Abstract of paper presented by Rodney Jackson at the symposium "People and Predators - Conserving Problem Mammals" International Theriological Congress (ITC8), Sun City, South Africa, 12-17th August, 2001.

People and Predators - Conserving Problem Mammals

Most carnivores come into conflict with people because of their predatory habits: red foxes kill chickens, lions kill cattle, brown bears kill sheep, stoats and weasels kill game-birds. Some of the larger predators also occasionally kill people, like lions or tigers. For these reasons most carnivore species have been persecuted for centuries.

As human densities have risen, larger carnivores have disappeared from the landscape - though their smaller relatives have often thrived and continued to conflict with man. Such conflict between people and predators affects even protected populations: much of the mortality suffered by carnivores living in reserves occurs in border areas, where carnivores come into contact with human activity.

As habitats become increasingly fragmented, there is an urgent need to devise means for both people and predators to coexist in the landscape. Such coexistence might involve various degrees of segregation of carnivores and people. In traditional societies, predators used the same areas as people, and people developed lifestyles and husbandry techniques to minimize carnivores' impact on their lives and livelihoods. As human densities have risen, agriculture has intensified, and technologies have advanced, people have become less tolerant of carnivores, and better able to eradicate them.

This symposium sought to address a number of questions vital to the future conservation of problem carnivores.

- What impact do carnivores have? Do the costs of retaining carnivores outweigh the benefits?
- Can people and predators coexist? What management or husbandry methods are most effective at reducing predator impact?
- Is coexistence attainable, or should we be segregating predators and people with fences?
- How quickly do we have to find a solution?

The symposium provided a springboard for a book on the same subject.

Fostering Co-existence with Predators in Hemis National Park, Ladakh, India.

by:

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Abstract:

Hemis National Park in northwest India suffers significant livestock damage from snow leopards and wolves. A survey of 79 households in 15 settlements indicated at least half lost 1-12 % of their domestic stock to predators, a total of 492 animals valued at USD $ 23,500 over a 14-month period. Snow leopard and wolf were associated with 58% and 32% of presumed depredation incidents respectively, with sheep and goats constituting 81% of the stock lost, followed by yak-cattle (12%) and horses (4%). Nearly 50% of all loss resulted when a snow leopard entered a poorly constructed night corral and killed the confined animals. These incidents accounted for 29 of the 210 depredation incidents tallied, and three settlements (31 households) incurred 54% of all depredation losses.

Using a highly participatory and inclusive planning process, the investigators worked with villagers to develop and implement action plans for predator-proofing corrals and improving livestock guarding practices. Park residents were also offered economic incentives linking biodiversity conservation with enhanced income generation from the existing tourism base. Signed agreements specified the role, responsibility and reciprocal contribution of each stakeholder, including herders and external donors, as well as providing relatively simple indicators for monitoring project effectiveness.