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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF ROLE OF MASS MEDIA IN HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT OF DUDHWA NATIONAL PARK, UTTAR PRADESH



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ABSTRACT

Human-wildlife conflict is hitting the headlines everyday in different states. "Human-wildlife conflict occurs when the needs and behavior of wildlife impact negatively on the goals of humans or when the goals of humans negatively impact the needs of wildlife." (World Parks Congress (WPC), WPC Recommendations, Recommendation 20: Preventing and Mitigating.) There are so many cases of human-wildlife conflicts recorded where wildlife threatens, attacks, injures or kills human or destroys their livestock, crops or property.



The damages and destructions caused by variety of wildlife is a leading danger to human communities. With the wildlife often killed, captured or otherwise harmed in revenge, these conflicts are one of the main threats to the continued survival of many species as well. Human-wildlife conflict is a common phenomenon in the human inhabitations that are close to forests and wilderness areas. Media plays an essential role in communicating conservation issues such as human-wildlife conflict management, poaching and illegal trade activities etc. Media plays a critical role in educating and enlightening people to manage human-wildlife conflict management. The research paper is based on the contribution, role and importance of mass media in human-wildlife conflict management in Dudhwa National Park, Uttar Pradesh. This paper is descriptive in nature and based on secondary data and review of related literatures.

KEYWORDS : *Media, communication, human-wildlife conflict, wildlife conservation and management.*

INTRODUCTION :

The word 'wildlife' is usually associated with "non-domesticated vertebrates", but has broadly related to all wild animals, plants and other organisms. All undomesticated animals and uncultivated

plants are scientifically known as "wildlife". The term wildlife was first noticed in year 1913 in a book, "Our Vanishing Wildlife" written by William Hornaday, The Director of The New York Zoological Park. Webster's dictionary defined wildlife as "living things that are neither human nor domesticated", whereas, Oxford dictionary defined wildlife as "the native fauna and flora of a particular region". The transformation of the grasslands to agricultural fields results in disappearance of many animal and plant species. The complete loss or extinction of these wildlife species is an evolutionary process. However, the human activities have increased the rate of extinction to exceptional levels. Today, Indian wildlife is in great danger due to many reasons; lots of wild species are disappearing quickly. A large number of species are already extinct and a large percentage of the rest are threatened with extinction. In almost all cases, the threats to wildlife can be related to human activities.

Conflicts between humans and wildlife are as old as humankind itself (Lamarque et al. 2009) and occur when animal requirements overlap with those of humans, usually causing a negative impact on both wildlife and people (Distefano 2005; IUCN World Park Congress 2004). Conflicts undermine human well-being and have economic and social costs (Distefano 2005). Animals, on the other side, are often killed or injured due to property and human life protection (Masunzu 1998). Human-wildlife conflict is a major barrier to the wildlife conservation. An increasing number of studies document human-wildlife conflict in human dominated landscapes (Bagchi & Mishra 2006; Gehrt et al. 2010; Loveridge et al. 2010). "Human-wildlife conflict occurs when the needs and behavior of wildlife impact negatively on the goals of humans or when the goals of humans negatively impact the needs of wildlife." (World Parks Congress (WPC), WPC Recommendations, Recommendation 20: Preventing and Mitigating.)

Human-wildlife conflict include many cases where wildlife threaten, attack, injure or kill human as well as many cases where wildlife threaten, attack, injure or destroy their livestock, crops or property. Human-wildlife conflict also occurs when humans deliberately injure, abuse or kill wildlife because of distinguish or actual threats to their property, livelihoods, lifestyle, person or family. These conflicts may take place when a tiger has attacked someone's livestock or an elephant has destroyed someone's crops or a person has killed a wild animal because of the threat it may pose to their livestock and family. A human-wildlife conflict happens for several reasons. The large home ranges of wildlife often draw them into repetitive competition with humans, exceptionally in areas related with plentiful livestock management. Indeed, many large wildlife species are specialized on either natural or domesticated ungulate prey, and some individuals seek and readily kill large livestock when opportunities arise (Meriggi & Lovari, 1996; Karanth, Sunquist & Chinnappa, 1999; Polisar et al., 2003). The mass media are key factors in the identification and interpretation of environmental issues (Schoenfeld et al., 1979; Spector and Kitsuse, 1977). Media have become an essential partner in global wildlife conservation and management through their various roles of not only increasing awareness on the problems and challenges towards wildlife conservation, human-wildlife conflict management, but also in achieving the ultimate goals of changing human perception, nature, attitudes and behavior towards wildlife conservation. Human-wildlife conflict issues are beginning to gain importance in the media. According to Global Sherpa (2011), internationally, media coverage of wildlife conservation and biodiversity has experienced a steady increase since 1990, when it hardly showed up in newspapers. The use of the term wildlife conservation in newspaper has increased to about 0.1 articles per newspaper in 2000 and 0.2 articles per paper in 2010.

According to Hesselink et al. (2007), to have an agency's messages reach the general public, the agency has to build a sound relationship with the media. The press is thus an important channel to reach decision makers and opinion leaders (GreenCom, 2001). For example, reportedly, newspapers

and television news is the best channels for reaching urban opinion leaders, while national and local radios are best for reaching rural audience (GreenCom, 2001). Media can play an important role in checking and reducing the conflicts if proper communication strategies are adopted. The mass media, especially the radio, are seen as the most cost-effective way of providing information and a voice to all members of society (Department of Information and Media 2005).

2. STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

2.1. In many parts of the world, human and wildlife are increasingly coming into conflicts over space and food. This is happening mainly due to continuously increasing human populations and continues loss of natural habitats.

2.2. Human-wildlife conflicts are of major concern because it threatens the survival of different wildlife species, the losses people face due to livestock predation and attacks on human by wildlife.

2.3. Human-carnivore interactions, therefore, are as old as human evolution and the problem of livestock depredation by large carnivores dates back to the early days of domestication of the livestock (Reynolds & Tapper 1996).

2.4. Conflicts often arise if two or more stakeholders compete for the same resource. Livestock depredation by large carnivores is a primary cause of their conflicts with humans and a serious conservation concern across the world (Madhusudan & Mishra 2003; Thirgood et al. 2005; Treves et al. 2006).

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Human-wildlife conflicts are a very serious obstacle to wildlife conservation and management. The result of this conflict is very serious. Many people lose their crops, livestock, and property & sometimes even their lives. The wildlife often killed in revenge or to avoid future conflicts. In such situation, it is necessary to manage the conflict with speed & accuracy in order to prevent panic, injuries or death. Lack of communication activities among people living near protected areas result in human-wildlife conflicts, deforestation, and destruction of habitat. Media is potential enough to bring out institutional change by changing people's mind set. Media communicates with these people and informs them about the advantages and disadvantages of wildlife conservation and management.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the present study:

4.1. To study the role of media in human-wildlife conflict management.

4.2. To study the role of media in resolving the conflicts between human and wildlife.

4.3. To find out how far media is successful in human-wildlife conflict management.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Matthew and Upreti, (2005) argued that rapid population growth and environmental degradation are key elements to what has gone wrong in Nepal. Therefore, human population growth must be addressed. Conflicts between people and wildlife in the peripheral region of national parks are a major conservation issue that occurs because of competition for resources.

Messmer, (2000) explained that to create effective strategies, we need to understand how and why human-wildlife conflicts occur, the actual and perceived level of the problem, and which strategies should be implemented to address the interactions. The solutions need to be situation-specific and driven by social and biological scientific data. An increase in public awareness and appreciation of

human-wildlife conflicts is necessary. This includes knowledge about factors such as their origin, dynamic nature, and ecology.

Messmer, (2000, p. 100) said that conflicts between humans and wildlife can be real or perceived, economic or aesthetic, social or political. These conflicts may arise when humans and wildlife, such as tigers, bears, cougars, and wolves, share the same physical space. The impact of human behavior has become increasingly significant because the frequency of overlap between human and wildlife activities has increased. Wild animals are in danger of losing their wildness when they interact with humans, particularly in town, but experience no negative consequences. These interactions can alter the animal's instinctual behaviors' and cause them to habituate to humans. When humans feed wildlife or fail to frighten them off, they put themselves and the animals at risk.

Lawate Digvijay Vasantrao, (2009) in his thesis "Study of Wildlife Conservation and Management at Chandoli Wildlife Sanctuary" explained that, human-wildlife conflict is growing global problem, which is not restricted to particular geographical region of climatic conditions, but it is common to all protected areas where wildlife and human population coexist and share limited resources. Dense human populations in close vicinity to protected areas seem to pose the greatest challenges in many countries. Human-wildlife conflict becomes more intense where livestock holding and agriculture are an important part of rural livelihoods. Competition between rural communities and wild animals over natural resources is more intense in developing countries, where local human population tends to suffer higher costs.

Mishra, (1997); Liu et al., (2011) explained that human- wildlife conflicts have two important dimensions; the reality of damage caused by wildlife to humans, and the perceptions and behavior of humans who suffer wildlife caused damage. People's tolerance level for large animals vary, depending on several factors including their religious beliefs, income, education level, characteristics of carnivores and cultural factors.

Treves & Karanth, (2003), Treves & Naughton-Treves, (2005) explained that wildlife conservation and conflict mitigation needs to be based on a sound understanding of animal behavior and ecology. Some of the recommendations for mitigation of human-wildlife conflicts involve animal behavior modification through measures such as non-lethal removal and non-lethal deterrence, modifying human/livestock behavior through changing grazing practices and guarding methods, reducing the interface between humans and animal through effective barriers, and lethal control of animal 'problem individuals'.

Weber, (1995) identified five major causes of conflicts for people living near the park, including illegal transactions of forest products, livestock grazing, illegal hunting and fishing, crop damage, and threats to humans from wild animals.

Messmer Terry A., (2000) in his paper "The emergence of human-wildlife conflict management: turning challenges into opportunities" explained that with the increase in wildlife population, human-wildlife conflicts have also increased. Yet despite these conflicts, many people continue to express appreciation for wildlife and actively try to improve wildlife habitat on their property. To succeed in this environment, wildlife managers may need to shift their focus from trying to maximize wildlife population to the more difficult one of trying to optimize wildlife values for society. A major difficulty in trying to achieve this optimization is that the benefits and liabilities have not been evenly distributed between different segments of society.

6. WILDLIFE OF UTTAR PRADESH

National parks and wildlife sanctuaries are scattered all over the Uttar Pradesh have vivid fauna

and flora. The fauna of Uttar Pradesh consists of Tigers, Antelopes, Deer, Wild Boars, Elephants, Rhinos and other animals that are common in the region. In terms of birds, Uttar Pradesh is a home to various species such as Painted Storks, Parakeets, Black and White-necked Storks, Saras Cranes, Great Indian Horned-owl, Jungle Owllet, Woodpeckers, Barbets, Kingfishers, Minivans, Bee-eaters and Bulbuls etc. Dudhwa National Park is the largest wildlife reserve in Uttar Pradesh and it is situated in the Lakhimpur Kheri district. Stretched in an area of nearly 500 square Kilometers, Dudhwa National Park is close to the Terai region of Nepal and boasts off a vivid fauna and flora. Dudhwa Tiger Reserve is a protected area in Uttar Pradesh and comprises the Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary. Tiger and Rhinos are the two animals that are worth seeing in this park and this is the only park where you can see these two animals.

7. STUDY AREA

The present study is based on news and media coverage of wildlife of Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary of Uttar Pradesh. The Dudhwa National Park is situated in the Terai belt of Uttar Pradesh, India, and covers an area of 490.3 km² (189.3 sq mi), with a buffer zone of 190 km² (73 sq mi). It is located on the Indo-Nepal border in the Lakhimpur Kheri District of Uttar Pradesh. It represents one of the few remaining examples of a highly diverse and productive Terai ecosystem, supporting a large number of endangered species, obligate species of tall wet grasslands and species of restricted distribution.

The Dudhwa Tiger Reserve is a protected area in Uttar Pradesh that stretches mainly across the Lakhimpur Kheri and Bahraich districts of Uttar Pradesh and comprises the Dudhwa National Park, Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary. It covers an area of 1,284.3 km² (495.9 sq mi) and includes three large forest fragments dominated by agriculture. It shares the north-eastern boundary with Nepal, which is defined to a large extent by the Mohana River. It ranges in altitude from 110 to 185 m (360 to 607 ft). Dudhwa National Park was established in year 1958 as a Wildlife Sanctuary for Swamp Deer. In January 1977, it was notified as a National Park. In year 1987, it was declared as a Tiger Reserve under the 'Project Tiger'. Dudhwa National Park along with the Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary and Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary forms the Dudhwa Tiger Reserve.

8. METHODOLOGY

The research paper is analytical in nature and based on secondary data and review of related literatures. For the collection of secondary data reference books, journals, magazines, articles and reports published in Hindi and English newspaper, central and state government records, published and unpublished research works, internet and other web sources such as different ministry and forest department websites were consulted.

9. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As far as any protected area is concerned, humans decided boundary of protected area has least meanings to wild animals and they are entering in private land and in residential areas causing damage to crop, wealth, health and life of human society. Simultaneously, the people living in vicinity of protected area entering in protected forest causing damage to wildlife and their habitat by their activities. In case of impact of wildlife on human in protected area, the damage to agriculture, killing of livestock and injuries to local residents by wild animals was observed. Commonly the animals found in conflict with human were mainly tiger, leopard, sloth bear, wild boar, wild dog and elephant.

It has been noticed that radio allows individuals to collectively react almost simultaneously to

an event being reported, while print media confers the power of non-involvement where the individual reader is detached for that moment from the rest and reacts slowly (Menon, 1981). The media coverage of wildlife conservation has gone up and down in many cycles directly reflecting the level of public interest and political action. (Kurst & Witlox, 1983). Media has potential to bring out institutional change by changing people's mind set. The media plays a crucial role in educating and making individuals, communities, and society conscious about wildlife conservation and management. Human-wildlife conflicts are often reported incorrectly and the news is sensationalized causing panic. Sensible reporting is the need of the hour during any conflict. The Hindi newspapers were far ahead in covering the conflict issues compare to English newspapers. It has been also found that wildlife issues were covered very less during the news bulletins by channels, however, the classification of issues covered by the news channels are quite regular and efficient in their coverage.

10. CONCLUSION

Human-wildlife conflict is a major challenge to conservation and among the most emotive issues is attack on humans by big cats (Loveridge et al. 2010). These attacks prompt intense media scrutiny, and media framing of such issues can affect public attitudes as well as reflect them (e.g., Uscinski 2009; Antilla 2010; McQuail 2010). The mass media is believed to play an agenda-setting role when it highlights certain issues and issue attributes (McCombs & Shaw 1972; Scheufele 1999). McComas (2006) suggests public perceptions of risk are substantially influenced by the mass media and can result in overestimation of danger, social amplification of risk, and creation of stigma. Thus, the mass media is not only a primary provider of information, but also has the power to affect interpretation of the information and can potentially but not always (e.g., Gore et al. 2005) affect conflict mitigation.

Media has potential to bring out institutional change by changing people's mind set. The media plays a crucial role in educating and making individuals, communities, and society conscious about wildlife conservation and management. Media helps people living near protected area about the positive and negative impact of human-wildlife conflicts by providing relevant information to them. Correct and truthful coverage of the conflict and the projection of the importance of wildlife are vital. The role that media should play is bringing real picture to the people but the laid back attitude by the media has made the human-wildlife conflict issues of low priority. Rather than making a fake sensational story, the media can try making the conflict story a more useful and informative one. Media can provide basic information to rural people on the actual situations of their natural resources and about its sustainability and un-sustainability.

11. LIMITATIONS

- 11.1. Study area is limited to only one state of India.
- 11.2. Study area is limited to only one national park of Uttar Pradesh.
- 11.3. Study is limited to secondary data only.
- 11.4. Media reach is very limited in the study area.
- 11.5. Very less government data and records are available related to human-wildlife conflict.

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