Annual Report 2020

Working elephants and their mahouts at the Indawgyi lake in northern Myanmar

Dear friends and members of Chances for Nature,

2020 was a truly eventful year, which none of us has imagined like this beforehand. Many were facing restrictions in their professional and private lives; therefore we would like to thank you even more for continuously supporting our cause! And, of course, the pandemic also took a toll on our project activities. On the following pages we present to you what we accomplished despite the adverse conditions.
In total, approximately 43.000 € were spent in 2020 for the projects (editorial note: annual statement of account not available at time of print).
We wish all friends and supporters a happy and, above all, healthy 2021 and thank you for your commitment to our nature conservation projects!

Your Chances for Nature team

Environmental education centre gets a guesthouse

A large part of our active members' work in Germany consists of raising funds for our projects abroad. After one and a half years of work we now succeeded in obtaining a grant for the extension of the environmental education centre at Indawgyi lake in the north of Myanmar. This follow-up project consists of a guesthouse with dormitories and a boat with an electric motor. These provide for accommodation and transport for classes from remote regions around the lake and enable them to participate in multi-day environmental conservation courses. Construction starts in spring 2021.
We thank the **Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung** for funding the project.

Elephant project starts in Myanmar

At the beginning of this year our newest project started, which is about improving the living conditions of working elephants at the Indawgyi lake in the north of Myanmar. Traditional husbandry and training methods for working elephants in Myanmar are not very compliant with animal welfare. The project aims at improving medical care for the elephants and at advocating for ethical husbandry. For this purpose a central facility, which provides medical care for the working elephants, especially for pregnant and nursing cows and their offspring as well as older animals, will be established. Furthermore, an institution will be created, which provides information and awareness training and offers education about modern and humane elephant husbandry for local veterinarians, elephant owners and mahouts.
All elephants kept in the project area are owned by private individuals from the region. The animals are taken care of by mahouts, who are employed by the elephant owners and are deployed for work together with the elephants.

Regular visits by the project veterinarian will guarantee medical care for the elephants

In August, the project leader, a local elephant vet, and his assistant visited 98 elephant owners in the biosphere reserve in order to present the new project and to get to know the elephant owners. Combined, they own 190 elephants. The great majority of elephant owners appreciate the project. The health care for the animals is critical at the moment as the reduction in logging in recent years resulted in decreased revenues for elephant owners. All owners want to be part of the elephant owner association which will allow them to better represent their interests to the government.

The project finds wide approval with the elephant owners

Unfortunately, the corona pandemic affected this project, too. Mid-March CfN project leader Christian Matauschek had to cut his stay in the country short as a secure departure could not be guaranteed for a later date. Since March the restrictions brought public life to a standstill and the extensive travel limitations severely impact work on the project. Also, it cannot be anticipated at which point in the future foreigners are allowed to enter the country again. Nevertheless, we are content that we could employ a dedicated project leader and an assistant. An appropriate piece of land with buildings will be provided by the Burmese nature conservation organisation **Friends of Wildlife**, who have many years of working experience at Indawgyi lake.
We thank **Friends of Wildlife** for providing the property. The project is funded by the **Welttierschutzgesellschaft**.

Managing forests in Madagascar in times of the pandemic

In Madagascar our work was also affected by the global Covid-19 pandemic. At the beginning of March public institutions were closed, people from Europe were prohibited from entering the country and traveling within the country was banned. Therefore, we also had to cut back on our project activities and adapt to the respective situations. For one, the environmental education camp “Little Rangers“, which enjoyed great popularity by the participating students in the past two years, had to be postponed indefinitely. Also, scheduled research projects had to be delayed as agreed upon with our supporters **Niedersächsische Bingo-Umweltstiftung** and **Wildlife Reserves Singapore**.

Despite the restrictions due to the pandemic we still achieved quite a bit for our conservation projects in Madagascar. Our local staff moved into a new office at the Centre National de Formation, d'Etudes et de Recherches en Environnement et Forestier (CNFEREF) in Morondava, the capital of the Menabe region. From there they can further develop the strategy for the time after the pandemic and network with local organisations. For instance, as part of a national initiative for afforestation, we will reforest destroyed areas in the Kirindy forest. These measures will be implemented in cooperation with CNFEREF, the German Primate Center (DPZ), the regional forest and environmental authority and other local partners. We will also be able to coordinate and expand our environmental education activities in the Menabe-Antimena protected area in cooperation with the ministries of education and environment and the DURRELL Wildlife Trust. For that purpose we held a first event in a Morondava school at the beginning of November.

Through the absence of tourists the pandemic affected the safety of the Kirindy forest and the Menabe-Antimena protected area. The ecotourism camp of the CNFEREF had to close down with the beginning of the lockdown. Thus there were no revenues from tourism, which normally fund CNFEREF's controls and measures against logging and illegal hunting. In cooperation with the DPZ we could keep up a small control team which patrols different areas of the forest since the beginning of April. Especially during the height of the dry season in August and September, many illegal activities were registered. In addition, we introduced a new system which improves the effectiveness of the controls and trained the local rangers in using the new technology. Observations can now be uploaded to a server via a smartphone app which allows for regular and timely analysis of illegal activities. In the future the data will support the spatial and temporal planning for the monitoring team.

Rangers in the Kirindy forest training with the new app

We thank the **Fossa-Fonds of the Zoo Duisburg** and the **Manfred-Hermsen-Stiftung** for supporting the controls in Kirindy during the pandemic.

Chances for Nature at the World Lemur Day in Morondava

On 30th of October Chances for Nature celebrated the World Lemur Day. Many of the local environmental conservation organisations presented themselves in a parade in Morondava. Our local staff called visitors' attention to the threats that many lemur species face at an information desk. In a virtual quiz children could learn about the lives of and threats to the numerous lemur species of Madagascar.

Acoustic monitoring of the northern narrow-stripedd mongoose

In Germany we started a cooperation with the Zoo Berlin, which has the largest captive population of northern narrow-striped mongooses (*Mungotictis decemlineata decemlineata*) in the world. Our project area in Madagascar, the Kirindy Forest, is one of the largest remaining refugia for this endangered species. For her bachelor's thesis at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, Celina Böker has compiled a repertoire of sounds of these animals, which are called "Bokiboky" in Madagascar due to their vivid calling. Celina found that Bokibokys produce a minimum of five calls associated with social interactions. Animals in the wild probably have a more complex repertoire of sounds as alarm calls, for instance, are rather rare in captivity. This study is fundamental for further research on acoustic communication of northern narrow-striped mongooses in Madagascar.
We thank the **Zoologische Gärten Berlin**, especially curator Heiner Klös and the zookeepers at the carnivore house, and look forward to future projects in cooperation with the capital zoo.

A couple of northern narrow-striped mongooses in the Zoo Berlin

Imprint: Chances for Nature e.V., Brauweg 9a, 37073 Göttingen
Text and editing: M. Markolf, C. Matauschek, M. Adamek
Picture credits: Aung Myint Htun, Aung Kyaw Myint, C. Matauschek, Chances for Nature e.V., C. Böker

Science as basis for our conservation measures

For the implementation of our projects we rely on scientific research, which we partly execute ourselves or support. This year the following scientific papers were published or conducted with the support of Chances for Nature:

Bader, S. (2020). Changes in vocalization frequencies depending on changes in light conditions in *Phaner pallescens*. BSc-Thesis. Universität Göttingen.

Böker, C. (2020). Vocal repertoire of captive narrow-striped mongooses (*Mungotictis decemlineata*) in behavioral context. BSc-Thesis. Universität Göttingen.

Roos, C, Helgen, K.M., Portela Miguez, R., Naw May Lay Thant, Ngwe Lwin, Aung Ko Lin, Aung Lin, Khin Mar Yi, Paing Soe, Zin Mar Hein, Margaret Nyein Nyein Myint, Ahmed, T., Chetry, D., Urh, M., Veatch, E.G., Duncan, N., Kamminga, P., Chua, M.A.H., Lu Yao, **Matauschek, C., Meyer, D.**, Zhijin Liu, Ming Li, Nadler, T., Pengfei Fan, Le Khac Quyet, Hofreiter, M., Zinner, D., **Momberg, F.** (2020). Mitogenomic phylogeny of the Asian colobine genus *Trachypithecus* with special focus on *Trachypithecus phayrei* (Blyth, 1847) and description of a new species. Zoological Research, 41(6): 656-669

Zöckler, C., Wodehouse, D, **Markolf, M**, (in review). A visual assessment scale for rapid evaluation of mangrove degradation, using examples from Myanmar and Madagascar. In: Mangrove Ecosystem Restauration. Editor: Sahadev Sharma, IntechOpen. ISBN: 978-1-83962-800-9. (PREPRINT)

Support our environmental and wildlife conservation projects!

We have several options for you: a one-off donation, a company or individual membership or sponsoring your favourite project.

For more information:

www.chancesfornature.org

info@chancesfornature.org

donations account

IBAN: DE49 2512 0510 0001 6374 01