

APPEAL OF THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT ON WORLD ELEPHANT DAY 2016

The World Elephant Day is an international event observed every year on 12th August, dedicated to the preservation and protection of the world's elephants. Elephants are highly social animals and extremely intelligent. They have memories that span many years. These memories serve matriarchs well during dry seasons when they guide their herds, sometimes for many kilometres, to watering holes that they remember from the past. Elephant herds are led by the female, the Matriarch, who keeps the herd under control and chooses its direction and pace. Elephants also form deep family bonds and live in tight matriarchal family groups.

The Government of Tamil Nadu is pioneer in taking effective initiatives to protect this magnificent animal. The Project Elephant scheme is implemented in four elephant reserves viz. Nilgiris Eastern Ghats Elephant Reserve, Coimbatore Elephant Reserve, Anamalai Elephant Reserve and Periyar Elephant Reserve. Tamil Nadu is one of the leading States in elephant population and their habitat management. This scheme is being implemented to protect the elephants and improve their habitats. The interventions include undertaking fire protection measures, providing water facilities to elephants etc., and planting fodder species to improve the habitats of elephants.

The Forest Department, Government of Tamil Nadu has elephant camps at Kozhikamudhi near Top Slip in Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR), at Theppakadu in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) in the Nilgiris and at Chadivayal in Pooluvampatti Range of the Coimbatore Forest Division. The camps have a sizeable number of elephants that were either rescued when in distress or those orphaned calves. The elephant camps are proving to be a major tourist attraction.

Other initiatives include digging elephant proof trenches along the forest boundaries in Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Coimbatore, Nilgiris, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Erode, Dindigul, Tirunelveli, Kanniyakumari and Tiruppur districts besides carrying out other activities like construction of percolation ponds, check dams and water troughs, maintenance of elephant proof trenches, early warning system, trip wire alarm system and tranquilizing and translocation of problematic elephants in Vellore, Salem, Dharmapuri circles, etc., for which various projects have been sanctioned.

On this World Elephant Day 2016, I urge all to take responsibility for Conservation of Elephants in Tamil Nadu. I appeal to all youth and student community to take up small steps for a mammoth conservation effort to protect our elephant's population. Supporting more and more afforestation activities, conserving forest area, rainwater harvesting, creating awareness for elephant conservation on forest areas etc., are some of the ways for protecting this humble creature.

I appeal to all the public to create awareness about the World Elephant Day 2016 among the peer groups and support this noble cause.

Director of Environment