

IITGN student offers solution to reduce man-animal conflict

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HUMAN-ANIMAL conflict has become a critical issue at the Gir National Park and Sanctuary of Gujarat which constitutes the only landscape where the endangered Asiatic lions are now found and are conserved in the world. With an idea to contribute to the conservation of the endangered species, a final year BTech student of the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGN) plans to aid the issue by giving a technological intervention to improve the water supply arrangement at the watering holes which in turn will help minimize the conflict.

The study flagged off by Rushabh Desadla will involve change in the design of the water points and changes in the material used. It will also look at the system of water supply to these water points and suggest improvements for more efficient utilization of water.

Desadla whose interest was sparked in the conservation efforts after a group of students from IITGN recently visited Gir as part of their winter internship project is supported by the institute, forest department and guided by its faculty for the



Left: A lioness which entered a village in Dhari and hunted calves on Sunday; above: Rushabh Desadla. PTI

study. Desadla said, "One of the major reasons of man-animal conflict during the dry season is the source of water. As water becomes scarce, man and wild animals start depending on the common water sources which have not dried. This puts them in a situation of mutual conflict. It is important to design these water sources in such a way that they are user-friendly for maximum number of species of animals, birds and reptiles. The water supply system should be such that the process doesn't disturb the animals as well as water is properly utilised. The use of solar pumps and wind mills for using local ground water will be examined."

Principal Chief Conservator

of Forests (Wildlife) and the Chief Wildlife Warden of Gujarat Kuldeep Goel said, "As the habitat of these majestic animals lie in the dry and drought prone regions of the state, it is a huge effort for the forest department to arrange for drinking water for the wild animals. In Gir and its surrounding areas, the forest department has made around 500 artificial water points which have to be regularly filled. The efficient design and management of these water points is a key requirement for animals and birds during the dry season."

As per a census carried out in 2015, the population of Asiatic lions in the wild had grown from 177 in 1968 to 523 in 2015.

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