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THE MACAQUE-HUMAN INTERFACE: CONFLICT, COOPERATION, AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

A. Fuentes

University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, USA

Presenter's Email: afuentes@nd.edu

The human-macaque interface is receiving increased attention from policy-makers, academics and the general public across Asia. Unfortunately, the prominent characterization of this interface is one of conflict and competition, without much acknowledgement of the diverse ways in which humans and macaques have coexisted for millennia. Behavioral, ecological and pathogen overlaps between humans and macaques are increasingly common and require not only scientific inquiry but enhanced management programs and planning. While most studies document the disputes over space and resources between humans and macaques, there are substantive data suggesting a range of sustainable co-existence possibilities. For example, nearly all studies indicate that the central focus of conflict arises from the presence, or assumed presence, of potentially contested food sources. Some of these same studies show that even small modifications of human behavior result in substantial changes in macaque responses and reduced conflict. Additionally, overviews of human-macaque interfaces reveal that many of these relationships have substantial temporal depth and some may even be considered sustainable (others, however, are not). Here I review the current state of knowledge on the macaque-human interface and demonstrate the possibilities of multi-species communities emerging as outcomes of shifting perspectives from competition to coexistence.

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