

AI cameras to be installed at 90 conflict points across T.N.'s Gudalur forest division to curb human-elephant conflict

Officials said this would be the first landscape-wide monitoring and surveillance effort that will be put in place to mitigate negative interactions between humans and wild animals in India

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A small herd of elephants grazing near the roadside on the Gudalur - Mysore national highway. File photograph | Photo Credit: SATHYAMOORTHY M

The Gudalur forest division plans to install Artificial Intelligence (AI) cameras across the division at 90 “conflict points,” where there is a high occurrence of interactions between humans and elephants. Once installed, the system, which is an evolution and upgradation of **the existing early warning system in the division**, is expected to bring down the number of negative interactions between humans and wildlife across the landscape.

The Gudalur landscape, an important elephant corridor that connects the elephant habitats of Wayanad and Mudumalai is “elephant-dominated,” where barriers that have been traditionally used to impede elephant movement could prove counterproductive in the long-run, said Vengatesh Prabhu, Divisional Forest Officer (Gudalur).

Mr. Prabhu said that structures installed in other landscapes to prevent elephants entering human habitations such as hanging solar fences and elephant trenches would sever the movement of elephants between the landscapes, and as a result, other systems to curb negative human-elephant interactions in the Gudalur region were necessary.

The AI cameras are to be installed at 90 different conflict points across the division, where elephants are known to venture out from the forests and into human habitations. The cameras, which Mr. Prabhu hopes will also be fitted with thermal sensors, will use Artificial Intelligence (AI) software to pick up on the movement of elephants that stray too close to human settlements and send out alerts to local residents as well as to the Forest Department’s Command and Control Center which is to come up at **the Gene Pool in Nadugani**.

 A Flourish hierarchy chart

Forest Department field staff will be notified through the centre and can drive the animals back into the wild if necessary, officials said.

Officials said that this would be the first landscape-wide monitoring and surveillance effort that will be put in place to mitigate **negative interactions between humans and wildlife in India**.

The Forest Department is holding talks with potential suppliers of cameras, with tenders to procure the cameras to be floated once the Model Code of Conduct restrictions are lifted.

It is hoped that the systems will become fully functional during the second half of 2024. Based on the success of the system, more cameras, as well as the areas covered by the systems can be expanded. It is hoped that by preventing negative interactions between humans and people in Gudalur, elephants too can be better protected from retaliation by human communities at loggerheads with the animals.