



Mains Practice Question

Q. As human settlements expand and encroach on wildlife habitats, conflicts between humans and wild animals are increasing. Suggest measures for promoting coexistence between humans and wildlife. **(250 words)**

05 Jun, 2024 GS Paper 3 Bio-diversity & Environment

Approach:

- Introduce by highlighting the gravity of human-wildlife conflict
- Give factors responsible for rising human-Animal conflict
- Suggest measures for human-animal coexistence
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction:

The harmonious balance between human settlements and wildlife is under strain. In India, Government data for 2022-23 recorded more than **8,800 wild animal attacks**.

- This escalating tension jeopardizes not only public safety but also the very existence of countless animal species.

Body

Rising Human-Animal Conflict:

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:** As human settlements expand, natural habitats are being destroyed or fragmented, forcing wildlife to venture into **human-dominated areas in search of food, water, and shelter**. This increases the likelihood of human-wildlife encounters and conflicts.
 - The construction of the **Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Railway Project** has led to concerns about the loss of habitats and disturbance of wildlife corridors, potentially increasing human-animal conflicts in the region.
- **Climate Change and Environmental Degradation:** Climate change and environmental degradation are **altering habitats and disrupting the natural behavior and migration patterns of wildlife**, leading them to venture into human-inhabited areas in search of resources.
 - **Elephants, wildebeests and zebras** are leaving **Hwange National Park** in Zimbabwe to escape the drought conditions in the southern African nation.
- **Agricultural Expansion and Crop Raiding:** As agricultural activities expand into wildlife habitats, crop-raiding by animals becomes more frequent, leading to retaliation from farmers and conflicts with wildlife.
 - In India's northeast states like **Assam**, the expansion of tea plantations and agricultural activities has led to increased instances of elephant raids on crops.
- **Human Attitudes and Lack of Awareness:** In some cases, negative attitudes towards wildlife, lack of awareness about their ecological importance, and misconceptions about their behavior can contribute to conflicts and retaliatory actions against animals.

Measures for Human-Animal Coexistence:

- **Landscape-Level Planning:**
 - **Habitat Corridors:** Establishing crucial habitat corridors that connect fragmented habitats, allowing for **wildlife movement without conflict with human settlements.**
 - **Urban Planning:** Integrating **green spaces and wildlife corridors** into urban planning to create wildlife-friendly cities.
- **Mitigating Human-Wildlife Conflict:**
 - **Non-lethal Deterrents:** Utilize fencing, **guard animals** (livestock guardian dogs), and **scare tactics (lights, sounds)** to deter wildlife from entering human settlements.
 - **Compensation Schemes:** Develop schemes to compensate for livestock predation or crop damage caused by wildlife, reducing resentment towards wildlife.
- **Community Engagement and Education:**
 - **Awareness Programs:** Educating local communities through **Forest Officials** about the importance of wildlife conservation and coexistence strategies. This can foster a **sense of responsibility** and reduce fear.
 - **Ecotourism and Livelihood Opportunities:** Promoting ecotourism ventures that generate revenue for local communities, creating a vested interest in wildlife conservation.
- **Leveraging Technological Advancements:**
 - **Wildlife Monitoring:** Utilize **camera traps, drones,** and other technologies to track wildlife movements and predict potential conflict zones.
 - **Early Warning Systems:** Developing **early warning systems** to alert local communities about approaching wildlife, allowing for preventive measures.

Conclusion:

By implementing a combination of habitat conservation, sustainable land-use practices, public awareness, and effective conflict management strategies, we can pave the way for a **harmonious coexistence between humans and wildlife.**

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