

Project Update: January 2014

We did an initial survey to select the villages which are mostly affected by human-elephant conflict (HEC) and areas where there are more chances to locate crop raiders. We did a short questionnaire survey covering 10 villages around the Dahaiyagala corridor which are located on the north side of the Udawalawe national park. Based on the questionnaire survey, visual indicators of HEC such as presence of tree huts, personal electric fences, etc. and visibility of elephants, we selected Pokunuthanna and Dahaiyagala villages as our study site. I interviewed 10 farmers in the two villages and according to them HEC is a huge problem in that area. According to villagers not only males but also female groups raid crops.

Most of the crop lands in Pokunuthanna and Dahaiyagala have tree houses (pictures 3-4). Picture 5 is of a male that was waiting near the corridor electric fence at night. Elephants break the electric fence often (picture 6). Crops could be observed in elephants' dung as well (pictures 7- parts of a mango fruit).



Pic 3



Pic 4



Pic 5



Pic 6



Pic 7

We observed several freshly raided paddy fields and recorded the GPS locations of those damaged crop lands. We searched for elephants inside the Dahaiyagala corridor and the villages. We searched along the electric fence of the villages every evening and at dawn to find crop raiders. As a result, we saw five big males, one alone and four together, and two female

groups who were grazing inside the corridor. Some of them were identified during my previous study. We stationed at a frequently used elephant path from 3.00 am to 6.30 am every day identify crop raiders that would come back to the corridor before daylight comes. As a result we could identify one crop raider. Interestingly, that was an identified male that had been seen inside the Udawalawe national park since 2007 in my previous studies.