

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To

The Hony. Editor
Indian Forester
P.O. New Forest
DEHRADUN (Uttarakhand)

Sub: Rescue and rehabilitation of an injured elephant calf.

Dear Sir,

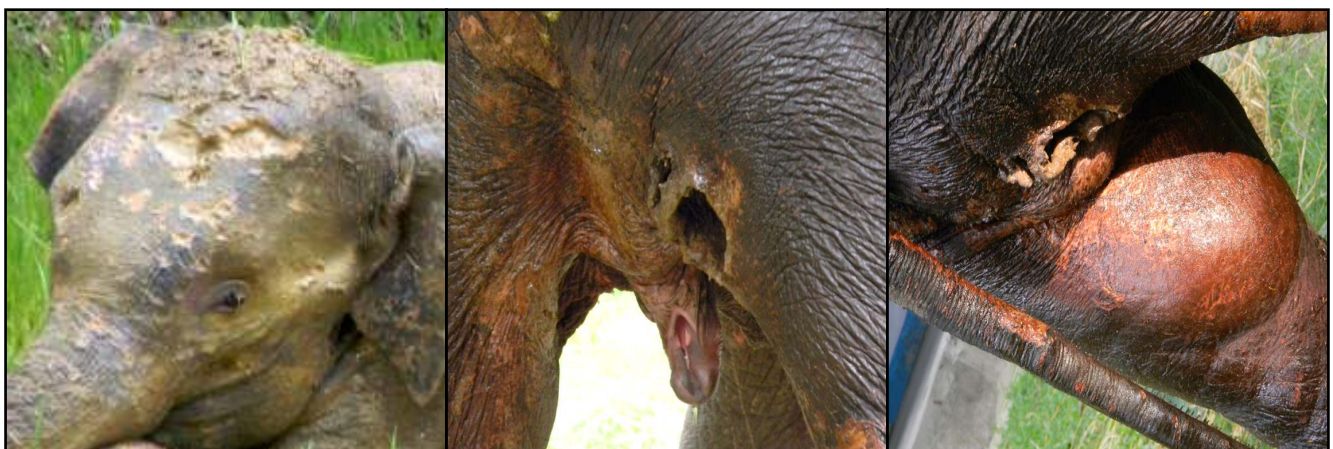
'Rajani' the wild elephant calf separated from the herd met an accident when fell down in to a well near the village Berdih of Seraikela district of Jharkhand. The villagers, with their local technique tried to remove the calf from the well and left it in the forest. The next day morning the calf was found struggling for life in the river bank of Subarnrekha near the same village. The news came to the forest official.

A team led by the Conservator of Forests, Jamshedpur, Sri S B Gaikwad and Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, Ranchi, Sri SEH Kazmi rushed to the spot. The forest team along with the villagers of that area tried to catch the elephant to transport to a safer place where the calf can get treatment. It was decided that the calf will be transferred to the veterinary Hospital in the Tata Zoo. With the local methods by the help of trap and rope, the calf was taken inside a mini truck and transported to Jamshedpur.

The calf was taken to the hospital campus of the Tata Zoo hospital and thorough enquiry of the calf was done by a team comprising of the Director of the Zoo, Sri Bipul Chakravarthy , the Veterinary Doctor, Mr Manit Palit and the local Divisional forest Officer, Dhalbhum Forest Division, Jamshedpur. After thorough check up of the external part of the animal, it was found that the calf was having multiple injuries and in a very critical condition. The calf was having serious injuries in the forehead, in the back and in the right thigh. Maggots were formed and oozing out of the injury. The injuries were so deep that the hand can be put inside the injury up to 5 inches. One of the fore legs was having swellings and the calf was unable to walk normally.

The maggots of the wound were removed. Dressing of the wound was also done .The calf was given enough succulent food and glucose water and antibiotics and pain killers were administered. The injured areas were cleaned and dressed every day. Antibiotic creams were applied in the injured areas. Slowly the injuries started showing improvements. The calf also started taking food. Seeing the symptom of improvement I was very much encouraged. I use to pay visit to the calf every day. It was a new experience to us. Hardly have we seen improvement in wild lives when they are abandoned in critical conditions by their herd.

When the calf showed good improvements, we decided to take the calf for a walk. The walking brought quick recovery to the injured leg. During the course of treatment, the calf was named Rajani. When Rajani became almost normal ,the Zoo authorities started writing to the forest department to take away the calf. It was really disturbing to us to take away the calf from the zoo as there was no facility centre available with us for the elephant. The zoo authorities



were quite emotional with the calf. The elephant being a scheduled I species cannot be kept in a zoo. Finally after a lot of discussion, it was decided that the calf will be taken to the proposed rehabilitation center in the Dalma Wild Life Sanctuary at Makulakocha. In the Dalma Wild Life Sanctuary already there are 3 domesticated elephants which are brought from Jamtara Forest division after being confiscated because of illegal possession. We were advised to take Rajani to Maklakocha where already 3 elephants were there but strictly advised to keep separately because the interaction between the wild calf and the domesticated elephants may lead to fatal consequences.

Rajani was kept for two days in Maklakocha in isolation but it was not comfortable in isolation. I thought why the calf should not be kept along with the three elephants. There were uncertainties still my curious mind decided to go for a trial with precaution. One of the leg was tied with rope and slowly the calf was brought near the three elephants. To our great surprise the three elephants absolutely reacted normally and the baby elephant rushed in to them. As soon as the baby elephant joined them, the three cordoned the calf as a motherly elephant herd in wild guides and protected the young ones. It was new experience to see the domesticated elephant accepting the wild one at once.

Now the elderly three looked after the feeding and drinking of Rajani. Rajni no more tied with a rope when taken to forest for bathing with the elder ones. The elder ones were ensuring all safety of Rajani when they were moving together. Now they were behaving as if they got their lost child and Rajani was also happy with them.

It taught me a lesson that the motherly instinct never dies whether taught or not. It made me believe that elephants are better humane than the claimed ones.

A.T. Mishra

Divisional Forest Officer
Wild Life Division, Ranchi (Jharkhand).
