**ASIAN ELEPHANT COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATION FIELD COURSE – THAILAND**

**Application deadline** February 15, 2018

**Course:** APBI 490 – Section 941 (6 credits)

**ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

The “Asian Elephant Compassionate Conservation” field course explores how the science of animal well-being can be used in conservation to improve outcomes for animals, people, and the environment. Compassionate Conservation is a cross-disciplinary, scientific field that recognizes that the health and well-being of all living things – including humans – are connected. This program addresses the socio-cultural context of conservation and how empirical work in conservation is grounded in value-based assumptions about wild animals, nature, and its resources.

Students will participate in an on-going research program that is studying the behaviour, social dynamics, bioacoustics, and food ecology of a family re-wilded Asian elephants. Students will hike each day into pristine bamboo and tropical evergreen forest to observe these elephants, assess the forest habitat, and survey other wildlife. Students will be accompanied by elephant guardians at all times when in elephant habitat.

Students will be accommodated in homestays by the local village. In addition to research activities, students will have the opportunity to participate in local Karen activities, such as rice planting, foraging for native vegetables, animal tracking, language lessons in Thai and Karen, fabric weaving, bamboo crafts, as well as traditional meal preparation.

The field site is in a remote (but not isolated) Karen hill tribe village in northern Thailand. The villagers speak Karen and Thai. The accommodations are basic, but clean and comfortable. Toilets are mostly western, but some are Asian squat style. The showers are a traditional bucket bath. There is no running hot water in the village.

Students will be given a weekend to explore Chiang Mai, the largest city in northern Thailand. Chiang Mai is renowned for its night markets, beautiful Old City region, and delicious, traditional Thai cuisine. Transportation will be provided.

**Program requirements**

In addition to completing the 4-week course, to earn credit, students must complete a final written, research project based on on-site lectures and data collection.

**Program Dates**

Session I: July 1 – July 29

Session II: August 1 – August 29

**Eligibility**

Students with 3rd-year standing or above

Students that have taken Animal Biology, Animal Behaviour, Conservation and/or Animal Welfare courses will receive priority

Application and interview are required

**Program fees and costs**

The program fee is between $2,800 ­– $3,100CAN. The final fee depends on the number of enrolled students.

**Program Fee Includes**

* On site accommodations
* On site meals (3x/day)
* Program-related travel (ground transportation)
* On-site lectures and cultural lessons
* On-site translator
* Group camping trips
* Group day trips (ex. national park, local museum)
* WiFi

**Program Fee Does Not Include**

* Tuition
* Airfare
* Incidentals

Examples: Personal transportation not related to the program, additional meals, off-site accommodations, personal spending money, immunizations (if needed), health or travel insurance, visas (if necessary), etc.

**Deposit Due on March 15, 2018**

$1000

**Program Fee Due on May 15, 2018**

$1,800 – 2,100

**Refund on Deposits**

Students are eligible for a refund of their deposit minus the administrative fee ($200) if they withdraw from the program within 30 days of paying the deposit. This allows time to fill vacated spots. After April 15, 2018 the deposit and any paid program fees are non-refundable.

**Refund on Program Fees**

Students who withdraw from the program after having paid the remaining program fee are not eligible for a refund on their deposit or the program fee.

**Applications**

Completed applications and all supplementary materials (transcripts, CV/resume, and 2 letters of reference) must be emailed to Dr. Kristen Walker at walkerkr@mail.ubc.ca by February 15th, 2018.

**Contact**

Dr. Kristen Walker, field course instructor, University of British Columbia, walkerkr@mail.ubc.ca

Dr. Liv Baker, research director; Institute for Compassionate Conservation, livbaker@compassionateconservationinstitute.org

**About Mahouts Elephants Foundation**

In addition to working with animal behaviourists, conservationists, and ecologists, participating students will work closely with the team from Mahouts Elephant Foundation, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of Asian elephants and the people who coexist with them. MEF started the re-wilding project “Walking Elephants Home” in 2015 to re-wild a family of elephants, rescued from working and performing in the elephant tourism industry. MEF helps provide financial stability to local people, through a safari-style ecotourism model that guides visitors into elephant habitat, where they may observe the elephants free-living in the forest.

Accepted students to the program will be guests of Mahouts Elephant Foundation and are expected to comport themselves with professionalism, respect, and cultural awareness in the village. A strict dress code of covered shoulders and knees in the village is required. Students must always remember they are guests in the village. It is imperative to our project that all guests respect the differences in culture and strive to understand the community we work alongside with openness and compassion.

More information about the project can be found at the Mahouts Elephant Website [www.mahouts.org](http://www.mahouts.org)

**About the Institute for Compassionate Conservation**

The Institute for Compassionate Conservation is a multi-institutional organization with the mission of supporting the well-being of wild animals through compassion, science, and scholar advocacy.

ICC holds that like us, all animals have an interest in the outcomes of their lives. All animals want appropriate shelter, safety, and food; they want to learn about and hold sway over their lives. For all animals - just like us - their physical health is intertwined with their psychological health; and their social environment matters. Reasonable challenges and positive emotions are not mere privileges an animal is fortunate enough to experience, but are essential to them being alive. <http://www.compassionateconservationinstitute.org/>