

ESOI WORKSHOP ON ANIMAL HUMAN CONFLICT SOLUTIONS

SEPTEMBER 6, 2011 – YERCAUD (TAMILNADU)

Welcome address by Mr Steve Borgia

Mr Steve Borgia expressed his desire to initiate discussion with the objective of making Yercaud the model hill station by adopting sustainable tourism policies and practices that can be emulated across other hill stations through Eco Tourism Society of India [ESOI] of which he is one of the founders.

Speaker: Mr Mohan Rajesh.Senior Planter yercaud.

Topic: Flora and Fauna of Yercaud

Mr Mohan Rajesh gave an introduction about the flora and fauna native to the Shevroys. He noted that the population of bison has witnessed an increase while the Ibex population has been totally wiped out.

Reasons for increase in Bison population

The construction of railway lines, the Mettur dam and the national highway between Salem and Bangalore have indirectly contributed to this. The infrastructure development restricted the movement of Tigers and Leopards, with the absence of predators to prey on them the bison population increased.

Damage caused by Bison

Bison feed on saplings, coffee, oranges and silver oaks and causing heavy loss to planters.

Prevention

Mr Mohan Rajesh also suggested some measures to tackle the bison menace:

Planters could undertake fencing of the property which can be subsidized by the government

A sanctuary to be established in Shevroys

Forest areas to be patrolled regularly to prevent illegal grazing

Birth control measures to control bison population

Introduction of predators such as panthers

Use of repellent sprays or ultrasonic noise to keep them out

Introduction of native species such as Ibex especially in Sengalathupadi

Speaker: Mr Vijayan Rajesh .Chairman of the Shevroys planters association.

Mr Vijayan Rajesh pointed out that the main reason for bison to venture into coffee plantations is due to decrease in fodder in reserve forest.

To prevent this grass and fodder must be grown in reserve forests

Another important point is that compensation is not available for plantation crops which is an issue he sought to be addressed. The difficulty of assessing the damage to perennial crops such as orange was mentioned.

Topic: Forest Department Perspective

Speaker: Dr M.G.Rao Chief conservator of forests.Tamilnadu,& Project officer of special project for biodiversity and greening.

Topic: Policies and Programs and Way Forward

Dr Rao stressed on two issues, the first is the encroachment of man into the habitat of animals, the second is conservation of wildlife has helped in increasing the population. The Tamil Nadu government has planned to initiate a project to deal with man-animal conflict for TN State.

The Forest department has undertaken several measures to reduce conflict in other areas:

Creation of water holes in reserve forests

Removal of exotics and planting of edible fodder

Salem forest division has also been included in the project.

Recommendations:

Stakeholders involved in tourism have to take up responsibility to restrict number of tourists in an effort to make tourism sustainable.

Stall feeding can be undertaken to prevent illegal grazing of goats in reserve forests.

Patrolling has to be done regularly to monitor approach of animals

Cooperation between planters, hoteliers and forest department is essential to preserve the bio diversity which will benefit all stakeholders.

Discussion Forum

Moderated by Mr Vijayan Rajesh and Dr M.G.Rao

It was evident by the end of the conference that the population of bison is the problem and not its presence. To tackle this problem, the population of bisons must be enumerated and the sustainable population to be identified.

In case of population being above the sustainable limit, measures such as fencing, creation of fodder and water holes in reserve forests and translocation can be undertaken. Hoteliers also must advice tourist on adopting environment friendly practices and reduce impact on the tourist spot.

The forum also recognized the need for involving The WWF and ESOI for mapping the range of migration of bisons. The need to create buffer zones can be created between the villages and forests to reduce conflict was also discussed.

Follow up and Plan of Action:

1. Carry out a scientific enumeration and study of migration and behavior of bisons of shevroys. And later arrive at a suitable programme to curtail the conflict situations.

2. A larger road map for CONSERVE YERCAUD be launched by the stake holders in partnership with Government of India and Tamilnadu. This can be a model for other Hill station CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

3. Review the situation of plastics and monkeys in yercaud and implement a programme to curb the growing menace.