to the contrary regarding the power of the UEOC during his interviews with the author (2019). Dahal is quoted as saying :

The animal rights groups constantly accuse private elephant owners of cruelty. Yet it is us who have made elephants chain-free and have introduced cruelty free elephant training. The government elephants are still chained and use traditional breaking in methods. We challenge them to deal with the government directly. But they don't, because the government refuse {sic} to deal with them directly. So they keep coming back to us (Bhattarai in Ways, 2016: np).

⁷⁸ Despite the fact that this training is regularly observed by outsiders at the breeding centre (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011, Locke, 2011b; observations 2017 and 2019).

Dahal's statement was echoed in interviews with other owners. They feel that the government should be required to offer access to more parts of the buffer zone and national park to support private owners (Vachan interviews, 2019). Some go as far as claiming that if the government really loved elephants, they would grant access, or move the elephant entry gates closer to the main hotels (Vachan interviews, 2019). Others felt that one of the major issues was the corrupt government not letting the money made on park entry fees trickle down to where it is most needed (Kipu and Saroj interviews, 2019).

The UEOC today

'Mr Soti' ascended to the UEOC presidency in early 2019, after serving in numerous other UEOC roles. He describes himself as 'different' from other owners who are 'rich' men, in that he has had to struggle to send his three children to school (one is now a veterinarian). He explains that having an elephant is important if one wants to have 'power' in the hotel business and remain competitive, and describes himself as a 'lucky man' since he has been able to 'work with' elephants for the last 15 years (interviews, 2019). Soti feels that he 'understands elephants', and wants to make a difference in the way tourist safari rides are conducted. Elephants, he explains, are individuals like people and should be treated as such. Some are friendlier than others, but they all have their own 'habits'. Some elephants are 'honest' and can be left unchained, while some are 'naughty' and need to be restrained (interviews, 2019). Soti freely expresses his 'love' for his elephants, and explains that they are 'sentient' 'family' members, just like his parents. This family-type relationship, according to Soti, is the reason

elephants are so deeply tied to his culture and why he takes such good care of them (interviews, 2019). This sense of interspecies kinship has been well described in academic literature from around the globe (Charles, 2014; Charles and Davies, 2011; Harris, 2011; Tipper, 2011), even between humans and sacrificial animals (Govindrajan, 2015). Interspecies kin is based on 'affinity, not consanguinity' (Sahlins, 2013: 11), and results from a sense of belonging to one another (Edwards and Strathern, 2000: 149). These kinships do not always result in lasting positive welfare for animals (for example Govindrajan's {2015} sacrificial kin), as will be demonstrated in this and following chapters.

Soti has plans to protect his kin, and wants to make changes within the owners' cooperative. He would like to see what he calls a 'proper doctor' (veterinarian) hired exclusively by the elephant owners' cooperative; one without ties to the NTNC (interviews, 2019). In addition, Soti acknowledges that there are mahouts who continue to beat and mistreat elephants, and says he would like to end this practice. He hopes to improve the lives of elephants by reducing the number of safaris offered each day, and implementing a weight limit for riders.

In addition, Soti feels that good nutrition is key to longevity, and because the government owns all of the good elephant grazing areas, they need to offer up some land for riding and grazing. Provisioned nutrition could also be improved, and Soti wants to add more rice to elephant diets and better access to fresh water. Life insurance on elephants is another key 'desire' on his list of goals, as is the oft-repeated desire to relocate stables closer to the tourist gates. This would decrease

the elephant rush hour traffic following the last safari of the day, and the number of cars elephants must face (Raja, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). Of course, these same goals have been proclaimed by previous presidents and Soti may simply be listing items which he thinks I would appreciate hearing as someone interested in elephant welfare.

Soti has implemented several changes since my last visit to Sauraha. He has installed closed-circuit cameras in the loading gate office, and there are now signs at the safari gates with clearly stated prices. These prices are dependent upon one's nationality: Nepalis pay 1250 Nrs, SAARC nations 1750 Nrs, and other nationalities up to 5000 Nrs (around 50 USD). Placing these signs at the entrance gate ensures that drivers—or owners—don't attempt to charge more for their safari, and is meant to create a feeling of trust for tourists. But, Soti adds, if 'you don't check the price that is your fault' (interview, 2019).

Owners' thoughts on the future

Owners and veterinary staff seem divided on the future of elephants in the Sauraha area. A commonly heard refrain was that if elephant rides stopped, tourism would also (Rao, Pabin, Saroj and Vidanta interviews 2019). Others worried that without elephants, there would be nowhere for older generations to visit and pay respects to these representations of Ganesha (Vidantainterviews, 2019). Some liked the idea of Sauraha as a 'destination' area for elephant-free tourism, explaining that the area was getting a 'bad reputation' for the rides, but early in my research none were willing to commit to stopping them (Raja, Rajesh

and Vachan interviews, 2019; see chapter ten). The first step, said one, is to sustain the business while improving elephant nutrition, mahout training (to decrease beatings) and the use of wooden instead of metal training tools. Another suggested earlier ages for elephant retirement and subsequent moves to a sanctuary situation (Vachan interview, 2019).

One of the issues impacting communication between the cooperative and welfare advocates is the large gap in perspective—perhaps owing to their very different definitions of what constitutes ‘good care’ for elephants and mahouts (see below). Owners felt that they were better understood by representatives from larger international organizations, but stated that everyone is welcome in the area as long as they do not cause trouble which impacts tourism (Rao, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). One of the complaints owners voiced towards safari-ending advocates was that these advocates did not offer a viable alternative which would ensure continued income (Rajesh, Rao, Sama, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). Owners felt that without safari rides, they would be unable to afford to feed elephants and pay mahouts (Pabin, Rajesh and Vidanta interviews, 2019).

The UEOC and COVID-19

As touched upon in chapter six, when COVID-19 spread across the globe, some activists jumped in to take advantage of the perfect opportunity for fundraising, bringing in thousands of dollars in the name of feeding starving, privately-owned elephants in Sauraha. In March and April of 2020, Dahal and Soti took to the press to decry a shortage of grain and other nutritious food for elephants due to the lack

of tourists during the COVID outbreak and its subsequent lockdowns (Acharya, 2020; Onlinekhabar, 2020). According to the report, elephants do not have access to fresh grasses since there are no tourist rides through the buffer zone of the national forest. It is during these rides, according to Bhattarai, that the elephants would typically graze, and Bhattarai was worried that elephants would begin to starve without them (2020). The government of Nepal opened up sections of the community forest to these elephants at the request of private owners, but quickly reversed this decision (Soti PC, 2020), citing a concern for disease transmission from captive to wild populations, among other reasons (Onlinekhabar, 2020).

The cooperative then requested that they be allowed to have grasses collected from the national park, and claimed that the national park management was cutting grass and disposing of it rather than offering it to elephant owners (Acharya, 2020; Onlinekhabar, 2020). When contacted in June of 2020, these owners denied any need for assistance, reporting in emails that while income was severely reduced due to a lack of tourists, elephants were now free throughout the day, and able to graze and consume browse for longer periods of time (Bhattarai, Gautam and Soti PC, 2020). They were still hoping that forest grazing would be reinstated to provide a better variety of fresh browsing opportunities for their elephants (Soti PC, 2020). According to the Chief Conservation Officer of CNP, it is the responsibility of the private elephant owners to provide food, but in an emergency he claims the government will step in to help (Onlinekhabar, 2020).

According to Gautam (interview, 2020), INGO6 reached out to elephant owners in Sauraha to offer help during the pandemic, but were told that there was no need. The staff at Tiger Tops Tharu Village, however, accepted help from INGO6 to purchase food and supplies during the pandemic (Gautam, interview, 2020).

Citing a lack of tourist income, ten of the elephants rented from foreign owners were returned in the spring of 2020, and at least eight elephants subsequently left the area during summer and fall—many heading for sale in India (Chitwan Post Daily, 2020; Brown, Randy, Thomas PC, 2020). Numbers are difficult to confirm with owners, given the illegality of these sales (CITES, 1973). In addition, one NTNC elephant died of a vaginal prolapse, and two government elephants died of TB (Brown, Gairhe, Vidanta PC, 2020). While parts of Sauraha and Chitwan National Park reopened to tourism in July of 2020 (Taraswin, Thomas PC, 2020), tourism numbers have not returned to normal.

Perspectives on the elephant cooperative

Some elephant owners and non-owners report that the care of elephants has improved since the inception of the cooperative, including a change from focusing exclusively on money-making to an increased concern for elephant husbandry (Rao, Bandhu and Vidantainterviews, 2019). In addition, they felt that the elephants get more of a rest now between safari rides, and have shelters which provide a break from direct sun (Bandhu, Rao and Vidantainterviews, 2019). Veterinary staff felt that the formation of the cooperative helped spread the load

around, so that the hotel's elephants don't have to carry every guest (Rao, Vidantainterviews, 2019).

While the husbandry of elephants may have been improved since the inception of the UEOC, the welfare of those humans concerned with elephant health and welfare has not. Outsiders described the UOEC as a 'mafia' organization run by a 'bunch of thugs' (Randy and Smith interviews, 2019). One young activist who spoke out against the use of elephants in tourism told me he was threatened with death (Teraswin interview, 2019), and the head of an international NGOs says he was 'scared for my life and my staffs life' {sic} (Smith, PC; Teraswin interview, 2019; Gwala interviews, 2020). Nepalese leaders of NGOs report that members of INGOs have been targeted for beatings or death, and NTNC staff were instructed not to associate with certain INGO employees or they would also face abuse (Gwala interview, 2019). To non-Nepalese, I am certain these descriptions create a sense of concern for the 'unethical' behaviour of Nepalese elephant owners. However, could this be a case of people inhabiting a 'different moral world' (Laidlaw, 2010: 158)? While the interlocutors above felt that any behaviour which kept them from advocating for elephants was the result of mafia-like behaviour, to the elephant owners who are facing the loss of a very profitable income stream (one which is intimately tied to their religious icons; see Ramanathapillai, 2009; 29,31), it may seem as though their belief system is under attack by outsiders (Vidantainterview 2019). While a sense of cultural relativity is, for some, a questionable anthropological practice (Bagramian, 2019; Brown, 2008; Jarvie, 2015; Kohn, 2015; Palecek and Risjord, 2013), some perspective-taking of the

beliefs of others is needed to find a common language through which to positively impact change. One option may be to embrace Haraway's (1988) 'situated knowledges', in which one accepts that objective disengagement is impossible. Rather than seeking an objective, stable truth and deriving power from 'being right', we might strive instead to accept that knowledge, truth and reality are all being actively constructed and co-constructed. Critical reflection of one's vantage point is vital, as is finding others willing to share their 'partial perspective' (Haraway, 1988: 586). After all, Haraway (1988) explains, reality is born of these community interactions.

Community responses to the UEOC

The Chitwan National Park Nature Guide Cooperative has now withdrawn any support of elephant tourism, and explain that private elephants are under a 'lot of stress' (Aadita, Naresh, Raj, Paudel interviews, 2019). Guides and local community members would like to see all riding activities ceased, and alternative (non-elephant based) money-making opportunities and sustainable development initiatives brought into the area instead (Aadita, Brown, Naresh, Pabin, Paudel, Taraswin, Thomas interviews, 2019). Guides felt that their voices were not being heard by the elephant cooperative, and have publicized their city-wide decision not to support elephant rides; some are demanding an immediate end to safaris (Naresh, Paudel, Raj interview 2019). Others took a more moderate approach, acknowledging that things are changing, but must proceed slowly or elephants will find themselves suddenly out of work and in worse conditions (Paudel interviews, 2019). Some guides expressed concern for what they called 'torture' endured by

elephants on safari, and a desire for elephants to have a choice in how they spend their days (Aadita, Baideni interviews, 2019). They felt that if people really ‘understood’ elephants and their importance in nature conservation, there would be no riding (Aadita, Baideni interviews, 2019).

The UEOC is connected to the national park in an important way—the majority of funding for Chitwan National Park comes from tourist entry fees, and elephant safaris are a big money-maker for the park (GoN, 2015a; see literature review, this thesis). For this reason, some people see elephant backed safari and the associated tourist attractions, such as the breeding centre discussed in prior chapters, as important ‘conservation activities’, feeling that this income greatly benefits wildlife in the area (Gairhe, 2012; Yadav, 2003; Rao interviews, 2019). In fact, one group which regularly visits the area admits that they still ride elephants while publicly promoting wild elephant conservation (Jones interviews, 2019 and 2020). However, some interlocutors expressed concern that the hotel owners benefit more from the community elephant rides than the community does (Kipu, Raja interviews, 2019). They felt that funds from admission tickets to PAs do not make it back to the community they purport to fund, an impression supported by academic literature (Bookbinder, et al., 1998; Puri, 2019: 78; Sullivan, 2006)

Other issues

Some interlocutors explained that elephant owners ‘do the best’ they can towards keeping elephants in ‘good health’, since these elephants are an ‘investment’ and ‘if elephant dead, no money {sic}’ (Raj interview, 2019). However, the true cost of

feeding and caring for these elephants is a well-guarded secret among Nepalese owners (Brown, Rao, Vachan and Gwala interviews, 2019 and Gwala, 2020). Some non-Nepalese participants in this study—elephant rescuers or NGOs—calculated a minimum of at least 6500 USD annually per elephant for high quality food, on top of mahout salaries, mahout housing, health insurance, etc. Total costs may run upwards of 19,000 USD annually (Bames, Brown, Thomas interviews, 2019; PC, 2020). The few owners who will speak publicly on the matter have stated that they pay between 8000-12000 USD per year, per elephant (Rao, Kumar interviews, 2019; Randy, Thomas interviews, 2019; Mandal, 2020). As noted in the last chapter, these costs do not include mahout insurance, and that mahouts at these facilities are paid peon wages while performing nearly triple the workload of other peon level employees (the lowest income tier in Nepal) (Yadav, 2003: 28).

Safari *income* is another closely guarded secret. Some owners claim that they make 2000 USD a month for three elephants, and others around 1000 per elephant per month (Kumar, Rao and Vachan interviews, 2019). According to a 2014 report, each elephant was bringing in 1250 USD monthly (de Vries, 2014). While the actual amount varies depending upon who is speaking, there seems to be agreement that the income from elephants appears to be dropping while the cost of purchasing elephants rises.

Part of the reason for this secrecy lies in preserving the value of this 'lively capital' (Haraway, 2008: 46; Rajan, 2012: 2). Businessmen are keen to protect their

investment, and one way to do so is to ensure no one really knows how much income is derived from tourist safari. Those owners who are willing to discuss elephant sales prices often ask the same amount they paid to acquire the elephant, even if decades have passed since the initial purchase (Rao, Vidantainterviews, 2019).

Public relations

An additional problem affecting perceptions of the UEOC is that of the annual elephant festival in Sauraha each December. This festival includes a beauty pageant, races, polo and football matches (Brown, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). While even the cooperative leadership team admits that the festival doesn't draw the numbers that are used in marketing for the festival, there are still many members who want to see the practice continue (Vachan interviews, 2019). Some owners admit that festival times are hard on elephants, with a rise in the number of public safaris per day, elevated stress levels resulting in more beatings, and government officials demanding rides for themselves and their families (Rajesh interviews, 2019). The annual protest over the festival gained international attention in 2019, as more than 50 international organizations signed a petition asking that the festival end. PETA released a video showing cruelty to elephants, and at least ten companies ended their sponsorship of the event, while protestors led by Nepalese activists carried signs and marched against the event (Paudel, Taraswin PC, 2020; see MSN, 2020; MyRepublica, 2020; PETA, 2020). NGOS offered to provide an extra picnic for the elephants in place of the football games, but their offer was declined (Bames interviews, 2019).

Creating adversarial relationships is not the way to solve conflicts over elephant treatment, explains one of the non-violent protesters (Taraswin interviews, 2019; see also Kontogeorgopoulos, 2020). Typically, organizations use social media and word of mouth over outright protest, as they believe that building communication and focusing on smaller positive changes to improve welfare for elephants is the way forward (Paudel and Taraswin interview, 2019). One activist explained that they would like to find a solution that will be beneficial for the owners, while protecting the elephants (Taraswin interviews, 2019). However, protesting at the annual festival is necessary to bring international attention to ongoing cruel practices (Paudel and Taraswin interviews, 2019).

‘Rudra Raja’, independent owner⁷⁹

Rudra Raja is the unique elephant owner mentioned in the previous section—the solitary holdout from membership the Sauraha elephant owners’ cooperative. During interviews for this thesis Raja explained that he ‘likes to make his own decisions’, and doesn’t want to be a small part of a big group, but rather make a name for himself. The current president of the cooperative, offered Raja a post in the UEOC in an attempt to get him to join. Raja refused, but reports feeling repeatedly pressured to join when he first began buying elephants. Now, the cooperative lets him do his own thing.

⁷⁹ Information in this section comes from interviews with Rudra Raja, Prakesh Vidanta and Ravi Saroj, unless otherwise noted. The potential implications of using positions and names were discussed with each, and the decision was made to pseudonymise here.

Interested in expanding from his handicrafts and canoe businesses more than a decade ago, Raja decided to purchase an elephant and chose a young bull named 'Dhonu Gaj'. According to Raja, he had no elephant experience and did not realize that a bull elephant might require different handling than a female. He purchased the bull and began participating in the tourist safari business. Raja continued to expand his herd, and purchased several female elephants. According to Dr Vidanta, NTNC veterinarian, these elephants did not do well. Unclear on proper elephant husbandry, Raja explains that 'big animal' can result in 'big mistakes'. He explains that he had no idea how to care for them, and three of his elephants died. Dr Vidanta felt that Raja kept his elephants too thin—Raja thought that a thin elephant is a quick elephant who would provide a better safari ride. NTNC veterinary staff attempted to get involved in the care of these elephants, but their advice was unwelcome. In addition, Raja opted to treat a wounded elephant without veterinary assistance, and according to veterinary staff the elephant's wounds never healed. One of Raja's elephants became dehydrated after not drinking for three days, and IV fluids were prescribed. These fluids were declined, but some medication was accepted. The elephant perished.

One of Raja's female elephants became pregnant and gave birth to a female calf, Sita. This calf is one of only two juvenile elephants in the area born from a captive male—all others are offspring of wild bulls (Gairhe, 2012; Kharel, 2002; see chapter one). Sadly, Sita's mother Ana Kali died while Sita was still a calf. According to interlocutors, her death can be attributed to being restrained by all

four feet immediately after giving birth, and then being too quickly returned to work (anonymous interviews, 2019).

Perspectives on Raja

Raja was described as a novice businessman, but an honest person (Vachan interviews, 2019). However, this same individual explains that he made an offer for one of Raja's elephants and was told the elephant was not for sale; at the same time another interlocutor was involved in negotiations to buy the same elephant (Vachan interviews, 2019), casting doubts on these claims. While one local described him as 'the worst person in town' (Vidantainterview, 2019), it seems to me that Raja is both the hero and the villain of the elephant story in Sauraha. While his inexperience cost numerous elephants their lives, Raja admits his mistakes, and is the only owner able and willing to allow outside groups to rent his elephants off safari. He also allows other locals to sell activities with elephants at his facility (Bames, Lamb, Vidantainterviews 2019). He appears willing to work with outside groups interested in improving elephant welfare, but whether he will embrace this help and make changes remains to be seen.

Raja has allowed INGO5, INGO3, and others to assist in the care of his elephants, but at the end of the day, he prefers to make his own decisions (Raja, interviews 2019). Raja claims he is open to communication with locals and foreigners to improve elephant care at his stable, and allows visitation to any interested parties. Raja also stated that he is interested switching to chain-free tourism, as he feels it is better for elephants (Raja interviews 2019). Raja feels that elephants in Sauraha

are 'suffering' from being kept on concrete and chained in place. He says, 'big animal gets big infections' from this practice, and sometimes owners make big mistakes. Raja would like to see all of the parties interested in building a sanctuary-type facility work together, since he feels they all 'love' animals and a sanctuary would be good for both the animals and the organizations.

Raja admits that he was a novice when he started buying elephants, but says he is committed and will do whatever it takes to financially support his herd. He is currently one of the parties discussing the development of a non-riding facility with non-Nepalese advocates (Thomas, Randy, 2019). Raja has since improved his elephant's nutrition, and has reached out to the author and some INGOs in Sauraha for suggestions on improving the lives of his elephants (Raja PC, 2020).

Conclusions

The advent of the United Elephant Owners' Cooperative in Sauraha raised the living standards of captive elephants by providing them with covered stables, and those of the owners by providing steady income whether their elephant was working or not (Rajesh, Rao, Vachan interviews 2019). It also ensured the continuation of the owners' cooperative's relationship with the NTNC through Dr Vidanta and Saroj, the veterinary technician who treats all of the privately-held elephants in the area. While membership in this organization is not mandatory, the majority of elephant owners choose to join (Rajesh, Rao, Vachan interviews 2019). All of the owners interviewed for the current study stated that they 'love' and 'care' for their elephant 'family', but their treatment does not equate with the definitions of

love and practices of care desired by welfare advocates. The following chapters will further examine this problem with the language between caregivers, owners and advocates.

Other local stables will be discussed in more detail in chapter ten. Next is an introduction to my search for a common language of elephant care, and introduces smaller organizations interested in captive elephant care in Nepal. While not all of these organizations have been entirely successful in their efforts to change the lives of captive elephants, two have been able to transition working female elephants into retirement at chain-free facilities.

Eight: Hatti Helpers?

The government and NTNC have already been introduced to readers, but there are a number of smaller NGOs interested in the lives of Sauraha's elephants. Along with organizational biographies, the following chapters will illustrate many of the issues faced not only by captive elephants in Nepal and their caregivers, but also the organizations that focus on the welfare of these pachyderms. Individual captive elephants, the men who work with them, and those who own these endangered species are often in conflict not only with one another, but with conservation and welfare organizations. The story of the parties involved will continue through the next chapters.

The future of elephants in tourism activities is unclear, and this chapter will examine how changing the culture of elephant ownership is fraught with potential pitfalls. It will also explore why some organizations refuse to work together despite espousing common goals and sharing common definitions of words like 'sanctuary', 'welfare' and 'appropriate care'. By examining their stated goals, relationships with captive elephants, and the ways in which they interact with one another, this chapter demonstrates the complexity of the elephant situation in Nepal.

INGO4 and INGO6⁸⁰

As I conducted interviews and wandered around Sauraha during fieldwork, Manoj Gautam's⁸¹ name kept coming up in conversations with owners and NGOs in the area. He was alternately referred to as the main agent for an unnamed animal rights group, an employee of INGO6, and a representative of US financial investors with big money to spend. I decided to reach out to Gautam while researching whom to invite to the 'sanctuary summit' (see chapter eleven), and he described his hope of changing the riding culture of Nepal into something 'beautiful and brilliant and win-win'. Gautam is, in fact, the executive director of INGO4.

INGO4 is interested in 'a compassionate change to traditional practices' within Nepal (INGO4, nd). They are predominantly involved in lobbying to stop animal sacrifice during the Gadhimai festival—an event occurring every five years and resulting in the death of up to 500,000 animals, but Gautam is also interested in elephants (HSI.org, nd; INGO4, 2020). Following a trip to Sauraha, Gautam realized that elephant tourism could be easily transformed from safari rides to 'something better', and decided to get INGO4 involved. Gautam says he met and built trust with the elephant owners' cooperative, and was able to 'share crucial information with them' without having to 'rat out' mahouts, and the owners appreciated his input. The elephant owners could tell, he says, that changes to elephant-backed tourism were on the horizon.

⁸⁰ Information in this section comes from a series of 2020 interviews and communications with Manoj Gautam and the INGO4 website, along with email communications with Dr Argent unless otherwise cited. There was little option to pseudonymise Gautam thanks to his position. Name used with permission.

⁸¹ See chapter 2, literature review, this thesis

These owners expressed to Gautam that they were tired of accusations of animal cruelty from international and local welfare organizations, and Gautam felt they wanted to make a statement against advocates by refusing to change their practices. In this way, organizations active in the area had a negative impact on the welfare of elephants by creating an adversarial relationship with owners (see Kontogeorgopoulos, 2020). Gautam reached out to INGOs looking for support for his plan to cease elephant riding. But he was largely unsuccessful, due to the strong pushback from elephant owners to continue safaris. One international organization went so far as to tell Gautam that Nepal was a 'lost cause'.

Gautam continued to press the elephant owners to embrace higher standards of care, and soon felt he had made enough progress to again seek out international partners. Gautam wanted an organization which might be interested in changing the face of tourism in Sauraha, and reached out to veterinarian and research head 'Dr Argent' of INGO6. INGO6 is a UK based NGO with offices in 14 countries (INGO6, 2020a). Throughout their history, INGO6 has provided aid to more than 7 million animals globally (INGO6, 2017b). INGO6 has been involved in Nepal for several years, and one of their focus areas includes animals in tourism. According to their website, INGO6's mission is to 'create a better world for animals' through ending their 'needless suffering', influencing policy makers, inspiring people to action and demonstrating the importance of animals to human lives (INGO6, 2020a).

According to Gautam, when he first approached INGO6 about Sauraha, they were not interested. But after meeting key stakeholders, INGO6's opinion changed. The relatively small size of Sauraha, the small number of privately-owned elephants (relative to Thailand for example), and the proximity to the national park made Dr Argent rethink his options. Argent began to realize that the Sauraha area was ripe for building a:

...high-profile, high-welfare sanctuary [that] will generate the urgently needed momentum to re-brand the community as an elephant-friendly destination and become a key tourism magnet for the Chitwan region, as well as Nepal as a whole (INGO6, 2018: np).

INGO6 worked in conjunction with the Intrepid Travel Group, Gautam and the INGO4 to undertake a study on the viability of creating a ride-free community in Sauraha. This report used both literature review and interviews with 20 stakeholders such as elephant owners and hotel owners, municipal leaders and tour operators as well as interviews with more than 240 tourists in the Sauraha area (INGO6, 2018: np). This study was aimed at improving the welfare of captive elephants, creating funding for conservation and supporting sustainable tourism (INGO6, 2018: np).

In the report, INGO6 states that more than 190 travel companies have stopped selling elephant-riding excursions in the last decade (INGO6, 2018: np). While INGO6 would like to see an end to elephant-backed safari in Sauraha, they acknowledge that they cannot succeed without a model in place ensuring sustained income for owners to pay for elephant care, ongoing employment opportunities for mahouts, alternative income for community forest user groups

which rely on income from elephant-based tourism, and safety for nearby communities.⁸²

According to the summary of the report, it is feasible that Sauraha could become ‘the first internationally recognized elephant-friendly destination in Asia’ (INGO6, 2018: np). In this study, 97% of tourists wanted to see elephants in their natural habitat, and 64% of them were willing to pay up to 5000 Nrs (around 50 USD) for the opportunity (INGO6, 2018: np). 20% of the respondents stated that they were willing to pay up to 10000 Nrs (around 100 USD) (INGO6, 2018: np). The authors of the INGO6 study claim that data from Thailand supports the idea that non-riding tourism is in high demand (INGO6, 2018: np). The ethnicity of the tourists interviewed is not given, and this data would need to be considered given the changing face of tourists in Nepal. If the majority of respondents were white, the data may not adequately reflect the current reality of tourism in Sauraha (Aadita, Bames, Gwala, Pabin, Vachan; Long, 2013; Wen and Ximing, 2008).

The INGO6 plan outlined four phases of implementation for the transition of Sauraha into an ethical destination (INGO6, 2018: np). Phase one included the development of a business plan leading to emotional and financial buy-in of stakeholders. Initially, says Gautam, individual owners were excited at the prospect of a sanctuary, and asked how to make it happen. A memorandum of understanding and collaboration agreement between the UEOC, INGO6 and

⁸² Perhaps the practices used by INGO5, which are discussed in the following chapter, can serve as a model for this type of facility.

INGO4 was created and signed by participants. However, once face-to-face meetings involving all the owners began, the group could never come to any agreements.

Phase two included building business leadership and concern for elephant welfare among key owners in Sauraha. INGO6 hired a consultant with experience in Burma and Nepal to assist with their plans. Data collection meetings between INGO6, INGO4 and owners began in order to discuss the prospects for a sanctuary. There was much reluctance among owners to share financial data, and Gautam says he was 'frustrated'. Phase two also included training selected mahouts on elephant welfare and safe handling (INGO6, 2018: np). I asked Gautam for a copy of the business plan for elephant owners mentioned in INGO6's viability study, and he explained that it was confidential. He suggested I contact INGO6, because he felt that they would be comfortable sharing this business plan with me as a researcher. Instead, I was told that the plan would remain confidential because INGO6 had invested a lot into it, but were having difficulty getting the owners to buy in (INGO6 PC, 2020).

In August of 2018, INGO6 took 16 prominent owners to Thailand to visit several elephant camps in Chiang Mai, one small, one medium and one large facility, in the hopes these owners would then embrace a sanctuary model upon returning home.⁸³ While the owners paid their own airfare, INGO6 footed the bill for all else,

⁸³ This is the trip that elephant owners have claimed was their doing. See UEOC section in the preceding chapter.

and offered what Gautam called 'huge hospitality' (Kumar, Ra and, Vachan interviews 2019; Gautam interviews, 2020). Nepalese informants saw Chiang Mai as the ideal situation for elephants and owners, combining chain-free enclosures with heavy tourist traffic (Rao and Vachan interviews, 2019 and Gautam, 2020). Mahouts at the conservation centre received free housing, medical care, educational support and a salary more than triple the monthly average of 1500 THB (about 48 USD), as well as tips (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2209: 58; Tipprasert, 2002: np). The centre also boasted a free of charge mobile elephant veterinary team and an onsite hospital (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2020; Museum Thailand, 2020: np). Unfortunately, Gautam says, the trip 'backfired in a lot of ways'. Instead of inspiring owners to embrace a chain-free facility, Gautam says, the owners now all wanted 'their own little heaven' and personal issues such as jealousy arose. Some owners didn't think the Thailand stables were as good as those in Nepal, and several complained that the elephants there were too thin (Rao, interview 2019). Others saw the trip more as an opportunity to 'learn about elephants' and share information about Nepalese stables with Thai owners (Kumar interview, 2019). The NTNC veterinary staff, those with the most intimate knowledge of all privately-held elephants in the Sauraha area, were not invited on this trip. In fact, when I mentioned the INGO6 viability study to Dr Vidanta, he had never heard of INGO6 nor spoken to them, and was shocked that they had not contacted him or the veterinary technician (Vidanta interviews, 2019). Gautam explained that as only owners can make the necessary changes, they NTNC veterinary staff was left out of the discussion (Gautam, interview 2020).

Phase three is still in the works. This phase calls for the planning and construction of an elephant-friendly sanctuary facility, and specifies the need for collaboration with mahouts in planning the styles of care-taking which will be used in the new facility. Plans also call for a state of the art visitor centre (INGO6, 2018: np). Phase four is the relocation of elephants to the sanctuary facility. The plan called for elephant behavioural specialists to be on site to facilitate the transfer (INGO6, 2018: np). Transitioning all of the privately-owned elephants at one time makes sense on paper, as this would effectively end the majority of elephant-backed tourism in the area (Gautam interviews, 2020). With buy-in from every cooperative member, and agreements that no new elephants would enter Sauraha, this sanctuary plan could change the face of Chitwan National Park into a globally-recognized ethical sanctuary. However, according to Argent, construction of this sanctuary will be left up to the owners themselves (see below).

Around the same time as the Thailand trip, interest from international 'rescuers' was building in Sauraha, and several people began attempting to create smaller, individual sanctuaries (Barnes, Brown, Plummer, Kumar interviews, 2019; Gautam, interviews 2020). Gautam says the owners changed focus to personal projects instead of thinking and acting collectively. Infighting, jealousy, money and power dynamics were damaging what should have otherwise been a very tight community. As readers will see in the following chapters, these issues continue to plague Sauraha.

Some feel that these smaller NGOs may be causing further delay with the sanctuary plan. Gautam, for example, feels that westerners who purchase or lease elephants, especially older or sick elephants, are creating a commodity market. His fear is that owners will sell off sickly elephants for high profits, and then bring in more elephants from India to replace them. This may deter owners from buying into the larger plan, and may cause further delays. The sanctuary plan remains on the shelf, for now. According to Argent, the engagement with elephant owners needs to be 'rekindled' before anything else can happen (PC, 2020). Discussion of this plan continues in the following chapters.

INGO6 published a follow-up report on elephants in tourism venues, which includes a very brief section on Nepal (INGO6, 2020b: 8). The INGO6 study examined factors similar to the welfare metrics used by Veasey as well as those in the current study (see Veasey, 2017 and 2020; see chapter ten). INGO6 found a slight (6%) decrease in the number of elephants living in 'severely inadequate conditions', but found no increase in elephants in 'best possible under captive conditions', despite the fact that several elephants have been moved to private sanctuaries (INGO6, 2020b: 36). INGO6 did acknowledge the existence of six observation-only facilities housing 13 elephants (including Tiger Tops), but incorrectly reported the name of one facility and completely disregarded another (INGO6, 2020b: 37).

How INGO4 and INGO6 are perceived

There appeared to be a great deal of confusion among elephant owners regarding who, exactly, was sponsoring the sanctuary plan presented by Gautam to the elephant owners' cooperative. One owner reported that Gautam was bringing in American investors to buy elephants (Vachan interview, 2019). Other interlocutors reported hearing that the US government was planning to purchase every private elephant in Sauraha (Vachan PC, 2020). Some thought that it was Jane Goodall-Nepal building a sanctuary, and staff at the NTNC had never heard of the study.

None of the owners interviewed for this thesis wanted to provide land for the above-mentioned sanctuary (Rao, Vachan interviews, 2019). They didn't feel ownership of the plan, and saw it largely as outsiders trying to influence local practices. Instead, they saw an opportunity to expand their business. These owners wanted INGO4, INGO6 or the unnamed 'US agency' they had heard about to purchase the land along with all the captive elephants. According to Gautam, negotiations are ongoing, as the cooperative is hesitant to offer an adequate percentage of their future profits from the sanctuary to an outside investor. INGO6/INGO4 refuses to proceed with planning until every owner and every elephant are involved, despite the fact that several years have now passed (Gautam interview and PC 2020; INGO6 PC 2020). It appears this plan is at a standstill (see chapter ten).

Welfare activists, western NGOs, and elephant owners express frustration at the lack of movement in instituting this sanctuary plan (Bames, Brown, Randy

interviews, 2019). Gautam is actively discouraging other entities interested in building sanctuaries in Sauraha. He feels that the smaller groups purchasing or leasing elephants in the area will cause the owners to wait for a better deal. This continues to create tension among elephant groups in the area, who want to see elephants removed from chains and transitioned to better facilities more quickly. Many argue that there will never be 100% agreement by the owners, and so the wait, and the suffering, will continue (Brown, Barnes, Randy interviews, 2019). These advocates feel that forcing elephants to remain in chains just so that INGO6/INGO4 sanctuary can get 100% participation is perpetuating cruelty. Communications with Gautam and INGO6 continued throughout the writing of this thesis, and a discussion of their role in the sanctuary plan continues later in this chapter.

Part of the issue likely lies in the lack of a common definition of the words 'sanctuary' and 'welfare'. Local advocates desire a sanctuary where elephants wander freely, with the ability to avoid tourist exposure at will. These advocates want the import of elephants from India to cease, and the eventual end to elephant tourism. The owners, in contrast, describe a sanctuary where elephants are available for viewing and riding, but are allowed to be without chains at least part of the day. Owners desire continued income, continued breeding and import of elephants, and long-term continuation of elephant tourism. The inability to find common ground (such as described in the INGO6 plan) means that elephants remain in their current situations.

Hotel1 and INGO2⁸⁴

When walking down the main street in Sauraha during my fieldwork in 2019, I happened to see a new sign touting ‘ethical elephant activities’ outside a shop and was intrigued. I stopped in to speak with the young Nepalese woman inside, ‘Mia’, and she explained that she is a banking student in nearby Thandi, but is interested in learning new things—and needed income in an area where good jobs are hard to come by—so she took a position at the shop. The shop features handicrafts and other goods, some of which are sent to the US for sale at fundraising events. In addition, the store provides information on Hotel1’s facility, an upscale resort and the home of INGO2’s leased elephants. For 2500 NRs, guests can walk with Hotel1’s elephants, and observe them bathing in the river. During these activities, no physical contact with elephants is allowed, and the elephants are given the choice whether to be near the guests or to wander off. Profits are used to help defer the cost of elephant care.

My conversation with Mia led fortuitously to an introduction to ‘Tika Kumar’, the owner of Hotel1. I set up an interview and tour with Kumar, and was impressed by the lush surroundings and beautiful hotel. I asked Kumar how he got started as a hotelier, he told me the key is to think big. He started his career as a waiter, and at 17 he met a Dutch group visiting Nepal. They got to talking and Tika shared his dream of making money to start a community school for the poor. They asked how much he needed, and said they weren’t rich but hoped he wouldn’t give up his

⁸⁴ All information in this section comes from interviews with Nia, an INGO2 employee, Tika Kumar and INGO2’s founder, Jennifer Cox. All names are pseudonymised.

dreams. Years later, the equivalent of 5000 USD arrived from these Dutch visitors, with a note that said he could either have a great party or follow his dreams. He went to the Netherlands for training, then rented a small hotel in Nepal. Whenever land prices dropped, Kumar bought up connected parcels. When he was finally able to create his 'dream village' at Hotel1, he paid back his sponsors, and they still keep in touch. Hotel1 now boasts 30 rooms, a spa, and a vegetable garden. This hotel and surrounding property is the most expansive (and expensive) in the area.

Kumar explains that he was born into the Hotel1 community (a neighbourhood of Sauraha) and sees the need for changes. He wants to protect the traditional culture, while also educating people and generating development. In addition to hotel ownership, Kumar offers microloans to members of the marginalized Chepang community via a Dutch family fund. He assists with the 'Hotel1 School', which he hopes will be a positive example for the area.⁸⁵ Kumar sponsors wildlife guide training, especially for women, and chairs a waste management cooperative. Kumar explains that he 'is giving women power'. Kumar says the key to his success in developing his community is involving the local government in his plans.

Kumar explains that the idea for a chain-free facility at Hotel1 started when he first met a pregnant female elephant in distress. Ana Kali's owner couldn't support her and planned to sell her to India, but Kumar says he 'fell in love'. Ana gave birth to

⁸⁵ 6% of the profits from his partners at INGO2 also go toward this school.

Deepak Gaj, who contracted the often fatal elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV) when he was about a year and a half old (see chapter four). Deepak eventually recovered and became a healthy, happy juvenile. Worried about the difficulties surrounding ownership of a male elephant, Kumar considered selling Deepak. Enter 'Jennifer Cox', an American businesswoman visiting Nepal to assist with building chain-free corrals with INGO3. She met Deepak and was hooked. Cox developed a business relationship with Kumar, and after some negotiation, Cox was able to 'rent' Deepak Gaj and some land from Kumar upon which to keep Deepak. Cox continued this support for a year, until Kumar felt he could again take on Deepak's care. Because Kumar supports a business model where elephants live chain-free lives in a humane facility, Cox explained, she was comfortable creating a non-profit and building chain-free corrals at Hotel1.

While INGO2 was financing the care of some of Hotel1's elephants, Kumar was still using two for tourist safari and retained his membership in the elephant cooperative. Kumar explains that he needed to keep a few elephants involved 'with the cooperative to survive' while paying for their upkeep, which seems counter to INGO2's mission. Kumar has only partial ownership of one of these elephants, leaving him stuck using this elephant, at least, for safari. During our conversations, Kumar explains that his dream is to have all of his elephants chain-free. He hopes to find a foundation to completely cover the cost of all his elephants, which he says is about 700 USD a month per elephant.

Kumar suggests that if people want to see riding stop, they will need to support a solution, and he is trying to set an example for other owners. He plans to continue offering walks with elephants, kuchi-making, etc. While he waits to transition the rest of his herd, he is fighting to keep private tourist rides (run by the cooperative) down to twice a day. While 'big money' used to come from safari rides, Kumar says it has steadily decreased over the years and profits now equal about 1000 USD per elephant, per month. But Kumar (among other interlocutors) admits that owners will always say they are losing money on their elephants, because they don't want outsiders to know how profitable elephant business is.

Hotel1 and INGO2: the elephants

Cox has chosen to lease the elephants who live at Hotel1, out of what she describes as concern for the illegality of elephant ownership in Nepal. In addition, she doesn't want to create a commodity market through elephant purchases. In her view, leasing provides a steady income to owners, and a Nepalese person is included on to the lease contract to ensure it is accepted by the community. Cox feels that westerners who buy elephants are risking someone just showing up and taking them away, as ownership relies only upon community acknowledgment. Cox explains that INGO2 uses 'legally-reviewed', tight contracts for leases, which state that the owner can't buy, lease or otherwise engage elephants while under contract with INGO2. This agreement also relies on community members and town pride to ensure compliance, according to Cox.

Cox feels that since Kumar publically uses the chain-free corrals and humane treatment as a marketing strategy, it offers insurance that he can't go back to chaining elephants. When asked why his facility has managed to maintain chain-free corrals when others have not, Kumar explains that others just need to 'believe'. He is trying to set a good example for other owners to convert to chain-free facilities, and thinks the NTNC could salvage theirs if they tried. Kumar explains that his 'elephants used to look sad', but now 'they look excited' when heading for their chain-free area.

I asked Cox if she was concerned that she was creating a commodity market for elephants in Nepal, and she said no. She feels the leases prevent that from happening by offering standardised prices. Kumar describes foreigners becoming involved with elephants in Sauraha as a 'tricky thing—white skin in Nepal say sorry to elephant, owners see opportunity' (interviews 2019). Cox agrees, saying that when the Nepalese see her coming, they often just want her money. That is why she chose to enter a business relationship with only one owner instead of approaching the cooperative (see chapter seven).

During the initial stages of working with Hotel1, Cox was approached by a Swiss ex-pat about an elephant in poor health. 'Renee' wanted to lease this elephant, 'Heena', in the hope that she could stop Heena's sale to an Indian temple. Cox helped Renee with the process, and Heena joined the chain-free herd at Hotel1. During the writing of this thesis, INGO2 was able to lease Hotel1's remaining two elephants, removing them from tourist rides.

As of 2020, INGO2, 50% of which is funded by a family foundation, now pays for 100% of the care for 6 resident elephants, has built a kitchen for mahouts and employs a cook exclusively for them. INGO2 pays for management staff, and Cox says that she will exclusively hire Nepalese to work there. The Subba and 12 mahouts are in charge of daily elephant care, and Marshal feels that having Nepalese people in control makes the program all the more powerful. The mahouts provide the know-how for determining diets and elephant care, and have incorporated information Kumar collected on his trip to Thailand (see section on INGO6). According to Kumar, the mahouts have expressed ‘happiness’ at their training, and a better understanding how to feed and care for elephants. Cox is trying to stem the use of large quantities of rice with her elephants, asking staff members to re-educate mahouts about using other foods. It has been a challenge, since rice is so deeply engrained as elephant food in Nepal.⁸⁶

Elephant staff at Hotel1, says Cox, are offered health insurance, shower facilities, pension fund matching, internet access, housing, and such items as phones. In return, Cox asks that the mahouts take part in community-building activities such as growing vegetables, raising chickens, growing fodder grass, etc. Everyone is equal and does equal work, and she tells them they can acknowledge the caste system only outside, not in the stable. Cox explained that she pays appropriate mahout wages, and is ‘kind to them, proud of them’. Because Deepak’s mahouts deal with a young male elephant, they are paid more due to the inherent danger.

⁸⁶ See appendix III

The mahouts—two for each elephant—at Hotel1 are not allowed to yell at or hit elephants, and are asked to provide quality care. Cox says that the mahouts ‘love her and love the journey’ they are on, referring to her as mother when she visits.

Cox feels that ‘her elephants’ are in paradise, given the opportunity to spend the day grazing and visiting the river twice daily. She feels that she has been successful in implementing chain-free corrals where others have failed, because she approached the situation as a businesswoman and deals with Kumar as a businessman. She understands that he sees elephants first as a business, and approached from that angle. She says Kumar has experienced ‘evolution as an enlightened human’ since joining forces with Cox, and describes him as an intelligent man who now has ‘the perfect place; {sic} and the perfect partner’.

Changes

A new elephant has joined the herd, one whose original stable will be discussed in the stable review portion of chapter ten. 23 year-old Daxa has some form of undiagnosed leg deformity which causes her back knees to ‘knock’ and her legs to form an ‘x’. Cox says she had to pay very little for Daxa, and feels that owners are getting the message that she isn’t going to up her prices. However, the leasing and moving process faced some hiccups. Daxa broke free on the first day and headed ‘home’, right through the electric fence. The staff decided to allow for a longer adjustment time away from her former stable mate, and for ten days took her back and forth to her old stable. The staff at Hotel1 would have liked to extend the process longer, but were concerned about getting her off chains to assist with

her legs. INGO2 did try to lease Daxa's stable mate and keep the pair together, but she had already been sold. Daxa now shares a corral with two other elephants, and has been observed lying down in close proximity to them. This is a sign of developing positive social bonds (Evison, et al., 2020: 402; Kurt and Garai, 2006). Daxa is undergoing water exercise twice daily now, and foot soaks to treat abscesses.

If Hotel1 is as successful as Tiger Tops at becoming a high-end destination, that may encourage others to engage with a chain-free mentality. There are new Nepalese-run non-profits on the horizon, says Cox, which she hopes will take over leasing or purchasing elephants for retirement. Her view is that if you love the elephants and the people, you will want locals to take over, but she will continue to serve as an advisor for Hotel1. In addition, Cox sees the need for a 24 hour animal hospital, and thinks she may need to build one. She hasn't decided how to handle veterinary care for the growing herd, and doesn't feel the current NTNC vet staff is able to be objective in their care, as she feels they misdiagnosed and downplayed a foot issue which turned out to be serious.

Perspectives on INGO2

Many of Cox's statements (see above) appear quite neocolonial in nature, implying that by involving herself in Kumar's life he is somehow made a better human being (Branlinger, 2011; Philip, 2001; Street, 2016). In addition, INGO2 appears to promote neo-colonial attitudes by indicating that people from the Global North are needed to best institute positive changes in elephant care. These

attitudes may undermine local organizations who seek to solve problems, and create conflict among local communities (Larsen, 2018; Lorimer, 2010b; Rodriguez, et al., 2007; Sankore, 2005; Gautam interviews, 2020).

While it might be argued that transferring several elephants to a chain-free, ride-free facility is a major achievement, it has also created ripples within the community. By aligning with only one owner, INGO2 has given Kumar 'elite' status and is reproducing inequalities and creating barriers against greater cooperation among owners and other NGOs (Gautam interviews, 2020; Larsen, 2018; Schuller, 2009). Elephant owners throughout Sauraha report being unhappy with Cox and Kumar (Rajesh, Vachan interviews, 2019). Some owners expressed concern about INGO2's stated goals, feeling that if they wanted to help, INGO2 would have contacted numerous owners and tried to spread the business around instead of contracting only with Kumar (Rajesh, Vachan interviews, 2019). One explained that if westerners truly wanted to help, they would choose to support larger numbers of elephants (Rajesh interview, 2019). In addition, some questioned the motives of organizations that approach individual owners without the knowledge of the elephant cooperative (Rajesh, Vachan, 2019). Others were concerned that if Cox's funding dried up, the elephants would be sold (but there is no evidence of this). There may be a degree of jealousy responsible for these concerns, since Kumar managed to hook a big donor when others did not. Kumar is described by other owners as 'very rich' and 'secretive' about his dealings with INGO2, but he was quite open with me during my research. One owner felt that Kumar was getting away with something by belonging to the cooperative, but still

using his elephants for activities outside of safari (in this case, walks with tourists). Other issues may stem from Cox being open about her dislike of other elephant owners and her refusal to communicate with them. It may be that a lack of open communication between Kumar, Cox and the cooperative are leading to the perpetuation of rumours. Perhaps opening lines of communication could result in the growth of positive relationships which could counteract these negative feelings.

INGO4 and INGO6 worry that in bypassing the efforts of others who are trying to create a local-run sanctuary, Hotel1 is undermining the welfare of the rest of the captive elephants in the area (Gautam interviews 2020, INGO6 PC, 2020). Some elephant welfare organization are slower to criticise, feeling that getting any elephants out of their current situation is a good thing. They feel that each elephant needs to be seen as an individual, and removing even one from private ownership is a success (Brown, Crane, Randy, Thomas interviews, 2019). Given the conditions in which most captive elephants in Sauraha live (see chapter ten), I tend to agree.

Another concern is that the Hotel1 elephants, like most in the area, are not being tested for TB (see chapter four). Cox feels that the treatment is so hard to arrange that for now they will delay testing and simply keep guests from close contact with the elephants (which is already the standard at the facility). By not testing, there is some concern that the health of mahouts is being put at risk, while keeping (foreign) guests safe.

One major point of contention arose when Deepak Gaj, Hotel1's male calf, was around two years old. Cox and Kumar weren't sure how to handle his training, and Kumar sent Deepak off to be 'broken' at the government breeding centre (see chapter six). Sending an elephant for breaking from a facility that claims ethical elephant activities and humane care has created concern as to the validity of these claims (anonymous interviews, 2019). Cox explains that Deepak was sent for breaking without her consent, and that Deepak's mother had a mental breakdown seeing the process and has never recovered.

Like most of the 'ethical elephant activities in town', tourists booking events at Hotel1 have been, with only one exception, exclusively white and western (Bames and Mia interviews, 2019). Sauraha's nature guides are hesitant to send interested tourists to these types of activities until they understand more about them, and many view any use of elephants for tourism as inherently unethical (Naresh, Paudel, Raj interviews, 2019). As mentioned above, the nature guide association has declared that they will not promote elephant-backed safari. Promoting communication between Hotel1 and the nature guide association may be key to the continued success of Hotel1's program.

Working together?

According to Cox, Sandra Smith of INGO3 is a regular friend and invaluable consultant, and other welfare organizations regularly communicate with INGO2. Cox says she has no problems with the other INGOs involved in Sauraha, explaining that they have different plans but successfully communicate towards

common goals. They are able to work in the same community, but choose not to combine projects. However, some NGOs in town say they have zero contact with Cox, or have been banned from her facility (Brown, Randy PC, 2020). Some expressed concern with INGO2's reliance on 'video foot trims' performed by untrained mahouts with Smith on the phone, when local, experienced foot care providers are available and willing to help (Brown, Randy, Thomas PC, 2020).

When asked about potential plans for a city-wide sanctuary, Cox says she would not join in or transfer her elephants to a larger facility. She doesn't like the idea of a big organization coming in and taking over, but will support future Nepalese NGOs interested in running sanctuaries. Cox says her desire is to build the infrastructure needed to see this happen, and agrees that the number of captive elephants in Sauraha is small enough to change the culture of riding forever.

A reflexive note

While completing this thesis, I gave a conference talk on the complexities of NGO involvement in the elephant situation in Nepal (Szydlowski, 2020a). When I was finished, I reached out to stakeholders to get their opinion on my presentation. While the feedback was generally very encouraging, one interlocutor felt that I came across as not entirely supportive of INGO2.⁸⁷ This is not the case, but sadly my short presentation did not allow for a great deal of elaboration on any participating organizations. My desire is to see all of the privately owned tourism

⁸⁷ In fact, this interlocutor suggested that her own perspective on my talk might have been colored by her own previous disagreements with organizations in the area.

elephants of Nepal transitioned into chain free facilities. While I would describe the attitudes INGO2's founders as largely neo-colonial (see above), I am supportive of their efforts, if not all of their methods. INGO2 has successfully transitioned a large percentage (seven females and one male at the time of writing) of Sauraha's elephants to a chain-free facility, while contractually obligating their owners to refrain from purchasing new elephants. Cox is interested in building a library for the community and ensuring the success of a local businessman who is very active in sustainable development and community building. While INGO2 chooses not to be directly involved with the larger group of sanctuary-seekers in Nepal, they have made an impact in the lives of many captive elephants, and have created one successful business model which may serve as an example for others. More time and research is needed to see if this business model can survive major catastrophes, such as COVID-19, and if the owners respect the terms of their leases. I do have lingering concerns about INGO2's refusal to work with the owners' cooperative, the NTNC veterinary staff or the other organizations in the area, as I believe cooperation is the only way forward.

The following chapter examines the discourses and practices of INGO5, the only INGO whose founders are permanent residents of Nepal. This chapter also examines the ways in which this INGO attempts to identify and address the needs of both mahouts and elephants at their facility.

Nine: The Hatti HOME

My first contact with INGO5 came before I left for Nepal. I was doing research on elephant welfare, when their website popped up. Via email I requested information about their organization and asked if we could meet when I returned to Sauraha. They agreed, but were hesitant to discuss their operations prior to seeing me in person. Our first visit felt extremely tense, and I wanted to discover why. As interviews continued, it came to light that there was a great deal of mistrust due to my seemingly random initial contact with INGO5 and the number of questions I was asking. According to interlocutors, many people arrive in Sauraha with one of two plans—to ‘save elephants’ which often leads to negative interactions with elephant owners, or to promote an agenda aimed at ending elephant riding immediately without consideration for the consequences of such an action. Before agreeing to participant observations and access to their facility, a relationship of trust needed to be established. I offered participant forms, information sheets, and letters from my university as proof of my intent—but simply spending time discussing each other’s objectives and getting to know one another was key to establishing a good working relationship. We needed a period of time to become-with one another in order to facilitate our work together (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Haraway, 2008: 27). This was my first experience being viewed with suspicion while doing research, but it was certainly not my last. I had not considered that organizations might feel the need to be careful with whom they shared information, and after this experience I approached further contacts with more sensitivity to their concerns.

INGO5 biographical information⁸⁸

In 2014, 'Chloe Brown', an elephant keeper from France, hoped to learn more about the natural history of her charges by working with elephants in Asia. She found a small NGO orphanage/elephant combination program located in Sauraha, Nepal, signed on with them and was sent to work with mahouts. Originally, she says, she thought the mahouts owned the elephants as no other explanation was given to her. After sharing long hours of hard work with mahouts each day, Brown began to realize that their lives were not easy, and their boss was not kind (Brown interviews, 2019). The longer she stayed, the more she discovered about the elephants and mahouts—including who really owned the elephants. In the five months she was there, she learned a great deal and offered to return the following year to conduct elephant foot care, undertake wound treatment and teach husbandry in return for food or payment. Only one owner, Raja, was interested and offered her 10,000 rupees a month for her service (approximately 100 USD)—at the high end of the normal salary for a mahout.

When Brown returned the following year, she spent two weeks working with the seven elephants in Raja's stable. She completed foot and wound care training with mahouts, and Raja was so impressed that he offered to continue paying her and introduce her to other owners who might need her help. Over the next four months, she saw almost every elephant in town, and more owners were starting to

⁸⁸ This information comes from interviews with group founders Chloe Brown, Mitch Bames and Liza Jakman which took place in Spring of 2019. Additional information comes from the INGO's website, promotional materials and continuing correspondence with the founders. While permission was given to use names, the author made the decision to pseudonymize all INGO5 participants.

notice that wounds were healing more quickly under her care and allowed her to expand treatments. Brown maintains records on every elephant she contacts, some of the only records which exist for the captive elephants in Sauraha.⁸⁹

Brown returned to Nepal for six months each year, but began to get frustrated that chronic overwork and lack of consistent foot care would take their toll every time she left. This return to ‘traditional ways’ once foreigners depart has been documented by a variety of researchers with regard to animal handling in Nepal and Thailand (see Bansiddhi, et al. 2020a; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Varma and Ganguly, 2011). In addition, Brown became concerned about opening abscesses to drain on elephants who would have to stand in urine, feces or mud all day (see chapter five). She started to worry that her foot treatments might instead make things worse, and suggested that owners provide clean concrete for treated elephants with abscesses, or allow for daily follow-up care. These did not materialize. Brown was feeling ‘fed up and useless’ with her current situation when she met up with a lawyer from Belgium who was also drawn to Nepal.

‘Liza Jakman’ had been regularly visiting children whom she sponsored in Kathmandu when someone suggested she visit Chitwan. She headed to Sauraha, and checked out several organizations purporting to help animals, then decided that her plans fit well with Brown’s. Around the same time, ‘Mitch Bames’ was looking for a warm place to retire. Nepal was on the top of his list for exploration,

⁸⁹ The NTNC maintains very basic records, but these records are not regularly updated (Brown and Vidanta interviews, 2019).

so he also headed to Sauraha. On his last day, a chance encounter led him to meet Brown and his first elephant, and Bames explains he was 'smitten' by both.

These three decided to connect and form INGO5, the first permanent ethical elephant organization in Sauraha. Registered as a non-profit organization in Belgium (due to the nationality of one founder), INGO5 receives funding from several sources, including the Brigitte Bardot Foundation, private donations, and Foundation Le Pal Nature. Other income is raised by selling local handicrafts and t-shirts. INGO5 founders are aware of the discourse surrounding neo-colonial critique, and that forming an NGO in an underdeveloped country with the intention of 'helping' its human and non-human residents might seem like an inherently neo-colonial pursuit. Any pay-to-save animal programs should be carefully examined to ensure they do not further marginalize populations (Ganti, 2014; Lorimer, 2010b: 320) or exhibit a sense of 'cultural superiority' (Liu and Leung, 2019: 125). As mentioned in the literature review, criticising practices which community members see as good or helpful to their society can create a rift between elephant welfare advocates and local people, especially if those 'traditional' practices are labelled as violent (Lambek, 2010; Malchrowicz-Mosko, et al., 2020: 27). INGO5 founders have attempted to counteract these neo-colonial attitudes and behaviours in a variety of ways, such as moving permanently to Sauraha and involving local stakeholders in decision-making, facility development and community activities.

INGO5 is the only NGO with administrative staff present year-round in Sauraha, and the founders stress how important being members of the local community is to

them. They have invested with a local family to open a restaurant, and note that due to their desire to work toward elephant and community welfare, they are careful not to alienate anyone or any belief system. The restaurant is not simply a way to secure income—in order to reside in Nepal permanently, one must obtain a business visa through a partnership with a Nepali citizen. According to INGO5 staff, when they arrived in Sauraha the government required an investment of approximately 5000 USD. This low number resulted in numerous western animal welfare activists to buy into businesses with Nepalese partners. In July of 2019, out of what informants describe as concern about Chinese and Indian investments in Nepal, the government raised the number to 100 million Nrs. (around 800,000 USD) (Nepal Tourism Board, 2020). Obviously, this new amount makes it more difficult for elephant advocates interested in relocating permanently to Nepal.

As locals, the founders and staff attempt to maintain positive relationships with the community. In studies of NGOs and local communities, Forbes (2010, 323-324) found that the differing ways in which people identified as 'local' made a difference in the ability of NGOs to meet their goals. Labelling a view as reflective of 'local' desires is tricky (2010: 323). 'Local' nature guides, young Nepalese welfare advocates and community members wish to see an end to elephant-backed safari, but feel that their voices are not being heard (Naresh, Paudel, Taraswin interviews, 2019). 'Local' elephant owners want to see safaris continue and earn a steady income (Rajesh, Rao, Vachan interviews, 2019). INGO5 faces challenges maintaining a balance between their own identity as locals, that of non-riding advocates and business owners. Finding a common language which supports all

'locals' and works toward finding common ground for elephant care is key to both this thesis and the operation of INGO5 (Forbes, 2010: 320).

Mission and practices

INGO5's mission statement and primary objective are listed as:

To improve the lives of captive elephants, their caretakers and the community in which they live... and ...to achieve better living conditions for the captive Asian Elephants of Nepal (INGO5.org, 2019).

In order to fulfil these objectives, INGO5 provides support to elephants and mahouts through various activities which are listed below (INGO5.org, 2019). In addition to their primary objective, INGO5 describes their approach as 'progressive and ethically responsible' in that they work with the community and include regular communication with elephant owners in their action plan. In addition, INGO5 is concerned about creating a commodity culture where owners try to make a huge profit from would-be rescuers. INGO5 appears to be one of the few NGOs (along with INGO2) interested in supporting both elephants and mahouts both individually and as co-workers, which Desai (2008: 55-62) sees as necessary for reducing stress on elephants. Both elephants and mahouts are marginalized communities within Nepal, and recognising that there are structures in place which actively oppress both (Coulter, 2016a: 141) is important. While the work done by these individuals varies dependent upon their species, their lives are intertwined in work which is primarily aimed at raising the economic status of someone other than

themselves (Coulter, 2016a: 142). Therefore any organization purporting to help these interspecies co-workers should be careful that their employment doesn't serve to simply reinforce the dominance of one over another (Coulter, 2016a).

The success of any NGO attempting to improve 'welfare' in a country not their own must bear in mind the history of local communities with these types of organizations. Along with successful NGO programs, many communities in Nepal have been the recipients of NGO projects which were mismanaged, delayed or abandoned (Forbes, 1999: 328; Roka, 2012: 118). In addition, these projects are often undertaken without the input of local people (Forbes, 1999: 331). Local people worried that income from NGO projects would be hidden from them, that NGO staff would act dishonestly, and feared that if they didn't appear to support NGOs that future funding would be withheld (Roka, 2012: 139). Another concern is that NGOs will not understand 'local' ways of doing things, or try to implement programs with no hope of success (Roka, 2012: 140). How INGO5 addresses these concerns in their programs is discussed in the following sections, which are divided programmatically.

INGO5—Elephant Happy Hour⁹⁰

Elephant happy hour started as a way to give working safari elephants a break from their workday. INGO5 rents the elephant from its owner, removes her howdah and allows her to wander. Guests offer fruit when the elephant first

⁹⁰ The term 'elephant happy hour' was coined by another visitor to Nepal. The name was used with permission, according to INGO5.

arrives, but have no contact with the elephant after this initial offering. The paying guests then follow at a distance as the elephant goes about 'being an elephant' in the jungle. Breaking branches, digging and throwing dirt are discouraged while on safari; but during her happy hour the elephant is allowed to exhibit all of these natural behaviours.

In order to best observe this activity, I accompanied a group of guests to Happy Hour. These guests paid 2000 Npr (around 20 USD) to spend the morning visiting an elephant. I met up with other guests at the local coffee shop for a pre-tour primer. One of INGO5's staff gave a short description of elephant natural history and behaviour. A small amount of the provided information, such as the statement that elephants in Sauraha are over-bathed, is debated in scientific research (Greco, et al., 2016; Mellen and MacPhee, 2001; Vanitha, et al., 2010). Next we discussed safety rules, signed waivers and received a description of appropriate human behaviour in the jungle, hopped in a jeep to pick up fruit and headed to the safari-ride gate.

When we arrived and positioned ourselves to wait for 'our' elephant, we watched the other pachyderms returning from their morning safari. One of the mahouts jumped off and headed for the restroom. As soon as his back was turned, his elephant took off running toward us. We were slightly alarmed at the several ton individual heading straight for us, until INGO5 staff explained that that was Rupa Kali—the other participant in happy hours. However, it was not her day to attend, and soon her mahout discovered the error and came to collect her. It was amazing

to see that she understood what was happening, and took it upon herself to head our way in search of treats and breaktime. I was truly heart-broken at her expression as she was led away from us.

Shanti Kali, the elephant scheduled for today's walk, soon arrived with her mahout. We offered the fruit, but she was so eager to go into the jungle that she left much of it uneaten. The guests followed about 30 feet behind, and we observed her digging mud and scratching with broken branches as her mahout gleefully pointed out spiders and plants. My use of these words is quite purposeful—as in my numerous trips to Nepal I would say that I have never experienced a gleeful mahout. I do not believe that this is a cultural difference, as I have spent much time in the company of joyful people while in country. However, even when I spent a month embedded with mahouts in 2017 it was rare to see a smile, much less laughter. I pointed this out to INGO5 staff, and was told that changing the attitude of the mahout was infinitely harder than changing the behaviour of the elephant. Mahouts spend the entirety of a safari 'controlling' their elephant—where she goes, what she does, yelling when she tries to stop, eat or drink (Bradshaw, 2015: np; de Vries, 2014: 2, 24 and 31; Szydlowski, in press; participant observations, 2014, 2017, 2019). When INGO5 first started the happy hours, the mahouts tried to direct the elephant into standing still so visitors could get close. When INGO5 asked the mahouts to let the elephants do as they pleased in the jungle, the mahouts were concerned. They had a hard time not constantly offering commands, and allowing the elephant to exhibit behaviours that they have been told were unacceptable on safari.

There were 'incidents' in the beginning. One guide told me a story about a group of tourists who stopped in after a happy hour event. They were upset that for the first 30 minutes of the walk, the mahout beat the ground with a stick and yelled at the elephant. After that, the experience improved, but it left the guide office with concerns about happy hour activities. He suggested that it might be a good idea to conduct exit interviews with participants in order to get a better idea of the overall picture before making a decision whether to support INGO5 or not. As explained above, INGO5 faced an uphill battle training mahouts to let the elephant make her own choices, and perhaps this group of tourists was one of the earlier groups.

It is important to consider that while offering the elephant a happy hour break, her human co-worker is not really given the choice whether or not to participate. While he was visibly more relaxed once out of sight of the tourist gate, this mahout must still remain on duty, watchful and in control of his elephant. This is a unique issue; Coulter describes how animal co-workers often have less agency in their activities while their humans take breaks, move around at will, etc. (Coulter, 2016a: 143). In the case of elephant-human pairs, the opposite occurs. While the elephant is 'on break', her mahout is still tasked with her safety and the safety of guests.

This also ties in to the discussion earlier in this paper regarding social facts (Durkheim, 1982) and the need to dominate elephants. In this case, mahouts and owners state that elephants must be dominated and submissive in the presence of tourists in order to maintain tourist safety (Cheetri, Larina, Vidantainterviews, 2019). Mahouts also believe that guests want 'clean elephants' and do not

typically allow dustbathing, scratching on trees or digging (mahout group interviews, 2017 and 2019). This reflects one of the key issues between those who want to institute 'humane' management programs in the area and existing beliefs.

During my visit, the mahout remained silent while guests offered fruit to 'his' elephant, and reached for cameras to act as photographer. This mahout became a nature guide for guests in the forest, laughing and smiling as the elephant did as she pleased—which included falling asleep twice. When it was time to go, the INGO5 staff gave the mahout a 500 rupee tip. They provide the same amount for each mahout each time, to show them that money can be made from alternative elephant activities. In addition, guests offered tips of their own.

While this activity is certainly not without danger, for example, if the elephant got spooked and ran, I felt safer on the walk than I did when in a howdah.⁹¹ Being an average-sized American, I felt quite trapped in the howdah, and felt that I would be unable to quickly get out if the elephant fell or bolted. When other guests were asked, they responded that they felt the howdah offered more protection from the danger of running into wild tiger or rhino in the jungle (Zed interview, 2019).

It is worth noting that every guest taking part in this happy hour was white. As discussed in previous chapters, there has been a change in the ethnicity of tourists participating in elephant activities (Aadita, Bandhu, Vidantainterviews, 2019). I

⁹¹ I am not proud of my elephant riding activities, which took place on my first trip to Nepal, when I was naïve to the issues surrounding elephant-based tourism. I regret my actions and have apologized to the elephants of the NTNC.

asked the organizers if they noticed a higher percentage of westerners participating in happy hour, and they estimate that 50% of their business is from the Netherlands and France, and 50% from other European nations and the US. In contrast, they estimate that 90% of the tourism for elephant backed safari is Indian, Nepali or Chinese. One reason for this might be Chinese tourists comfort with nature which has been intensely managed or influenced by humans (Long, 2013: 48; Wen and Ximing, 2008: 567). Chinese tourists, according to Long (2013: 49), have a more anthropocentric traditional philosophy. Wen and Ximing (2008: 567), ascribe the differences to 'western' views of humanity as separate from nature in contrast to Chinese views of human and natural 'unity'. 'Westerners' prefer to visit wilderness areas away from large human populations (Long, 2013: 48; Wen and Ximing, 2008: 577).

When asked if their business is 'taking away' from the safaris, INGO5 stated that most, if not all, of their guests are people who had no intention of riding an elephant when they came to Nepal. Instead of taking money away from safaris, they are serving an untapped market, and want to make that clear to elephant owners who might feel they are a threat to safari earning potential. At the time of writing, INGO5 has done 250 happy hours with 1582 guests since their inception. Sadly, this is the same as the average number of guests who ride an elephant in three days in Sauraha. Happy hour may not be a big impactor of population-level elephant welfare at this point, but offers instead a needed break for individual working elephants and a way to raise awareness for captive wildlife. One should consider that this has provided 250 hours that these two elephants have been

allowed to remove their howdah and remain unriden, which may sound small to some, but I would guess has made a big difference to these two individuals and their human co-workers.

The impact of small changes on tourist and local behaviour shouldn't be dismissed. Einarsson (2009) found that making a change from whale-hunting to whale-watching came about slowly but organically in Icelandic villages following the buy-outs of small family fishing operations by larger corporations (2009: 132). Of course, this transformation also led to the reconstruction of dead capital (in the form of fish) to 'lively capital' in the form of whales to watch (Haraway, 2008: 46; Rajan, 2012: 2). This lively capital created a new drive within the community to educate tourists (Einarsson, 2009: 134), thanks to the realisation that whale-watching contributed to the culture and identity of the region (Einarsson, 2009: 135). Perhaps this type of successful adaptation of activities into an existing culture might be a model which INGOs can use to assist in the transition of Sauraha to a ride-free destination (Einarsson, 2009: 136).

Other studies have shown that animal-watching activities are a valid way to influence tourism venues. Thresher (1981: np) found that a live wild lion was worth much more as a safari-sighting opportunity (515,000 USD) than as a hunting trophy (8500 USD). Hughes (2001: 328) found that animal rights and animal welfare lobbies successfully influenced tourism spending, and can act as a watchdog toward tourism operators. Attitudes towards and outcomes of species conservation have been positively influenced by ecotourism activities (Newsome

and Hughes, 2016: 13; Oglethorpe and Crandall, 2009: 8; Sedhain and Adhikary, 2016: 58; Waylen, et al., 2009: 348-349). By incorporating animal-watching, especially in less anthropogenic settings such as the jungle, INGO5 may be able to change attitudes within the local community. INGO5 is gaining a foothold as a tourist destination, and according to Tripadvisor (nd) Elephant Happy Hour has become the #1 thing to do in Sauraha.

In addition to these in-person experiences, INGO5 now offers 'Happy Hour Live'. This online program offers sponsors a chance to enjoy their own happy hour with an elephant, mahout, and INGO5 staff. For 85 Euros, the staff will video an elephant walk through the jungle and send it on to the sponsor for their enjoyment, building a sense of community among those who are unable to travel to Nepal.

Money from Elephant Happy Hours is kept separate from other income, so that these funds can be reinvested in items such as tips for mahouts, buying lighter howdahs for elephants, improvements to mahout and elephant housing, supplemental food for elephants, clothing, shoes, blankets, medicine and haircuts for mahouts, etc. (Brown interview, 2019). Because Raja (see chapter seven) provides the elephants for Happy Hour, many of the improvements at his facility come from Happy Hour income. Prior to winter of 2019, Raja had never refused elephant rentals to INGO5 for Happy Hour activities and had been a reliable partner. Unfortunately, as of the end of 2019, happy hours have been suspended, with Raja saying he has decided to go another route. INGO5 continues to discuss participation in Happy Hours with other owners, but they refrained from naming

these owners out of an abundance of caution. Sauraha is a very small town, and as such rumours spread quickly (Barnes, Brown, Thomas, Vidanta, interviews, 2019).⁹²

INGO5—Elephant HOME

This sanctuary was built in the hope that owners would gift or sell older or injured elephants to INGO5. The home consists of a large stable surrounded by pasture in the Kumroj section of Chitwan. The staff of INGO5 has publicly committed to using only positive reinforcement techniques with elephants.⁹³ This stable features metal bar training walls for staff safety when performing health care tasks that are not traditionally trained for in Nepal—such as treating painful foot abscesses. This is a learning experience for mahouts and elephants alike, and the training walls offer a chance for them to safely rebuild their relationship without using dominance techniques. Creating opportunities for mahouts to learn new ways to work with their elephants is a key part of the INGO5 organizational plan.

The Elephant HOME is surrounded by a double row of electric fencing, with banana trees as an extra barrier to ensure elephants stay in designated areas and protect against accidental incursion by wildlife. An agreement has been reached with neighbours, which allows resident elephants the ability to freely browse in the community forest. This allows for the elephants to eat a more natural variety of food items. In addition, the HOME includes elevated mahout housing, a kitchen for

⁹² The rapid spread of both information and rumour were concerning as I wrote up this thesis.

⁹³ See appendix I for a discussion of these techniques

staff, dry toilets which are used to create compost, showers and hot water. The facility is intended to function with minimal impact on the environment, and demonstrate environmental stewardship. Elephant waste at the home is being used to create environmentally-friendly paper products.

Mahout housing is particularly important because many mahouts in Nepal do not live with their families. Instead, they 'live' with their elephant, and often their housing is open air and/or substandard (see section on stables and mahout housing in chapter ten). Mahouts working for INGO5 are provided with private rooms so that their families can visit, built several feet off the ground to ensure a safer monsoon season. As a marginalized group, mahouts are often uneducated, mistreated and very low in the caste system (Gopali, 2003: 29; Hart, 2005; Hart and Locke, 2007; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009 and 2020; Locke, 2008; Lipton and Bhattari, 2014; Varma, 2008). INGO5 wanted to ensure that mahout welfare is addressed along with elephant welfare, as these jobs are dangerous and generally poorly paid (Hart, 2000; Brown, Randy interviews, 2019). Treating mahouts with respect and offering fair wages and better housing alternatives is key to INGO5's philosophy (and is supported by academic literature; Carnahan, 2019; Desai, 2008; Kharel, 2002). The organization employs three full time mahouts, one part-time mahout in training and a local Nepalese project manager; all of whom are paid more than the standard mahout salary of 8000-10000 rupees a month (approximately 65- 81 USD). INGO5 also provides health insurance to mahouts and school fee assistance for their children, along with haircut/shave vouchers and over 300kg of donated clothing, so far.

Elephants who are moved to the Elephant Home will not be used for happy hour or other activities, but will be 'retired'. The home is a sanctuary, with no lodge or restaurant attached to the property to solicit visitors. People interested in visiting the facility are, however, welcome daily at no charge. While I was collecting data for this thesis, the elephant stable was under construction, and plans were being made to identify the three female elephants most in need of assistance. In considering each elephant, INGO5 looked at their health, their living conditions, their history and their future prospects. The hope was to identify which elephants most needed rescue, and could be helped at a reasonable price. Finished in Fall of 2019, the home now has its first resident elephant, Idha Kali. Idha will serve as a case study in the following chapter for an examination of the NTNC, INGO5, elephant owners and elephant welfare individual's best practices, ethics and care.

INGO5 Volunteer program

This program is aimed at animal care professionals already working in the field who wish to supplement their knowledge with hands-on experience at an inexpensive rate. Zoo professionals often visit in order to increase their experience, or expand their knowledge of animals that they have only seen in zoos. Researchers are also welcome, but no more than two visitors can stay on site at any given time, to ensure experiences are 'rich and meaningful' (INGO5, 2020a). These volunteers participate in ethology, analysis of CCTV video from the stable, daily animal care and facility maintenance, grass collection and visitor education. Most of the researchers and volunteers so far have been French,

according to INGO5 staff. This is because, as Brown's home country, that is where most of INGO5's connections exist and where their advertising has been targeted. Volunteers/researchers stay in the newly completed elevated rooms at the Elephant Home and use the shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. These participants are asked for a donation of 900 euros a month which includes full room and board as well as transportation.

INGO5--work with elephant owners

One of the key differences in the way INGO5 practices in Nepal is their approach to change. Understanding that any social change takes time (Einarsson, 2009: 132), INGO5 approaches their mission with the understanding that working toward change in the perception of elephants, mahouts and the use of captive animals in tourism is a gradual and ongoing process. Initially, INGO5 attempted to work with mahouts and owners to improve elephant welfare at the owners' stables. While this did temporarily increase the health and welfare of certain elephants, unfortunately these individuals were put back on safari as soon as their health improved.

Brown and Bames consider themselves part of the Sauraha community. Because they plan to remain, it is important to them to sustain a working relationship with elephant owners in the area. They feel that this relationship is only possible if they refrain from using their social media platform to spread negative news about elephants in Sauraha, or show photos of chains or bull hooks. Instead, social

media posts reflect the construction of the elephant home and training/treatment of their new resident elephant⁹⁴, in addition to highlighting the work of staff members.

INGO5--The future of elephant-back safari

While trying to improve the welfare of elephants and mahouts through fair wages and respectful treatment, INGO5 acknowledges that what they are doing is not a large-scale solution to the problem of animals in tourism. While they would like to see an end to elephant-back safari in the Sauraha area, they realize the need for cessation to happen gradually. If rides were to suddenly stop, they explain, then large numbers of mahouts and their families—already a low-caste, underemployed group—would be left without any income or job prospects. Until elephant owners stop buying new elephants, and until some alternative way is widely accepted through which owners can earn money from their current captive elephants, little will change. INGO5 hopes that through the demonstration of alternative methods for tourist interaction with elephants, chain-free housing options, tourist education and mahout support, small changes will have lasting effects throughout the community.

Limitations and Perceptions of INGO5

When Bishnu Gwala of the INGO4 found out about INGO5's plan to build a sanctuary in the Sauraha area, he admits to trying to frighten them away (Gautam interviews, 2020). He was concerned that if they successfully retired elephants, they would not want to give up their facility if a larger, community-wide sanctuary

⁹⁴ See Hatti Biography: Liswini/Idha Kali

was built. As part of the team trying to create a single sanctuary via talks with the UEOC, Gautam felt that other organizations were a threat to its success. Gautam admits that he essentially told INGO5 that he would pull every string possible to bring trouble down upon them if they got in the way. Luckily, the founders of INGO5 are supportive of efforts towards a community-wide facility, and willing to collaborate with any interested organizations in the area. Like any organization, especially an INGO, there are issues surrounding practice within a county not their own.

Being registered as a foreign NGO does present problems. Even though Brown and Bames have a business visa allowing them to stay in the country for unlimited periods of time, their NGO has no legal standing in Nepal. They are in the process of registering as a Nepali NGO. It is their hope that the relationships they have built with community members offers them some protection against political or community changes until this happens. The staff of INGO5 understands that they cannot technically 'own' an elephant in Nepal, and to ensure continuity of care will have the NTNC veterinarian and the elephant broker witness their transactions with elephant owners.

[Leasing elephants from owners](#)

INGO5 doesn't see the leasing of elephants as a long-term solution to the situation in Nepal. INGO5, along with Individuals and other NGOs have publicly expressed concern that leasing elephants will create a commodity market relying on outside forces. Even with a contract there is the possibility that previous owners will claim

rights and return the elephant to work. In addition, if an injured elephants is leased by an organization and rehabilitated, the owner may then decide that once the elephant is healthy, she is again worth money and insist on cancelling the lease. However, other elephant welfare organizations share the same concerns about *purchasing* elephants, citing the illegality, lack of ownership documents and ease with which a Nepalese owner could demand the return of his property.

Some Nepalese elephant owners worry that leasing elephants puts them at risk. If an owner is dependent upon the lease for income, what happens if the organization leaves Nepal? 'It is a temporary solution', says one, who explains that in his view, leasing an elephant and offering tourist activities is the same as offering rides. It may be 'more friendly' for the elephant, but is still making money from their use (Pabin, Rao interviews, 2019). This sentiment was also expressed by a number of nature guides (Naresh, Raj, Paudel interviews, 2019).

INGO5 describes themselves not as a sanctuary, but as a facility trying to demonstrate to owners that there are alternatives to elephant-backed safari; and show mahouts how to work with elephants in alternative environments or activities, while demonstrating respect for their skills. The nature guides and animal rights groups in the area have varying opinion on whether INGO5 activities are ethical (Paudel, Pabin, Raj interviews, 2019). Every Chitwan park guide interviewed for this thesis, as well as some animal welfare and rights interlocutors, felt that any use of elephants for profit is the same as using elephants on safari. One guide mentioned that the only activity he would support was elephants in sanctuary that

people could pay to view but not touch, so that they didn't 'suffer' (Which is the model used by both INGO2 and INGO5). Other guides explained that since they hadn't had a lot of contact or experience with the alternative elephant groups in the area, they were refraining from sending any guests to them unless the guests 'insist' (Raj interviews, 2010).

Of course, this abolitionist approach to elephants' forced labour is not as simple as it seems. The complete and immediate cessation of animal use in tourism seems at first the 'moral' choice, and many animal rights advocates will tolerate only this zero-use of animals policy (Regan, 1983: 394). Because these individuals are not legally allowed to be released into the wilds of Nepal, and due to the fact that after decades of human involvement they may be unable to feed or defend themselves (Beck, et al., 1994: 278; Kleinman, 1989; Mathews, et al., 2005), there is no option to simply return these elephants to a natural state. Nor, with the exception of one owner, is there a desire among owners to do so. In addition there is only a single zoo within Nepal available for elephant care, and they have chosen to house only a single, retired elephant (Pokharel, interviews 2019); at this point no sanctuary exists beyond those mentioned in this thesis. There is, therefore, a need to balance the interests of these animals (re: being fed, housed, offered freedom to move around and kept free of pain and disease) with the needs of the involved humans (re: the need for continued employment of marginalized groups of mahouts, paying the costs of animal fodder and housing). Elephant owners expressed concern that without elephant safaris, there would be no tourists and

therefore no impetus to keep their 'property' in Nepal, feed or care for it (Rao, Vachan interviews, 2019).

INGO5 understands that any use of elephants is viewed negatively by nature guides and local welfare advocates (Naresh, Taraswin interviews, 2019), and they are working hard to change the opinions of locals, offering open visitation to their facility to any interested party at no charge. They are hoping that local attitudes will change once people see how the facility operates, with a no elephant-human contact policy. They have also been visiting local businesses to introduce themselves, and offered to share their financial reports with interested parties upon request.

Some community members felt that organizations like INGO5 and INGO2 are the logical choices during the time it takes for changing societal attitudes to impact the riding culture (Cheetri, Paudel and Taraswin interviews, 2019). There are ways in which to better ensure animal welfare while allowing for use in activities. One way to do this is to allow the animal to break off the encounter at will (Fennel, 2012: 164; Acampora, 2005: 75), as is the case at INGO5. This and other considerations will be discussed in the next chapter.

NTNC head Rao thinks that programs like INGO5 are a good idea, but feels that it is not a self-sustaining venture since happy hours can't happen as often as safari rides (interview, 2019). Elephant cooperative president Soti shared concerns over the safety of humans walking with elephants in the event wildlife approaches the

group. Not all those participating in these events are 'young and healthy', he says, and might not be able to escape a wild rhino. For this reason, he prefers having visitors on top of an elephant (interview, 2019).

Other organizations in the area credit INGO5 in their desire to be a permanent part of the community, and their commitment to living in Sauraha year-round. Some other westerners admit to being leary of INGO5 at first, worrying that they were being too nice to certain owners who had records of elephant mistreatment. It has become clearer over time how INGO5 is building these relationships to further assist elephants in the area. Working relationships with owners seems to be necessary if welfare organizations hope to purchase or lease elephants in Sauraha (see chapter eight).

Another self-defined problem is the lack of a permanent facility. The land on which the home currently stands is used via a 5 year, renewable lease, which could one day be cancelled by the owner. In addition, there is limited space on this land, which means that INGO5 can only house a total of three elephants in their current sanctuary. They do have a three year plan in place to purchase a larger piece of land on which to establish a permanent sanctuary, farther outside town. The current stable and housing was designed and built with the ability for disassembly and relocation, which is a benefit as it decreases funding needs or lost investment upon moving.

Meeting Hatti

What follows are three biographies focused on residents of different stables under different styles of management. These biographies offer glimpses into the complex lives of captive elephants in Nepal. The first individual, Sanani Gaj, was born at the government breeding centre and now resides at the government patrol stable, where he has gained a unique reputation. Next is the story of Dhonu Gaj, the young male purchased by Rudra Raja and imported from India, who has become infamous among both mahouts and advocates in Sauraha. Lastly, readers will meet Idha Kali. Idha's story is important as it represents a fairly typical captive elephant life in Nepal: capture in India, sale to Nepal, use, injury and potential for return to India. However, Idha's story ends in an unexpected way thanks to the involvement of numerous individuals and organizations including INGO5.

Hatti Biography One: ‘Sanani Gaj’⁹⁵

In April of 2017 I was working alongside another researcher who was focused on elephant-mahout relationships.⁹⁶ I wanted to introduce her to my friends at the NTNC, including my good friend ‘Mr Larina’, a wildlife technician. Once Larina heard that we were interested in mahouts and elephants, he excitedly said he had something special to show us. We proceeded to the government elephant stable, where patrol elephants are housed. There we spotted a man walking toward the shower room. Behind him trailed a young elephant, who appeared to mimic the human’s movements. Everywhere the man went, the elephant followed, including into the shower house. Larina called the pair over, and introduced them as ‘Mr Gurju’ and ‘Sanani Gaj’. Gurju instructed us to sit in a chair in one of the stables, which we did. He then handed Sanani a flower lei, and Sanani came quickly towards us. I was more than a bit disconcerted by the large tusks heading directly for my head, but laughed as the elephant placed the lei gently over my head and ‘blessed’ me by heavily dropping the tip of his trunk on me. During this event, there was no yelling or beating. There was no traditional stick or hook in sight, and Gurju used only a whistle to ask Sanani for behaviours. I was in shock, as it appeared we had found the only elephant in Nepal trained via positive reinforcement.

Claiming not to speak much English, Gurju had Larina and the mahout supervisor

⁹⁵ Female elephants in Nepal carry the surname Kali to honour the Hindu goddess of the same name. Male names contain Prasad or Gaj, with respect for the elephant-headed god, Ganesh (aka Gaja/Gajah). Sanani is sometimes spelled ‘Lakshman’.

⁹⁶ Information in this section comes from 2017 and 2019 interviews with ‘Mr Larina’ and ‘Mr Gurju’ unless otherwise noted. Names and positions are used with permission. Additional information provided by Dr Prakesh Vidanta.

act as translators as we sat down to talk. Gurju explained that Sanani's training came about in a very unexpected way.

Sanani is one of Nepal's famous twin male elephants, born on two separate days in November, 2008 at the breeding centre near Chitwan (Gurju interviews, 2017 and 2019; Thapa, 2009). Twins are rare in elephants, and after Ram Gaj was born late on November 6th, handlers thought they were finished with the process. However, four hours later, Sanani made his entrance, arriving on November 7th (Thapa, 2009). The twins, named for Hindu gods, created quite a stir with tourists, and their arrival led to their mother Devi Kali being treated with great reverence and 'care' (Thapa, 2009). Like most elephants in Nepal, Devi was imported from India, and was bred by the dominant wild male of the period, Romeo (see chapter six; Gurju interviews, 2017, 2019; Thapa, 2009).

Male elephants born at this facility are destined to become government patrol elephants, and Sanani would typically have begun his training around the age of three and a half. Due to a lack of breeding centre staff, his breaking (using 'traditional' methods, see chapter six) and training was delayed until he was seven and paired with Gurju. Gurju had been working with the other twin, but had to leave the stable and return home for a period of time due to the death of a relative. When he returned, Ram had another mahout and so Gurju was given responsibility for Sanani.

Sanani's training via positive reinforcement happened quite by accident. There was another elephant in the stable, Sundramala Kali, who violently disliked Gurju. If Sundramala heard his voice, she would attack, throw things, or try to destroy the stable. As Gurju explains, it was a case of, 'I hate you, so I hate your whole family, too.' She soon began to go after Sanani, and Gurju had to stop speaking entirely while in her presence. Trying to find new ways to pass information to Sanani, Gurju found that the calf easily responded to cues such as clapping. Gurju decided to explore other methods, and began using a whistle to give commands. When I told Gurju that this method was commonly used in western countries, he was shocked. Gurju had not realized that this was a method at all, he and Sanani had simply responded to the situation and adapted in the only way they could. I spent some time describing the operant conditioning methods used at zoos in the US, and offered to connect Gurju with some elephant keeper friends once I returned home.

When our interview officially ended, Larina and the supervisor left. Gurju stayed back, and motioned to my friend and I to stay. Apparently, the supervisor attempts to limit public communication with government mahouts, and tried to limit him from speaking to us alone. He informed us (in excellent English) that the other mahouts teased him about his methods. The others are convinced that dominance and beating is the only way to train, but for the most part their taunts don't bother Gurju. He explains that he and Sanani work just as hard as any pair, and so refuses to let it get to him.

While I do not receive much communication from Sanani himself while I am at home in the US, his co-worker Gurju has been kind enough to keep me updated on Sanani's adventures and growth. So when I returned to Nepal during my 2019 research trip, I visited them both. We sat on the grass and Sanani turned out to be an excellent conversationalist. He chuffed, blew and rumbled while we talked, at one point making me stop to instinctually gasp as I felt his deep rumble in my chest—his answer to my interview questions.

Gurju and Sanani still rely on positive reinforcement training. Not much has changed, Gurju says, but I see that the now massive Sanani is chained by a foot in the stable. I ask if Sanani still has the freedom to follow Gurju around, and he says that when Sanani is 'off work' he can, but I am visiting in the middle of the day. Gurju and Sanani still get teased by the other mahouts, but they continue to work as hard as other teams, and have added vocal commands to their training now. Gurju explains that he 'talks sweet, talks lovely' to Sanani, and gets the same treatment in return. Gurju says Sanani's behaviour hasn't changed much over the last few years, he is still very easy to work with. Visitors have been supportive of the pair's methods, which creates jealousy among the other mahouts. NTNC staff often bring guests to show off Sanani, and these guests offer tips; this is not an opportunity afforded to other government elephant drivers.

Gurju, like others interviewed for this thesis, feels that government elephants have it significantly better than other owned elephants in Nepal. They work in the forest, where fresh browse is available to them for six hours a day, they have regular

access to the river for drinking and bathing, and are given 'days off'. On these days off, they can spend unlimited time in the forest grazing. Government mahouts are allowed to regularly collect grass from within the park, and this grass is much greener and fresher than what was seen in privately owned stables.

Sanani is still very young, and likely won't hit musth for several years, but I am curious if anything will change when he does. Gurju says that they will continue working with vocal commands, in the hope that their bond functions equally well during the eventual surge of hormones. Some adult males at the stable continue to function much as normal throughout musth, he says, while others are very dangerous and uncontrollable. I assume he is talking about the elephants, and not the mahouts. He is hoping Sanani will be one of the former, but Lama reminds me that Sanani started training very late—years after 'normal' training begins, so his future is unknown.

I ask Gurju if he will stay with Sanani, and he says he would like them to work together for life. It is ultimately up to his superiors, however. What happens if Gurju is assigned to another elephant, I ask. Will he use the same training methods? Gurju laughs and explains that training an elephant is 'very difficult'. Positive reinforcement worked with Sanani because of his personality, and is unlikely to work with another elephant, according to Gurju. I was disappointed as Gurju described that he would train any future elephants using traditional methods of

beating and dominance; he doesn't think other elephants have whatever it is that makes Sanani special.⁹⁷

Gurju is an excellent example of a mahout who not only cares for his elephant co-worker, but cares about him (Schrader, 2015: 668). Watching Sanani and Gurju it is clear that their relationship differs from many other government mahouts and elephants. Sanani is afforded more agency (at least while he is young) to explore the camp with Gurju and to express his emotions via vocalizations and actions. His freedom of movement allows Sanani to experience a variety of substrates, foods, and experiences. It also frees Gurju from the stress of needing to be constantly 'dominant' and he appears much calmer and relaxed than the mahouts around him.

Assessing Sanani's health and welfare

Sanani, as an individual, appears to have better health and more positive welfare than most other elephants in Nepal. Perhaps this is due in part to the fact that he is not managed using dominance-based methods (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Desai, 2008; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011). Perhaps it is because mahouts who share strong bonds with their elephant also recognize illness or injury more quickly and require less forceful methods of daily control,

⁹⁷ As this thesis was being written, the Nepal Rastra Bank decided to change the elephant photo on the 1000 rupee note. Instead of the African elephant which has been gracing the note since 1982, twins Sanani and Ram will become the new face of the bill (Rao, 2020; Friedberg, 2020). Eight years in the works, the new note is part of an effort to update photos and replace foreign animals with native species (Rao, 2020; Friedberg, 2020). I could find no documentation why an African elephant was on this bill previously; none of my informants were able to enlighten me.

leading to healthier elephants (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2020: 55). Positive bonds may also help reduce mahout injury, as those familiar with their elephant's behaviour are able to quickly respond to changes in emotional state (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2020: 55). Keeping mahouts in one stable—keeping mahouts 'happy' and in long-term relationships like Gurju and Sanani's—increases the welfare of both elephant and mahout (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2020: 57).

Interlocutors in this study were divided on the health and welfare of elephants housed at this government stable, with some reporting that they felt these individuals lacked access to fresh grass and free time, while others felt that the long periods of grazing afforded these individuals meant that government elephants had more balanced diets. Perhaps this is thanks to recent changes at the stables, where it appeared that diets were evolving. Instead of the dry grass which I saw served on previous visits, the elephant grass seen on my 2019 trip was fresh, green and very plentiful.

Many government mahouts live in raised wooden houses adjacent to the hattisar. Gurju has a house off-site, where he lives with his wife and children. Some nights, when wild males are nearby, he is required to sleep at the hattisar. This is because Renaldo—the now-dominant wild bull—dislikes 'Ala' Prasad, the extremely large, well-tusked government bull.⁹⁸ Renaldo also picks fights with the

⁹⁸ During the writing of this thesis, Renaldo continued to destroy homes and killed a villager on the edge of town. (Barnes PC 2020)

older bulls in the hattisar, and caused a variety of wounds during an incursion in 2018.

For the most part, these government patrol elephants are male. Larger than females, these bulls are used in anti-poaching patrols, collecting wood and grass, translocation efforts, defence of village areas against encroaching wild elephants and census activities. The tusks of these males are trimmed, for reasons which vary depending upon who is speaking. Some say they are cut for the safety of mahouts and other elephants. Other explain that tusks may be damaged during digging (a natural behaviour) or during work. Three females have recently been moved to the hattisar due to a shortage of patrol elephants, and will continue to serve on patrol until impregnated by Renaldo on one of his visits. Once they are approximately a year and a half along, they will be sent back to the breeding centre.

Other Stable Considerations

These elephants have the added benefit of not wearing howdahs (de Vries, 2014: 41; Kontogeoropoulos, 2009: 6; Magda, et al., 2015: 4,5), as they are ridden by a single mahout at a time. They do not have to traverse the main street of town to enter the national park, but rather simply cross the river from their stables. These stables are the standard Nepal style seen at the breeding centre and army posts—long rows of tall wooden posts with metal roofs. These roofs often retain heat, and may cause discomfort to elephants during hot periods (de Vries, 2014). Elephants at this stable are kept within olfactory and sight distance of each other, and are

taken out in groups to browse, thus allowing for appropriate social bonding and activities. Musth, however, can last up to four months, and during that time government males are chained in a special corral. They do retain visual and olfactory contact with others during this time. While the musth corral was encircled by an electric fence and occupied by a large bull in musth, it was not turned on during any of my visits.

Many elephants observed at the government hattisar often had wounds on their foreheads, which according to the NTNC vet are due to 'rubbing on trees'. These injuries also occur, says Vidanta, when elephants try to follow their mahouts around and occasionally try to kill them (interviews 2019).⁹⁹ Mahouts at this facility also had many of their own wounds. During one visit, I was greeted by a mahout using a walker, who had been thrown from his elephant and sustained multiple broken bones. Many others had casts, limps, slings and a variety of other, apparently common, injuries (observations, 2017, 2019; Cheetri and Larina interviews, 2017). Because of this inherent danger, government mahouts are paid significantly more than the 8000-10000 Nrs earned by private mahouts; around 16000 Nrs monthly (around 160 USD at writing) (Bames, Thomas, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). Mahouts that work with male elephants explain that striking these elephants is absolutely necessary to maintain human safety (Cheetri, Larina, Vidantainterviews, 2019), yet it appears that they are hardly 'safe', given the large number of mahout injuries.

⁹⁹ During other stable visits, Vidanta described this damage simply as 'sunburn' or a 'chronic skin condition' (interviews, 2019).

Lehnhardt and Galloway (2008: 169) argue that only positive reinforcement can truly keep handlers 'safe', as it does not create aggressive elephants to begin with. They examined handlers in Myanmar and India who used positive bonds to build 'coworker' relationships with elephants, and compared them to mahouts in Sri Lanka using dominance methods (2008: 176). Despite the fact that their elephants had undergone a breaking ceremony, the 'humane' handlers reported no deaths. This group of elephants was allowed to range the forest at night and interact with wild individuals, but returned to camps in the morning thanks to their bonds (Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008: 176). In contrast, elephants with zero contact with wild individuals and living in dominance-based management regularly tried to kill their handlers (2008: 174). This information suggests that positive interactions with mahouts, as well as other elephant herds, is key to prevent human injury, but more studies are needed to identify which relationship is more important.

Conclusions

Sanani is in a truly unique situation, as the only elephant currently managed using positive reinforcement training. While this method arose organically, it has proven successful at garnering Sanani a bit more fame and Gurju extra tips. Gurju and Sanani appear to respect each other both as kin and co-workers.

Gurju's definition of 'necessary care' involved finding a way to communicate with his elephant co-worker which ensured they both remained safe from attack. In addition, Sanani's status as a government elephant means that he is provided with different provisions and legal requirements than privately owned individuals.

Hatti Biography Two: ‘Dhonu Gaj’¹⁰⁰

As I walk onto Rudra Raja’s property, I am struck by the differences in this stable to many others I have seen. The mahout housing consists of long, brick shacks which I would describe as ramshackle. The bricks are wavy from settling, and there is an air of neglect about the stable. A thin wire with danger signs (in English, among other languages) runs around the perimeter. A large male elephant is chained under a high-roofed shelter, and is wildly waving his trunk—this is Dhonu Gaj. Dhonu stands in an unnatural spread-eagle position, unable to pull his legs in due to the chains on all four limbs. He drips fluid from his temporal glands, indicating musth. Dhonu is surrounded by plastic strips tied to poles, I imagine meant to act as caution tape to keep visitors from getting too close. He is very vocal, and pulling at the tape. No one can approach without being threatened, so water is being offered from a large hose sprayed by a mahout standing 15 feet away. Mahout staff throws corn to Dhonu, and Dhonu throws everything he can grab.

The children of mahouts are running around, terribly close to Dhonu. Nine mahouts live on the property, some who still practice polygamy, so there are a lot of children. Dr Vidanta leans to me and says that he thinks the mahout housing should not be so close to Dhonu’s stable (see photo), and that he thinks Dhonu should be sold.

¹⁰⁰ Information in this section was obtained via participant observations of Dhonu and Rudra Raja, and interviews with Saroj, Vidanta, and INGO5 staff, unless otherwise noted. Names have been pseudonymised.



Figure 5 Dhonu Gaj, chained in his stable.

Photo by the author. Sauraha, Nepal. April 1, 2019.

I meet Dhonu's owner, Rudra Raja, and we sit down some distance from the elephant. I sit facing Dhonu, as I instinctually do not want to turn my back on him. I am told that Dhonu had two mahouts, but they were both 'drunkards' and left. The mahout of another elephant is trying to care for Dhonu, but the bull will not let him get close. As we talk, Dhonu picks up corn stalks and throws them at us as he vocalizes. When he starts picking up heavier objects, Raja suggests we move further away.

Raja purchased Dhonu when he decided to extend his elephant operations, because 'he looked healthy' and Raja, as mentioned above, was inexperienced with the differences between bulls and cows. According to Raja, all was well until Dhonu hit 20 years old, and his musth became 'very strong'. Dhonu became uncontrollable for 42 days at a time, several times a year, and at one point

completely destroyed his stable. After spending nearly a year chained by all four legs in the field with no shelter from the sun, Dhonu had had enough. He broke free and escaped into the forest, where he went on a 'rampage'. The veterinarian was called, and he had to shoot Dhonu with a tranquilizer gun to calm him enough to regain control. Dhonu was returned to Raja's field, but due to the perceived danger, many mahouts now simply refused to work with him. During the next elephant festival, the veterinarian again received an emergency call. Dhonu had been taken to the festival during musth, and was wreaking havoc. Interlocutors feel that these early traumatic experiences have led to Dhonu's heightened aggression and prolonged periods of musth.

'Saving' Dhonu

Raja openly discusses his love for Dhonu, and his difficulty in selling him because of their strong attachment. Most local owners typically only purchase females due to the difficulties inherent in housing males, making Dhonu more difficult to place. Rajal was debating whether to sell Dhonu to India or simply let him go into the national park. Whether freed captive elephants can survive on their own is a matter of debate, but has been practiced in Nepal in the past (see chapter four). Raja voiced concerns that if he simply released Dhonu, the elephant might return to the village and damage more property or injure humans.

Since Raja had previously contracted with INGO5 (an NGO we will meet in the following chapters) for foot care and training, they stepped in and offered to cover Dhonu's expenses for one year to allow Raja time to weigh his options. This

organization built Dhonu a very tall, large roofed shelter on Raja's property. Providing physical improvements on other people's property is something INGO5 (INGO5) tries to limit to items which more directly impact mahout and elephant welfare, but in this case INGO5 felt it was the best way to improve Dhonu's conditions, especially during his difficult musth periods. They made an agreement with Raja that if Dhonu ended up sold, the shelter would be removed from the hattisar. INGO5 staff began spending time at the hattisar daily, holding barbeques for hattisar staff, and offering professional and personal support. INGO5 explains that they, along with some other community members, have agreed to support several of the mahouts' children as 'unofficial' aunts and uncles. Sadly, one of these mahouts was killed by a tiger while grazing the elephants during the fall of 2020 (Rimal, 2020; Barnes PC, 2020).

Financial impacts

Raja is losing money on Dhonu, since he can't participate in safari rides throughout much of the year. To make extra cash, Raja has been 'renting' out his female elephants for other NGOs or private entrepreneurs to take on tourist walks through the community forest. In addition, Raja decided to pilot a program accepting volunteers who pay a fee for the experience of 'working' in an elephant stable. His first volunteers are in town while I am visiting, and Raja feels the program is a success, but is still entertaining the idea of renting or selling Dhonu to

Indian buyers for between 50 and 80 lakh.¹⁰¹ The concern remains that if kept in his current situation, Dhonu may again escape and rampage.

While in negotiations with Raja, INGO5 held a fundraising drive with the aim of purchasing Dhonu and transferring him to a sanctuary. When talks with Raja fell through, staff at INGO5 contacted all of the donors and offered to return their money. They report that most donors left their money in place for other projects. Negotiations for Dhonu continued, but INGO5 explained that his price tag remains more than they can afford.

Assessing Dhonu Gaj's stable and welfare

Dhonu's living conditions are far from ideal. While Dhonu is becoming more handleable during his musth, he still spends significant time chained in place on hard-packed dirt, which can cause joint damage (Miller et al., 2016: np; Csuti, et al., 2001). Due to his youth, this damage could have life-long consequences. The spread-legged position in which Dhonu is forced to stand may also impact his joint health. Furthermore, standing in feces and urine may lead to infections and further joint problems, and Dhonu's staff can't get close enough to clean (Roocroft and Oosterhuis 2001; Sarma, et al., 2012; West, 2001). These care issues might be addressed with changes in husbandry, such as using long leg chains to allow for more agency during musth (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Carnahan, 2019; Rizzolo and

¹⁰¹ A lac (or lakh) is 100,000 (Nepalese or Indian) rupees and is used to discuss large sums of money in India and Nepal

Bradshaw, 2016). Ideally, male elephants should be provided specific enclosures where they can be maintained without chaining or beating (Desai, 2008).

Dominance methods of elephant management are used at Raja's hattisar, like most other stables in the area. These management techniques often include the use of a bull hook or stick and result in negative welfare outcomes, which may lead to an inability to fight off infection or other lingering health issues (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). The lack of agency in any aspect of his life means that Dhonu is in a constant struggle against his mahouts, which has led to stress for both humans and elephant, and ongoing staff turnover.

Another reason for Dhonu's stress level and difficult musth may include his separation from his maternal herd at a young age. This early separation and subsequent isolation may lead to lingering issues with proper brain development (Bradshaw, 2009). Dhonu's continuous vocalizations and aggression are clearly signs of low welfare (Veasey, 2006). In addition, the ability to lie down for rest is essential to health, especially for young elephants, and Dhonu has no such option (Asher, et al., 2015; Schiffmann, et al., 2018). Dhonu's corral is open-sided, with four corner posts, and he can't reach them for leaning upon due to the short length of his rear chains. The lack of appropriate leaning or recumbent rest may be partially responsible for Dhonu's increased aggression and prolonged musth periods (Clubb and Mason, 2002; DEFRA, 2012; Gairhe, 2012; Kurt and Garai, 2006).

The stable does house numerous female elephants, so some of Dhonu's social needs are being met (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Varma, 2008; Vidya and Sukumar, 2005). Dhonu is kept within olfactory distance of the females, which is important to the welfare of each (AZA, 2012; Clubb and Mason, 2002). As already noted, some natural breeding activities have been allowed, which may also promote some aspects of positive welfare (Desai, 2008). However, these elephants were purchased individually from India and therefore faced their own breaking of bonds and exposure to the Phajaan ritual—both of which are major impactors of health and welfare (see chapter six).

Additional issues

Because of the stable's location, there is little 'natural' elephant habitat available within the property, meaning Dhonu cannot wander and graze without traveling to the community forest. However, he is allowed to make the trek while not in musth, and has more access to browsing during monsoon season when there are fewer tourists around. While a small grassy meadow lies behind the stable, it is instead made available for cart-horses who are allowed to relax here with their owners.

The stable itself lies on Sauraha's main thoroughfare, where tourist jeeps and safari elephants turn on their way into town, to the NTNC, and to the Kumroj elephant-safari gates. Almost directly across from the stable lies one of the busiest spots in Sauraha, often referred to simply as 'riverside'. At dusk, tourists and locals gather en masse in this area to watch the sun set and catch a glimpse of wildlife

crossing the Rapti River. Riverside is also the launch point for tourists crossing the river via canoe to participate in jeep safaris or river tours, creating further chaos throughout the day.

Raja's elephants work out of the Kumroj tourist gate, which means that these elephants walk long distances before beginning their daily duties, and must pass along the very busy road mentioned above. Coupled with a diet lacking adequate nutrition or appropriate quantity, this added work may lead to continuing health problems or death, as was the case for three of Raja's elephants (see chapter six). Mahout housing at this stable is also inadequate. This housing is located only 5 meters from Dhonu's shelter, well within throwing distance (see above), and appears to be collapsing. Offering appropriate shelter, medical care and training for mahouts is key to improving the welfare of both humans and elephants (AERSM final report, 2017; Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a; Carnahan, 2019; GoN, 2015b).

Update

Raja reached out to me in the fall of 2020. He had purchased several new elephants, and wondered if I might offer some suggestions as to how to navigate managing this larger herd. I sent him suggestions on diet changes during musth, and recommended he have Chloe Brown of INGO5 and vet tech Saroj take a look at the new arrivals. Raja has contacted INGO5 to obtain information on creating chain-free enclosures, and has begun building a few on his property. INGO5 has put a young welfare advocate in touch with Raja in the hopes that extra support for

stable improvements will follow. Dhonu came out of this period of musth, and was allowed to socialize with other elephants. Raja regularly posted pictures of the elephants playing in the river or 'wrestling' trunks.

Conclusions

Dhonu's situation is one of the most concerning in Sauraha, due to his inadequate housing and restraint, and the lack of suitable housing for Raja's other elephants and mahouts. Raja's definition of 'appropriate care' does not mesh with that of the veterinary staff, other elephant owners, or advocates in the area, and he admits that his methods have led to issues with elephant health and welfare. Raja, for the most part, refuses to listen to veterinary advice, and continues to obtain more elephants despite issues keeping them healthy or alive.

Perhaps it is strange, therefore, that I see in Raja the key to improving elephant health throughout Sauraha. As an independent owner, Raja has developed a reputation as someone who fails to provide 'positive welfare' for his elephants. However, Raja is now accepting advice from several parties, and remains open to the idea of a non-riding facility, which he feels would be better for all his elephants. He has shown a commitment to financial investments in stable improvements, and with the continued support of INGO5 and local community advocates, perhaps Raja can successfully transition his safari elephants to chain-free living while stabled. If Raja is successful, other owners may follow suit, especially if Raja can bring in further financial support from outside parties.

Hatti Biography Three: ‘Liswini (Idha) Kali’



Figure 6
Liswini Kali in her former stable.
Sauraha, Nepal. March 31, 2019. Photo by the author.

Liswini Kali arrived from India in 2010 at around 20 years of age. Her history up to that point is unknown, as are the circumstances surrounding her birth. According to veterinary staff and her caregivers, she was likely wild-caught, broken in India and imported to Sauraha. Because she arrived from Assam with visible leg injuries which they had observed in other wild-caught individuals, vet staff suspected that she was captured using the illegal pit method—using a hole covered with sticks for

camouflage and waiting for an elephant to fall in (Munster, 2016: 433). This method is dangerous for both mahouts and wild elephants, as the former are often injured in the attempt to rope these elephants, and the latter often suffer broken body parts or death in the fall (Munser, 2016: 433). After undergoing a breaking process, Liswini was purchased by a Nepalese businessman and (illegally) imported to Sauraha, Nepal to serve as a tourist conveyance.

Liswini Kali's is the final biography which will serve as a cynosure for a discussion of the complex issues surrounding captive elephant care and ethics in Nepal. Prior to this study, I had only seen Liswini Kali in video form, but our first meeting in Nepal created a feeling of kinship. Sharing physical ailments and the very real struggles of middle-age, I saw in her the same issues we all face—a fight for control of our bodies and our lives.

The number of westerners involved in her situation, the passion she ignited, the mishandling of her narrative and the anger surrounding her perceived mistreatment may have led to an initial decrease in her welfare. Liswini's story is a bit auto-ethnography and a bit biography, based upon my interactions with her, participant observations and face-to-face interviews with the founders of INGO5. My contact with both Liswini Kali and her caregivers continues via videos, video call, and emails. The following includes information and assessments drawn from the above contacts along with an intuitive analysis of the INGO5 website and social media accounts, as well as interviews with community members and veterinary staff at the NTNC.

Liswini's story

After serving as a privately-owned safari elephant in Nepal for seven years, Liswini Kali developed deep wounds and swelling on the sides of her body from the constant rubbing of howdah straps, a common injury in captive elephants throughout Asia (see also Magda, et al., 2015). Antibiotics and anti-inflammatory medications were provided by veterinary staff, but Liswini was unable to lie down to rest for months due to pain from these wounds.

Liswini's involvement with human foreigners began in 2017, when Brown (prior to forming INGO5) offered to assist Liswini by massaging the area around the saddle wounds. Brown worked in conjunction with veterinary staff to treat these injuries and make Liswini more comfortable. Later that year, Liswini's right front leg suddenly began to swell. Liswini's mahouts said she had fallen, while other mahouts claimed she was attacked by another female; the NTNC vet blames an overgrown toenail for the swelling. The leg ended up four times its normal size, and vet staff repeatedly tried to bring down the swelling with antibiotic injections. Brown became involved again, offering to massage the leg in an attempt to offer pain relief as well as a comforting touch.

Liswini continued to ferry guests on safari despite the swelling and obvious pain, and made her feeling known by becoming 'naughty' and 'aggressive' to her handlers. Finally, NTNC veterinary staff requested that the owner offer her time off. As the medical providers of privately-owned captive elephants in Sauraha, it is up to the NTNC veterinarian to decide when an elephant is too old or too injured to

continue riding, and to suggest a length of time she should be kept off work. From the time she was removed from duty, Liswini was chained in her stable for long periods each day for rest, but Liswini refused to lie down, which means she was unable to experience REM sleep (see chapter five). Sleep-deprivation, an inadequate diet, the inability to relieve her pain by altering her standing position and increasing frustration led Liswini to act out more aggressively. She was trying to communicate her needs, and no one was listening.

On a 2018 trip to Nepal to assist an elephant organization with foot trimming and corral building, Renee spotted a weary Liswini struggling to walk as her mahout gently encouraged her. After attempting to contact the owner about Liswini's health problems and receiving no response, Renee took matters into her own hands and hired a veterinarian unaffiliated with elephant care in Sauraha. This veterinarian treated Liswini without contacting her owner to obtain permission (, 2018). Concerned with Liswini's chronic health problems, Renee took to social media (INGO1 founder, 2018), but failed to ask permission from the elephant's owner to use Liswini's image in her posts (Vidantainterviews, 2019). The video post showed an obviously slow, pained elephant walking alongside a dirt road. The tagline read: PLEASE look, share and donate! Let's do everything we can to help this elephant. You can donate through our website. Thank you! (INGO1, 2010).

The NTNC veterinarian, Liswini's owner and the elephant cooperative quickly found out about this post, and sent police to confront Renee. The police ordered

her to remove the social media posts due to their inflammatory nature. The veterinarian and owner felt these posts were damaging to the image of Sauraha, and seemed to imply that Renee had made arrangements to offer some financial support to Liswini Kali. They informed Renee that since she was in Nepal on a tourist visa, and had not come as part of an organization, she was not legally allowed to perform care of any kind on elephants. The use of tourist visas is fairly common practice in Nepal, and all of the NGOs interviewed for the current study used tourist visas to enter the country, with the exception of INGO5 founders, who live year-round in Sauraha on a business visa (Shirley, Thomas Interviews, 2019).

Renee, who has no veterinary training nor experience with elephants outside a certification course offered by the non-profit INGO3 (see chapter seven), contacted a Nepalese news outlet and stated that Liswini was terminally ill and needed immediate assistance. The article and above-mentioned videos, which until 2020 remained on You Tube and Facebook, along with current comments and running donations, continued to anger veterinary staff and elephant owners throughout Sauraha. Liswini's owner never received any funds raised for this elephant, nor did the NTNC veterinary staff. The amount of money raised, and how it was used is still unknown.

Renee was not, in fact, alone in her attempts to assist Nepalese elephants, nor did she remain in Nepal despite these posts. She returned to Thailand, but visited Nepal several more times and has continued to post pictures of elephants without the permission of owners. Each time she faced similar outcomes, including being

taken to the tourist police and threatened with deportation. In response, Renee often resorted to contacting newspapers to publicly defend her actions (Pant, 2018: np).

Other people concerned with elephant welfare are familiar with Renee and expressed their concern over her methods. While some activists regularly take to social media in an attempt to publicize poor animal treatment, these posts can be damaging to relationships between organizations active in the area who are working in the country legally and have garnered some cooperation from elephant owners to create lasting change (see chapter three). Many of these other organizations have asked Renee to attempt a quieter approach to her activism. These organizations explain that they experienced prejudice and distrust from locals due to the local tendency to perceive the actions of one westerner as representative of all westerners.

Meeting Liswini

I meet Liswini at her small stable, chained by a front and a back foot on a hard-packed dirt floor, but with remnants of blue dye across her forehead, likely from the Holi¹⁰² celebration. Even though she doesn't leave the stable, her mahout clearly cares enough to include her in the celebration. Her right foreleg is visibly swollen, and it is this leg that carries double metal chains which attach to a sunken concrete slab. Her back leg is also encircled by a metal chain, but attached to a

¹⁰² A Hindu celebration involving lots of decoration, and colorful dyes which are thrown at other humans or painted on elephants foreheads

small rope tied to a post. As I approach her, she initially acts disinterested—trunk hanging limply and relaxed ears—as the veterinarian instructs me to stay back from this ‘very dangerous’ elephant with a history of killing humans.¹⁰³ I notice her feet immediately—and it is hard not to automatically react, not only as a veterinary nurse and someone experienced with pachyderm feet, but as someone who understands chronic pain. Her front toenails are gnarled and overgrown, and there is a red, raw spot between her toes. Her back toenails are overgrown and malformed, concave instead of convex. Due to her chains, Liswini Kali is forced to stand in an unnatural position (see photo below). While Liswini could not describe in English words her feelings, she made them clear by constantly shifting her weight back and forth, painfully and uncomfortably. She has been ‘relieved’ of her tourist safaris duties for a year, due to swelling, pain and obvious difficulty in walking, and now remains chained in place under a metal roof for up to 24 hours a day.

Liswini’s stable stands only a few feet away from another elephant (a ‘nice’ elephant, I’m told), and small ponds from the unseasonal rains have encouraged ducks to swim right behind her. Liswini has a pile of used hay and feces behind her, but her hard-packed dirt floor is clean, which I take as a sign of mahout care and an important thing, given the suspected infection under Liswini’s nails. Dirty substrate is a key contributor to these types of infections, and can cause long-term joint issues (see chapter five). Trash litters the area surrounding the stable, as it does most of Sauraha. Waste management typically consists of sweeping trash

¹⁰³ Although whom or how many was never shared with the author

into a pile and burning it, along with elephant dung, or more often, ignoring it.

While not standing in urine or faeces, Liswini's rear legs have urine stains running down them, and the stains encircle one foot.



Figure 7

A close-up of Liswini Kali's feet showing nail problems and swelling.

Sauraha, Nepal. Photo by the author. March 31, 2019.

Liswini's mahout comes out to say hello; he is a friendly Tharu man who looks about my age, and is the same mahout seen in the videos circulated on social media. He welcomes us and chats with the vet staff about Liswini. His home, next to Liswini's, is of traditional mud and stick Tharu construction (see chapter ten),

Liswini continues to shift her weight uncomfortably, raising one foot to rest, then the other. Forward, backward, and side to side she sways and steadily makes a variety of noises. She waves her trunk around unpredictably as the vet explains that Liswini's current problems began, in his opinion, with an overgrown toenail. Because she would not allow anyone to touch her feet, the mahouts and veterinary staff were unable to provide care beyond the anti-inflammatory injections mentioned above, but her leg continued to swell. Without the equipment for radiographs (see chapter eight) there was no way to tell how far the infection had progressed, or what interventions might help. Pain medication was provided for a while, but has been discontinued. Vidanta tells me that the foot and leg are not really 'painful', but it is obvious from Liswini's body language that they are. Other treatments were attempted, says Vidanta, and with toenail trimming to redistribute her weight off the affected toes, her feet looked better for a little while. Sadly, they soon returned to their now normal state of agony. Unable to place equal weight on her painful front foot, Liswini began to shift as much weight as possible to the other leg, resulting in the loss of two toenails and the twisting of her other nails. Things have gotten so bad that any treatments require Liswini be chained to posts by all four limbs, which is painful for her and traumatic both for her and the vets.

At one point, the vet staff tried using xylazine, a sedative, to calm her enough to treat her foot issues, but (not unexpectedly) it made her unable to raise her legs enough to allow any procedures. I ask if it was possible to 'knock her down', the veterinary term for the use of anaesthesia. M-99 is an anaesthetic agent available

in Nepal, but the vet team explains that they are hesitant to use it for several reasons. First, it is a narcotic, which means more paperwork for them. Second, they try to limit M-99 use to wild animals in need of rescue. Lastly, they would have to anaesthetise her twice, as once she lies down on one side, they would not be able to roll her over to treat the other.

Dr Vidanta repeatedly argues that there is no infection in the foot, but I doubt these claims as her foot is still swollen and the toenails overgrown, cracked and ugly. Vidanta would like Liswini permanently removed from safari, and sent to a shelter of some kind or sold to India. This owner has been asking approximately 42000 USD for Liswini, and has been hesitant to sell even at that price. Vidanta says he wishes INGO5 would purchase her. According to the UEOC president, the coop has gotten involved to put pressure on Liswini's owner to sell her. He feels her condition reflects badly on the rest of the members, and feels that the coop has a responsibility to get involved (Vachan interviews, 2019).

There is an elephant behaviourist from the US in town, and she comes to visit Liswini, along with an American vet who spends part of the year in Nepal with her own adopted elephant. The two women offered to train Liswini and build a 'training wall', made of metal bars to separate the trainer for safety, in the hope that they could train her to voluntarily present her feet. The local vets helped them ask the owner to pay for supplies, and he responded that he must have a signed contract stating that he is not responsible if anyone gets hurt, and the vet wants assurances that nothing will be posted on social media asking for money. Despite

continued efforts by the group, the owner never agreed and the wall was never built.

I agree to return to the stable later so that I can observe Liswini's foot treatment. I arrive early and am greeted by the neighbouring mahout, who invites me to sit in the shade of his porch and share his fan. He has been in the area for six years, trying to support his mother who had throat cancer. He was only 14 when he arrived from a small village outside Chitwan National Park, and started following guides as they took tourists on walks. While he spoke no English or Nepali, he quickly learned that words like 'no problem' and 'yes' went far with tourists who then thought he was part of the tour group. This resulted in tips—which he could send home—and an increase in English proficiency. Elephants were his favourite animal, and so he became a mahout, and now works with Big Punam Kali—the 'nice elephant' who lives next door to Liswini Kali. He likes the mahout housing here, it is nice and cool. During the monsoon season, he enjoys the decrease in safaris so he and Big Punam can relax. During non-festival times, he and Big Punam offer between one and three rides a day. He really likes his job, and plans to stay a mahout for the rest of his life. I ask him about Liswini, and he describes the elephant's behaviour as like a bull in musth, pointing to his temples, and says she is constantly eating, eating, eating. According to the Dr Vidanta, she has gained weight being off work, but is still underweight for an adult elephant¹⁰⁴. I comment that I think she seems like a bored, middle-aged woman, eating to pass the time.

¹⁰⁴ The reasons for this are likely due to the foods offered. See chapter five

The behaviourist arrives with a bag of produce, and while I feed her, Liswini raises her foot (under the suggestion of her mahout, armed with a beating stick, just in case) and places it in the offered tub in which water has been mixed with turmeric, Epsom salts and powdered antibiotics. I am shocked at the ease with which this happens, as I expected a fuss, trumpeting and aggression. Her mahout follows the foot soak with a laser treatment, and Liswini wiggles and waits while he finishes. This dangerous elephant has shown no signs of aggression towards any of us involved in today's treatment. The soaks continued for several days, but the short duration coupled with the dirt and feces of Liswini's stable floor mean that the treatment is likely largely ineffective.

A few days later, I stop by to visit the NTNC vet, Dr Vidanta, and meet an American veterinarian turned university professor who is in town visiting. Vidanta is interested in getting this vet's opinion on a few elephants, even though the professor isn't currently practicing. We take him to look at one of the EEHV survivors who is exhibiting strange behaviours with his tongue, then drive over to Liswini's stable, where the American vet recommends pain meds, regular walks and if nothing works, then euthanasia. This may seem a normal suggestion for non-Nepalese, but euthanasia is not often practiced on elephants here, due to their connection to the Hindu god Ganesh, and an overall avoidance of euthanasia in wildlife.

Liswini Kali today

Two years to the day after permanently relocating to Nepal, and following six months of negotiations, INGO5 was able to purchase Liswini Kali in the fall of 2019 for approximately 32,000 USD—a bargain by Sauraha standards. A healthy elephant may cost up 80 or 90 thousand dollars. Because there are no laws governing the care or ownership of privately-held elephants, INGO5 involved the UOEC, the NTNC veterinary staff and the elephant broker in the finalization process. Their involvement means that the local community acknowledges that Liswini is now owned by INGO5, and offers the only protection against someone else claiming to be her owner.

The move to sanctuary life was not easy. Truck transport was not an option in this case, and so Liswini made the painful 4.5 km walk on foot. It took nearly 14 hours and a lot of convincing, but she finally arrived at the INGO5 facility with her two mahouts. Adjusting to her new life was far from automatic, and Idha Kali—her new name to reflect her new beginning—received foot treatments for the infected areas. An initial health assessment was completed when Idha arrived at the Elephant Home, and numerous issues were recorded. On top of a poor body condition score (she was still underweight), all of her front nails were found to be cracked, overgrown, infected or missing. She demonstrated a slow, stiff gait, likely due to joint issues. Her right foreleg did not bend. Her head is marked with old wounds from beatings which have not healed, and she suffered from dry skin. Her mental status was described as ‘disturbed’ by staff and she appeared fearful, painful and traumatized.

While getting the newly-named Idha Kali out of her former situation was important for her long-term health, simply expecting her to quickly adjust to her new surrounding was out of the question. As discussed earlier, elephants are complex beings who are heavily impacted by the events of their past. In order to make Idha's transition as smooth as possible, she was walked into a large stable, with metal beams supporting open sides and a roof. This enclosure would serve as a safe space for her to explore her new surroundings while ensuring the safety of the humans around her. Idha was started on antibiotics and vitamins, and quickly seemed to settle in to her new corral as her feet started to heal with access to clean, dry flooring. Within a week, Idha was starting to respond to positive reinforcement using produce to get her to place her foot up on a bar and allowing staff to gently touch her with a stick, and within four weeks she was accepting foot soaks and medication application using only positive reinforcement.

Despite steady progress (see above), for her first eight months at the Elephant HOME, Idha was described as 'aggressive' by her mahouts and staff. She was nervous due to the new sights and sounds of the elephant HOME, and vocalized loudly. She had been accompanied to her new home by her long-term mahout, who liked to spread stories to the other mahouts about the history of this 'dangerous' elephant. Staff feels that this may have had an impact on Idha's adjustment—perhaps she felt the fear the mahouts had toward her thanks to these stories.

Brown and Bames feel that Idha's reported 'aggression' at her old stable was really just the natural response by an elephant to a lack of choices in her life, and in chronic pain. Unable to express herself and stuck in one place all day and night, Idha struck out. Once moved to the INGO5 HOME, she was initially unsure about her new facility and all of the changes in her life, and reacted in the only way she could. In the last year, Idha has learned that she has the agency to simply leave any situation, and no longer reacts 'aggressively' to stimuli. Brown described Idha as a 'sensitive' being, who wants to express herself, sometimes loudly. Brown describes Idha as juvenile in a lot of ways, such as being fearful of loud noises, and unable to handle stressful situations calmly. This is perhaps due to her early removal from her herd and subsequent violent capture and injury leaving her without the coping mechanisms to deal with change easily (Sukumar, 2003).

Idha was likely exposed to a breaking ceremony (see chapter six), so her life history may have created lasting emotional issues (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011: np). In addition, her years of painful foot issues and inadequate stabling may have left her with emotional trauma or PTSD which may manifest as fear, social anxiety, physical aggression or charging at humans, self-injury or distress vocalizations (Carnahan, 2019; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2016: 293). Elephants who have experienced trauma or stress in the past may begin to heal if placed in appropriate facilities (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). Allowing elephants choice of which human (instead of forcing a specific mahout upon them) with whom to associate may also aid their recovery (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). Studies on mahouts who attempted consistent and caring husbandry, or patient

flexibility in timing of response to commands resulted in calmer elephants (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). In addition, adding non-command related physical touch (such as patting) and conversation aided in elephant emotional recovery (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018).

Closed circuit TV cameras made it easier to observe her behaviours in the hopes of discovering ways to make her transition easier. What the staff discovered instead was Idha's love of inventing new hat fashions daily. Hay, dirt, burlap—whatever she can find she places on her head, much to the delight of her caregivers (see photo below). This behaviour is less about style and more about substance—while elephants are not allowed to cover themselves with dirt and grass while on safari, they would in the wild. As the months passed and Idha continued to settle in, she began to slowly allow foot soaks twice daily, and allowed the application of ointments to her toes.





Figures 8 and 9
Idha and her 'hats' at the INGO5 HOME. Sauraha, Nepal.
Photos provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Making the adjustment was not easy for the mahouts, either. Transitioning from traditional dominance-based training to trust-based training was difficult, as was having the responsibility of a much larger stable to clean. Idha and her mahouts had to learn to trust each other and the INGO5 staff, and that took many months. In addition, these mahouts were accustomed to keeping their elephants 'quiet' and seeing any noise as aggression. Learning that elephants were vocal beings, and allowing Idha to express herself took several months of becoming-with their charges (Haraway, 2008: 27). There is also, according to interlocutors in this study, a long-standing rivalry between India-born and Nepal-born mahouts in Sauraha. Having arrived with her solitary Nepalese mahout, other mahouts were employed to help care for her. Nepalese mahouts at the Elephant HOME accused Indian mahouts of drugging Idha during her first few months at the facility, in an attempt to make her more aggressive and likely to hurt the Nepalese mahouts. Building trust between these men took time.

INGO5 founders report that there is no longer any rivalry between nationalities (at least at this stable), and the mahouts joke and smile. The mahouts maintain clean rooms and common spaces and have decided to beautify the area by planting flowers, which INGO5 founders feel indicates that they are proud of the facility and taking ownership of their roles. When mahouts from other stables visit, INGO5 mahouts take them on tours to 'show off' their kitchen, lodgings, and to share their meals. This sharing of meals has resulted in numerous visits from other local mahouts.

It took three months of patient work by Idha and her carers, but in January 2020 she was released into the larger, open pasture. An electric barrier fence ensures her safety and that of people living near the property. Idha has the choice of where she goes on the property, what she eats and has a pond for bathing (separate from her drinking water) and plenty of mud during the wet season. She is the only captive elephant in Sauraha with constant, free-choice access to water throughout the day—and she takes full advantage of it. She was soon choosing to associate with the founders at her new home, following them around and touching them with her trunk. INGO5 has introduced enrichment items slowly to prevent stress, but Idha now has a tire toy. Eight months after her arrival at her new home, Idha's body and mind were healthy enough to voluntarily allow a complete front foot treatment including nail care. Positive reinforcement training continues, in the hopes that Idha will eventually be comfortable allowing bloodwork, rear foot work and other treatments. In addition, INGO5 has hired a local Nepalese man as their

project manager, and he oversees cultural relations, language issues and acts as a leader for the HOME team.



Figure 10

Idha at the end of 2020

Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Idha is now described as ‘friendly, and affectionate, and cooperative’. She and INGO5 founder Bames have a mutual love affair, and she has taken to following him around and seeking affection. When she hears his voice, she trumpets and quickly moves to find him. According to Bames, when Idha first arrived, he was unable to even approach the perimeter of her enclosure. Which was fine with the staff, as they had planned to keep their distance and only allow mahouts to have contact with Idha. About eight months in, he ‘got a vibe’ that Idha wanted him to come closer so he joined the mahouts in the pasture. Soon, Idha seemed to know as soon as Bames arrived on the property (he lives elsewhere), and would huff

and chuff while reaching his direction with her trunk. If he remained on the outside of the pasture, Idha would act as if she was distressed and ‘wanted him really close’. Bames began to take daily walks around the pasture, and Idha would follow, seeking contact. Other days Bames would sit on a stool, and Idha would come over and stand near him. Soon, she began to stand over him and ‘nap’ (resting in a standing position is common in elephants). Bames simply sat and played games on his phone. He describes feeling ‘totally and completely’ safe, even if Idha is stressed about something. Idha is very aware of him, even while standing over him, and is careful not to accidentally step on him. Bames says, ‘I feel more like she is protecting me.’ Female elephants follow herd leaders based upon their ability to do what is best for the herd (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Poole, 2001 in Clubb and Mason, 2002), and perhaps Idha saw in Bames a protector who made good choices for her welfare. Brown attributes this positive transspecies relationship to Bame’s undemanding nature; he is very calm and has ‘good energy’. According to Brown, Bames demands nothing—he is not Idha’s mahout and so asks for nothing from her, while offering only ‘good things’ such as companionship.

Perhaps the change in Idha’s behaviour is also due to a change in mahouts’ understanding of her. Rather than a jeep kept full of the cheapest gas, roughly driven and given only the most basic care, Idha is now a companion and part of a much larger, more supportive ‘herd’. She has been de-commodified and reformed as an individual member of a family.



Figure 11
Idha and Mitch Bames. Sauraha, Nepal.
Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

July 2020 brought with it a major landmark in Idha Kali's rehabilitation. Her long-term injury, years of pain and distrust had subsided enough for her to attempt resting lying down. Given a large pile of dirt upon which to recline (as often recommended by elephant specialists), Idha was finally comfortable enough in her new surroundings to relax. This recumbent sleep is very important for elephant health and should help reduce Idha's stress levels further (see chapter five).

In October of 2020, a private party purchased Sama Kali—an elephant whom I have considered a friend since 2012, and whom I visit socially at her home every time I am in Nepal—for retirement at INGO5. Sama began her journey to INGO5's Elephant HOME with daily visits in order to acclimatise to the stable and to Idha. After several weeks, the two were given physical access to each other, and after a few weeks of discomfort became accustomed to being in proximity. Sama returned

to her regular stable to visit her co-workers (several kilometres away) at night for several weeks. INGO5 used this time to secure funds to cover Sama's care costs for at least a year. Towards this goal, INGO5 launched a Gofundme campaign and donations arrived from around the world. This campaign used 'Feba', her new name, in order to offer anonymity to her prior owner. In December 2020, Feba moved into the Elephant HOME permanently. Videos show her rubbing her head against Idha's side, and Idha leaning in to accept the touch. Both elephants spend time with Bames, who is still Idha's favorite human.

Idha is less dependent on Bames now, choosing to spend time with Feba instead. Having a larger herd (even when it includes humans) may positively impact Idha's mental wellbeing (see Clubb and Mason, 2002). While Idha is still excited whenever Michael arrives, she is 'not so desperate' to be with him all the time. The girls both lie down at night now, and Idha tries to get as physically close to Feba as possible at bedtime, lying nearly on top of her as they sleep. This synchronized recumbent (down on their side) sleep is indicative of a high level of social integration and is important for their health and welfare (see chapter five). Idha's behaviour is also indicative of her need for 'adult' companionship. As Brown explained, Idha is still very juvenile in her behaviours, and having an older adult female will aid Idha in her growth process.



Figure 12
Idha and Feba. Sauraha, Nepal.
Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Assessing Idha's current stable at the Elephant HOME

Idha Kali's stable resembles the standard hattisar found in Nepal, with a few notable exceptions. Based on the standard metal pole/tin roof design that is found throughout the area, this stable is significantly taller (beyond the reach of Idha's trunk), longer, and wider than standard elephant shelters. This stable has 'training walls', meaning that horizontal metal bars have been spaced in such a way that the elephant or her human counterparts can safely move away at will (see photo below). The hattisar floor is packed dirt, but Idha can leave the stable and access both a natural pasture with mixed surfaces and a bathing pond.



Figure 13

Brown initially treating Idha's feet using a training wall at the INGO5 facility. Sauraha, Nepal. It should be noted that this 'stick' is a target, not a beating stick. Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

This stable meets many other welfare needs thanks to the accessibility of veterinary care (via experienced Nepali mahouts, western staff and NTNC veterinary staff), the consideration of mahout welfare and housing, the use of positive reinforcement training (even when being examined by NTNC veterinary staff), the ability for expression of natural behaviors such as digging, dirt bathing, scratching, walking, and decision-making (see chapter five).

A potentially negative aspect is the stable roof, which is metal, as is standard in the area. These can get very hot and may affect elephant health (de Vries, 2014), but Idha can leave the stable area to thermoregulate, and the height of the roof may be enough to allow for circulation and prevent heat build-up. This would require further research to assess its effectiveness in dispelling heat.

Assessing Idha's (Liswini's) health and welfare

Several factors positively impact Idha's situation, including plans for her nutrition. Idha has access to the community forest, so has fresh browse which she chooses herself, along with that provided by her caregivers, and her provisioned diet is changed seasonally to replicate wild elephant eating patterns. Creating more natural eating patterns may be important for positive wellbeing (Sukumar, 1989 and 2006; Vancuylenberg, 1977; Veasey, 2006). Pesticides are a major problem with produce in Nepal, so the use of sustainable, local, organic goods is important for Idha's health (Angkawanish, et al., 2009). Rice is included, as it is throughout Nepal. According to INGO5 staff, there is not enough rice grown in the Sauraha area to meet the demands of local humans and elephants, but they have been lucky to know growers and have been able to continue to offer Idha her 'traditional' unhusked and uncooked rice. According to INGO5, Nepalese owners feed rice since it is easy to store, cheap, and keeps elephants feeling full. INGO5s offers less rice and hay than is standard in the area, and Idha's mahouts offer fresh grass, chickpeas, and vitamins in the winter. Idha's pasture has grass so she can graze at her leisure. Idha also has permission to browse within the community forest, which means her diet is comprised of a larger natural variety than many other captive elephants in Sauraha. The unlimited time spent grazing per day, and the variety of browse and grasses available meet the standards discussed in the health and welfare chapter, and having agency over her eating activities is a contributor to positive welfare (Carlstead, et al., 2013: 329; Poole and Granli, 2008; Vanitha, et al., 2011; Veasey, 2006).

According to INGO5, 'proper care' for an elephant runs upwards of 19,000 USD annually. This cost is higher than previously mentioned estimates due to INGO5 offering significantly higher salaries to mahouts, new housing, providing health insurance, the purchase of larger amounts of forest products (compared to other private owners) from local farmers and fresh pesticide-free produce, veterinary care (which is not included because as non-riding owners INGO5 does not belong to the elephant owners' cooperative) permits to enter the community forest and training supplies for positive reinforcement training (INGO5, 2020b). Because INGO5 relies on donations, like most non-profits, there is always the opportunity that money will dry up and rescued elephants faced with another change of ownership. INGO5 is addressing this concern by working with a funding specialist to ensure continued support for Idha, her mahouts and the facility. The Le Pal Nature Foundation has continued to fund 10,000 Euros annually, and the Belgian Province of Walloon Brabant (where INGO5 is registered) continues to provide 5,000 Euros each year. Other funders have also made large contributions, and the Brigitte Bardot Foundation is covering Idha's costs for her first year. It was important to INGO5 that they have enough funding in the bank to cover at least a year's care prior to moving any elephants to their facility.

INGO5 has completed various strength, weakness and threat assessments. These assessments include the potential impacts of political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental threats to their non-profit, persons and facility (INGO5, 2020a). These assessments came in handy when COVID created the necessity to lockdown the Sauraha area. The good news is that INGO5

doesn't rely on tourist income in any way, so unforeseen events do not impact the care of elephants or the salaries of staff. According to INGO5, the army was patrolling the streets, and beating anyone not complying with lockdown. Because their mahouts live on site, Feba and Idha's care was not compromised. In addition, having funds in the bank for a year of support meant that INGO5 did not have to compromise care or mahout salaries—in fact, the mahouts received a bonus during lockdown.

INGO5 has, in the past, collaborated with various other NGOs and individuals in the Sauraha area. However, according to INGO5 staff, 'common goals are not enough', and the differences in practices and motivations have proven too great to maintain active partnerships. INGO5 does maintain communication with NTNC staff, and has kept veterinary staff involved in Idha's care. These veterinary visits also offer an opportunity for vet staff to observe positive reinforcement training outcomes.

While visitors are allowed at the facility, they are not permitted physical contact with Idha, nor is she required to be in any one place at a given time for the convenience of visitors. Welcoming these guests is more an effort to demonstrate appropriate housing for elephants and the benefits of positive reinforcement training.

A side note

Problems continue to plague relationships between organizations in Sauraha. While writing up this thesis, yet another dispute erupted between INGO2 and Renee. After Renee completed the building of a training wall at Hotel1 for INGO2, she asked INGO5's Brown to begin positive reinforcement training with Heena Kali, the elephant Renee initially leased and who now resides with the Hotel1 herd. Due to disagreements over the best way to involve mahouts in the training process, the women were asked to discontinue any contact with the staff at Hotel1.¹⁰⁵

While Renee declined to participate officially in this study due to concerns with the language barrier, she is in contact with the author as well as INGO5. During the lockdown, she began working with Brown toward the goal of offering assistance to elephants in need. During conversations with her, I explained that the elephant owners were bothered by her social media posts and her complaints to newspapers. I also described my feelings about the presence of her social media posts which remained unedited online and appeared to be asking for financial support nearly a year after Liswini/Idha had been moved to INGO5 facility. In response, Renee has removed the social media posts involving Liswini and her mahout.

¹⁰⁵ This dispute was partially resolved during edits on this thesis. INGO2 and INGO5 are again communicating and discussing the future.

Conclusions

Elephant lives in Nepal are defined by a human-imposed system of commodification. Privately-owned, non-cooperative member individuals find themselves in precarious positions, which can mean an early death due to inexperienced owners and traditional management styles. Other privately-owned elephants survive in a variety of conditions largely dependent upon the whims of their owners, the owners' cooperative, the location of their stable, the interest of NGOs in their welfare, and their perceived financial value. Government elephants, described by many interlocutors in this study as being in terrible conditions, actually find themselves with greater access to fresh grass, browse, and exercise within the national park. While many NGOs/INGOs are focusing on ending elephant use entirely, perhaps greater focus should be placed on improving the conditions of all elephants who find themselves under human control.

What follows is a review of 25 of the approximately 40 private stables in Sauraha. Using a welfare needs checklist derived from the data in the elephant health review of this thesis, these facilities will be evaluated according to their ability to meet the basic needs of their residents. Standards such as substrate, chaining and access to veterinary care are considered, along with mahout housing and a variety of other impactors which correlate with the five freedoms.

Ten: The Hattisar Assessments

During my 8-week fieldwork trip in spring of 2019, I visited (or in many cases, re-visited) 25 of the approximately 40 private hattisars in the Sauraha area, as well as the government and NTNC stables. I also visited the Tiger Tops Tharu Village hattisar on the other side of Chitwan National Park—the only completely chain-free facility at that time. Some of these stables were chosen on the advice of veterinary staff as examples of what they felt were ‘good’ or ‘bad’. Others were chosen after asking local and international welfare advocates which elephants and stables were of ‘greatest concern’ to them. I wanted to compare the perspectives of these advocates to those of the veterinary staff and my own judgments based on my background in veterinary health, my in-depth study of welfare and health parameters and my experience with (and embodied knowledge of) captive elephants in US and Nepalese zoos and hattisars. All visits were approved by the NTNC veterinary staff, project management staff or facility owners, and I was given permission to photograph and interact with elephants, mahouts and other staff at will.¹⁰⁶ Audio of many of these visits were recorded with permission, and for others field notes were written immediately following the visit. Audio recordings were transcribed to allow for discourse analysis (see chapter two).

¹⁰⁶ Dr Prakesh Vidanta approved my access to all elephant stables in the Sauraha area. As the veterinarian with oversight of these stables, he had the authority to approve these visits, as well as the use of photography and video. Name has been pseudonymized. Additional permissions for stable visits were given by the NTNC project manager and the president of the UEOC.

I was accompanied on many of these visits by the NTNC veterinarian, Dr Vidanta or veterinary technician 'Ravi Saroj', who described 'nice', 'naughty' or 'dangerous' elephants. They also offered insight into what they considered 'good', 'very good', 'bad' or 'very bad' stables. These descriptions were helpful by way of giving me a glimpse into what they considered the most important elephant husbandry factors. They explained that a good stable was one with higher quality rice which was free of insects, rat feces or fungus, and a clean, dry floor with no rocks or concrete. In addition, they considered fodder storage, distance from the tourist gates (which creates long walks for some elephants before their workday even begins), mahout experience and mahout housing. Mahouts prefer housing which is easily escapable in case of attack by wild bull elephants. Traditional mud and stick Tharu housing falls into this category, and concrete block housing does not. Mahouts have been trapped inside concrete housing by bulls blocking doors or windows, and some have chosen to sleep in the open rather than risk being trapped or crushed. The dominant bull elephant, Renaldo, destroyed numerous buildings while I was in Nepal, often those where food was stored in or near mahout lodgings. For this reason, mahout lodging is included in the following assessment of hattisars.

Having visited elephant stables in Nepal on three prior visits, I had a good idea of what standard living conditions for safari elephants looked like, and how conditions had changed since 2012. I knew that captive elephants in Nepal did not receive the same diets, housing, veterinary care or enrichment as elephants in US or European facilities. It was not my initial intention to approach these elephants from

an advocacy viewpoint or compare them to stables in the global north. As demonstrated in chapter five of this thesis, European and US zoos do not always compare favorably with Asian timber camps, nor do elephants live longer in those zoos (Clubb, et al., 2008; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Sukumar, 2003). The Nepalese stables which I had visited on prior trips and conducted interviews and participant observations were functional spaces which housed mahouts and elephants and were described by informants as typical of the area. Instead, I intended to look for similarities and differences in welfare impactors as described by both Nepalese and non-Nepalese interlocutors. Considering these welfare impactors has another facet; some of my non-Nepalese participants (the pachyderm persons) were unable to discuss their situation in words. To properly consider their position, I needed to use my embodied knowledge of elephants, my experience with animal health, and my liminal position between elephants, owners, mahouts and advocates in my attempts to identify factors which might impact the health and welfare of stable residents.

One consideration is immediately apparent. According to veterinary staff, there are no privately-owned elephants in the Sauraha area who are completely chain-free, including those elephants with chronic or painful wounds, injuries or disabilities.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the practice of restricting injured elephants, such as 'resting' them in one place 24 hours a day, seems counterintuitive for healthy joints in large land mammals. Without diagnostic equipment, however, there are few other choices for

¹⁰⁷ Tiger Tops is on the other side of the park, in another village; Hotel1 was not completely chain-free during this phase of the study but has since changed.

treatment. The restricted movement of all elephants coupled with standard stable conditions led several interlocutors in this study to claim cruelty or abuse (Bames, Brown, Crane, Randy, Taraswin interviews, 2019). But accusations of mistreatment of elephants are quite upsetting to owners, and an 'affront' to their religion, says Vidanta, as elephants are seen as the embodiment of Ganesh. These gods must be treated with respect, and owners have what he calls a 'moral obligation' to care for elephants properly (Vidanta interviews, 2019). According to Vidanta, the elephants in Sauraha are well-cared for and 'happy', especially compared to the 'horrible' conditions he feels they face in other parts of Nepal (2019).

I had also been warned by both international NGOs, nature guides and NTNC staff (i.e., non-Nepalese and Nepalese viewpoints) that some of the stables housed elephants in what they described as dangerous, unhealthy or 'horrible' conditions (Bames, Brown, Crane, Minsky, Randy, Sama, Taraswin, Thomas and Zed, 2019).

I had also been told by elephant owners that most stables could benefit from improvements in nutrition, treatment and housing; owners stated that they would like to see these improvements implemented, but few were willing to commit to doing so without outside funding. As someone with a long-term relationship with and knowledge of elephants, I knew it would be hard to assess these stables objectively, but as someone with an animal health background, I initially wanted to be impartial. In the end, I chose to view these stables reflexively rather than seek (likely impossible) objectivity.¹⁰⁸ For that reason, I created a welfare consideration

¹⁰⁸ See pages 10, 25, 26, 87-92, 255, etc., this thesis, for discussions of reflexivity and objectivity.

checklist, based upon the large literature review undertaken for this thesis mixed with the concerns of advocates, elephant caregivers, owners and other stakeholders.

Considerations

A typical day for a captive elephant in the area starts at 4 am with kuchis, which are made from uncooked rice, molasses and salt wrapped in long grasses. At 6 am, mahouts drive the elephants to the tourist gate for safaris until 10 am. Many elephants simply 'hang out' during their 10 am break, standing with their mahouts in the fields near the tourist gates instead of making the long walk back to the stable. At one pm, they return to the safari gates for rides until 5 pm, or later if there are a multitude of tourists in town. More kuchis follow for dinner, which typically lasts until 10 pm. Water is typically accessed at the river on the way to or from safari.

What follows is a discussion of stables in the Sauraha area and an assessment of their ability to provide appropriate environments for good health and positive welfare. Included are stories about the elephant individuals who reside at some of these stables, offering a glimpse of the kinds of work and care that take place within. The following checklist served as a guide for these assessments and links each welfare consideration to the Five Freedoms and associated Five Provisions (FAWC, 2009: 2). For the current study, each item below is given equal weight, due to a lack of available literature or data on the 'weight' that each welfare impactor truly carries in Nepal (see chapter five and appendix III this thesis). Due

to individual differences in stables (see below) every item on this checklist was not applicable to every situation.

For the majority of stables, it was impossible to assess the variety of offered browse, or whether any was actually given. Owners and mahouts claim that the elephants can graze and browse during morning trips out to collect grass or while on safari, but during all observed safaris the elephants were discouraged from browsing, and often beaten if they tried to eat more than a passing branch with guests on their back. According to informants, forest materials are obtained and offered to elephants to varying degrees at private shelters. During my months in Sauraha, I rarely saw privately owned elephants offered anything but kuchis while stabled, but this does not mean it never occurs.¹⁰⁹ For this reason, most shelter scores reflect a total of 16 rather than 17 possible points, giving them the benefit of the doubt regarding browse, due to the difficulties in assessing its variety and availability.

¹⁰⁹ American zoos located in colder climates do not offer browse year-round, either (Harris, PC, 2020).

Consideration¹¹⁰	Available(1)	Unavailable(0)	Unable to assess(N/A)	Notes
Shelter ²				
Appropriate substrate ⁴				
Cleanliness of substrate ³				
Availability of dirt for bathing and digging ⁴				
Access to clean water for drinking and bathing ¹				
Availability of browse ³				
Variety of diet ^{1,3}				
Social groupings ⁴				
Freedom of movement ^{1,4}				
Non-Traditional (dominance based) Management ⁵				
Structures for rest/sleep ²				
Prevention of injury ³				
Access to health care ³				
Choice in activity/agency				
Additional considerations				
Life history/exposed to Phajaan ⁶	Yes (0)	No (1)		
Very short distance to tourist gate	Yes (1)	No (0)		
Mahout housing	Concrete(0)	Traditional(1)	Elevated(1)	

Figure 14: Welfare consideration checklist created by the author for this study.

¹¹⁰ The five freedoms associated with the above list:

¹Freedom from hunger, thirst, malnutrition

²Comfort and shelter

³Prevention or rapid diagnosis of disease and treatment. For this study also relates to ability to get away from perceived Danger and the safety of the stable with regard to debris

⁴Freedom to exhibit normal patterns of behaviour

⁵Freedom from fear (FAWC, 2009)

⁶If the elephant was imported from India, it was assumed he/she has undergone the Phajaan

The lowest scoring stables

Two of the stables in this study earned a score of 1/16. One of these, owned by Rudra Raja, was discussed earlier in the biography of Dhonu Gaj. The second housed an elephant named Kasmitha Kali, who was by far the saddest elephant I have ever seen in my decades of becoming-with elephants. Kasmitha demonstrated behaviours that indicated she was both physically and mentally 'broken'. Watching how she responded (or failed to respond) to her environment offered insight into her emotional state (de Waal, 2009: 175; de Waal, 2011: 199).

Kasmitha Kali's stable is in a part of Sauraha that I have never visited before.¹¹¹ This part of town is lacking many of the improvements that are obvious on the main street of Sauraha, such as street drainage, and Vidanta explains that it is home to many landless, poor families. We approach a hotel which appears to be deserted and in disrepair but is, Vidanta tells me, open for business. He says that the hotel, and its elephant, are under the shared ownership of two brothers, neither of whom reside in Sauraha. Following an argument, the brothers failed to come to an agreement on the distribution of property, so the hotel and Kasmitha are in flux. As we approach the stable, we pass a group of mahouts playing poker in front of a small house which appears to be made entirely of tin.

Kasmitha Kali is chained by her front and back legs in a tiny stable under a collapsing metal roof (see photo). She is covered in blotches of red dye, perhaps

¹¹¹ Following information provided via interviews with Vidanta in 2019 and visits to the stables. Vidanta's name is used with permission.

leftover from the celebration of Holi a few days earlier. Kasmitha Kali stands with her eyes closed, sucking on her trunk as we approach. Despite our proximity, she does not move or open her eyes and appears completely disinterested. Even when we step up closer to better see her chains, she doesn't react to me at all. When she finally partially opens one eye to gaze at us, as if the very effort was too much for her, something inside me snapped. This elephant is mentally and physically suffering; her toenails are cracked and deformed, her floor is hard packed dirt with large chunks of concrete, and behind her are piles of feces, while next to her more piles wait to be burned.



Figure 15
Kasmitha Kali under the broken roof of her stable. Sauraha, Nepal.
Photo taken by the author. April 4, 2019.

The veterinarian explains that while Kasmitha's diet is 'good', she is not. He seems perplexed that even with what he considers proper nutrition, her 'attitude is not happy', even though he describes her as 'friendly'. Kasmitha seems to be caught

in the space between being cared for and cared about (Schrader, 2015: 668).

Vidanta has deemed her physically fit for safari rides but feels that she would be a prime candidate for retirement given her poor 'attitude' and advanced age (approximately 58). Having no control over her physical surrounding or daily activities, Kasmitha Kali is, in my opinion, demonstrating maladaptive passivity (Peterson and Seligman, 1983: 104) which can be fatal without interventions. The lack of interest in her surroundings, and the ongoing trunk-sucking are extremely concerning.

I mention the possibility that the condition of the stable, her work schedule and the chains may be having negative mental and physical health impacts. Vidanta agrees that the roof is cause for concern but doesn't seem to further connect Kasmitha's 'attitude' to her conditions or work life. I believe this is another case of social facts getting in the way of objectivity. It appeared that Vidanta was, at a gut level, aware of Kasmitha's suffering, and wanted her in a different situation. But as someone educated and trained in the belief that available food and a lack of visible wounds equals good health, Vidanta's viewpoint was that Kasmitha was 'sound'. In addition, Vidanta often cited the difficulty of not having the laboratory facilities to 'prove' when an animal has issues that are not visible to the naked eye. Without these tools, he is hesitant to make any suggestions to owners regarding the elephant's health.

This stable received its only point thanks to Dr Vidanta's access to this elephant. However, her access to healthcare has been moot, as Kasmitha is physically fit for

duty and therefore Vidanta has little to offer towards her care. I am concerned about Kasmitha at a visceral level and reached out to INGO5 about potentially adopting her. They agreed to check on her but had obligations to other elephants. I repeatedly reached out to organizations including INGO2 and INGO1, but no one was able to assist Kasmitha. I continued to bring Kasmitha to the attention of numerous groups, but sadly the COVID pandemic resulted in her eventual sale back to India. I felt, and still feel, that I failed her.

The second group of hattisars

Seven stables scored a 3/16 on the welfare consideration checklist. These stables garnered a point each for providing housing with full tin roofs supported by metal posts, and another for their access to Dr Vidanta. One of these stables scored an extra point for having extremely clean substrate. All but one of these hattisars had concrete mahout housing, and one had no housing at all—it had been destroyed by the wild bull, Renaldo. These mahouts were currently sleeping outside.

At the hattisar owned by the secretary of the elephant owners' cooperative group, a pair of females, Champa Kali and Aama Kali, have olfactory and visual contact with one another while stabled, and therefore gained a point. It should be noted that these two females reportedly have a multitude of health problems but receive care from both the veterinary staff and their four mahouts plus the hotel manager. Champa Kali, who is around 50 years old, has masses of small tumors all over her back, and chronic bedsores because she chooses to lie on only one side. Her caregivers are unsure why this is, and when I ask Vidanta he says it may have

something to do with injuries sustained in India as a younger elephant.¹¹² Champa has a nasty reputation, and reportedly killed 15 people before arriving in Nepal, possibly leading to retaliatory beatings. She is considered dangerous, yet her mahouts spread hay to soften a space for her to recline so that the vet can examine her, and we can trim her pads and toenails. As she attempts to lie down, she moves in strange ways—stiffly, and as if she can't quite bend properly. Champa does lie down at night for sleep, I am told, but is chained all night and lacks any soft dirt piles to rest upon. Due to her history as a dangerous elephant, we are told to stay out of trunk's reach (not an easy feat while trimming nails), and as we watch Champa move around her stable, I notice that while the mahout carries a bamboo stick, there is considerably less yelling at the elephants or need to threaten with tools to encourage compliance.

Champa's stablemate, Aama Kali, has wounds along her trunk and moves gingerly. She looks old, tired, sad and sore. Her caregivers are busy preparing a natural remedy for digestive issues. Containing garlic, ginger, salt and a variety of other traditional ingredients whose English names were unknown to the mahouts, this mixture is given a few times a year as a preventative treatment. According to Vidanta, humans also consume it as a digestive aid. The preparation of this tonic is a noisy, chaotic process which includes chopping, pounding, grinding and a lot of yelling back and forth. It involves all five caregivers, dedicated to getting this elephant what she needs. Vidanta offers me a taste of the black salt and a type of

¹¹² It is important to note that any injury or malformation is often reported as having been there since the elephant arrived from India

garlic, which is so hard and so strong I had to violently spit it out, which was very amusing to veterinary and mahout staff.

There is a street dog hanging around this facility, who appears to be attached to a younger mahout and is trying to eat the elephant toenail clippings which we left on the ground. I absentmindedly toss him a scrap, and the hotel manager yells at the dog and removed the clipping. The manager throws a rock at the dog, who refuses to leave and approaches us, tail wagging. This exchange seems strange to me, considering the large group of men working so diligently to prepare traditional remedies for an elephant whom they describe as a killer, but to whom they offer such affection. Perhaps this is a matter of Aama being a co-worker, and the dog merely an animal intruding on their property (Coulter, 2016a and b, and chapter two, this thesis).

Group three

Nine stables scored a 4/16 on the checklist. Of this group, seven scored points for maintaining social groups of female elephants. These are not traditional 'herds', as the females are not typically allowed to interact, but do have visual, auditory and olfactory contact throughout the night.

Only one of these stables had the traditional, preferred style of mahout housing. Others scored points for clean substrate and in some cases, for providing fresh browse or added variety to the standard elephant diet of kuchis. Touring these stables brought to light the numerous issues with 'traditional' or dominance-based

management techniques. Mahouts openly beat elephants in my presence, typically with a stick, sometimes with the flat of an axe, and occasionally with a bull hook. Yelling, kicking and hitting elephants was typical, and in one case each strike was followed by cooing and patting.

‘Daxa Kali’ and ‘Alina Kali’

As we approach the next stable, a young boy quickly comes toward us on an elephant, screaming and yelling, at me it seems (the elephant was non-plussed). Dr Vidanta and Ravi Saroj, the veterinary technician, quickly shouted back in Nepali. There appears to be an argument happening, while the elephant quickly inches closer and reaches out her trunk to me. Her eye is quite milky and appears to be non-functional, while her ears are extremely furry, along with her legs. The boy eventually turns his elephant back to the hattisar and we follow him. When I ask Vidanta about it, he tells me that the child was screaming, ‘You are white, white people can’t come!’ Vidanta apparently told the boy that as a veterinarian, he could bring us into the stable, and suggested the boy check with his father for confirmation. This was the first incidence of overt prejudice I had experienced during my numerous trips to Nepal, and I was quite surprised. According to Vidanta, I shouldn’t have been. When white people visit the stables located further from main street, he explained, it is usually to complain about ‘welfare’ and spread ‘propaganda’—a word we commonly discussed in relation to elephants. He had to reassure the boy that I was a researcher, and that I would be respectful of his

family and elephants.¹¹³ This stable has a ‘traditional’ family unit of mahouts, with a grandfather, father, brother and 9-year-old son who care for a pair of female elephants, Alina Kali and Daxa Kali. This familial care is not often seen any more at Nepalese stables, but can have positive welfare benefits to elephants (see chapter seven), and Vidanta tells me the son would like to continue the mahout tradition.

In order to seek consent from Alina (and her young mahout), I simply stand aside. Alina has already experienced me through sound as she approached; elephants have the ability to recognize others’ ‘voices’ more than a km away (McComb, et al., 2000), and our chatter likely announced our presence before we sighted her. Elephants also have an excellent sense of smell (Rasmussen and Krishnamurthy, 2000), and I allow Alina to take her time experiencing me olfactorily at a distance. As I wait, I learn the elephant is 50-years-old and blind. I am told her physical condition has been unchanged ‘since she came from India’ seven years ago. Alina’s ears show damage on the top, a common wound from bull hook use. As Vidanta heads around the concrete mahout house to find the adults, the young man stands with Alina, arm wrapped around her trunk and chatting with us in Nepalese. Alina is inching closer again and holding her trunk about six inches from different parts of my body, not touching me. I feel like I am being scanned, and she flaps her ears in rhythm with her sniffing. I wonder if she uses smell in place of her poor eyesight, as her trunk and ears are always in motion, but her body is

¹¹³ One could argue that his fears were justified. While I am a researcher and treated this young man’s family with respect as I observed their practices, I am also writing a thesis which argues for an end to many of these practices themselves.

strangely still. She leans against the post of her stable as we take her photo, then she returns to her olfactory exploration of our bodies. Alina's young mahout apparently decides we are ok and invites us to come closer, as Alina takes my hand in her trunk. Elephants are incredibly tactile beings (Balcombe, 2009), using their entire bodily surface to interact with the environment. Their trunks are so sensitive that they can sense a change in pressure as miniscule as .25mm (Dehnhardt, et al., 1997), and I take Alina's touch to indicate a form of acceptance and consent to my presence.

Alina's stablemate, Daxa Kali (see chapter eight), is the elephant of 'most concern', according to welfare groups in the area. As she approaches us, I can see why. Her back legs are abnormally long and meet in the middle to form an 'x' as she walks. Her hip points stick out and she rocks wildly from side to side as she approaches. She is very friendly and quickly approaches to smell my hands. I see her toenails are very overgrown—perhaps the longest I have seen and I ask Vidanta how often they are cut. He tells me that they try to trim every six months, but this is another common refrain which Vidanta admits later is not 'really' the case.

The grandfather exits the house, sees us and yells something. Saroj again translates—'these people are white'—and we nod. Reassurances are made to the human residents of the stable, and Ravi tells me a story which demonstrates the bond shared between this mahout and his elephant. One day the grandfather had a feeling that something was a bit off with Daxa Kali. He tried calling Vidanta and

Saroj, but both were busy and didn't answer, so he walked Daxa Kali to Saroj's house to wait for him. She was fine, but Saroj laughs as he tells the story. These mahouts appear to love their elephants and want to ensure they get the care they need. To that end, the father gets up in the middle of the night, every night, to make kuchis, because he doesn't think the younger mahouts do a good enough job.

We return later to perform foot care on Daxa Kali. Given her disability, Daxa Kali requires regular care to balance the distribution of weight equally across her pad surface to prevent nail breaks and pressure sores, but she does not want to take part in the process, thus requiring a great deal of yelling and threatening. She is offered rice bags to lie on, and instructed to lie down, which she does awkwardly. It appears as though she doesn't bend in the 'normal' places and has to flop down stiffly. Her mahout, the grandfather, has taken charge, and is standing behind Daxa's head, chirruping in her ear and talking to her. Daxa pulls her leg back from the vet, and one mahout hits her repeatedly with a bamboo stick until she stops. He then rubs the spot and coos in her ear again. This makes me think of van Dooren's (2015: 9; 2014: 91) 'violent care', but perhaps not in the way he originally intended it¹¹⁴, but rather as care which requires aggression or the exertion of power to perform necessary tasks. I am reminded of my daughters as children—fighting nose blowing or diaper changes. While these practices are necessary, they are often not welcome and require some dominance by parents to achieve. In

¹¹⁴ Van Dooren (2015: 9; 2014: 91) discusses violent care in the keeping of endangered species for purposes of species preservation. Sacrificing individual animals to 'diminished' captive environments and stressful lives is part of the 'violent care' of conservation.

fact, I was a bit uncomfortable touching Daxa Kali without her express consent, but as with other caregiving practices (such as veterinary tasks like vaccinations) I could understand the necessity outweighing her desire. However, if a form of positive reinforcement training were an option here (see appendix I), perhaps Daxa would have freely given her consent.

After over two hours of very intensive ‘care work’ (see Coulter, 2016b: 199) on the part of the NTNC veterinary technician, myself, the mahout and a visiting technician, we finish her feet, which thanks to the application of betadine look ghastly. Daxa has been performing her own labour, remaining on the ground against her wishes (which she expressed, repeatedly trying to rise and getting whacked with a stick) and allowing numerous people to touch her in ways she did not want to be touched. Before she gets up, I quickly take ‘after’ photos for later comparison.¹¹⁵ Daxa rises and tests out her feet gingerly, as if expecting them to be sore. They do not appear to bother her, and Daxa returns to her shelter.

I wonder—if Daxa had been trained using positive reinforcement techniques from childhood, would there be more options open to her for foot care, such as standing with a foot on a training wall (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Greco, et al., 2016; Laule and Whittaker, 2000)? Perhaps this is something to consider adding in the future.

¹¹⁵ I return in a week to see her feet, and they look like ‘normal’ elephant feet. Evenly worn, nails adequately sized and shaped, with a lovely set of ‘treads’ on the soles.

The breeding centre

The last hattisar which scored a 4/16 on the checklist is the government owned breeding center at Kasara, discussed in chapter six. This hattisar houses 17 adult and subadult females along with a few juveniles. The breeding center is used to supply elephants for government operations, serves as a site for the breaking ritual and is a popular tourist attraction. The shelters at the breeding center are arranged very differently from private stables, with a single long tin roof covering a row of posts to which elephants are chained. A lack of accessible water has been a concern since the inception of the breeding centre, with a 2003 report suggesting that a water supply system was much needed (Gopali, 2003: 28,30), but this supply system has yet to be built.

The youngest calves wander freely throughout the facility, often to the delight of guests who reach out to pat them as they go by. According to nature guides, tourists of all nationalities are often treated to broken bones or other injuries as they attempt to 'play' with these babies, associating 'baby' with 'harmless'. These young juveniles have access to grassy areas and loose dirt, a luxury not afforded to the adults and subadults, who stand on packed dirt hills, often hobble-chained. These elephants are seen pulling on their chains in attempts to reach their offspring or shelter mates. Juvenile elephants 'in training' are also hobble-chained, which I did not observe on prior visits to Nepal. One of the young chained elephants is attempting to 'hop' into a new position by raising both front feet and shifting to the side before dropping them down. I am concerned that this behaviour might be damaging to his developing joints.

On prior trips, hobbling any residents of the centre was uncommon, but Renaldo, the wild bull, has taken to breaking smaller chains and releasing females into the forest. Whether or not Renaldo was involved in the actual breaking remains to be seen, as these females react with fear when he arrives at the breeding center, standing between him and their calves. The females may have broken loose to escape his advances or to distract him from their offspring.

Renaldo successfully destroyed the (human) kitchen at the center in 2017, and on this visit, I notice that electric wire has been haphazardly strung around the perimeter of the mahout housing. The wire is disconnected during the day and restrung each evening to protect both mahouts and their food stores, but the female elephants are left outside the protective barrier.

Stables with mid-range scores

Only three stables scored 5 or 6. One of the elephants housed here, Sanji Kali, had significant tearing of the tissue on her ears, which according to the veterinarian has been present since she 'came from India'. Sanji has a limp with no known cause, although it may have something to do with her stable floor, which is made of concrete (see chapter five). Sanji Kali is chained by both front and back legs and uses her trunk to rub her painful joint. The vet asks Sanji's caregiver to have her lie down so he can examine the leg, but she resists and appears very stiff. Hay is placed on the ground for her lie on, and the mahouts beat her repeatedly with a stick until she lies down and lets us inject a steroid to aid with

inflammation. He asks if they have been beating her on the legs, and the mahouts deny the accusation. Vidanta explains that he is part detective—he must investigate these mysterious injuries while treating them.

Vidanta has tried penicillin to see if it would help with the joint, but it has not worked. Instead, Sanji Kali's mahouts boil down tree bark to mix with mud and rub it on the injured leg, which seems such a gentle expression of care work in contrast to the violent beating witnessed earlier (Coulter, 2016b: 199). This Aryurvedic treatment, again with no English name, helps with inflammation. As an aside, Vidanta tells me he is working on an ethnopharmacology book for elephant medicines and hopes to share traditional mahout healing knowledge with the rest of the world.

Tuli Kali

Another of these middle-scoring stables houses Tuli Kali, another limping elephant. Dr Vidanta describes this as a 'bad' stable, due to the large amount of gravel in the dirt, and the concrete floor within the shelter. Tuli's front left leg is twisted and deformed along with her toenails, which are split. Her front legs are two different sizes and have been that way since 'she came from India' at the age of five. Vidanta tells me Tuli moves in an 'awkward' way when she walks. The veterinary technician agrees to perform some foot care on Tuli, and we make arrangements with her owner to meet Tuli and her mahout again the next day. When we arrive, she is nowhere to be seen. The second mahout informs us that she was taken to the tourist safari, and Dr Vidanta tells me this is one of the issues

he faces daily. Tuli attended a prior health camp and received a foot trimming, but had issues walking afterwards and her owner was 'furious'. However, a few days later, Tuli was walking much more easily, and now the owner requests regular foot care. This owner has even offered to give the vet staff live ducks if they will take care of her feet, but the mahouts remain unwilling to allow these foot treatments to take place.

Even with her walking issues, Tuli seems more well-adjusted than many other elephants we have visited. She is playing with a garden hose and is given free access to her dirt-packed yard daily. She wanders over to her stable to eat a few kuchis, one of the few elephants that eats them (according to veterinary staff) without having to be instructed to do so. However, she quickly unwraps the dry grass and starts to take out the rice. The older mahout grabs a stick and lays it by her food, and she begins to eat the entire kuchi. Apparently, the stick alone is enough to remind her who is in charge.

The highest scoring hattisars

Tiger Tops Tharu Village Lodge

Tiger Tops Tharu Village, Hotel1 and INGO5 were the among the three highest scoring stables in this study, with a 12, 14 and 16, respectively. Tiger Tops offers large, chain-free corrals for their socially grouped herds. These elephants have some agency in their actions, feeding, and socialization with humans. The corrals at Tiger Tops have a variety of natural surfaces, which is important for foot health, as is the ability to move across these surfaces at will (see chapter five). In

addition, these elephants have long periods of 'free-choice' grazing time daily. This herd is not used for elephant-backed safari (but are followed by paying guests on jungle walks), and have a staff of well-respected, uniformed, well-treated, and generally well-experienced mahouts—some of whom have been with the facility for decades. Tiger Tops uses a combination of modified handling techniques at their facility. A behavior is first requested by voice while carrying a stick. If the elephant does not comply, they are sometimes allowed to break off, and other times struck lightly with the stick. Mahouts do not spend the entire day in the corral, or with their elephant, which sets their jobs apart from most mahouts. This also allows individual elephants to choose whether to socialize with humans or remain with conspecifics.

American interlocutors had mixed feelings about the arrangement at Tiger Tops. While impressed by their ability to achieve what NTNC staffers said was impossible and maintain a chain-free facility, these Americans worried about Tiger Tops lack of shade, lack of free-choice access to water for drinking or bathing, and reliance on high-end tourism to survive (Place, Thomas, Zed interviews, 2019). The lack of water is also a concern for the management staff, who showed me examples of the drinkers they are hoping to install in each corral. However, due to the ease with which elephants destroyed the original concrete drinkers, they are now being re-engineered.

When I mentioned that Tiger Tops was often suggested to me as a place to view 'the best' in chain free living, Dr Vidanta said, 'I do not think they are best of the

best' and that 'chain-free is not a means of happiness'. He worries about the lack of shelter to protect them from both heat and cold weather, and shares concerns that the ground gets very swampy during monsoon, making conditions ripe for fungal infections. Vidanta also feels that it is harder to get 'good food supplies' on this side of the park, and that, in general, elephants who are unchained are too thin. Other Nepalese interlocutors expressed similar concerns over Tiger Tops, citing past financial issues (Perth interviews, 2019), problems supplying food, 'unhappy' elephants and concerns running a 'mini sanctuary' (Gwala interviews and PC, 2020).

The thought that unchained elephants are 'too thin' may be another instance of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) or social facts (Durkheim, 1982) getting in the way of 'reality'. This fact was shared with me by numerous elephant owners, veterinary staff, and mahouts (Kumar, Rao, Vachan, Vidanta, interviews, 2019). One owner stated that this is because unchained elephants only want to relax and play instead of eating (Rao interview, 2019). However, as another owner put it, 'We are asking them to eat food they don't want to eat' and then beating them when they refuse (Thomas interview, 2019).

INGO5 and Hotel1 (INGO2)

Elephants at the INGO5 HOME are managed exclusively with positive reinforcement training (see appendix I) and at the time of my initial study were the only stable to have free-choice access to water for drinking and bathing. Since my

fieldwork, Hotel1 has added a water tank to allow for free-choice drinking (but not bathing). Both stables now house their elephants in social groups.

Hotel1, the lodge which partners with INGO2 and houses their elephants, scored a 14 out of 17, but this number may be not reflective of the current situation and requires some explanation (see chapter eight). At the time of this study, there were two sets of elephants at Hotel1. One pair was being used for tourist safaris and the other elephants were leased from their owners and allowed to wander with their mahouts during the day. This score applies to the non-working herd only. Hotel1 scored high on the checklist largely due to the free choice foraging that this herd is offered throughout the day. However, while the non-working herd had access to the river, trees, dirt and grasslands of the facility, they were still chained for feeding and at night stood on packed dirt. Due to their personal history as safari elephants, it may take time to transition all the elephants to a completely chain-free existence.

Since the time of my visit, the elephant owned by Hotel1's founder has also been removed from duty and joined the herd along with the newest lease, Daxa Kali (see above), bringing the number of non-working elephants at Hotel1 to six. This is a large percentage of the total number of captive elephants in Sauraha and represents great progress in changing the mindsets of owners. Further elevating their score is the fact that Hotel1 mahouts have health insurance, housing (albeit cement), pension matching funds, uniforms and their own cook. According to INGO2 founder, they treat mahouts at their facility with respect and kindness.

Discussion

Some might question my decision not to include specific health measures of these elephants, but measurements such as bloodwork and fecal analysis really lie too far afield for a study of this size. There were several reasons that I came to this decision. First, it was never my intention to take this thesis into the realm of captive elephant health measures in Nepal. As a limited but multi-sited study, there was not enough time to complete health exams. It was my intention to locate funding for a future health camp (which I did) and attend it in conjunction with the NTNC, in order to obtain some baseline data on the health of individuals in Sauraha (this camp was scheduled for 2021).

Further limiting any inclusion of health data was the lack of available laboratory equipment, staff, personal experience and time to properly assess all these elephants' health. Foot issues, wounds, abscesses, eye damage and a variety of other physical issues were present in every privately-owned elephant visited during this study, therefore making their inclusion on the checklist moot. I focused on the easy to assess health indicators, and those welfare impacts that greatly affect health.

Each facility also provided a diet consisting of kuchis with varying degrees of fresh grass. These kuchis represent a huge time and labour commitment by mahouts, who spend mornings obtaining grass and a large portion of the day wrapping these 'elephant sandwiches' or 'elephant candy' as they are laughingly called. Most of the facilities do not offer supplemental browse, reporting that they instead

let the elephants forage while they collect grass. A few stables did provide fresh browse products, sometimes in the form of local branches and others by supplying palm or sugarcane. One mahout was observed sharing his Dal Bhat (traditional lunch) with his elephant coworker.

84% of the shelters met six or fewer of the welfare considerations, with most scoring points only for providing shelter and clean, though inappropriate, substrate. All but one garnered a point for access to health care, as Vidanta is paid by both the NTNC and the cooperative to care for these private elephants. Those that do not belong to the elephant cooperative still receive care from Vidanta, typically at a minimal cost. Thirteen of the stables received points for providing social groupings, some by stabling their herd together, and some who provide olfactory and sight contact somewhat accidentally due to their location adjacent to another stable.

Most elephants in this study lack any apparatus upon which to lean for rest and are reprimanded if they attempt to lean against the poles supporting their stable to prevent them from pushing it over. Some mahouts tie feces to the posts to discourage their elephants from leaning. In addition, none the elephants taking part in this study had escaped exposure to a breaking ritual (see chapter six), including the juvenile elephant who has lived in a chain-free 'sanctuary' for his entire life (see chapter eight). This exposure, paired with the dominance-based management styles which include the use of tools such as sticks, axes, bull hooks, metal poles and fists, likely has lasting impacts on these elephants' welfare

(Carlstead and Shepardson, 1994; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Desai, 2008; Joffe, 1973; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; Widman, et al., 1992).

Recommendations

Data from the current study suggests that elephant owners and veterinarians who see that welfare improvements can be achieved inexpensively and without impacting their regular income from elephant-backed tourism will embrace policy changes (Brown, Rajesh, Raja, Rao and Vachan interviews, 2019). Discussions with the president of the United Elephant Owners' Cooperative led to his commitment to improving welfare, decreasing riding and housing elephants in more appropriate conditions. While some owners and advocates claim that an end to riding is on the horizon (Aadita, Paudel, Raja, Rajesh and Vachan interviews 2019 and Gwala, 2020), in the short term improving the conditions in which captive elephants reside will improve their lives. It is important to note that these suggestions *do not* represent an end goal, but rather stop-gap changes to improve elephant welfare while they await more sweeping changes.

Any suggested change in husbandry for these captive elephants must consider several important points. First, they must not make the already long and arduous workdays harder on mahouts. Not only to prevent making mahout lives more difficult, but also to ensure that the recommendations can and will be implemented. Second, they must be inexpensive or funded by outside parties to get buy-in from owners. Lastly, they should be undertaken with care to not create larger problems. For example, offering natural substrates for digging, foraging and

sleeping upon would solve several issues. It would allow for the expression of natural behaviours, help maintain foot health, and provide a soft mound upon which to lie for recumbent sleep. However, these elephants are daily told to refrain from dustbathing, digging or relaxing and there is concern that the sudden addition of sand or dirt would result in ingestion and impaction which has been a problem in the past (Vidanta interviews, 2019; Brown PC, 2020). If this recommendation is to be followed, it should be introduced slowly. In addition, dirt must be provided in a place where it does not prevent mahouts from clearing feces, and somewhere where the elephant will not simply kick it backwards (Brown interviews, 2020; observations 2017 and 2019). This behaviour would result in the elephant standing on a mound which is higher in back than in front, leading to issues with posture and unequal distribution of weight, putting pressure on joints and creating further issues.

To remedy this situation, any improvements require several steps. The footprint of existing stables must be expanded, where possible, or stables relocated. As a simple four post with tin roof design, this is an inexpensive change. However, many stables are in very small areas behind hotels, with little hope to expand. In these cases, as both Soti and Saroj suggested, moving shelters closer to the tourist gates where there is more space may be the only option and would also serve to decrease the long walk before their workday begins (interviews, 2019). These stables could be built to house more than one owners' elephants, increasing the feeling of belonging to a larger social group (see chapter five), and offering greater opportunity for social interactions between elephants, but care

would need to be taken with females who may not get along (see chapter four). The original poles and roofs could be reused, or stables could be rebuilt from supplies available onsite at hotels. There are a variety of building materials lying around most stables, with more behind larger hotels. Leftover from construction projects, they are kept for future use (Brown and mahout group interviews, 2019; observations 2017 and 2019). Moving these stables closer to the tourist gates may also afford opportunities for mahouts to more easily access a variety of browse for elephants, resulting in an increase in nutrition and food manipulation options (Angkawanish, et al., 2009; Sukumar, 1989; Vancuylenberg, 1977).

Next, a center post is needed to replace the front and back chaining posts. These are used to prevent the elephant from pushing over the stable support posts. With a larger footprint, a center post would allow for a single leg chain which would create options for elephants to walk around, forage, and explore dirt piles without allowing them access to roof support posts. While this does create a slight amount of extra cleaning for mahouts (all the feces are no longer in one place), it further reduces the risk of pododermatitis (foot rot) and its potential progression to joint infections (see chapter five) due to standing in urine and feces. An increase in freedom of movement allows the elephant to make more choices in her daily life, experience a variety of substrates which helps with foot health, thermoregulate by moving to warmer/cooler spots, and choose sleeping locations (see chapter five).

Sleeping mounds or leaning walls should be provided to allow for recumbent or leaning rest. These walls can be constructed on one side of the stable, and have

the dual purpose of serving as a protected contact training wall, if desired (see chapter five). After researching literature and conversing with elephant specialists in the US and Nepal, I have developed a simple and inexpensive design for these walls in conjunction with Chloe Brown of INGO5.

Lastly, mahout health and wellbeing must be addressed. Adequate housing which allows for escape in the case of wild elephant attack is needed (Vidanta, mahout group interviews, 2019). Salaries should be increased to better reflect the time commitment required by the job (Yadav, 2003: 29). Education in elephant nutrition, foot and skin care should be offered by more experienced mahouts or veterinary staff, which includes the need for digging and dustbathing to protect feet and skin.

Conclusions

As discussed in chapter five, there are several key areas considered important for elephant health and welfare, which are consistent among researchers from both range states and non-Asian countries which house elephants. Appropriate—and clean—substrate is key to foot and joint health and the expression of natural behaviors which benefit physical and mental health, and cooling via dust bathing. The ability to rest in a recumbent position, protection from the elements, access to water, availability of a variety of browse which includes seasonal dietary changes and the ability to make meaningful choices were also considered. Freedom of movement, management style, and the ability to recline or lean for appropriate restful sleep are important elements of positive health and welfare. Being allowed agency is key to trauma recovery for elephants who have been captively held and

is included here for that reason. Matriarchal herd structure, and the retention of related females in their birth herds is an important element for elephant health, reproduction, and mental wellbeing. However, because the elephants in the Sauraha area typically arrive singly, providing known family groups is nearly impossible. Because of this, the social groupings below refer to the stabling of elephants in pairs or small herds with visual, olfactory, and auditory contact with conspecifics.

The highest scoring stables on this list were also those stables owned or financed by non-Nepalese—Tiger Tops is owned by a British family, INGO5 by French, Belgian and Canadian, and Hotel1 elephants are funded by American-owned INGO2. This may stem from a variety of reasons, the most likely being that Nepalese owners, veterinary staff, and mahouts felt their care was appropriate and based on traditional practices (see previous chapters). In contrast, non-Nepalese felt that ‘appropriate care’ of elephants required a greater degree of agency, the ability to move around larger spaces at will, browse in natural settings, physically touch conspecifics and be free of tourists in howdahs upon their backs. It is important to consider that each of these high-scoring stables receive funding from international sources and draw in predominantly ‘western’ tourists. This external income may have mitigated some of the risks inherent in changing husbandry and management methods (such as the expense of more infrastructure at stables or training for mahouts).

These elephants are, of course, still occasionally ridden by mahouts when needed, such as when walking on roads or being moved long distances. Many of these mahouts have adopted non-dominance-based control methods, but due to the way these elephants were raised, it is often necessary (according to interlocutors for this study) to allow the continuation of mahouts on elephant back.

The above examination of stables highlights the problems with the language of care when people of varying cultural backgrounds and belief systems intersect. Many mahouts, veterinary staff and owners stated that they provide the 'best care' for their charges as they engage in daily labour tasks with elephant coworkers. Food, shelter, access to veterinary care and relationships with co-workers are provided to elephants, but from the viewpoint of some Nepalese and non-Nepalese elephant advocates, this care is inadequate. They point out that, as Shrader (2015: 668) discusses, 'caring for' an individual is possible without 'caring about' them, and vice versa. They would like to see elephants considered as members of an endangered species, or as individuals with inherent value, worthy of protection and offered more appropriate care. This type of care would involve the daily tasks needed to not only physically support another being, but mentally and emotionally support them as well.

Eleven: The Sanctuary Summit¹¹⁶

When research first began in 2019, I spent a great deal of time working alongside the NTNC veterinarian, Prakesh Vidanta, thanks to our common long-standing relationship with a US based conservation group. As we toured hattisars and spent time among the captive elephants of Sauraha, we often discussed the wide variety of egos and personalities whose discourse revolved around ‘loving’ and ‘helping’ captive elephants, and how it appeared that not only were these personalities refusing to cooperate toward their common goal, but in many cases were not even in contact. Vidanta was concerned that NGOs purporting to care about elephants were really just trying to raise money to fund their organizations, and that they ‘retire’ elephants solely to keep the cash flowing. He felt that if outsiders really ‘loved’ elephants, they would promote the NTNC by funding health camps¹¹⁷, communicate with the NTNC and one another, and try to see things with a ‘Nepali eye’ instead of through an American or European lens. Instead, he felt that the organizations and individuals were in competition with the NTNC and one another. Vidanta felt that there was too much propaganda surrounding both elephants and NGOs, and that activities such as social media posts showing injured elephants were very harmful to the relationships needed to promote welfare. As we discussed the various NGOs active in Sauraha, he suggested (somewhat teasingly, since he realized my chances of succeeding were slim) that a grand

¹¹⁶ All information in this section comes from interviews and personal communication in 2019 and 2020 with the individuals and groups previously described in this thesis.

¹¹⁷ In which he can gather baseline data on captive elephants, preform deworming and check feet. Vidanta has run these before, and the author secured funding for another in 2020, which was delayed due to COVID.

ending for my thesis would be if I could get all those interested in elephant welfare to communicate with one another. Never one to turn down a challenge, I decided to host the first 'Sanctuary Summit' in Nepal. I quickly realized that while I had been working in Sauraha since 2012, I was still an unknown to many of the NGOs which now had a presence there, and some might not trust me. In addition, it likely appeared to the NGOs that I had ties to the elephant owners' cooperative or NTNC as I had spent time helping with the wildlife hospital setup in the past, and was currently observing work at hotel stables. The owners shared concerns that I had ties to advocacy groups, as I had been interviewing them in the public coffeeshops for weeks. I decided it was still worth a try, even if only a few people attended. Perhaps naively, I expected that the non-Nepalese would feel as I did, that any opportunity to build relationships within the small town would be welcome.

I composed an email inviting all those who had claimed an interest in captive elephants to a meet and greet event at a local coffee house, including the president of the owners' cooperative, the past president, several members and Rudra Raja. I followed up these emails with personal visits, and in particular the president of the cooperative was keen to share his plans for the future. I proposed additional topics of conversation surrounding the transition of older elephants to sanctuary, the role of the elephant cooperative and ways to improve communication. I suggested that if everyone met, it might at the very least promote social interactions as people passed on the streets of Sauraha (Sauraha is a very small town, and it is nearly impossible not to run into each other regularly). My hope was to further define the words 'sanctuary' and 'welfare'.

I also invited an American small-animal veterinarian living part-time in Sauraha who had purchased an elephant, her business partner, the NTNC veterinary staff (with the approval of NTNC management), an American elephant behaviourist visiting town, ex-pat Renee (see Hatti Biography 3), local activist Doma Paudel, Bishnu Gwala of INGO4, Jennifer Cox of INGO2, and the founders of INGO5. The initial response from owners and other stakeholders was encouraging, with all those invited agreeing to join and discuss the topics above. Perhaps a sign of the past difficulties with trust, nearly every respondent (of every nationality) wanted to know who else was invited before committing.

Not all the initial responses to my invite were positive. In fact, I received two of the ‘who are you to invite us to anything’ variety, which questioned my background, rights, education and my relationship with the owners’ cooperative. Luckily, following a great deal of trust-building and interpersonal communications, both of these individuals agreed to participate in the summit.

The coffeehouse

An eternal optimist, I sent out reminder emails to everyone the morning of our agreed meeting, and headed to the coffeehouse. I was thrilled to see the three founders of INGO5 arrive, along with an American vet and elephant owner and her business partner, Dr Vidanta and the NTNC veterinary technician, Ravi Saroj. As we waited for the others to arrive, I introduced those who were not formally acquainted. Most had seen or spoken to one another at some point, but had not officially met or identified their roles in the Sauraha community. The NTNC staff

and INGO5 were able to describe their perspectives on elephant care and pricing, with Dr Vidanta offering to accompany Bames and Brown of INGO5 as an unbiased observer in their negotiations to purchase elephants in need of retirement. None of the aforementioned participants was the least surprised that other elephant owners who agreed to attend were missing. Rather than refusing outright, it was culturally appropriate to give an answer that I, as an outsider, would want to hear. I was disappointed by the lack of participation from the NGOs, perhaps applying my own cultural expectations of 'prompt attendance at agreed meetings' to other 'westerners', even when those individuals are not from my own country. Or perhaps it was my own optimistic worldview, which leads me to believe that those interested in a common goal would put aside differences for the 'greater good'.

As we continued to wait for more people to arrive, Bames asked the veterinarian to explain why elephant owners who have long since made up the purchase price of an elephant via safari rides still value that elephant at her original cost. According to Vidanta, it is a matter of perspective. An owner with a non-working elephant does not see it as money 'not coming in', but rather as 'money lost'. This difference in western and Nepalese perspective has been a stumbling block for several NGOs interested in retiring elephants in the area. According to Vidanta, Nepali owners may simply not want to sell, but rather than just saying no, they will put forth an exorbitant price when asked. Another stumbling block has been a lack of experience among westerners surrounding the need to negotiate prices.

Vidanta explains that it is customary to haggle, especially on 'items' like elephants,

for quite some time before coming to an agreement. Instead, the western NGOs simply asked for a price and walked away when it was too expensive. Vidanta suggests that they should continue to request a lower price, even if it means returning frequently to visit a stable over a long period of time. Eventually, he says, the price will go down.

Vidanta shared stories of successful elephant medical treatment (and some failures) as we drank our coffee and waited for more participants (who failed to arrive, despite claiming to be very interested and supportive), and the INGO5 founders took the opportunity to clear up some misconceptions regarding their presence in Sauraha. Bames explained to Vidanta that there would be no touristic interactions with elephants at their new facility, and that the founders receive no salaries. As permanent members of the community, INGO5's facility is not a business, but rather a retirement home for elephants. Vidanta was able to explain his issues with purchasing elephants to retire, and suggested leasing them instead. In his opinion, leasing is safer; if a leased elephant dies, you are out nothing. If an owned elephant dies, one loses their investment. While the staff of INGO5 did not agree with this perspective, at least they now understood his viewpoint. Harder to swallow, at least for me, was the viewpoint that elephants were a commodity, an investment or anything other than a complex, living being deserving of compassion.

Another point of contention arose as we discussed elephant joint health. There are several elephants who have significant skeletal or joint issues. Vidanta feels that if

these elephants are used in daily safari and don't appear to be in obvious pain, they should continue to be used. Others felt that due to the perceived severity of these issues, these elephants should be removed from duty. Without scientific proof, such as radiographs, explained Vidanta, it is impossible to tell an owner or the elephant cooperative that the elephant should be rested or sold. Of course, being 'rested' is not always the preferable option, as elephants may simply be chained up and forced to remain standing in one place (see Hatti Biography 3). One participant shared that she has a portable radiograph machine which was donated by an American zoo, but there is no available processor, and no protective gear in Sauraha. We discussed sending out a message via social media to obtain a processor, and I agreed to operate as the point person for these efforts.¹¹⁸

Brown requested that Vidanta and Saroj notify her if they hear of owners interested in ceasing elephant-backed safari and potentially selling their elephants. I suggested that they notify each other of any potential elephant sales, keeping the lines of communication open. Vidanta asked that his staff be contacted when NGOs are active in the area, as in the past these organizations never requested records, information or support. Because Ravi is the person most intimately acquainted with the privately-owned elephants in the area, he is uniquely positioned to offer advice and 'reality checks' for parachute NGOs—those who purport to help elephants in the area but have no regular presence there, instead

¹¹⁸ In fact, for nearly a year the author proceeded to chase down a processor to no avail. Organizations are unwilling to donate or fund radiograph equipment which will be used by inexperienced medical staff. I then found staff to train Vidanta, and he was able to procure a radiograph machine and processor via a USAid grant. However, due to COVID-19 is still awaiting training.

dropping in when convenient and often stirring up conflicts. These types of organizations have little understanding of the community or the appropriate ways to achieve their goals, according to interlocutors in this study.

Despite the small number of participants, eight in total, who attended the first Sanctuary Summit, I still felt as though it was a success. Getting people with similar interests to interact, especially those who have previously avoided contact out of a misplaced fear of reproach, might offer a starting place for working toward common goals. At dinner a few nights later, Vidanta and I saw Brown and Bames enter the restaurant. They came over to say hello, and Brown asked Vidanta to accompany her on a visit to a stable. Later, Vidanta admitted to me that prior to the summit he was suspicious of the pair. However, after conversing with them, he thinks they are 'probably good people'. Vidanta later accompanied Brown as she visited Liswini Kali's owner to offer assistance with the elephant's problematic feet, and Vidanta acted as a 'witness' for Liswini's eventual purchase. While these may be baby steps, they are at least steps toward communication and collaboration which I believe will positively influence the future of elephant care in Sauraha.

Since returning home, I have kept in touch with almost everyone invited to the original sanctuary summit. There have been high points and low points in communication between organizations, and I find myself alternately frustrated and elated. While INGO2 initially cut ties with other groups, INGO5 and INGO2 are again communicating. INGO5 has reconnected with Renee and are they are working together to build relationships with owners and mahouts by offering foot

and wound care free of charge to privately owned elephants. Frustration has built over the lack of movement with INGO4/INGO6 sanctuary plan. Renee reached out to various stakeholders, and convinced Gautam to meet with her and representatives from INGO5, Nepal Elephant Walk Sanctuary and Animal Nepal. This meeting took place in November of 2020, with the hope of creating dialogue surrounding the welfare of captive elephants, the illegal trade of these individuals, and any sanctuary projects. The decision was made to create an email list inviting everyone interested in a sanctuary plan to openly communicate and form a united front. Much like the original sanctuary summit, only three parties responded to the email. Luckily, the email link remains available, and following an article I wrote for the Nepali Times (Szydlowski, 2020b) several formerly quiet parties at least responded that they saw the article, indicating that at least they were aware of everyone's efforts. I will count this as progress, and continue to hope that these organizations can work together in future.

In the meantime, INGO5, Renee and myself continue to reach out to INGO4 and INGO6. The latest news on their sanctuary plan is not encouraging. According to Bishnu Gwala, nothing will happen without the complete agreement of all elephant owners in the Sauraha area. According to Dr Argent of INGO6, their plan was never to build or create a sanctuary. Instead, they only hoped to encourage the elephant owners to build their own sanctuary with governmental funding, outside investors or grants (despite the funding promised by Gautam for the sanctuary—see previous section). INGO6's role was to outline a business plan which the owners could use to transition from their riding model to a sanctuary model. Argent

feels that the elephant owners' cooperative has shown little initiative in the last year, and are acting against their memorandum of understanding. Argent states that INGO6 will again try contacting the cooperative and governmental stakeholders to assess the current situation.

Conclusion

The sanctuary summit proved useful in facilitating communication between stakeholders in Sauraha, and may be the first step in finding the common language of conservation this thesis seeks. Communication between the NTNC veterinary staff and other NGOs is ongoing, and email group messages continued through 2020 and into 2021. While INGO2 and INGO5 are examples of successful sanctuary business plans, they are both now at capacity, and further options are needed.

Twelve: A Hatti Ending

This thesis has followed the trails of captive elephants through the hattisars and forests of Nepal, and into the workspaces of NGOs and INGOs interested in their welfare. The elephants encountered within this thesis found themselves alternatingly constructed as the embodiment of a god, beloved family members, signs of wealth or power, and lowly slaves in chains.¹¹⁹ This thesis set out not to speak for elephants, but to discover a ‘common language’ used by those speaking *about* elephants; I sought to discover the ‘ordinary ethics’ (Lambek, 2010) of elephant ownership and use. This common language is not only expressed in words, but also in social interactions. Using the biographies of both elephants and organizations to examine the motivations, aims and practices of elephant-focused groups led to the realization that words such as ‘care’, ‘work’, ‘love’ and especially ‘elephant’ left behind their official definitions and instead became participants in meaning-making with a culturally diverse group of humans.

The elephants of Nepal represent, more than anything, a moral quandary. Thanks to long-standing relationships with elephant owners and mahouts, I approached this thesis with a basic understanding of their desire to keep elephants. Logically, operating elephant-based businesses which bring in tourists who in turn support local community members and conservation projects made sense. However, academic literature does not back up claims that tourism practices are the

¹¹⁹ See chapter one, this thesis.

salvation of communities in areas of conservation focus. Instead, authors called for more interdisciplinary research into the true effects of tourism on societies.

Conservation and ecotourism practices are tied up in neoliberalism, and often serve to widen the gap between socio-economic groups and limit access of poor communities to natural resources (Castree, 2008b: 163-166; Campbell, 2007: 83; Mehta and Heinen, 2001). In addition, considerably more research is needed into the physical, mental and emotional needs of animals used in tourism, both as conveyance and objects to view (Buckley, 2011; Curry, et al., 2010; Fennell 2013; Subedi, 1999).

Contributions to knowledge

This thesis offers several unique contributions to knowledge. First, it uncovered changing community attitudes toward elephants and elephant-backed safari in Sauraha. I was hesitant to judge practices which appeared to have the backing of the community, lest I be labeled as neo-colonial. It became very clear during this study, however, that the local community no longer supports the practice of elephant-backed safari. The Nature Guide Association, business owners, educators, NTNC officers, young people and college students all professed the need to allow elephants to express their agency and release them from service. They desire an end to the use of elephants in tourism, but it is hardly that simple. The situation is far more nuanced and requires the consideration of marginalized communities of mahouts and other community members who rely upon elephants for their survival.

Secondly, this thesis articulated the wide range of stakeholder perspectives and the challenges to collaborative welfare efforts. It identified the intractability of the 'elephant situation' in Sauraha, given the reliance of large numbers of community members on tourism. Lastly, this thesis provides a unique tool for assessing welfare in stable facilities and offers suggestions which may improve elephant welfare while decisions are being made regarding the future of these individuals. This thesis also demonstrates the usefulness of elephant biography in clarifying the range of experiences faced by captive elephants in Nepal.

Seeing elephants through a variety of lenses

The introduction to this thesis asked, 'is it possible to improve the health and welfare of captive elephants and their caregivers through an examination of the similarities and differences in ethical approaches used by elephant owners and NGOs active in Sauraha, Nepal?' I wanted to discover if the ethical norms of each group were so different that they got in each other's way, or if working toward a common goal was enough. Is it even possible to identify norms that are consistent across cultures and reframe them in a way that will aid organizations in finding a 'common language' or common ground of elephant care? Before answering these questions, a brief summary is needed of the ways in which 'caring for elephants' is viewed by different organizations.

Co-workers and commodities

Some organizations, such as the United Elephant Owners' Cooperative, view elephants as both commodities to be bought, sold and used until they can no longer work, and as co-workers for humans. Elephant-mahout pairs spend long hours together bringing in significant income for their 'boss'. When viewed through this lens, both mahouts and elephants remain marginalized communities, receiving low pay (or low nutrition in the case of elephants), inadequate housing and little respect. While elephant-human relationships are often idealized in academic literature (see Hart, 2005, 2015; Hart and Locke, 2007; Locke, 2017; Locke, 2011b), in reality these pairs face daily struggles as co-workers and cohabitators. Working long hours for low wages, drivers face both heavy body-work and emotional labour. These men and women face caste discrimination, exposure to zoonotic disease, accusations of violence and cruelty, inherent danger and a lack of job security. These mahouts are expected or forced to participate in breaking ceremonies and maintain dominance-based control over their elephant co-worker regardless of how they might personally view these methods.

The private safari elephants face long walks to tourist gates with a heavy howdah on their back, saddle wounds, chronic foot pain and beatings in exchange for rice kushis and a stable roof. Working elephants are conceived via chained mating or wild-caught in India, and must endure the breaking ceremony under the frightened gaze of their mothers. They must continue to perform their own emotional labour, fighting against their instincts while on duty by refraining from skin care or

foraging. They return home at the end of their work day to hard packed dirt floors, dry grass and nowhere to rest.

The care afforded these elephants may seem to outsiders to be cruel or inhumane, but in reality one must accept that it is instead ‘traditional practice’ to many elephant caregivers. Providing shelter, food, and access to veterinary personnel is providing necessary ‘care’, and many drivers and owners profess a deep love for their elephants. It is this ‘love’ that drives elephant caregivers to perform the hard physical labour daily to ensure the health and safety of their charges. Many mahouts in this study demonstrated affection towards and emotional investment in ‘their’ elephant and seemed to understand individual elephant needs and desires. Owners, veterinary personnel and mahouts in this study not only professed a desire to care for and work with elephants, but most felt that their methods were ethical and provided good health and positive welfare for elephant individuals. In addition, many felt that their choices were *more* ethical or better for elephants than those of non-Nepalese organizations. These mahouts are not the romanticised men of previous academic literature (see Locke, 2017a: 362-365; Locke, 2011b: 36-39), nor are they the cruel or evil beings construed in many social media posts (see chapter eight), they are simply humans enmeshed in complex relationships. Elephant staff have asked that outsiders view their care with a ‘Nepali eye’ instead of a ‘western eye’.

The above descriptions of appropriate care may also reflect social facts rather than reality. The physical care of elephants may have been adequate when

mahouts were respected for their skill and knowledge was regularly passed down familial lines from experienced drivers. However, the flow of that information has been interrupted. It must be noted that modern mahouts are often inexperienced, underpaid, untrained individuals with little embodied knowledge of elephants (Hart, 2000; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2020; Lipton and Bhattari, 2014; Varma, 2008), and thus elephant care is suffering. Some mahouts take advantage of the situation, beating, stabbing, punching and starving their elephants into submission. This may reflect their frustration with a system which limits their own agency, or may be a misunderstanding of *how* to care in appropriate ways (Schrader, 2015: 684). Without the guidance of a mahout manual or instruction from their elders, there is little hope to return elephant co-work to its previously respected incarnation. Furthermore, one must consider that many owners do not see a problem with the underemployment and inadequate housing of these mahouts. Socially, these mahouts are 'allowed' to be mistreated or underpaid thanks to their caste. Likewise, privately-owned elephants are 'allowed' to be mistreated thanks to theirs.

Treating these elephants and humans as co-workers or commodities is an unsustainable model for owners, as evidenced by their inability to support elephants and mahouts when tourism disappeared during COVID-19. Some owners have taken the time during COVID to leave the elephant business, sending individuals back to India. Others have leased or sold elephants to NGOs, and others are exploring creating a common hattisar to divide elephant cost and care. Many owners accept that elephant-backed tourism is viewed as an unacceptable

practice by many Americans, Australians and Europeans, but feel that as long as it provides income there is no impetus to change.

Some INGOs have chosen to focus on supporting mahouts and elephants enmeshed in the above-mentioned situations, attempting to improve working and living situations *in-situ*, as it were, for both. As the captive elephants in range countries are unlikely (or unable) to be returned to the wild, efforts should focus instead on creating habitats which provide more opportunities for captive elephants (and mahouts) to experience good health and positive welfare. Studies from countries with larger captive elephant populations have come to varying conclusions on how best to proceed. Elephants in zoos generally suffered earlier mortality and poorer welfare than elephants in intensively managed camps in range countries, indicating that perhaps intensively-managed facilities themselves are not necessarily the problem. Some research demonstrates that human-elephant co-work in elephant-backed tourist venues in Thailand may result in more positive welfare than in non-riding facilities (see Bansiddhi, et al. 2020a). One issue with these studies is the lack of consistent results from tests used to assess positive welfare (see appendix III). Another problem lies in the lack of a welfare tool which universally fits all captive situations. This is one reason I developed a checklist of welfare impactors which uniquely applies to the situation in Nepal and can be repeated on future visits, along with recommendations for improving health and welfare through simple changes. The owners in the current study expressed interest in improving the health and welfare of their elephants (despite at the same

time claiming they are already well cared for), and working within the owners own construct of a co-working stable may be key to successfully improving 'care'.

Environmental justice

Elephants have traditionally been studied as biological entities but pushed to the side-lines of environmental justice discourse. Thanks to the overlap of their ranges with those of marginalized humans reliant upon tourism for survival, the ethical implications of elephant-based tourism activities have been largely avoided in favour of discourses surrounding the needs of single-species human communities. In response, several NGOs have chosen to view elephants through the lens of environmental justice, promoting their wild nature and encouraging others to consider their emotional lives, social structure, and need to be seen as wildlife deserving of respect. In addition, these organizations seek to improve the socio-economic status of mahouts and other marginalized communities. These organizations, including the Nature Guide Association, focus on ending the 'torture' of elephants, freeing them from servitude, and promoting ethical lifestyles (such as veganism, in some cases). To create better living situations for all species, these groups feel that humans must see animals as equals, and attempt to understand elephants' desire for choice. They see the protection of the environment as a global concern, and local communities in areas of high biodiversity as actors in a globalized society, one which is reliant on tourism to survive. This view, at least, acknowledges marginalized communities of various species as intrinsically valuable co-creators of the environment.

These organizations are often in open conflict with owners, the government and the NTNC. They are vocal about ending cruel practices and publicly protest events like elephant football and breaking ceremonies. NGOS viewing elephants through the lens of environmental justice have discovered that questioning traditional practices of these communities, even with regard to illegal practices, may result in accusations of neocolonialism, or even threats of beatings or death. In addition, a focus on sustainable development initiatives may serve to reinforce gaps between castes and cultures, undermining the push towards environmental justice.

Cosmopolitans

Several of the NGOs in this study appear to see elephants as cosmopolitan actors sharing landscapes with humans as they navigate the culture of globalised tourism, and encourage sustainable development which focuses on the survival of the entire community. This development might be supported by ecotourism which does not 'use' elephants as conveyance, but instead allows tourists to visit elephants living in free-range facilities. Community members have also adopted this style of thinking, asking that wild and captive elephants be offered a place in which they can live out their lives intersecting with humans but without the complete repression of their agency. Several owners expressed an understanding of elephants unique personalities and desires, which may indicate that they are adopting a more cosmopolitan approach to care. Tiger Tops and INGO2 have incorporated the daily lives of their elephants into the lives of guests and staff, and is approaching elephants as individuals who require social lives independent of human direction. INGO6 and INGO4 appear to favour releasing elephants from

service, but ensuring they remain in their original 'neighbourhood' in a sanctuary-style facility with improved shelters for both elephants and humans. In addition, mahouts at several facilities are being trained in different styles of elephant management and offered financial and social support as valued community members.

These organizations also find themselves at odds with owners, the government and each other as they call for enforcement of CITES regulations and an end to elephant import. In addition, the publication of videos and other accusations of cruelty have resulted in an inability to promote elephant welfare by creating the impression that all non-Nepalese are troublesome animal rights advocates out to end traditional practices.

It is vitally important to note that all of the above relationships are intimately tied to the continuation of tourism in Nepal. INGO2, INGO6 and INGO4's plans rely upon tourists being willing to pay fees higher than those charged for safari rides. During the next pandemic or natural disaster (such as 2015's devastating earthquake which killed tourism for over a year), this leaves facilities vulnerable to closure and elephants and mahouts facing loss of pay or food. They could also face a return to India to become temple or beggar elephant-mahout pairs.

INGO5 also embraces this cosmopolitan view of elephants. However, unlike the organizations above, INGO5 does not currently rely on tourist income for survival. They do require a great deal of fundraising and support from sponsors, which can

be unreliable during lean economic times. Despite being reliant on outside funding, and therefore vulnerable to global recession, INGO5 may still represent the best model in Sauraha thanks to their status as community members, their commitment to funding versus tourism activity, their hands-off policy for visitors, and their work with elephant owners, veterinary staff and mahouts throughout the area. Rather than create rifts between the government, NTNC, owners and advocates, INGO5 has remained focused on changing the riding culture by demonstrating an alternative. However, they are only able to help a very limited number of elephants due to facility size restrictions.

It is likely that the 'ideal' view of elephants is one that combines the lenses above. Humans should perhaps focus on the spaces where elephant and human bodies and emotions intersect, like Haraway's (2008: 42) 'knot of species' or van Dooren's (147) 'entangled significances'. These spaces are where we will find a set of ordinary ethics which organizations can use to develop working relationships with owners and each other. Combining the best practices of each organization is key to improving the lives of both elephants and mahouts in Sauraha.

Common language and ordinary ethics

Within these different views of elephants lie the threads of a common language and ethical approaches to improving elephant and mahout health and welfare. The first aim of this study involved an examination of the motivations of local, national, and international conservation groups active near Chitwan National Park. The second aim sought to compare the stated aims of these organizations with the

ways in which they practice elephant care. Aim three attempts to understand the perceived efficacy of these organizations and how their aims overlap, support, contradict or directly undermine each other. I will discuss each of these aims through the following ‘common language’ subheadings.

‘Sanctuary’

While INGO6, INGO4, INGO5, INGO2, INGO3 and the elephant owners’ cooperative all used the word ‘sanctuary’ to describe their plans for the future, the word was interpreted in vastly different ways. The elephant owners saw a sanctuary simply as a place where elephants were managed as a group in a central location. This location would allow riding, and breeding encouraged to ensure a steady supply of biocapital for future use. Owners mentioned their desire to allow older elephants to remain at the facility once they could no longer be ridden, rather than being sent to India. INGO6 and INGO4 developed plans for the owners’ cooperative to establish and run this type of facility, housing elephants in chain-free corrals but continuing to financially benefit only their owners.

This style of sanctuary does not mesh with the ideas of other organizations wishing to entirely remove owners from the picture and remove elephants from hands-on tourism activities. These NGOs want elephants to ‘be elephants’, meaning that deriving income from tourism is a fringe benefit, not a need. Much of the problem arises from differing senses of urgency—organizations who wish to stop riding ‘right now’ or to ‘save elephants’ are purchasing individuals and focusing on moving them to private stables. Organizations such as INGO6 and

INGO4 choose to view elephants as a population, and emphasize that it is important to wait until every owner can transition at the same time with the understanding that no more riding elephants will be purchased from outside Nepal. They believe this is the only workable option for ending elephant riding in Sauraha. They have not acknowledged that stop-gap measures may be necessary to ensure that elephant welfare is improved while waiting for owners to agree upon a 'sanctuary' plan.

There is merit in each of the above plans. While it is urgent to remove elephants housed in inappropriate or dangerous conditions, one must consider the tourism-elephant system as a whole. Nature guides and other community members recommend any plans proceed 'slowly, slowly', lest outsiders forget that more is at stake than elephant lives. Privately owned elephants have multiple mahouts, and these mahouts are often lacking other job options. When elephants in this study were moved to a private facility, typically only one of their mahouts accompanied them, creating an ethical dilemma by firing the others. Is it ethical to 'save' elephants at the cost of mahout families?

In addition, the sale of elephants into private facilities owned primarily by foreigners is unlikely to create a sustainable future for local communities, and should be considered through a neoliberal lens. Any resultant tourism may bring in guests who consume local goods, but may benefit elephants and foreign interests more than local people. Instead, alternative income-producing methods must be established which will financially support retired elephants throughout their lives

while offering livelihoods to local humans. One example that may be working is the involvement of elephant- and hotel-owner Tika Kumar in sustainability efforts surrounding Hotel1. His 'success' in pairing with foreign investors to create a chain-free facility means that his lodge welcomes a higher number of non-Asian tourists, who sometimes pay double the cost of lodges aimed at other tourists, and a portion of this hotel income supports community projects. However, his success may also serve to create gaps between 'rich' owners pairing with foreign investors, and may result in further class or caste distinctions.

These concepts of 'sanctuary' may seem incompatible, but within each is a seed of promise. The key to success lies in communication. As mentioned in previous chapters, following the sanctuary summit several interested parties composed an email which was sent to ten organizations and two independent parties which have declared an interest in the captive elephants of Sauraha (this email did not, however include Nepalese elephant owners). There was a great deal of confusion at first from parties assuming they knew what other parties meant by the word 'sanctuary'. This email chain has allowed participants to clarify their vision and expectations for a sanctuary facility. In addition, parties are slowly starting to share information regarding 'their owners'—those who have contacted only certain NGOs, professing an interest in discussing alternatives to safari. Transparency about these contacts is key to developing relationships with interested parties which will benefit elephants. The parties in this email chain 'agreed' to advance projects which promote elephant welfare, inform the group about contacts with owners, and notify the group of meetings between members.

With regard to sanctuary plans in Sauraha, the diverse ethical norms of owners and advocates continue to create problems. However, the ethical norms of NGOs and INGOs are much more closely aligned than these groups initially thought. Returning to the research question above: on paper, it seems that the answer is a resounding yes. It *is* possible to improve the health and welfare of captive elephants and their caregivers through an examination of the ethical approaches of organizations in Sauraha. These organizations have similar missions and goals. However, that 'yes' is itself a word which is situationally dependant. Yes, examining these ethical approaches resulted in a number of organizations agreeing to work together. Yes, some organizations are also working with owners thanks to an understanding of the expectations and goals of each. However, egos continue to present such a problem that this 'yes' does not apply to all groups or all situations.

Some NGOs continue to create their own private sanctuaries, making changes and decisions without consulting other groups. When confronted, some groups explained that they had no obligation or desire to work with others, with some stating that while their ethical norms are aligned, their 'methods' are simply too different. However, it appears to me that the efficacy of these organizations is undermined by their inability to cooperate. There remains a refusal to share resources despite proposed cooperation. Smaller organizations find themselves forced to align with one of two larger NGOs if they hope to influence elephant

futures. Often, it is the refusal of a single person within an NGO who chooses not to 'allow' cooperation, or in some cases any communication at all.

For example, had larger organizations like INGO6 and INGO4 been willing to work with the smaller NGOs operating in Sauraha during COVID-19 in 2020, I believe that it would have been possible to create a one-of-a-kind, sanctuary-style, free-range facility that would have been an example for other countries. In 2020, time and a lack of tourists were on their side, and owners regularly reached out asking for help and support, or offering to sell or lease their elephants. Thanks to a stubborn resistance to sharing details of their plans, or allowing a portion of the owners to contract with other organizations, the INGO6 plan is now unlikely to proceed. I believe that like facilities in Thailand, Sauraha will ultimately house numerous chain-free tourist venues and a handful of 'walk with elephants' for-profit venues or expensive hotels focused exclusively on international tourists. While this model works in some areas of Asia, it is unsustainable in Nepal for several reasons. Elephants do not reproduce well in captivity, and infant mortality in Nepal remains high while numbers of individuals of breeding-age continue to fall.¹²⁰ This model also does not solve what some advocates see as the ultimate problem—elephants captured and sold into captivity. Unlike Tiger Tops management, other hotels have not agreed to stop buying elephants to replace or expand their herd, and therefore illegally obtained elephants will continue to walk across the border, seemingly invisible to enforcement agencies.

¹²⁰ During the final edits of this thesis, several more female elephants were sold to Indian buyers and left Nepal.

'Necessary Care'

Government of Nepal and NTNC-owned elephants are protected by legislation regarding nutrition and husbandry, although it is rarely enforced. The definition of care by these organizations involved physical provisioning and an inclusion of elephants in religious celebrations (which often simply involve painting their elephant with colourful dyes and allowing her to be close to celebrating humans). These organizations have been successful in achieving their aims of providing anti-poaching patrols in support of conservation efforts. They have been somewhat successful in breeding the next generation of patrol elephant, but as this herd ages out there are too few to replace them without bringing in (illegally) more wild-caught individuals. This puts their aims in direct conflict with one another, wherein 'saving' a species in the wild requires removing the same species from the wild, albeit in a different country. The use of captive members of endangered species to protect the same species in the wild seems inconsistent to many non-Nepalese in this study, including myself. This is especially troubling when one considers the use of NTNC elephants to bring in income via rental to tourist groups or researchers.

Private elephant owners share at least a few common goals and practices with the government and NTNC (not to mention cross-employment of human staff). The desire to promote tourism in Chitwan National Park is key to the success of each of these groups. Without the owners, the government could not focus on conservation, and without the national park the NTNC would not exist. Without

these conservation practices, the owners would have nothing to draw in tourists. The aims of these three groups, however, are in direct conflict with those of most other Nepalese and non-Nepalese organizations interested in elephant care.

INGO3, INGO2, INGO6 and INGO4 see 'necessary care' not only the daily tasks involved in maintaining health, but also offering improvements in welfare, such as adequate nutrition, free access to water, removal of chains and a reduction in dominance-based management. Other organizations such as INGO5, and the Nature Guide Association feel that the only ethical option is a complete end to the use of elephants in tourism. They view 'necessary care' as moving beyond the physical requirements and into the realm of positive welfare, which includes access to conspecifics and natural spaces, freedom from daily human direction and the option to express their own agency.

While these concepts of care appear to be incompatible, again we must look for the seed of commonality. Every well-cared for elephant begins with good nutrition, space, shelter and 'rest' of some form. By focusing on the needs which elephant owners, governmental bodies, the NTNC and other NGOs see as 'requirements', we have common ground upon which to build. By focusing on these specific needs, NGOs and INGOs can impact the health of elephants in small ways which may lead to the adoption of alternative methods by mahouts and owners. The owners have demonstrated willingness to use chain-free corrals, improve nutrition and move facilities closer to the tourist gates. If NGOs are willing to cooperate, and likely finance, many of these changes, perhaps relationships can be built

which will lead to lasting change. Offering financial support to those individuals who are on the top-rung of the financial ladder in Sauraha—the owners—may cause discomfort to non-Nepalese readers and NGOs. However, as evidenced by INGO2's approach, along with my own experiences with Nepalese owners, this is currently the only way forward. There is a need for perspective-taking. If the owners see 'elephants as a business', then only by approaching change in this way can we succeed in increasing welfare for captive elephants.

'Welfare'

Aims four and five of this thesis were concerned with assessing elephant health and welfare, documenting the potential impactors of each, and exploring ways that this research might contribute to improving the welfare of elephants in the area. By creating a checklist which uniquely fits the stables of Nepal, I have contributed to the larger body of knowledge surrounding captive elephant welfare. This thesis successfully documented the welfare status and stable conditions at 25 of the 40 area hattisars. I found a concerning lack of appropriate substrate, lack of water access for drinking and a lack of places or ability to recline or lean for rest (among others). These stables were representative of most found in Sauraha, but conditions have likely deteriorated even more thanks to the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism.

These stable conditions reflect more than simply a disconnect between a 'Nepalese' and 'Non-Nepalese' view of welfare and care. Owners, mahouts, local community members, tourists, academics and NGOs interviewed for this study all

reported that conditions could or should be improved with regard to nutrition, number of safaris, management systems, housing, foot care, etc.. With this amount of agreement that conditions are less than ideal, why is elephant health and welfare suffering? It cannot be due solely to a lack of funding—as conditions in some financially-strapped range state camps have resulted in better overall welfare than individuals housed in western zoos (Mason and Veasey, 2010b; Sukumar, 2003: 397). Therefore, it can't simply be that access to financial support, research and health diagnostics are completely necessary for better welfare outcomes.

I suspect there are several issues at play here. First, the owners have little motivation to change. As long as safari income continues, so will the status quo of stabling and care. I would argue that this is not unique to Nepal, but is the case with many businessmen in a multitude of countries. Secondly, as discussed in chapter seven, some owners *choose* to do the opposite of whatever elephant advocates want. This adversarial relationship, in which NGOs paint elephant owners as one-dimensionally cruel or cold people, has created a lose-lose situation for captive elephants. Instead, any group interested in changing the lives of captive elephants in Nepal must accept that these owners are dynamic, complex humans, as are elephant advocates. What is needed is perspective taking, the building of relationships, consistent communication, willingness to fund cooperative projects, and an understanding that 'slowly, slowly' is the only way forward. However, some understanding of 'welfare' offers common ground on which to build.

Limitations of this study

Nepal is not representative of the relationships between elephants and mahouts, or mahout-elephant-owner-camp relationships in other parts of Asia. While there is obvious influence due to the employment of Indian mahouts throughout Sauraha, the relationships seen in Nepalese hattisars are incredibly unique. Critics may point out that elephants, owners and mahouts in other range states face vastly different challenges and lifestyles. While other range states were used as examples for health and welfare guideline comparison, this thesis did not set out to examine elephant-human relationships in these countries but rather to examine the changing relationships found within Nepal. A natural, and necessary, extension of this study would be to expand the search for commonalities of language and care into Thailand, India, or Myanmar.

Another limitation is due to the likelihood that some information provided by both Nepalese and non-Nepalese informants was based upon their expectations of what I wanted to hear. While I believe this happens in all studies thanks to perceived power differentials between researcher and interlocutor, it is a common cultural practice in Nepal (Johnson, interviews, 2016; Brown, Vidanta, interviews 2019, Gwala interview, 2020). To counteract this, I attempted to gather a variety of information from diverse sources to create a better understanding of each situation.

Lastly, government-owned elephants present a conundrum. Their health and welfare is little studied, thanks to restrictions by the government involving access to stables and research permits. While they appear to live in significantly better conditions than privately held animals, the use of one endangered species to ‘save’ or ‘protect’ others is ethically problematic at best. Deeper studies into these government stables, and an assessment of how many elephants are ‘necessary’ to operate antipoaching patrols and perform rescue and census duties are needed. Whether any use of elephants is ethically permissible remains to be seen.

Final conclusions and the way forward

Most Nepalese people involved in elephant care in Nepal are doing what they perceive to be the right or ethical thing. There is the need to acknowledge that what we each see as ‘right’ or ‘ethical’ is both personally and culturally dependent. There is also a need to acknowledge basic animal rights. Sentient, wild, intelligent beings who did not choose to affiliate with humans are being kept in conditions which adversely affect their health and welfare. Basic human rights are also involved—marginalized communities of mahouts cannot be ignored as advocates try to provide better living conditions to elephants at the expense of these mahouts. Elephants and mahouts must both be offered equal consideration as organizations move forward in ending elephant-backed safari in Nepal.

Elephant owners also require consideration as community members and human beings. While I understand that they feel they are operating using good business practices, the fact remains that they acknowledge the illegality of owning elephants

‘for profit’. Their feelings of frustration are understandable, as they see governmentally linked organizations such as the NTNC doing the same thing. However, asking these owners to part with their ‘property’ should not present an ethical concern—if animals are illegally obtained, as are these elephants, they should be confiscated and released to facilities where they can live out their lives as freely as possible. The best ‘business plan’ for these owners would appear to be selling their remaining elephants to NGOs with space or working with NGOs to create a chain-free facility. Of course, this plan is fraught—if the border is not closed to trade, and CITES regulations not enforced, then owners may decide to continue bringing in elephants illegally and create a commodity market for ‘retired’ elephants. A first step in the success of any sanctuary plan is governmental support of existing regulations.

The national, international and local organizations advocating for captive elephants in Nepal have had a great deal of success, despite getting in each other’s way. At least nine elephants have been transitioned to facilities where tourists are not allowed to touch or ride them. This is a huge proportion of Nepal’s privately held captive elephants, but the future of these elephants still relies heavily on tourism and international funding. In addition, Rudra Raja, with the help of INGOs, is now building chain-free corrals for his herd. Several owners have agreed to coordinate on land purchases to house elephants together, and this may lead to the eventual formation of a sanctuary-style venue. Other owners have agreed to work with the author on stable improvements if financing for these improvements comes from outside interests (such as grants).

The future

Further studies documenting the changes which occurred in attitudes toward elephants and their living conditions following the COVID-19 lockdown are needed. These studies could determine if the small changes suggested in the current study are still feasible options for improving the health and welfare of captive elephants in Sauraha. In addition, welfare measurements which include the input of caregivers, veterinarians and local communities (such as Veasey's, {2020: 6} AWPIS[®] system) or perhaps a combination of metrics which offer a variety of health and welfare measurements would help determine a way forward. However, the elephants in Sauraha can't wait for COVID to end and these studies to begin. The most logical path forward is to support the organizations who are physically present within Nepal and working to improve the health and welfare of captive elephants. These organizations are intimately acquainted with individual elephants, mahouts, owners and the community. Any hope of creating better living conditions for elephant-mahout pairs will likely come through these groups, and thus ensuring their collaboration is key. There is a desperate need for NGOs and INGOs who do not have a year-round presence in Nepal to work with and through those that do. Lastly, researchers, activists, officials and the public must support national and range-state-wide legislation regarding registration and elephant welfare.

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Appendix I: Management systems and their effects on health and welfare

Current training and management styles have variable impacts on elephant health and welfare, and an analysis of the type of management found at different facilities can help predict overall elephant welfare (Greco, et al., 2016b: 11). However, these population-level studies should act only as a guide while allowing for adjustment to the needs of individual animals (Greco, et al. 2016b: 21; Veasey, 2020). Below is a brief summary of each style, along with a discussion of their potential welfare impacts.

Traditional dominance training with 'free' contact

In southeast Asia, traditional elephant training using force and punishment is still the norm (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Desai, 2008; Gautam, 2011; observations, 2014, 2017, 2019). Because elephants are a species with a clear social hierarchy, many trainers believe that dominance training is a natural way to manage elephants (Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008; Mar, 2020b; Sukumar, 2003). Larger, older females with dominant family lines are more likely to be dominant herd leaders who lead not by fear or intimidation but by demonstrating an ability to do what is best for the herd (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008; Poole, 2001 in Clubb and Mason, 2002). Dominant males are typically strong, large individuals but may be ousted by smaller, more determined bulls (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 105-106). These males rely on threat displays to

maintain their dominance (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008). In a traditional management program, the handler tries to become the socially dominant member of the herd, thus leading some to refer to this as dominance training (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008). Obviously, human trainers will not be able to dominate based on size or family relations, and therefore must obtain dominance through the demonstration of strength or intimidation, often in situations where the elephant can't fight back (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 143; observations, 2017, 2019). In addition, humans may use threat displays or psychological means to dominate these animals (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Poole, 2001 in Clubb and Mason, 2002). Traditional training often includes punishments for non-compliance with human instructions, such as beatings with metal bars, ankus, sticks or metal hooks (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008). In addition, this style of free contact often involves the elephant being chained or tied if not in direct control of a human (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Vanitha, 2010; observations, 2017, 2019).

In parts of southeast Asia, elephant training begins following the subjection of a juvenile elephant to a breaking ceremony, which often includes both physical and psychological trauma (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011; Mar, 2020b; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; see chapter four). It is possible, since nearly 60% of elephants in European zoos were captured from the wild, that most elephants currently residing in Europe went through a breaking ritual (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 120), and according to interlocutors for the current study, Nepalese

stables still employ breaking rituals (see chapter four). Due to the complex emotional history of elephants, not knowing how an elephant was initially broken or trained may create issues for handlers later (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 113-114, 126-127). Continued use of dominant training methods may make certain behaviours such as veterinary procedures or foot care easier on the handler but may also result in later aggression toward humans (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 142).

It seems unlikely that elephants view their trainer as dominant, but rather associate fear with certain behaviours and pleasure with others (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 111). The elephant may learn to associate pain or fear with certain areas of their enclosure, or with certain humans (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 125). Furthermore, use of a bull hook seems to violate the 'prevention of injury or disease' and 'freedom from fear' portions of the five freedoms (Clubb and Mason, 2002; FAWAC, 1979). The Association of Zoos and Aquariums in the USA voted in 2019 to begin phasing out bull hook use by 2021, and to discontinue all use by 2023, except in emergency situations and for emergent veterinary care (Brulliard, 2019).

In both western zoos and Asian stables, elephants may undergo dominance training which includes the use of negative reinforcement—a method in which a negative stimulus is removed upon compliance (Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008). These methods often use the sharp point of the bull hook as a negative pressure stimulus. With negative reinforcement, the animal is poked with the hook and moves away (or moves the body part away) from the discomfort (Clubb and

Mason, 2002; Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008). A verbal command may accompany the prod, and with repeated use, the elephant learns to respond to the command without the prod (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 97). If the desired behaviour wanes (i.e. the elephant tries to put his or her leg down before told to do so), then the point of the ankus is again applied to reinforce holding the position (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 98). Rewards may then be incorporated for compliance with a trained command (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 98). Care must be taken, as improper use of the ankus can result in wounds which may then decrease welfare (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009). Some facilities use ropes to obtain the same result, tying body parts to hold down or position an animal until she learns to assume the position on her own (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Gautam and Khatiwads, 2011). Elephants that do not comply may be beaten until they submit and many in Nepal carry with them wounds on their head and face (Gautam and Khatiwada, 2011).

These beatings are not limited to Asian facilities, however. In statements to the US government in 2000, elephant managers and staff offered testimony that chaining, beating, electric prodding, and stabbing were a recognized element of traditional US zoo and circus management (US Government, 2000 in Clubb and Mason, 2002). It should be noted that the use of electrical devices is prohibited in US zoos—excluding emergency situations to defend against imminent attack (AZA, 2001). In the UK, negative reinforcement training is not allowed, but there are still reports of items such as cattle prods being employed in elephant training (Clubb and Mason, 2002; DEFRA, 2012).

Furthermore, some traditionally trained behaviours seen in zoos, circuses and elephant camps have come under scrutiny due to their innate unnaturalness (PETA, nd and 2002; Schmidt-Burbach, 2017). Behaviours such as standing on one leg or mounting can cause permanent damage to joints and being forced to sit can lead to hernias (Kuntze, 1989: np). Despite the damage these behaviours can cause, there are still no restrictions on what behaviours can be trained in Europe (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 130).

Dominance training may have positive benefits as well, such as making it easier to performing husbandry behaviours or veterinary care (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 127-128). There may also be increases in welfare via the sense of belonging to a larger herd if the human is seen as a conspecific (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 127). Access to outside activities may be available to individuals who are under keeper control (including via dominance), and this access may have positive health benefits (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Sampson, 2001: 58). Traditional dominance methods may allow for free-contact situations with caregivers, where the hands-on nature of training could result in earlier detection of physical issues (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 127; Sampson, 2001). While there are a few desirable benefits, the overall effect of traditional training methods on welfare is predominantly negative. Studies on other species, including humans, have demonstrated that individuals who believe that their behaviour has no effect on their environment experience a sense of hopelessness which is akin to depression in humans (Peterson and Seligman, 1983; Seligman, 1972). This feeling of having no control over one's

surroundings can lead to ‘maladaptive passivity’ and can be fatal (Peterson and Seligman, 1983: 104; Seligman, 1972). This type of stress and passivity has been described in captive animals (Carlstead and Shepardson, 1994; Joffe, 1973; Widman, et al., 1992).

Traditional training and management are often accused of not allowing elephants time to ‘be elephants.’ This refrain was heard from informants throughout the study period and has been heard in zoos using traditional methods as well (Clubb and Mason, 2002). Without a large-scale study of elephant behaviour in different management systems—as well as the wild—it is hard to judge the validity of this claim. A study by Katole, et al. (2013: 386) demonstrated that four hours of tourism work had no negative effect on food consumption or blood profiles of semi-captive elephants. Instead, the work demonstrated a positive effect on food digestibility (in part due to an increase in bacteria and fungi which degrade fibre) and appropriate caloric supply (2013: 386). Of course, this study only examined working elephants who could forage during their work and may have limited applications to elephants who are not permitted to forage (2013).

Free contact without dominance

A few facilities in the US use free contact or ‘passive control’ with sanctuary elephants and claim to use no dominance training with their herd (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 241; Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008). Some facilities begin training by placing an individual in a no-contact situation and observing the elephant’s behaviour toward staff (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 136-137), while others begin

establishing a social relationship with calves (Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008). The elephant is then allowed to choose whether or not to interact with humans, and once accustomed to staff be trained using positive reinforcement (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 137). The small number of staff in residence allows for personal connections to be made and may impact the success of this type of training (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 138). This passive method of control seems ideal, allowing for elephant management which doesn't result in pain or fear responses, and allows for basic husbandry to be performed without restraint (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 138). In addition, elephants in these sanctuaries have a large range over natural substrate and therefore need little additional foot care (Clubb and Mason, 2002). Therefore, passive control methods appear to offer more positive welfare outcomes.

The applicability of this method to larger scale elephant facilities such as zoos and Asian elephant camps is unknown. Due to concerns for handler safety, and the high turnover rate of zoo staff limiting the creation of personal attachments, it is unlikely that this method could be used in US or UK zoos (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 137-138). Protected contact developer Gail Laule (in Clubb and Mason, 2002: 138) feels that this type of elephant management is simply impossible to apply in zoo situations.

Protected contact and/or positive reinforcement training

In protected contact or 'voluntary-contact' (Kalk and Wilgenkamp, 2001: 63) situations (formerly called restricted contact), handlers train from an area physically separated from the elephant (Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008: 169). This

space can be on the other side of a barred enclosure where the animal can walk away if desired, or with the animal held in a restraint device or chute (AZA, 2001; Kalk and Wilgenkamp, 2001). 22% of European zoos were still using free contact with females at the time of Clubb and Mason's landmark study (2002), but protected contact is the new norm in American Zoological Association (henceforth AZA) accredited zoos, and the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (henceforth EAZA) is following suit, requiring protected contact in all facilities by 2030 (AZA, 2012; EAZA, 2019). The EAZA is allowing a longer period for adjustment to protected contact methods, acknowledging that these types of management require extensive staff training and changes to enclosure design. The EAZA was careful to acknowledge that free-contact systems have been successfully used for a long while, and will not specifically condemn them (EAZA, 2019). AZA (2012: np, section 1.4.9.2) guidelines do allow for 'certain, well-defined circumstances' that may require free-contact with elephants .

Training with protected contact frequently uses a target and positive reinforcement or operant conditioning methods with positive stimuli (Greco, et al., 2016b; Laule and Whittaker, 2000), and was the most common method in use in a recent survey of US zoos (Greco, et al., 2016b: 15-16). Positive reinforcement training (PRT) asks the animal to move toward an item or behaviour instead of away from a painful stimulus (Laule and Whittaker, 2000; Ramirez, 2020). These methods use a bridge, such as a whistle, followed by a reward such as chopped produce or positive physical attention and are performed in a voluntary manner, with the animal free to break off and walk away at will (Greco, et al., 2016b; Kalk and

Wilgenkamp, 2001; Laule and Whittaker, 2000). This method of training requires extensive experience or education in behaviour theory and operant conditioning (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 143). Without this education or experience, handlers may end up confusing the animal rather than training it (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Desmond and Laule, 1994; Ramirez, 2019). Considering the need for consistency in training, the AZA (2001) has recommended standardising commands.

With positive reinforcement training, there is no breaking process and no need to be socially dominant over the elephant (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Laule and Whittaker, 2000). There is no physical punishment, and therefore concerns for animal welfare are decreased (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 143). PRT can be more effective than dominance training in gaining voluntary responses during routine husbandry and medical care (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a). Animals receiving such training show better weight management but may not have the option to leave their enclosure like animals in free-contact situations (this does not apply to animals outside zoos, as elephants who received positive reinforcement training in other countries are used in free-contact situations). Elephants in protected contact still receive physical interaction from their handlers, albeit through a barrier (Kalk and Wilgenkamp, 2001; Laule and Whittaker, 2000).

PRT is often paired with negative reinforcement training, or the removal of positive stimulus. The only ideal negative reinforcement training (NRT) comes from the withdrawal of attention by the handler if the elephant is displaying unwanted behaviours (Laule and Whittaker, 2000), however, many US zoos keep an ankus

on site for emergencies. Due to public relations issues, this ankus is now referred to as a 'guide' (Greco, et al., 2016b: 4; Lehnhardt and Galloway, 2008).

PRT and NRT are not without issues. Many trainers withhold food until the animal completes the desired behaviour (Baldwin, 2017; Hargroves, 2016; Goodman, 2017). For some, this can mean starving an animal until it complies (Baldwin, 2017; Hargroves, 2016; Holt, 1992; Goodman, 2017) even though the US animal welfare act prohibits these harsh training methods (USDA, 2019).

No contact

Elephants who are considered too dangerous to keep in traditional settings may be housed in no contact facilities (AZA, 2001: np). This method is not recommended as a standard form of confinement, but rather for use in extreme cases (AZA, 2001: np). In these situations, physical breaking is not required since physical punishment or dominance cannot be used (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 139, 143). There is also no opportunity for daily health checks as recommended by the AZA (2001: np), and no opportunity for veterinary care without anaesthesia (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 139). The need to use anaesthesia for any medical procedure, including routine checks, raises welfare concerns due to its inherent risk (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 143).

This type of housing requires appropriate substrate and hygienic conditions to ensure good foot health since regular care is not available, and an in-depth knowledge of herd relationships since no intervention is available if aggression breaks out (2002: 139). No contact facilities with large range areas and

appropriate design may more successfully mimic natural conditions and may therefore be the best for elephant welfare (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Veasey, 2008). However, to ensure positive welfare outcomes, these facilities would have to ensure adequate herd size and social structure (Clubb and Mason, 2002).

Conclusion: the best method?

Due to a lack of welfare studies comparing these different methods of elephant management, it cannot be said whether one method is clearly better with regard to elephant welfare, but Clubb and Mason (2002) feel that passive restraint (free contact without dominance) holds the most promise. Individual elephant biographies are needed to best assess what method would best serve each elephant, rather than letting the limitations of each facility decide. Perhaps placing elephants that require the same type of contact or training style in facilities together is an option. Of course, this point is moot in facilities that have required contact-style methods, such as US zoos, but may be applicable in the elephant camps of Nepal, India and Thailand. More research needs to be done into successful methods of combining elephants, particularly as areas of SE Asia move towards camp and sanctuary models of elephant management.

Appendix II: Elephants in Asia

Part 1: Acts impacting elephant health and welfare in Asia

Out of concern for the threats facing Asian elephants, the US passed the 1997 ‘Asian Elephant Conservation Act’ and committed financial support through the formation of an Asian Elephant Conservation Fund (Stromayer, 2002: np). This fund was aimed at supporting Asian elephant conservation efforts throughout the 13 range states¹²¹, and funded 26 projects in its first two years (Stromayer, 2002: np). In 2018--the most recent data available at the time of this writing—the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS, 2019) awarded over 1.8 million USD to projects related to the fund. Over \$130,000 of this went to projects in Nepal and was followed by another \$78,000 in leveraged funds (USFWS, 2019).

The USFWS also supports Asian Elephant Range States Meetings (AERSM) which take place every few years, and in 2017 supported stakeholders from all 13 range states in the signing of the Jakarta Declaration of Asian Elephant Conservation (IEF.org, nd; USFWS, nd). This landmark accord recognizes Asian elephants as both an umbrella and a keystone species¹²², and states that elephants are culturally significant throughout Asia (Jakarta Accord, 2017: 2). The accord asks for international cooperation from range states in coordinating efforts to conserve elephants (Jakarta Accord, 2017: 3). Additionally, the accord

¹²¹ A range state is a country that has authority over areas in which an animal resides or through which it migrates.

¹²² An umbrella species is one whose conservation also conserves other animals sharing the same habitat (falling under the same umbrella). A keystone species is one which is critical to the continued survival of other living things in sharing the same ecosystem. The loss of a keystone species has the potential to cause the collapse of the entire ecosystem in that area (National Geographic, 2019: np).

recognizes the need for governments, NGOs and INGOS to work together (2017: 3). The accord lists a number of priority actions including the maintenance of large, connected landscapes in protected areas. The accord also seeks to address the causes of human-elephant conflict (HEC) and mitigate them, enable participatory development and conservation, register elephants, enforce legislation of animal and animal part trade, support international bodies such as CITES and INTERPOL, ensure captive elephant welfare, develop action plans for any range nations that are in need, and create a range-nation level plan (Jakarta Accord, 2017: 3-4). These range-wide action plans and DNA registration would also help with reporting CITES violations; range states have complained about a lack of timely reporting and the failure of inter-agency and inter-state cooperation (AERSM, 2017: 43).

During the 2017 meeting, range states discussed the desire to develop captive breeding programs so that elephants do not have to be removed from the wild (AERSM, 2017: 49,53). While this might positively impact wild populations, it does bring up further concerns surrounding plans to continue using captive elephants. Only one political body, peninsular Malaysia, specified that they had no plans to increase numbers of captive elephants (AERSM, 2017: 53).

Of the range states, only about half currently have captive elephant management and staff training programs in place (AERSM, 2017: 51-52). Developing guidelines for management followed by the institution of appropriate training programs for elephant staff is key to improving welfare of both mahouts and elephants in captive

situations (AERSM, 2017: 7,49; Desai, 2008: 70-72; Varma and Prasad, 2008: 62-63).

Registration as the basis for all welfare

Richard Lair (2002: np), US Food and Agriculture Organization consultant and author of much elephant history, explains that the key to captive elephant management lies in national or international registration. Any hope of improvement for elephant welfare, health or quality of life must begin with registration (2002: np). Without it, laws regarding care and keeping cannot be enforced, trade across borders will continue, and disease tracking is impossible (2002: np). Registration systems do exist in India and Myanmar, but according to Lair (2002: np) these systems are not user-friendly nor are they legally enforced. Getting mahouts and owners to comply with a registration system is a daunting task, and one that—despite Lair's (2002: np) prediction that it would come to pass by 2005—is still lacking in most range states.

In 2006, range states again acknowledged their willingness to enforce captive elephant monitoring, microchipping and enforcement of cross-border movement regulations (AERSM, 2017: 6,23; Desai, 2008: 69). Yet, years later, these elephants are still passing across CITES member borders without microchips, papers, or interference from governments (AERSM, 2017: 6; Menon and Tiwari, 2019: 24). Because microchips can be tampered with, all AERS delegates agreed that DNA tracking tests should instead be used, and Thailand has recently begun registering individuals in this way (AERSM, 2017; Menon and Tawari, 2019). New methods of testing DNA include the ability to test ivory as well as blood and skin,

allowing for better tracking of trade in elephant body parts (AERSM, 2017: 43). NGOs have offered to finance the development of DNA testing and delegates agreed that a range-wide elephant action plan is needed on top of national conservation plans (AERSM, 2017: 6,38). Nepal is credited as one of the few countries with a national elephant conservation plan, but it should be noted that this plan does not apply to captive elephants (AERSM, 2017: 36; Tewari, 2006).

Part 2: India

With over 3500 captive Gajah (Asian elephants), India is home to the largest captive population in the world, and is home to nearly 60% of the global wild population (Elephant Task Force, 2010; Menon and Tawari, 2019; Sarma, et al., 2012). Many of Nepal's elephants and drivers originated in India, making a discussion of its history and husbandry practices key.

In 1992, the government of India launched Project Elephant with the goal of protecting wild elephants and their habitats, but they also hoped to address issues surrounding captive elephant welfare (GOI/MOEF, nd). Wild elephant populations, once spread across the sub-continent, now occur only in four areas of India (GOI/MOEF, nd). These populations have been fragmented, and Project Elephant aims to protect and restore habitats and wildlife corridors for elephants (GOI/MOEF, nd). Captive populations should be served through the creation of a welfare infrastructure, which will include provisions for public education, research facilities, veterinary care and mahout and management staff training (GOI/MOEF,nd). While a study was concluded in 2003 and an official report

submitted the following year, no further action was taken by the Indian government for years. In a document dated August 1, 2008, the Project Elephant Director requested that the government follow up on its plans, citing their committee recommendations to create specific rules and guidelines for managing elephants, improve training facilities for mahouts and elephants, improve working conditions and salary of mahouts, improve veterinary care for elephants, and enforce cruelty and registration laws (Prasad, 2008). This document includes a copy of the 'guidelines for care and management of captive elephants' (2008: np). In short, the guidelines require a current survey of captive elephants, microchipping and registration, transport rules, larger stable sizes of 9mx6m for adults (and 7m x 3.5m for sub-adults), requirements for stable cleanliness, veterinary care including disease reporting, and necropsies, and the development of a definition for cruelty to elephants (Prasad, 2008: np).

[Husbandry recommendations in India](#)

A large-scale, year-long study was undertaken by Compassion International (CUPA), the Asian Nature Conservation Foundation (ANCF) and the World Society of the Protection of Animals (WSPA) in 2003. This survey examined the management and welfare conditions of not only captive elephants but also their mahouts, and the results presented at a workshop for review by twenty-two international 'field experts' to create a set of measurable health parameters (Varma and Prasad, 2008).

One benefit of this study and its subsequent workshops was the formation of definitions developed to provide a common language of elephant care and a list of recommendations for future discussions (Desai, 2008; Varma, 2008; Varma and Prasad, 2008). Varma (2008: 18) suggests that any assessment of captive elephant welfare must first consider how close to the 'species-specific environment' a man-made habitat can be, and how much one can limit 'alien' conditions for these animals (Varma, et al., 2008: 18). The parameters chosen by Varma, et al. (2008) for the measurement of health and welfare included an evaluation of the sizes of space for sleeping, exercising and resting; as well as the elephant and mahouts' work requirements, access to health care, the presence of veterinary records and recordkeeping, feeding, crop raiding patterns and management issues.

Following these workshops, Varma and Prasad (2008: 55) developed a set of recommendations for captive elephant and handler health and welfare. Some examples of these recommendations include restrictions on traveling or beggar elephants walking distances, and the limitation of long-distance walking to cooler time periods. These traveling elephants must be regularly fed, offered water and given shaded breaks (2008: 55-62). All captive elephants should be registered, and both routine and emergent veterinary care undertaken by wildlife veterinarians experienced in elephant care (2008: 55-62). Additionally, if ill elephants must be quarantined, it must be within 'communication' (visual, olfactory or auditory) of the herd (2008: 60).

These recommendations also included guidelines for mahouts, such as the suggestion that they be exposed to elephants at a young age, around 12 or 13 (Varma and Prasad, 2008: 62). One mahout must be employed for each calf, but once their calves reach 6 feet tall, a second mahout must be obtained (2008: 62). These mahouts should be trained in basic skills which should include 'elephant care, family and social skills, anger management, personal development, alcoholism, insurance', etc. (2008: 62).

Using Elephants

During the 2008 workshops Ajay Desai (2008: 67), wildlife biologist, IUCN/SSC Asian Elephant Specialist Group member, and steering committee member for the Indian government's Project Elephant recommended that management staff have a clear understanding of the rationale behind keeping captive elephants. He felt that management staff should understand the reasons elephants deserve humane treatment. Desai (2008: 71-72) suggests that management quality be standardized via training, and well-paid mahout staff hired in the expectation of long-term employment to reduce stress on elephants (2008: 71-72).

Desai further recommends that individuals and organizations consider whether their desire to own elephants is justifiable and whether these animals are going to be used for short or long-term activities (2008: 60-70). Justification considerations should include whether the elephants are a *necessary* part of the experience, for example obtained for a religious festival as opposed to a zoo or circus event (2008: 67). Consideration should be made whether animals are needed in eco-

tourism activities or conservation management (2008: 67). If the use of elephants is considered justifiable, organizations must then ask themselves if the use of animals is simply 'traditional', in which case changing social perspectives on animal use should be critically assessed (2008: 68).

Organizations should further assess if the need for elephants is temporary, and if so explore options such as reallocation of elephants already in the area. If the use of elephants is still considered justifiable, a plan should be created for the management of these animals humanely and realistically (Desai, 2008: 68). These elephants should not be used in dangerous or stressful environments and should not be kept under strict control or forced to remain stationary for extended periods of time (Desai, 2008: 71). Individual elephants brought into a locale should be legally obtained from areas which are noted to have a surplus of animals (2008: 70). In addition, any elephants added to a locale should have monitoring and enforcement bodies in place to ensure care and management standards are met, and considerations should be paid to how many elephants already serve in those area (2008: 70). Lastly, there needs to be a plan in place for the support of these new elephants for the rest of their natural lives (2008: 68).

[The current situation in India](#)

The Elephant Task Force (ETF) met in 2010 to report on the progress of Project Elephant (2010). The ETF found that India now faces huge gaps in their wildlife divisions, with up to 50% vacancies in oversight positions (ETF, 2010: 82). These gaps, coupled with a generally young and inexperienced forest staff, allow for poaching and illegal trade to continue unchecked (ETF, 2010: 82). The ETF would

like to see commercial captivity of elephants phased out but acknowledges that the current population of captive individuals requires better care (ETF, 2010: 94).

Like many of the other countries whose welfare policies are discussed in this thesis, the Indian government has been working with researchers to develop a set of guidelines for better care of captive elephants for at least thirty years (Desai, 2008; GOI/MOFE: nd; Vanitha, et al., 2010; Varma and Prasad, 2008). A lack of implementation of these suggestions and failed enforcement of current legislation means that like Nepal and Thailand, India's elephants find themselves stuck in the same cycle of inadequate care that they have faced for decades.

Elephants in Indian stables lacked proper 'preventive or curative treatment' (Sarma, et al., 2003: ii) by a knowledgeable vet for years, and suffered from such maladies as fungal infections, external parasites, harness wounds, farra gal¹²³, colonic impactions, and overgrown tusks and nails (Harris, et al., 2008; Menon and Tawari, 2019). 84% were reported to have worms, and some showed wounds from run-ins with wild rhino or improperly cleaned injection sites (Sarma, et al., 2003: 10). Reasons for the lack of medical care include the lack of a reliable four-wheel drive vehicle to access remote camps, a lack of equipment for routine field tests, and the lack of a tranquilizer gun (Sarma, et al., 2003: 11).¹²⁴

¹²³ 123 Farra gal is an abscess typically caused by ill-fitting harnesses, especially when worn in heat and humidity. A small wound becomes a painful abscess and may be fatal (Sarma, et al., 2003),

¹²⁴ India is facing an ongoing crisis with wild elephant populations as well, having lost over 260 individuals since the 1980s to collisions with trains (AERSM, 2017; Menon and Tawari, 2019). With new high speed rails being built, these fatalities are likely to increase (AERSM, 2017), putting more pressure on wild populations.

In 2008, Varma assessed 1200 elephants in various captive situations including zoos, private-ownership, temples, circuses and street beggars using a pre-designed datasheet with between 50 and 83 parameters, with each parameter rated on a 0-10 scale. Observations and interview methods of data collection were used to build 'passports' of 32 data points for each elephant (Varma, 2008: 8). Travelling elephants—also called beggar elephants by Nepalese—scored an average of 2.4, whereas forest camp elephants averaged 7.9 (Varma, 2008: 7). Privately-held elephants generally received a moderate score, whether viewed individually or as a group (Varma, 2008: 11).

According to Varma (2008: 12), there was no demonstrable difference found between the welfare of mahouts in forest camps, private facilities or zoos. Beggar- elephant handlers and temple mahouts scored much lower on the welfare scale (Varma, 2008: 12). Mahout health was rarely checked, and poor mahout health may have negative impacts on elephant welfare (Miller et al., 2015: 2; Varma, 2008; also Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a; GoN/CNPMP, 2015).

Elephant work in India

Studies by Vanitha, et al. (2010: 118) found that privately owned elephants used for rituals and begging spent around 8% of their time in ritual activities, but spent an average of 5.5 hours begging, sometimes walking 30-40km a day in unsuitably hot conditions. In comparison, temple elephants only received less than an hour a day of exercise, and spent around 20% of their day working on ritual activities while standing in one place, and 65% of their time resting and feeding in indoor

enclosures (2010: 119). Temple elephants spent around 70% of their time on chains, and the ankush (ankus) was used between around 90% of the time in both temple and private management systems (Vanitha, 2010: 120).

Forestry elephants, who perform safari rides twice daily for around two hours each time, spent a good deal of their time (55.5%) free to forage in natural surroundings, and about 24% of their time resting and stall-feeding (Vanitha, et al., 2010: 120). Overall, these elephants spent nearly 13 hours a day eating, wandering, and resting—albeit on a hobbles or long chains (2010: 119). Most forestry bull elephants were tethered at night to protect them from the potential of being taken by poachers (2010: 117). These elephants worked for humans a total of 10% of their time, much less than institutionally- or privately-owned individuals (Vanitha, et al., 2010). Forest department mahouts do not use ankush at all, relying only on a stick for bulls in musth (2010: 119). Vanitha, et al. (2010: 121) recommend restrictions on working times, a focus on welfare improving activities such as exercise, and offered regular bathing opportunities. They further call upon Hindu temple authorities and governmental agencies to legislate and enforce better conditions for working elephants (2010: 121).

Overall, the temple and privately-owned elephants fared much worse in a comparison of welfare, due to the lack of shade, substrate (such as hot roads or metal surfaces), natural opportunities for movement, and access to natural food sources and eating behaviours (Vanitha, et al., 2010: 120-121). Due to an excess of forestry elephants, Vanitha, et al. (2010: 121) recommend further training for

young elephants so that they may be used in safari rides, or a transfer of young animals to anti-poaching camps.

Part 3: Elephant care and welfare in Thailand

Thailand is the primary country of focus for researchers interested in welfare and management issues of elephants due to its large number of captive elephants.

Thailand is home to approximately 3,700 captive individuals, 95% of whom are privately-owned (AERSM, 2017; CEWR/UWN, nd; Tipprasert, 2002). Like Nepal, the number of wild elephants in Thailand is roughly equal to that of captive populations (AERSM, 2017; Phangkum, et al., 2005; CEWR/UCM, nd). Captive elephants in Thailand, like those in Nepal, are considered private property and can be sold or traded legally to others within each country (Schliesinger, 2010).

History

Thai elephants were first protected in 1921 with the drafting of the Wild Elephant Protection Act, outlawing killing or injuring wild individuals (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a: 2). While this act did not attempt to legislate captive animals, it did result in the need for captive breeding programs throughout the country (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a: 2). Elephants in Thailand are also covered by the Draught Animal Act of 1939, which also lists animals such as cattle and donkeys (Phangkum, et al., 2005: 2). According to Bansiddhi, et al. (2020a: 2), elephants in Thailand are now typically classified into two subgroups: captive and wild. Other researchers subgroup individuals as timber elephants, camp elephants, travelling or temple elephants (Varma, 2008; Vanitha, et al., 2010).

Prior to the late 1980s, most Thai logging elephants belonged to the forestry office, a governmental agency (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 8). A Thai logging ban in 1989 resulted in thousands of elephants and their drivers—around 70% of them—suddenly out of work (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009; Tipprasert, 2002). Because elephant food is costly, elephant welfare can be linked to their position as income-producing private property, and out of work timber elephants became a burden instead of an income source (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 8). Some human-elephant pairs found their way to cities, where they faced illness from a lack of food and water, or injury from run-ins with traffic (Tipprasert, 2002: np). In addition, elephants posed a hazard to human city dwellers (Tipprasert, 2002: np). Around 100 of these wandering elephants can still be found throughout Thailand, another 1200-1400 pairs are simply considered ‘unemployed’, and another thousand work at one of Thailand’s 37 elephant camps (Tipprasert, 2002: np). The majority of Thai elephant camps are located in the northern part of the country, with 7 major camps in the district of Chiang Mai (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 3). Elephant groups in these camps are not made up matriarchal herds as they would be in the wild, but rather of a hodge-podge of unrelated animals (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 6).

In 1991, the Thai government’s Forest Industry Organization (FIO) built an Elephant Conservation Centre in order to solve, in part, the problem of unemployed elephants and mahouts (Laohachaiboon, 2010: 77-78). The Thai Elephant Conservation Centre (henceforth TECC) is the only government-owned

camp in the country and houses 48 government-owned elephants and around 110 trained and 'certified' mahouts (FOI, 2002 in Laohachaiboon, 2010; Tipprasert, 2002). Originally focused on tourism activities which included elephant riding and homestay programs, the facility has now expanded to include an elephant orchestra, elephant painting, health clinic and an artificial insemination program (Laohachaiboon, 2010; Tipprasert, 2002). One benefit of this facility, and others in the Chiang Mai area, is its location within forested areas, allowing captive elephants access to browse which has not been chemically treated (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 6).

These elephant camps became the focus of the first nationwide study of ecotourism in the country (Tipprasert, 2002: np). This study recommended a change to the classification of 'domesticated' (see chapter one, this thesis) elephants from 'transport animal' to an animal 'reflecting the unique identity of Thailand' (Tipprasert, 2002: np). Additionally, Tipprasert (2002: np) called for the establishment of permanent jobs for mahouts and elephants in the national parks service, the establishment of quality standards for both elephants and mahouts through training schools, the implementation of an identification card system, fixed income and working hours for mahouts, governmental support of disabled or elderly elephants, protection for the traditional lifestyles of mahouts and an institution dedicated to elephant medical care and research.

In 2002, the TECC affiliated themselves with the National Elephant Institute (henceforth NEI) in what some described as an attempt to escape the corruption

and growing debt of the FIO (Laohachaiboon, 2010: 83). This 'new' organization was tasked with developing elephant conservation within the country while maintaining local traditions and indigenous wisdom (Laohachaiboon, 2010: 83). The Department of Livestock instituted new standards for elephants camps throughout the country (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020b: 3) which included shelter and health regulations as well as tourist safety protections. The NEI spearheaded a drive to instill the elephant as Thailand's national symbol and ensure that captive elephants received humane care through the drafting of The Protection and Conservation of Elephants as the National Symbolic Animal Act (Laohachaiboon, 2010: 84). The drive to pass this bill has stalled due to certain inclusions in the document draft which would eliminate or undermine the revenue and authority of numerous elephant owners in Thailand (Laohachaiboon, 2010: 85). Further complicating attempts to codify training methods were debates over the Phajaan¹²⁵ (breaking) ritual, much the same debates still taking place in Nepal (Interviews, 2019; Laohachaiboon, 2010; Cohen, 2015). This ritual, called 'epidemic elephant trauma' by Rizzolo and Bradshaw (2018) includes the separation of young elephants from their mothers and often includes beatings, food deprivation and other harsh treatment (Cohen, 2015; Laohachaiboon, 2010; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018; Gwala interview, 2020).¹²⁶ While many experienced mahouts were baffled by complaints against what they see as an ancient and necessary tradition, westerners have moved to eliminate the practice (Cohen, 2015; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). Elephant cruelty throughout tourist destinations is one

125 Sometimes spelled Phachan, paah jaan, or pajan

126 See chapter four, this thesis

reason that several large travel organizations, such as Trip Advisor and the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), have decided to cease supporting travel to any venue where free-contact with elephants is permitted (ABTA.com, 2020; Tripadvisor.com, 2020). The ABTA also restrict activities where captive breeding occurs, or where CITES listed species are exhibited (ABTA.com, 2020). These boycotts are potentially missing an even larger issue—that what organization may think is an ‘ethical sanctuary’, may in fact be one that simply has not been investigated properly.

2002’s new guidelines for elephant camps were soon rejected, as owners realized the increase in costs associated with providing higher standards (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019). Instead of higher standards bringing in money which could then be applied to better elephant care, the owners realized that the immediate costs of implementing these standards were high, and instead cut corners in elephant care (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 13). Some informants in a 2008 study explained that ‘good camps take care of their elephants’, and it should be left at that (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 13). Enacting restrictions simply forces the smaller camps out of business, or requires elephant owners to find ways to make even more money with their animals—leading to a decrease in welfare (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 13).

Elephants in these camps suffered from a lack of mahout training, the employment of a large number of already marginalized people in a profession lacking social standing, and high rates of turnover as mahouts look for better income

(Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2019). This turnover might have been due to the fact that mahouts no longer share long histories or have had time to develop bonds with individual elephants, making it easier to leave as new opportunities arise (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009, 2019). A lack of experience with elephants may result in signs of illness or injury being missed, and the need to use harsher methods to control them (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009). Elephants at Thai facilities showed wounds from both howdah wear and injuries from ankus use (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 7-8).

The Thai National Elephant Institute again fell under scrutiny when the costs associated with its mahout training school massively outpaced those at other facilities, using funds that allegedly could have been distributed more equitably among training schools (Laohachaiboon, 2010: 89). The NEI has been successful in its efforts to use artificial insemination to increase captive elephant numbers, and has introduced a reintroduction program to return elephants to the wild in the hope that more genetic diversity will help increase numbers of wild elephant (Laohachaiboon, 2010: 81). This reintroduction program has resulted in the released elephants behaving in much the same way as wild elephants, wary of human contact (Thitaram, et al., 2018: 176). The released elephants did return often to settlements for crop-raiding, creating issues with HEC and the need to pay compensation to crop owners (2018: 176). These elephants also face issues with their legal status—as it is unknown whether they are covered under the same protections as other wild elephants (2018: 176).

Thailand began to take elephant welfare more seriously by launching the *Thai Elephant New World Project*, a multi-sited program slated to build elephant conservation centres throughout Thailand (Laohachaiboon, 2010; Tipprasert, 2002). Each centre would attempt to provide a naturalistic environment and range for captive individuals, while providing tourism-centric activities and money-making opportunities (Tipprasert, 2002). These facilities would include tourism information centres, art and culture centres, museums, research centres, elephant health care areas and mahout training facilities (Tipprasert, 2002: np). Within each centre would be a 'reserved zone' of original forestry and water resources, with additional cultivation of elephant-friendly food sources (2002: np). This area would serve as a feeding area for elephants and a tourist trekking zone (2002: np). Of great import for the implementation of this plan was the need to improve and then maintain the quality of reservoir water (2002: np). Furthermore, a commitment to the prevention of elephant trespass into neighbouring privately-owned lands was necessary, as was a commitment to the safety of villagers and tourists while bulls are in musth (2002: np).

The suitability (and pricing) of each of Thailand's elephant camps varies by location. Some of these camps have their own veterinarian on staff, while others rely on a local vet who may not be an elephant specialist (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020: 15). While the camps in the Chiang Mai area pay better, they are still subject to fluctuations in numbers of tourists (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 10-11). Tourism directly impacts camp elephants, and out of work individuals return to urban areas

during the lower tourist season in search of food and income (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 10).

The Current Situation

In 2014, Thailand passed the rather vague Cruelty Prevention and Welfare of Animals Act which calls for the formation of an animal welfare and cruelty prevention committee, and states that cruelty to animals cannot take place 'without justification' (Department of Livestock Development/Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, 2014: 12). Cruelty charges may carry a two-year prison term and fines (2014: 16). This act allows for outside groups to file as animal welfare organizations and initiate campaigns for welfare (2014: 8), and outlaws abandonment of animals. The act purposely excludes any killing of animals for food or religious reasons, allows for 'ear, the tail, fur, horn or tusk' cutting and 'local traditional animal' fighting (2014: 13). This act does require that animals used for human entertainment must be provided with proper welfare, but does not clarify what that welfare entails (2014: 14). Thailand has instituted a National Master Plan for the Conservation of Elephants 2018-2037 (Bansiddhi, 2020a: 11). This plan addresses the need to reduce poaching and trade in elephant parts, connect populations and landscapes, increase knowledge of populations and habitats, legislate and enforce policies, and change negative perceptions of elephant conservation in Thailand (Bansiddhi, 2020a: 11). While this new legislation is a step in the right direction for animal welfare, it leaves a great deal of room for interpretation.

In 2017 a group of camp owners formed the Chiang Mai Elephant Alliance (then renamed it the Thai Elephant Alliance Association the next year), and this group includes representatives from 15 camps (Bansiddhi et al., 2020a; Thai Elephant Alliance, nd). This alliance seeks to promote elephant tourism through a positive lens, educate others on elephant care, improve messaging about elephant tourism and promote cooperation surrounding elephant tourism issues (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a: 10).

[Pandemics and their effect on elephant welfare](#)

Like the logging ban of 1989, the 2002 SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak changed captive elephant status in Thailand from income-producer to burden (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 10). As tourism plummeted, owners sold off their elephants at discounted prices (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 10). The same thing happened in 2019, as COVID-19 circled the globe and tourism disappeared (see chapter seven, this thesis). Even before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, news outlets began posting articles about starving elephants abandoned on the streets (Kindred, 2020: np). Due to the relatively high cost of feeding captive elephants—around 40 USD daily, or three times the minimum Thai wage—these individuals faced starvation as tourism disappeared in Thailand (Paddock and Suhartono, 2020: np). As tourism at elephant parks faded to 10% of normal, many owners simply set the animals free, though some were concerned that elephants wouldn't know how to find food on their own (Paddock and Suhartono, 2020: np). Over one hundred of these camp elephants were marched 150 km to forested natural areas near the Mae Chaem district, where they have

been traditionally kept by members of the Karen community (Sivasomboon and Peck, 2020: np).

The Thai Elephant Alliance Organization website is actively seeking donations to support elephants through COVID (Thai Elephant Alliance, nd). Some camps are unable to pay mahouts or feed elephants, and drought is further affecting the availability of other food sources (TEAO, nd) According to TEAO, elephants are spending longer times tied in one place as mahouts seek out work, or are being taken to mahout's home villages where foraging may not be available (TEAO, nd). The alliance hopes to support camp members through food donations, edible salts, and first aid kits (TEAO, nd).

ACES

Another organization is now attempting to change elephant conditions in Thailand. Asian Captive Elephant Standards (ACES) is the brainchild of sustainable tourism developer Nicolas Dubrocard, developing camp guidelines for Thai camps starting in 2019 (ACES, nd; Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a). These guidelines include registering elephants, microchipping, staff training and elephant welfare plans—all of which are necessary for elephant wellbeing according to the welfare studies listed above (AERSM, 2017; Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a; Jakarta Accord, 2017; Lair, 2002; Varma, 2008; Varma and Prasad, 2008, etc). However, the ACES website claims that bull hook use, riding, and chaining are desirable tools in the tourism and elephant trade (ACES, nd: np), so western welfare activists or those wishing to participate in ethical tourism may not agree that an ACES certification is a guarantee of

appropriate treatment. ACES does require that camps do follow the five freedoms guidelines (ACES, nd: np).

The Thai elephant manual and other guidelines

One publication of note in Thailand is the *Elephant Care Manual for Mahouts and Camp Managers* (Phangkum, et al., 2005), aimed at mahouts in the hopes of ensuring faster diagnosis of issues and better elephant care. This document lists normal parameters for elephant health and husbandry, appropriate interaction guidelines, and anatomical descriptions to aid with assessment (Phangkum, et al., 2005). The guidelines for food and care found in this manual served as a comparison to the conditions found at stables in Nepal, where no such guide exists (Vidanta, interviews, 2019; Tewari, 2016). Many suggestions from the guide are included in the discussion of health and welfare in appendix III, chapters five and ten.

According to this manual, elephants are required to have registration and ownership papers for every elephant over the age of 8, and mahouts and/or owners must keep these paper with the elephant at all times, or risk the elephant being confiscated (Phangkum, et al., 2005: 3). Elephants must also be microchipped, and microchipping is offered throughout Thailand free-of-charge (Phangkum, et al., 2005: 5). However, regulations on microchipping, registration and disease reporting are rarely enforced (see AERSM, 2017).

The manual also includes a discussion of control methods (see appendix I). Phangkum et al. (2005: 25) suggest using an ankus, but in a way that doesn't injure the elephant. The ankus should be used to apply pressure, not to cause pain. Striking the elephant with the ankus is never acceptable, and it should never be used around the ear canal to prevent damaging the sensitive area within . However, the manual does allow for striking the elephant with the shaft around its eyes or eyebrows only 'in the most extreme emergencies' (Phangkum et al., 2005: 26). Ankus use has become a topic of great debate among researchers and welfare advocates alike (see appendix I, chapter five).

In a discussion about dominance training Bansiddhi et al (2020a: 3), claim that anecdotal and emotional evidence is the impetus for organizations making 'unfounded claims of universal brutality' towards elephants in Thai camps. Safely controlling captive elephants is necessary to prevent mahout or tourist injury, and Bansiddhi et al. (2020a: 4-5), argue that the bull hook is a necessary tool to ensure safety. While they acknowledge the existence of other options—such as positive reinforcement techniques—they point out that these methods must be firmly established before more traditional tools can be left behind (2020a: 6). They do recommend mahout training on methods of using the ankus appropriately (2020a: 6). Outlawing the ankus, according to Bansiddhi, et al. (2020a: 6-7), may result in more positive training techniques being used in public, but behind the scenes treatment becoming harsher. The authors acknowledge that Thai mahouts use painful weapons, such as nails and knives, and that their prevalence is unknown (2020a: 4).

Reviews of Thai elephant camps

A 2018 camp welfare study by Bansiddhi, et al. (2018: 18), found that the recommendations made in the elephant care manual are being completely ignored, and elephant welfare is still suffering. 67% of these camps reported injuries due to equipment, typically ankus, but also nails and slingshots. Chain length recommendations in the above manual are rarely used due to space restraints, and chains less than 1/3 the recommended length were the norm. 82% of captive elephants in the study spent at least portions of the day chained, but some camps did allow elephants to roam under the care of a mahout during the day. Despite evidence of the dangers of hard substrate, concrete flooring was still in use at 52% of the camps (Bansiddhi, et al., 2018: 13).

Food requirements were not being met, with amounts of roughage and variety significantly lower than needed (Bansiddhi, et al., 2018: 21). 61% of the elephants in the study had no access to natural browsing areas. Water was not provided during the evenings at 82% of the surveyed camps, as the main sources of water at these facilities came from nearby rivers or streams rather than being stored onsite or piped in. 39% of the study elephants had no access to appropriate veterinary care. Without the enforcement of legislation or guidelines for elephant care, welfare at many of these camps has suffered (Bansiddhi, et al., 2018: 24).

Bansiddhi, et al. (2020a) used the five freedoms method in another recent study to re-evaluate camps. Nutritional intake was hard to quantify due to a lack of measurement by mahouts and the feeding of elephants by tourists, but elephants

were supplied with vitamin supplements, and around a third were now provided with foraging opportunities (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a: 7). Most of the elephants were described as overweight, in contrast to prior studies by these authors (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a: 7; Norkaew, et al., 2018). This may be due in part to the fact that elephant camps have chosen to refocus their operations from tourist rides to more 'elephant friendly' activities such as walks with elephants (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020b). The only approved tourist interaction at some facilities is the feeding of high-sugar treats like bananas, and without the opportunity for safaris and baths, some individuals are gaining weight (2020a: 4,7). Both male and female elephants were scored higher in overall body condition to those in western zoos, but over a third of the females were declared overweight (Norkaew, et al., 2018: 9).

88% of the elephants surveyed had adequate shelter, and most were provided dirt substrates at night, but only a few were provided water (2020a: 8). Additionally, tourists are not limited in number, and stressors such as noise may negatively impact welfare (2020a: 8). Noise as a stressor has been documented in zoo elephants (Jakob-Hoff, et al., 2019: 9,12). Elephants in the earlier Bansiddhi et al. (2018) study were chained at night and unable to touch conspecifics, but newer camps reportedly take elephant mental health into account, allowing more interaction with other individuals (Bansiddhi et al., 2020a). Changes to camp management and veterinary care are ongoing. As of 2020, there are six elephant hospitals in Thailand, all of which offer veterinary care at no charge (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020b). Only 18% of the camps surveyed had a full-time vet, but each camp

does screen for TB yearly and provide a visiting vet twice a year as well as access to mobile vet clinics (Bansiddhi, et al.,2020a: 8).

While Thai elephant camps are now—allegedly—inspected and certified every two years, there is no enforcement of standards nor any real benefit to those camps that pass (Bansiddhi, et al., 2020b). Bansiddhi, et al. (2020a: 3) found that a lack of oversight and failed enforcement of legislation has resulted in Thai elephant owners continuing to behave as they always have, and leaves some elephants suffering with poor health and negative welfare.

Mental Health

Population-level studies of elephants in Thai facilities showed signs of psychological issues or complex post-traumatic stress disorder in up to 74% of elephants (Carnahan, 2019: 4; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018: 119). These issues include trauma stemming from earlier separation from familial groups, breaking ceremonies, violent treatment by caregivers, prolonged chaining and limited nutrition (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018: 119-120). These traumas may be expressed through aggression, avoidance, anxiety, stereotypies (i.e. repetitive behaviours) or self-injuring behaviour (Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018: 293).

Elephants moved to a free-ranging facility have shown signs of improvement since relocation (Carnahan, 2019: 4), possibly due to the fact that they managed with a style which is individually designed (2019: 21,24). This individualization may be key to the improvement in PTSD symptoms, as different individuals respond to

different methods (2019: 22). Another key ingredient to healing psychological wounds is the presence of a committed and supportive mahout (2019: 22). Being a mahout is a dangerous job, and if they are worrying about their income, family and livelihood, they may be less invested in elephant care and conservation efforts (2019: 15). Providing support and safety for mahouts is therefore key to elephant welfare (2019: 22-23).

Conclusions

A 2019 survey found that every stakeholder interviewed felt that elephants in Thailand would be worse off without tourism activities (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019: 55). Following the logging ban, the lives of elephants and mahouts suffered, but the timing happened to coincide with a sharp rise in tourism (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019: 55). This rise allowed for the quick transition of unemployed lumber elephants into tourist attractions (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019: 55). Because they are seen as livestock, the ability of elephants to serve as money-makers is directly tied to their care (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019: 56). Elephants making money may also raise the standards of care offered by their mahout, and prevent the mahout from seeking employment elsewhere—again benefitting the welfare of the elephant (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019: 57). Having elephants located in central camps provides easier access to veterinary care, and thus having centralized tourist areas may benefit elephants overall (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2019: 57).

Tourism activities appear to be key to the survival of captive elephants in Thailand, and interactions with tourists may be the price elephants pay to receive food and

shelter (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009 and 2019). Promoting tourism as the answer to financially supporting elephants is a paradox. More tourists mean more work and more income, leading to more stability, but also means less time spent drinking, resting or eating (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 6). Not having to move to urban areas during slow seasons may increase welfare, but spending less time in the expression of natural behaviours may negatively impact welfare (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 6). A lack of understandable or enforced legislation prevents organizations who might want to improve elephant welfare from doing so, cutting off a potentially ripe source of income or educational opportunities (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009: 16).

The question remains whether forced reproduction and continued commodification of this endangered species is necessary or appropriate. If countries agree that this generation of captive elephants is the last, what happens to those economies now reliant on elephant-based tourism?

Appendix III: Expanding upon elephant health and welfare concerns

The health and welfare discussion in chapter five was brief, due to space restrictions. This appendix offers further information regarding what is needed for healthy elephants and positive welfare. In addition, it discusses available welfare measurement tools.

Key health and welfare impactors

Nutrition: Rice is not elephant food

One major issue creating tension between elephant owners in Nepal and those concerned with captive elephant welfare is that of nutrition. The diet supplied to captive elephants in Nepal is not what elephants consume in the wild or what they are provided in captivity in other countries (see Clubb and Mason, 2002; Hatt and Clauss, 2006; Harris, PC, 2020; health and welfare chapter, this thesis). In fact, the precise nutritional and digestive requirements of elephants are still largely unknown, and dietary analyses are often based on what we know of equine needs (Edwards, et al., 2019; Koirala, et al., 2019).

One study by Koirala et al. (2019: 5) found that during the dry season, wild elephants consumed a higher percentage of food to body weight. Crude protein intake varied greatly across the seasons, with the highest intake in the monsoon

season. In order to balance protein levels during times where plant variety is limited, elephants compensated by eating greater amounts of lower-quality food. Elephants also modified their consumption of woody plants seasonally, perhaps due to the need to balance macronutrients and minerals (Koirala, et al., 2016: 7). The availability of different plant species did not seem to influence elephant feeding choices, which may indicate that there are other undiscovered nutritional requirements at work (Koirala, et al., 2019: 7). This need for dietary variety and agency to choose appropriate plants during each season may be partially to blame for health and welfare issues in captive populations. Provisioned foods need to be seasonally cycled to create proper balances of fibre, micronutrients and protein (Hatt and Clauss, 2006; Koirala, et al., 2019)

In contrast to wild individuals, captive or privately-owned Nepalese elephant diets are made up of 70% human-provided (provisioned) items. These elephants have little opportunity to graze, especially during tourist season (Brown, Rao, Sama, Vachan, mahout group interviews and observations, 2017, 2019; Szydlowski, 2017). This is important when weighing the nutritional needs of these individuals, who are consistently fed unhusked rice as their main staple (Barnes, Brown, Rao, Sama, Vachan interviews, 2019; personal observations, 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019). According to interlocutors, rice is considered by owners and mahouts in Nepal to be a 'high nutritional value' food (Raja, Rao, Saroj, Vidanta and Vachan interviews, 2019). Other interlocutors stated that it was used to make elephants feel full and was easy to store for long periods of time (Barnes, Brown, Saudala, Vachan interviews, 2019). This use of rice as a staple may be an example of a social fact

taking hold—as interlocutors in this study often quoted ‘traditional’ methods of feeding without the ability to explain how they came to be, or whether they successfully fulfil the basic dietary requirements of elephants (Rao, Taraswin interviews, 2019). Rice is used in smaller amounts in countries such as Sumatra and Thailand only as a supplement to standard diets (Stremme, et al., 2007). The Thai care manual suggests that mahouts offer rice only to underweight elephants as a high-carbohydrate food (Phangkum, et al., 2005: 22-23), but no more than 5kg should be given at one time to prevent digestion issues (2005: 23).

Housing

Space is a concern globally, as most minimum elephant enclosure guidelines are 60-100 times smaller than the smallest reported wild range (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Harris, et al., 2008: 41). The size of these enclosures not only affects the numbers of elephant each facility can hold but decreases freedom of movement and choice in feeding and social activity, quality of locomotion, and mental welfare (Clubb 2002; Vanitha, et al., 2011; Harris et al., 2008: 41; Poole and Granli, 2008; Varma and Prasad, 2008; Veasey, 2006). To decrease some of the negative impacts of captivity, Varma and Prasad (2008: 55) recommend enclosures include a variety of habitats for foraging, grazing, and space to escape aggressive interactions with other elephants. Enclosures must be well ventilated and provide shaded areas which allow for individual choice in resting locations (Phangkum, et al., 2008: 27; Varma and Prasad, 2008: 55-62).

Prolonged chaining in one place resulted in signs of poor welfare yet 48% of the elephants in US zoos were chained overnight (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 227-228, 237). Varma and Prasad would like to see the use of chains in India forbidden while elephants are stabled (2008: 55-62). In Thailand, however, the use of chains and hobbles (even spiked hobbles) are acceptable (Phangkum, et al., 2005: 27).¹²⁷ Spiked collars are also allowed and are called 'quite humane' as the elephant could choose to stop struggling and therefore end its pain (Phangkum, et al., 2005: 34).

Water

Varma and Prasad (2008: 55-62) suggest that free-choice access to drinking water must be provided all day from a dedicated on-site water supply, along with 'natural' food of appropriate protein/carbohydrate balance which requires manipulation to consume along with vitamins and minerals.

Skin

Common skin issues seen in captive elephants include parasites, sunburns, nutritional deficiencies resulting in skin changes, fungal or viral diseases, abscesses, wounds, pressure sores and dry skin (Mikota, 2006; Shrestha & Gairhe, 2006). Some of these issues are caused by saddle wounds, some by improper use of tools such as ankus or sticks, and others by dry skin from a lack of sufficient bathing (Mikota, 2006). Some specialists have recommended that elephants in Asia be scrubbed for 75-90 minutes a day in order to maintain skin

¹²⁷ Spiked hobbles prevent any walking without pain (2005: 27).

health, and scrubbing the base of tusks, behind the ears and in other folds is important to prevent parasites (Krishnamurthy, 1992; Mikota, 2006).

One study showed 64% of elephants carried active lesions, almost 50% of these on their backs (Magda, et al., 2015: 3). These lesions were caused by the howdah, and longer working hours create created more frequent and worsening lesions (Magda, et al., 2015: 4). The weight of the howdah did not impact the incidence of lesions, but the use of rice sacks as padding significantly increased their incidence (Magda, et al., 2015: 6). Taking more breaks had been suggested as an option but was likely to cause more issues due to the rubbing of loosened girth straps while resting (Magda, et al., 2015: 6).

Social interaction and social bonds

Social and familial groupings are an important aspect of elephant lives and affect overall welfare (see introduction, this thesis). These groups spend up to 20 hours a day moving about and foraging, which requires the interaction of a multitude of muscles and offers a large amount of mental stimulation (Poole and Granli, 2008: 3,7). Herd foraging behaviours also provide an opportunity for teaching calves how to navigate differing environments, and learn appropriate and efficient eating methods. These behaviours are key to successful reproduction (Kurt and Garai, 2006: 121; Poole and Granli, 2008: 11).

Early removal from matriarchal herds and the breaking of social bonds among adults may create lifelong issues with social skills, future bond creation and the

development of successful coping strategies for use in adulthood (Kurt and Garai, 2006: 121; Prado-Oviedo, et al., 2016; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018). Disruption of these bonds is also implicated in the development of stereotypes (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Vanitha, et al, 2016). For this reason, 'quality and quantity' time for calves and mothers is vital, as is birthing with unchained adult females in attendance (Varma and Prasad, 2008: 58)

The AZA (2012) now recommends waiting to move calves until at least three years of age. Removal from the family herd is very stressful and some experts believe three is still too young, with some suggesting that delaying forced separation of male calves until a more natural age of dispersal and leaving female calves with their mothers permanently would go a long way towards improving captive elephant welfare (Garai in Clubb and Mason, 2002; Prado-Oviedo, et al., 2016; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018).

Mental well-being of individuals is especially affected by isolation (Vanitha, et al., 2016; Veasey, 2006), but despite organizational recognition of the need for larger social groups (AZA, 2012; EAZA, 2020) providing adequate social structure in captive facilities is lacking and may be nearly impossible due to exhibit size restrictions (Harris et al., 2008; Veasey, 2006). The EAZA (2020: 46) suggests that zoos should 'maximise opportunities for every elephant to have unrestricted physical contact with other members of the herd for as many hours each day as possible', outside of those individuals who have justifiable reasons for separation. It is important that elephants who must be housed individually maintain olfactory,

visual and auditory contact with conspecifics (AZA, 2012; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Harris et al., 2008; Varma and Prasad, 2008).

Bulls should be housed in groups of two or more (AZA, 2012: np), but the difficulties associated with housing bull elephants were cited as reasons for keeping only one at a time (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 232). However, studies have shown that husbandry issues may be at fault for prolonged periods of musth and increased aggression (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 232). Bulls should be kept in appropriate enclosures where they can be 'maintained without chains, isolation, starvation, or beating' (Varma and Prasad, 2008: 55-62) and within sensory communication of conspecifics, even during musth (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Harris et al., 2008). Food changes should be made to items with lower nutritional value such as banana tree stalks, green squash and dried grasses with salt (for taste) (Phangum, 2005: 54; see also Clubb and Mason, 2002; DEFRA, 2012; Gairhe, 2012; Kurt and Garai, 2006). These foods are thought to shorten the duration of musth, whereas high-protein foods thought to prolong it (2005: 54). This diet also creates the feeling of being full quickly (2005: 54).

Enrichment

The goal of enrichment is to increase animal welfare by lowering stress and stereotypic behaviours, and while anecdotal evidence has been collected, there has not been a large-scale study regarding the usefulness of these enrichments in promoting positive welfare in any country (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Greco, et al., 2016; Mellon and MacPhee, 2001). Enrichment items such as dirt piles, browse,

pools, and logs are provided in European and US zoos, to allow for the display of natural behaviours like scratching, digging, bathing and problem-solving (Clubb and Mason, 2002; EAZA, 2020; Greco, et al., 2016; Mellen and MacPhee, 2001). Most often, scheduled enrichments were used in US zoos; these enrichments included items which provided elephants with opportunities for self-maintenance, instead of more complex enrichment activities involving problem-solving (Greco, et al., 2016: 12). In general, these enrichments involved adding a physical object to the exhibit, such as a toy, and not a holistic approach to overall enrichment (Mellen and MacPhee, 2001: 214). A holistic approach would need to consider the individual elephant's history and preferences (Mellen and MacPhee, 2001: 214), but of course this type of practice would make population-level studies even more difficult.

Elephants have been documented using 'inciteful problem solving' to reach food or explore (Foerder, et al., 2011: 3). Determining the welfare value of problem-solving has been difficult but creating the opportunity for captive elephants to experience different types of enrichment appears to be important (see Carnahan, 2019; Greco, et al., 2016; Mellen and MacPhee, 2001).

Measuring welfare

The above sections are a brief introduction to the types of health and welfare impactors that are important to consider in captive facilities. But how can we quantify whether these considerations are resulting in good health and positive welfare? Overall good health can be measured in a variety of ways, including

appropriate body condition, bloodwork and faecal studies which fall within normal parameters, normal appetite, normal sleep, interest in one's environment and a lack of obvious disease processes (Brown, et al, 2020; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Fowler and Mikota, 2006). Poor welfare may be observed through body mass loss, ulcers, lowered reproductive rates¹²⁸, or early death, and some of these measures may not be visible except upon necropsy (Veasey, 2006: 65). The development of structured, quantifiable measurements is needed to properly assess the welfare of elephants in captivity, and these measurements do not current exist in any accepted form (Bansiddhi, et al, 2002b; Greco, et al., 2016; Veasey, 2017). To fill in the gaps, facilities use a variety of less-invasive welfare measurements to keep tabs on their herds. These methods will be discussed next.

Available measurement tools

Hormonal studies

Welfare can be assessed through various physical or health-related measurements (Veasey, 2017: 414-415). These measurements include stress-related hormones or changes in breathing or heart rate, but one must consider that these are the same measurements which may be affected by exertion, excitement or the stress of collecting samples (Veasey, 2006: 65). One proposed method for quantifying welfare is testing for elevated levels of adrenal hormones. These hormones, known as fecal glucocorticoid metabolites or FGM (aka fGCM), have been used as an indicator of stress in elephants (Norkaew et al., 2018; Seltman, et

¹²⁸ Although this measure is under debate in wild situations. See Asian Elephant Range State Meeting (AERSM) final report, 2017.

al., 2020). Tests of FGM levels in UK zoo elephants in 'regular conditions' showed levels similar to those of an Asian elephant during a stressful relocation process, indicating that captive elephants chronically experience stress (Harris, et al., 2008: 46). In another study, FGM levels were higher on days zoo elephants were exposed to humans, indicating that the presence of *any* humans may be stressful (Millsbaugh, et al., 2007: 1258). A recent FGM study in Thailand showed that elephants allowed to spend their nights in the forest (i.e. more natural settings) instead of inside the open areas of camp showed lower levels of FGM (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019: 10). To the surprise of the researchers, however, studies of captive elephants in Thailand showed *higher* concentrations of the hormones in elephants housed in camps that did not allow riding or shows when compared to those that offered these tourist interactions (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019: 7). The same study found that elephants with wounds showed higher levels of these hormones overall, but lower levels when suffering moderate or severe foot problems (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019: 12). Another study found that captive bull elephants in Thailand showed higher concentrations of FGM, possibly due to harsher management techniques (Norkaew, et al., 2019). Due to the lack of data on wild elephants, these higher levels in males may simply be normal hormonal functioning (Millsbaugh, et al., 2004; Norkaew, et al., 2019).

This FGM method has been used to compare the effects of stress on repetitive behaviour (stereotypies, see below). In one study, 54% of elephants performed stereotypies, but their FGM levels measured similarly to those of wild elephants (Harris, et al., 2008: 46). In another, 25% of the elephants were reported to

perform stereotypies, but unexpectedly these elephants were found to have lower levels of FGM (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019: 8). The inconsistent results of this test thus far may be due to collection techniques, sample storage methods and even biological factors such as normal seasonal hormone fluctuations (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019; Millspaugh, et al., 2004; Mumby, et al., 2015; Norkaew, et al., 2019). Other studies showed that FGM measurements varied greatly without obvious environmental factor changes, or correlation with intensity of stereotypies, making them suspect as wide scale tools for stress measures (Harris, et al., 2008: 38,46,63). These tests should therefore only be used in combination with behavioural and other welfare measures (Bansiddhi, et al., 2019; Harris, et al., 2008).

Behaviour

Behaviour can be used as a welfare measurement, and is presumably easier to observe in captive elephants residing in a variety of captive environments. Observing behavioural preferences, such as the willingness to give up a comfort in order to engage in a preferred behaviour, offers further insight into what an individual needs for mental well-being (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Veasey, 2006). Veasey is testing a new welfare measurement tool using twelve criteria to determine the 'psychological significance of behaviours and cognitive processes' (2020: 4).¹²⁹ These criteria are evaluated by professionals and scientists in order to provide insight into what might constitute the most important welfare factors for a species (2020: 4). For Asian elephants, behaviours which maintain physical

¹²⁹ This evaluation process is known as AWPIIS[®]—Animal Welfare Priority Identification System[®]

health were some of the most important 'welfare priorities', followed by browsing, drinking and walking—behaviours which often take place in social groupings of wild elephants (2020: 8-9). While these are physical needs, the psychological exercise and enjoyment of these behaviours has a direct impact on welfare (2020: 10). This is still an experimental system, and discrepancies between rankings of captive elephant behaviour and wild elephants were found which likely reflect the differing opportunities experienced by each group (2020: 7).

Behavioural measurements should also include observations of what individuals actively avoid, as well as what they seek out to the detriment of other needs (Mason and Veasey, 2010a: 240). Avoidance of new stimuli (neophobia) or a lack of curiosity about new situations may indicate stress or anxiety (EAZA, 2020: 72; Mason and Veasey, 2010a). Elephants faced with situations in which they are unsure how to respond may turn to displacement behaviours such as repeated twisting back and forth of their trunk tip, foot-swinging, or touching their face or temporal gland area (Mason and Veasey, 2010a: 241). These behaviours often increase when the individual is faced with conflicting possibilities (Mason and Veasey, 2010a: 241). In addition, behaviours such as unpredictability, charging at caregivers, startling, hiding, self-injuring or distress calls may be seen in elephants experiencing trauma or stress (Mason and Veasey, 2010a: 242; Rizzolo and Bradshaw, 2018: 293).

Potentially related to these displacement behaviours are stereotypies.

Stereotypies, repetitive and seemingly unnecessary motions, have long been used

as an indicator of negative welfare (Vanitha, et al., 2016; Veasey, 2006). These behaviours may include head-bobbing, trunk tossing, and weaving along with front and back repeated steps, and are reported in 50% of Asian elephants and 25% of African elephants in UK zoos (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Harris et al., 2008). Recent studies have confirmed stereotypies within timber, temple, and privately owned elephants in India (Harris et al., 2008; Vanitha, et al, 2016). Whether stereotypies are troubling behavioural tics or an expression of exaggerated normal behaviour depends upon which expert is consulted. Some believe that expressing these behaviours may simply offer an outlet for the reduction of stress (Veasey, 2017: 414), while others plainly state that these behaviours are due to environments which are (or have been in the past) 'unsuited for their species-specific needs' (Harris, et al., 2008: 42). Some studies have noted that head-bobbing has been documented in wild elephants at rest, but others state this behaviour is unseen in the wild (McKay, 1973; Schmidt-Burbach, 2017). Like hormonal measures, studies suggest that these behaviours may be simply a response to excitement or stress (Harris et al., 2008; Veasey, 1993). Perhaps these behaviours provide a sense of control over one's environment and may be a result of events in the elephant's complex history, such as early removal from family groups (Vanitha, et al., 2016; Veasey, 2006). There are reported correlations between restrictive enclosures or chaining and the incidences of stereotypies, as well as stereotypies caused by social problems in young orphans (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Vanitha, et al., 2016). Other stressors such as an environment devoid of opportunities to problem-solve may be to blame and increasing the agency of the animal by offering opportunities to make decisions and face challenges may decrease stress, increase welfare and

reduce stereotypies (Carlstead and Shepardson, 2000; Kagen, et al., 2015; Meehan and Mench, 2006; Widman, et al., 1992). Elephants who exhibit stereotypic behaviour in one place often carry this behaviour to a new facility (Veasey, 2006: 68), but these behaviours may decrease in frequency with more freedom of movement or through the addition of enrichment activities (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 223). In one study, data on individuals proved statistically accurate, but institution-wide data did not serve to predict stereotypies (Greco, et al., 2016: 25). Social experiences and social environment had the greatest impact on these behaviours, with positive social experiences lowering rates of stereotypies, while negative social experiences, such as transfer to a new facility, caused an increase in stereotypical behaviour (Greco, et al., 2016; Vanitha, et al., 2016).

A contrasting study found no evidence that elephants who walked less had more stereotypic behaviours, no evidence that less walking impacted foot issues or musculoskeletal health and found that elephants who walked more were no more likely to have ideal body condition scores, better health or increased welfare (Holdgate, et al., 2016: 12). Feeding conditions were the driving force for walking distances, so more research is needed on how opportunities to walk affect overall health and welfare (2016: 10).

Other behavioural indicators of low welfare might include changes in vocalization, aggression, shyness, a decrease in grooming and foraging, and even self-mutilation (Veasey, 2006: 68). Veasey warns that even these seemingly obvious behaviours should be considered within the context of the elephants current

situation (Veasey, 2006: 67). Aggression toward other elephants could be caused by frustration, stress, or pain, enclosure size or a myriad of other conditions, and appears to be more common in zoo elephants than in wild female herds (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 231). Aggression towards humans is a common occurrence in zoo elephants, and whether this aggression is due to dominance training, restraint methods or hormonal changes remains to be seen (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 232).

Lifespan and reproduction

The early mortality rates of captive elephants should also be considered when measuring welfare (Clubb, et al., 2008; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Sukumar, 2003). Zoo-born elephants had a shorter life expectancy than wild-born individuals, and elephants kept in smaller facilities—such as zoos—lived only half as long as elephants living in protected areas of range states (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Clubb et al., 2008; Sukumar, 2003). Zoo elephants also faced higher rates of infant mortality and stillbirth, and these rates have not improved over time (Clubb et al., 2008; Clubb and Mason, 2002). In addition, wild-caught individuals faced earlier mortality rates than captive-born elephants (Lahdenpera, et al., 2018: 7).

Furthermore, captive Asian females reproduce around 10 times slower than wild females, and only around 20% of the captive population has bred at all (Clubb and Mason, 2002; Sukumar, 2003). This in itself is not an issue--the captive population is considered unlikely to help with population rebuilding around the world—but it is a sign of impacted welfare (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 211-214; Prado-Oviedo, et al., 2016; Sukumar, 2003). Other signs of decreased welfare such as stress, low

male fertility and obesity may play a part in the low reproductive rates of these captive elephants (Clubb and Mason, 2002: 211-214). While reproduction rates are low in all captivity held elephants, those in western zoos are especially problematic when coupled with an extremely high rate of stillbirth (Clubb et al., 2008; Clubb and Mason, 2002; Sukumar, 2003).

Infrared thermography

Infrared technology (IRT) has been suggested as a non-invasive way to study animal welfare (Stewart, et al., 2005: 321). By measuring electromagnetic radiation to measure heat gain and loss, IRT can be used to measure stress responses and signs of infection (Stewart, et al., 2005: 322). Because it typically does not require restraint, it may prove to be a valuable tool in measuring elephant welfare. However, IRT is affected by normal circadian rhythms, feeding schedules, recumbency and weather, making it of questionable use in many field situations (Naas, et al., 2020; Stewart, et al., 2005: 324).

Newer welfare metrics

Carlstead, et al. (2013) undertook a large-scale study of North American zoos using an epidemiological form—meaning that it involves the study of patterns in populations, including the ‘prevalence of hazards and the risk factors associated with their occurrence’ (2013: 321). Using 291 elephants in 72 zoos, they collected physical evidence such as photos and videos, blood tests, veterinary examination results spanning 10 years and biographical and historical data on individuals

(Carlstead, et al., 2013: 330). These results were combined with data on enclosure specifics, training procedures and management programs as well as ratings from zoo keepers based on holistic evaluations of welfare (Carlstead, et al., 2013: 330). Using this data, they developed seven criteria they felt were meaningful to elephant care (Carlstead, et al., 2013: 328). These criteria included 'feeding and avoiding obesity', 'freedom of movement to seek physical comfort', 'optimal health', 'species-appropriate social behaviours', good human-elephant relationships', avoidance of negative emotions' such as fear or apathy, and the 'experience of positive emotions' such as security or contentment (Carlstead, et al., 2013: 329). Combining information from the above sources will likely help paint a more complete picture of the needs of captive elephants (Miller, et al., 2015; Tewari, 2016).

Welfare measurement conclusions

Despite the lack of standardized welfare measurements, it appears that the above studies have created at least an outline for what is necessary to ensure positive elephant welfare. Opportunities for social engagement appear to be an extremely high priority, along with exercise, an appropriate and varied diet, freedom to spend long hours preparing and consuming food, free access to clean water, natural substrates and forest materials, free-choice time and the opportunity to problem solve are a few key elements. In addition, non-aversive training methods, the cessation of foot chain use, and regular access to veterinary care will likely improve captive elephant welfare. Assessing population level requirements for

health and welfare should be done, but with the knowledge that each elephant will benefit more from individual assessment and adjustment of handling techniques.

Stable and husbandry concerns in Nepal

Veterinary care

Kharel (2002: np),¹³⁰ says that although the Department of Animal Health is quite extensive and has a presence in 75 districts in Nepal, they have little actual information about elephant veterinary care (Kharel, 2002: np). With only one DNPWC Veterinary Officer and various assistants, care at the elephant camps and breeding centres is 'poor'. Kharel (2002: np) laments the lack of funding for drugs and equipment needed to properly care for captive elephants in Nepal.

Kharel (2002) stated that these facilities commonly lack walls, which allows for domestic cattle to interact with elephants. This sharing of space is dangerous due to the threat of disease transmission from livestock to elephants. Kharel (2002) also cites a lack of properly stored fodder, a lack of space to store grass and straw, and a lack of planning for or planting to ensure food during lean times as major issues in elephant care. Training for mahouts and management is lacking, as are research and monitoring of elephants' impacts on the national parks and buffer zones (Kharel, 2002: np).

¹³⁰ Former director general of the Nepalese Department of National Parks and long-time elephant researcher

One serious health concern in Sauraha is pododermatitis, or foot rot (Mandal and Khadka, 2013; Shrestha and Gairhe, 2006). Arising from poor husbandry practices and a lack of exercise, foot rot can progress to painful joint infections (Mandal and Khadka, 2013; Miller, et al., 2016; Roocroft and Oosterhuis 2001; West, 2001). As discussed in previous sections, substrates which allow for the natural expression of digging behaviours are vital to foot health (Roocroft and Oosterhuis, 2001; Veasey, 2006: 78). Concrete or packed dirt are not appropriate substrates, but are the norm across much of Thailand and Nepal (Varma and Ganguly, 2011: 13; see country profiles above and in appendices; Brown, Vidanta, interviews, 2019; observations, 2019). In Nepal, these types of behaviours are heavily discouraged as they disrupt tourist safaris, and the feet of captive elephants show nail and pad overgrowth (Brown, Randy, Thomas, mahout group interviews, 2019; observations, 2014, 2107 and 2019)

Vaginal tearing, dystocia andagalactia strike captive female elephants with regularity, and 20% of elephants carry parasitic worms (Gairhe, 2012; Mandal and Khadka, 2013). Another common concern is constipation due to inappropriate fibre content of diets and sand-eating, which is often treated by per rectum administration of soap and water or mineral oil (Shrestha and Gairhe, 2006: 465-67). Occasionally, electrolyte support is offered (Shrestha and Gairhe, 2006: 465-67). Older camp elephants in Nepal are susceptible to respiratory issues, especially during the colder months (Shrestha and Gairhe, 2006: 465-67). Shelters are inadequate to keep out the cold, particularly in the Bardia area, where winter temperatures can drop to dangerous levels (Varma and Ganguly, 2011: 14).

Issues similar to those found in India and Thailand such as stereotypies, foot issues, reproductive issues, wounds from other animals, wounds from sticks or ankus, and howdah wounds were commonly seen in Nepalese hattisars (GoN, 2015b; Gairhe, 2012; Mandal and Khadka, 2013: 37-38; Shrestha and Gairhe, 2006; Gairhe and Vidanta interviews, 2012, 2014, 2017 and 2019; Szydlowski, 2017).

A 2013 study of 66 captive elephants residing in the area surrounding Chitwan National Park found tail issues (including chopped tails from those seeking to make good-luck bracelets from tail hair), joint problems, TB, tusk issues from manual labour, EEHV, and anthrax in the captive population (Mandal and Khadka, 2013: 37-38). In fact, during the period between 2004-2009, 10 individuals—15% of the study group—died from broken legs, ligament rupture, dystocia, and disease (Mandal and Khadka, 2013: 38). The lack of any kind of elephant care manual, the status of mahouts as a lower-caste group, and a high turnover rate in mahouts may be partially to blame for a lack of appropriate elephant treatment (Kontogeorgopoulos, 2009 and 2019).

A Sauraha-specific study: 'An elephant is not a machine' (deVries 2014: 1)

A 2014 survey of the elephant stables in Sauraha found that 82% of captive elephants were living in 'unsuitable conditions' (de Vries, 2014: 2). The welfare of these elephants appeared to be directly connected to the welfare of their mahouts (2014), which is similar to findings in other parts of Asia (Miller et al., 2015: 2; Varma, 2008; also Bansiddhi, et al., 2020a; GoN, 2015). Mahouts who were 'well

taken care of had elephants who scored higher on de Vries health assessment (2014: 2). De Vries (2014: 2) found a variety of concerns: 24% of the elephants had wounds, and one suffered from a spinal injury. Four elephants were working while blind, six of the elephants were housed alone, and most were chained for multiple hours daily (2014: 23). Elephants had no protection from adverse weather conditions, no ability to dust bath or water, and stood on packed dirt floors with no drainage (2014: 23). Dung from these elephants was piled in the hattisar, or burned (2014: 23). The metal stable roofs lacked any insulation, leaving the elephants exposed to extreme temperatures (2014: 23). Other issues such as a lack of fresh food, appropriate supplements, and repeated beatings were noted (2014: 25). Some mahouts stated that a lack of nutrition was helpful in controlling elephants, as a weak elephant may follow commands more quickly (2014: 32). Elephants undergoing treatment for TB were given two months of the 10 month treatment off, then returned, and tourists were allowed to interact with a variety of sick elephants (de Vries, 2014:17).

While this study was well-designed and reflects many of the same issues seen in my four trips to Nepal, it must be noted that this study is not peer-reviewed and is self-published. As one of the co-founders of both Animal Nepal and the Animal Welfare Network in Nepal, de Vries is a respected advocate for animals and works with members of the Jane Goodall Institute, Nepal. In addition, other studies of stables in Nepal found the same issues with heat stress in elephants due to a number of factors described in the de Vries study. Yadav et al. (2015b), compared housing at the government breeding centre, the NTNC and hattisars in Sauraha.

These stables all had metal roofs which do not dissipate heat, and elephants who are chained cannot move to more comfortable areas, resulting in heat stress (Yadav, et al., 2015b: 297). Elephants who were housed outside the stable also struggled, demonstrating heat stress indicators such as ear flapping and attempted dust-bathing, as they were chained in one place and could not move off into the shade as needed (Yadav, et al., 2015b: 297). Yadav et al. (2015b: 297) found that the NTNC stables were more appropriate enclosures, due to their location in a tree-covered area.

Conclusion

It is clear that range states, and those that lack Asian elephants in the wild but hold individuals in collections, are concerned about elephant care. These organizations are aware that a lack of regulation and enforcement has had massive impacts on the health and welfare of captive individuals. India, Thailand, the UK, Europe, the US and numerous global agencies have attempted to implement standards of elephant care, but enforcing these standards has failed in many range states. The complexity involved in providing appropriate care for elephants in captivity is daunting, and often results in facilities continuing to use outdated or so-called 'traditional' methods. It is important that captive elephant facilities, especially those in range states, are provided with access to up-to-date information regarding husbandry and nutrition.

Appendix IV: Supplementary Materials

Part 1: Ethics approval

An ethics application was completed and submitted to the University of Exeter on 12/12/2018, and was approved by the University of Exeter College of Social Sciences and International Studies ethics committee on 8/03/2019. A copy of the ethics application and approval is attached in the supplemental materials section of this thesis.

Copy of ethics application (Please note, the sections on human/non-human animal orphans were left out of the current thesis for space reasons, and will be used in future papers instead):

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

All staff and students within SSIS should use this form; those in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy & Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology should return it to ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk. Staff and students in the **Graduate School of Education** should use ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk.

Before completing this form please read the Guidance document which can be found at <http://intranet.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences/ethics/>

Applicant details	
Name	Michelle Szydlowski
Department	Sociology, Philosophy, and Anthropology
UoE email address	Ms835@exeter.ac.uk
Duration for which permission is required	
Please check the meeting dates and decision information online before completing this form; your start date should be at least one month after the Committee meeting date at which your application will be considered. You should request approval for the entire period of your	

research activity. Students should use the anticipated date of completion of their course as the end date of their work. Please note that retrospective ethical approval will never be given.

Start date: 03/09/2019	End date: 01/09/2021	Date 12/12/2018
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Students only

All students must discuss (face to face or via email) their research intentions with their supervisor/tutor prior to submitting an application for ethical approval. **Your application must be approved by your first or second supervisor (or dissertation supervisor/tutor) prior to submission and you MUST submit evidence of their approval with your application, e.g. a copy of an email stating their approval.**

Student number	660064145
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Programme of study	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
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Name of Supervisor(s) or Dissertation Tutor	Dr Samantha Hurn, Dr Tom Rice
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Have you attended any ethics training that is available to students?	Yes, I have taken part in ethics training at the University of Exeter EG the Research Integrity Ethics and Governance: http://as.exeter.ac.uk/rdp/postgraduateresearchers OR Ethics training received on Masters courses. If yes, please specify and give the date of the training: Research Integrity 01/10/2019
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Certification for all submissions

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given in this application and that I undertake in my research to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research. I confirm that if my research should change significantly, I will seek advice, request approval of an amendment or complete a new ethics proposal. Any document translations used have been provided by a competent person with no significant changes to the original meaning.

Michelle Szydowski

Double click this box to confirm certification

Submission of this ethics proposal form confirms your acceptance of the above.

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT

<i>Framing Conservation, Colonialism and Care in the Preservation of Endangered Species in Nepal. (working title)</i>

ETHICAL REVIEW BY AN EXTERNAL COMMITTEE

<i>No, my research is not funded by, or doesn't use data from, either the NHS or Ministry of Defence.</i>

MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005

No, my project does not involve participants aged 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. people with learning disabilities)

SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Maximum of 750 words.

The goal of this project is threefold:

6. to understand the motivations of conservation groups active in Nepal
7. to compare the stated aims of these organizations with the way they practice conservation
 - 2a. One section of this research will focus on how these stated aims and the care of orphans is dependent upon their species. The care, funding, and support of human orphans will be contrasted with that of non-human species. (see below for more detail)
8. to understand the perceived efficacy of these organizations and how their aims overlap and/or complement each other

First, I wish to examine the motivations of local, national and international conservation programs active in Nepal, using a framework of normative or everyday ethics (everyone is doing what they feel is 'best' for the animals and communities, but their 'best' is very different than someone else's). These organizations include (but are not limited to) the government of Nepal and their non-profit conservation wing, the National Trust for Nature Conservation (henceforth NTNC); community-based conservation groups; and smaller international groups such as INGO3. Secondly, I wish to examine the 'discourse versus practice' of how these organizations 'do' conservation.

Research toward these first two goals will proceed as follows:

Introductions and interviews via email with management of the NTNC, government officials overseeing conservation efforts (many of these connections have already been made in the researchers three prior trips to Nepal for conservation work and research). and directors of international and national conservation groups active near these field sites.

In person interviews with local staff of the above organizations (such as wildlife and veterinary staff; elephant drivers) along with participant observation of 'volunteers' from international organizations (permissions for which will be sought from the main office of each organization prior to contacting the volunteers who are present in country during research), participant observations of community-based conservation efforts (such as beehive fencing and chain-free elephant initiatives).

Community input (methods below) regarding the perceived efficacy and motivations of the above organizations and their projects.

Email and in person interviews with researchers active in conservation projects in Nepal.

Biographies of animals treated at the National Trust for Nature Conservation will be collected from wildlife technicians and veterinary staff. These biographies will be used for comparison to those of human victims of human/wildlife

conflict. These biographies will also serve as to examine the perceived success or failure of the animals 'care.'

With reference to 2a: To highlight one area where the stated goals of the government and NGOs often do not match their local practice, particular attention will be paid to the differences and similarities between the treatment of human and non-human 'orphans' of human/wildlife conflict (henceforth HWC). People who live in areas of high conservation focus are often also those who experience crop-raiding, loss of income, and injury due to conflict with local wildlife. In contrast to the nonhuman orphans of HWC, who have been the focus of considerable academic and popular attention (Bradshaw, 2009; Sheldrick, 2008) little research has been done on the human orphans of HWC. By comparing the care and resources for 'wild' orphans with those available for human orphans, the research will provide valuable insight into the attitudes and behaviours of the people of Nepal. More compellingly, several organizations active in Nepal now offer joint volunteer conservation/orphanage activities.

Research toward this goal will involve:

Emailed questionnaires and participant observation of 'volunteers' from international organizations offering combination orphanage/wildlife experiences (permissions for which will be sought from the main office of each organization prior to contacting the volunteers who are present in country during research).

In person interviews with the directors of two orphanages known to the researcher from prior trips to Nepal, one of whom is also a senior staff member at the NTNC. The researcher wishes to determine how governmental funding, community feelings and expected outcomes for these human victims varies from funding, community (and international) support and outcomes of the wild animal victims. It is hoped that interviews with these two directors will lead to contacts with the directors of other orphanages where victims of HWC reside.

Children at these orphanages will not be interviewed. Instead, information regarding past and current juvenile residents will be gathered from orphanage staffers (see methodology section below for what, exactly, this data will entail). Much like the non-human animals discussed in this study, the 'orphan stories' will come from those responsible for their care, instead of from the orphans themselves. This helps create a symmetry between the human and non-human subjects of this study.

Lastly, this research will discuss the perceived efficacy of each type of conservation group and will attempt to identify key areas of overlap between government, NGOs, local communities, and national/international volunteer organizations. I would like to identify norms that are consistent across cultures and reframe them in a way that will aid organizations in finding a 'common language' for conservation efforts. This information

is vital to determining how to link organizational goals and practices to create more successful conservation outcomes.

INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

My research will take place in Nepal and will build on my experience of working in this country over the past seven years. The focus will be specifically on field sites surrounding Nepalese National Parks. While Nepal has ethical guidelines for research in health, there appears to be a lack of overarching guidelines for non-health related research. Therefore, my research will adhere to the guidelines of the Exeter University Ethics Framework and the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA) ethical guidelines.

The only locally employed assistants will be translators and travel guides. These assistants will be paid for their services.

Because this research takes place in a country not the researcher's own, every effort has been made to clarify 'culturally acceptable' behaviours. The researcher has friends and co-workers in-country who can and will offer specific guidance toward acceptable behaviour and conduct.

The researcher has met with the former project director at the National Trust for Nature Conservation Biodiversity Conservation Centre in Nepal to discuss the legal requirements for research in Nepal. The NTNC is the non-profit arm of the Nepalese government that oversees all conservation and forestry activities. According to him, if research takes place outside the boundaries of the National Forest, the researcher is simply asked to check in with the project manager and identify their plans. If research takes place within the boundaries of the forest (which this does not) then special permission must be obtained from the main office of the NTNC in Kathmandu.

In order to foster a good working environment, the researcher will provide the NTNC at each field site with a lay summary of her research proposal, a letter from her research advisor at the university, and a copy of her passport. (Following recommendations made by Shivish Bhandari, Coordinator of the Himalayan Biodiversity Network-Nepal.)

RESEARCH METHODS

Research will be divided into two categories: participant observation and face-to-face interviews and email interviews/follow-up questions. All participants will be adults with the capacity to give informed consent. The initial 5-week trip is planned for March and April of 2019.

Permissions and data collection at a distance:

Questions will be piloted via email with those individuals already familiar with the researcher, in order to establish whether the questions are easily understood and elicit the type of information sought for this project. Following these emails, questions may be altered/clarified before use with others. Following these alterations/clarifications, further individuals will be contacted as outlined below. Portions of this research will take place prior to the first research trip to Nepal, and the rest after the researcher returns home.

An estimated sample size for this initial phase of research is approximately 20-30 individuals.

Contacts will be made prior to travel with emailed questions posed to directors at the National Trust for Nature Conservation, the government of Nepal, and international organizations that send volunteers or supplies to Nepal to assist with conservation (including but not limited to) INGO3; the Katie Adamson Conservation Fund, etc.) and conservation/orphanage 'combination experiences' such as Karmalaya and Mighty Roar. The purpose of these emails is to seek permission to interview and observe staff or volunteers while in Nepal. In addition, questions will be asked regarding the official stated purposes, goals, and motivations of these organizations. In reality, emails to staffers in Nepal will likely be answered with a simple, 'sure, we can talk when you are here' and very few answers. This has been the case in my past research projects in Nepal. Most questions will need to be asked in person.

Volunteers, administrators and staff from various organizations such as INGO3, the Katie Adamson Conservation Fund, the World Wildlife Fund, and university researchers currently or formerly active with conservation concerns in Nepal (i.e. Per Wegge from the University of Life Sciences in Norway, Suraj Updhaya from the University of Georgia) will be contacted via email and asked to participate in this study.

Questionnaires will be sent via email to ascertain their plans, goals, and reasons for participating in this type of international conservation activity. Follow-up interviews may take place via Skype or email.

Data collection in Nepal:

Face-to-face interview questions will be piloted with those individuals with whom a good relationship is already in place (approximately 3-4 people). Following these interviews, questions may be altered/clarified before use with others. Approximately 20-30 individuals will be interviewed for this phase of the project.

Government staff, project management staff, wildlife/veterinary staff at the National Trust for Nature Conservation sites, and community-based conservation leaders will be interviewed in person. These interviews will focus on their conservation motivations and methods, rescue and rehabilitation efforts currently in place for wildlife, and their hopes for future facilities, support, partnerships with international conservation groups and expansion goals. These interviews will take place only once permission is sought from their oversight committees. Because it may be necessary to identify certain participants by their job title during the writing up process (i.e. to separate staff from

management perspectives), permission to do so will be sought via written or oral informed consent. If the participant prefers not to have this information shared, then their job title/description will be kept confidential, and all information anonymised.

Follow-up questions will be addressed via email, messaging or text. All participants will be offered an information sheet and participant consent form. It is realistic to expect that many participants will offer informed oral consent and decline signing a form (please see section on informed consent for the reasoning behind this statement).

Staff and adult volunteers overseeing/participating in 'orphanage/conservation combo programs' will be identified and contacted via their sponsoring organization (i.e. Mighty Roar and Karmalaya). Questionnaires may be sent via email to ascertain their plans, goals, and motivations for participating in this type of activity. In person interviews will take place with these volunteers if they are willing and in-country at the same time as the researcher.

The staffers at orphanages will act as 'general informants' regarding children as a whole at their facility. General information requested will include whether the children at this facility have living family members, whether they return home to a village on occasion, the circumstances that labelled the children orphans (death of one or both parents, and the cause of death or abandonment), the amount of time children have resided at the orphanage, the area of Nepal from whence the children came. Additional questions may include the type of financial and community support received by the orphanage and the rules/laws surrounding the day-to-day functioning of the orphanage. The term 'orphan' itself is subject to culturally-specific meaning. Often, human 'orphans' actually have at least one living parent. Literature review for this project will include specific information on the nature of 'orphans' and 'orphanages' in southern Asia. This information will be collected as a general examination of what determines 'orphanhood' at these homes. No individual child's biographical information will be collected for this section.

In contrast to the above section, selected biographical data on a few human juveniles specifically affected by HWC will be gathered from their guardians and staffers via face to face interviews at the orphanages. The purpose of this information is to compare/contrast the biographies of non-human wildlife 'orphans' with that of human orphans. All of this information will be obtained via interviews and emails with orphanage staff, and no children will be interviewed for this study. Children's names and ages will **not** be gathered or used in the study, and all information will be anonymised. This information will provide comparison to the biographies of non-human victims treated at the National Trust for Nature Conservation. These original interviews will take place with 2-4 orphanage directors. Because my focus is on individuals 'orphaned' by human/wildlife conflict, and due to the smaller size of the orphanages in this area, I expect there to be only 1-2 children per orphanage whose history will pertain to this study. This estimate comes from my contact in Nepal, one of

the orphanage directors who has offered to be part of this project. A list of sample questions is located at the end of this application.

Adults who were former 'orphans' may be contacted for this study. Their interviews will be handled in the same way as interviews with other adults for this study (participant forms, consent forms, etc).

Publication will be sought for this project (journal articles or in its entirety), and information may be used for Exeter Anthrozoology Residential programs and other academic conferences. Results may be shared by the author with participating institutions upon completion.

PARTICIPANTS

Participants will include adult (over the age of 16) staffers and volunteers from NGOs, governmental institutions, local community members, local/international volunteer organizations. I estimate the number of participants to be between 50-100.

Participants will be given the options to opt-out of interviews and observations.

No financial incentives will be offered to participants.

No vulnerable populations (children/youth, learning disabled, etc) will be asked to participate in this study.

THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Many NTNC participants will be recruited via relationships established in Nepal on prior trips by the researcher. Local community members will be contacted via community leaders. Other participants will be recruited via contacts with their parent groups (Karmalaya, Katie Adamson Conservation Fund, INGO3, World Wildlife Fund, International Rhino Foundation, Chain Free Chitwan). Participants will be offered an information sheet and consent form (see below). All those contacted will be given the option to decline participation. If at any point during the research the participant wishes to leave the interview or cease contact with the researcher, they will be encouraged to do so. Anyone who withdraws will be given the option to have any information they have already offered withdrawn from the study.

SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

In case of special needs (such as font being too small for a participant to read), the forms will be read aloud to the participant, and informed oral consent sought. As noted in the following section, in the case of illiteracy, informed oral consent will be sought.

THE INFORMED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Given the nature of work in Nepal, most contact requests for participation and description will take place orally. Email has proven in the past (three trips to Nepal and various friends/co-workers there) to be inefficient and confusing. Therefore, Nepalese

participants will likely need to be contacted in person. International volunteers will be contacted via email, given a synopsis of the research to take place, and informed that all data will be anonymised.

Participant information sheets and consent forms are attached below and will be translated to Hindi and Nepali before research begins. Copies of the translated forms will be provided to the ethics committee as completed.

It is possible, given the rural location and population of some field sites, that certain participants will not read English, Hindi or Nepali. According to Nepalese friends, some populations may be wary of signing any forms, and will be more likely to participate if informed oral consent is offered. In addition, many populations may be wary of official looking forms, due to the relatively changeable nature of government in Nepal. In these cases, the researcher will use a translator and community member known to both the researcher and the local participants and will obtain informed oral consent. In this case, the researcher will document the oral consent in her field notes and ask the translator or community member to countersign, when possible.

ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE HARM

Risk of harm to others:

The potential for harm to staff and volunteers working with the National Trust for Nature Conservation, the Government of Nepal and other organizations in this study revolves around the discussion of possibly traumatic memories of losing animals to illness/natural disaster/poaching/etc, and feelings regarding the 'official stance' on animal care and welfare. As is the case with many organizations that work at rescuing and rehabilitating wild animals, the rate of animal loss is particularly high, and the carers with direct animal contact often have a very different set of morals or ethics than their employers. Participants will be given the option to refuse interviews, if they feel that the questions might provoke earlier trauma or cause profound harm to their job status. If at any point the participant becomes upset and does not wish to continue, the interview will be stopped and support from family and staff will be sought for the participant.

With regard to the potential for these employees to face political or economic strife for sharing information that their employer or government might disagree with; each participant will be assigned a number and their interviews anonymised. Before interviews begin, permission will be sought from the government body or NGO who employs the participant. While there is always a potential for a power differential when dealing with cultures other than one's own, no 'vulnerable populations' are being considered for this study (victims of violence or persecution, children, prisoners, mentally ill, etc.). Care will be taken when writing up the research not to provide sufficient details about any individual for them to be identified.

Operators of orphanages may face potentially traumatic memories when asked about the histories of children in their care who have faced losses of parents or families. Again, the option for non-participation in the study will be given. The primary orphanages in Chitwan that will be a focus of this study are both run by people known to the researcher, whose insight led to the choice of topic and have been willing in the past to discuss issues surrounding orphans in Nepal on a social basis. They have displayed interest in being a part of research interviews. These questions are voluntary, and participants will be offered the chance to opt-out of answering. If at any point the participant becomes upset and does not wish to continue, the interview will be stopped and support from family and staff will be sought for the participant.

No organization can be perfect, and some of the organizations examined in this study may find that their 'shortcomings' (or unintended consequences of their policies and practices) may be surfaced, and that they cannot always expect to be painted in a positive light. The researcher will make every effort to discuss this with the contact at each organisation and attempt to clarify that both positive and negative aspects of the organizations work will be discussed in the completed paper.

Risk of harm to the researcher:

The researcher will minimize potential harm to herself by ensuring all pre-travel vaccinations are up to date, that her supervisor and family know which part of Nepal she is in and whom to contact there in case of an emergency. The researcher will check in via text each evening.

The researcher is enrolled in the US government-sponsored STEP program (similar to the FCO), which notifies the traveller and emergency contacts about potential natural or political upheavals in areas of interest. The researcher will follow guidelines set forth in the STEP country profile. A copy of the researcher's passport and phone numbers for emergency contacts in Nepal will be left with the researcher's spouse.

The researcher is quite familiar with the areas in which she will be working, having visited them several times over the last 7 years. The researcher has completed registration for travel insurance through the University of Exeter, which includes emergency evacuation insurance. The researcher has completed all necessary paperwork for this insurance, including the risk assessment form, which has been approved by her supervisor and received by the insurance office at the University of Exeter.

The researcher has friends and contacts at each field site of the country. In addition, the researcher will not remain in Nepal during Monsoon season, or in the case of natural disaster. Travel is to take place between September and April, outside of monsoon season and before the heavy heat of May. A main contact, Raj Koirala, who resides in Kathmandu, will act as an 'emergency contact' if family back in Colorado does not hear from the researcher each day.

Because the researcher lives at altitude (between 5000 and 6000 feet above sea level), altitude sickness is less of a concern. In addition, the field sites for this study average less than 1000 feet above sea level.

The researcher will familiarize herself with safety procedures in case of an earthquake, and with medical emergency treatment in case of snake or wild animal bite. The researcher has completed the pre-exposure rabies vaccine and had her rabies titre tested for immunity in January 2019. The researcher has also been vaccinated for HepA/B, Japanese Encephalitis, Typhoid and has had a recent tetanus/diphtheria vaccine, as suggested by the US government for travel to Nepal. She is carrying a first aid kit and anti-malarial medications.

All animal-related research involves a risk of physical harm. The researcher will not enter animal areas without appropriate guides/staff, and has received training regarding animal behaviour, and is a certified veterinary technician with decades of animal experience. When staying on grounds at the National Trust for Nature Conservation, visitors are asked not to leave their rooms without an escort after dark. The researcher will respect the safety rules in place while on site at the NTNC.

The researcher will conduct interviews in public areas, and will have a known male, Nepalese escort while traveling in any unfamiliar areas or visiting private facilities.

DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE

Personal data will be handled following the principles of the Information Commissioner's Office.

Participants will be informed as to why their information is needed for this research, and how their information will be stored, processed and used via a participant information sheet available in three languages. If a participant is unable to read or understand the information sheet, an oral description of the requested data and its proposed use and storage will be offered, via translator if necessary. All participants will be given the option to refuse or withdraw consent at any time without penalty, and their data will be deleted. Please see consent form for specific details.

Data will be kept confidential unless compelled by law. If information obtained in an interview causes concern about the potential for harm to any participants, it may be necessary to discuss the data with a supervisor and, if necessary, report this information to the proper authorities.

Consent forms will be scanned and saved into a password protected file and the original forms will be shredded. Confidential data will be stored for up to five years, to allow for the completion of my PhD. This information may be used to contact participants for follow up questions. Once the PhD is awarded and publications completed, this information will be destroyed. Anonymised data may be stored indefinitely.

Data collected via email, interview or participant observation will be kept in a field journal. This information will be transferred to a password protected, encrypted laptop computer, and the original notes destroyed once uploaded. As data is compiled from the field notes, participants will be assigned a number and interview notes and recordings will be saved under their assigned number. A 'number to name' key will be kept in a separate password protected file, and participant information will be anonymised. Data to be gathered may include name and employer or volunteer organization. *No sensitive data such as age (other than needed to verify age for consent), gender, ethnicity or medical data will be gathered by the researcher.*

Data will be uploaded to One Drive or the researcher's protected/encrypted home computer via an encrypted connection as often as a secure connection is available. Data that relies upon identification of the occupation of the participant will be pseudonymised and stated as 'an employee of...' without a job title or location, unless specific permission is granted by the participant. The researcher's field notes will be kept confidential. Because the sample size from some organizations may be too small to ensure anonymity, special care will be taken to remove any methods of re-identification, or data from these individuals will be anonymised.

No confidential information will be recorded during audio recordings, and these recordings will be kept on a password protected device. Audio recordings will be transcribed by the researcher herself to retain anonymity of participant. Upon award of the PhD and completion of publications, if not sooner, these recordings will be deleted.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

I am a board member of a small conservation fund based in the US. Some study participants (volunteer vet techs involved in care of Nepalese animals) may be involved with this organization as well. If so, a declaration of interests will accompany my thesis.

USER ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

Feedback opportunities will not be offered to study participants. A final report may be made available to organizations involved in the study (after publication). Because several of the participants have indicated during past conversations that they would be interested in taking part in this project, the emails prior to travel will also serve to engage Nepalese orphanage directors and conservation group management in the formation of questions on topics that they feel are relevant to this study.

INFORMATION SHEET: see following sections

CONSENT FORM: see following sections

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Academic Unit: Sociology, Philosophy, and Anthropology

Title of Project: Framing Conservation, Colonialism and Care in the Preservation of Endangered Species in Nepal.

Research Team Member(s): Michelle Szydlowski

Project Contact Point: Ms835@exeter.ac.uk

Supervisor(s): Dr Samantha Hurn, Dr Tom Rice

This project has been approved for the period

From: 03/09/2019

To: 01/09/2021

Ethics Committee approval reference: 201819-054R

Signature:

Date: 08.03.2019



Stephen Skinner
Chair, SSIS College Ethics Committee

Part 2: Acronyms

BCC Biodiversity Conservation Centre
BNP Bardia National Park
CARE Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CNP Chitwan National Park
DNPWC Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (Government of Nepal)
DWC/DWD Department of Women and Children (Government of Nepal)
EHC Elephant/Human Conflict
GoN Government of Nepal
HBN Himalaya Biodiversity Network
HWC Human/Wildlife Conflict
IMF International Monetary Fund
INGO International Non-Governmental Organization
ITNC International Trust for Nature Conservation
IUCN International Union for Conservation of Nature
MFSC Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (Government of Nepal)
MOF Ministry of Finance (Government of Nepal)
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
NTNC National Trust for Nature Conservation
NVC Nepal Veterinary Council
TAL Terai Arc Landscape
UEOC United Elephant Cooperative in Sauraha
WB World Bank
WWF World Wildlife Foundation (World Wide Fund for Nature)

Part 3: Data collection and handling

Personal data was handled following the principles of the Information

Commissioner's Office. Data will be kept confidential unless compelled by law.

Participants were informed as to why their information was needed for this research, and how their information would be stored, processed and used via a participant information sheet made available in both English and Nepali. If a participant was unable to read or understand the information sheet, an oral description of the requested data and its proposed use and storage was offered,

via translator when needed. All participants were given the option to refuse or withdraw consent at any time prior to November, 2020 without penalty, and their data unused or deleted. Please see consent form in appendices for specific details. Consent forms were scanned and saved into a password protected file and the original forms shredded. Confidential data will be stored for up to five years, to allow for the completion of my PhD. This information may be used to contact participants for follow up questions. Once the PhD is awarded and publications completed, this information will be destroyed. Anonymised/pseudonymised data may be stored indefinitely.

Data collected via email, interview or participant observation was kept on a password protected, encrypted laptop computer. Data gathered included name and employer or volunteer organization. *No sensitive data such as age (other than needed to verify age for consent), gender, ethnicity or medical data was gathered by the researcher.*

Data obtained while in the field was uploaded to the University of Exeter's One Drive or the researcher's protected/encrypted home computer via an encrypted connection as often as a secure connection was available. Data that relied upon identification of the occupation of the participant was pseudonymised and stated as 'an employee of...' without a job title or location, unless specific permission was granted by the participant. Audio recordings were kept on a password protected iPhone. Audio recordings were transcribed by the researcher herself or by a professional service to retain anonymity of the participant.

All participants were offered an information sheet and participant consent form. As expected, all but seven participants declined signing a form and gave informed oral consent instead (please see section on informed consent for an explanation regarding this phenomena).

Declaration regarding conflicts of interest

After completing research for this paper, I was appointed chairperson of the board of a small non-profit conservation group—the Katie Adamson Conservation Fund (KACF). Having been active with this fund since 2012, many of my initial contacts in Nepal originated via social travel with this group. This group formed the basis of my master's thesis, which focused on the KACF's use of a relational approach to conservation efforts in Nepal, and how this approach was perceived to positively or negatively impact conservation (Szydlowski, 2017). These contacts did not offer access to any staff or facilities that are not accessible to others undertaking research in Nepal. However, I do believe that my prior relationships with elephant owners, veterinary staff and nature guides resulted in more patience on their part when confronted with difficult questions regarding elephants in captivity, and allowed me to follow avenues of inquiry that would not have been tolerated from someone unknown to them. While this does not constitute a true conflict of interest, but rather an advantage that comes with continued travel to an area of study, I felt it important to acknowledge.

Part 4: Supplemental materials (forms and sample questions)

Participant Information Sheet (सहभागी सूचना पत्र)

Title of Project: Framing Conservation, Colonialism and Preservation of Endangered Species in Nepal

परियोजनाको शीर्षक: नेपालमा खतरनाक प्रजातिहरूको फ्रेमिंग संरक्षण, औपनिवेशिकवाद र संरक्षण

Researcher name: Michelle Szydlowski, AAS, BA, MA, CVT शोधकर्ता को नाम: मिशेल सज्दिलोवस्की

Invitation and brief summary:

Many local and international organizations are involved in conservation projects within Nepal and each of these organizations has different goals, motivations and methods. This research will examine these organizations and will focus on the idea that what a community or organization says is often different than what it does. Finally, this research will compare and contrast the treatment of wildlife orphaned by human/wildlife conflict to that of its human victims. Please take time to consider the information provided here carefully and to discuss it with family or friends if you wish, or to ask the researcher questions.

धेरै स्थानीय र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय संगठन नेपाल भित्र संरक्षण परियोजनाहरूमा संलग्न छन् र यी प्रत्येक संगठनमा फरक लक्ष्य, प्रेरणा र विधिहरू छन्।

यो अनुसन्धानले यी संस्थाहरूको जाँच गर्नेछ र यस विचारलाई ध्यान दिनेछ कि कुन समुदाय वा संगठनले के भन्छ, अक्सर यो के तुलनामा फरक छ। अन्ततः, यस अनुसन्धानले मानव र बन्धुजन्तु विवादको उपचारको तुलना गर्नेछ। कृपया यहाँ उपलब्ध जानकारी प्रदान गर्न विचार गर्नुहोस् र परिवार वा साथीहरूसँग छलफल गर्नुहोस्। यदि तपाईं चाहानुहुन्छ भने, तपाईं अनुसन्धानकर्तालाई प्रश्न सोध्न सक्नुहुन्छ।

Purpose of the research:

The goal of this research is to study the culture of human/wildlife conflict and conservation efforts in Nepal.

अनुसन्धानको उद्देश्य: यो अनुसन्धानको लक्ष्य नेपालमा मानव / बन्धुजन्तुको द्वन्द्व र संरक्षण प्रयासको संस्कृति अध्ययन गर्ने हो।

Why have I been approached? किन मसँग सम्पर्क गरिएको छ?

You may have been invited because you are involved in conservation efforts through your work or volunteer organization, or because you live in an area of heavy human/non-human interaction, have been personally affected by or known someone affected by conflict with wildlife, or care for someone who has. Your participation is voluntary, and a translator will be provided (if needed) to facilitate the exchange of information.

तपाईंलाई निमन्त्रणा गरिएको हुन सक्छ किनभने तपाईं आफ्नो काम वा संगठन मार्फत संरक्षण प्रयासमा संलग्न हुनुहुन्छ। किनकी तपाईं भारी मानव / गैर-मानव अन्तरक्रियाको क्षेत्रमा बस्नुहुन्छ। तपाईं व्यक्तिगत रूपमा मानव / बन्धुजन्तुको द्वन्द्व मा प्रभावित भए को वा तपाईं ले चिनिने व्यक्तिलाई मानव / बन्धुजन्तुको द्वन्द्व मा कुनै किसिम को हेरविचार गर्नु भएको छ। तपाईंको सहभागिता स्वैच्छिक छ, र एक अनुवादकलाई जानकारीको आदानप्रदानको सुविधा दिन (यदि आवश्यक छ) प्रदान गरिनेछ।

What would taking part involve? कुन कुराले भाग लिन सक्दछ?

The researcher will ask you questions about your feelings about wildlife or wildlife conservation groups in your area, your experiences with wildlife or wildlife conservation groups, and your thoughts about future conservation in your area. You may be asked questions about the wildlife in your area, typical behaviour in your community regarding conservation and conflict, wildlife laws, your past experiences and your life in Nepal. Information will be anonymised (people will not know who you are) once compiled.

शोधकर्ताले तपाईंलाई आफ्नो क्षेत्रको वन्यजीव वा वन्यजीवन संरक्षण समूहहरूको बारेमा तपाईंको भावना, वा वन्यजन्तुको संरक्षण समूहहरू, र तपाईंको क्षेत्रमा भविष्यको संरक्षणको बारेमा तपाईंको विचारबारे सोच्ने प्रश्नहरूको बारेमा सोध्दछ। तपाईं आफ्नो क्षेत्र मा वन्यजीव को बारे मा प्रश्नहरू, तपाईंको समुदाय मा सामान्य व्यवहार संरक्षण र संघर्ष, वन्यजीव कानूनो, तपाईंको अतीत अनुभवहरू र नेपाल मा आफ्नो जीवन को बारे मा सोधिने छ। सूचना अज्ञात हुनेछ (एक पटक संकलित भैसके पछि तपाईं को हो भन्ने कुरा अरु व्यक्तिले थाहा पाउदैनन) ।

What are the possible benefits of taking part? भाग लिनको सम्भावित फाईदाहरू के हो?

The researcher hopes to identify ways to support local and international conservation efforts in areas of human/wildlife conflict, and link organizational goals and practices to create more successful conservation outcomes.

शोधकर्ताले मानव / वन्यजीव संघर्षको क्षेत्रमा स्थानीय र अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय संरक्षण प्रयासहरू समर्थन गर्ने तरिकाहरू पहिचान गर्न आशा गर्दछ र यसले अधिक सफल संरक्षण परिणामहरू सिर्जना गर्न संगठनात्मक लक्ष्यहरू र अभ्यासहरू लिङ्क गर्नेछ।

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? भाग लिन सम्भावित हानिकारक र जोखिमहरू के हो?

If you have been negatively impacted by conflict with wildlife or conflict with a conservation organization, you may find some of the questions upsetting. You are able to opt-out or discontinue an interview if you feel uncomfortable. If you withdraw, you will be given the option to have any information you have already offered withdrawn from the study.

यदि तपाईं वन्यजन्तु वा संरक्षण संगठनसँग विवादको साथ संघर्ष गरेर नकारात्मक प्रभाव पार्नुभयो भने, तपाईं केहि प्रश्नहरू अफ्ठ्यारो पाउन सक्नुहुनेछ। यदि तपाईं अफ्ठ्यारो महसुस गर्नुहुन्छ भने तपाईं एक अफ्ट आउट वा साक्षात्कार रोक्न सक्नुहुनेछ। यदि तपाईं फिर्ता लिनुभयो भने, तपाईंले पहिले नै प्रस्तावबाट फिर्ता लिनुभएको कुनै प्रस्ताव छ भन्ने विकल्प दिइनेछ।

How will my information be kept confidential? मेरो जानकारी कसरी गोपनीय राखिनेछ?

The University of Exeter processes personal data for the purposes of carrying out research in the public interest. The University will endeavour to be transparent about its processing of your personal data and this information sheet should provide a clear explanation of this. If you do have any queries about the University's processing of your personal data that cannot be resolved by the research team, further information may be obtained from the University's Data Protection Officer by emailing dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk or at www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection

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Will I receive any payment for taking part? के म भाग लिनको लागि कुनै भुक्तानी पाउनेछु?

You will not receive any payment for taking part.

तपाईंले भाग लिनको लागि कुनै भुक्तानी प्राप्त गर्नुहुने छैन।

What will happen to the results of this study? यो अध्ययनको नतीजा के हुनेछ?

This research will be used to complete a thesis for a PhD degree. Upon completion of the degree, the entire study or parts may be published or offered to those groups participating.

यो अनुसन्धानलाई पीएचडी डिग्रीको लागि थिसिस पूरा गर्नको लागि प्रयोग गरिने छ। डिग्रीको पूरा भएपछि पूरा अध्ययन वा भागहरू प्रकाशित हुन सक्छ वा साझेदारी गर्न ती समूहहरूलाई प्रस्तावित गर्न सक्छ।

Who is organising and funding this study? यो अध्ययन को आयोजन र कोष को हो?

This study is organised by Michelle Szydłowski, a PhD student at the University of Exeter. You can reach her at ms835@exeter.ac.uk

यो अध्ययन मिसेल सिज्दलोवस्की द्वारा आयोजित, Exeter विश्वविद्यालय मा एक पीएचडी विद्यार्थी द्वारा आयोजित छ .तपाईं उसलाई

तपाईं इमेल गर्न सक्नुहुनेछ। इ - मेल ठेगाना: ms835@exeter.ac.uk

Who has reviewed this study? कसले यस अध्ययनको समीक्षा गर्यो?

This study has been reviewed by faculty at the University of Exeter, and the University of Exeter Ethics Committee.

यो अध्ययन एक्टर को विश्वविद्यालय मा संकाय द्वारा समीक्षा गरिएको छ, र एक्सेटर विश्वविद्यालय ईथिक्स कमेटी ।

Further information and contact details

If you have any concerns about this study that you are uncomfortable discussing with the researcher, please contact: ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk

थप जानकारी र सम्पर्क विवरणहरू:

यदि तपाईंसँग यस अध्ययनको बारेमा कुनै चिन्ता छ भने तपाईंले शोधकर्तासँग छलफल गर्न असहज हुनुहुन्छ, कृपया सम्पर्क गर्नुहोस्: गेल सेमोर, अनुसन्धान नैतिकता र प्रशासन। उहाँको इमेल ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk

Thank you for your interest in this project.

यस परियोजनामा तपाईंको चासोको लागि धन्यवाद।

CONSENT FORM (सहमतिका लागि)

Participant number (सहभागी संख्या): _____

Title of Project: Framing Conservation, Colonialism and Preservation of Endangered Species in Nepal.

परियोजनाको शीर्षक: नेपालमा खतरनाक प्रजातिहरूको फ्रेमिंग संरक्षण, औपनिवेशिकवाद र संरक्षण

Name of Researcher: Michelle Szydłowski

शोधकर्ता को नाम: मिशेल सज्दलोवस्की

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated February 26, 2019 (version 1) for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have these answered satisfactorily.

पुष्टि गर्दछु कि मैले माथिको परियोजनाको लागि 26 फरवरी, 2019 (संस्करण 1) को जानकारी पत्र पढेको छु। मैले जानकारीलाई विचार गर्ने अवसर पाएको छु, प्रश्नहरू सोध्नुहोस् र यो संतोषजनक रूपमा जवाफ दिइयो।

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.

मैले बुझें कि मेरो सहभागिता स्वैच्छिक छ। म कुनै पनि कारण बिना मेरो कानूनी अधिकारलाई असर नगरिकन यो वार्तालाप कुनै पनि समयमा फिर्ता लिन छु।

3. I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study may be looked at by members of the research team and individuals from the University of Exeter, where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.

म बुझ्दछु कि अध्ययनको एकत्रित डेटाको प्रासंगिक खण्ड अनुसन्धान, अनुसन्धान टोलीका सदस्यहरू र एक्सेटर विश्वविद्यालयका सदस्यहरू द्वारा हेर्न सकिन्छ। यो, यस अनुसन्धानमा भाग लिन सम्बन्धित छ।

4. I understand that taking part involves pseudonymised/anonymised questionnaire responses, and interview transcripts (no one but the researcher will know who I am).

मैले बुझें कि भाग लेने मा छद्मनाम / गुमनाम प्रश्नावली प्रतिक्रियाहरू र साक्षात्कार ट्रांस्क्रिप्ट शामिल छ (कुनै पनि शोधकर्ताले थाहा पाउनेछन् कि म को हुँ)

5. I understand that taking part may involve audio recordings.

मैले बुझ्दछु कि लिने भागले अडियो रेकर्डिङ समावेश गर्न सक्छ।

6. I understand that information will be used to create a dissertation report as part of the researcher's fulfilment of a PhD degree.

म बुझ्दछु कि जानकारी एक पीएचडी डिग्रीको शोधकर्ताको पूर्तिको भागको रूपमा एक शोधरण रिपोर्ट सिर्जना गर्न प्रयोग गरिनेछ।



7. I understand that information may be shared with other researchers for use in future research projects.

मलाई थाहा छ कि भविष्यका अन्य अनुसन्धानकर्ताहरूसँग भविष्य अनुसन्धान अनुसन्धान

परियोजनाहरूमा प्रयोगको लागि साझेदारी हुन सक्छ।

8. I understand that taking part involves reports published in an academic or other publication and may be used for academic or public conference activities.

मैले बुझ्दछु कि भाग लिने एक शैक्षणिक वा अन्य प्रकाशनमा प्रकाशित रिपोर्टहरू समावेश गर्दछ। र

अकादमिक वा सार्वजनिक सम्मेलन गतिविधिका लागि प्रयोग गर्न सकिन्छ।

9. I understand that information may be used in an anonymised report to conservation organizations for the purpose of improving messaging, conservation efforts, or outreach programs.

म बुझ्दछु कि सूचना सन्देश, संरक्षण प्रयासहरू, वा आउटब्याच प्रोग्रामहरू सुधार गर्ने उद्देश्यका लागि

संरक्षण संगठनको लागि गुमनाम रिपोर्टमा प्रयोग गर्न सकिन्छ।

10. I agree to take part in the above project.

म माथिको परियोजनामा भाग लिन सहमत छु।

Name of Participant
सहभागीको नाम

Date (मिति)

Signature (हस्ताक्षर)

Name of researcher

Date (मिति)

Signature (हस्ताक्षर)

शोधकर्ताको नाम

Taking consent (सहमति लिनु)

PHOTOGRAPHY CONSENT FORM

Participant Identification Number:

Title of Project: Framing Conservation, Colonialism and Preservation of Endangered Species in
Nepal

Name of Researcher: Michelle Szydlowski

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read the information sheet dated February 26, 2019 (version #1) for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without my legal rights being affected.
3. I consent to having my photograph taken and used for the inclusion in a dissertation report as part of the Researcher's fulfilment of a PhD degree.
4. I understand that this photograph may be included in reports published in an academic or other publication and may be used for academic or public conference activities.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of researcher taking consent	Date	Signature

Sample questions

Sample questions for management and directors of organizations

How would you describe your organizations goals and motivations?

Are those goals being met?

What is your personal motivation for working with conservation efforts?

How do you decide what is the 'best' for the animal with regard to:

veterinary care

hands-on versus hands-off caring

release to wild vs shipment to Kathmandu zoo or sending to other countries

tourism activities (i.e. can people visit the animal in your care)

policies for gifting animals to other countries and who makes the decision on where they go

Have you personally experienced any HWC?

Sample questions for NTNC wildlife care team and government veterinary staff

How would you describe your organizations goals and motivations?
Are those goals being met?
What is your personal motivation for working with conservation efforts?

How do you decide what is the 'best' for the animal with regard to:
veterinary care
hands-on versus hands-off caring
release to wild vs shipment to Kathmandu zoo or sending to other countries
tourism activities (i.e. can people visit the animal in your care)
policies for gifting animals to other countries and who makes the decision on where they go

How do you feel the guidelines set out for wildlife care meet the needs of the animal?
Are there any changes you would like to see in order to better care for the animals?

Do you receive financial or personnel assistance from outside organizations?
National or international?
What services do they provide?

What additional 'needs' does your organization have to serve wildlife?

Have you personally experienced any HWC?

Questions for volunteers working with wildlife or captive elephants

Why did you choose to use this organization (name here) for your volunteer activity?
How would you describe this organizations goals and motivations?
Do you feel that those goals are being met?
What is your personal motivation for working with conservation efforts?
Why did you choose this country/city/etc.?
What made you choose to work with wildlife/captive elephants?
What activities are you doing with the orphans?
Are you doing any other projects on this trip?
What other areas/cities/countries are you visiting?
Are you combining the trip with vacation activities?
Do you volunteer with animals in your own country/city/etc.?
How do you feel about the care that this animal is receiving?
Please describe why/why not
How would you describe the 'best' care practices for this animal?
How do you know what is 'best' for this animal?
Embodied knowledge, education, prior experience, etc.

Questions for adults who experienced HWC as children:

What was your experience of HWC?
How did it impact your views on wildlife?
What do you do as a job currently?
How do you feel that your community deals with HWC?

Do you feel like you received adequate services (counselling, job placement, education) as a child?

Did the incident change the way your relatives or friends feel about wildlife?

Questions for community members

What is your view of conservation efforts in this area?

Have you interacted with any conservation organizations that are active here?

Please name

In your view, what are the goals of that organization?

In your opinion, are these goals being met?

What would you like to see conservation groups doing in your area?

Have you personally experienced any HWC?

Acknowledgements

While it may be slightly unorthodox to acknowledge one's faith in a thesis, it truly needs to be done. Faith has gotten me through more than one crisis in my life, and without God I would never have made it. This has resulted in many amusing (and some not so amusing) debates in my former biology labs, but I have never seen any conflict between faith and science (or between the wide variety of world religions, for that matter). Thanks again for always being there.

This thesis would have been impossible without the support of my husband, Bob. I wanted to call him my 'long-suffering' husband, but that would give him entirely too much ammunition the next time I make a life-changing decision for both of us or feel the need to spend months in Nepal. Thanks for the 30 plus years, the laughter, the 'color' and putting up with my need to be surrounded by non-human heartbeats. Thanks for being a great son and son-in-law to our parents.

It would also have been unthinkable without my daughters, Kesia and Chelsea, who have provided me with more joy than any mom deserves. It is impossible to put into words what you both mean to me. You root me in the present while also encouraging me to fly. You are my sources of pride, much-needed reality checks and comic relief when I get too serious. I love you more than anything and owe you a huge 'thank you' for putting up with me during my chronic quest for education.

Thank you to Jensen, my grandson, who is perhaps the only person to ever leave me speechless. I love to watch you exploring and taking in every detail; you are so full of wonder at our world. When I look at you, I see the future and it is full of joy! I love you so much and can't wait to see what adventures we will take together.

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To the PodCrew, Kris and Sarah: you ladies have been such a delight, my guides as I navigated strange British ways and fellow pilgrims with me through the often-unintelligible publishing world. You provided me with laughter, calming words, empathy, too many pictures of cats and a lot of flower emojis. Thank you for letting me vent in my loud American way, and for teaching me amazing and applicable new acronyms. Long live the Anthrozoology Podcast and 'uncivilized' women.

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To Dad and Alyssa, who I know spent many a long day gazing down and wondering if I was really going to eat that entire box of Gobstoppers in one sitting; you inspired me to finish my PhD, both of you for very different reasons. Thank you for being lights in my life, I miss you both every day. I promise to eat a salad now and again.

To Drs Hurn, Turner, Badman-King, Cassidy and Saha, thank you for your reading (and rereading) of this thesis in its various forms, your thoughtful suggestions and patience as I navigated the turbulent world of doctoral studies.

To Suraj Kali: I'm sorry.

List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Nepal showing national parks. Public domain. Used under creative commons license.

Figure 2: Nepal outline showing location of Chitwan National Park
From: Government of Nepal. (2015a) *Chitwan National Park and Its Buffer Zone Management Plan*. Kathmandu. Ministry of Soil and Forest Conservation. Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation.

Figure 3: An NTNC-employed female elephant wearing hobble chains on her front feet. Photo taken by the author. Sauraha, Nepal. April 3, 2019

Figure 4: Electric fence posts in the NTNC trash heap. Photo by the author. Sauraha, Nepal. April 17, 2019.

Figure 5: Dhonu Gaj, chained in his stable. Photo by the author. Sauraha, Nepal. April 1, 2019.

Figure 6: Liswini Kali in her prior stable. Photo by the author. Sauraha, Nepal. March 31, 2019.

Figure 7: A close-up of Liswini Kali's feet showing nail problems and swelling. Sauraha, Nepal. Photo by the author. March 31, 2019.

Figure 8: Idha and her 'hats' at the INGO5 HOME. Sauraha, Nepal. Photos provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Figure 9: Idha and her 'hats' at the INGO5 HOME. Sauraha, Nepal. Photos provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Figure 10: Idha at the end of 2020. Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Figure 11: Idha and Mitch Bames. Sauraha, Nepal. Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Figure 12: Idha and Feba. Sauraha, Nepal. Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Figure 13: Brown initially treating Idha's feet using a training wall at the INGO5 facility. Sauraha, Nepal. It should be noted that this 'stick' is a target, not a beating stick. Photo provided by INGO5, used with permission.

Figure 14: Welfare considerations checklist created by the author for this study.

Figure 15: Kasmitha Kali under the broken roof of her stable. Sauraha, Nepal. Photo taken by the author. April 4, 2019.

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