



Dr Andrew McLean

Andrew McLean brings together a rare combination of academic knowledge and practical animal training. With a degree in Zoology and a PhD in the neuroscience of animal training, Andrew has also been a top international equestrian competitor. A prolific author of books and journal papers on the science and ethics of horse training, Andrew has won Australia's most prestigious science award, the Eureka Prize for Science in 2011.

His journey with elephants began in Nepal in 2007 when he constructed a training program for mahouts and elephants based on the same scientific 'learning theory' blueprint that he has developed for training horses as part of his PhD. To facilitate the implementation of this program, Andrew formed the not-for-profit group HELP Foundation (Human Elephant Learning Programs), bringing together a team with various expertise. With the indispensable support of HELP's partners, the Wildlife Trust of India, regional elephant training workshops have been held in the northern state of Assam, and in the southern state of Kerala. All of these workshops have aimed at teaching mahouts to train elephants humanely and more efficiently for their crucial role in anti-poaching. So HELP's remit is actually the wider picture of stamping out poaching, which is rapidly decimating elephants, tigers and rhinos across Asia. Well-trained elephants provide the best 'vehicle' for stealthily capturing poachers.

The results have shown great success with all elephants regardless of their background. Elephants trained this way are calmer and far more safe and reliable than traditionally trained elephants. Andrew has written a manual on elephant training for mahouts which was launched by the Minister for the Environment in Kerala in October last year which is now published in Burmese and Thai. All donations enable travel and accommodation. In October we are monitoring the program in India and then we move on to Thailand and Myanmar to initiate the program.