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# 2021 saw 2nd highest man-animal conflict toll

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NAGPUR: Year 2021 proved bad from human-animal conflict point of view for tigers, leopards, and humans too. With 7 days to go for the year to end, 81 humans, 41 tigers and 174 leopards have already died this year. The conflict has worsened, admits Maharashtra PCCF (wildlife) Sunil Limaye.

Though as per forest department's claim, 29 tigers and 153 leopards have died this year, according to data compiled by Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI), an NGO working to tackle the country's growing wildlife crisis, the toll in Maharashtra was 41 tigers and 174 leopards.

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The WPSI data also includes the recent cases of poaching in which a large cache of tiger and leopard body parts was seized from at least 80 poachers and accused by forest officials in the region.

This is the second consecutive year when human deaths in wild animal attacks crossed over 80, though it is marginally less compared to 2020 when 88 people had died.



According to state forest department, of the 81 human kills, Chandrapur 44 and neighbouring Gadchiroli 16 accounted for 60 deaths combined. Of the 60 victims, 47 were mauled by tigers and 10 by leopards while 3 were attacked by an elephant and wild boar. Nashik had reported 9 deaths in leopard attacks.

Nagpur also reported 3 fatal attacks by tigers and 1 by a leopard. Two persons had also died in Yavatmal due to tiger attacks. It was not only humans vulnerable to attacks, but tigers and leopards too suffered big casualties as a result of the conflict.

Of the 41 tiger deaths recorded by the WPSI, 20 died due to poaching, 12 were found dead, 2 died in road accidents, and 7 died in infighting. Similarly, of the 174 leopard deaths, 89 were found dead, 26 were due to poaching, 28 died in road and railway accidents, 20 in infighting and the remaining deaths were due to attack by local villagers and killed during rescue operations.

As per the All India Tiger & Leopard Estimation-2018, the tiger numbers in Maharashtra have increased from 190 in 2014 to 312 in 2018 and is around 350 now. Similarly, leopard numbers have increased to 1,690 in the state, which is the third largest in the country. Hence, the conflict will not end unless there is strong enforcement plan to contain it.

“The two-state wildlife board committees have already submitted reports and we are on the job to implement them by creating awareness among the locals by various means. But most importantly, we can mitigate the problem if people maintain restraint by not intruding into the space occupied by big carnivores.”