

Study calls for urgent need for improved human-wildlife conflict management across India

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Crop damage caused by wildlife. Credit: Krithi Karanth

There is an urgent need to strengthen human-wildlife conflict management across India, as up to 32 wildlife species are damaging life and property in this nation of 1 billion people, according to a recent study published in the July 2017 edition of *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*.

The researchers are calling for the identification of effective prevention techniques, strengthening existing compensation schemes, and an open inclusive dialogue between local communities, governments, and conservationists.

The authors of the study, "History, Location, and Species Matter: Insights for Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation," are Dr. Krithi Karanth, conservation scientist with the Wildlife Conservation Society and Sahila Kudalkar, research associate with the Centre for Wildlife Studies.

The study examined the patterns of human-wildlife [conflict](#) and [mitigation](#) use by 5,196 families from 2011 to 2014 from 2855 villages neighboring 11 wildlife reserves across western, central, and southern India. The study was designed to help inform better policies to mitigate human-wildlife conflict.

Some of the results of the research included:

Of the more than 5,000 households surveyed around 11 reserves in India, crops were lost by 71% of households, livestock by 17%, and human injury and death were reported by 3% of households.

Rural families use up to 12 different mitigation techniques to protect their crops, livestock and property. Night-time watch, scare devices, and fencing are the most common mitigation techniques used by [rural families](#) in the periphery of reserves.

Families near reserves in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh were most likely to use mitigation. In recent years, these states have recorded high levels of damage by wildlife, and are among states that provide the highest compensation payments across India. In contrast, families in Rajasthan were least likely to protect crops and property.

Across wildlife reserves, people reported average crop losses amounting to INR 12,559 (US\$194) , and INR 2883 (US\$44)of livestock losses annually. Such losses constitute a significant chunk of India's rural economy, where the majority of the population earns less than INR 5000 (US\$77) per month.

Said Dr. Karanth: "Resolving human-wildlife conflict requires revisiting the goals of conservation policies and investments by people and organizations. This is especially true with respect to effort and money deployed associated with mitigation and protection. People may be better served by deploying early warning, compensation and insurance programs rather than by focusing heavily on mitigation."

Said Sahila Kudalkar, "Combined with high poverty, and low awareness regarding government compensation, such families may be most vulnerable to impacts of [wildlife](#) damage upon their livelihoods."

More information: Krithi K. Karanth et al, History, Location, and Species Matter: Insights for Human–Wildlife Conflict Mitigation From India, *Human Dimensions of Wildlife* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/10871209.2017.1334106](https://doi.org/10.1080/10871209.2017.1334106)

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