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Global carnivore conservation at risk, new report shows

Date: April 4, 2016
Source: Helsingin yliopisto (University of Helsinki)
Summary: Shrinking habitat and increased conflict are projected in regions critical to survival of threatened apex predators, a new report shows. Carnivores include some of the most iconic species that help generate funding for biodiversity conservation and deliver important benefits to humans. Protecting carnivores will conserve many other bird, amphibian, reptile and mammal species that live in priority areas for carnivore conservation.
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Shrinking habitat, increased conflict projected in regions critical to survival of threatened apex predators.

A new study confirms that the global conservation of carnivores is at risk. Published in *Scientific Reports*, the report models future global land conversion and estimates this will lead to significant range loss and conflict with local people in regions critical for the survival of already threatened carnivore species.

Organized by researchers from the University of Helsinki in collaboration with an international team of conservation and land use change scientists the study concludes that immediate action is needed to prevent habitat loss and conflict with humans in priority areas for carnivore conservation.

Lead author Dr. Enrico Di Minin of University of Helsinki explained, "We assessed how expected land use change will affect priority areas for carnivore conservation in the future. The analysis revealed that carnivores will suffer considerable range losses in the future. Worryingly, it seems that the most important areas for carnivore conservation are located in areas where human-carnivore conflicts are likely to be most severe."

Di Minin continued, "Presently, South American, African, and South East Asian countries, as well as India, were found to contribute mostly to carnivore conservation. While some of the most charismatic species, such as the tiger and giant panda were found to be at high risk under future land use change, smaller, less charismatic species, with small ranges were found to be equally threatened by habitat loss."

Carnivores include some of the most iconic species that help generate funding for biodiversity conservation and deliver important benefits to humans. Protecting carnivores will conserve many other bird, amphibian, reptile and mammal species that live in priority areas for carnivore conservation.

Dr. Luke Hunter, President and Chief Conservation Officer of Panthera, the global wild cat conservation organization, and a co-author of the paper shared, "Carnivores like big cats have been squeezed out of their ranges at alarming rates for decades now, and we can now see that habitat loss and its shock waves on wildlife are only on the rise. In order to protect our planet's landscape guardians, a far greater financial investment from the international community is needed for range-wide conservation approaches, both within and outside of protected areas where carnivores roam."

Professor Rob Slotow from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, another co-author in the paper, in South Africa emphasizes that reducing conflict with humans outside of protected areas is pivotal. "Most priorities for carnivore conservation are in areas in the global south where human populations are increasing in size, agriculture is intensifying, and human development needs are the highest. There is need to implement conservation strategies that promote tolerance for carnivores outside protected areas and focus on the benefits that people derive from these species."

Story Source:

The above post is reprinted from materials provided by **Helsingin yliopisto (University of Helsinki)**. *Note: Materials may be edited for content and length.*

Journal Reference:

1. Enrico Di Minin, Rob Slotow, Luke T. B. Hunter, Federico Montesino Pouzols, Tuuli Toivonen, Peter H. Verburg, Nigel Leader-Williams, Lisanne Petracca, Atte Moilanen. **Global priorities for national carnivore conservation under land use change.** *Scientific Reports*, 2016; 6: 23814 DOI: 10.1038/srep23814

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