

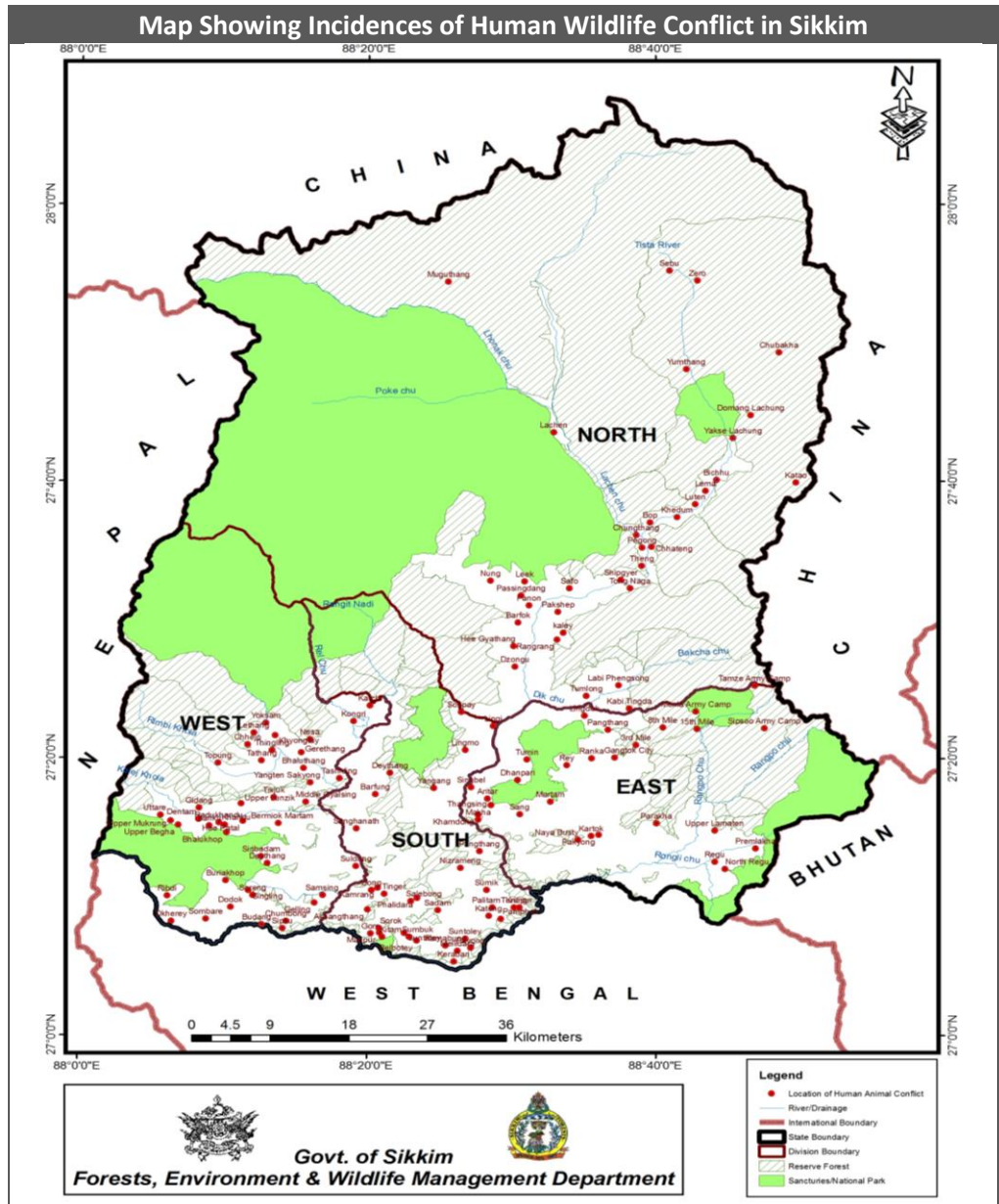
Human Wildlife Conflict in Sikkim

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Human Wildlife conflict is on the rise in the state. The data of the Forest Department on the conflicts over the past few years suggests that the conflict is prevalent throughout the state and Sikkim has had a long standing problem of man-wildlife conflict. Our state has witnessed conflicts which occur inside the forest areas mostly on fringes when people venture in forest for collection of fuel and fodder and the other conflict that occurs near human habitation.

Human-wildlife conflicts in Sikkim can be grouped into four categories: (1) attacks on humans, (2) livestock killing, (3) crop raiding and (4) wildlife straying in human-dominated areas. It is mainly due to the overlap of resources amongst man and animal. The other possible reason, in Sikkim's context, could be due to increase in wildlife population and its increasing requirement of resources to sustain it. Also, with the rising human population and increasing settlements near the forest fringes, wild animals take their chances to feed on the livestock and crops resulting in conflicts with humans often with fatal casualties or injuries to the later.

High altitudes have more incidences of yak/cow kill by attack of wild dogs and Himalayan Black Bear. Personal communication with herders from high altitudes also suggests cattle lifting by snow leopards in some parts. The mid belts suffer from incidences of cattle kill and crop



Pictures: Himalayan Black Bear tranquilized and caught during wee hours from Tadong, Gangtok

(Picture date: 26/01/2016)



Wildlife attack victim being rushed for treatment



Wildlife attack on livestock



Damages of Crops



Release of wildlife in their habitat



Tangled male deer being released



Training on use of tranquilizers

damage by Himalayan Black Bear, wild pigs and macaques. The lower belts of the state suffer from attacks by wild pigs and birds like peacock.

The number of Himalayan Black Bear attack increases before winter and in spring when they search for food out to the agricultural fields. In case of Himalayan Black Bear, crops like maize in the agricultural fields, has proven to be an attractant like in Lachung during month of August and September. In terms of seasonality of attack, Himalayan Black Bear attacks on crops/human are highest before winter and then spring season. While on the contrary, wild pig, peacock and monkey attacks are throughout the year but are comparatively lesser in extent and magnitude.

In our state, ex-gratia is the widely accepted solution. Ex gratia to the people are being paid as per the rate notified in the Notification No. 204/PCCF-Pr. Secy/FEWMD/GOS dated 31/01/2015. At present, ex-gratia for the loss incurred by wildlife is applicable to the whole of Sikkim unlike in many states where it is applicable only few kms from the boundary of the protected area.

The Forest Department is carrying out the first phase of population estimation to know the status of wildlife in the state. This will help us understand whether there has been an increase in the population of wildlife in recent past and has crossed its carrying capacity which has resulted in increasing conflict. There are a number of other initiatives undertaken by the Department. A number of site specific,

practical field based solutions are being carried out like solar fencing in areas like Kitam which will prevent wildlife from entering fields. The Department also organizes frequent trainings on tranquilizing animals in Himalayan Zoological Park. A community-based insurance system which has been practiced in other Himalayan states has to be initiated in the state.

The problem of human-animal conflict cannot be controlled immediately and animals are simply doing what animals do. We need to come up with more practical and effective solutions, more stakeholder's participation in conflict management so as to resolve the conflict amicably to an extent that is possible.