

General Studies – 3; Topic: Conservation

Man - Animal Conflict in India

1) Introduction

- Man-animal conflicts are common in various parts of the country.
- In India, wild elephants probably kill far more people than tiger, leopard or lion.
- Damage to agricultural crops and property, killing of livestock and human beings are some of the worst forms of man-animal conflict.

2) Reasons

- Depleting forest cover, encroachment in forested areas and the human settlements have come close to the forest areas.
- Excess mining, dams construction and heavy traffic movement in forested area causes animal attacks on humans
- Construction in forested areas affects the habitat of animals which cause man-animal conflict.
- Depletion of the natural prey base, changing crop patterns, suitability of man modified habitats to wild animals, presence of stray dogs and cattle in forest fringe areas.
- Lack of buffer zone between wildlife and human settlement
- Increased disturbance due to collection of fuel wood, fodder, water etc. from the forests has also increased the incidences of man-animal conflict.
- It is observed that people have to go deeper and deeper, year by year for fetching firewood and other forest produce. This has increased the number of incidences of man-animal conflict.
- Infestation of wildlife habitat by the invasive exotic weeds. As a result, herbivores come out of forest area and cause depredation of agricultural crops on the fringes.
- Livestock grazing in forests leads to human-wildlife conflict. At the same time it is having disastrous impact on wild herbivore populations as they have to compete with livestock for their food source.

3) Seriousness of Man-Animal Conflict

- Government report that over 400 people killed in man-animal conflict in 2016-17
- Leopard attacks on humans are regularly reported only in India and leopards kill more humans in India than all other carnivores
- Tigers are known as man eaters and Sundarbans is the best example.
- Death due to Snake bites are more in India.
- Elephant attack occurs in villages of Kerala and other parts of India.

4) Impact

- Crop damage, animal deaths, loss of human life, and injuries to people and wildlife.
- Farmers suffer loss of livestock and crop losses.
- When the bread winner of the family is killed or injured, the burden of the family passes on to women and children.
- A study in North-East found that when men were killed or injured, it led to increased debts and poverty.
- We only wake up to conflict when humans are attacked or killed.

5) Solution

- Construction of physical barriers such as barbed wire fence, solar power electric fence, bio fencing using cactus to prevent entry of animals in crop fields.
- Increase water availability in the forests through check-dams, nala bunding and water tanks so that number of animals straying out of forest will be controlled.
- Monoculture of species like teak should be avoided in forests. Instead mixed plantations of miscellaneous, bamboo and fruit species can be considered.
- The fragmentation of wildlife habitat should be avoided and proper care should be taken so that the connectivity through wildlife corridors is not disturbed.
- Wide reach of LPG connections to the villagers who frequently go to the forest areas to fetch fuel wood. CSR spending could be utilised here.
- Villagers and households in heavy risk areas should be educated on preventing and mitigating conflicts.
- Crops like sugarcane, Banana, Bajra, should not be allowed to be grown near forest areas.
- Ex-gratia /compensation should be paid promptly to the victims of wildlife attack
- Relocation/Rehabilitation of problematic and disadvantaged wild animal to suitable habitat or be kept in a zoo or rescue centres.
- Developing risk maps by integrating geographic and landscape factors for better conflict management efforts
- Developing regional level conservation policies as there were lot of reserve level differences and need for implementing locally relevant conservation strategies.

