



**BRING THE
ELEPHANT
HOME**

Annual Report 2020

Bring The Elephant Home Foundation

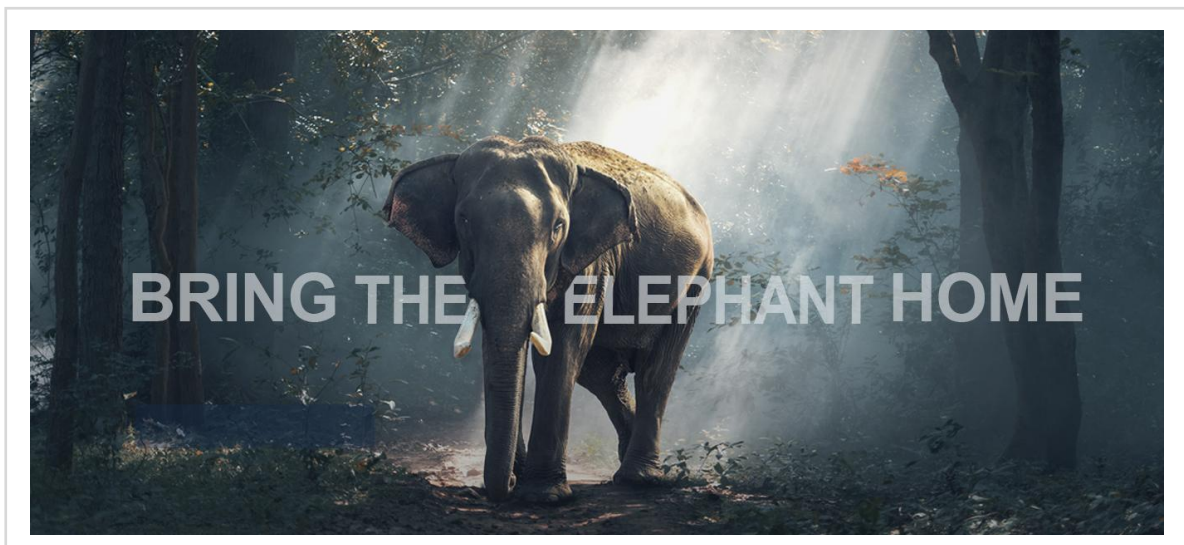
For a world where elephants and people can live in harmony

The Netherlands, Thailand, South Africa

Approved by the board: 05/04/2020

Table of Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Mission and Objectives**
 - 2.1 Mission
 - 2.2 Strategy: integrated community-based elephant conservation
 - 2.3 Goal: sustainable positive change
 - 2.4 Objectives
- 3. Projects and Programs**
 - 3.1 11th Annual Bike For Elephants
 - 3.2 Tom Yum project
 - 3.3 Beehive Fence Project
 - 3.4 Conservation Action in Kui Buri
 - 3.5 Ongoing Research in South Africa
 - 3.6. Rewilding
 - 3.7. Capacity building: TeamNL & board
- 4. Media and Outreach**
- 5. In summary**



1. Introduction

The year 2020 started off with many exciting projects; however, as was the case for many NGOs, it turned out to be a year that tested our flexibility and resilience. With most of our volunteer events and the opening of our elephant field stations postponed, and with the lack of funding during COVID-19 in general, it became a challenging period. Although we initially aimed at just making it through to the end of year, we eventually ended up successfully initiating **new coexistence projects** despite COVID-19.

During the year, it became increasingly clear how much the corona virus affects elephants, and the people living alongside them. Local communities lost income generated through elephant-based eco-tourism, which, in turn, decreased their tolerance towards elephants. Tensions between local people and wild elephants reached an unprecedented level in February 2020, when an elephant killed a farmer guarding his plantation in Ruam Thai village. In the next few months, four elephants that visited farmland were killed by gunshots or electrocution. To help mitigate these challenges for local people, we launched a new method to promote human-elephant coexistence: the **Tom Yum project**. The project supports farmers to organically grow crops that elephants do not like, such as chillies, lemongrass, galangal, lime, garlic, cilantro, and other aromatic plants. The ingredients of the traditional, spicy Tom Yum soup! The Tom Yum project helps to **diversify local livelihoods** and creates employment for rural people, which is vital, especially during these difficult times. The project aims to reduce violence towards elephants and **protects the ecosystems on which we all depend**.

Another highlight of 2020 was the publication of our beehive fence research in Conservation Science and Practice. The study shows that beehive fences can reduce crop damage by Asian elephants and generate supplemental income for farmers at the same time. We proudly hosted the webinar "Can bees bring peace for elephants and farmers?" in collaboration with the Future For Nature Academy, Miami University's Project Dragonfly, and a great team of elephant experts from Africa and Asia. We also presented the beehive fence model and the Tom Yum project at the Human-Elephant Conflict Conference in Thailand. It is our mission to collaborate and develop partnerships, and sharing our findings within these networks contributes to the promotion of new sustainable conservation methods and to create peaceful coexistence.

In Thailand, dedicated community rangers risk their lives during efforts to mitigate increasing human-elephant conflict. Thanks to our donors, we were able to provide them with urgently needed equipment. Despite the travel restrictions, we were very fortunate to have been able to host our annual **Bike for Elephants** charity ride on World Wildlife Day. About 50 participants set off on a two-day adventure that not only took them on stunning trails on the border of Kuiburi National Park, but also taught them about the challenges experienced by people living near wild elephant populations.

In South Africa, we planned to open our Elephant Field Station in April 2020, and the first option for pioneer volunteers was already fully booked. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 we had to postpone all plans related to the Elephant Field Station. However, we have been able to complete our community workshops about innovative elephant conservation strategies that are part of Antoinette's PhD research at the university of KwaZulu-Natal. We have made great progress in enlarging our network, for example by presenting our work at the Pathways Conference in Kenya. In 2020, Bring The Elephant Home expanded its network once again. We have a growing team of **dedicated volunteers** and welcomed two new staff members in Thailand: Thanasit "Oh" Phibunwattanakon as our Regional Field Supervisor and Samon "Som" Sangthong as our Activity Coordinator. We also welcomed Dr. Suzan Doornwaard and Tis Voortman to our board. David Owen was one of the 20 changemakers to join the Win Win Sustainability Adventure, and Antoinette van de Water joined the working group 'Elephant Ecosystem Services' with WWF, Trunks & Leaves, and Colby College. We have established a collaboration with two institutions in the USA and organisations in four Asian countries to test the effectiveness of planting alternative crops on elephants, people and the environment. This inspiring project that will be launched in 2021 aims to facilitate human-wildlife coexistence through regenerative agro-ecology to restore resilient socio-environmental systems. We became a member of the GlobeGuards in the Netherlands and ENhancing COexistence through SHaring (ENCOSH), and are grateful for our continued partnership with Elephants Alive, the Elephant Specialist Advisory Group, the Future For Nature Academy, and FORRU of Chiang Mai University. Finally, a big thank you to all our donors and volunteers who were so important for us during this challenging year. Many thanks to Kootje Fundatien, INNO of WWF, Charity Pot of Lush Cosmetics, Cryotainer, Voeten in de Aarde, Franci Blanco of Happy Hearts Yoga Project, and Marjo Hoedemakers Elephant Fund.

Bring The Elephant Home values **diversity, inclusion, and equality**. We celebrate the range of diversity, culture, and unique differences within our organisation and network. We embrace inclusiveness by encouraging everyone to share their ideas, opinions and knowledge, and we welcome diversity at all levels. We believe that inclusion enables out-of-the-box solutions, makes sustainable growth possible, and contributes to **a just and more sustainable world**. By working together across continents and applying research and conservation action, we will keep improving the future of elephants and the people living amongst them. Together, we can create a world where elephants and people can thrive!

Antoinette van de Water
Director Bring The Elephant Home



2. Mission and Objectives

2.1 Mission

Our mission is to ensure the wellbeing, social integrity, and survival of elephants and work towards a world in which people and elephants can thrive and benefit from each other's existence. By doing so, we aim to contribute to socio-ecological resilience.

To increase chances of survival for elephants and work towards a world in which people and elephants can live in harmony, benefiting from each other's existence.

2.2 Strategy: integrated community-based elephant conservation

Our community-based conservation strategy, which we have developed over more than a decade, integrates the intrinsic, ecologic, economic, cultural, social and spiritual values of elephants. Through linking elephant wellbeing, ecosystem conservation, and human wellbeing, our projects aim to better the relationship between elephants and people and support community members to initiate sustainable solutions tailored to improve local situations.

2.3 Wider goals: sustainable positive change

By implementing our integrated conservation strategy, we push for change in elephant-human relationships from mutual negative impacts to mutual positive impacts. Our projects are inclusive and promote shared decision making, ownership, sustainability, equality, pride, and partnerships. In our community-based projects, we have witnessed that when people take ownership, lasting positive change will happen.

2.4 Objectives

- Conserving wild elephants and restoring, expanding and protecting their habitat in collaboration with local stakeholders;
- Implementing, testing and promoting sustainable strategies for human-elephant coexistence;
- Encouraging local participation in nature conservation and empowerment of local communities, generating economic and social benefits;
- Raising awareness about the importance of elephant conservation and nature in general.



3. Projects and Programs 2020

All our projects are in collaboration with local organizations and include the participation of local communities. This year, we focused our efforts on establishing a base, developing relationships with multi-level stakeholders, and engaging in conservation action activities in Ruam Thai village, Prachuap Khiri Khan province, Thailand. This community borders Kuiburi National Park, home to over 300 wild elephants. Our projects and programs in 2020 were:

- 3.1 11th Annual Bike For Elephants
- 3.2 Tom Yum project
- 3.3 Beehive Fence Project
- 3.4 Conservation action in Kui Buri
- 3.5 Ongoing research in Southern Africa
- 3.6 Rewilding
- 3.7 Capacity building: TeamNL & board

3.1 11th Annual Bike For Elephants

On October 3-4, 2020, we hosted the 11th annual Bike For Elephants fundraiser in Kui Buri, Prachuap Khiri Khan in collaboration with the local community in Ruam Thai village. 50 Participants set off on a two-day adventure that not only took them on stunning trails on the border of Kuiburi National Park, but also taught them about the challenges experienced by people living near wild elephant populations.

Along the route we planted trees and learned about beehive fences, made paper from elephant dung and pineapple leaves, and saw gaur, hornbills, and several herds of wild elephants on a community-led safari into Kuiburi National Park. The event catalyzed new partnerships and ideas, and raised funds for the Tom Yum Project. Many thanks to all partners involved in this unique event:

Chang Pa Kui Buri Homestay, Baan Ruam Thai Homestay, Kuiburi National Park, the Royal Forestry Department, Had Kham sub-district office, Kui Buri Community-Based Wildlife Tourism Club, Phu Kang Farmstay, Baan Rai Kong Mun Guesthouse, Free Bird Cafe, SuperBee Wax Wraps, Beaconhouse Yamsaard International School - BYIS, The Customer Clinic, Hua Hin Bike Tours by Tour De Asia Bicycle Touring, and The Little Urban Farm.



3.2 The Tom Yum project

The Tom Yum project supports farmers to organically grow alternative crops that elephants don't like, such as chillies, lemongrass, galangal, lime, kaffir lime, and other aromatic plants. These alternative crops are now used in a range of handmade products, all with a unique conservation story! A group of 15 local people earn additional income through the crop planting, maintenance, and product making. Six local women attended a workshop at Soap Me, an eco-friendly cosmetic store in Hua Hin, where they learned to make candles, soaps and other products using the yield from alternative crops.

In 2020, we first tested the alternative crops to see if this model actually worked in the area. Although elephants have entered the plot roughly three times per week since the study began, we have lost very few plants to trampling or uprooting. Indeed, our preliminary study found that in two months, elephants destroyed 96.5% of the pineapple grown next to the experimental crops, while they only eliminated 5.2% of the chillies, 4.8% of the kaffir lime, and 2.5% of the citronella - and in the majority of cases these were plants growing near the pineapple. The lemongrass, lime and karonda were not damaged by elephants.

The project aims to design a sustainable model that converts “conflict” into “coexistence”, can be implemented in other contexts, and serves as a catalyst for change. In line with BTEH's basic principles, the project tackles elephant conservation at the root by countering the human-induced causes of HEC.

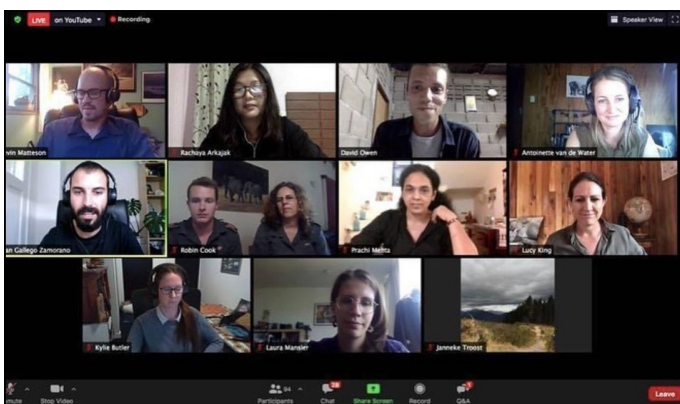


3.3 Beehive Fence project

On August 20, 2020, our research paper ‘Beehive fences as a sustainable local solution to human-elephant conflict in Thailand’ was published in Conservation Science and Practice. It describes the first evidence that beehive fences can reduce crop damage by Asian elephants and generate supplemental income for farmers in Thailand. As such, beehive fences have the potential to prevent violent conflicts between people and the world's largest land animals, and lead to new forms of peaceful coexistence. Our study was conducted in Kaeng Hang Maeo district of Chanthaburi province in Eastern Thailand, an area of high human-elephant conflict, consisting of farmland surrounded by protected areas. The results of the pilot study indicated that over 60% of the elephant groups and over 88% of the individual elephants were deterred by the newly installed beehive fence. The elephants that came close to the beehive fence showed typical signs of increased alertness and uncertainty and often slowly backed away. The farm owner reported a strong reduction in crop damage after the beehive fence was installed, as well as additional benefits including the supplemental income from honey and honeybee queens. This study was a collaboration of Bring The Elephant Home Foundation, the Phluang Wildlife Research Station, Project Dragonfly of Miami University, the Future For Nature Academy, the Elephants and Bees project of Save the Elephants and global citizen scientists.

In September, we hosted a webinar to share our research findings. The webinar was hosted by the Future For Nature Academy and Miami University, and included presentations by Dr. Lucy King (Future For Nature Winner, Save the Elephants, Kenya), Dr. Kevin Matteson (Project Dragonfly, Miami University), Kylie Butler (beehive fence study in Sri Lanka), Dr. Prachi Mehta (Wildlife Research and Conservation Society, India), Dr. Michelle Henley and Robin Cook (South Africa), Rachaya Arkajak (Phluang Wildlife Research Station, Thailand) and David Owen (Miami University, BTEH, Thailand).

Beyond Honey brand continued sales in 2020. Through the distribution of elephant-friendly honey, people can support this holistic solution, BTEH can support beehive fence owners, and more people can become aware of the way that bees are helping farmers and elephants.



3.4 Conservation action in Kuiburi

Our team overcame challenges brought on by the pandemic. Throughout the year, we were still able to host over 250 students from NIST International School for conservation action events with community partners living on the borders of Salakpra Wildlife Sanctuary and Kuiburi National Park. Notably, 120 students camped in Kuiburi National Park in December 2020, and the program supported local community initiatives, created new ideas for our Tom Yum project, such as other Tom Yum products and sales opportunities, and gave students the chance to forge a deeper connection with nature. International School of Bangkok, Hua Hin International School, Beaconhouse Yamsaard International School, and Verso International School have visited our project site in Kuiburi and are working with us to develop conservation action trips in 2021. These events bring benefits to the communities which contributes to more tolerance towards elephants.

3.5 Ongoing research in Southern Africa

In 2020, we were able to collect enough data in Southern Africa for our research on integrated human-elephant coexistence strategies, conducted in the context of obtaining a PhD. We have been able to conduct over 700 questionnaires, 8 in-depth interviews, and 7 World Cafe participatory workshops with people living alongside wild elephants. Moreover, the cancellation of field activities had one advantage: more time for analysing data and writing down the findings. This research, conducted in the context of obtaining a PhD, will give new insights into human-elephant coexistence strategies, and will shed light on the drivers of conflicts. With this research, we aim to develop an evidence-based, holistic, mutually beneficial human-elephant coexistence strategy.

In 2020, we presented at the Pathways Conference in Kenya, at the PRIS conference of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, The Conservation Symposium in Howick, and at the Australasian Wildlife Management Society. Through these types of events, we enlarged our network, formed new collaborations, and shared our research findings with a broad audience.



3.6 Rewilding

The pandemic revealed the challenges of elephants in captivity, and offered a chance to rethink the relationship between humans and elephants. Together with three other elephant experts, we published the article ‘Future of Thailand’s captive elephants’ in *Animal Sentience*. The article describes how elephant rewilding can be done through a holistic co-management strategy that improves human wellbeing and social cohesion, as well as elephant wellbeing, thereby better securing long-term survival of Asian elephants, environmental justice, and overall sustainability.

In July 2020, we published an article in the journal *The Revelator* with the title: ‘Could the COVID crisis provide an opportunity for Thailand’s captive elephants?’ The article ends with: “The problems facing Thailand’s elephants are bleak, but promising solutions do exist. We need extensive exploration of all challenges to build knowledge and attract investments. In an ideal scenario, elephants will be able to live natural lives, nature in general will thrive, and people will benefit in a material sense, as well as regain their age-old respect and veneration for the gentle giants. Admittedly, the pandemic makes it difficult to envision those ideal scenarios, but it also tells us that now is the time to plan changes for a better future and an exciting new normal.”

3.7 Capacity building: TeamNL & board

In 2020, we welcomed two new members for the board of BTEH in the Netherlands: Dr. Suzan Doornwaard and Tis Voortman. Social scientist Dr. Suzan Doornwaard has been involved with Bring The Elephant Home since a couple of years, contributing enormously to our research and project proposals. We regret to say farewell to Remko Bronswijk who volunteered many years for BTEH as our treasurer, and we thank him for the many years of support. We are very happy to welcome Tis Voortman as our new treasurer. With experience in human-wildlife conflict management and bookkeeping, Tis is a valuable new board member. Our enthusiastic team of volunteers is growing, bringing new expertise and ideas into our organisation. In 2020, we again offered students of Utrecht University an intern position at Bring The Elephant Home. We are grateful for Capstone and Flock for their ongoing support to develop our database and website, so that we can ensure the best protection of our supporters’ privacy, and have the best communication tools to keep them informed.

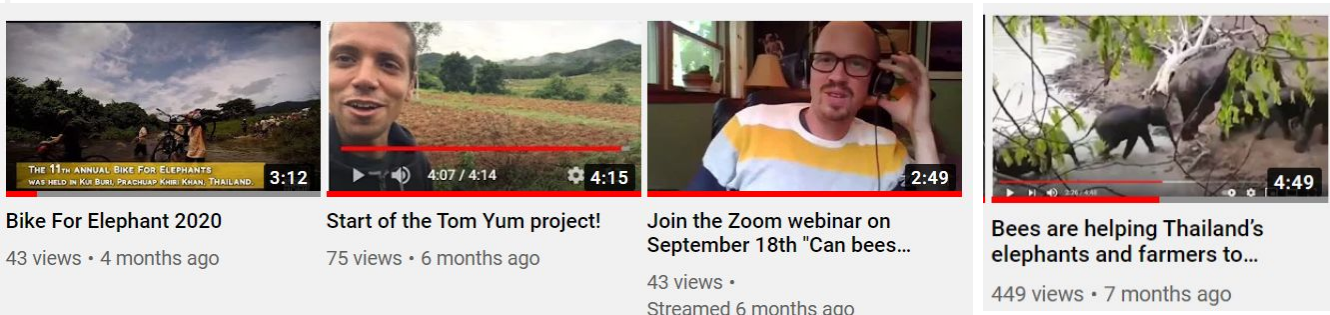


4. Media and outreach

4.1 Scientific publications

- Van de Water, A., King, L. E., Arkajak, R., Arkajak, J., Doormaal, N. van, Ceccarelli, V., Sluiter, L., Doornwaard, S. M., Praet, V., Owen, D., & Matteson, K. (2020). Beehive fences as a sustainable local solution to human-elephant conflict in Thailand. *Conservation Science and Practice*, e260. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.260>
- Van de Water, A., Henley, M., Bates, L., & Slotow, R. (2020). Future of Thailand's captive elephants. *Animal Sentience*, 5(28).

Other media and videos produced



5. In summary

The future of elephants is heavily dependent on human attitudes and tolerance levels. Elephants are an umbrella species; their protection positively affects key biodiversity areas and other threatened species. However, land use changes and other socioeconomic issues increasingly cause human-elephant conflicts. Preventing these conflicts is one of the greatest challenges in elephant conservation worldwide. Despite the direct impact of elephants living in their area, community representatives have often been excluded from decision-making processes. We aim to connect and collaborate with communities living with elephants and local organisations to include their visions on ecological problems and co-create sustainable solutions bottom up.

We can't fully understand all the consequences of losing a keystone species such as the elephant. Because they are integral in so many connections in nature, their extinction would create a snowball effect of biodiversity loss. By reconnecting patches of habitat to allow elephants to move uninterruptedly, applying a mix of community-based mitigation methods, and developing models that help people to rediscover and benefit from the value of elephants, we can create a world where elephants and people can thrive.

Bring The Elephant Home!



Many thanks to all involved

Bring The Elephant Home can only realize its goals thanks to the endless dedication of many people from different nationalities.

BTEH has a board in the Netherlands (board members Berrie Jurg, Liesbeth Sluiter, Dr. Suzan Doornwaard and Tis Voortman) and a board in Thailand (Antoinette van de Water, Siriporn Sriaram, Supassawan Homchailert and Dr. Aim Chotirot). Our projects in Thailand are coordinated by our Program Manager David Owen, joined by many Thai and international volunteers. Our projects in Africa and Asia are supported by TeamNL: our growing team of volunteers. Special thanks also to BTEH ambassador Leo van de Water, who coordinates BTEH's office in the Netherlands.

We are very grateful for all our partners and donors who make our work possible! Special thanks to the Phluang Wildlife Research Station (Thailand), Elephants and Bees Research Station (Kenya), Future For Nature Academy (NL), Dragonfly Project of Miami University (USA), School of Life Sciences of the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal, Elephants Alive (SA), the Elephant Specialist Advisory Group (SA), Win Win Sustainability Adventure, Trunks & Leaves (Sri Lanka), GlobeGuards (NL), ENCOSH (France), and FORRU of Chiang Mai University. Finally, a big thank you to all our donors and volunteers who were so important for us during this challenging year. We would not be able to execute our projects and initiatives without the financial support from the INNO Fund of WWF, Lush Cosmetics, Kootje Foundation, Cryotainer, Voeten in de Aarde, Franci Blanco of Happy Hearts Yoga Project, and Marjo Hoedemakers Elephant Fund. We are grateful for Capstone and Flock for their ongoing support to develop our database and website.

Special thanks to all our long term volunteers from all over the world and to everyone else who contributed to the success of BTEH in 2020! We couldn't realize our goals without the loyal support of all our donors and sponsors. We are truly grateful for your support, trust and friendship.





Foundation: **Bring the Elephant Home**

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