

Research Article

Conservation Without Coexistence: Understanding the Paradox of Human–Leopard Relationships around Bannerghatta National Park, India

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ABSTRACT

Understanding community perspectives on large carnivores is essential for designing effective coexistence strategies in human-wildlife conflict zones. This study examines social attitudes toward leopards among 79 residents of five villages bordering Bannerghatta National Park, India. Semi-structured interviews and quantitative analyses examined how experiences of conflict, institutional support, and compensation influence willingness to coexist. While 72% of respondents supported leopard conservation, only 18% felt coexistence, defined as accepting leopards' regular presence near settlements, was feasible, revealing a coexistence paradox of moral support without spatial tolerance. No significant associations emerged between conflict experience, perceived support, or compensation and willingness to coexist. However, gaps between official mitigation advice and community beliefs, along with low satisfaction with institutional responses, highlight opportunities for improved outreach. These findings emphasise that coexistence requires more than tolerance; practical progress depends on context-specific risk mitigation, community-inclusive governance, and culturally grounded education that can rebuild trust and support long-term conservation outcomes.

Keywords: human-wildlife interactions, coexistence, leopard conservation, community perceptions, Bannerghatta, Karnataka

