

What causes conflict?

■ A mob gathers around a leopard

If a desperate cat is cornered, it may attack someone in a bid to escape. Though a leopard can easily kill a person, they typically avoid people but may attack in self defence if it is cornered and surrounded. Always stay out of its way so that it can go away.

■ Pressurising the forest department to set up a trap cage

This intervention has the worst impact because as you remove leopards from an area, more of them will come in to fill the vacant territories. Moreover, when sometimes a mother is removed and her sub adult cub left behind, the cub may create more problems without the guidance of its mother, who would normally spend 2 to 3 years teaching the cub to hunt, avoid humans and other survival skills. So, if leopards are living in an area without attacking humans, it is important that the same leopards be allowed to remain in the area, as they will not attack humans unless provoked.

■ Hunting wildlife

If the natural prey of leopards are hunted, the leopards, being highly adaptable animals might opportunistically seek domestic animals as prey and also frequent garbage dumps. Or if an adult leopard is poached or injured, we will have cubs without a mother or very young animals new to the place and that can have negative consequences for us.

Leopards, being very adaptable animals, can use plantations close to forest areas.

Sighting a leopard close to human habitations does not necessarily mean that they are dangerous and need to be removed. This is a complete misconception.

Leopards do not attack humans intentionally. They are shy animals that try and avoid places frequented by humans.

The boundaries of estates, households and forests are for human beings. Leopards and other animals do not recognise man-made boundaries. They have always used these areas.

Living with Leopards



Garbage attracts dogs and pigs. Reduction in garbage and the proper disposal of organic waste (including waste from butcher shops) can reduce leopard presence around our buildings. It is in our hands to reduce that attraction for them and it is in our hands to put pressure on the civic authorities to ensure better waste collection, storage and management.



Do's and don'ts to minimise conflict

- Recognise that leopards are resident in the area and mere sightings do not translate into danger.
- Leopards do not recognise our maps of forest, national park, colony, etc. However, they are sensitive enough to avoid contact with people and in fact do their best to avoid us.
- Be alert after dark (when leopards are active), especially ensuring that children are accompanied by an adult if they are outdoors. One could also put on the music on the mobile phone so that it knows that a human being is walking along which it goes out of its way to avoid.
- Do not move about alone after dark and ensure you have a companion. This will alert any leopard nearby and reduce any chance of you being mistaken for prey animal.
- If a leopard is sighted, give it right of way and allow it to move off peacefully. Any sudden actions or aggressive posturing may cause it to react with alarm (and panic), leading to unintended consequences.
- If a leopard is sighted in the area, do not form a crowd around it. Crowds invariably get excited and the mob behaviour will cause the animal to panic and it might harm someone in its bid to escape. The forest department is responsible for managing the interactions between people and leopards but have little control over the movements of individual wild leopards.
- The only long term solution to avoid leopards within a colony or adjoining it is to ensure that garbage is disposed off well and that no feral dogs are present. If a colony has a dog then ensure its kennel is far away from the building because leopards are attracted to barking dogs. However, once they know that the particular dog is well protected, they will decrease their incursions.
- Cattle and other livestock should not be allowed to graze unattended by a herder. Livestock must be kept in secure cattle shed at night so as to prevent unexpected encounters with leopards in these sheds.



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