

ElephantVoices Advocacy policy

ElephantVoices is a collaborative project of the Amboseli Trust for Elephants' whose Amboseli Elephant Research Project is the longest study of free-living elephants in the world. The accumulated knowledge of this long-term project is vital for the future of elephants everywhere. Joyce Poole has been associated with the Amboseli project studying elephant behaviour and communication for more than three decades.

The emergent knowledge of elephant behavior has developed hand-in-hand with a growing recognition of the need for the ethical treatment of animals. Joyce has been called upon to spend increasing time defending the interests of wild and captive elephants around the world.

ElephantVoices was initiated by Joyce and her partner, Petter Granli with a two-fold mission: to further the study of elephant communication and to act as a voice for the interests of elephants. Influencing policy decisions in the interests of all elephants, their welfare and conservation, is a major objective of ElephantVoices.

Three recognized taxa of elephants exist: Asian elephants, *Elephas maximus*, African savannah elephants, *Loxodonta africana*, and African forest elephants, *Loxodonta cyclotis*. Most African elephants live in the wild, while the majority of Asian elephants live in some form of captivity. Welfare issues are a concern for elephants in both the wild and captive state.

ElephantVoices receives numerous requests to comment on issues related to the conservation, management and treatment of both wild and captive elephants. Since we believe that the incorporation of our long-term scientific knowledge can set positive precedents for the interests of all elephants, our objective is to contribute wherever we can.

These are the "guidelines" we follow in all our advocacy work:

1. Main priorities

Our main priority is policy issues where we can have the broadest influence on elephant conservation and welfare. Thus, the development statements on selected topics (e.g. culling, capture of wild elephants, elephants in circuses) concerning the management and treatment of elephants will be our primary goal.

Our intention is for individuals and institutions to make use of these expert statements in a range of more specific cases around the world. While we may take a decision to give advice or provide statements on specific cases ourselves, this will be the exception rather than the rule.

2. Our right and need to say "no"

If we do not feel that we can contribute because of our limited financial resources, time availability, lack of reliable information or inappropriate expertise, we ask you to understand and respect our position. Our resource base will often force us to excuse ourselves, even when we would like to engage. At the same time, when we decide to commit ourselves we do not compromise our work ethics nor our obligation to do our best.

3. ElephantVoices initiatives versus external requests

Our advocacy effort is a combination of our own initiatives and responses to external requests. Our own initiatives focus on providing a baseline of knowledge from which the interests of elephants may be met. We will, with or without external partners or collaborators, continue to take action on behalf of elephants in what we believe are important issues and engage in cases where the outcome may represent a significant precedent for conservation and/or the treatment of captive or wild elephants.

4. Our knowledge is accessible for anyone at any time

All our arguments are based upon what we hold as truths about elephants. Although each individual case may be different, our long-term scientific data and general knowledge apply to a very broad range of elephant welfare and conservation issues. Everything we know about elephants is knowledge that is, in principle, open to the public, through scientific and popular papers, policy documents, articles, films. We make every effort to make available our perspectives and standpoints via online documents, bibliography, statements and FAQ's (www.elephantvoices.org)

5. Our internal process

All requests to ElephantVoices regarding advocacy issues goes through Joyce Poole (jpoole@elephantvoices.org). As a collaborative project of the [Amboseli Trust for Elephants](#) we may consult with, or collaborate with, ATE when this is appropriate and agreed upon.

6. Political neutrality - collaboration

Our approach on any elephant issue is independent of political aspects, as the interests of elephants as we understand them will always be our main concern and focus. With this at heart we are in principle willing to collaborate with any party as long as we can embrace their work ethics.

7. No rhetoric

World politics is full of rhetoric and the politics of wildlife conservation and animal welfare is not far behind. We try hard to avoid participating in discussions where the debate is more important than the action. We endeavor to advance positive change for elephant conservation and welfare.

8. We stand for elephants, and not against anyone

We stand *for* the interest of elephants, and *against* mistreatment or abuse of elephants, with scientifically based arguments as our foundation. It is never our intention to contest against individuals, institutions or companies, and we are always prepared to work constructively with others to promote proper conservation, management and treatment of the world's largest land mammal.

9. We want to be trusted

Our integrity and credibility is vital and rules all our advocacy efforts.

10. Checking our sources

Our intention to be a reliable source of information about elephants and their well being is as important as our ability to check facts and external sources when we get or need input from others. We do not engage or go out publicly without evaluating thoroughly any information given to us.

11. Sticking to what we know

We aim to take an honest and humble approach when it comes to questions and issues we do not know enough about. We acknowledge that our credibility is stronger when we stick to our core expertise, rather than to try to take sides or express an opinion on issues that are not directly related to our main fields of specialist knowledge.

www.ElephantVoices.org