

SHORT COMMUNICATION

FIRST REPORT OF DIRECT HUMAN – SMOOTH COATED OTTER (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) CONFLICT AT ODISHA, INDIA

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Abstract: Human – otter direct conflict is rarely reported and do not often reach the news. Otters are carnivores and both an aquatic and a terrestrial mammal. Most of their conflicts with humans are because they take fish from fishing gear, and damage the nets of fishermen, which is their only livelihood. This paper reports the first direct conflict of otters with humans, causing injury to three people from one family in the state of Odisha, India. This report also indirectly shows feral dog – wildlife conflicts.

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Keyword – Smooth-coated otter, Attack, Feral dog, Conflict, Injury, Treatment, Odisha.

INTRODUCTION

Three species of otters inhabit India (Menon, 2014) and all three have been reported from Odisha (Debata and Palei, 2020) but the Smooth coated otter is distributed mostly in the region of Puri, district of Odisha (Samal, 2022). There are many instances reported where smooth coated otters interact with fishermen affects

the fishermen's livelihood, and later leads to conflict. (Samal, 2022). Up till now, there have been no records of direct conflict between humans and otters in the state of Odisha.

At about 0900 on 12th June 2022, a 9-year-old girl found an otter being chased by a dog near Balabhadrapur, Astaranga, Puri (19.9416000, 86.2885950); the otter took refuge in an abandoned house to save its life from the dog. Curious, the girl entered the house to see the animal; it was stressed and felt threatened by the sudden encounter with the child, and bit her on her left leg calf muscle (Fig 1). The abandoned house was next door to the victim's house.



Figure 1. Canine tooth mark of smooth coated otter on calf muscle of 9-year-old girl.

When the girl shouted in pain, her 32-year-old mother came to the rescue, and tried to help her daughter escape, but, the otter attacked the mother too, biting her hand (Fig 2).



Figure 2. Mother's hand showing fresh bite and after healing.

While escaping in terror from the abandoned house, the otter attacked the youngest daughter (7-year-old) of the family with its claws on her upper thighs (Fig 3). Later the otter escaped from the place using a waterbody on opposite of the house.



Figure 3. 7-year-old victim, who was scratched by the otter, while the otter was escaping.

Three members of one family were attacked and the injuries were severe. The family was taken to the Community Health Center, Astaranga for post bite treatment, where they were given Tetanus and Rabies Vaccinations.

A couple of months later, our team visited the victim family to reassure them, follow up on their injuries, and mitigate the chance of probable retaliation towards the smooth-coated otter species (Fig 4).



Figure 4. Follow up with the victim's family after interval of 2 months to reassure them, and try to mitigate any future human – wildlife conflicts

DISCUSSION

Direct human – otter conflict causing harm is seldom reported in India because the bites are never serious enough to kill anyone. Otters are carnivores and the attacks we mentioned was accidental and unfortunate. We think that the otter was stressed after being chased by dog, felt cornered, and took the human as one of the threats blocking its escape. The attack was unintentional by the otter and due to stress. Follow ups were taken to check the victims' health condition and to avoid probable future conflicts with otters.

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RESUMÉ

PREMIERE OBSERVATION D'UN CONFLICT DIRECT ENTRE L'HOMME ET LA LOUTRE À PELAGE LISSE (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), À ODISHA EN INDE

Les conflits directs entre l'homme et la loutre sont rarement signalés et plus rarement documentés. Les loutres sont des carnivores et des mammifères à la fois aquatiques et terrestres. La plupart des conflits entre l'homme et la loutre sont dus au fait qu'elles volent les poissons dans les engins de pêche et endommagent les filets des pêcheurs, avec pour unique objectif leur subsistance. Cet article mentionne un premier conflit direct entre les loutres et l'homme causant des blessures à trois personnes d'une même famille dans l'état d'Odisha, en Inde. Ce rapport illustre aussi de manière indirecte les conflits entre chien sauvage et faune.

RESUMEN

PRIMER REPORTE DE CONFLICTO DIRECTO HUMANO-NUTRIA LISA (*Lutrogale perspicillata*) EN ODISHA, INDIA

Raramente se reporta conflicto directo Humano-Nutria, y no llega a menudo a ser noticia. Las nutrias son carnívoros, y son mamíferos tanto acuáticos como terrestres. La mayor parte de sus conflictos con humanos se deben al robo de peces de los artificios de pesca y al daño que producen en las redes de pesca de pescadores que lo hacen para sobrevivir. Este artículo reporta el primer conflicto directo entre nutrias y humanos, que causaron heridas a tres personas de una familia en Odisha, India. Este informe también muestra indirectamente los conflictos perros asilvestrados-fauna silvestre.

सारांश –

भारत के ओडिशा राज्य में इंसान और उदबिलाब के बीच हुए संघर्ष का पहले घटना पर आधारित रिपोर्ट ।

मानव-ऊदबिलाव संघर्ष की शायद ही कभी रिपोर्ट की जाती है और शायद ही कभी ध्यान दिया जाता है। ऊदबिलाव मांसाहारी होते हैं; और दोनों जलीय और स्थलीय स्तनपायी। मनुष्यों के साथ उनके अधिकांश संघर्ष मछुआरों के मछली पकड़ने के उपकरण से उनकी मछली चोरी करने की प्रकृति के कारण होते हैं, साथ ही उनके मछली पकड़ने के जाल को नष्ट करने के कारण होते हैं, जो पूरी तरह से एक मछुआरे की आजीविका है। यह पेपर मनुष्यों के साथ ऊदबिलाव के पहले प्रत्यक्ष संघर्ष की रिपोर्ट करता है, जिससे भारत के ओडिशा राज्य में एक ही परिवार के तीन लोग घायल हो गए। इसके अलावा, रिपोर्ट अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से कुत्ते-वन्यजीव संघर्षों को भी दिखाती है।

ସାରାଂଶ –

ଭାରତ ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରେ ମଣିଷ- ପାଣି ଓଧ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ହୋଇଥିବା ସାମୁହିକ ସଂଘର୍ଷ ର ପ୍ରଥମ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା ।

ମଣିଷ - ପାଣି ଓଧ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସଂଘର୍ଷର କୌଣସି ଉପସ୍ଥାପନାର ନଜିର ନଥାଏ କିମ୍ବା ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱାରୋପ ଦିଆ ଯାଇନଥାଏ । ପାଣି ଓଧ ଏକ ଛନ୍ଦ୍ୟପାୟୀ ମାଂସାଶୀ ପ୍ରାଣୀ ଓ ଉଭୟଚର (ଜଳ ଓ ଛଳ) । ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ସହ ପାଣି ଓଧର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ସ୍ୱନ୍ଦ୍ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ମହ୍ୟଜିବୀ କା ଜାଲ ନଷ୍ଟ ଓ ଜାଲରୁ ମାଛ ଚୋରି ପ୍ରକୃତି ଇତ୍ୟାଦିର ସାମୁହିକ ନଜିର ରହିଅଛି, ମାତ୍ର ଏହି ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଣି ଓଧ ଓ ମଣିଷ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ହୋଇଥିବା ସାମୁହିକ ସଂଘର୍ଷ କୁ ଦର୍ଶାଇଅଛି । ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଅଭିଲେଖରେ ଏକ ପରିବାରର ତିନି ଜଣ ସଦସ୍ୟ ମାନେ ପାଣି ଓଧ ସହ ହୋଇଥିବା ଆକସ୍ମିକ ସ୍ୱନ୍ଦ୍ ରେ ଆହତ ହୋଇଥିବା ତଥା ବୁଲା କୁକୁର ଏବଂ ବନ୍ୟପ୍ରାଣୀ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଲାଗିରହିଥିବା ସ୍ୱନ୍ଦ୍ କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଦର୍ଶାଇଛି ।