

British Conservationist, Belinda Stewart-Cox, awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire OBE for outstanding service to conservation in Thailand



Belinda Stewart-Cox (second left) with her mother Mary, brothers Rupert and Charlie, and colleague Jittin Ritthirat by the steps that lead into the state rooms of Buckingham Palace.

Elephant Conservation Network, with offices located at 37/1 Mu 8 Kaengsian, Muang, Kanchanaburi 71000, Thailand, was founded in 1999 by Belinda Stuart-Cox and her colleague Jittin Ritthirat. The Elephant Conservation Network aims to ensure the long-term survival of wild elephants and their ecosystem in Thailand, at present focusing on trying to find sustainable solutions to human-elephant conflict in Kanchanaburi province. Belinda recently was invested with The Most Excellent Order of The British Empire (OBE) for twenty-five years of service to nature conservation in Thailand by none other than H.M. Queen Elizabeth II on 6 December 2011.

Belinda is Executive-Director of the Elephant Conservation Network (ECN) and Jittin is ECN Programme Manager. Last year Jittin received the prestigious Whitley Award.

Belinda went to Thailand in 1986 to study green peafowl in the Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary. She joined the Thai campaign a Hydro-Electric Dam in a local Wildlife Sanctuary and

another campaign against a legislative change that would have allowed loggers into the sanctuary. Later she helped her mentor and colleague, Seub Nakhasathien, write Thailand's nomination for Thung Yai-Huai Kha Khaeng to become a UNESCO natural world heritage site and helped field the nomination successfully through the long approval process. She was a founder and trustee of the Seub Nakhasathien Foundation for 9 years, until the founding of ECN.

Belinda described the ECN mandate "to assist Thailand's most important conservation area for elephants and other large mammals. If we can find ways to help farmers and other villagers co-exist comfortably with elephants, we will make a useful contribution to ensuring their overall conservation in Thailand. More importantly, we will help safeguard the ecosystem that sustains so many lives and livelihoods in this region".

Belinda was accompanied to Buckingham Palace to receive her award by her mother and two brothers

as well as by her Thai colleague, Jittin Ritthirat who is ECN's programme manager.

Zoo Outreach Organisation came to know ECN as well as Belinda and Jittin several years ago when it was suggested that ZOO's very successful teaching workshop on human elephant coexistence. ZOO recently conducted 3 workshops in their community.

* For information on ECN contact jittin.ritthirat@ecn-thailand.org or belinda@ecn-thailand.org or call +44 70984 801610 or check their Website: www.ecn-thailand.org.



Belinda Stewart-Cox holding her OBE award, and Jittin Ritthirat providing more colour in her traditional Thai outfit than any other guest at Buckingham Palace that day.