

# Human-King Cobra Conflict Mitigation Project 2017

## Agumbe, Karnataka State, South India

Agumbe Rainforest Research Station (ARRS) is one of India's longest running wildlife research and conservation field stations located amidst rainforests of the Western Ghats of Karnataka. Agumbe region has long been considered to be a hotspot of Human-King Cobra conflict. Indeed, it is one of UNESCO's Biodiversity Hotspots with a dense human population. ARRS, as part of its outreach and conservation program regularly rescues stranded or injured King Cobras from within people's homes and rehabilitates them. The method for this has been improved over the last decade and is different from what most rescuers in the region (or around India) follow. We try to see if the snake can move out on its own, and wait on the spot till it does and follow it till it has moved away from human premises. We talk to people, sometimes spending the day at the spot creating awareness about the importance of King Cobras in the environment and the need to try and co-exist with them. In case rescue of the snake is inevitable, we ensure minimum physical handling of the snake through our expert snake handlers and always ensure that the snake is released as close to the rescue spot as possible to ensure minimum disruption to their home range. This is always done with the written consent of the people around the place. This protocol has ensured that over the past decade, the Forest Department and the local people have trusted ARRS to be the point of contact to resolve instances of human-king cobra conflict.

ARRS realizes the importance of creating awareness on a regular basis apart from on-site conflict interactions with people. Hence we conduct workshops on snake ecology, environmental importance, responsible handling etc. periodically for the Forest Department, schools and colleges, local snake rescuers, village community and civil society groups.

### Snake rescues for the period September 2015-September 2016 within a 40 mile radius of ARRS

Rescue calls for	Rescued	Visit and monitored	Total
King cobra	82	26	108
Spectacled cobra	59	4	63
Rat snake	7	-	7
Python	5	-	5
Trinket snake	2	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>185</b>

**Awareness programs conducted on human-king cobra conflict in the region over the past year**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Target audience</b>	<b>Strength</b>
28-10-15	LTM Nature camp, Gerusoppa, Honnavar taluk.	Msc students and forest department officials	110
01-11-15	At ARRS, Agumbe	Karnataka Forest Department	70
01-11-15	At ARRS, Agumbe	BSc and Msc Students	60
02-12-15	“World Wildlife Conservation Day” Amvasebailu, Kundapura taluk	High school students including locals and FD	100
05-12-15	Bommalapura, Koppa taluk	High school students	118
07-12-15	Forest department check post, Agumbe	Karnataka Forest Department	130
13-01-16	Hebri nature camp, Hebri	High school students and forest department officials	50
23-01-16	Hebri nature camp, Hebri	High school students and forest department officials	60
31-01-16	At ARRS, Agumbe	Professional snake rescuers from 7 district of western ghats	27
03-03-16	On the occasion of “World Wildlife Day”	High school students including locals and FD	70
06-04-16	Hosagadde school, Hosagadde (King cobra pair onsite visit)	Primary school students	17
03-05-16	Hebri nature camp, Hebri	High school students, teachers and forest department officials	50
09-05-16	Jogigundi waterfall, Agumbe (Anti-Plastic drive program)	Locals and visitors	15
16-07-16	Nemmar high school, Chikkamagluru district. “World Snake Day”	High school students and teachers	155
08-08-16	SPPS narve high school, Koppa taluk, Chikkamagluru district.	High school students	170
06-09-16	Hosaagrahara, Thirthahalli taluk, Shimoga district.	Local community	200
20-09-16	Agumbe grama panchayat	Grampanchayat, members.	10
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1407</b>

In 2017, we aim to expand our program from the Agumbe region and train people in all the seven Districts of the King Cobra geographical range in Karnataka State here in South India. Permission from the State Wildlife Authorities has just been issue for the seven Districts. Since we collect no money from local people for rescues, we need funds for salaries, food, local travel and maintenance of equipment. Funds are also needed for printing of educational material and running of the field station. Hence the following is the budget requested for the year 2017:

**Budget requested for human-king cobra conflict mitigation, 2017:**

No.	Account Head for year 2017	Amount (USD)	Amount (INR @65 INR/USD)
1	Workshops and training sessions	1200	78000
2	Equipment maintenance at ARRS	800	52000
3	Educational material design and print	1600	104000
4	Running costs (local travel and food)	1200	78000
5	Medical costs (antivenom)	200	13000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5000</b>	<b>325000</b>

A full project report will be sent at the end of 2017 with details on impacts and successes along with the plan for 2018. This grant will be crucial in continuing the program and spreading it to the other parts of the King Cobra range in the hilly areas called the Western Ghats of Karnataka.

**Some pictures of Ajay, lead rescue officer at ARRS and Rom Whitaker, founder, ARRS, in rescues and awareness programs**



**Inside the cowshed of a villager in Agumbe and bagging a king on the roof**



**Inside kitchen of a home with 3 young children**



**Awareness program in a high school**



**Awareness program with Wildlife Protection Staff**





**Onsite awareness at the spot of King Cobra male combat**



**Rom at an interactive session with Agumbe school children**



**Ajay gently removes a king from an odd hiding place**



**Kings often get into people's houses for coolness and in search of rat snakes**