

Human- wildlife conflicts

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Although people and wildlife have coexisted for millennia, man- animal conflict is becoming much more frequent and widespread. Each case of conflict is different from the next, making it difficult to devise easily transferable solutions. Hence interdisciplinary approaches are essential to tackle the problem.

In news The tragic death of a pregnant elephant in Kerala brings to the fore the human-wildlife conflict.

Placing it in syllabus Environment – Wildlife conservation
Dimensions

- What is it?
- What are the causes?
- Mitigation Strategies

Content

What is it?

- **Human-wildlife conflict (HWC)** occurs **when animals pose a direct and recurring threat to the livelihood or safety of people**, leading to the persecution of that species.
- It occurs when **growing human populations overlap with established wildlife territory**, creating competition for space and resources.
- It **results in loss of life or injury** to humans and wild animals, depredation of livestock and degradation of habitat.
- It severely impacts the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the people.
- There are immense challenges in addressing HWC because of underlying cultural, political and economic aspects that shape these conflicts.
- In some cases, **successes in species recovery have resulted in creating new HWC**. E.g. where carnivores have

recovered in numbers and expanded their range.

- Hence conservation strategies for conflict-prone species need to consider not only current scenarios but also anticipate emerging conflicts in order to ensure sustainable coexistence.

What are the common causes?

- Though India does not lack **protected areas, the very idea of itself appears skewed**. E.g. A male tiger needs an area of 60-100 sq km. But the area allocated to an entire tiger reserve, like the Bor Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra, is 138.12 sq km, which is barely enough for one or two tigers.
- The latest news of a pregnant elephant's death in Kerala, reportedly due to firecrackers stuffed inside a fruit she had eaten has again triggered the man-animal conflict problem.
- According to the wildlife experts, as the territorial animals do not have enough space within reserves and their prey do not have enough fodder to thrive on, **wild animals move out and venture close to human habitation in search of food**.
- The **presence of a large number of animals and birds outside the notified protected areas** is also a cause. E.g. According to estimates, 9 percent of the tigers in India are outside the protected areas.
- **Developing infrastructure in forest areas** is also a cause of concern. E.g. Between 1987 and 2018, 249 elephants were killed on railway lines passing through elephant habitats.
- **Enhanced competition among predator species for food** and increase in livestock population in forest fringes attract wild animals into human settlements.

Mitigation Strategies:

A united effort: In order to be truly effective, prevention of

human-wildlife conflict has to involve all the stakeholders- international organizations, governments, NGOs, communities, consumers and individuals.

Land-use planning: Protecting key areas for wildlife, creating buffer zones and investing in alternative land uses, thus ensuring that both humans and animals have the space.

Community-based natural resource management: If the local community people are empowered to manage their relationship with wild animals, these “unwanted” neighbours can become allies in bringing income and promoting a better quality of life for all.

Compensation or insurance for animal-induced damage is another widely accepted solution. E.g. In Namibia, community-based insurance systems exist for damage done to livestock.

Habitat Restoration: As a result of growing human population, changing land use practices and resultant anthropogenic pressures, forest cover has either decreased or declined in quality due to habitat degradation. Avoiding deforestation and planting new trees in forest areas can help a lot in reducing conflict rate in the long run.

Organizing awareness programs: Awareness and training activities for locals will help in creating tolerance towards wild animals. Training and education programs for wildlife personnel, giving proper skills for dealing with wild carnivores would promote commitment towards conservation and raise the welfare level of animals.

Avoid rearing of pet animals: The people living near forest areas must avoid rearing pets as they act as an attractant for wild beasts.

Avoid making fruit plantations near forests: This activity will alleviate man-bear conflicts in adjoining human areas of forests.

Constructing elephant proof trenches, walls and solar- powered fences.

Mould your thought Why are man-animal conflicts on a rise these days? What mitigation strategies need to be followed to overcome this problem?