

Plastic in Elephant dung



Plastic sack in Asian Elephant dung.

Plastic pollution is one of the burning environmental issues. Many studies have been done on the occurrence of plastics in aquatic wildlife (Kurobe et al. 2013; Sigler 2014; Wilcox et al. 2015) but very few literature are available on the occurrence of plastics in terrestrial wildlife. Plastics are consumed by terrestrial animals like cattle, camels, hyenas, zebras, tigers, elephants and others. In many cases the tiny ingested plastics pass out through the digestive tract of animals without causing any harm, but there have also been cases when the plastics have blocked the digestive tract and caused death (Parker 2019).

On 18 April 2018 at 18.16h, a dung pile of Asian Elephant *Elephas maximus* with pieces of plastic sack in it was seen in the Anaikatti Reserve Forest area (11.093°N, 76.784°E). It seemed as if the elephant had eaten something kept in that plastic sack.

The Anaikatti Reserve Forest comes under the Coimbatore Forest Division, a part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It is a tropical thorn and deciduous forest. It lies in an Attapadi-Boluvampatti Elephant Corridor. As elephants have large home ranges, this wildlife corridor is important as it helps them for their movement and interbreeding, thus

helping in gene flow. There are lot of human settlements nearby. These settlements are surrounded by solar fence, thus restricting the free movement of elephants. Moreover, there is Coimbatore-Anaikatti State Highway which hinders their movement. Lots of banana plantations are also seen in this area and this attracts many elephants to come close to human habitation. According to the report of WTI (2017), increase in construction activities has led to the increase in human-wildlife interactions. Thus, there should be strict regulations as with more developmental activities comes more encroachment which then accelerates the issues of negative human-wildlife interactions and plastic pollution.

References

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Ankita Das

Wildlife Institute of India, Chandrabani, Dehradun, Uttarakhand 248002, India. Email: ankitadas22.ad@gmail.com

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