

## RHESUS MACAQUE-HUMAN INTERACTIONS IN URBAN AND RURAL BANGLADESH: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT

M.F. Jaman<sup>1,2</sup>, M.A. Huffman<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Social System Evolution, Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University, Japan,* <sup>2</sup>*Department of Zoology, University of Dhaka, Dhaka 1000, Bangladesh*

*Presenter's Email: [mfjaman@yahoo.com](mailto:mfjaman@yahoo.com) / [jaman@pri.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:jaman@pri.kyoto-u.ac.jp)*

Most rhesus macaque populations in Bangladesh are currently associated with human habitations and their population size has been decreasing gradually. We conducted a comparative study on two commensal rhesus groups, one in a village and the other in a city between September 2007 and January 2009 in order to assess the state of macaque-human interactions and its effect on the foraging behavior of rhesus macaques. We interviewed 100 and 169 residents and visitors within the home ranges of the urban and the rural groups respectively. A majority of respondents claimed that the monkeys were a nuisance because they destroyed crops, gardens and household articles in their search for food. The frequency of bites by monkeys was higher in the rural site, most likely due to the higher frequency of humans driving away monkeys here. Macaques received food from very few people in the rural site as compared to the urban one. Many differences in behavioral patterns between the two rhesus groups were related to the varying levels of human interactions across the two sites. A majority of people suggested that shortage of natural food resources at the rural site was the main cause of human-macaque conflicts. Nonetheless, almost half the respondents did not want monkeys moved from their habitat, as they perceived them to be an important part of their environment. Our study suggests that despite the nuisance problem, people do not want to get rid of rhesus macaques, but instead want to conserve them through appropriate management practices.

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