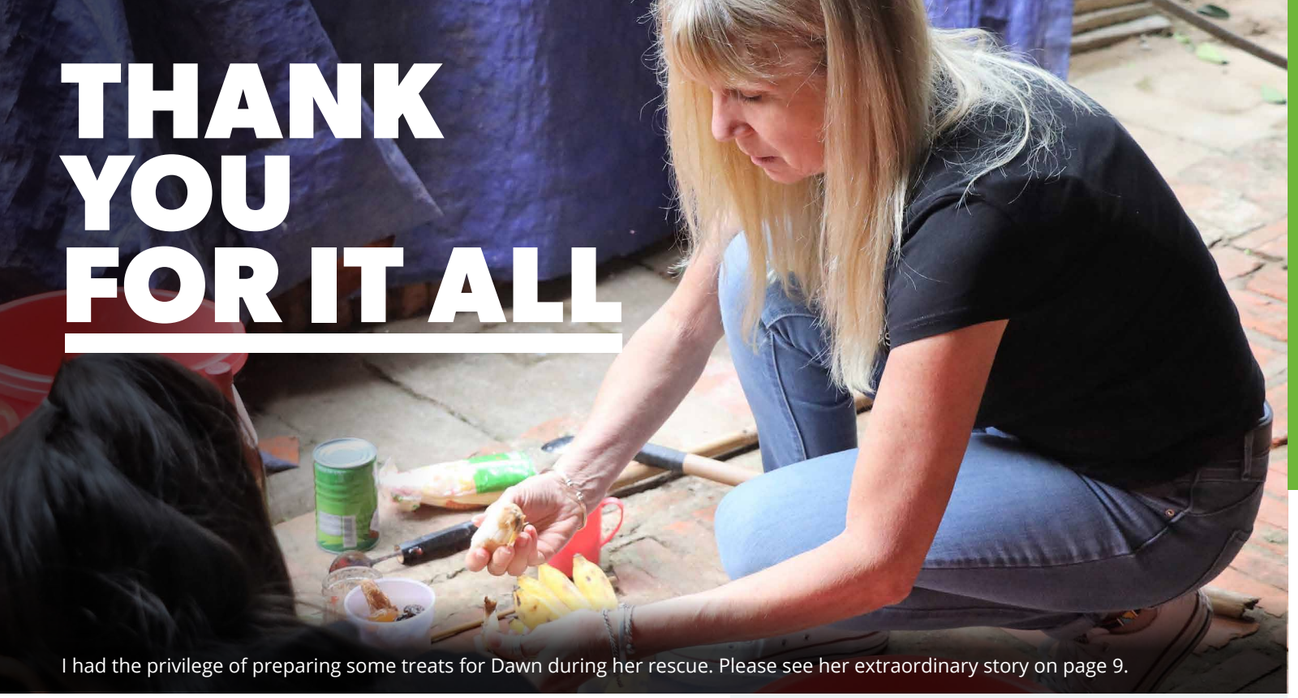
AnimalsAsia
Kindness in action

25 YEARS OF KINDNESS IN ACTION

Animals Asia Review 2023

THANK YOU FOR IT ALL



I had the privilege of preparing some treats for Dawn during her rescue. Please see her extraordinary story on page 9.

Dear friends,

It's been an incredible 25th anniversary year thanks to your extraordinary generosity and kindness.

We opened our second Vietnam sanctuary at Bach Ma and welcomed home the first three residents. Armstrong, Buzz and Apollo have landed – and so has a new era of kindness. This beautiful sanctuary will be home to the country's remaining 250 bile bears.

Then there was Dawn. This poor bear arrived with us completely shut down after 20 years on a bile farm. But her story is one of hope – and the profound impact of your support.

And it's not just the bears who felt your loving hands at work in 2023. Cats and dogs, elephants, macaques, birds and many other wild animals also ended the year free from suffering and with love in their hearts.

On behalf of every one of these precious animals, ***thank you***.

With my sincere gratitude,

Jill Robinson MBE, Dr med vet hc, Hon LLD
Founder and CEO

"Your kind support in 2023 gave Animals Asia the means and resources to change the lives of thousands of Asia's most desperate animals.

Thank you for your trust, your compassion and your generous heart. Your loyalty means more than we can say."

Anneleise Smillie

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(at December 2023)

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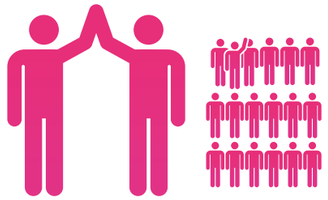
YOUR AMAZING IMPACT

Your kindness saved millions of animals from slaughter, abuse and imprisonment in 2023. *Thank you from every one of these precious souls.* Here are just some of the ways you brought love and joy into their lives. You helped us:

Rescue **16** beautiful moon bears in Vietnam and bring them to our sanctuaries.

Help **20,000** dogs and cats in 60 shelters in China.

Support **200** Chinese groups that help dogs and cats.



Perform **232** health checks on our bears, including 30 major surgeries.

Open our **2nd** sanctuary in Vietnam.

Rescue **3** more elephants from riding tourism.

Deliver our animal welfare and behaviour lessons to over **3,000** students.

Plant **5** new herb gardens growing alternatives to bear bile.

Provide **363,000kg** of nutritious bear food.

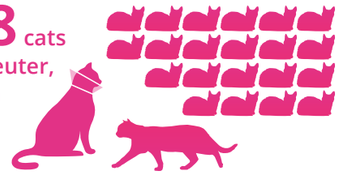
Help release almost **30,000** songbirds saved from illegal traders.

Visit over **16,500** people with our registered therapy dogs.

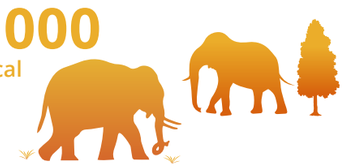
Hold **60** public awareness events promoting bears in China and Vietnam.

Work with **70** schools (preschool, primary, secondary and university).

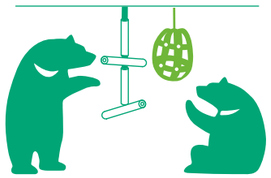
Help neuter **478** cats through our trap, neuter, return projects with 29 groups.



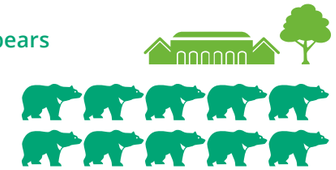
Welcome over **1,000** visitors to our Ethical Elephant Tours.



Provide **18** mobility-challenged bears with 740 physiotherapy sessions.

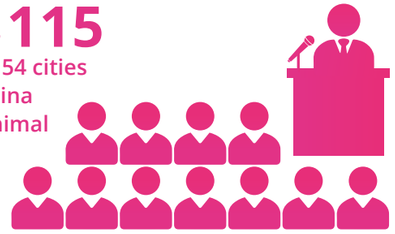


Care for **308** bears at our sanctuaries.



Help release **87** macaques into protected areas.

Bring together **115** charities from 54 cities at our 2023 China Companion Animal Symposium.



Start to train **2** new veterinary interns at our Tam Dao sanctuary.

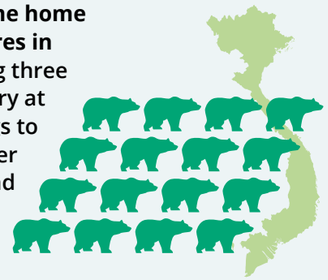
OUR BEAUTIFUL BEARS

Thank you for taking precious animals like Sumaya into your heart

YOUR AMAZING IMPACT

Your kindness in 2023 meant the world to bears rescued from misery.

16 moon bears came home to our rescue centres in Vietnam – including three to our new sanctuary at Bach Ma. This brings to 687 the total number rescued in China and Vietnam.



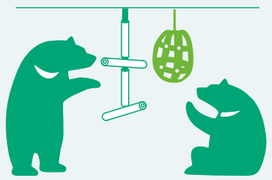
308 bears enjoyed first-class care and love at our sanctuaries – one in Chengdu (China's only bear sanctuary), and two in Vietnam (in Tam Dao National Park and Bach Ma National Park).

Thanks to you, the bears at our sanctuaries:

Enjoyed over 1,100kg of dried fruit and veggies, including kiwi, pineapple, winter melon, cherry tomato, coconut, banana, sweet potato and hawthorne berries.

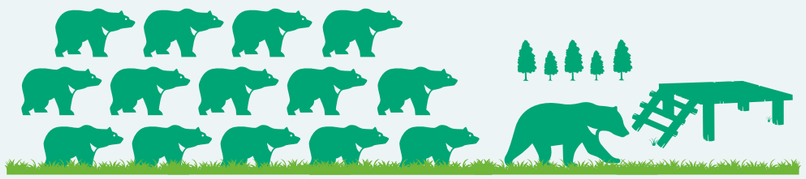
Savoured 363,000kg of food in 345,106 meals tailored to their individual needs.

Stretched their bodies in our physiotherapy program – 18 bears with various mobility issues benefited from around 740 sessions.



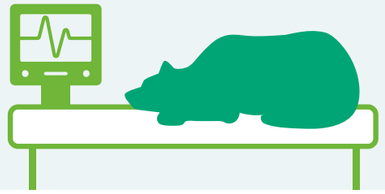
Destroyed 3,175 hessian sacks, tearing them to shreds and using them in games of tug o' war.

Walked on grass – 15 bears went outside for the first time since they were stolen from the wild as tiny cubs.



Gulped down over 133,000 delicious medication pots used to give medicines or distract bears during darting. The usual fare for the 218 bears on meds is banana chunks and syrup, but some special-needs bears get tailored fruit or rice shakes.

Slept through 232 life-saving health checks. These included 30 major surgeries, the longest being nine hours, 20 minutes.



And your support is sending ripples of kindness throughout China and Vietnam. In 2023, we:

Planted 5 new herb gardens. Working with schools and communities, we've now created 32 herb gardens growing medicinal alternatives to bear bile.

Began training 2 new veterinary interns at our Tam Dao sanctuary. So far, 11 other vet interns have completed our program in China and Vietnam.

Collaborated with experts on a new balm with 16 herbal ingredients that we plan to promote as an alternative to bear bile.

Worked with 70 schools (preschools, primary, secondary and universities) on 61 activities, including sanctuary tours, presentations and art competitions.

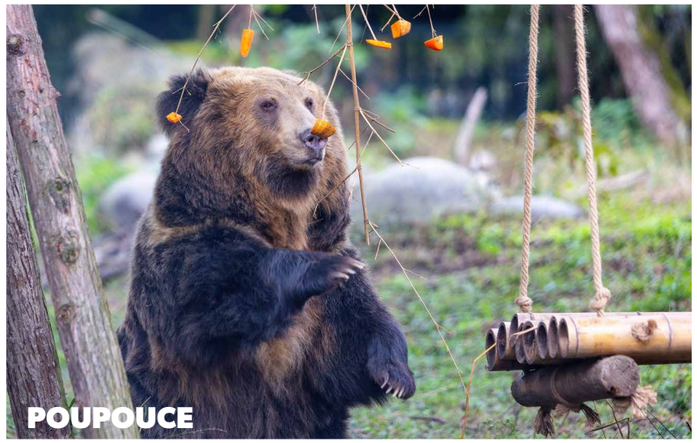
Held 60 public awareness events, including educational displays and free health checks with traditional doctors prescribing herbs.

WHEN TIME IS PRECIOUS

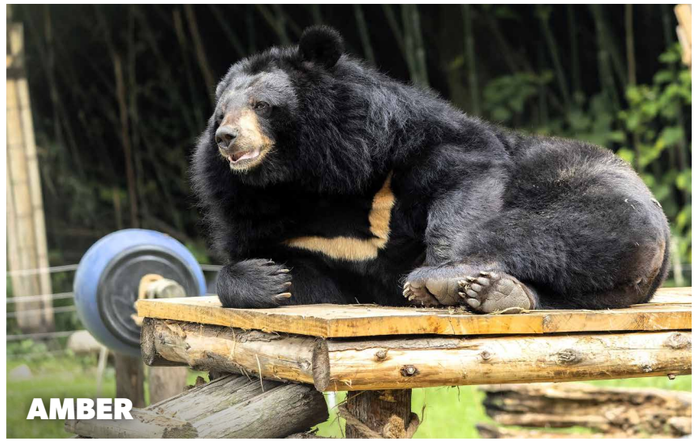
Most of our China bears are elderly but, thanks to your kind heart, they live every day with joy in their hearts.

Your generous gifts in 2023 provided our geriatric bears with:

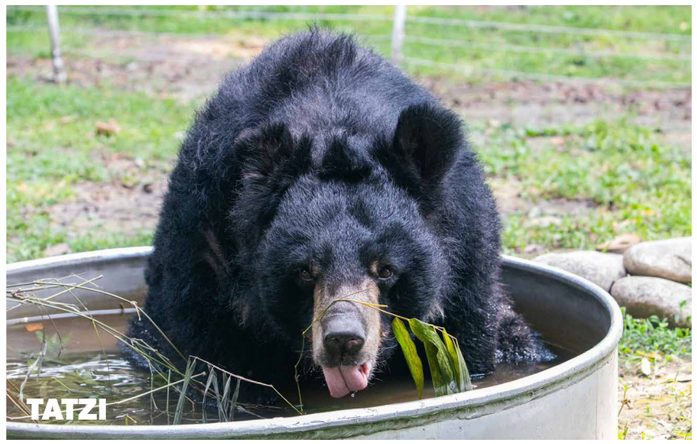
- Physiotherapy sessions for stiff and sore limbs. After just a few weeks, some bears learned to climb and play again.
- Regular medications for 100 of the 108 bears. Our older bears suffer all kinds of mobility issues, high blood pressure and other conditions.
- Special furniture and toys, including easy-access climbing frames, extra-comfy low beds and toys designed for arthritic paws.
- Tailored diets that give them the best chance of enjoying happy, healthy lives.
- Life-saving health checks under anaesthesia, (85 in total, including seven major surgeries).



Poupouce, one of two gorgeous Tibetan brown bears at our China sanctuary, demonstrates "berry picking", another way we encourage older bears to stretch their limbs.



Low, accessible hammocks, toys and platforms mean our bears can continue to enjoy the outdoors as they age.



Lovely, raggedy Tatzi is our oldest resident at 35 years plus. (Moon bears usually live to around 30.) He's still active and enjoying his days in the sun.

Farewell our brave and beautiful bears. In 2023, we said goodbye to 28 bears – 12 in China and 16 in Vietnam. Each of these much-loved souls will live forever in our hearts.

A NEW DAWN

From 'learned helplessness' to 'learned happiness'. Your support meant the world to this precious bear in 2023.

Dawn, one of 16 bears we rescued last year, was so traumatised that she'd completely shut down. She was diagnosed with "learned helplessness", but after months of loving care, she finally found her smile.

This is where we found sweet Dawn, where she'd spent the past 20 years being exploited for her bile.

She'd learned that nothing she did could stop the terror. Back at the sanctuary, noises like clanging cages caused her to flinch and shut down.

It took time to ease her fears. We started slowly with rapport building, her carers talking to her softly and giving her treats and toys.

Then came confidence-building training, like learning that if she placed her nose on a tennis ball attached to a stick, she'd get a delicious treat.

Six months after her arrival, Dawn was ready to go outside. She felt the breeze ruffle her fur for the first time since she was a tiny cub.

It took another month for Dawn to feel confident enough to step onto the grass. But, finally, *thanks to the kindness you live and breathe,* Dawn was truly home.

FIRST BACH MA BEARS HOME

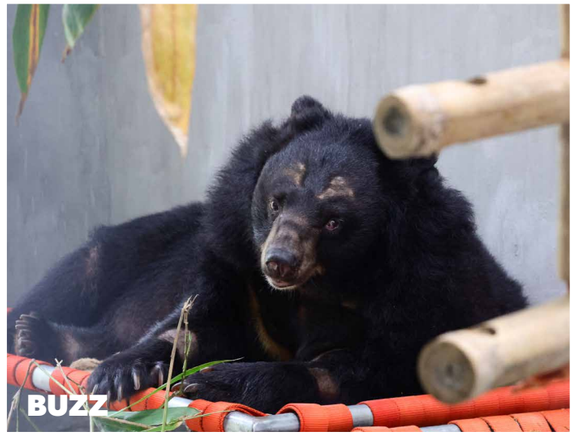
Armstrong, Buzz and Apollo have landed! Our new sanctuary in Bach Ma National Park opened in 2023, with Phase One of construction complete and our first three residents safely home.

Phase One includes a quarantine area, bear hospital, bear nutrition house and two big bear houses with a total of 34 dens that can take 120 bears and open either side to large outdoor enclosures.

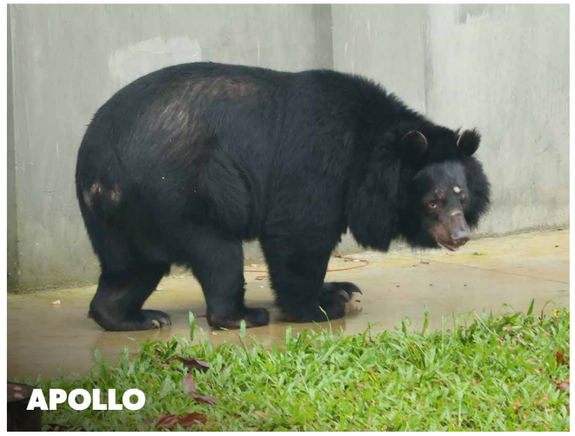
Phase Two will include a third double bear house and is due for completion in Q2 2025.

Handsome Armstrong displays his glorious golden crescent during the very first bear health check in our new hospital.

Armstrong and Buzz enjoy some treats from Sanctuary Manager Thuy during their 30-day quarantine. The isolation area is open to the air, but sheltered from the rain and sun.



Shy little Buzz snuggles up in her den, one of 34 dens complete and ready for 60 more bears in 2024.



Brave Apollo takes her first, tentative steps outside. It wasn't long before she was exploring all over her new playground. But it's still early days for this gorgeous girl.

PROVINCE BY PROVINCE

And farm by farm – together, we're ending bear bile farming in Vietnam.

Twenty-five years ago, 48 out of 63 provinces and municipalities in Vietnam had bile farms. Today, there are just 17 (with around 90 farms).

It's your support that's driving this phenomenal change.

Progress on our new Bach Ma sanctuary continues, with construction of a new double bear house, a maintenance area and more infrastructure going ahead in the second half of 2024. The new bear house will have 17 more dens and we'll be ready to house all the bears we plan to rescue over the next couple of years.

Thank you from every one of the 266 bears rescued so far and from the remaining 250 bile bears we're preparing to bring home – 60 of them this year.

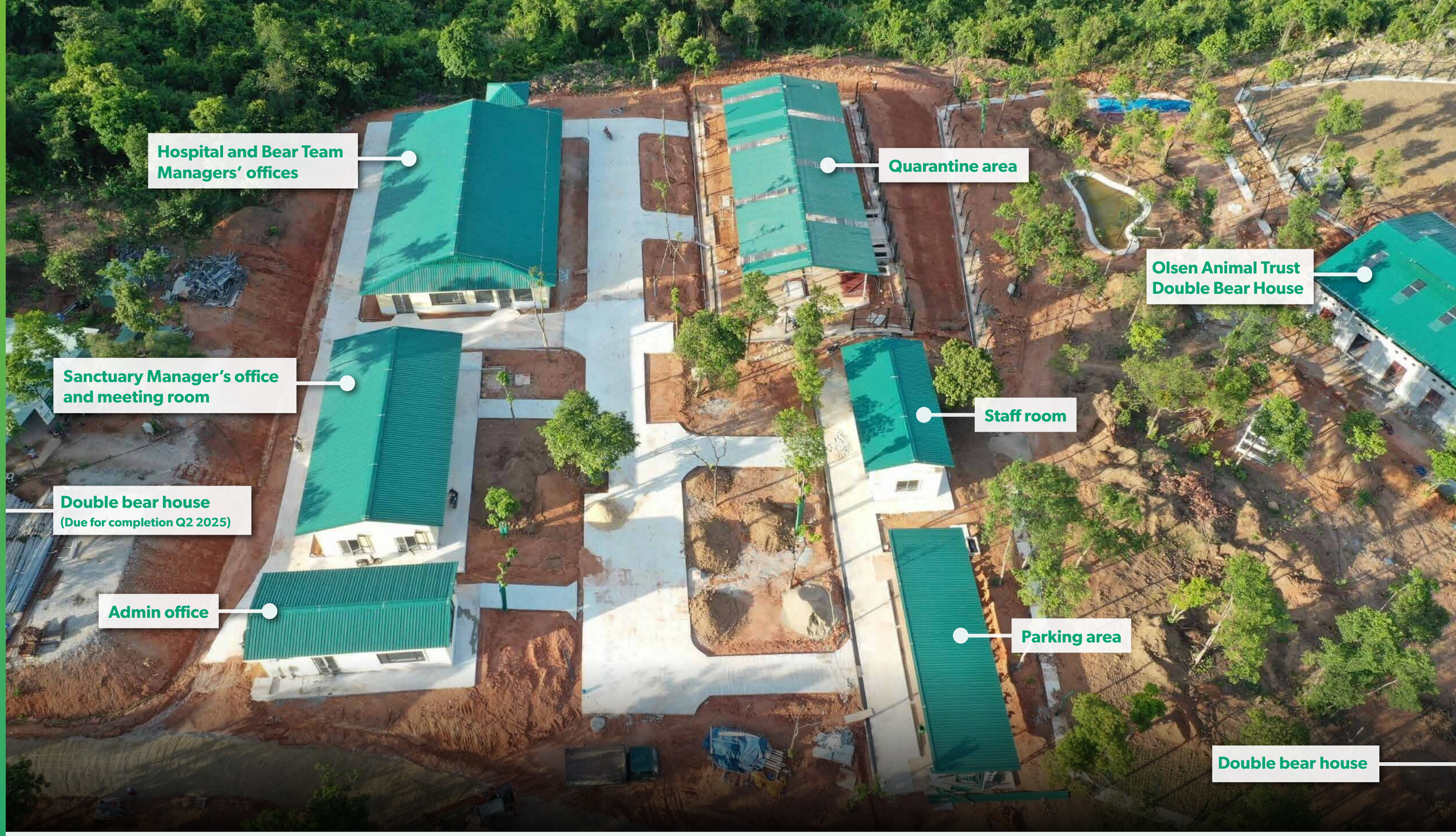
Provinces still with bile farms:
Lao Cai, Yen Bai, Bac Giang, Thai Nguyen, Nam Dinh, Hung Yen, Phu Tho, Vinh Phuc, Nghe An, Ha Tinh, Dong Nai, Ba Ria-Vung Tau, Binh Duong

Municipalities still with bile farms:
Hanoi, Hai Phong, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh

Bear farm free

Vietnam has 58 provinces and five municipalities.

TOGETHER, WE'LL TURN ALL OF THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY GREEN!



THE END IS IN SIGHT

Our shared dream of ending bear bile farming in Vietnam is fast becoming a reality. Thanks to your loyalty, your ongoing support and your endless kindness, our Bach Ma sanctuary opened in 2023. Armstrong, Buzz and Apollo are the first of around 250 bile bears to be rescued from the farms.

HOME SWEET HOME

Our sanctuary gates are open and bears confined in cages for over two decades are already walking on grass. Phase One of their new home is complete and we're preparing to rescue around 60 more bears in 2024.

MEET OUR ALL-VIETNAMESE BACH MA TEAM

And see how your donations are creating a sanctuary home filled with happy and fulfilled bears and people alike.

Dr Huong Pham, Junior Veterinary Surgeon

Huong was volunteering at the Primate Rescue Centre in North Vietnam before she joined Animals Asia and trained to become a Junior Veterinarian.

Thang Truong, Bear Carer

Thang was working as a server in a local restaurant before joining our sanctuary team and training as a Bear Carer.

Tu Nguyen, Bear Facilities Staff

Tu started his career as a ship mechanic before using his skills to help build and maintain our sanctuary. He now focuses on maintenance, repairing damage (bears love to break their toys!), setting up the climbing structures, and overseeing all technical aspects of the sanctuary's operations.

Trang Le (known as Mai Trang), Supporter Engagement Coordinator

Before joining our team, Trang studied in renewable energy, climate change and waste management. Now she coordinates requests from our global communications team, assists on rescues and hosts guests at the sanctuary. She takes photos and footage that follow the rescued bears' individual journeys and provides updates on them for supporters around the world.

Thuy Hoang, Bach Ma Sanctuary Manager

Thuy has a veterinary background and, before joining us, she worked with a number of NGOs in Vietnam. She is at the helm of all operations and leads all the teams at Bach Ma.

Hoa Nguyen, Bear Facilities Assistant Team Leader

Hoa's background is in electrical engineering. Before joining us, he worked with an eco-tourism company in Hue. Now his job is to set up, fix and maintain all the electrical equipment at the sanctuary. Even though he was new to animal welfare, he learned quickly and now can handle any technical or safety issues that might arise.

Toan Hoang, Team Leader (Security)

Toan is one of our most experienced security officers. He oversees the entire security team, controls access to the sanctuary and ensures day and night patrols to keep the bears safe.

Quoc Dinh, Bear Carer

Quoc's passion for Vietnam's forests and wild animals led him to Bach Ma after first undergoing training at our Tam Dao sanctuary. He takes care of the bears' daily needs. He feeds them, observes their behaviour, and reports his observations to Bear Team Managers weekly.

Ellie Thanh Dang, Bear Team Manager

Ellie always has the bears' welfare as her top priority. With her technical knowledge and solid understanding of animal behaviour and management, she's a core member of our sanctuary team.

Dr Han Ly, Junior Veterinary Surgeon

Han is one of our first Junior Veterinary Surgeon graduates, having completed a veterinary internship under our Tam Dao sanctuary's world-class veterinary team.

Charly Trang Le, Translator

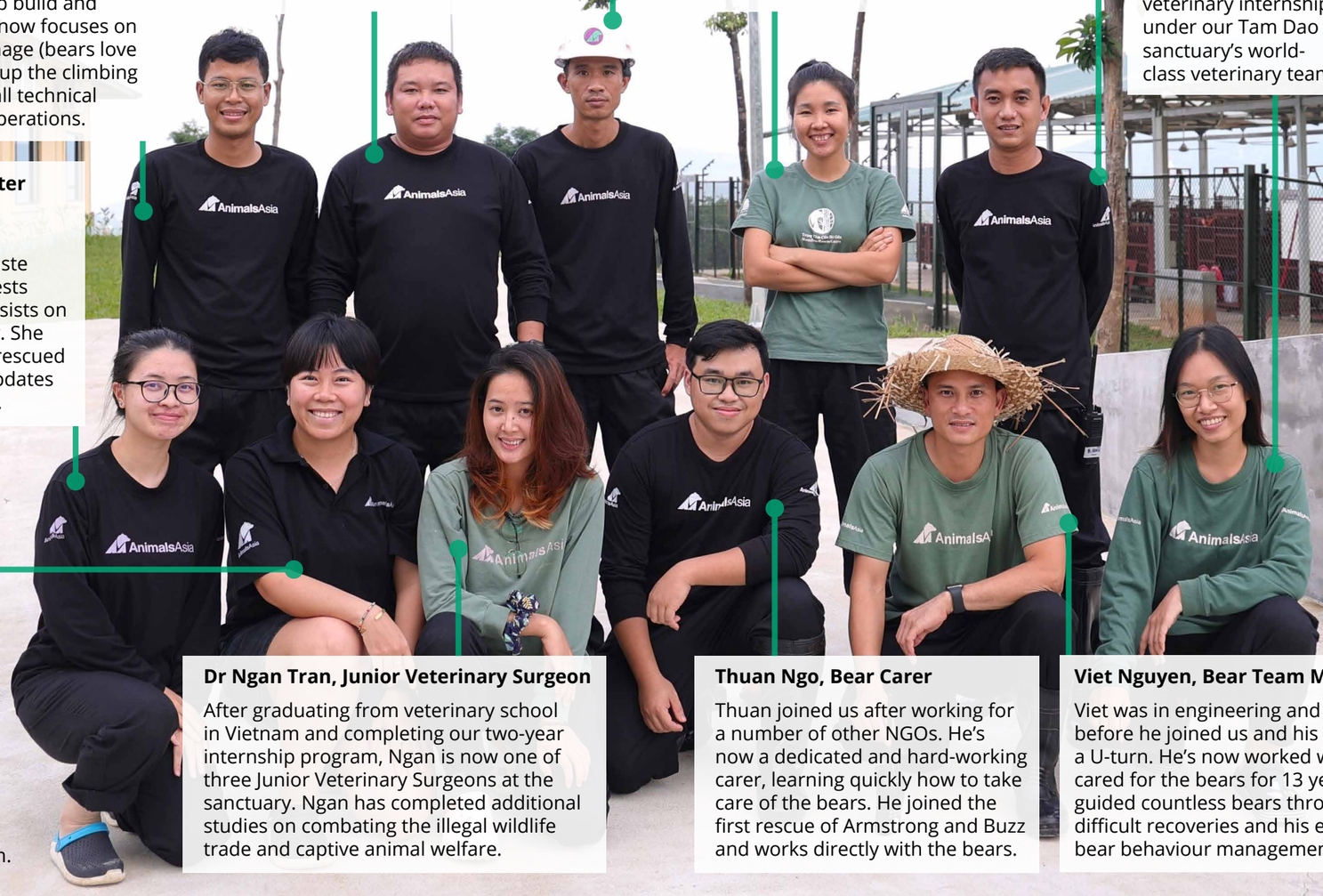
Charly is a vital team member, translating between our English and Vietnamese speakers. She also translates work materials in both languages. Charly has rich experience working in the NGO sector and using her translation skills to make a difference.

Tu Duong, General Administrator

Tu has a number of vital functions. She arranges staff travel and accommodation, facilitates workshops and events, procures supplies and helps with financial matters. Tu is an integral part of our Bach Ma team.

Ni Doan, Bear Carer

Ni, the newest member of the bear care team, is hard-working and highly motivated. She works alongside the other bear carers to attend to the daily needs of the bears.



Dr Ngan Tran, Junior Veterinary Surgeon

After graduating from veterinary school in Vietnam and completing our two-year internship program, Ngan is now one of three Junior Veterinary Surgeons at the sanctuary. Ngan has completed additional studies on combating the illegal wildlife trade and captive animal welfare.

Thuan Ngo, Bear Carer

Thuan joined us after working for a number of other NGOs. He's now a dedicated and hard-working carer, learning quickly how to take care of the bears. He joined the first rescue of Armstrong and Buzz and works directly with the bears.

Viet Nguyen, Bear Team Manager

Viet was in engineering and construction before he joined us and his career took a U-turn. He's now worked with us and cared for the bears for 13 years. Viet has guided countless bears through their difficult recoveries and his expertise in bear behaviour management in invaluable.

Core members of our Bach Ma sanctuary team.

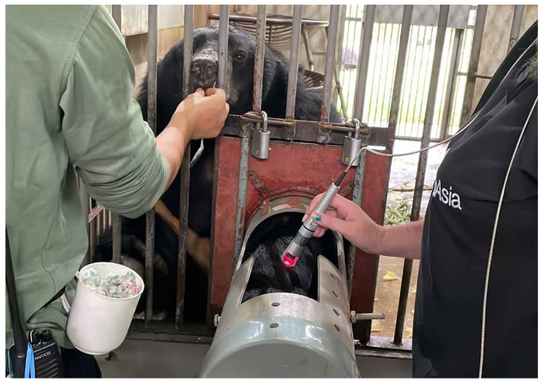
YOUR HEALING HEART IN ACTION

In 2023, your kind support saw 128 of our rescued bears helping with their own health care through our Cooperative Care Program.

Through positive reinforcement (sweet treats and loving, encouraging words), they learned certain tasks to avoid having to be anaesthetised, including opening their mouths so we can check their teeth and putting arms in sleeves so we can take their blood pressure.

They also learned to allow us to draw blood, apply topical ointment, swab deep into their ears, take radiographs, give paw injections, apply laser and massage them to assist in their physiotherapy, trim their claws and apply eye drops. Allowing us to brush their teeth is a new subject on this year's curriculum!

We installed a second robotic "scarewolf – with a frightening growl and flashing lights – in Sichuan Province, China. The project is part of our work with the local authorities to reduce human-bear conflict.



Prince 2 has laser treatment.

Alice shows us her teeth.

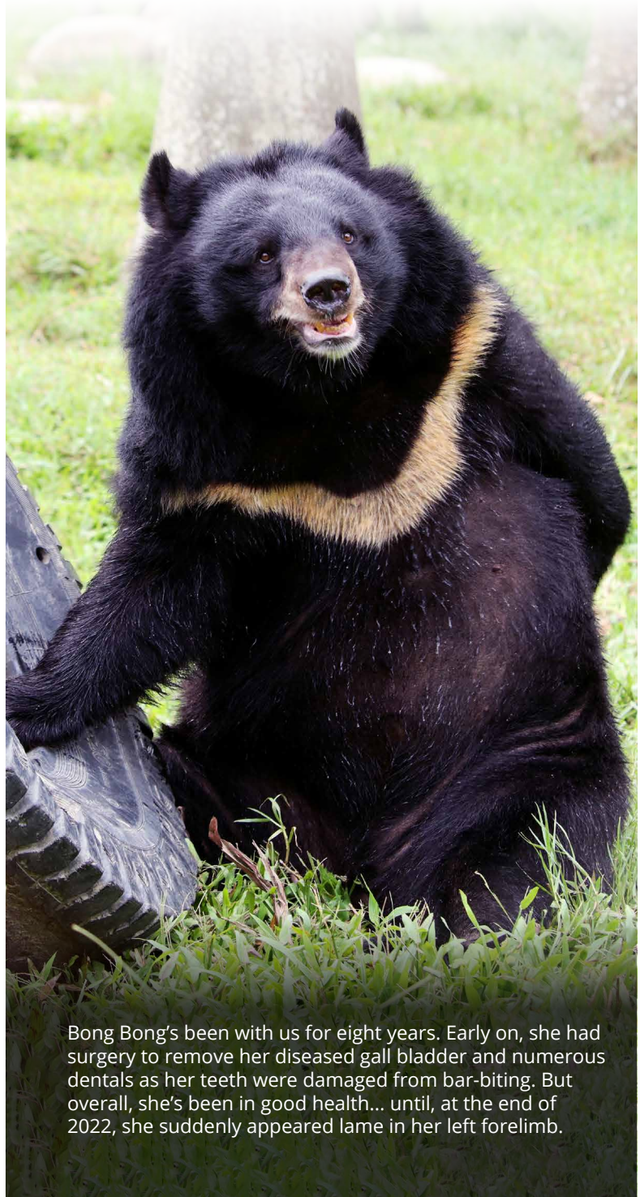
Xin Xin has her blood pressure taken.

And sweet treats are helping Sassy learn to let us inject medication into her forearm.

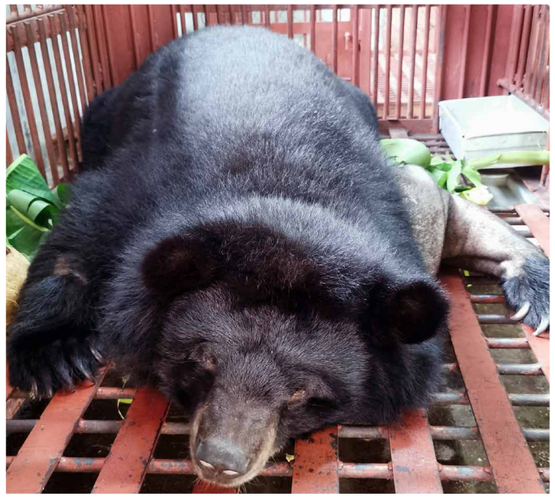
GOING TO ANY LENGTHS

Every day, on your behalf, our dedicated vet and behavioural care teams stop at nothing to help the rescued bears recover and live out their lives free from pain…

… bears like middle-aged Bong Bong who spent 12 years in a bile cage and who, without your support, would be in pain today.



Bong Bong's been with us for eight years. Early on, she had surgery to remove her diseased gall bladder and numerous dentals as her teeth were damaged from bar-biting. But overall, she's been in good health… until, at the end of 2022, she suddenly appeared lame in her left forelimb.



Throughout 2023, we tried everything to work out what was wrong and ease her pain, including medications, X-rays under anaesthesia, den rest and cage rest. Baffled, we took more X-rays and finally found a fracture that was very difficult to see. We contacted veterinary surgical specialist Dr Alane Cahalane who volunteers her time for the bears.

Alane (left) performed a gruelling seven-hour surgery that involved lots of arduous drilling and screwing in a metal plate. Bong Bong couldn't have been in better hands. Thank you, Alane!

Today Bong Bong is in our Cooperative Care Program, helping us take X-rays of her arm while she's conscious (see photo). She's also doing physio – Vet Nurse Pia Dodd reports: *"In her first session, she really showed off how good her forelimb was feeling now by pulling down on all the resistance bands!"*

OUR MAN IN VIETNAM

Tuan (left) speaks with a bile farmer who's handing over his seven bears. Tuan's quiet, respectful diplomacy has won Animals Asia many friends in government *and in the bear farming community.*

Originally from Ho Chi Minh City, our Vietnam Director Tuan Bendixsen was 10 when he emigrated with his family to Australia in 1973.

After obtaining a PhD in Agricultural Science, he worked with the CSIRO on DNA vaccines for disease prevention and husbandry for farm animals.

Moving back to Vietnam in 2000, Tuan first worked for United Nations Volunteers then with the government and later co-managed a vet clinic and lab in Hanoi before joining Animals Asia in 2005. He received an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2019.

Tell us about your work for the bears in Vietnam.

Mostly my work focuses on securing the rescue of bears, increasing awareness in the community of the cruelty of bile farming and promoting the herbal alternatives to bile.

What's a special moment in your work that you'll never forget?

Signing our agreement with the government in 2017 to end bear bile farming by 2026 was definitely momentous. On a more personal level, I'll never forget the moment when we managed to save our sanctuary from eviction in 2013.

Why are you so nice to the bear farmers?

Kindness is the only cure and that's especially the case when it comes to cultural change. It's always better to treat people with warmth and respect, even if we don't agree with them. On rescues, I always thank the farmers for handing over their bears and invite them to visit our sanctuary. If we were judgemental and spoke to them disrespectfully, other farmers would be reluctant to give their bears up to us.

What's next?

First we need to finish our new sanctuary at Bach Ma so we're ready to take in the remaining 250 bile bears. Long term, we'll be promoting better protection for bears in the wild and lobbying for animal welfare legislation. And of course caring for hundreds of bears at our sanctuaries!

Do you have family in Vietnam?

Yes, my wife, Hang, who used to work for Save the Children in Vietnam, and adult daughters Lan and Amy.

What do you do to relax?

Read the "Sydney Morning Herald" and watch movies that have meaningful and creative dialogues.

Tell us something personal about yourself.

I wear red socks to work every day. They're for luck.

OUR COMPANIONS

You brought comfort to countless cats and dogs in 2023. Thank you

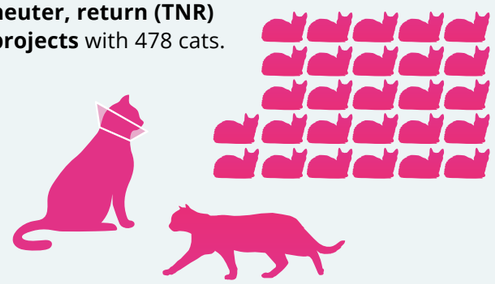
Photo: Liu Jin Chuan

OUR BEST FRIENDS THANK YOU

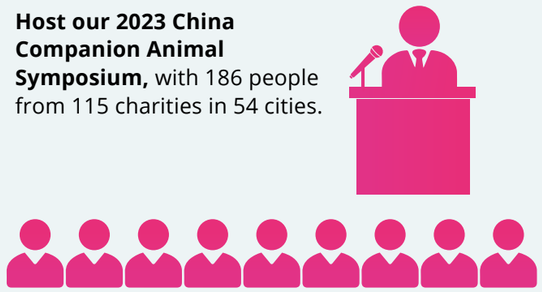
You left a happy trail of purrs and wagging tails in 2023. Our work for companion animals had a profound impact. It's only thanks to your generous help that we could:

Hold 40 awareness and education campaigns to promote the welfare of dogs and cats in China.

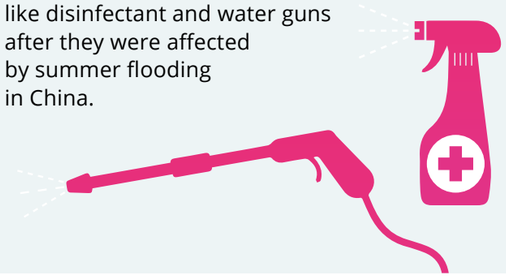
Help 29 NGOs carry out trap, neuter, return (TNR) projects with 478 cats.



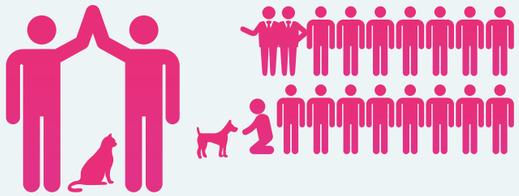
Host our 2023 China Companion Animal Symposium, with 186 people from 115 charities in 54 cities.



Provide 38 cat and dog rescue charities with cleaning materials like disinfectant and water guns after they were affected by summer flooding in China.

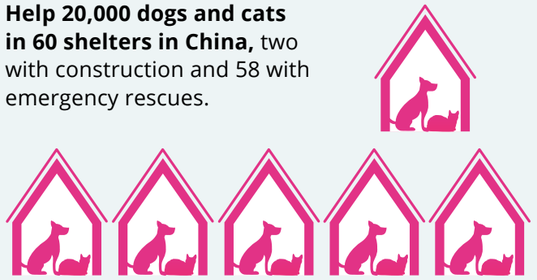


Support 200 Chinese NGOs that help dogs and cats, 140 of them with funds and training.



Treat 242 companion animals at the small-animal clinic at our bear sanctuary in Tam Dao, Vietnam – 158 dogs and 84 cats.

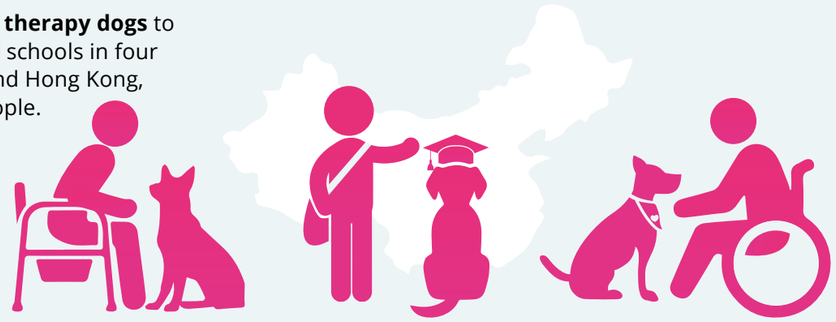
Help 20,000 dogs and cats in 60 shelters in China, two with construction and 58 with emergency rescues.



Celebrate South Korea's ban on eating dog meat, which will save millions of dogs from the terrible trade.

Stop 14 restaurants from selling dog or cat meat by reporting them to the authorities.

Make 368 visits with our therapy dogs to hospitals, care homes and schools in four mainland Chinese cities and Hong Kong, delighting over 16,500 people.



THE SMALLEST STEPS

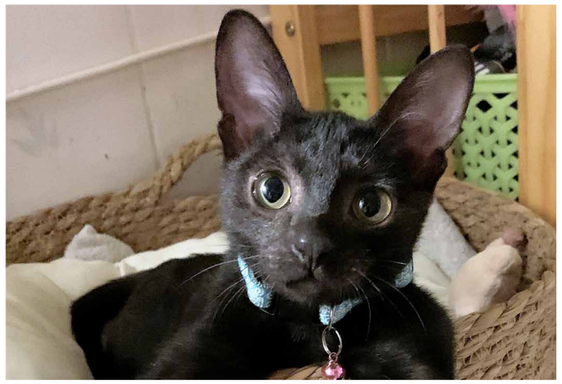
Tiny Bo might be just one kitten, but his adoption could lead to homes for other abandoned animals.

It wasn't easy to convince the monks at Tay Thien Pagoda near our Tam Dao bear sanctuary to allow our vet team to help the 50 dogs and cats abandoned at their doorstep. But finally we gained their trust and were allowed to vaccinate, neuter and treat any problems the animals had.

But because of their beliefs, adoption was out of the question for the monks – and we still had work to do.

"It's all about putting ourselves in the other person's place. Never judging, really listening and trying to see things from their perspective. Gradually the monks started to see our side too and finally they agreed to allow one kitten to be adopted. There's no guarantee they'll allow more adoptions, but this is an amazing first step."

Vet Nurse Kat Donald



Meet the first pagoda animal to find a forever home. Lucky little Bo (Avocado) now lives with our own junior vet Huong Pham.

The monks visited our bear sanctuary and are now planning a new dog house and play area based on the bears' dens and enclosures.

LOOK WHO'S TAKING THE TRAIN

To celebrate 30 years of loyal service, our tail-wagging Dr Dogs were invited to ride on Hong Kong's MTR (Mass Transit Railway). This was the first time any dogs, apart from guide dogs, have been allowed on the MTR.

This exciting event saw 20 dogs and volunteers riding in the last carriage of each train in the MTR's network. The MTR also broadcast positive messages about our Dr Dog program to its millions of passengers over several weeks and gave us space for 300 large posters in 88 stations, reaching almost everyone in Hong Kong.

While this was a one-time event, we hope it starts a conversation about the positive role of dogs in our society and leads to a more animal-inclusive Hong Kong. Also, it brought us new teaching volunteer enquires, dog guardians wanting to join, new requests for visits, and more media interest.

Dr Rogelio is all ready for the ride of his life.

HELPING STRUGGLING SHELTERS

Running a shelter for cats and dogs is never easy, but your support has made it less difficult for many hard-working and compassionate people – and helped 20,000 animals.

In China, we helped 58 shelters with emergencies like rescues and flooding, providing food, vaccines, neutering, deworming and cleaning materials (disinfectant powder, backpack water sprayer, shovels, high-pressure water guns, buckets, boots and gloves).

We funded the construction of a shelter in Liuzhou, Guangxi and part funded the construction of another in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi. And we delivered 2 tonnes of cat and dog food to four shelters and 10 student groups.

In Vietnam, where we're just starting our program to help shelters, we gave 400 kilos of dog food to a shelter in Quang Binh Province and helped another in Ho Chi Minh City with their fundraising.

We also started a new partnership with old friends, vegan skin care company Cocoon. More about this exciting project, "Join Hands to Help Stray Cats and Dogs", next year!

We help cat and dog shelters with emergency aid, long-term planning and construction. Photo: Dou Dou

Jingdezhen shelter is one of two new shelters in China that your kind gifts are building.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Your life-changing support in 2023 saw millions of stray cats avoid a life of misery.

We expanded our trap, neuter, return (TNR) program, training 29 groups around China to neuter and care for 478 stray cats.

Nineteen universities joined the program, with students taking on the task of trapping 219 cats, taking them to the vet for de-sexing, then returning them to the university and feeding and caring for them. At end-2023, 30 of the cats had been adopted.

Ten animal charities in eight cities also joined our TNR program, neutering 259 cats and returning them to their communities to be cared for by volunteer residents.

You're their lifeline. China's street cats thank you.

WE CALL THEM OUR 'SMALLIES'

These are the lucky dogs and cats under the care of our world-class vets and vet nurses.

As well as taking care of 308 bears in 2023, our vet teams treated over 350 companion animals in our sanctuaries and surrounding communities. Of these, we neutered 128. (It's a prerequisite that all the smallies we treat must be de-sexed.)

The animals are vaccinated, dewormed, treated for fleas and given any veterinary treatment they might need. For sanctuary staff, this is free, and for villagers it's either free or at a very low cost.

This is not just great for the individual dogs and cats – it provides a biosecurity zone for the bears, controls the stray animal population around us and builds bridges with the general community.

Little Zhu Zhu Zi is one of over 350 cats and dogs treated by our small animal clinics in 2023.

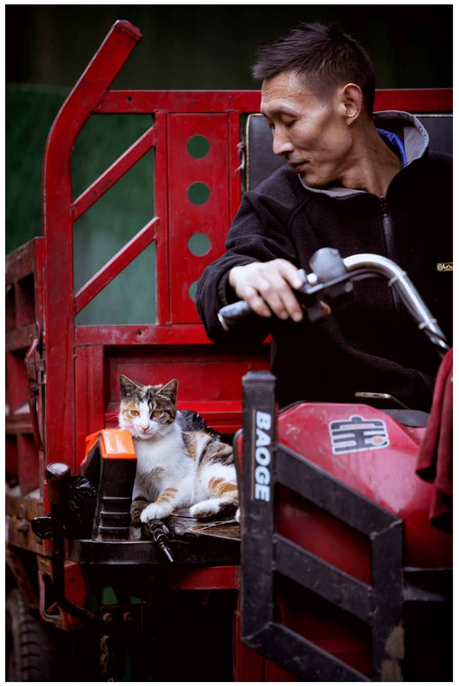
CLICKING FOR LOVE

Our nationwide photography competition, Click for Love, was one of 40 major awareness and education activities we held in China in 2023.

We received 474 entries from nearly 200 cities with a total of 1,076 photos. A professional jury selected 48 works for awards. The series that stole their hearts though was by Liu Jin Chuan who captured the extraordinary love story of street cleaner Uncle Qiao and his cat, Xiao Qiao (Little Qiao).

Street cleaner Uncle Qiao rescued Xiao Qiao from a rubbish bin.

Xiao Qiao soon made himself at home with his kind rescuer.



Xiao Qiao now rides with Uncle Qiao every day and lives with him at home.

OUR BEST FRIENDS

Through our Dr Dog and Professor Paws programs, we're spreading the message that dogs belong in our hearts, not on the menu.

Last year, our registered therapy dogs and their volunteer guardians made 368 visits, sharing their unconditional love with 16,567 people in hospitals, senior homes, schools and orphanages in four mainland Chinese cities and Hong Kong.

Dr Laimi makes a new friend in China. To date, our gentle therapy dogs have brought comfort to over 700,000 people.

FRIENDS NOT FOOD

Thanks to your kind support, we continued our efforts to crack down on the illegal dog meat trade in 2023.

We're working with the authorities in China and Vietnam to stop the illegal sale of dog meat. We're also engaging with the communities where we work and enlisting their support.

After receiving tip-offs from the public about 40 dog meat restaurants in 31 Chinese cities, we managed to stop 14 restaurants from advertising and selling dog meat. We identified 54 dog meat products on major Chinese online retailers. By the end of 2023, 41 of these items had been removed.

We visited several slaughterhouses and markets in Guilin and Liuzhou as well as checking on the Yulin Dog Meat Festival. We then made follow-up visits to all sites, reporting any illegal activity found and checking for improvements in the follow-up visits.

In Vietnam, we temporarily put most of our work for "meat dogs" on hold to focus on building our new bear sanctuary. But we have big plans for 2024, including restarting our dog trade investigations in Dak Lak, completing our count of dog restaurants and dog meat suppliers in Hanoi, and recruiting a dedicated coordinator for our work to end the trade.

Every day, your donations are fighting for their lives and bringing about long-term change.

South Korea set to ban dog meat

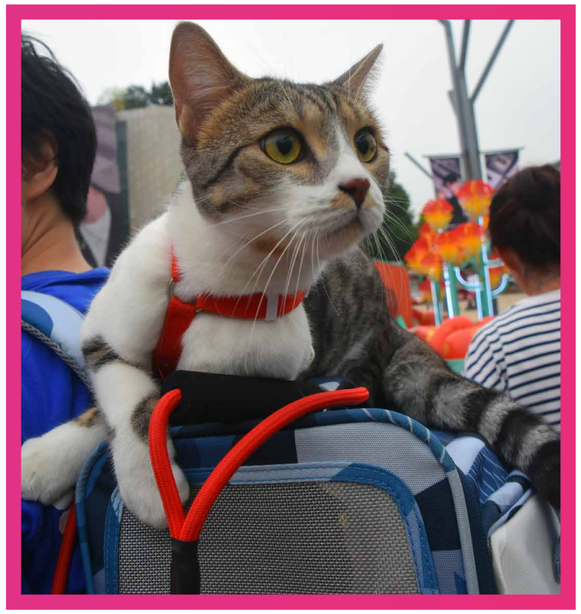
One big bright spot for dogs in 2023 was South Korea's decision to ban the sale of dog meat.

The bill will have a profound impact on the country's dogs. Government figures show there are currently around 1,150 breeding farms and 1,600 restaurants serving dog meat.

Previous attempts to pass anti-dog meat legislation were opposed by the industry which raised concerns about jobs. The current bill, which is expected to pass this year, includes a three-year grace period and financial support to help affected businesses.

THAT'S THE SHOT

Celebrating International Rabies Day (28 Sept) and World Animal Day (4 Oct), we worked with local vet clinics to offer free vaccinations for hundreds of cats and dogs at large public events in several Chinese cities – Chengdu, Guangzhou, Nanning and a number of cities in Guangxi Province. The furry patients also got a free health check from their local vets.



This little one might not agree, but they're one of the lucky cats and dogs to receive a free vaccine shot and a health check at our rabies awareness events in China.

OUR WILD FRIENDS

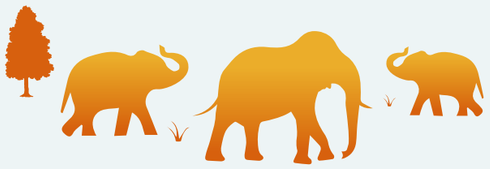
Majestic elephants like Thong Ngan now roam free in the forests thanks to your special kindness

YOUR KINDNESS AT WORK

Your gifts sent ripples of compassion through three Asian countries in 2023. Here are just some of the ways you brought about extraordinary change for so many animals.

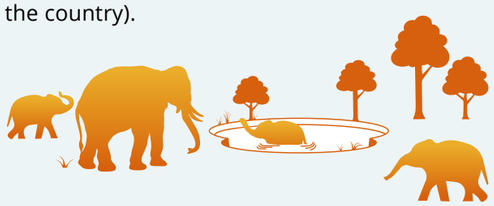
In Vietnam, we:

Rescued 3 more elephants from elephant riding tourism.



Welcomed a record 1,271 visitors to our Ethical Elephant Tours.

Cared for 14 elephants (of the estimated 70 captive elephants in the country).



Reached over 1.2 million people with information about our Ethical Elephant Tours.

Released 25 macaques onto an island and continue to supplement their food.

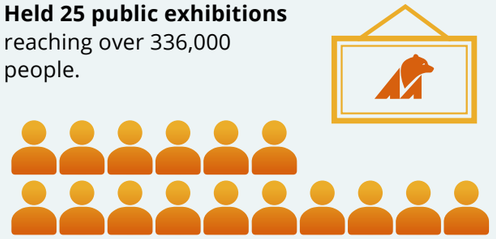
Continued working to end all elephant riding in Vietnam.

In China, we:

Delivered our animal welfare and behaviour lessons to over 3,000 students.

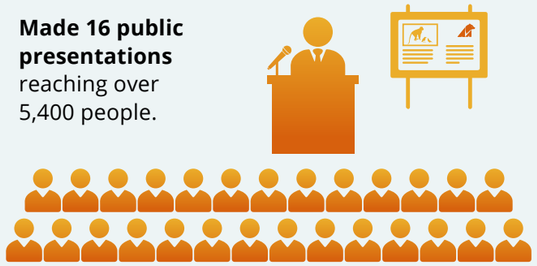
Gave 23 school talks reaching over 8,000 schoolchildren.

Held 25 public exhibitions reaching over 336,000 people.

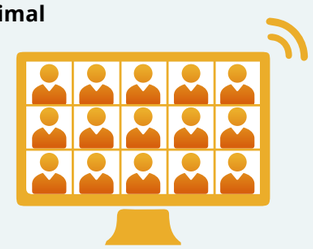


Ran 4 public competitions with over 3,200 entrants.

Made 16 public presentations reaching over 5,400 people.

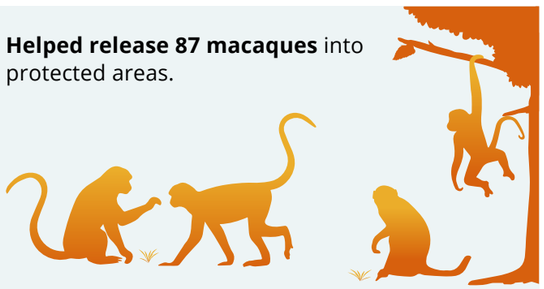


Gave 4 online animal management webinars for over 15,400 zoo staff.



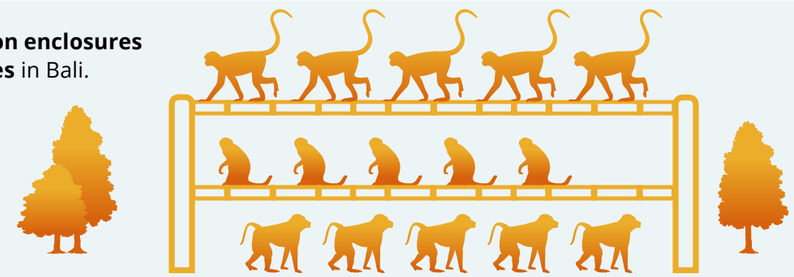
In Indonesia, we:

Helped release 87 macaques into protected areas.



Helped release almost 30,000 songbirds confiscated from illegal traders.

Developed socialisation enclosures for 15 ex-pet macaques in Bali.



FINALLY FREE TO ROAM

Your compassion reached three more desperate elephants last year, saving them from decades of gruelling labour in the scorching heat. All three spent years carrying tourists.

Tragically, Y'Rock arrived with us so broken in body and spirit that he passed away after just a month in our care.

Our two survivors, Ta Nuon and Y Khun, have been slowly introduced to their new way of life. It took some time for them to realise they no longer had to work, and that they were free to roam, forage, bathe, rest and play as they pleased.

Meet the elephants who felt your love in 2023

Ta Nuon, 41, had been forced to provide tourist rides at the Cau Treo Tourism Camp. She now has the freedom to roam within Yok Don National Park as part of our Ethical Elephant Tours.

Y Khun, 68, has also joined our Ethical Elephant Tours after he was removed from tourism riding in the Lak Lake region.

Sadly, Y'Rock, 33, was so ill that he survived just a month after he arrived from a zoo where he'd worked carrying tourists. He was just 33 years old. We want you to know that in the short time he had with us, he felt your love and care every day.

JUN AND GOLD

We continue to support the Elephant Conservation Centre at Dak Lak to provide a life as close as possible to nature for elephants Jun and Gold.

In 2023, we designed a new house for them, and gave recommendations and funded the installation of enrichment like shade structures and mud wallows.

We've been helping the centre care for Jun and Gold since 2016, providing them with all their enrichment needs – places to wallow in the mud and in the sand, giant toys to play with including wind chimes and hanging tyres, and a safe, fenced-in expanse of forest for them to roam and forage in (6,000sqm in total).

Forest rangers found and rescued Gold as a baby after he fell into a well. Sadly, attempts to reunite him with his herd failed.

Jun was also found by forest rangers. His trunk was horribly damaged and a long piece of metal was embedded in his leg from being trapped in the wild. Thanks to your support, our vets were able to treat Jun, but he remains permanently disabled and needs ongoing veterinary care.

Gold follows "big brother" Jun as they forage for leaves at the Elephant Conservation Centre. Your kind gifts enrich their lives every day.

RIDING INTO THE SUNSET

With you by our side, our campaign to make elephant riding a thing of the past in Vietnam saw great progress in 2023, including one facility stopping the practice after almost 30 years.

In Dak Lak Province, the centre of elephant riding, an annual coffee festival and a popular tourist facility both announced they were ending the practice.

This follows our 2022 agreement with the Dak Lak government to phase out elephant riding in the province by 2026.

Thanks to the agreement, Cau Treo Tourism, a popular tourist spot in Buon Don, Dak Lak, ended elephant riding in February 2023. The facility had used elephants for riding tourism since 1994.

And last year, for the first time in its eight-year history, the Buon Don Coffee Festival had no elephant riding, elephant races, elephant swimming competitions or re-enactments of wild elephant hunting.

Elephants forced to carry tourists suffer terribly. The heat and humidity are usually intense and their heavy wooden saddles rub painfully on their aching backs.

This sad sight will never be seen again at Vietnam's popular Buon Don Coffee Festival.

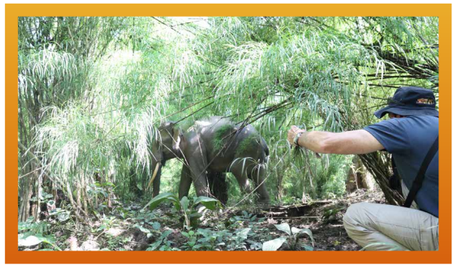
Over the next two years, we're working with the Dak Lak government to end all elephant riding there.

Promoting a new ethical model

We're doing all we can to encourage the smooth transition of elephant-riding operations to ethical tourism, including financial help and advice, and education activities for the next generation.

In 2023, along with our government partners, we hosted a workshop on ethical elephant tourism, attended by elephant owners, mahouts, government representatives and tourism operators based in the Dak Lak region.

The workshop allowed us to further promote our successful Ethical Elephant Tours and to encourage owners and tour operators to work with us to develop their own alternative tourism models in line with our agreement with the Dak Lak government.



A record number of 1,271 people joined our elephant tours in 2023.

Elephant owners, mahouts, officials and tourism operators from around Dak Lak Province attended our ethical tourism workshop.

We're also taking our elephant talks into schools as part of our work to bring the community on board with our ethical elephant tourism plans.

RESCUED BUT STILL NEEDING HELP

Our sincere gratitude to the **Olsen Animal Trust** for their generous support over the years. Many elephants and bears have lives of joy and wonder today because of you.

Much of our work in Vietnam is devoted to helping wild animals in government rescue centres.

These facilities receive large numbers of animals from many different species and, with your kind support, we provide them with technical expertise and affordable, practical solutions.

Our animal welfare teams provide daily onsite and written recommendations on all aspects of animal management and enclosure designs to ensure that the welfare of rescued animals at these centres continues to improve.

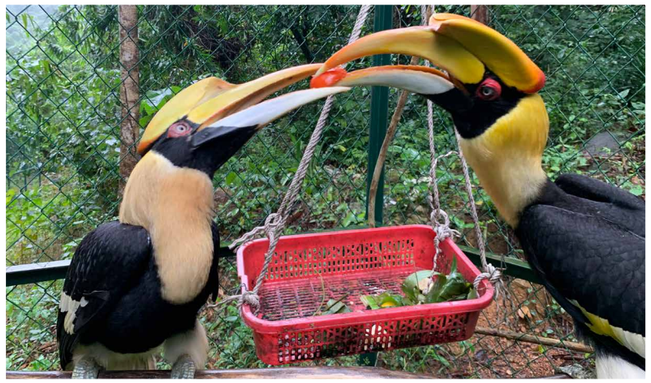
Our long association with the Hanoi Wildlife Rescue centre continues, and we have a full-time employee based at the centre.

We support other rescue facilities around Vietnam too, where we help staff with enclosure improvements and implementing affordable ways to enrich the lives of the animals in their care – simple things like straw to roll in and ropes and platforms to climb.

We also provide dietary advice and veterinary support for many different animals including macaques, eagles, leopard cats, bears and tortoises.

Our education and awareness teams in China and Vietnam delivered animal welfare messages via social media with a reach of **60.4m** people.

In 2023, we finished building and furnishing a new, more species-appropriate macaque enclosure at Hoang Lien National Park Rescue Centre. Rescued macaques will be housed here and integrated into social groups before being released back to the wild.



These beautiful Great Hornbills were among many wild species you helped in 2023. They live at Phong Na Ke Bang National Park Rescue Centre where our staff deliver enclosure improvements from detailed architectural drawings tailored to the individual species' needs. We also help with daily enrichment, better diets and veterinary support for numerous animals including leopard cats, civets and macaques.

SHARING OUR EXPERTISE

As well as handling a packed daily schedule as Senior Veterinary Nurse at our Tam Dao bear sanctuary, in 2023, Kat Donald found the time to publish a book on the endangered Indochinese tiger.

And "Technical Guidelines for the Rescue of Wildlife: Indochinese Tiger" is just the first of a series of books Kat plans to write. The purpose of these books is to help the Vietnamese authorities, but they'll also be essential tools for us too as we provide advice and work on wildlife projects around the country.

"Ideally I'd love to create similar guidelines for elephants, civets, birds, otters, primates, etc. Animals Asia is a world leader when it comes to animal welfare standards. By giving our government partners and other agencies this type of information, we're advocating for change all the time, not just when we're present."

Kat Donald, Senior Veterinary Nurse

Drawing on the extensive knowledge of our veterinary and wild animal care teams, Kat's book outlines veterinary-standard technical instructions for rescue procedures and protocols to keep both humans and tigers safe.

We're now distributing the publication to all agencies responsible for rescuing and transporting wild animals, including zoos, national and provincial forest protection departments and nature reserves.

Since 1998, no sightings of Indochinese tigers have been recorded in the wild in Vietnam, but over 300 are estimated to be in captivity, mostly in illegal operations. Poaching, wildlife trafficking and habitat loss are pushing this tiger subspecies to the brink of extinction.

Published in English and Vietnamese, Kat's book provides zoos and government agencies with technical guidance on rescuing and transporting endangered Indochinese tigers.

Hundreds of Indochinese tigers are still held in captivity in Vietnam, most of them illegally.

Kat is on a mission to share the "Animals Asia Way" with wild animal facilities throughout Vietnam.

IT'S NO CIRCUS FOR THEM

Thanks to your kind support, we're continuing our fight for wild animals used as entertainment.

Over the years, we, our partner organisations and the public have been able to stop performances at many Chinese zoos, safari parks and other venues.

- Circuses at 53 zoos closed following public opposition.
- 80 travelling circuses suspended due to public opposition and a lack of permits.
- 15 marine mammal circus shows stopped due to public opposition and a lack of permits.
- 6 "circus animals for hire" websites closed down due to a lack of operating permits following our opposition.
- 8 zoos stopped public interaction sessions with wild animals following public opposition.
- 3 local authorities banned the use of animals in "International Circus Festivals".

In Vietnam, we focus our campaign on animals used in festivals, ending elephant riding and animals in circuses.

Our Hanoi-based education team has been investigating the use of animals in traditional festivals, attending and documenting scenes of animal suffering at goat fighting and buffalo fighting festivals. The information will be used for a report to the Ministry of Culture as part of our ongoing campaign to end the use of animals in traditional festivals in Vietnam.

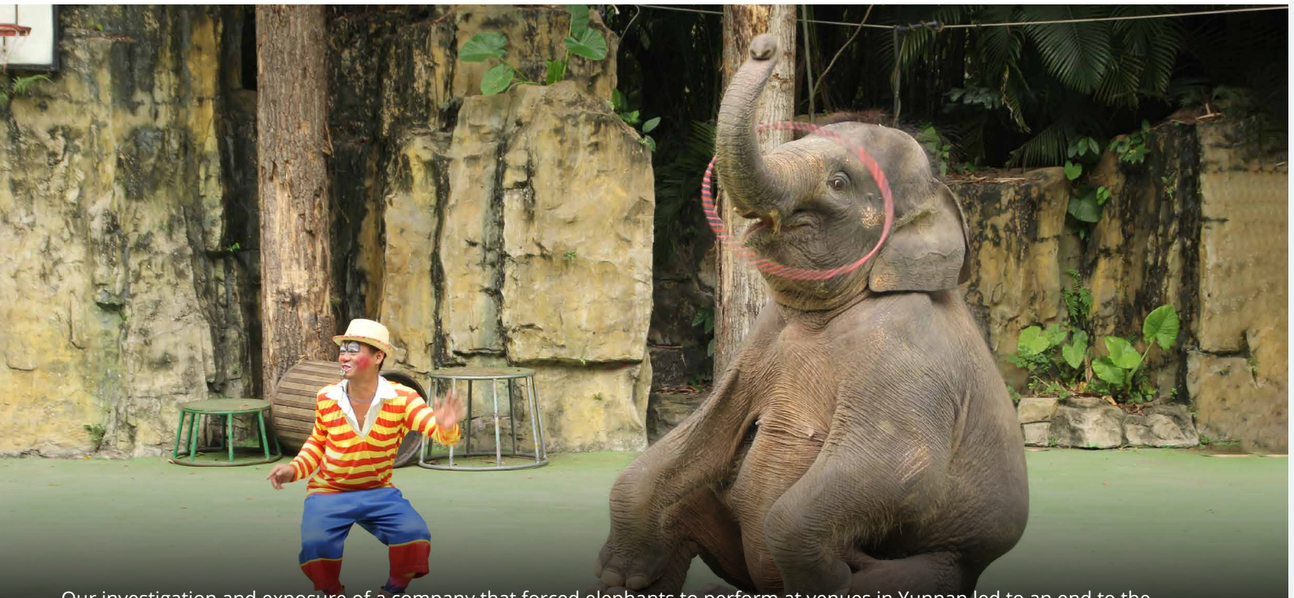
Progress has come from engaging with both the authorities and the public. Since we started our campaign to end animal performances over two decades ago, we've had more than 43.3m online views of our awareness activities exposing and opposing the use of animals in circuses.

A further 26 million people have viewed physical advertising campaigns – either ours or our partners' – opposing the use of animals in circuses.

Increasingly, official media outlets are also calling for an end to the practice, pointing to an already declining industry. This, they say, is due to waning audience appeal, tighter national regulations on animal performances and society's growing attention to animal welfare.

"We've long opposed the use of wild animals in circuses. We're seeing progress, but it's slow and there simply aren't the resources to enforce a ban or the space and skills to look after all of the wild animals currently held captive for entertainment. We have however started to see attitudes changing."

Dave Neale, Animal Welfare Director



Our investigation and exposure of a company that forced elephants to perform at venues in Yunnan led to an end to the practice in 2023. In the same province, popular tourist site Yunnan Wild Elephant Valley also ended elephant performances last year. You're the reason these majestic animals no longer have to perform to loud and scary crowds.

OUR STAR SUPPORTERS

A bear-sized thank you to the many passionate, high-profile supporters who used their fame for good in 2023.

These wonderful celebrities made huge contributions to our work – championing our cause, shouting about our successes and promoting our fundraising to their millions of followers on social media.

When we officially opened our second sanctuary in Vietnam, they worked tirelessly to take our message to the world's media. Special thanks to Lesley Nicol, Maggie Q and Peter Egan for helping us secure international media coverage of this historic event and even finding time in their schedules to be in Bach Ma for the big day.

Big bear hugs to *all* our celebrity supporters who helped the bears and other animals last year. These include actors Dame Judi Dench, Ricky Gervais, Sophia Del Pizzo, Alan Cumming and Tara Buck, musicians Simon Le Bon, Peter Northcote, Tiziano Ferro, Rick Wakeman and Mya, television personalities naturalist Chris Packham, veterinarian Katrina Warren and reality star Sharon Osbourne, primatologist Dame Jane Goodall, photographer to the stars Kat Benzova and author Jane Fallon.

Loyal supporters Peter Egan, Maggie Q and Lesley Nicol, pictured here with Jill, flew in to join us for the opening of our Bach Ma sanctuary.

With the sad passing of Benjamin Zephaniah in 2023, the world lost a champion for kindness and we lost a true friend. Poet, musician and animal activist, Benjamin visited our bear sanctuary in China, spoke out about our work and was a great advocate for animal welfare. Rest in peace, Benjamin and thank you for taking the bears into your heart.

Ricky Gervais, our long-time supporter, and other top stars are sharing our messages with millions of fans. On behalf of the animals, we thank you.

Heartfelt thanks to popular Vietnamese actress and model Tang Thanh Ha (Ha Tang) for spreading the word about our work. Ha Tang became Bear Guardian to a little cub after seeing images of his rescue. She named him An, meaning "peace" in Vietnamese.

OUR VETERINARY LEADERS

In 2023, your kindness sent ripples of love, care and dedication from our vet teams to veterinary communities throughout China and Vietnam.

Our sanctuary vet teams are dedicated to achieving excellence in every aspect of their work and, most importantly, *sharing their skills and knowledge.*

One of our former veterinary interns – Hanoi vet clinic owner Lam Kim Hai (Hai) – brought his own team to our sanctuary in 2023 to learn from our experts. Hai (left) wanted them to see how we operated and to learn the importance of communication and critical thinking. Hai is one of 13 veterinary interns we've taken into our program in China and Vietnam.

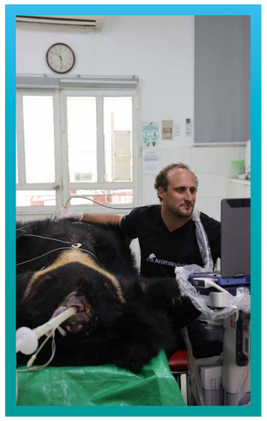
Cool heads, steady hands and strong lungs

This is what it takes to be emergency ready. In the highly unlikely event of a bear escaping from their enclosure, we now have a full emergency response team trained to keep people and bears safe.

In 2023, Veterinary Nurse Pia Dodd took on the task of training a darting team at our Tam Dao sanctuary. Now, as well as our vet team and a few other high-level staff, we have four Bear Team Leaders – Tong Khanh Linh, Pham Thi Hao, Nguyen Thi Quyen and Nguyen Van Nguyen – ready to step in and dart a bear if necessary. This can be done safely from as far away as 11 yards (10 metres).

Under Pia's guidance, the team will continue with frequent practice drills to ensure they're ready at any time.

Bear Team Leader Linh practices his darting to be ready should a bear escape.



Our Senior Veterinary Surgeon Shaun Thomson (left) has developed a procedural guide to ensure successful laparoscopy surgeries and recovery. The guide covers pre-op, intra-op and post-op requirements to ensure surgeries with minimal complications and optimal care for our bears. Shaun plans to share the guide with vets throughout Vietnam.

Better X-rays for our China bears

Our China sanctuary has a new state-of-the-art X-ray machine, thanks to two very generous Hong Kong supporters. They made the gift in honour of their much-loved dogs – Sweetie Wu and Bubi Foong – and in memory of Albert Wu, after whom our X-ray room is named.

Our previous X-ray machine, donated in 2009, had become a struggle to keep operational. After four months of research, we found the best machine for our needs. The images are remarkably clear, allowing us to better evaluate our bears' radiographs. The old machine is now being used in our small animal hospital.

Huge thanks to the specialist vets who offer their skills to help the bears. These include dental specialists Cedric Tutt and Serena Oh, eye specialist Claudia Hartley, pain specialists Paulo Steagall and Beatriz Monteiro, orthopaedic specialist Alane Cahalane, physiotherapist Brooke Williams, cardiologists Lynne Nelson and Chris Linney, neurologist Sean Sanders and radiologist Nat Webster.

In 2023, our sanctuary vet teams:

- **Performed 232 life-saving health checks on bears** under anaesthesia.
- **Performed 30 major surgeries on the bears.** The longest was 9 hours 20 minutes.
- **Helped 8 bears at government rescue centres** with outreach procedures.
- **Started training 2 more veterinary interns** at our Tam Dao sanctuary.

25 YEARS OF KINDNESS

You, *our wonderful supporters*, made the past quarter century a very special time of progress for Asia's most abused animals.

Whether you've been with us from the start, or you've recently joined our Animals Asia family, it's your big, kind heart that's got us to where we are today.

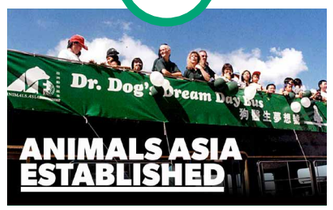
1991

Jill Robinson launches Dr Dog, Asia's first animal-assisted therapy program.

1993

On a visit to a bile farm in China, Jill meets a bear she calls "Hong" – and that changes everything.

1998



Jill launches Animals Asia with a small group of friends.

Jill is awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth II.

1999

Animals Asia offers to work with the Vietnamese government to rescue all the country's 400 bile bears. Sadly, our offer is not taken up.

2000

After signing an agreement with the Chinese government to build a bear sanctuary in Chengdu, our first resident, Andrew, arrives with 60 other bears.

2004

We launch Professor Paws in Hong Kong and mainland China to encourage children to love and respect animals.

2005

The Vietnamese government agrees to talk with us. The bear bile industry is out of control with the number of bile bears skyrocketing to 4,000.

2006

The Vietnam authorities allow us to build a bear sanctuary in Tam Dao National Park near Hanoi. The site is a former government rescue centre and one bear, Ben, lives there in a large covered cage.

2007

We rescue our first bears in Vietnam, cubs Mara (pictured) and Mausi.

2008

Our Vietnam Bear Rescue Centre officially opens. It can house 200 bears.

2009

Our work sees 19 of China's 31 provinces make a landmark declaration that they are now, and will remain, bear-farm free.

2010

The first entire bear farm closes in Vietnam and 19 bears come home to our sanctuary.

A 20th province in China becomes bear bile farm-free. Ten bears are rescued including Oliver (pictured) who spent 30 years in a bile cage.

2011

AfA
ASIA FOR ANIMALS COALITION

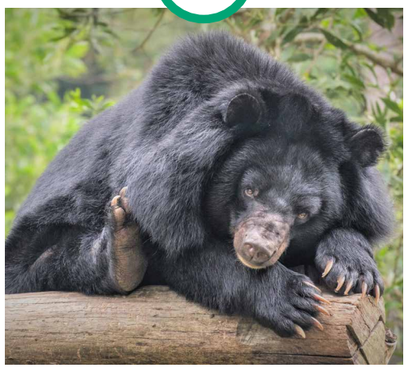
We host Asia's biggest animal welfare forum, the four-day Asia for Animals Conference in Chengdu.

Jill is awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Zurich.

2012

Just four years after opening our Vietnam sanctuary we face threats of eviction, first from a holiday resort company and then from the Ministry of Defence. We launch a worldwide campaign to Stop the Eviction.

2013



Vietnam's Prime Minister steps in to save our sanctuary. The land is ours to use as a sanctuary and the 100-plus resident bears, including our lovely Lexi, are safe.

2014

Animals Asia takes over the care of 132 bears on a former bear bile farm in Nanning, China.

Our sanctuaries become the first in China and Vietnam to receive international accreditation from the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries.

1,900+ Chinese pharmacies join our Healing without Harm campaign, pledging to stop selling bear bile.

Animals Asia starts lobbying to end elephant riding in Vietnam.

2015

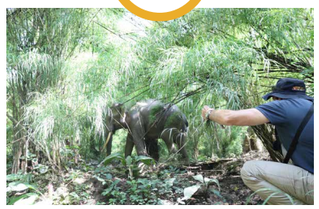
The number of dogs slaughtered at China's annual dog meat festival in Yulin drops to 1,000 from 10,000 after campaigning by Animals Asia and other groups.

The Vietnamese Traditional Medicine Association's 70,000 members agree to stop prescribing bear bile by 2020.

2017

Animals Asia signs a historic agreement with the Vietnam government to work together to end bear bile farming in the country for good.

2018



Thanks to the support of The Olsen Animal Trust we sign an agreement with the Yok Don National Park to end elephant riding and launch Vietnam's first ethical elephant tourism project.

2020

Following years of campaigning by Animals Asia and other charities, China makes selling dog meat illegal.

As the world faces a global pandemic Animals Asia launches The Only Cure Is Kindness campaign.

Animals Asia becomes the first and only non-profit to join China's Rabies Prevention and Control Committee.

2021

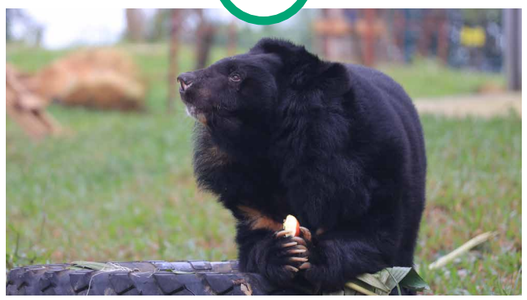
The world's biggest bear rescue. After a seven-year campaign, Animals Asia moves 101 bears from an ex-bile farm in Nanning 1,200 kilometres (750 miles) to our Chengdu sanctuary.

We sign a historic agreement with Dak Lak government in Vietnam to end elephant riding there. Nearly all the country's elephant-riding tourism is in Dak Lak.

2022

We're in the final stages of planning our second sanctuary in Vietnam. The new rescue centre in Bach Ma National Park will be home to all of the country's remaining bile bears, around 300 in 2022.

2023



Phase One of our Bach Ma sanctuary opens and our first three bears arrive – Armstrong (pictured), Buzz and Apollo.

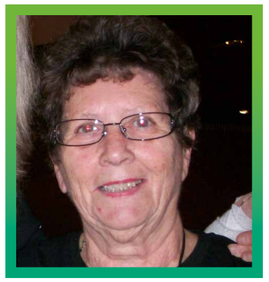
Our Dr Dogs and Professor Paws therapy dogs reach a milestone, with over 700,000 people taking comfort from their unconditional love since 1991.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR HEROES

Big bear hugs of thanks to the wonderful winners of our Moon Bear Hero Awards for 2023.

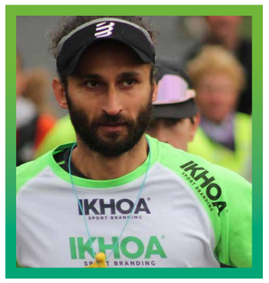
ANDREW SUPERSTAR AWARD

Inspired by moon bear Andrew, the very first bear we rescued in China.



When our first Australian support group started in Perth in 2003, **Brenda Douglas** joined immediately, later becoming president. Over the years, Brenda has held countless fundraising events like stalls and raffles and given presentations at many clubs and organisations. At 86, she still spreads the word whenever she can. Thank you beyond words, Brenda.

ISF Academy in Hong Kong has partnered with Animals Asia for 10 years, showing its students the meaning of kindness in action. Among their activities, each year, the Grade 11 students hold a Moon Bear Picnic for the Grade 2s, teaching them about moon bears and why we need to save them. And the Grade 1s learn about dog care from our gentle Professor Paws therapy dogs. Our sincere gratitude to all you wonderful teachers and students.



Antonio Frasca Di Manno, of Italy ran for 76 hours straight, setting a new Italian record – and it was all for the bears. Antonio is a vegan ultrarunner who's raised thousands of euros for Animals Asia with his challenges. He's the Italian champion of Backyard Ultra and took part in the World Championships in Tennessee, USA where he completed his record-breaking run. Thank you for every challenging step, Antonio!

Inspired by her mother who left a gift in her Will to Animals Asia, **Jill Mills** of the UK has worked tirelessly for the bears for over two decades. Jill has coordinated events and activities for the Bolton Support Group for several years – including raffles and teddy bear sales. She arranges meetings every month and organises events. She partners with charity shops, tearooms and even her local post office to raise funds. We're incredibly grateful for all that you do, Jill.

COURAGE IN ACTION

Inspired by Cubby Leo, our brave little sun bear who overcame her fears.

Enza Marramao, Italy
Barbara Thiel, UK

EMPATHY IN ACTION

Inspired by moon bear Smudge, the last bear born at the former Nanning bile farm we closed down in 2021.

Maria Concetta Curto, Italy
May and Johnathan Hung and their Dr Dog, "Hung Bear Bear", Hong Kong
Peter Northcote, Australia
South Yorkshire Support Group, UK
Wyatt Tunstall, Australia

RESPECT IN ACTION

Inspired by moon bear Tuan, whose rescue was a result of diplomacy and cooperation.

Jack Alvey, USA
Lynne Chitty, UK
Claudia Bussotti, Italy
Year 6, Park Lake State School, Australia
Cat Yu and her Dr Dog, "Kam Bo", Hong Kong

TENACITY IN ACTION

Inspired by brown bear Oliver, who spent 30 years in a bile cage before enjoying four years of sanctuary.

Wendy Henderson, Australia
Sandra Jeavons, UK
Andy Ooi, Malaysia
Rita Zucca-Pater, Luxembourg

STAYING ON TRACK FOR THE ANIMALS

Measuring "work done" against strategic goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) is crucial to the success and growth of any organisation.

For Animals Asia, it's also life-changing. Here are some examples of how we did in 2023:

Goal: To end bear bile farming in Vietnam and rescue the remaining 250 bile bears by 2026.

KPIs: Number of bears rescued, progress on construction of our second bear sanctuary that will be home to the last bile bears.

Work done: Rescued 16 bears and completed Phase One of of our Bach Ma sanctuary. The sanctuary now has capacity for 120 bears.

Goal: To end the suffering of millions of street cats and dogs in China.

KPIs: Number of shelters/shelter animals helped, progress in spreading our Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) program for cats throughout the country.

Work done: Helped 29 NGOs carry out TNR projects for 478 cats. Helped 20,000 shelter animals in 60 shelters with construction, emergency food and medical supplies.

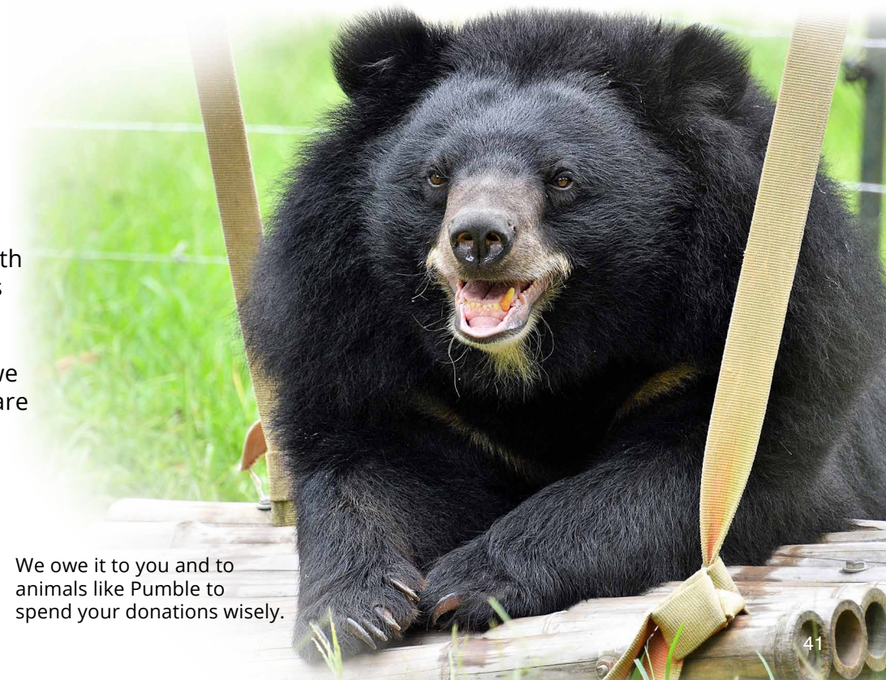
Goal: To end elephant riding tourism in Dak Lak Province, Vietnam's main elephant riding centre. This is in line with our agreement with the provincial government to end all elephant riding there.

KPIs: Number of elephants rescued, number of elephant-riding ventures closed down.

Work done: Rescued 3 more "riding" elephants, bringing to 14 the total number under our care. Convinced Cau Treo Tourism to end elephant riding at their facility. Ended elephant performances at the Buon Ma Thuot Coffee Festival. This was the first year the festival had no elephant riding, elephant races (running and swimming), or re-enactments of wild elephant hunting.

OUR PROMISE TO YOU

Every project we undertake with your hard-earned donations is subject to strict scrutiny and evaluation. We look at what's working and what's not. And we always keep the animals' welfare front and centre.



We owe it to you and to animals like Pumble to spend your donations wisely.

EQUALITY IN ACTION

Men in the kitchen and women driving trolleys – small but powerful steps towards equality and inclusion for all our sanctuary staff.

Technical Supervisor Le Thi Bac has worked at our Tam Dao rescue centre for over 14 years and has a deep understanding of our rescued bears. She's known for treating them as her own children.

It's Bac's job to ensure that the bear care staff are trained in all aspects of behaviour, husbandry and welfare to ensure procedures are carried out to a high standard.

In mid-2023, she was presented with an extra challenge – to head our Gender Diversity Advisory Team after the former leader moved to our Bach Ma sanctuary.

"Vietnam is still a conservative society with traditional gender roles, but this is changing. We want every one of our staff to know their gender will never dictate what they can and can't do at work."

Le Thi Bac, Technical Supervisor and head of our Gender Diversity Advisory Team

In the second half of 2023, Bac's team made some impressive progress:

- All female team leaders and assistant team leaders learned to drive the utility trolleys to move fruit and veggies to bear houses without needing men's support. Before 2023, only men drove the trolleys.
- All female bear care staff trained to operate the bears' transport cage slides correctly and safely. Previously, only men had this role.
- Three male bear carers trained in our nutrition team, which prepares all food for the bears. This includes food-based enrichment like puzzle feeders, delicious pots of banana and sweet syrup to hide the bears' medications and any special meals and food preparations like soft/blended food for bears with painful gums.
- After our education sessions to raise awareness of gender equity to encourage female staff to join men-only teams, for the first time a female bear carer applied for a key position in the Bear Facilities Team and another female bear carer signed up to train with the team. The team's responsibilities include building and repairing climbing structures, swings and hammocks, maintaining the enclosures and grounds, delivering food and browse and moving bears during health checks.

These changes not only empower both women and men, they also make sense operationally. Now we have staff trained and ready to step in if one of our teams needs more help.

We were invited to share our methods and practices at a conference on gender equity held by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

As well as driving our utility trolleys, Bac is driving the change towards equality.

We've got this! Women at our sanctuary are taking on roles that were traditionally considered male-only.

"The women at our Tam Dao sanctuary show the world that what men can do, women can do, and they're even more skilful in care work."

Tuan Bendixsen, Vietnam Director

BUILDING OUR ORGANISATION

From a small, but mighty, group of passionate people to a global movement for good, Animals Asia has come a long way in 25 years. *All thanks to amazing supporters like you.*

Jill Robinson launched Animals Asia in 1998 with a group of friends around her kitchen table in Hong Kong. Today, we're a worldwide organisation with over 400 full-time employees. The Animals Asia way of Kindness in Action is more relevant than ever before.

Here are some highlights from 2023:

We had over 26,000 new donors, bringing to almost 53,000 the total number of supporters who donated in 2023. A huge welcome to all our new family members, and a very big thank you to each of you very special people who donated last year. You're making the world a kinder place for its most vulnerable animals.

Our supporters and support groups held 118 fundraisers, bringing in over US$366,000. These activities and events, and you, the wonderful people who organise them, are the backbone of Animals Asia. Thank you.

We had 24 new Bear Guardians, bringing to 230 the number of bears with guardians at end-2023 and to 203 the number of unique Bear Guardianships at the end of the year. Becoming a Bear Guardian and naming a rescued bear is the greatest gift you can give to a bear. Your generosity is appreciated more than we can say.

Almost 13,000 individuals became monthly donors, bringing to over 24,700 the total number of monthly givers at end-2023. Thank you beyond words. Your monthly gifts help us plan ahead and prepare for extra expenses like emergency rescues and health checks – and replacing swings and hammocks that the bears love to break!

We received over US$1.1m in gifts from 60 trusts and foundations, thank you so much. Your vital grants allow us to take on projects like our Ethical Elephant Tourism program where visitors can watch rescued elephants roaming in the forest. They observe from a respectful distance as the elephants forage, bathe and wallow in the mud.

We had almost 200 corporate sponsors, an increase of 51% over the previous year. (Please turn the page for more on some of these special companies.)

300 kind people signed up to Sponsor a Bear, some for the first time and some adding to their furry family. At end-2023, we had almost 1,300 people in the program, some of whom sponsored more than one bear. Big bear hugs to all you lovely people. Your gifts mean the world to these special bears.

225 new individuals pledged to leave a gift in their Will. Thank you to each and every one of you wonderful, caring people. Your loving hearts will live on, creating a kinder future for the animals.

We welcomed almost 20,000 new Facebook fans, bringing the total number of followers at end-2023 to over 340,000 (6% increase over 2022).

Our Instagram family grew by over 10,400 to more than 145,000 followers at end-2023 (9% increase).

We shared over 1,500 posts to our social media platforms and received over 142,000 responses.

THE BUSINESS OF KINDNESS

Sending big bear hugs to **Animal Friends Insurance** for their generous support of our new sanctuary at Bach Ma.

Our sincere thanks to all our kind corporate partners who made 2023 a better year for Asia's animals.

We worked with nearly 200 businesses that donated funds and raised much positive awareness. These partnerships raised over US$350,000 for the animals we love.

We're proud to state that each one of our corporate partners operates ethically and shares our vision for a kinder world. *We're honoured to work with you all and can't thank you enough for all you make possible.*

Exciting news from Adventure World

You can meet bears like Quizzy on a behind-the-scenes tour of our Tam Dao sanctuary with Jill Robinson, thanks to our generous partner, ethical travel company Adventure World.

Adventure World offers bespoke trips tailored to your preferences. You'll be able to immerse yourself in the bustling beauty of Vietnam *and* see first-hand the impact of your support for the bears. Sanctuary visits will be limited to small numbers and include tours of the bear houses and hospital and a chance to join enrichment activities.

Ten per cent of trip costs will go to Animals Asia. To find out more and book this unique experience, search for "Adventure World – Animals Asia Bear Sanctuary Visit".

If you've ever dreamed of visiting the bears, we can wholeheartedly recommend Adventure World. Bears like Quizzy are looking forward to meeting you!

Thank you to our railways

Our sincere thanks to Hong Kong's Mass Transit Railway (MTR) Corp and Vietnam Railway Corp for promoting animal welfare at their busiest stations in 2023.

We worked with both railways on projects that shared our messages with millions of passengers.

Our tie-up with Vietnam Railways allowed us to hand out gifts, provide information and hold painting and photo exhibitions targeting elephant riding and the use of animals in traditional festivals.

In Hong Kong, our Dr Dogs made history, riding on the MTR for the very first time. Please see page 22 for the full story.

Our Vietnam Director, Tuan Bendixsen, hands out gifts and answers questions at Hanoi Station.

Enormous thanks to our longstanding partners, vegan bag and accessories company **Miomojo** and natural wellness brand **Activated You**. Your continued support and dedication to our cause have been instrumental in advancing our mission to protect animals.

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

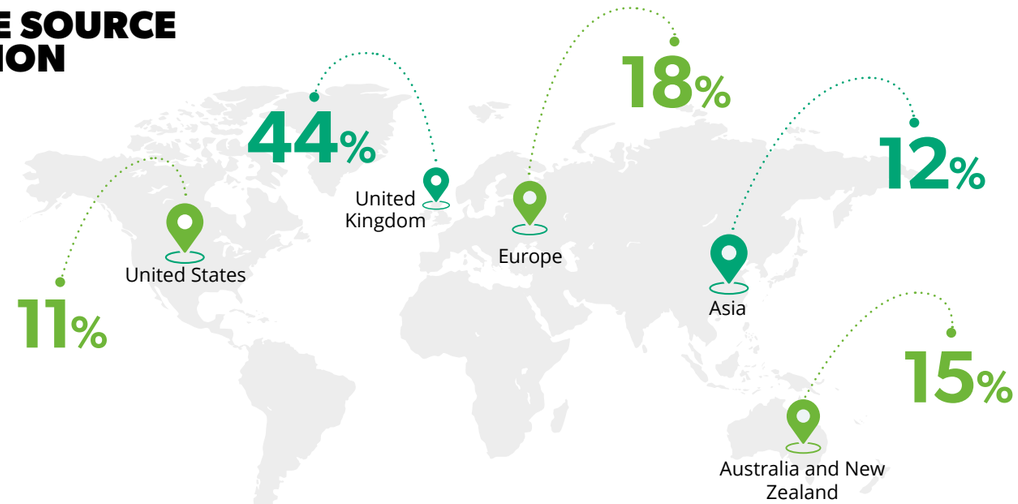
Thank you. Your kindness and loyalty helped us through a challenging 2023. Global instability and the cost of living crisis saw a dip in our income, but despite this, we decided to drive forward our plans to complete Phase One of our Bach Ma sanctuary so we could start to rescue Vietnam's remaining 250 bile bears.

To avoid cutting expenditure on our other vital programs, we drew down our reserves to help fund Bach Ma's construction. Our leadership team is developing robust strategies for sustainable income growth and has agreed prudent plans to rebuild our reserves.

Together with other generous supporters around the globe, you donated almost $17 million last year, allowing us to continue our vital work for Asia's most desperate animals. Bears freed from cages after more than two decades, stray dogs and cats living in loving homes, weary elephants rescued from carrying tourists and wild animals in captivity with new places to climb, play and hide. On behalf of each one of these precious animals, thank you beyond words.

GLOBAL INCOME $16.87M (all amounts in US$)

INCOME SOURCE BY REGION

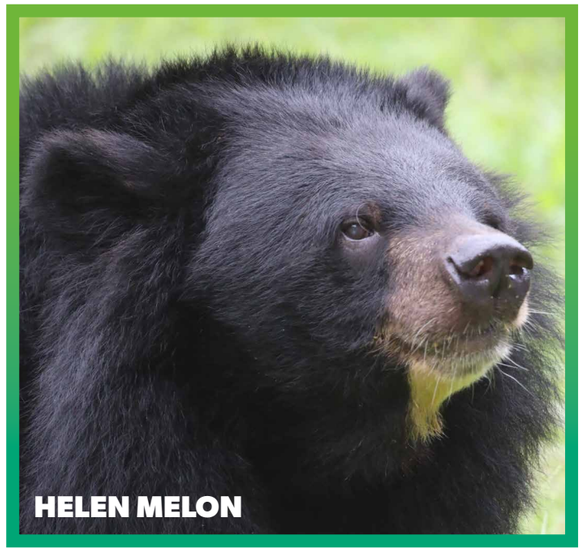


RUNNING COSTS $19.35m

Programs	**63%**
Income generation	**32%**
Administration and governance	**5%**

PROGRAM EXPENDITURE

We spent $12.093m directly on our programs in 2023. The bears took the biggest share of nearly 50 per cent.



Moon Bear Protection 49%: Almost half our program spend was directed to our flagship program which saw some impressive results in 2023 – almost 700 bears rescued to date and the end of bile farming in Vietnam several steps closer.

Captive Animal Welfare 12%: Our wide-ranging work to enrich the lives of captive animals and free those we can focused on ending wild animal performances and elephant riding, and helping and advising government rescue centres.

Cat and Dog Welfare 9%: Our work to improve the welfare of cats and dogs continued with highlights including new shelters built in China and an exciting new tie-up with vegan skin-care company Cocoon to help shelters in Vietnam.

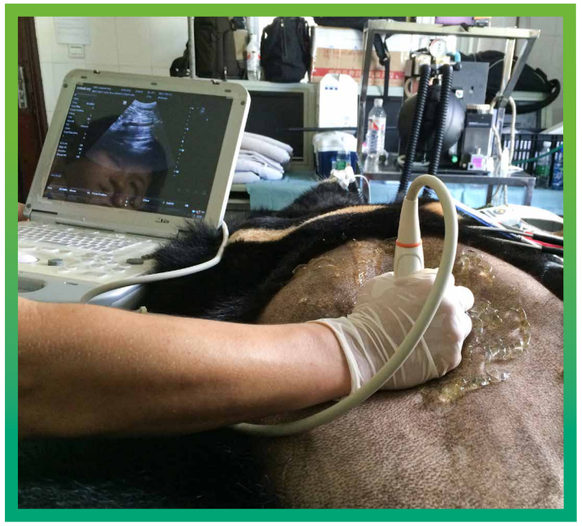
Public Education 30%: Supporting our three main programs is our critical community education work, which is changing hearts and minds throughout Asia. We target schools and communities where bear bile farming is common.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

We spent $1.481m directly on capital works in 2023. Not surprisingly, the construction of our new sanctuary took the lion's share.

Construction 90%: As you'd expect, almost all our capital expenditure was directed to building our second sanctuary in Vietnam – to be home to the country's last surviving bile bears.

Sanctuary refurbishment 8%: Bears like playful Princess often break their swings and hammocks, but our clever maintenance teams have developed quick and affordable ways to fix or replace them.



Equipment 2%: We treasure the resources we have. With careful use and regular maintenance, expensive surgical and diagnostic equipment like this ultrasound machine can last for over a decade.

Our rescued bears can live for over 30 years. A gift in your Will can help ensure they get the special care they need every day of their lives. If you'd like to learn more, and receive our gifts in Wills guide, please email giftsinwills@animalsasia.org.

If you'd like to learn about becoming a Bear Guardian and naming one of our rescued bears, please contact us at bearguardianship@animalsasia.org.

‘Glowing defiantly inside the gloom of her cage was the golden crescent moon on her chest.’

Jill Robinson MBE, founder and CEO on rescuing our cover girl, Princess

COVER GIRL: Princess spent over 15 years in a bile cage. Today she loves to roll on the grass with her best girlfriend, Sinh.

BACK COVER BOY: Rescued as a tiny cub, Sonny Ray is known for his climbing skills. He also likes playing with sacks and wearing them on his head.

DESIGNER: Mavis Fan **EDITOR/WRITER:** Angela Leary

Donations to **Animals Asia Foundation** are tax-deductible in Australia, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, the UK and the US.

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