

MONTHLY REPORT



HEAL

The Human & Environment
Alliance League

AUGUST 2023

Santanu Das ©



The month at a glance

Collection of Intelligence on Ritualistic
Hunting in Birbhum

Awareness Program in West Medinipur

Wildlife Rescues

Towards Zero Death from Snake Bites

Articles, Events and More

Collection of Intelligence on Ritualistic Hunting in Birbhum



Field Coordinator Santanu Das interviewing a local in Birbhum

- In August 2023, HEAL launched a Rapid Action Project in collaboration with the Wildlife Trust of India (WTI) to address ritualistic hunting in Purulia, Bankura, and Birbhum districts. The initiative involves utilizing field survey data to facilitate enforcement action and implement community outreach programs.
- HEAL had previously executed a similar project in Jhargram and West Medinipur districts with WTI's support. The outcomes of this earlier project provided crucial data that guided HEAL's endeavors to combat ritualistic hunting in those districts over the past three years.

- This month, HEAL's team members Santanu Das and Aditya Pardhan conducted interviews with rural residents across 13 blocks in Birbhum district. The objective was to gather information on significant hunting dates and their locations.
- Insights obtained from 48 interviews revealed that, in contrast to the Jangal Mahal districts, ritualistic hunting in Birbhum occurs on a smaller scale and less frequently. Interviewees shared details on hunting practices, rituals, and the overall status of ritualistic hunting in recent decades.



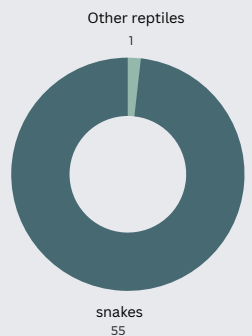
Field Officer Aditya Pardhan interacting with local women to gather data

WILDLIFE RESCUES

This month HEAL's rescue teams carried out 56 rescues in 5 districts across West Bengal. These rescues were carried out by: Jayanta Chakraborty and Bapi Das in Malda, Ardhendu Banik, Rahul Dutta and Anirban Das in Cooch Behar, Jaydip Sen in Bankura Samar Chakraborty in West Medinipur and Santanu Das in South 24 Parganas

56
RESCUES

5
DISTRICTS



Awareness Program in West Medinipur



- In July 2023, villagers in Sijua, West Medinipur district, ruthlessly chased, tortured, and killed a striped hyena (further details in the July 2023 monthly report).
- HEAL brought this incident to the attention of the West Medinipur Humane Committee, a Court-appointed body established in five districts of West Bengal to combat wildlife hunting and poaching.
- As a result of HEAL's advocacy, four culprits were arrested and placed in judicial custody for seven days during July. Further, an awareness program was organized by the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), in collaboration with the local Forest Department to sensitize the villagers to the importance of conserving wildlife.
- The program took place on 09 August at Delua Primary and Junior High School in Midnapore Sadar, and Field Coordinator Santanu Das represented HEAL at the event.
- During his address to the villagers, Santanu elaborated on the significance of striped hyenas, emphasizing their role in maintaining ecosystem health through their scavenging activity.
- Meanwhile, the DLSA provided insights into the legal protections afforded to wild animals and the repercussions of violating such laws.

(Top) Image that was used to push for enforcement action against the villagers who killed the striped hyena on 01 July in Sijua. (Bottom) Secretary, DLSA Dibyendu Nath addressing the attendees of the awareness program held on 09 August in Delua

Of Lesser-known Stripes Among Tangled Roots

- HEAL's Joint Secretary and Director of Ecology & Conservation Program, Tiasa Adhya, collaborated with Mr. Jones Justin, the Deputy Field Director of Sundarban Tiger Reserve, to co-author an article about fishing cats.
- This article served as the cover story for the August 2023 issue of Sanctuary Asia, India's premier wildlife magazine. The focus of the article was the first-ever fishing cat census conducted by the State Forest Department in the Sundarban Tiger Reserve (STR) during 2022 in West Bengal.
- The article delves into the conceptualization of the population estimation study, shedding light on the challenges encountered by the team during field data collection and providing insights into the process that led to the obtained results.
- The study has proven to be exceptionally valuable, offering a comprehensive overview of how fishing cats are faring in the STR and serving as an important indicator of the overall health of their population.

Read the article here: <https://www.sanctuarynaturefoundation.org/article/of-lesser-known-stripes-among-tangled-roots>

Towards Zero Death from Snake Bites

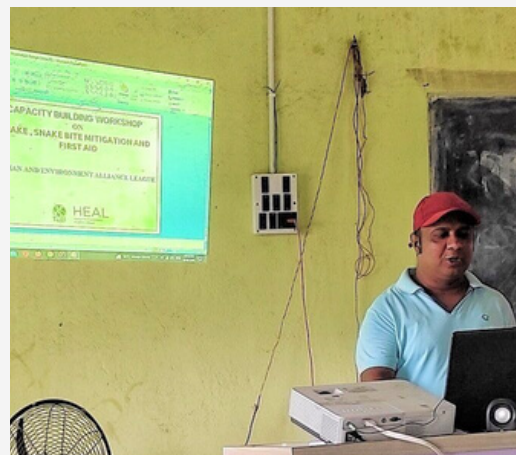
- HEAL aims to alleviate the commonly associated fear of snakes from a young age and nurture a spirit of harmonious coexistence with these reptiles.
- Consequently, HEAL focused its initiatives this month on village youth and school students as part of its 'Zero Death from Snake Bites' campaign.
- Members Santanu Das and Rabin Mahato organised Snake Awareness and Snake Bite Mitigation Programs in three schools of Jhargram from 01-03 August. Similar sessions were conducted at one school each in Malda and Murshidabad by Zonal Coordinators Jayanta Chakraborty and Soumyadip Mondal, respectively.
- During these engagements, students learned about snake ecology, identification, measures to avoid snake bites and the appropriate way to respond during a snakebite incident.



Awareness program held at Tulibar Karmisaran High School in Jhargram



Jayanta Chakraborty interacting with students during an awareness program in Malda



Soumyadip Mondal engaging with students at an awareness program in Bazarsau, Murshidabad



HEAL's Cooch Behar team raising public awareness on snake bite prevention in Buxa Tiger Reserve

- HEAL's local team in Cooch Behar amplified these efforts by conducting a short snake awareness session during a football tournament at Buxa Tiger Reserve in Alipurduar to commemorate India's 75th Independence Day.
- The session was conducted by Zonal Coordinator Ardhendu Banik during the halftime. He was accompanied by members Rahul Dutta and Ranjan Shil.
- HEAL's initiative was greatly appreciated by the locals gathered at the event. They found the talk to be immensely helpful and expressed their interest in attending more awareness programs in future.

Celebrating World Elephant Day

- On the occasion of World Elephant Day (12 August 2023), HEAL's local team in Jhargram, led by Field Officer Rabin Mahato, conducted an awareness campaign across the Kendadangri Panchayat area in Jamboni Block.
- This region frequently witnesses the movement of elephant herds. Therefore, the main objective of the campaign was to educate and sensitize the local communities about responsible behavior around elephants, so as to prevent any potential harm to both people and the pachyderms.
- On the same day, a felicitation event was organised in Jalpaiguri district by Solitary Nature & Animal Protection (SNAP) Foundation, in collaboration with other non-profits.
- HEAL was invited as a guest of honour in recognition of its ongoing and past efforts to mitigate human-elephant conflict in West Bengal.
- HEAL dedicates this honour to its field teams in various districts, especially those in South Bengal. Their diligent contributions bring HEAL closer to realising its vision of a harmonious coexistence between humans and elephants.



(Top) Field Officer Rabin Mahato conducting an awareness program on the occasion of World Elephant Day. (Bottom) Villagers in Kendadangri participating in the campaign



HEAL's Secretary Suvrajyoti Chatterjee and member Arkaprava Majumdar accepting the token of appreciation at the felicitation event in Jalpaiguri



Jongol Sathi - an initiative by HEAL in Jhargram to monitor the movement of elephants and mitigate negative interaction between elephants and people