Human-Crocodile conflicts in Andaman and Nicobar Islands - a case study

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The Andaman and Nicobar Islands comprises of 572 islands, islets and rocky outcrops and is located between 06° and 14° N Latitudes and 92° and 94° E Longitudes in the Bay of Bengal. The archipelago has a total land area of 8293 km² and a coastline of 1962 km. The Saltwater Crocodile Crocodylus porosus (Schneider) is a common species throughout the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It can be encountered in the open sea, near the shore, mangrove creeks, freshwater rivers and swamps. Human-crocodile conflicts have been reported since early 1970s in these islands. About 26 crocodile attacks including 8 casualties have been reported between 1986 till date in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Recently, two people were killed at the famous Radha Nagar Beach in Havelock and Bakultala in Middle Andaman. The Department of Environment and Forests captured both the problem crocodiles and released into the mini zoo at Port Blair. In such a situation, removal of the problem crocodile might provide a temporary fix, but another male will eventually dominate the creek and may again be a threat to local people and tourists. Possible reasons for crocodile attack on humans include defending individual territories, attractive food-sources such as livestock and other domestic animals and dumping of high-protein waste food materials on banks or beach areas. Proper management of the crocodile populations to reduce human - crocodile conflicts include training field staff in field survey techniques and capturing crocodiles, creation of awareness among local people and tourists by providing brochures, pamphlets, posters, through newspaper write ups on crocodile biology, behavior, ecology and organizing awareness workshops. The indigenous methods developed for capturing these crocodiles are discussed in detail in this paper.