



Corridors of death

Elephants are victims of train collisions and electric fences in rising man-animal conflicts.

Elephants collisions:

Elephant deaths in railway accidents are not new in India. The Reasons other than natural causes has led to the killing of 1,160 elephants over 11 years ending December 2020; 741 deaths were due to electrocution; railway accidents accounted for 186 cases; poaching 169 and poisoning 64.

Big loss

Figures provided by the Union Environment and Forest Ministry on the deaths of elephants across the country

Cause of death	No. of elephants killed*
Electrocution	741
Train hits	186
Poaching	169
Poisoning	64
Total	1,160

(*2009-10 to December 31, 2020)



Death on the tracks: The carcass of one of the two tuskers run over by a train at Moinajan in Kamrup (Metro) district of Assam on Wednesday. Local people say the elephants entered the village to feed on paddy. ■ RITU RAJ KONWAR

Solutions:

1. There are effective solutions in the case of two causes: electrocution and train hits. Installing hanging solar-powered fences, as has been planned in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and planting citronella and lemongrass to deter elephants are some of the large-scale options.
2. The authorities should ensure that there are no illegal electric fences or barbed wire fences, which, instead, can be replaced with solar-powered ones.



- Needless to say, the participation of local communities is crucial. The critical role elephants play in biodiversity conservation must be highlighted, especially to those living in areas close to elephant corridors.
- The Environment Ministry and Ministry of Railways should also expedite proposals for elevated wildlife crossings or eco-bridges and underpasses for the safe passage of animals.
- A finding of the C&AG was that after the construction of underpasses and overpasses in the areas under the jurisdiction of East Central and Northeast Frontier Railways, there was no death reported.
- The authorities should also expedite other recommendations made by the C&AG such as a periodic review of the identification of elephant passages, more sensitisation programmes for railway staff, standardisation of track signage, installation of an animal detection system (transmitter collars) and 'honey bee' sound-emitting devices near all identified elephant passages.

Jumbo in India:

- The Ministry said in the document that India had a total of 29,964 wild elephants as per an estimate done in 2017.
- The southern region comprising Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra accounted for the highest population – 14,612 elephants.

Mammoth count

Table lists State-wise population estimates of elephants as per census conducted during 2017



State	Count	State	Count
Karnataka	6,049	Uttar Pradesh	232
Assam	5,719	Tripura	102
Kerala	5,706	Andhra Pradesh	65
Tamil Nadu	2,761	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	25
Odisha	1,976	Bihar	25
Uttarakhand	1,839	Manipur	9
Meghalaya	1,754	Mizoram	7
Arunachal Pradesh	1,614	Madhya Pradesh	7
W.B. (north+south)	682	Haryana	7
Jharkhand	679	Himachal Pradesh	7
Nagaland	446	Maharashtra	6
Chhattisgarh	247		