

Human-Carnivore Conflict in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan: A Review.

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ABSTRACT

Human-carnivore conflict is a natural phenomenon, and carnivore species have the natural right to live in this world; however, their extinction is at an alarming rate, e.g., the leopard. Due to the exponential growth of the human population, most of the world's forests have been converted to agricultural land or residential areas, in turn affecting the wildlife species, including carnivores. Moreover, it is becoming the major cause of the conflict between humans and carnivorous species. Pakistan's northern areas have a richer diversity of wildlife species, including the mammalian carnivores, but the majority of them are either threatened or endangered due to habitat degradation and conflict with humans. Eleven carnivore species were reported in different parts of Azad Kashmir, including common leopard (*Panthera pardus*), snow leopard (*Uncia uncia*), leopard cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*), lynx (*Lynx lynx*), brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*), grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), Asiatic jackal (*Canis aureus*), red fox (*Vulpus vulpus*), stone martin (*Martes foina*) and yellow-throated marten (*Martes flavigula*). Every year, thousands of livestock species are being lost due to diseases and carnivore predation. Both the Asiatic black bear and brown bear also cause damage to maize and potato crops, causing economic losses of millions. Depredation of livestock was greatly affected by four major factors: prey type, season of depredation, location of depredation and livestock guarding practices. Results show that there is a rich diversity of carnivores in AJK, but their survival is threatened due to conflicts with humans over excessive livestock depredation and crop raiding. Active livestock guarding practices can reduce carnivore attacks. Educating the local people about conservation, monitoring the carnivores, vaccinating their livestock and compensating affected families can greatly reduce the negative perceptions of the local people towards the carnivores.

Keywords: Forests, Wildlife, human-carnivore conflicts, livestock depredation