

# MITHILA WILDLIFE TRUST

*Mithila Bihari-3 (Mithileshwar Mauwahi), Dhanusha, Madhesh Province, Nepal*

## ANNUAL SNAKE RESCUE REPORT 2025

**January 2025 – December 2025**

*A Comprehensive Report on Snake Rescue, Species Documentation,*

*Community Outreach, and Human-Wildlife Co-existence Initiatives*

**143**

Total Rescues

**8+**

Species Documented

**5,325**

Outreach Participants

Published by: Mithila Wildlife Trust

Mithila Bihari-3 (Mithileshwar Mauwahi), Dhanusha, Madhesh Province, Nepal

Reporting Period: January 1 – December 31, 2025

## 1. Executive Summary

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The year 2025 marked a landmark year for Mithila Wildlife Trust's snake rescue and conservation programme in Dhanusha District, Nepal. Over the course of twelve months, from January through December 2025, our dedicated rescue team successfully responded to 143 snake rescue incidents across Dhanusha, Mahotari, and Kathmandu districts, safely rescuing and releasing over eight documented species of reptiles back into their natural habitats. July 2025 emerged as the peak rescue month with 23 incidents, closely correlating with the height of the monsoon season, while January recorded the lowest activity with just 2 rescues. The Common Cobra (*Naja naja*) accounted for approximately 52% of all rescues, underscoring the pressing need for continued public education on identifying and safely reporting encounters with venomous species.

Beyond direct rescue operations, the Trust conducted human-snake coexistence awareness sessions in 25 schools across Dhanusha District. A landmark achievement was the successful organisation of Nepal Snake Festival (Chapter 3), held on 16-17 November 2025 at the Cultural Village, Mithila Bihari Municipality-2, Dhanusha. The festival, conducted in partnership with Save The Lives and with financial support from Pipal Tree, reached 5,325 participants from 11 schools, significantly strengthening community knowledge and reducing fear-driven snake killings. These combined efforts position Mithila Wildlife Trust as a leading force in herpetological conservation and human-wildlife coexistence in the Madhesh Province.

## 2. Project Description

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Mithila Wildlife Trust operates a community-based snake rescue and release programme in Dhanusha District, located in the fertile Terai lowlands of Nepal's Madhesh Province. This region, characterised by dense agricultural landscapes, expanding urban settlements, and proximity to natural wetlands, is home to a rich diversity of snake species many of which play critical roles in maintaining ecological balance by controlling rodent populations and supporting the food web.

Conflict between humans and snakes is a well-documented challenge in the Terai region. Encroachment of human settlements into snake habitats, combined with widespread fear and deep-rooted cultural myths surrounding snakes, frequently results in the killing of snakes many of which are non-venomous or of high conservation value. Mithila Wildlife Trust's rescue programme directly addresses this conflict by providing a rapid, community-accessible rescue service that ensures both human safety and snake welfare.

The programme operates through a network of trained snake rescuers available across Dhanusha District and surrounding areas. Upon receiving a distress call, rescuers respond promptly to capture and safely transport the snake, with a standard operating procedure emphasizing minimal stress to the animal. All rescued snakes are assessed for injury or disease before being released into appropriate natural habitats away from human settlements. Rescue data including species, date, location, rescuer

details, and snake condition is systematically documented to build a robust database for scientific research and evidence-based conservation planning.

Pipal Tree started supporting snake rescue activities in 2024 which helped us expand our reach to the community level training works. With this support, we trained forest officials, local police officials and some community members, this has increased the number of rescuers. We focus on the rescues of highly venomous and uncommon species where common species are transferred to community rescuers. At the same time, this has also changed our rescue pattern and decreasing the number of direct rescues. Alternatively, this is helping the rescues be community managed.

### 3. Goals and Objectives

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The snake rescue and conservation programme of Mithila Wildlife Trust is guided by the following core goals and objectives:

- **Reduce Human-Snake Conflict:** Minimise dangerous encounters between humans and snakes through rapid rescue response and community-level awareness, reducing the risk of snakebite and preventing retaliatory snake killings.
- **Promote Coexistence:** Foster a culture of respect and tolerance toward snakes and other wildlife among communities in Dhanusha District and beyond, emphasising the ecological importance of snakes in controlling pest populations.
- **Rescue and Safely Release Snakes:** Ensure the humane rescue, treatment where necessary, and safe release of all captured snakes into suitable natural habitats, preserving biodiversity and protecting individual animals.
- **Raise Awareness:** Conduct targeted awareness programmes in schools, communities, and through public events to educate citizens on snake identification, safe behaviour during encounters, and the conservation value of snakes.
- **Build Scientific Data for Conservation:** Systematically collect and analyse rescue data including species distribution, seasonal patterns, and geographic hotspots to inform evidence-based conservation strategies and contribute to regional herpetological research.
- **Strengthen Community Rescue Networks:** Train and empower local volunteers and community members to serve as front-line responders, extending the programme's geographic reach and response capacity.

### 4. Snake Rescue Data Analysis (2025)

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All data presented in this section has been extracted and verified from the official Snake Rescue Records maintained by Mithila Wildlife Trust for the period January 1 to December 31, 2025. The analysis covers a total of 143 rescue incidents across multiple districts.

### 4.1 Overview Statistics

Indicator	Value
Total Rescue Incidents (2025)	143
Peak Rescue Month	July (23 Rescues)
Lowest Rescue Month	January (2 Rescues)
Most Rescued Species	Common Cobra ( <i>Naja naja</i> ) — ~52%
Primary Rescue District	Dhanusha District (~80% of rescues)
Number of Species Documented	8+ distinct species
Standard Outcome	Rescue and Release (>95% of cases)

### 4.2 Monthly Rescue Trends

Rescue activity in 2025 followed a strong seasonal pattern, rising sharply from early spring through the monsoon season (June-July), then declining toward year-end. The following table presents the monthly distribution of rescue incidents:

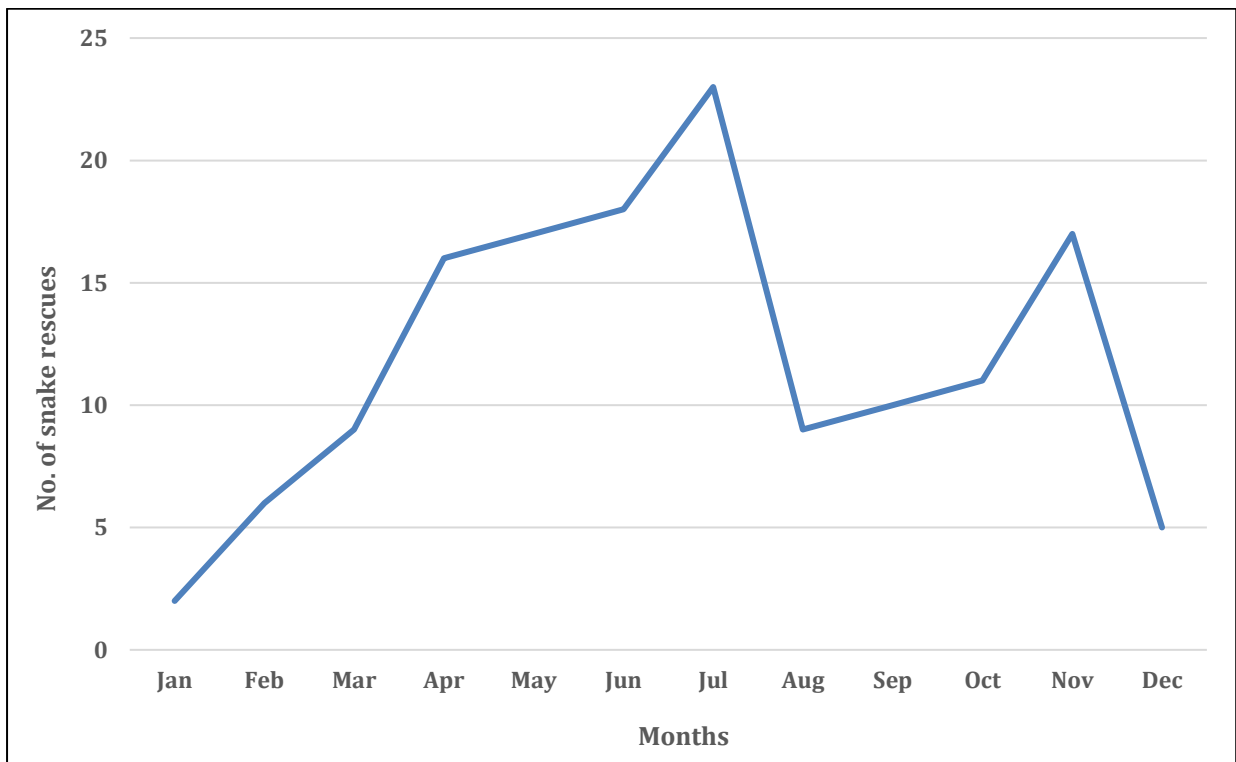


Figure 1: Monthly distribution of snake rescue incidents recorded by Mithila Wildlife Trust in 2025

### 4.3 Seasonal Patterns

The monthly data reveals three distinct seasonal phases of rescue activity in 2025:

**Pre-Monsoon Rise (January-May):** Rescue activity increased steadily from 2 incidents in January to 17 in May, corresponding with rising ambient temperatures that trigger snake activity. Snakes emerging

from winter dormancy began entering agricultural fields and human settlements in search of food and nesting sites.

**Monsoon Peak (June-July):** The monsoon season (June–July) drove rescue activity to its annual peak. Flooding and waterlogging displace snakes from their natural habitats, pushing them into elevated ground often homes, storerooms, and workplaces. July recorded the highest single-month total of 23 rescues, representing 16.1% of the full year's activity.

**Post-Monsoon and Winter Decline (August-December):** Activity declined after the monsoon, though October and November saw a notable uptick likely amplified by increased community reporting following awareness programmes, including the Nepal Snake Festival held in November. December recorded only 5 rescues as temperatures drops at that time and snakes enter their winter dormancy.

#### 4.4 Species-Wise Breakdown

A total of eight distinct snake species (and other wildlife) were documented across 143 rescue incidents in 2025. The Common Cobra dominated rescue records, reflecting its widespread presence in human-inhabited areas of the Terai.

Species	Notes	Rescues	% of Total	Venom Status
Common Cobra ( <i>Naja naja</i> )	Spectacled & Monocled Cobra incl.	~75	52.4%	Highly Venomous
Rat Snake ( <i>Ptyas mucosa</i> )	Common & Keelback Rat Snake variants	~34	23.8%	Non-Venomous
Wolf Snake ( <i>Lycodon aulicus</i> )	Frequently mistaken for Krait	~16	11.2%	Non-Venomous
Keelback ( <i>Xenochrophis sp.</i> )	Checkered & Buff-Striped Keelback	~7	4.9%	Non-Venomous
King Cobra ( <i>Ophiophagus hannah</i> )	Apex predator; IUCN Vulnerable	~5	3.5%	Highly Venomous
Common Krait ( <i>Bungarus caeruleus</i> )	Nocturnal; highly dangerous	2	1.4%	Highly Venomous
Python ( <i>Python bivittatus</i> )	Non-venomous constrictor; rare	1	0.7%	Non-Venomous
Other Wildlife / Unspecified	Sand Boa, Water Snake, Monitor Lizard	~3	2.1%	Varies
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>143</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Notably, the King Cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List was rescued on five occasions in 2025, including from Dakshinkali Municipality (Kathmandu), Tuteswar (Mahotari), and Mithila Nagarpalika (Dhanusha).

## 4.5 Location-Wise Distribution

The vast majority of rescue incidents in 2025 occurred within Dhanusha District, reflecting the Trust's primary operational area. However, the programme's reach extended to neighboring Mahottari District and Kathmandu, demonstrating growing network capacity and cross-district collaboration.

District / Area	Rescues	% of Total	Key Localities
Dhanusha District (incl. Janakpur)	114	79.7%	Janakpurdham, Mithila Bihari, Dhanushadham, Mithila Nagarpalika
Mahotari District	7	4.9%	Jaleshwar, Bardibas, Sabaila, Bagra, Pipra
Kathmandu District	4	2.8%	Dakshinkali Municipality (King Cobra rescues)
Other / Unspecified	18	12.6%	Rural areas; phone/virtual guidance provided
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Rescue hotspots within Dhanusha District included Mithila Bihari Municipality, Dhanushadham, Mithila Nagarpalika, and Janakpurdham urban areas, locations where rapid urban expansion is encroaching on previously natural snake habitats. A significant proportion of rescues involved snakes found inside homes (bedrooms, kitchens, store rooms), farmlands, and commercial premises, highlighting the growing interface between human settlements and snake habitats.

## 5. Community Awareness and Outreach

### 5.1 School Awareness Programmes

In 2025, Mithila Wildlife Trust conducted structured human-snake coexistence awareness sessions in 25 schools across Dhanusha District. These sessions were designed to reach students, teachers, and indirectly their families and communities, creating a cascading effect of awareness across the district. Each session covered four key thematic areas:

- **Snake Awareness and Safety:** Identifying common snake species found in the Terai, understanding venomous versus non-venomous snakes, and knowing what actions to take and avoid during an encounter.
- **Behavioral Guidance:** Educating participants on how snakes behave, their seasonal patterns, preferred habitats, and the importance of not provoking or handling snakes.
- **Conservation Value:** Highlighting the critical ecological roles played by snakes as predators of rodents and as prey for larger animals, and explaining their protected status under Nepali law.
- **Emergency Response:** Sharing information on how to contact the Mithila Wildlife Trust rescue team and what first-aid measures are appropriate in the case of a snakebite.

These sessions were well-received by school authorities and have contributed to a measurable shift in attitudes toward snakes among participating communities, with anecdotal evidence from teachers

suggesting a reduction in fear-based reactions and an increase in reporting of sightings to the rescue team rather than resorting to killing.

## 5.2 Nepal Snake Festival - Chapter 3

A flagship achievement of 2025 was the successful organisation of the Nepal Snake Festival (Chapter 3), a national-level public awareness event that brought together schools, conservation experts, government stakeholders, and the wider community in a celebration of snake awareness and conservation.

Festival Details	Information
Event Name	Nepal Snake Festival — Chapter 3
Dates	16 – 17 November 2025
Venue	Cultural Village, Mithila Bihari Municipality-2, Dhanusha District
Schools Participated	11 Schools (showcasing creative work)
Total Participants Reached	5,325 individuals
Partner Organisation	Save The Lives
Financial Support	Pipal Tree

The two-day festival served as a dynamic public platform, combining education, entertainment, and direct engagement with wildlife professionals. Key activities included:

- **Documentary Video Screening:** An educational documentary on the ecology, behavior, and conservation status of snakes native to Nepal's Terai region was screened for participants, providing scientific context in an accessible and engaging format.
- **Live Snake Handling Demonstration:** Expert snake rescuers from Mithila Wildlife Trust conducted live demonstrations of safe snake handling techniques, helping to demystify snakes and reduce fear among participants. These demonstrations visually communicated the Trust's rescue methodology and professionalism.
- **School Creative Stalls:** The 11 participating schools set up dedicated stalls showcasing student artwork, models, posters, and interactive displays on snake identification, anatomy, ecological roles, and safety practices, encouraging peer-to-peer learning in a creative environment.

The Nepal Snake Festival (Chapter 3) represents the largest single community outreach event undertaken by Mithila Wildlife Trust to date. The direct reach of 5,325 participants combined with the media coverage and social attention generated by the event significantly amplified the Trust's conservation message beyond the immediate festival audience.

## 6. Impact

The cumulative impact of Mithila Wildlife Trust's 2025 rescue operations and awareness activities can be assessed across four key dimensions:

**Reduction in Snake Killing:** Community feedback and field observations from rescue team members indicate a notable reduction in the killing of snakes in areas covered by awareness programmes. Increased willingness to call the rescue hotline rather than resorting to self-help methods is a direct indicator of improved attitudes toward snakes. The availability of a reliable, accessible rescue service provides communities with a safe alternative to killing.

**Increased Community Awareness:** The combined reach of 25 school awareness sessions and the Nepal Snake Festival (Chapter 3) directly engaged thousands of students, teachers, parents, and community members. Greater awareness of snake species identification, safety practices, and the ecological value of snakes translates into more informed, less fear-driven responses to snake encounters.

**Improved Rescue Response Capacity:** The Trust's rescue network demonstrated consistent response capacity throughout 2025, including during the peak monsoon period when rescue calls were at their highest. The programme's multi-rescuer model with team members such as Subodh Acharya, Ravi Thakur, Amarnath Yadav, and others enabled simultaneous responses across geographically dispersed areas of Dhanusha District.

**Scientific Data Contribution:** The systematic recording of 143 rescue incidents including species identification, GPS-referenced locations, snake conditions, and seasonal timing has produced a valuable longitudinal dataset for Dhanusha District. This data contributes to Nepal's national herpetological knowledge base and supports evidence-based conservation planning for the Madhesh Province.

**Community Engagement and Ownership:** The Nepal Snake Festival and school programmes have fostered a sense of community ownership over local wildlife conservation. Student participation in stall presentations, creative projects, and live demonstrations encourages young people to become advocates for snakes and biodiversity in their own communities.

## 7. Challenges

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Despite significant achievements, Mithila Wildlife Trust's programme continues to face substantial challenges that require sustained attention and strategic investment:

**Deep-Rooted Fear and Cultural Myths:** Fear of snakes is culturally embedded across many communities in the Terai. Misinformation, myths, and superstitions about snakes including the belief that all snakes are dangerous and must be killed remain widespread, particularly in older generations and remote rural areas. Changing these perceptions requires sustained, culturally sensitive communication over many years.

**Limited Human and Financial Resources:** The Trust's rescue team operates with a relatively small core group of trained rescuers. During peak months (June–July), the volume of simultaneous rescue calls occasionally stretches response capacity. Additionally, limited financial resources constrain the programme's ability to expand equipment, purchase protective gear, extend training, and cover transportation costs to remote rescue sites.

**Rapid Urbanisation and Habitat Loss:** Dhanusha District is experiencing rapid urban expansion, particularly around Janakpurdham and surrounding municipalities. Unplanned construction and

agricultural intensification are progressively encroaching on snake habitats, reducing natural foraging areas and forcing snakes into closer contact with human settlements. This structural driver of human-snake conflict will require long-term land-use planning solutions beyond the scope of rescue operations alone.

**Geographic Reach Limitations:** While the Trust's rescue network primarily covers Dhanusha District, rescue calls are increasingly received from neighbouring districts such as Mahotari. Extending reliable, timely rescue coverage to these areas requires the development of a broader network of trained local volunteers.

## 8. Future Plans

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Building on the achievements and lessons of 2025, Mithila Wildlife Trust has identified the following strategic priorities for the coming year and beyond and this program have led to the planning of two initiatives that will be implemented continuously from the coming year:

- **Garuda Festival** -The primary objective of this program is to ensure community participation in the conservation of Garuda species and other bird species found in agricultural landscapes.
- **Golden Hour Snake Festival** -The main objective of this program is to raise public awareness about the importance of the first hour (golden hour) in the treatment of snakebite cases.
- **Expand Rescue Network:** Recruit, train, and certify additional snake rescuers in Dhanusha District and neighbouring districts, particularly Mahotari and Siraha, to ensure timely responses across a wider geographic area. Develop a formal volunteer rescuer programme with standardised training, equipment, and safety protocols.
- **Deepen School and Community Programmes:** Increase school outreach to a target of more schools across Dhanusha District in the coming year, and develop structured curriculum materials for teachers to integrate snake awareness into regular classroom activities. Expand the programme to include adult community sessions in rural wards.
- **Nepal Snake Festival-Chapter 4:** Continue participate in the annual festival tradition with an expanded Nepal Snake Festival Chapter 4, aiming for broader geographic participation, increased school involvement, and stronger media coverage to amplify conservation messaging at the national level.
- **Data-Based Conservation Strategy:** Develop a formal species distribution map for Dhanusha District based on accumulated rescue records, and share findings with relevant government departments, conservation organisations, and research institutions. Apply data insights to identify high-priority rescue hotspots and allocate resources accordingly.
- **Snakebite Prevention and First Aid Training:** Introduce community-level snakebite prevention and basic first-aid training sessions in collaboration with local health posts, targeting agricultural workers and rural communities at highest risk of snakebite.
- **Sustainable Funding and Partnerships:** Diversify the programme's funding base through applications to national and international conservation grants, and strengthen partnerships with organisations such as Save The Lives and Pipal Tree, while seeking additional institutional partners committed to herpetological conservation in Nepal.

## 9. Acknowledgements

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Mithila Wildlife Trust extends its sincere gratitude to all individuals, institutions, and partner organisations whose contributions made the successes of 2025 possible. Pipal Tree's effort to raise fund for the rescues and snake rescue and management training is highly acknowledged.

We also acknowledge with deep appreciation the dedication of our rescue team Subodh Acharya, Amarnath Yadav, Rabinandan Thakur, Akash Yadav, Rohit Giri, Gautam Mandal, Baijanth Singh, and all associate volunteers whose commitment, skill, and courage in responding to rescue calls, often in difficult conditions, forms the backbone of this programme.

We thank our partner organisation Save The Lives for their collaborative support in community outreach, and Pipal Tree for their vital financial contribution to the Nepal Snake Festival Chapter 3. The participation of 11 schools and 5,325 community members in the festival reflects the growing social momentum behind snake conservation in Dhanusha District.

We also acknowledge the community members, school authorities, local government officials, and all individuals who trusted the Trust's rescue service and contributed to the protection of Nepal's snake biodiversity by choosing to call rather than kill.