

Predation of Wildlife on Agricultural Lands: The Kaleidoscope of Conservation and Livelihood

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Abstract

Human-wildlife conflicts have emerged as one of the most contentious issues across agrarian landscapes throughout the country. Deprivation due to injury and death of a bread earner is usually devastating to families, while material losses often cause unbearable financial burden. In some areas, farmers have derelict rich cropland due to incessant crop raids and damages caused by predation of wildlife on agricultural lands. Conservationists are in favour of demarcating more landscapes as wilderness protected areas for reducing human-wildlife conflicts. But in a densely populated country like India, it will cause more and more socio-economic and political ramifications along with the creation of conservation refugees and predation refugees. This study is based on the Levels of Conflict Framework to understand the present intensity of human-wildlife conflict, particularly related to the aspect of predation of wildlife on agricultural lands in Kerala. The study finds that if not properly managed with modern management strategies focusing on the carrying capacity estimation of predators in relation to the available space, the issue will not only cripple agrarian community and the rural India as a whole resulting in an enormous increase in the number of conservation refugees and predation refugees, but will also pose challenges to the national security, weakening the structural base of the society.

Keywords: Predation Refugees; Livelihood; Human Casualties; Human-Wildlife Conflict; Conservation Refugees.