

Human-Elephant Coexistence in Coorg & Erode



Background

The Human-Elephant Coexistence Project is one of the pioneer programs by Zooreach across India and southeastern Asia since 2000. As part of the initiative the team has conducted perception studies, education outreach, and training workshops for various stakeholders across the region.

In 2025, the team played a crucial role in understanding perceptions of people across Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu and Coorg in Karnataka towards elephants, human-elephant interactions, casualties, habitat loss, and other factors affecting coexistence in the landscape. Throughout the fieldwork, in both the locations a wide range of emotions were encountered, including anger, frustration, sadness, fear, and surprise. While many community members recognise the underlying causes of the issue, fostering coexistence requires sustained engagement at the community level and careful consideration of diverse perspectives.

Activities conducted during the reporting period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026

Perception studies conducted focused on understanding human experiences related to elephants and other wildlife, with particular emphasis on identifying zones characterised by high, medium, and low levels of negative interactions. Additionally, we documented incidents involving human casualties and property damage attributed to elephants, along with details of compensation provided by the forest department for crop and plantation losses. The studies were conducted over a period of three months across Coorg (Ponnampet and Virajpet taluks were identified as the primary study areas) and Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (villages in Germalam and Hasanur ranges).

Key achievements and outcomes

- The team conducted 700+ perception studies across both the study areas.
- 50+ villages in Coorg and Sathyamangalam were reached out to.
- The study was inclusive of all stakeholders including, local residents, plantation owners, labourers, panchayat members, farmers, daily wage labourers, school teachers, forest department officials, and students

Challenges faced

- In Coorg, since the coffee estates are huge parcels or land, a lot of the field time goes in to travelling from one place to the other. Additionally, coffee is a labour-intensive industry, thus making it difficult to be able to talk to the workers other than lunch breaks.
- In Sathyamangalam, majority of the people are daily wage labourers and are not in the village throughout the day, leaving the team with a very small window to conduct the studies.

Participant numbers and locations

The study team consisted of six members. Koshik, Sidharth, Sushanth, and Trisa took part





in the perception studies in Coorg; Sidharthan and Trisa conducted the surveys in STR, while Koshik, Nethra, and Yadu helped with translation of all the interviews. Additionally, in Coorg the team was supported by Sumanth Bindumadhav, Vinod Krishnan, Dr. Anupam Thammaiah Chekkera, and Kavan from Humane World for Animals.

Key partnerships and collaborations

The team collaborated with Humane World for Animals for the project activities and Manipal Institute of Technology for knowledge support. The team also worked in communication with Tamil Nadu Forest department.

Acknowledgments

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connect with the forest department, Dr Sanjay Molur for helping in project planning and implementation, and the admin team, Latha and Rajesh for their continued support.

Future plans/next steps

The team at present will continue the study across both the study areas and expand across other surrounding regions. The final goal of the project is to plan outreach in the regions with all the associated stakeholders, to build coexistence in the region and help build a stakeholder-led conservation action plan for elephants you in the region.



Humane World for Animals.

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