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"'Man-eaters' in the Media: Representation of Human-leopard Interactions in India Across Local, National, and International Media"

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Interactions between humans and wildlife are frequent in India, requiring stakeholders to devise mitigation strategies that benefit both humans and wildlife. Success of such initiatives can be impacted by stakeholders' perceptions of species and related issues, which may be unduly influenced by the media. This paper explores media representation of Human-Leopard Interactions (HLI) in India, focusing on detecting agenda-setting and framing in articles, and whether these differ with the level of association with HLI. To accomplish this, we coded articles (n=291) from three media-distribution levels with increasing detachment to HLI events: local news, Indian national news, and international news, and compared the types of agenda-setting and framing found across the three. Overall, international media had the most negative portrayal of leopards and HLI, while national had the most balanced. Local and international media included "man-eater" framing in the majority of their stories; whereas stories of leopards as victims were most prominent in local news, and victim framing was most frequent in national. These results suggest that agenda-setting and framing may vary with association with HLI. Despite differences between sources, our findings suggest that all media distributions focused primarily on stories of leopards causing trouble (e.g., attacks and incursions), or in ways viewed as troublesome (e.g. incursions) with few stories of leopards as victims or informational pieces. The largely negative depiction, and differences in representation between geographic locations, could hinder mitigation strategies and policy through presenting stakeholders with incomplete information. (Text from authors' abstract)

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