Nepal Snake Festival

Promoting Co-existence between Humans and Snakes

&

International Snakebite Awareness Day Celebration

(September 17-19)



An Update Submitted By Kamal Devkota

Nepal Snake Festival

Snakebite is one of the common life-threatening public health problems in Nepal. About 26 districts of the tropical lowland are at high risk to venomous snakebite (Shah et al. 2003) affecting around 20,000 people causing 1,000 deaths per annum in Nepal (WHO 1987). But a recent study shows that it affects approximately about 40,000 people causing around 3,000 deaths annually (Alcoba et al., 2022). More than 84 snake species are recorded from Nepal including up to 21 venomous among which 18 species are known to be medically important (Shrestha 2001; Schleich and Kastle 2002; Shah and Tiwari 2004; Kästle et al., 2013; Sharma et al., 2013). Most of the people dislike/fear and/or want to kill any snakes they encounter (Magar et al., 2013; Pandey et al., 2016). It has been found that most of these incidents are due to lack of awareness about snakes and snakebites. As snakebite is preventable and treatable, if some basic things related to snakes and snakebites could be understood or explained, perhaps the lives of many people who died could have been saved. To mitigate human-snake conflicts in communities, we conceptualized the educational initiatives by promoting co-existence between human and snakes.

The Nepal Snake Festival (NSFest) was initiated with the aims and objectives to conduct the various awareness programs regarding biodiversity conservation primarily focusing on species of snakes, human-snake conflicts mitigation, snake conservation and snakebite management in Nepal. Most of the team members of Nepal Snake Festival have decades of experiences with the expertise on snakes and snakebites. Our team has conducted numerous awareness and outreach programs, capacity building training, workshops and interaction programs in various districts of Nepal. Our major programs are "Save The Lives", "Theatre in Education", "Save Snakes Save Nature", "Human-Snake Co-existence", "Save The King", "I Speak for Snake Conservation, and You?", "Rescue and Relocation" etc.

The Nepal Snake Festival team is a group of young, enthusiastic and dedicated snake conservationists and snakebite expert's team of Nepal. The NSFest was planned after having long experiences in this field to keep working together consistently. We have organized the second edition of Nepal Snake Festival on the occasion of International Snakebite Awareness Day in Shankarnagar Banbihar and Research Centre (Banbatika), Tilottama, Rupandehi district from 17th - 19th September 2024 with the slogan "Promoting Co-existence between Humans and Snakes".

The festival was featured by other allied events such as Various Awareness Stalls, Educational Documentary Shows, Face Painting, Cultural Dance Show, Drama Show, Museum Specimen of

Snakes Display, Professional Snake Handling Methods, Puja Chanting of Snake Handling Equipment, Interviews, Poster Presentation, Herping etc. Approximately, 5,000 visitors have visited and gained the knowledge from the festival.

This was probably the first of its kind in Nepal that we have organized the snake festival from which hundreds of people benefited which definitely may help to make a positive change in people's perception towards snakes and overall biodiversity. We believe that this program has a potential to create connections with our visitors/audiences and are powerful medium that can create awareness at a national level.

Aims to Celebrate Nepal Snake Festival:

Snakes have various importances such as ecological importance, medical importance, religious and cultural importance etc., therefore snakes are considered as farmer's friend and life saver. We are going to celebrate the Nepal Snake Festival every year with the aim of explaining these different importances of snakes and introducing our religious culture with scientific facts to the entire world.

We had celebrated the Nepal Snake Festival and International Snakebite Awareness Day to raise public awareness about how to avoid snakebite, recommended first aid for snakebite, dos/don'ts when bitten by a snake, symptoms of snakebite, species of snakes, misconceptions about snakes and snakebite, human-snake conflict mitigation, importance of snake conservation in biodiversity, how to contribute to snake conservation etc.

Objectives to celebrate Nepal Snake Festival and International Snakebite Awareness Day

- To organize and celebrate the Nepal Snake Festival in Rupandehi, not only in a scientific way but also in a cultural and religious way.
- To educate people about snakes, preventive measures from snakebite, recommended first aid methods and snake conservation.
- To promote co-existence between human and snakes by educating people through various programs.



Nepal Snake Festival and International Snakebite Awareness Day Program's Events

Inauguration of program by Chief Guest

The Nepal Snake Festival program was inaugurated by the Mayor of the Tilottama Municipality, Mr. Ramkrishna Khand. The head of the Division Forest Office, Rupandehi, Mr. Praveen Bindari was also attended the inauguration ceremony as a distinguished guest. Dr. Chhabilal Thapa, Dr. Krishna Prasad Acharya, including many other conservationists attended the Nepal Snake Festival and International Snakebite Awareness Day.







Mayor of the Tilottama Municipality, Ramkrishna Khand delivering his speech about the importance of Nepal Snake Festival to make people aware regarding human-snake conflicts mitigation.



The head of the Division Forest Office, Rupandehi, Praveen Bindari delivering his speech about the importance of Nepal Snake Festival to make people aware regarding snake conservation and human-snake conflicts mitigation.



The Festival Director Mr. Kamal Devkota sharing his knowledge and experiences regarding snake conservation and snakebite mitigations. He also shared about the aims and objectives of conducting the Nepal Snake Festival and future plans.



The Chairman of the Shankarnagar Banbihar and Research Centre (Banbatika), Mr. Bel Prasad Sharma speaking about the role of local communities for snake conservation and snakebite prevention.

Pooja of the Snake Handling Equipment on the occasion of Bishwarkarma Pooja day

Mayor of the Tilottama Municipality, Ramkrishna Khand, head of the Division Forest Office, Rupandehi, Praveen Bindari and festival team worshiping Snake Handling Equipment on the occasion of Bishworkarma Pooja believing that it may help to save the snakes as well as save the lives of people.





Cultural Dance Show by Children





- Snake Conservation Awareness Stall
- King Cobra Conservation Awareness Stall
- Snakebite Preventive Measures Awareness Stall
- Snakebite First Aid Awareness Stall
- Snakebite Management in Hospital Awareness Stall













नेपाल सर्प महोत्सव Nepal Snake Festival

अन्तर्रिष्ट्रिय सर्पदंश सचेतना दिवस International Snakebite Awareness Day

Public awareness through educational documentary: We have showed the short educational videos films, like;

• Snakebite: Save The Lives

Snake Rescue Methods and

• Snakes: Conservation and Importance

These educational films include the information about snake conservation/human-snake conflict mitigation/snake rescue/relocation/snakebite preventive measures etc. We believe these educational video films also attracted a wide diversity of people to watch the video in its entirety, as well as remembering the message long term.





T-shirt and Cap distribution for volunteers and a few guests:





Art and painting:





Museum Specimen of Snakes Display:





Professional Snake Handling Methods:









 $Poster\ presentations\ from\ conservation ists/researcher:$





Nature Walk and Herping:





Thank

You