

Human-Wildlife Conflicts in Selected Areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan

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Abstract : Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) exists in both developed and developing countries though it is more serious in developing nations. Knowledge of species ecology and species sensitivity to anthropogenic pressures is an important prerequisite for conservation/management. Therefore, three districts (Poonch, Bagh, and Muzaffarabad) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir were selected to highlight the wildlife hunting practices from January 2015 to November 2018. The study area was thoroughly explored to recover dead animals. Moreover, the local community was investigated (questionnaire survey) to catch on motives of killing. The results showed HWC mainly arises due to feeding habits of wild animals as some are frugivorous (small Indian civet and small Kashmir flying squirrel) who damaged human cultivated fruit trees. Besides, Indian crested porcupine and wild boar act as serious crop pests. The feeding upon domestic animals (common leopard) and poultry (Asiatic Jackal and Red fox) were also reported as factors of conflict. Hence numerous wild animals and birds (N=120) were found killed by natives in revenge. Despite protected status in Pakistan, the killed mammals belonged to categories of critically endangered (*Panthera pardus*) and near threatened (*Viverricula indica*) species. The important birds include critically endangered (*Falco peregrines*) and endangered (*Lophura leucomelanos*) species. It was found that mammals were primarily killed due to HWC (60%) followed by recreation (20%) and trade (15%) Whereas, the foremost hunting reasons for birds are recreation (50%), food (25%) and trade (25%). The drastic hunting/killing of the species needs our immediate attention. This unwarranted killing must be stopped forthwith otherwise these animals become extinct.

Keywords : Azad Jammu and Kashmir, anthropogenic pressures, endangered species, human-wildlife conflicts

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