



FACT SHEET

Auckland Zoo's Asian Elephant Programme

Auckland Zoo's existing elephant programme

- Auckland Zoo currently holds two female Asian elephants - *Kashin*, 40 years old, and *Burma*, 26 years old.
- The Zoo's elephant management programme is recognised internationally as progressive and is used as a template for programmes at other zoos.
- Elephants are held at Auckland Zoo as high profile conservation advocates – to enable the Zoo to highlight the plight of endangered species, and the factors that threaten their future, such as habitat destruction, poaching and conflict with people.
- Auckland Zoo also helps fund efforts to conserve Asian elephants in Thailand and Indonesia

Asian Elephant Natural History Facts

- The Asian elephant is endangered
- The species is threatened with extinction by habitat degradation, poaching and conflict with people.
- The current wild population is estimated at less than 30,000 animals.
- Asian elephants are highly intelligent and social animals that form close bonds between individuals within the herd.
- Females live in structured matriarchal groups consisting of relatives.
- Males will leave the herd before the age of 10 years, forming bachelor groups or living solitarily.

Health and Welfare

- *Kashin* is 40 years old
- She is experiencing on-going foot and joint problems, and is currently under constant medical surveillance. Her condition remains manageable, but tends to worsen over winter.
- Given her health issues, it is likely that *Kashin* could die within the next 1 to 5 years.
- Neither *Kashin* nor *Burma* is able to breed.
- Elephants are highly social animals. Zoo industry guidelines recommend that captive elephants live within a herd structure. It would therefore be inappropriate to hold *Burma* at the Zoo on her own for an extended period, should *Kashin* die. The Zoo would need to either move *Burma* to another zoo outside New Zealand that has suitable elephants, or acquire additional elephants to meet these guidelines.

Establishing a sustainable herd of Asian elephants at Auckland Zoo

- For Auckland Zoo to hold Asian elephants into the future, we need to establish a breeding herd with a healthy structure

- A sustainable breeding herd of females includes elephants of various ages, from young calves through to old matriarchs, which replicates the natural social structure
- To safeguard against *Burma* being left on her own, the zoo's first priority would be to import a cow.
- To accommodate a sustainable herd, the zoo would need to provide land and facilities sufficient for up to eight females (including calves) and, separately, two males
- The exhibit must separately accommodate and manage two males.
- In the first instance, the zoo would need to acquire one female, followed by two breeding males, and then two breeding females. There would be costs associated with the animal acquisition (transportation, quarantine holding), facility construction, and consequential operational costs such as increased staff requirements.
- Up to two births might occur within the first 10 years.
- The programme is part of an Australasian regional breeding programme, aiming to ensure a sustainable population.

Land

- To accommodate the proposed herd, and to add the required male facility, additional land would be required
- Adjacent to the current elephant enclosure is a relatively under-utilised part of Western Springs Park.

Auckland Zoo Asian Elephant Conservation Support

- The Auckland Zoo Conservation Fund supports Wildlife Protection Units in Sumatra that are active in protecting elephants, conducting surveys and monitoring their populations.
- The Conservation Fund also supports the Elephant Nature Park's 'Trees for Elephants' in Thailand. This project is working to regenerate native rainforests in northern Thailand – home to elephants and a diverse range of other wildlife.