

# Brainstorming the man – leopard conflict issue: (*translocation, captive management and research*)

Vidya Athreya\*

## Introduction

Leopards are increasingly perceived as problem animals and the recent spurt in human attacks by leopards in and around SGNP is a testimony to the same. The causes of conflict at best are restricted to opinions by a section of society and are not likely to allow for mitigation or prevention measures that will succeed. At the same time, policy regarding the trapping process of the leopards, handling and post capture management is greatly lacking. Moreover, once trapped, the government is not equipped to house large numbers of leopards in captivity. Translocation is not an option when dealing with leopards that are trapped in human dominated areas (see Athreya et al., 2004) and therefore, in the interests of society, the forest department functioning as well as the well-being of the leopards a discussion forum that involved all the concerned organizations and individuals is a serious need of the day.

*We propose a national level meeting which involves*

1. MoEF (to take action related to policy changes that are required to ease man-leopard conflict levels)
2. Forest Department officials from affected states (so that they can put forward their views)
3. Reputed scientists (who are important for providing biological information on the species)
4. CZA and animal welfare officials (who have to be sensitized to the problems at hand and the attitude difference required when dealing with leopards trapped in conflict situations compared to domestic animals).

We think it is important that all interested parties (MoEF, reputed scientists, CZA, interested NGO's) meet at a common forum to discuss the human-leopard conflict issue and formulate recommendations that can be taken up with the MoEF to ease the nature of the conflict and its related issues. We propose a two day conference in New Delhi that could be co-hosted by the MoEF. The main components of the forum are.

1. Discussion on the translocation issue (to be initiated by presentations regarding the issue)
2. Discussion on the problems faced at the field staff level of the Forest Department (to be initiated by presentation by concerned staff from selected conflict areas)
3. Discussion on captive management problems by experienced veterinarians who have dealt with leopards caught in conflict situations (again initiated by presentation from respective doctors).
4. Discussion on the lack of research and its necessity to understanding the issue at hand and how that can be rectified.
5. Discussion on how to improve captive holding facilities and orient them towards being self sufficient in funds and in providing conservation inputs towards education.
6. Finally a synthesis of all of the above and action plan to be drawn up for further action to be taken by the MoEF.

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Vidya Athreya, c/o Dr. Ramana Athreya. NCRA, Pune University Campus,  
Ganeshkhind, Pune 411007, Maharashtra; Email: phatrosie@vsnl.net