

**Announcing:** The Institute for Compassionate Conservation, in partnership with Mahouts Elephant Foundation:

## Field Course 2020

# Asian Elephants: Animal Behavior and Wildlife Conservation in Thailand

**Applications Now Open!**

*(rolling admission, final deadline is February 1)*



**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 an emerging cross-disciplinary scientific field, that recognizes that the health and wellbeing of all living things – including humans – are connected.

For this field course, each student will have his or her own research project, as part of an ongoing research collaboration between ICC and MEF, that is studying the behavior, social dynamics, bioacoustics and foraging ecology of a family rewilded Asian elephants. To collect the data for their projects, students will hike into bamboo and tropical evergreen forest to observe the elephants. Students will be accompanied by trained staff and elephant guardians when hiking out to the elephants.



Besides gaining field work experience, this course addresses the socio-cultural context of conservation. Students will explore the complexities and challenges of community-based conservation, and will be immersed in cultural experiences. Students will also gain language skills in S'gaw Karen and Thai, through formal lessons by our bi- and tri-lingual field staff, and by conversing with community members.

### 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.

**"I attended this study abroad program in August of 2018 and it was the best experience of my life! If you are thinking of attending this program I highly recommend it was the best decision I ever made and it meant a lot to me."**

- Danielle, 2018 Participant

### Course Assistant: Mara van Maarschalkerweerd, MSc

Mara van Maarschalkerweerd joined the MEF research program for the graduation project of her second masters in Behavioural Ecology in 2018. This research project focussed on the assessment of the elephants' wildness, as part of their well-being, at multiple project sites. She continued working on the research program after graduation and returned to study the latest elephant that MEF supports at the LIFE project site. At home in the Netherlands, Mara works as an Equine veterinarian.



**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**

**"This experience will greatly influence my educational/career path. It solidified that I would like to do field research, to some degree, as a profession."**

- 2019 Participant

## 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.

**"I learned so much about elephant behavior and conservation from the perspective of scientists/staff, as well as the community around them. I learned brand new methods for observing and recording the elephants behaviours."**

- 2019 Participant

## Program Details

**Eligibility and Requirements:** All students in their 2nd year, or above, of an undergraduate/Bachelor's degree in 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. Download the application [here](#) or email [mahoutsfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:mahoutsfoundation@gmail.com) for application details.

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

### Fieldwork in Thailand: July 26 – August 22

**Pre-Field** Readings and syllabus distributed upon final payment, reading assignments due July 15-August 2

**Post-Field:** Final Project due September 30

### Costs: Total Cost \$ 2,900\*

Nonrefundable deposit of \$ 400.00 due by April 15 to reserve your place

Program Fee of \$ 2,500.00 due by May 15

### Program Fee Includes:

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

### 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
- Incidentally, 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.

\*Program fee based on Nov. 2019 exchange rates from THB, and is subject to change of up to 5% based on exchange rate fluctuations.

## Contact Information

**Main Contact:** Course Assistant, Mara van Maarschalkerweerd, MSc [mahoutsfoundation@gmail.com](mailto:mahoutsfoundation@gmail.com)

**Curriculum Questions Contact:**  
**Dr. Liv Baker**

Executive Director, ICC; program facilitator and research director, Hunter College, CUNY  
[Lv824@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:Lv824@hunter.cuny.edu)

## Submit Applications

**Electronically to:**

[iccfieldcourseapps@gmail.com](mailto:iccfieldcourseapps@gmail.com)



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



Working to improve the lives of Asian elephants

**ICC** Institute for Compassionate Conservation  
Compassion, Science, Advocacy

