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HUMAN AND THE RHESUS MACAQUES CONFLICT: SOLUTION FOR NEPAL

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In Nepal, as in several other Asian countries, the rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*) population has remained stable in some places while in many locations it has increased. With more than 83% of the rural agriculture-based human population dependent on natural resources for their livelihood, loss of natural habitat due to the expansion of crop fields is on-going. Nearly 25% of Nepal is officially protected habitat, but these protected areas are fragmented and not all are suitable for primates. Deforestation and fragmentation drives the dispersal of primates increasingly into areas of human settlement and agricultural lands, and ultimately into conflict. Conflict between farmers and rhesus macaques around the country is increasing. To examine the problem, we surveyed human-primate interactions in a variety of locations around Nepal. Our survey revealed that of the three species of primates known in Nepal (*Macaca mulatta*, *M. assamensis*, and *Semnopithecus entellus*), farmers reported that *M. mulatta* was responsible for the majority of crop raiding. In 2003, the Nepali government instituted a wildlife farming policy that permits the removal of problematic animals, such as rhesus macaques, to establish sustainable breeding programs in government-approved centers. However, still a strong law to back up the policy is under formulation by the government. Full fledged law enforcement will lead to a sustainable harvesting of natural resource and add subsistence support to marginalized people in Nepal.

Keywords: crop-raiding, macaque breeding, harvesting.