

Animal Conservation

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Original Article




Canine Conundrum: domestic dogs as an invasive species and their impacts on wildlife in India

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Abstract

Domestic dogs are increasingly being recognized as a conservation threat for native species. In many places, their impacts may be as severe as other invasive predators such as cats and rats. We conducted the first ever sub-continent scale assessment of the impacts of dogs on native species in India using an online key informant survey and reports from national print media. Dogs reportedly attacked 80 species, of which 31 were IUCN Red list threatened species, including four Critically Endangered species. Larger bodied mammals such as ungulates and carnivores, were most commonly reported to be attacked, although this may be an observation bias. Approximately 68% of the attacks were carried out by dogs unaccompanied by humans. Most of the attacks were carried out by packs of dogs with 45% of these attacks leading to the death of the prey. Nearly 48% of the incidents were reported in and around wildlife protected areas, suggesting that dogs are an important large-scale edge effect around protected areas in India. For Critically Endangered species that are already suffering from serious population declines due to other causes, the impact of dogs may seriously impede population recovery efforts. Mitigating the impacts of dogs on wildlife requires a multi-pronged approach of responsible dog ownership, restriction in free-ranging behaviour, and strong population control measures, especially around sensitive conservation areas.

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