



USING CAMERA TRAPS MORE ETHICALLY IN WILDLIFE RESEARCH

Focus: GS-III Environment and Ecology, GS-IV Ethics

Introduction

- The question of ethicality in use of camera traps is – what is to be done when the cameras unintentionally capture images of people – local villagers or even suspected poachers?
- A new paper published by an international team of researchers notes that the privacy of people photographed needs to be respected and lays out seven basic principles, “a blend of ethical and pragmatic good practices,” to be followed.

How this question came about?

- The study team has been conducting camera trap-based studies of snow leopards in several countries such as Mongolia, India, China and the Kyrgyz Republic.
- Some of them had recorded people with guns, trespassers, and even a possible hunting party.
- On one hand, camera traps can be used as an important tool to detect illegal movement.
- But doubts are raised if the people have been informed enough.

Arguments for saying it is unethical:

- It is not ethically correct to quietly sneak out using these cameras and catch the people by surprise; because ultimately it is the local people who are the partners in the forefront of the battle to conserve the habitats and the wildlife.
- It is important to put out a notice in the surrounding local communities – like “This area



is under CCTV Surveillance.”

- The local communities need to be empowered and well informed of these practices.
- However - Researchers also have public responsibility that it is important to report illegal activity.

-Source: The Hindu

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