PRIMATE OVERPOPULATION

SOLUTIONS AND MANAGEMENT



My life is in your hands!

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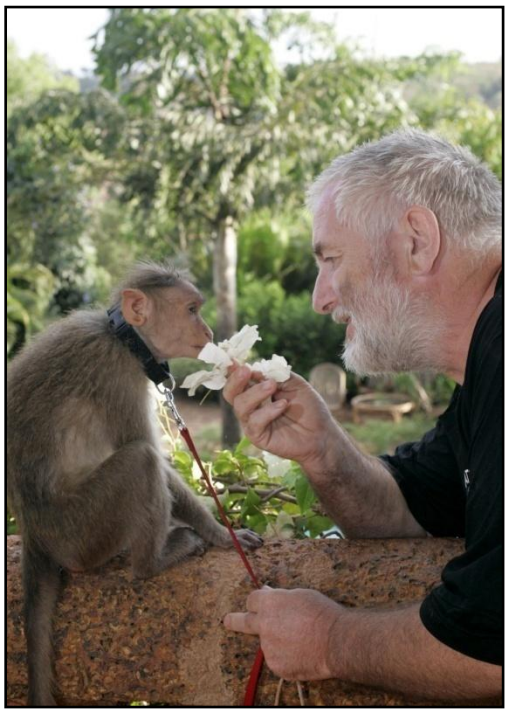
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MONKEYS IN CRISIS

Monkeys in India are in crisis. Buildings have replaced trees; cement has covered their grasslands. Loss of habitat has removed their natural food, forcing them to forage among city garbage. In cities, people consider they are an ever increasing public nuisance.

I am writing because this crisis is worsened by current government initiatives to remove the monkeys. This strategy, known as "relocation," temporarily reduces their numbers until others move in but ultimately it kills the monkeys.

Monkeys cannot survive relocation. Another humane solution is possible.



The author with a rescued Bonnet Macaque.

My name is John Hicks, and I have over 40 years' hands on experience at handling animal related problems in many countries including Malta and Mauritius where the Governments came to me for assistance. My work with animals has been recognized by the Animal Welfare Board of India and I am now a co-opted member of that esteemed Government body. The Chairman of the AWBI, Dr.R.M.Kharb Maj. Gen.(Rtd.) AVSM has evaluated my work with monkeys and holds my expertise in high regard.

I am the Founder of International Animal Rescue, International Animal Rescue Goa, The Primate Trust and the Primate Trust India.

I wish to highlight the proven solution to the problem of urban over-population of monkeys.

In order for you to understand why **relocation is always a failure, and surgical sterilization (birth control) is successful** I describe below facts about monkeys which are essential to understand if we are to provide a humane and effective solution to the problem.

BACKGROUND: MONKEY FACTS EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

There is such a degree of ignorance amongst those that deal with monkeys on a day-to-day basis that I have been nothing short of astounded. All too often the very people one would associate with caring for these highly intelligent creatures are the individuals and institutions who inflict terrible suffering on them.

Dealing with monkeys is highly complex but with a little common sense and logic all the problems can be overcome without horrendous cruelty.

The three species that cause most of the problems are the Langur, the Rhesus Macaque and the Bonnet Macaque.



Rhesus Macaques will quickly exploit any opportunity.

All three species are in conflict with humans due to the destruction of their habitat. Probably the species that cause the biggest problem is the **Rhesus Macaque.** These are highly intelligent opportunists that are always keen to exploit any situation. For this reason they have become fully at home in towns and cities and cause billions of rupees worth of damage each year. They can become very aggressive if cornered or attacked and are potentially dangerous in such situations.

The **Bonnet Macaque** does not cause damage on the scale of the Rhesus Macaque and has not become so well adapted to urban life. They are also much less aggressive but there is no doubt that they inflict considerable damage to trees, crops and buildings.



Bonnet Macaques tend to be less destructive than Rhesus Macaques.

The **Langur** is the largest of the three and are basically tree dwellers. They come into conflict with humans mainly due to the damage they do to crops and they are renowned for breaking roof tiles due to their size and weight.

Certainly there are rare occasions when an individual troop member becomes extremely aggressive and dangerous to humans. These animals are nearly always Rhesus Macaques. In these circumstances the individual responsible should be caught and humanly euthanized as relocating it will simply lead to its death and keeping it in captivity is worse than death as it will live its life in fear and misery.

It is important to have some very basic knowledge of each of these species.

THE BASICS

Monkeys are in conflict with humans due to the destruction of their habitat. Resolving this conflict requires our understanding of what monkeys need.

Probably the most important fundamental fact is that monkeys live in social groups, called "troops" and an understanding of what that means is crucial in resolving population problems and ensuring efficient, effective and humane primate management.

The troop is at the very heart of monkey society. It is a highly complex structured organisation that has a leader known as the Alpha Male and he is supported by the rest of the troop in an ever-changing world of political manoeuvring. All the monkeys in the troop basically try to enhance their standing within the troop by playing up to the Alpha Male, whilst at the same time doing all they can to ensure others lose favour with the Alpha Male. The whole system reflects the human political systems around the world perfectly!



A rescued monkey shows his potential to maim and kill.

Just like us, they have their territory or as we would put it, their country and as with humans their territory/country is defended to the death. **A state of constant warfare exists on all their borders and fights between troops are savage leading to many deaths and serious injuries.** This is a vital factor for everyone to take account of. It therefore is obvious that **by relocating monkeys into the territory of existing troops it has to lead to territorial fights that result in the death of those "relocated" and serious injury or even death to members of the resident troop.**

Another important aspect of this close society is the **bond** that exists between the troop members. This bond reflects the close bond of human families and friends and the loss of a close troop member can be as devastating to them as a loss of one of our friends or family members.



The bond between troop members is close and important.

Likewise **to remove a member from the troop causes just the same dreadful mental anxiety, pain, stress and suffering as any human would endure**. In fact it is probably worse as they cannot understand what has caused such a terrifying thing to happen to them. Certainly the bond between mother and baby is every bit as strong for monkeys as it is with humans.



The bond between mother and baby is obvious for all to see.

There is no doubt that every aspect of human life is reflected perfectly in monkey society and their intelligence means that they have the capacity to suffer more than other animals.

RESOLVING THE CONFLICT

The problem of human over-population will mean that monkeys suffer, but **we can and must reduce their suffering.**

Cruel and barbaric control methods are inexcusable.

The cruellest of these are trapping of individuals or small groups and relocating them in another monkey's territory. This not only causes the relocated individuals terrible mental suffering but will almost for certain end in their death due to attacks from the resident monkeys.

A fate worse than death is when they are put in small cages with no environmental enrichment for mental stimulation and just basically left to exist or die in misery.



This monkey was left in this empty Forestry Department cage for more than a year. It ended up eating its own flesh out of boredom.

THE HUMANE BREAKTHROUGH:

Himachal Pradesh Forest Department Has The Answer!

If ever there was a project the Government of India should wholeheartedly support and be proud of this is it!

Thankfully there has been some amazing work carried out by the Wildlife Wing of the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department that could, and should, have a major impact on the control of monkeys throughout India.

Having heard of this potentially innovative work I felt it essential that I should personally access and evaluate the project for myself. I arranged a visit to Shimla to meet Dr Sandeep Rattan, who along with Dr Sushil Sood, was largely responsible for the project.

My expectations were low as every other project I have encountered regarding monkey control in India has proven to be ill thought-out and doomed to end in disaster (at least for the monkeys). How wrong I was. **Never have I seen a project so well planned, organised and engineered as this one.** Every little detail had been considered and the smooth handling of every aspect of project ensured that the monkeys suffered the minimum of stress.

I was simply amazed when I saw a female monkey sterilized in just one and a half minutes and that a male vasectomy took about the same time.[1] It is easily possible for one small team to efficiently sterilize at least 60 monkeys in a day![1]



Dr.Rattan operates on a female Rhesus Macaque.

[1] The correct terms for the sterilization being carried out is:- males: Llaser vasectomy or Electrothermal Vasectomy. females:- Endoscopic Electrothermal Tubectomy.

Basically the whole operation is run along these lines: - a large trap is set up and the monkeys are fed in the trap for a few days before the trap is sprung. Literally it is possible to trap a whole troop in one go although this is not always achieved and a few troop members may escape. As soon as the trap is sprung a cage is slotted onto a hatch door in the trap and the drop door opened and one or two monkeys dash into the cage in the vein attempt to escape. The cage is then immediately lifted up and put on a lorry and another cage is put in place. This continues until the whole troop is loaded - 60 monkeys can be loaded onto the lorry in less than an hour.

Once on the lorry the monkeys are covered to reduce stress during the journey to the animal hospital. At the hospital the cages are unloaded and as they come off the lorry they are slid onto a hatch door so when the door is opened the monkeys dash out. They enter a row of cages with drop doors dividing them and the monkeys run through until stopped by a drop door and then another drop door is closed behind them which then means the next monkey can be unloaded. The system is simplicity itself and the important thing is that it means the monkeys are not handled by people at all and so the stress is minimised.

When all the monkeys are unloaded they are given a quick veterinary check to ensure there are no injured or sick monkeys. They are provided with water and then the door to the room is closed and the monkeys are left undisturbed so they can settle down overnight.

The next morning the monkeys are sterilised and again **the system is smooth, efficient and professional.** The monkey in the first pen has a door opened so it runs through into a crush cage where it is given an injection to anesthetise it. Whilst waiting for the injection to take effect it passes into another cage to permit the next monkey to be injected and so on.

Once unconscious they are shaved and prepared and then placed on the operating table. The vet makes a very small incision into the abdomen of the female monkeys and then a small rod about the size of a knitting needle is pushed in. Through this rod gas is pumped in to inflate the abdomen and then a miniature TV camera permits the vet to carry out the sterilisation process. The rod is then removed and the monkey is put into the recovery room which is identical in every way to the pens into which they were first put. Male vasectomies are carried out in much the same way but obviously without the need to enter the abdomen.

After two days to recover the monkeys are loaded back onto the lorry and returned to the area where they were caught. Any troop members that were not caught will still be nearby and the relief of seeing their troop members back is a cause for huge relief.



The operation is quick and humane.

So far this innovative system has only been used on Rhesus Macaques but it would be equally effective with Bonnet Macaques. Langurs may be more difficult to trap and some research needs to be carried out with this species to find the best method of catching troops; the main problem being that they are mainly tree dwellers.

The dog sterilization project known as ABC and subsidized by the Animal Welfare Board of India has been hugely successful. This is not only in terms of numbers sterilized, but also due to visual public awareness because people in the areas where it is carried out can see immediately that the animal has been sterilized by the chip taken out of the ear. Therefore they can see the situation is being brought under control and concerns of ever increasing problems are overcome.

This same approach is vital when it comes to the sterilization of monkeys - the public need to see for themselves that the monkeys in their area have been sterilized and therefore know the situation will year on year get better, not worse. All the monkeys sterilized are clearly freeze branded for this very reason and to ensure time and money is not wasted trying to sterilize monkeys previously operated on.

RELOCATION

The above term generally sickens me and fills me with horror. Under the guise of 'relocation' horrendous suffering is inflicted on animals that have every bit as much ability to suffer both mentally and physically as humans. Unless you have had extensive hands-on, one to one experience in handling these wonderful creatures it is difficult to appreciate just how sensitive and intelligent they are. Dealing with these highly intelligent animals is rather like dealing with young children. They may not be as sophisticated and well developed as we are but their ability to experience pain, fear, anxiety and stress is every bit as developed as in any human child.

"Relocation Projects" into other monkey's territory never work. There is no research that supports their efficacy. Period

In reality "relocation" is simply dumping of animals in another location without any thought or concern as to the welfare of the animals involved.

The suffering caused by these ill-conceived projects is beyond my ability to describe. I know all too well the amount of suffering that these poor creatures are forced to endure. On the whole it is basically a way of killing monkeys without having the honesty to admit to it.



Monkeys are bright, intelligent and deserve to be treated with respect and decency.

Let's work together to protect these wonderful creatures!

IN CONCLUSION

I appeal to the Government of India and to all Chief Ministers to put an immediate stop to all these so-called relocation projects, unless researchers can document a method which ensures the survival over one year of the relocated troop and the primates whose habitat the relocated monkeys invade.

I suggest such information will never be provided because it cannot.

Shifting monkey troops goes against their nature. Shifting results in massive deaths. Putting the monkeys in situations where their death is inevitable though not immediate is tantamount to killing them.

Let us celebrate and replicate throughout India the outstanding work currently performed in Himachal Pradesh. There is simply no good reason to ignore it, and thousands upon thousands of vulnerable lives are in our hands.

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