Current threats to Asian rhinos from illegal rhino horn trade

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Illegal trade in rhino horn has triggered an increase in rhino poaching in South Africa over the past five years. The poaching scenario in South Africa and also in some other African countries in past few years has raised concern about the future of rhinos. Whether the rhinos are poached in Africa or in Asia, research on illegal trade of rhino horn has revealed that few Asian countries who are not rhino range states are using the rhino horns, triggering continued illegal killing of rhinos in rhino range states in Africa and Asia. In contrast to the African rhino poaching scenario, the state of rhino conservation in Asia seems encouraging. However, rhino poaching in India increased during 2011-2013. Thanks to concerted efforts, the poaching trend declined in 2014 and 2015 by about 25% and 40% respectively. The rhino poaching increase in India is linked to the poaching decline in Nepal, which is the result of successful anti-poaching efforts in Nepal over past 5-6 years. The rhino poaching dynamics in India and Nepal is changing, as are the transport routes of rhino horns from India to consumer countries. This paper highlights the change in trade route of rhino horn from India to end user countries as well as the changes in modus operandi of rhino poachers operating in India over the past 5-6 years.

Is Elephant Proof Trench an effective mitigating measure against human-elephant conflict?

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Human-elephant conflict (HEC) is one of the challenging issues of elephant conservation in all its ranges. India experiences approximately 175–200 cases of human deaths caused by elephants, about 10 lakh hectares of crop loss and 15,000/- houses damaged by elephants annually. The amount spent on control measures and ex-gratia payment towards HEC is about Rs. 15 crores annually. However, the affected communities feel the ex-gratia payment is negligible given the magnitude of conflict and its adverse impact on their socio-economic status. Therefore, goodwill and tolerance level is decreasing among the affected people over time that could lead to animosity towards elephant conservation. Various methods include traditional farm-based deterrents (the use of watchtowers, fires, ditches and loud noises) and novel farm-based deterrents have been tried to reduce HEC. The Elephant Proof Trench (EPT) is recognized as a potential means of reducing HEC. The effectiveness of EPT in controlling HEC (particularly by large species such as elephants) depends on various factors which have not been looked at thus far. This paper describes the effectiveness of EPT in two different geographical landscapes in Tamil Nadu south India. In a total hundred and ten kilometres in Coimbatore Reserve Forest Division (CRFD) and forty four kilometers in Grizzled Giant Squirrel Wildlife Sanctuary (GSWLS) EPT was taken up for this study with the following major objectives such as to record number of wild animals and livestock crossing points, to find out extent of use by wild animals along the EPT and people's perception on EPT. The entire EPT length was walked by foot to record wild animal and livestock crossing points, line transect method was deployed to find out extent of use by wild animals along the EPT and questionnaire method was used to understand people's perception on EPT. The result revealed that there were 242 and 114 locations of wild animal crossing points and 127 and 52 locations of livestock crossing points recorded in the length of 110 km and 44 km length of EPT in CRFD and GSWLS respectively. The depth ranging from 1.5 m to 2.5 meters in CFRD and from 2.5 meters to 3 meters in GSWLS, similarly width varies from 1.5 m to 2.5 meters in CFRD and from 2 m to 3 meters in GSWLS. Due to insufficient direct sightings, indirect evidences were considered