

## **Hati Bondhu : Friends of Elephants : CONCEPT LOVE**

By Brigitte Uttar Kornetzky in Welt der Tiere, Ausgabe 6/ 2020, 13. Oktober 2020

The text below in English (online translation)

Slingshots, burning spears and chilli bombs are the most popular means of forcibly driving herds of elephants out of the farmers' plantations. What the adrenaline rush and morning exercise is for the young village population in many parts of Assam (India) means stress and disaster for the elephants.

But there are exceptions. They are called Hati Bondhu, Friends of Elephants, who protect the animals that have come under serious constant stress. This primarily includes ensuring sufficient food in the rapidly shrinking habitat of elephants.

Under the direction of Pradip Buhyan, the president of the Hati Bondhu movement, Dulu Bora and his wife Meghna Hazarika, the fast-growing Napier grass, broom grass, and Tora, as well as local trees, shrubs and rice in strategically valuable areas, are planted and regularly visited by herds of elephants, especially before and during the rice harvest. If the elephants had previously caused fear in the villages and the destruction of the fields, they are now welcome comrades, elephants. They are intelligent and have learned to leave the other plantations completely alone and to move back to their jungle areas after they have satisfied their hunger.

For over two years elephants have not caused death or damage to buildings or people in this area. Not only are they tolerated, no, they are loved and cared for.

Entire villages are mobilized and enthusiastic. By the hundreds, people plant thousands upon thousands of plants for the hungry elephants; they all gave part of their fields to the elephants out of

love, as a woman assures me. There is still enough for their own harvest, confirm the women and men of the villages on the foothills of Karbi Anlong. All of them have become convinced Hati Bondhus, enjoy their own harvest and make peace with the elephants. The cultivation is enough for everyone.

High voltage electrical cables are tapped by poachers and laid on the ground to kill animals. That means certain death for elephants and other wild animals, but also for humans. Meghna and Dulu have already brought around 300 such cables back to a safe height in the past six months. No more killer cables! However, urgently needed government bills are missing and lawsuits from wildlife activists have been swept under the carpet, but we are not giving up.

In addition to improvements to the elephant habitat, Hati Bondhu is planning an Elephant Rehabilitation Center that aims to give elephants a species-appropriate life. The land is already allotted. *Elefanten in Not* is in. *Elefanten in Not* supports the Hati Bondhu project as well as several other development projects in Assam and Rajasthan to secure the elephants' extremely endangered habitat.

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