ELEPHANT POACHING

Because the amount of forest in Myanmar has dropped to below 30 percent, the government has drastically reduced logging to protect the forest habitats. This means the elephants no longer have much work. They are released into the forests at night to feed but are vulnerable to poachers from neighbouring countries who capture them for the tourist trade. Only the well trained adult elephants are useful to the poachers so the babies are often left behind as orphans.

THE WORKING ELEPHANTS OF MYANMAR

Myanmar has the second largest population of Asian elephants after India. It has a large population (about 5000) of captive elephants used as part of the logging industry. These elephants have been used in government-owned timber camps for over a century pulling logs out of the forests which is much less destructive than the use of machines. The elephants are very well trained and cared for by their elephant handlers called ooazies. Oozies have a close relationship with their elephants. They take great care of the elephants, making sure they are fed well, bathed daily and free to roam.

EKARI’S STORY

Ekari was one such orphan. Her mother was taken during the night and she was left trapped in a snare. She was found by her mother’s oozie in the morning and taken to the elephant sanctuary hospital close by. Fran, our large animal vet, was able to treat the wound on her leg and save her. As a very young elephant she had to be hand fed with a bottle. Elephants are sociable animals and Ekari needed company. She was introduced to an old female elephant who had recently lost her oozie and the two elephants have become firm companions. Ekari will probably never be able to return to the wild but will be cared for at the sanctuary and will earn her living by helping to train people about how to care for elephants.