

## *Abstract*

This study examined the role volunteer tourism played in the conservation of elephants in Chiang Mai, Thailand. A case study was conducted to determine whether volunteer tourism at the Elephant Nature Park (ENP) had an effect on elephant conservation. Specifically, this study looked at how volunteer tourism and the ENP had an impact on: non-volunteer tourists, elephants, the local economy, and government policy. Mixed methods were used to attain the data in this study. Self-administered questionnaires were created to determine the impact volunteer tourism had on non-volunteer tourists. Results showed an increase in non-volunteer tourists' awareness of elephant tourism, volunteer tourism and elephant conservation during the time they spent at the park. Self-administered questionnaires were also used to determine whether members of the local community felt they were receiving economic or social benefits from volunteer tourism and the ENP. The data showed that community participants felt they were receiving both economic and social benefits but their responses varied depending on sex, age, and how long they had lived in the region. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted to determine the role the ENP had on the conservation of elephants in Thailand and government policy. Interviewees consisted of experts in the industry who were knowledgeable about elephant tourism, volunteer tourism, and the ENP. The data indicated that the ENP created awareness about elephant conservation issues with non-volunteer tourists, volunteers, the community, and government officials. However, the ENP did not have any measureable effect on government policy. The model of volunteer tourism utilized by the Elephant Nature Park has been shown to be effective in conserving the domestic elephant and in creating awareness about domestic elephant conservation issues in Thailand.