

# HUMAN-LEOPARD CONFLICT HAS INCREASED THREEFOLD IN KARNATAKA, FINDS STUDY

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

A study conducted across Karnataka indicates that the policy guidelines brought out by Government of India to mitigate human-leopard conflict and discourage translocation of the animal has had little impact on the ground.

The number of leopards captured per month increased more than threefold (from 1.5 to 4.6) after the human-leopard policy guidelines were brought out in 2011. Similarly, there was a threefold increase in the number of leopards translocated per month (from 1 to 3.5).

Sanjay Gubbi of the Nature Conservation Foundation, who led the study in the State, said the guidelines for human-leopard conflict management were brought out in April 2011 to reduce conflict with leopards, discourage their translocation, and suggest improved ways of handling emergency conflict situations.

Mr. Gubbi, the lead author of the paper, said that in Karnataka, 357 leopards were in conflict situations and were captured between 2009 and 2016, and the final outcome was available in the case of 314 leopards. Of these, 268 were translocated in contravention of the spirit of the policy, 34 were captured and kept in captivity, while 12 died during the capture.

These findings have been published in a paper titled 'Policy to on-ground action: Evaluating a conflict policy guideline for leopards in India' in the *Journal of International Wildlife Law and Policy*. The co-authors of the paper are Aparna Kolekar and Vijaya Kumara.

Taking Karnataka as a case study, the researchers analysed pre- and post-guidelines leopard captures, reasons for the captures, and the outcome for the captured leopards.

The study found that out of 357 leopards captured across 23 of the 30 districts in the State during 2009-16, a majority (79%) occurred in Mysuru, Udupi, Hassan, Tumakuru, Ramanagaram, Ballari, Koppal, and Mandya districts.

Of the 268 leopards translocated, many were moved to protected areas (59.7%) and some to reserved/State/minor forests (29.8%). The highest number of translocations occurred into Bandipur Tiger Reserve (22.5%), followed by Nagarahole Tiger Reserve (20.6%) and Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary (15%).

The study indicated that of the 80 leopards that were translocated to reserved/State/minor forests, most releases were to Kemphole Reserved Forest (16.2%), followed by Devarayanadurga State Forest (7.5%) and Bukkapatna State Forest (5%).

Though eight reasons were attributed to capture and translocation of leopards, the main justification was livestock depredation (38.1%), said Mr. Gubbi. The other reasons included leopards rescued from snares and wells (15.7%), anxiety caused owing to leopard sightings in human habitations (13.7%), and leopards entering human dwellings (10.9%). Human injuries (4.5%) and human deaths (2%) formed a small part of the reason for leopard captures and translocation.

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