

Distribution and Population Status of Canis spp. Threats and Conservation in Lehri Nature Park, Salt Range, District Jhelum

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Abstract : The grey wolf has been ranked endangered and Asiatic jackal as near threatened in Pakistan. Scientific data on population and threats to these species are not available in Pakistan, which is required for their proper management and conservation. The present study was conducted to collect data on distribution range, population status and threats to both of these Canis species in Lehri Nature Park. The data were collected using direct observations and indirect signs in the field. The population of grey wolf and Asiatic jackal were scattered into pocket of the study area and its surroundings. The current population of grey wolf was estimated 06 individuals and that of Asiatic jackal 28 individuals in the study area. The present study showed that grey wolf and Asiatic jackal were distributed in the northern and southern part of the study area having dense vegetation cover of tress and shrub between the altitudes of 330 m and 515 m. The research finding revealed that the scrub forest is the most preferred habitat of both the species but due to anthropogenic pressure the scrub forest is under severe threat. The dominant trees species were *Acacia modesta*, *Zizyphus nummularia*, and *Prosopis juliflora* and shrubs species of *Dodonea-viscosa*, *Calotropis procera* and *Adhatoda vasica*. Uril is one of the natural prey species: their population is low due to a number of reasons and therefore the maximum dependence of the wolves was on the livestock of the local and nomadic shepherds. The main prey species in the livestock was goats and sheep. The interviews were conducted with the eye witnesses of wolf attacks including livestock being killed by 5-6 numbers of wolves in different hamlets in the study area. The killing rate of the livestock by the wolves was greater when the nomadic shepherds were present in the area and decreased when they left the area. Presence of nomadic shepherds and killing rate has relation with the shifting of the wolves from the study area. It is further concluded that the population of the grey wolf and Asiatic jackal has decreased over time due to less availability of the natural prey species and habitat destruction.

Keywords : wildlife ecology, population conservation, rehabilitation, conservation

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