



Conflict in the
backyard

Down To Earth

Conflict in the backyard

Himanshu Nitnaware with Bhagirath in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, Raju Sajwan in Uttarakhand, K A Shaji in Kerala and Karnataka, Mayur Bargaje in Maharashtra, Madhav Sharma in Rajasthan, Rohit Prashar in Himachal Pradesh, Jayanta Basu in West Bengal, Hrushikesh Mohanty in Odisha, Niraj Sinha in Jharkhand, Satyam Kumar in Bihar, and Deepanwita Gita Niyogi and Aliya Bashir in Jammu and Kashmir



Conflict in the backyard

❖ **A nationwide agrarian crisis**

- Across more than a dozen states covered in our reportage, farmers describe a common reality: recurring crop losses, falling incomes, rising indebtedness and growing uncertainty about the future of farming.
- It is not one, but at least 14 species of wild animals including **peacock, nilgai, deer, wild boar, birds, monkeys and cows** among others that forage on the crops causing heavy damages to farmers. Damages are across seasonality, timing and at times multiple species raiding the same farm at different times of the day.
- The situation is worsening by the day and the damages incurred due to wildlife is the **third largest challenge** to the farmers followed by extreme weather events and lower prices of agricultural produce.

❖ **Wildlife dictates what farmers grow**

Farmers in Bihar, Odisha, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh are abandoning high-value crops and shifting to less profitable alternatives because repeated wildlife raids have made cultivation economically risky.

❖ **Crop losses becoming unsustainable**

Farmers in Madhya Pradesh report losses of **40 per cent or more** depending on the species involved. Large herds of nilgai and deer can flatten **up to four hectares of standing crop within half an hour**.

Conflict in the backyard

- ❖ **Unbearable economic loss**

Annual agricultural losses in Maharashtra at **₹10,000-40,000 crore**

- ❖ **Shrinking India's cultivated landscape**

The Maharashtra survey revealed:

62% of farmers reduced cultivated area

54% abandoned at least one high-value crop

- ❖ **Abandoning agriculture**

Impacting psychologically: In Odisha's Ganjam district, frequent wild boar attacks forced farmers in several villages to collectively declare a “**crop holiday**”.

- ❖ **Contributing to rural migration**

In Uttarakhand wildlife damage accounts for **5.61% of migration cases** as per Uttarakhand Rural Development and Migration Prevention Commission. While in Chhatarpur district of Madhya Pradesh in **80 per cent of households**, at least one member has migrated.

Conflict in the backyard

- ❖ **A human safety issue**

 - Karnataka alone recorded more than 35,500 conflict incidents in a year

 - **35,500+ wildlife conflict incidents in 2024-25**
 - Nearly **22,000 incidents involving elephants**

- ❖ **Leopard attacks are becoming more frequent and more visible**

 - In Maharashtra's Junnar-Narayangaon landscape:

 - **768 leopard attacks recorded over the past 25 years**
 - Human attacks spiked from **1 case in 2021-22 to 9 cases in 2024-25**

- ❖ **Increasing presence in human-dominated landscapes**

 - A 2026 Uttarakhand state survey noted **57% of wild animals now live near human settlements rather than core forests areas**

Conflict in the backyard

- ❖ **Traditional deterrents are failing**

Bells, firecrackers, crude bombs and noise-based systems no longer reliably deter wildlife.

- ❖ **Changing animal behaviour**

- **Loss of fear**

- **Climate change: In Jammu and Kashmir, warmer winters are believed to be disrupting bear hibernation cycles. Between 2023 and 2025, Asiatic black bears were allegedly linked to:**

- **67 deaths**
- **940 injuries**

- ❖ **Compensation systems inadequate**

The Maharashtra study found that only **25% of affected farmers sought compensation**, but **1-2% received payments commensurate with actual losses**.

Conflict in the backyard

- ❖ **The Union government takes note**

From the 2026 kharif season, animal-related crop losses have been brought under the **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana**, with drone-based verification proposed for claims assessment.

- ❖ **States are seeking mitigation tools**

In 2016: Uttarakhand and Maharashtra for wild boar, Himachal Pradesh for rhesus macaques, Gujarat for nilgai. Kerala in 2025 appealed the Union government to declare wild boar as vermin.

- ❖ **Wildlife protection alone insufficient**

Need for central policy for scientific and well-calibrated culling to restore avoidance behaviour towards humans.