

OF MONKEYS AND MEN: HUMAN-RHESUS MACAQUE CONFLICT IN NORTHERN INDIA

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The rhesus macaque has lived in close proximity to humans in north India over centuries; in recent years, however, extensive urbanization and recruitment of forestlands for cropping have led to intense human-primate conflict in many agricultural areas of northern India. The various forms of this conflict include extensive crop raiding by macaques, occasionally serious injury to humans, transmission of diseases across macaques and humans, and the unplanned translocation of macaques into new, previously problem-free areas where they come into conflict with both people and other indigenous primates. The control of serious human-primate conflict requires the use of both preventive management measures like surgical sterilisation or immunocontraception aimed at population control, garbage management, and prevention of provisioning in human-populated sites, and reactive methods such as capture of identified problem troops or individuals and the development of monkey sanctuaries. The most common reactive measure of translocation to protected areas or other sites needs to be strictly prevented. Efforts directed at the long-term conservation of the macaques should incorporate effective management of the agriculture-forest ecotone and, more importantly, research on the ecological and behavioral plasticity of nonhuman primates that use human-modified landscapes as well as on the sociocultural and economic realities of the people living in those environments.

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