

Slippery Bed - An Effective Indigenous Method for Preventing Crop Damage by Elephants in Kerala

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Crop damage by elephants has been a major challenge for elephant conservation in India. Increasing incidences of crop damage has led to innovative mitigating measures to defend crops. There are several mitigating measures that have been tested for their efficacy. Most of the methods are effective in the short term, but have failed against habitual raiding elephants. Normally, selection of the crop protection method would depend on the conflict site and availability of funds. Elephant proof trenches and rubble walls are very expensive and not suitable for high rainfall and loose soil areas (Veeramani *et.al.* 2004). The traditional methods for deterring crop raiding elephants, such as fire and sound making, have generally failed except with animals that are closer to the field (Bell 1984). Slippery bed – an indigenous method made up of tall grass for protecting crops from elephants has been very effective in Anaiyarangal tribal settlement of Devikulam range, Munnar forest division, Kerala.

The Kerala State government had relocated tribals residing inside the forest to the pine plantation around the Anaiyarangal reservoir, a part of the elephant habitat in Munnar forest division. People living in the Anaiyarangal tribal colony have been experiencing human casualty and severe crop raiding by elephants for the past five years. Elephants, moving along the reservoir, used to congregate on the banks of the Anaiyarangal reservoir and finally end up in human habitation and cultivation areas.

To prevent crop damage by elephants, the tribals in the area developed an indigenous technique called slippery beds. Slippery beds were prepared using tall grasses. The cut and dried tall grasses were placed along the slopes of the banks throughout its length without any gap; this made it a very slippery stretch. If anything stepped on the grass, it would make the animal stumble or slip. All along the reservoir banks

they have used the slippery beds to prevent elephant entry into human habitation. This indigenous technique has worked effectively and has reduced human elephant conflict considerably in Anaiyarangal. These slippery beds could be used to reduce human elephant conflict in other areas, having similar kind of site and problem.

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