

Announcing the Institute for Compassionate Conservation, in partnership with Mahouts Elephant Foundation: **Field Course 2019**

Asian Elephants: Animal Behavior and Wildlife Conservation in Thailand

Applications Now Open!

(rolling admission, final deadline is February 1)



Working to improve the lives of Asian elephants

ICC Institute for Compassionate Conservation
Compassion, Science, Advocacy

This program is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for qualified students to study Asian elephants in their natural habitat in their range country.

Coursework:

The Asian Elephant Compassionate Conservation field course explores how the science of animal behavior and 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.

While students are based in the field, they will have the opportunity to explore the complexities and challenges of real world, community-based conservation initiatives, learning from MEF expert staff. Students will gain valuable cultural immersion experience. Students will join villagers in activities such as, rice planting, foraging for native vegetables, animal tracking, fabric weaving, in forest crafts, as well as in traditional meal preparation. Students will also gain language skills in Sgaw Karen and Thai through formal lessons by our bi and tri-lingual field staff, and by conversing with community members.

In the field students will participate in an on-going research program that is studying the behavior, social dynamics, bioacoustics, and foraging 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 trained staff and elephant guardians at all times when in elephant habitat.

Life in the Field:

Students will be accommodated in homestays by the local village. 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.

Additional Trips:

Students will have a weekend in the middle of the course 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. It is an extremely safe and easy to navigate city. Transportation to and from Chiang Mai is included in the course fee, but student's choice of activities and accommodation in Chiang Mai during their break is their responsibility.

Elephant Field Research:

ICC and MEF collaborate on a long-term research program to study how re-wilded elephants live in the forest. This research is the first of its kind on Asian elephants and is a vital, compassionate step forward. Our research will advance the scientific community's ability to conserve and protect Asian elephants worldwide. Accepted field course students will participate in this research program.

Expert Course Instruction:

Course Instructor: Liv Baker Phd. Msc.

Dr Liv Baker works with Mahouts Elephant Foundation, directing their research program. Dr. Baker is a conservation behaviorist and an expert in wild animal well-being. Her research focuses on the role individual, wild animals have in the health of their social groups and populations. Dr Baker's work explores the similar patterns of well-being and behavior seen across the animal kingdom. Dr Baker's conservation research projects involve a range of wild animals, including, elephants, primates, arachnids, rodents, and macropods. Dr. Baker is a faculty member at Hunter College, New York in their Animal Behavior and Conservation Program.

Dr. Baker will assist students with preparation for their field study and will join students for the first week of their field experience, providing on-site lectures and research guidance. After which, students will be led by MEF's Research Coordinator Becca Winkler and their expert field staff.

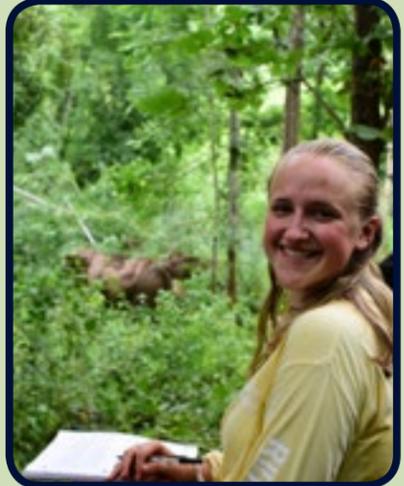
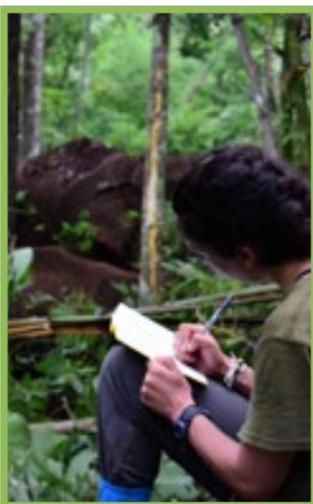
Course Assistant: Becca Winkler, MEF Research Coordinator

Becca Winkler has been project coordinator with MEF for over 2 years. During this time, she has been based in the field facilitating research into the behavior and ecology of elephants at MEF's program sites. Becca speaks Sgaw Karen. She has research interests in environmental anthropology and the connections between culture and conservation. She has an academic background in Biology and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. She is passionate about elephant well-being and culturally-informed community-based conservation.

MEF Founder and CEO Sarah Blaine will also be working directly with course participants. Sarah Blaine has been working for over a decade to reform the elephant tourism industry. She works internationally with industry stakeholders and will provide students with valuable insight into the complexities and challenges of creating lasting change for elephants and mahouts. **Students will also be joined by MEF's experienced field staff**

Why Field Experience?

There are hundreds of valuable summer experiences for students, but engaging in field research with real-world application provides invaluable experience for students helping them to bridge the gap between theory and practice. We keep numbers small enabling personalized learning, tailored to each student's individual research interests. For anyone interested in a future career in the fields of biology, ecology, conservation, animal behavior or animal welfare, fieldwork is a necessary part of learning and professional development. Field research is something that all graduate programs look for in candidates.



Program Details

Eligibility and Requirements: All students with 2nd-year standing or above studying a related discipline are welcome to apply.

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

Program Length and Dates: The ICC Field Course involves 4 weeks of dedicated field time and approx. 2 weeks of pre-field preparatory work, and approx. 2 weeks of post-field individual work to complete each students research project.

Session I: In the Field: June 23 – July 19

- Pre-Field: Readings and syllabus distributed upon final payment, reading assignments are due June 1-June 14
- Post-Field: Final Assignment due August 15

Session II: In the Field: July 28 – August 23

- Pre-Field Readings and syllabus distributed upon final payment, reading assignments are due July 15-August 2
- Post-Field: Final Project due September 30

Program fees and costs:

Program Fee of \$2650.00 due by May 15

Deposit of \$400 due by April 15 to reserve your place

Program Fee Includes:

- Field Course tuition and instruction from Dr. Baker plus field guidance by TA Becca Winkler and MEF Field Staff.
- Pre-trip field orientation communication
- On-site accommodations
- On-site meals (3x/day)
- Program-related travel (ground transportation)
- On-site lectures and cultural lessons
- On-site translators in the field and language lessons
- Overnight camping trip

Program Fee Does Not Include

- Student's own additional University Tuition (If applicable for receiving credit)
- Airfare
- Travel Health Insurance (required)
- Cellular Data – MEF recommends students purchase international data
- Incidentals, for example: 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)

Receiving University Credit: Field Course participants can acquire credit directly from their home universities. Students should contact their department or academic advisor and make sure to inform ICC staff of necessary materials they need to receive credit prior to making their final payment.

Mark Your Calenders!

February 1: Application Deadline

Feb 15 – March 15: Applicant Interviews and Admission Decisions



Questions and Information

Contact: Becca Winkler, Research Coordinator; Mahouts Elephant Foundation: becca@mahouts.org

Submit Applications Electronically to: icccfieldcourseapps@gmail.com

Curriculum Questions Contact:

Dr. Liv Baker

Executive Director, ICC; program facilitator and research director, Hunter College, CUNY
Lv824@hunter.cuny.edu

About Mahouts Elephant 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. 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 Foundation [Website](http://www.mahouts.org) 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.

[ICC](http://www.compassionateconservationinstitute.org) www.compassionateconservationinstitute.org works closely with the Centre for Compassionate Conservation and Compassionate Conservation Middle East.

Scholarship Funding: MEF and ICC believe in the value of field experiences and strive to make the course as accessible as possible to students from all backgrounds. Students will find our program fee is significantly less than comparable programs. We are also pleased to offer a 50% program fee waiver to one qualifying student for each field course session. We encourage students to seek scholarship funding for summer experiences through their universities.

 **mahouts**
ELEPHANT FOUNDATION

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