


Project Update: December 2015

We have been continuing our Maharashtra Forest Department (key informant) interview survey since May. Instead of five districts which were planned for before (till May 2015), we have been successful in covering 7 districts with the help of some students. This took up till July 2015. Along with recording wolf sightings through these surveys, we also collected data for leopard and hyena sightings and now we have a large-scale database from our study area. This data is being worked on since August 2015 onwards and we have come up with some rough trends for the presence of all three carnivores in the agro-pastoral landscape outside protected areas. A final report will be submitted by February end to each of the Forest divisions we have worked with. Our next phase of fieldwork will commence from December 2015 onwards and will involve locating wolf denning sites (in areas with higher probability of wolf occurrence) and understanding livestock owner responses to livestock loss and grazing instances in reserve forest fragments.





Understanding the distribution of large carnivores in an agro-pastoral system of western Maharashtra

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The story behind...

- Growing body of knowledge about wildlife outside protected areas and human-wildlife interactions
- Agro-pastoral landscape in western Maharashtra hosting high human population and high diversity of large carnivores
- Human use spaces are resource rich because of high abundance of domestic prey, water and cover availability, etc. and large carnivores with large home ranges can survive in these areas
- Wildlife management forms an integral part of Forest Dept. responsibility and in turn influences interactions between local people and wildlife

Our work in the last 1 year...

- Conducted 1576 interviews in 94 ranges of ground staff of the Forest Department
- Used an occupancy framework to assess presence of 3 large carnivores





Leopard (0.21) Wolf (0.41) Hyena (0.31)

What are we trying to understand?

Where leopards, wolves and hyenas occur across human-use spaces in 7 districts?


What determines their presence? Eg., wild or domestic prey presence, terrain type, land use, etc.



Conclusions

- Extensive use of human-use landscapes by all three large carnivores and determine hotspots of higher occurrence
- Stresses on the fact that animals do not understand protected area boundaries and that this should inform policy decisions
- Highlights the value of some of these landscapes which are often considered unproductive and opened up for plantations

Photo credits:
Yogendra Shah
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A poster submitted to the lecture series summarising our work up till now.