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Human-Monkey Conflict in Sri Lanka: Evidence from Yapahuwa to Guide Feeding Stations as a Mitigation Strategy

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Abstract

Human-monkey conflict has intensified across Sri Lanka, with the endemic Toque macaque (*Macaca sinica*) frequently raiding crops, damaging property, and threatening human safety. The primary objective of this study was to quantify the extent, economic impacts, and patterns of human–monkey conflict in communities surrounding the Yapahuwa heritage site and to evaluate the potential of managed feeding stations as a short-term mitigation strategy. A community survey and field study were conducted in February 2025, collecting information on human–monkey conflict experienced over previous years, from 20 households in villages of Yapahuwa, Pailigama, Lunupothagama, and Diwullawa. The survey focused on the frequency of monkey incursions, troop size, crop and property damage, yield loss, perceived threats to human safety, and associated economic impacts on household livelihoods. Among the 100 households surveyed, 75% reported daily disturbances, with 50% of farmers losing about half their harvest and 15% experiencing total crop destruction. Property damage was reported by 75% of respondents, while more than half expressed concern over aggressive encounters and health risks. During the field observation confirmed that large macaque groups, typically 20-30 individuals, routinely entered home gardens and farmlands, causing significant economic which is nearly 50% reduction of crop yield and social strain. Based on these findings, the study proposes establishing sustainable monkey-feeding stations within natural habitats as a short-term measure to divert monkeys away from settlements and reduce immediate conflict. These stations, equipped with elevated platforms, controlled food dispensing mechanisms, and monitoring systems, can help restore more natural foraging behavior while improving community safety. However, feeding stations alone cannot resolve the issue in the long run. medium-to long-term solutions will require habitat enrichment to restore ecological balance, combined with population management to reduce pressure on both forests and human settlements. The study demonstrates that conflict mitigation demands both immediate interventions and long-term strategies, linking community welfare with primate conservation in Sri Lanka.

Key words: *Crop damage, Community survey, Conflict mitigation, Human-monkey conflict*