

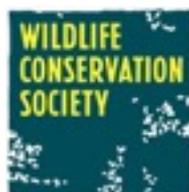
---

## NATIONAL LEVEL MEDIA AWARENESS WORKSHOPS IN FOUR HIGH LEOPARD CONFLICT STATES IN INDIA



Vidya Athreya

2013-2015



---

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The workshops were funded by the Rufford Foundation and was organized by Wildlife Conservation Society in collaboration with State Forest Departments of Himachal Pradesh, Goa, Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Mumbai Press Club, Calicut Press Club along with Mhadei Research Centre (Goa), Wildlife and Nature Conservation Trust (WCNT), Tamil Nadu and Parambikulam Tiger Conservation Foundation, Kerala.

My sincere gratitude goes out to Shri Sunil Limaye, Shri Vikas Gupta and Shri Sunil Wadekar of the Maharashtra Forest Department; Shri. Sat Pal Dhiman, Shri. S.C Srivastava, Shri. Dr. Lalit Mohan of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department; Shri Richard D'Souza and Dr Anil Kumar of the Goa Forest Department; Shri Pramod Krishnan of the Kerala Forest Department); Dr Pradeep Vyas, Mr. Ujjwal Bhattacharya; Dr. Brij Raj Sharma of the West Bengal Forest Department and Shri Joseph of the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department for providing their full support to this work. for making this workshop possible.

The success of these workshops was possible due to the involvement of the Press Clubs of Mumbai, Calicut and Goa. I would like to make special mention of Shri Mrityunjay Bose, Virat Singh, Ranjeet Jadhav, Anil Patil, Rajendra Kerkar, Vijay Bhaskar, Shri Rahul Khanolkar and Sricharan Desai for their help and support.

The workshop would not have been possible without the help of Nirmal Kulkarni, Atul Borkar, Shweta Shivakumar, Aritra Ksettry and Vijay Bhaskar.

---

---

## SUMMARY

Media plays a very important role in the way human wildlife interactions are perceived by the public. The media could either have damaging conservation consequences or it could use its power of outreach to assist people in leading safer lives in areas where they share space with wildlife. This is especially true in India where high density human spaces are also occupied by a wide variety of wildlife. Between January 2014 and March 2015 we conducted 10 workshops targeting both media as well as forest department personnel in six states (Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu) affected by leopard and/or elephant conflict. Our resource people were scientists who have worked on elephant or leopard interactions with humans and who were part of the teams where successful mitigation to reduce conflict was carried out. We also invited senior and field level forest officials from Maharashtra to share their experiences with forest officials in states where we also had workshops for the Forest Department. Media friends from Mumbai Press Club, Mumbai Mirror and DNA who have been part of the project Mumbaikars for SGNP ([www.mumbaikarsforsgnp.com](http://www.mumbaikarsforsgnp.com)) were resource people from the media group. They shared their experience of dealing with leopard human interactions in a city like Mumbai and showcased examples where the right kind of reporting led to administration doing the right things that benefitted the people as well as the animals.

---

---

## INTRODUCTION

India is a unique country with respect to its tolerance towards wild animals including large dangerous carnivores which also reside in human-use landscapes. The strict laws do not allow killing of large cats irrespective of where they occur. However, sensational news of large cat attacks could decrease local people's tolerance and media is a very powerful agent of shaping public perceptions. Our preliminary analysis of media reporting on human leopard interactions across India finds that the reporting is largely sensational with rare events such as attacks by leopards on people and people killing leopards being reported while neutral or positive interactions which are more common are rarely reported. This could affect public perception into thinking that these animals are always dangerous and the only way they interact with humans is one of aggression.

In response to severe human leopard conflict in Maharashtra in 2001, our research work assessed the reasons behind the increase in conflict. I used the first Rufford small grant in 2003 to increase the capacity of the forest department to handle leopard emergencies. Based on the work the state forest department issued guidelines for dealing with human leopard conflict and the material was produced using the 2nd RSG in 2006. In 2007 I started work on a detailed ecological study on leopards in human dominated landscapes. At the same time, we focussed our attention to producing educational material in English and the local language using the RSG booster grant obtained in 2007. During these years (2003 - present) I have had a lot of interaction with the press and realised how important their involvement is in changing the perception of the public.

So far my work has been focussed in Maharashtra But I wanted to use the results of the past research and awareness work to collaborate with media (at all levels) in other states, seriously affected by human leopard conflict. The objective was to increase awareness on a nation-wide level so as to decrease human leopard conflict in the long term. The aims were (i) to use a decade long experience of conflict research and media outreach in the state of Maharashtra in order to make the media in most affected states more aware of the problems of sensational reporting affecting tolerance and conflict levels. (ii) to involve the local NGOs and Forest Departments (iii) to involve the media people from Maharashtra and national level journalists who have been reporting on wildlife issues during the awareness programmes.

Although this workshop was meant to target only the media, we also held workshops for the forest officials as well because they are the most important stake holders in wildlife issues and are major agents of change. Senior and field level staff from affected areas in Maharashtra were involved as resource people to share their experience of a decade long involvement with the leopard issue in Maharashtra. During the workshops we used recent ecological and sociological information on the leopard - human interaction from the state of Maharashtra to highlight the complexity of the issue to different stake holders, focusing on the media, local NGOs and the Forest Departments in four states that are seriously affected by human leopard conflict.

We conducted the workshops in Kerala, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Our primary focus was on two species that are commonly reported in negative light in the media and which have a large distribution in India; leopards and elephants. Scientists working on elephant conflict issues in India and Sri Lanka were invited to share their experiences with the workshop participants. Forest Department officials as well as media personnel from Maharashtra also shared their experiences with the participants at all locations.

---

---

## PRE-WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES:

The workshops were held in multiple locations within each state to effectively reach out to media groups and forest department officials at multiple regions in each state (Table 1). In Goa, the workshops were held in Ponda and Panjim, in Kerala it was held in Wayanad, Calicut and Trivandrum, the West Bengal workshops were held in Kolkata and Siliguri. Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh had one workshop each in Coimbatore and Shimla respectively. The workshops were held separately for media personnel and Forest Department officials. The workshops for the media personnel also encouraged the participation of local NGOs and wildlife enthusiasts. Invitations were sent out to all leading media houses prior to the workshops along with officials of the Forest Departments of the respective states. A list of all the participant media houses as well as NGOs has been included in the Appendix. Both English and vernacular media were invited for the workshops as local vernacular newspapers also play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion through their reporting. Members of local Police Department and Fire Department were also invited for the workshops since the respective departments play a crucial role in crowd control and wildlife rescue during wildlife emergencies. The Press Clubs in the different states were also involved in the workshops for ensuring better outreach and more involvement of the media in the proceedings.

### **Dates and locations of media and forest department awareness workshops held between October 2013 and March 2015**

<b>Date</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>State</b>
January 7th 2014	Hyderabad	Senior Forest officials	Andhra Pradesh
September 18th 2014	Ponda	Senior and field officers	Goa
September 19th 2014	Panjim	Media	Goa
October 17th 2014	Shimla	Media	Himachal Pradesh
November 10th 2014	Wayanad	Field Officials and Media	Kerala
November 11th 2014	Calicut	Media	Kerala
November 12th 2014	Trivandrum	Media	Kerala
February 17th 2015	Kolkata	Senior officials and media	West Bengal
February 18th 2015	Siliguri	Field Officials and Media	West Bengal
March 5th 2015	Coimbatore	Media	Tamil Nadu

## WORKSHOP MATERIALS AND LOGISTICS

During the workshops we provided the following as resource materials (i) the MOEF manual on human leopard conflict guidelines (<http://www.moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/guidelines-human-leopard-conflict-management.pdf>) (ii) Maharashtra State Guidelines on handling human leopard conflict ([http://www.projectwaghoba.in/docs/human leopard conflict management guidelines english.pdf](http://www.projectwaghoba.in/docs/human%20leopard%20conflict%20management%20guidelines%20english.pdf)) (iii) DVD of 21st

---

---

Century cats ([http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x12715l\\_leopards-21st-century-cats-hd\\_lifestyle](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x12715l_leopards-21st-century-cats-hd_lifestyle)) and in Goa which is also Marathi speaking we added the movie Waghoba Chya Khatla that was made for awareness purpose in a past Rufford grant to me (iv)(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAGQ9VMN5W0>) (iv) posters made by Maharashtra Forest Department for leopard issues in urban landscapes; in rural landscapes; posters made for police stations for dealing with leopard emergencies; poster for dealing with elephants in rural landscapes as well as dealing with problem monkey taken with permission from the Singapore Parks Authorities (<http://www.ava.gov.sg/docs/default-source/tools-and-resources/resources-for-businesses/jointadvisoryonmonkeys.pdf?sfvrsn=2>). The materials were printed in English as well as local vernacular languages like Hindi, Tamil, Malayali and Bengali for better outreach among a wider audience. The Goa workshop included awareness poster about leopards, the Kerala workshop included awareness posters on tigers, leopards, monkeys and elephants (Figure 1), the West Bengal workshop included posters on Tigers, leopards and elephants whereas the Shimla workshop included material only about leopards.

The workshop venues were organised by the Forest department in West Bengal, Goa and Kerala and was organised by us or collaborating NGOs in the other states. Accommodation for workshop speakers was arranged by us in most places with Forest Department also proving accommodation in some places.

#### **Resource materials provided at the Shimla media workshop, Himachal Pradesh.**



## OUTCOME

The workshop was conducted in ten centres across six conflict affected states in India namely Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. More than 200 media personnel and more than 200 forest officials along with several members of NGOs and animal welfare groups attended the workshops. Some NGOs who participated in the workshop included WWF-West Bengal, SHER-West Bengal, ALOHA-West Bengal, MHADEI Research Station-Goa, and WNCT-Coimbatore.

---

---

**Resource materials provided at the Calicut and Trivandrum media workshops, Kerala.**



In the media workshops, researchers shared their experiences of research and management challenges when dealing with large wildlife that share space with humans; media personnel from Mumbai shared their experiences of how reporting can change the way people view the wildlife and the subsequent actions that are required to be taken by the administration. During the workshops held for the Forest Department officials, the officers from Maharashtra shared their experiences of dealing with wildlife emergencies and wildlife management in human use areas.

Dr. Ananda Kumar and his team shared insights on reducing human elephant conflicts using SMS based early warning systems in Valparai, Tamil Nadu. Dr. Prithviraj Fernando interacted with the workshop participants on science and management of human elephant conflict in Sri Lanka. Dr. Benjamin Lee also shared his experiences about managing human primate conflicts in Singapore.

Sunil Limaye, CCF, Pune and Vikas Gupta, CCF, Sanjay Gandhi National Park of the Maharashtra Forest Department spoke to the participants about the challenges of managing human-leopard conflicts in an urban setting in Mumbai while Sunil Wadekar, RFO spoke about leopard immobilization techniques and wildlife management in Maharashtra. Officials of the host State forest departments also shared spoke about the

---

---

challenges they face and kinds of conflict management used to tackle various wildlife emergencies in human use areas.

Overall the workshops for the Media as well as Forest department witnessed good turn out and participation with a large number of articles about the workshops published in leading English as well as Vernacular dailies across all the states where the workshops were conducted. Some of the newspaper clippings are added in the supplementary material.

## CONCLUSION

The key objective of the work was to share experiences about research, management and the role of media related to large potentially dangerous wildlife such as leopards and elephants where they share space with humans in India. The workshops were designed to ensure the realisation that India is unique in the way wildlife and people share spaces and such situations can deteriorate if the media reporting is more sensational than informative. Media personnel from Mumbai also shared their own experience of how reporting about these species which also fascinate people in an informative and positive way can bring about positive changes in the way they are dealt with by the public and authorities.

We also wanted to highlight that sensational reporting of wild animal news will lead to a demand for interventions by the public which in turn will increase conflict for the people. For instance with increased fear of leopards, the natural reaction is to ask for their trapping and subsequent translocation. Our research has found that this increases conflict near sites of release. At a much deeper level, I wanted to inform the media and policy makers how the issue of wildlife outside protected areas is a desperately neglected issue that requires a lot of thought and planning because wrong interventions can negatively affect human and animal welfare. Finally, the workshops were successful as providing the ground work to create a long term reduction in conflict by providing knowledge based management methods for the local forest department as well as the local people via the media which is a very powerful tool for reaching out to many people in the affected states.

## CHALLENGES

We had hoped to assess the perceptions of the media related to human wildlife interactions prior to the workshops and then mail them the same questionnaire a few months after the workshops to assess if there was a change in the way they understood the issue. However, we found that it was hard to obtain replies from them long distance and we could not assess the difference in perceptions based on our questionnaires. However, in Mumbai we have been carrying out a media analysis based on newspaper headlines before and after our interactions with the media in Mumbai related to the leopard issue and our initial analysis indicates a change in their way of reporting towards a more nuanced and information method of reporting leopard news. This is in the process of being readied for a peer reviewed conservation journal.

---

---

## BUDGET

Description	Budgeted Amount	Spent	Difference
Salary	£ 5131.00	£ 3,487	£ 1,644
Travel	£ 3922.00	£ 6,253	£ (2,331)
Stay	£ 1176.00	£ 959	£ 217
Food	£ 327.00	£ 542	£ (215)
Movie	£ 800.00	£ 0	£ 800
Awareness material	£ 933.00	£ 3,200	£ (2,267)
computer	£ 408.00	£ 427	£ (19)
rent for office space	£ 882.00	£ 0	£ 882
communication	£ 294.00	£ 262	£ 32
courier	£ 302.00	£ 6	£ 296
Salary for office assistant	£ 1765.00	£ 772	£ 993
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 15940.00</b>	<b>£ 15,909</b>	<b>£ 31</b>

---

Invite for the workshop in Calicut, Kerala.

## INVITATION LETTER



A WORKSHOP TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HUMAN INTERACTIONS  
WITH LARGE CATS, ELEPHANTS AND PRIMATES, KERALA



**Date-11th November 2014**      **Time- 10:00 am- 1:30 pm**  
**Venue- Zoological Survey of India- Conference Hall, Calicut**

Dear Madam/Sir

we would like to invite you to participate in a workshop that aims to share recent research findings related to leopards/tigers, elephants and primates. The workshop is being jointly organised with the help of Mumbai Press Club, Calicut Press Club, Wildlife Conservation Society - India and Parambikulam tiger Conservation Foundation.

The workshop will be held on the 11th of November at The Zoological Survey of India - Conference Room, (Near Regional Science Centre, Jaffer Khan Colony Road, Kozhikode, Kerala) and we request your presence there. Also, due to space constraints, we can only accommodate 50 media personnel so we please request you to register yourself online at [\(click here\)](#) as soon as possible.

We are looking forward to seeing you there.

With best wishes,

Vidya Athreya  
WCS-India and partners.



Parambikulam Tiger  
Conservation Foundation



---

Schedule for the workshop in Calicut, Kerala.

# SCHEDULE

---

11th November 2014: **WORKSHOP ON HUMAN-LEOPARD INTERACTIONS FOR MEDIA**

Venue: **ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA- CONFERENCE HALL, CALICUT**

Duration: **10 am - 13:30 pm**

**10:00 - 10:40 ->** Leopards in human settlements: Insights from research in Maharashtra (Dr. Vidya Athreya, WCS India)

**10:40 - 11:20 ->** Reporting about wildlife : the Role of media (Media partner from Mumbai Press Club)

**11:20 - 11:30 ->** Tea Break

**11:30 - 12:10 ->** Humans and Elephants, Understanding both to ease conflict (Dr. Prithviraj Fernando, Chairman - Centre for Conservation and Research, Sri Lanka & Research Associate - Smithsonian Institution, USA)

**12:10 - 12:50 ->** Understanding the way of the monkeys to ease conflict (Mr. Benjamin Lee, Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology, Singapore)

**12:50 - 13:30->** Interaction and discussion

**13:30->** Lunch

End of Media Workshop in Calicut

---

A sample of a list of participants at the Trivandrum Media Workshop, Kerala.  
The contact details can be obtained on request.

REGULAR WITH REGULAR  
A WORKSHOP TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HUMAN INTERACTIONS WITH LARGE CITIES, SUBURBS AND  
RURALITY, TRIVANDRUM, 17 November 2022

S.No	Name of participant	Institution & Designation	Phone Number	Email id
1	Rakshitha	...		
2	...	...		
3	...	...		
4	...	...		
5	...	...		
6	...	...		
7	...	...		
8	...	...		
9	...	...		
10	...	...		
11	...	...		
12	...	...		
13	...	...		
14	...	...		
15	...	...		
16	...	...		
17	...	...		
18	...	...		
19	...	...		
20	...	...		

REGULAR WITH REGULAR  
A WORKSHOP TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HUMAN INTERACTIONS WITH LARGE CITIES, SUBURBS AND  
RURALITY, TRIVANDRUM, 17 November 2022

S.No	Name of participant	Institution & Designation	Phone Number	Email id
21	Ajaythara	...		
22	...	...		
23	...	...		
24	...	...		
25	...	...		
26	...	...		
27	...	...		
28	...	...		
29	...	...		
30	...	...		
31	...	...		

A sample of a list of participants at the Calicut Media Workshop, Kerala.  
The contact details can be obtained on request.

REGULAR WITH REGULAR  
A WORKSHOP TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HUMAN INTERACTIONS WITH LARGE CITIES, SUBURBS AND  
RURALITY, TRIVANDRUM, 17 November 2022

S.No	Name of participant	Institution & Designation	Phone Number	Email id
1	...	...		
2	...	...		
3	...	...		
4	...	...		
5	...	...		
6	...	...		
7	...	...		
8	...	...		
9	...	...		
10	...	...		
11	...	...		
12	...	...		
13	...	...		
14	...	...		
15	...	...		
16	...	...		
17	...	...		
18	...	...		
19	...	...		
20	...	...		

REGULAR WITH REGULAR  
A WORKSHOP TO BETTER UNDERSTAND HUMAN INTERACTIONS WITH LARGE CITIES, SUBURBS AND  
RURALITY, TRIVANDRUM, 17 November 2022

S.No	Name of participant	Institution & Designation	Phone Number	Email id
41	...	...		
42	...	...		
43	...	...		
44	...	...		
45	...	...		
46	...	...		
47	...	...		
48	...	...		
49	...	...		
50	...	...		
51	...	...		
52	...	...		
53	...	...		
54	...	...		
55	...	...		
56	...	...		
57	...	...		
58	...	...		
59	...	...		
60	...	...		



---

**Trivandrum Workshop in Progress.**



**Calicut Workshop in Progress.**



---

**Wynaad workshop for forest officials. This was attended by Park Director, Shri Vikas Gupta, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai. The Forest Department also invited the Collector (the top most administrative official of the district who also sat for one of the talks). He is flanked by the local Forest Official.**



**Shri Sunil Limaye, Forest Official from Maharashtra talking about his experiences of dealing with leopard conflict to the Goa forest Officials.**



---

**Shri Virat Singh, a journalist with Mumbai Mirror talks to Goa journalists how he reports on leopards commonly but focuses on making people aware of how to take precautions so that their lives and livestock are safe.**

