

# HUMAN-LEOPARD CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN HIMALAYAN ECOREGION OF PAKISTAN

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## ABSTRACT

Gallies forests are located in the Western Himalayan G200 Eco-regions. This Eco-region is globally recognized for its unique biological diversity. Gallies forests provides the habitat for more than 757 vascular plant species, 31 species of mammals, around 203 species of birds, 16 species of reptiles and 3 species of amphibians. Galliat, besides rich biodiversity, is the only historic habitat of common leopard in Pakistan where, because of legal cover and good protection on ground; the species grow in number and reached to a stage when it started posing problems to the lives and property of local communities who are living in areas adjoining to the forests of Gallies. In June, 2005 a common leopard, killed six women in the study area first time in the history of Pakistan. That incidence has greatly affected the community's feelings and attitude towards the conservation of wildlife especially the carnivores. Except a small group of peoples who still support the conservation of the leopards, majority wants them to eliminate them from the only historic habitat of the species in Pakistan. As a result of that incidence the retaliatory killings of the leopards increased (*a total of 15 leopards killed within last three years from the area*), attacks on human beings increased (*17 human beings were attacked and badly injured by the leopard*), rate of livestock depredation increased as well as leopard sighting inside the villages was also increased with in the last few years.

In order to manage the human-leopard conflict; WWF-Pakistan launched a leopard conservation project with the collaboration of the cat specialist group, IUCN in the problem zone. Under that research project; Common leopard population was estimated, prey species were identified, livestock depredation rates and major reasons were investigated, women attitude towards leopard conservation was assessed, GIS based habitat modeling of common leopard was conducted, mitigating measures to reduce leopard attack chances on human life and property were identified, evidences regarding the post impacts of the leopard killings were collected in the area under the **Research component** of the project. A community based livestock insurance scheme was launched in the area to reduce the economic losses to farmers due to leopard, and an environmental education and awareness program was initiated in the local schools to normalize the existing situation. Under this small grant project, five students were trained in different aspects related to common leopard conservation studies. A comprehensive long term conservation strategy development and implementation on the basis of the lesson learnt from this project is highly required for the conservation of this endangered species throughout the historic ranges of the leopard in the Pakistan.

**Key Words**

Common leopard, Human-leopard conflict management, conservation, western Himalayan Eco-region, historic habitat, livestock insurance scheme, environmental education and awareness