

World Snake Day: Celebrating snakes and their protectors

Guest blog by Hiral Naik, Africa Program Manager, Save The Snakes; and Chair of the Snakebite [Community Engagement Network](#)

On 16 July we celebrate World Snake Day, and it is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate snakes. Snakes are one of the most feared animals in the world, but this often stems from a lack of education about them and generations of myths that have been spread. However, there are countless individuals, organisations and communities around the world that are working tirelessly to raise awareness about snakes and ensure that people learn about the importance of these reptiles.

Due to the fear of snakes, there is often conflict that arises between snakes and humans and this conflict can lead to public health challenges such as snakebite. In 2017, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) declared snakebite a neglected tropical disease as it affects millions of people globally every year. To tackle the challenges around snakebite and reduce snakebite related deaths and disabilities, there is a need for more education and outreach initiatives, and improved methods of treatment and relationship building with communities.

Snakes are found on every continent except Antarctica and occur in a wide range of habitats. As humans encroach on natural habitats, there is increased interaction between humans and snakes. As a result, there are more conflict events occurring, often as people try to kill snakes, which has led to an increase in snakebite incidents. Snakes have been neglected in conservation and education initiatives and, due to their unpopularity in the animal world, their important roles in the ecosystem are rarely communicated. Snakes maintain balance in the food web, they are a natural form of pest control, and their venom is used for medicinal purposes.

In the past few years, there have been various organisations and individuals that have identified the need to educate others about snakes and focus on mitigating human-snake conflict. [Save The Snakes](#) is one such organisation that is dedicated exclusively to snake conservation and human-snake conflict mitigation. Together with a worldwide network of snake conservationists, they aim to protect snake populations around the world through education and outreach. This [video](#) created by Save The Snakes explains the importance of snakes and has been used to successfully educate members in rural communities in South Africa. Resources such as these are very useful to create awareness and to encourage people to appreciate snakes.

Around the world, there is a growing interest to invest in snake conservation and education and due to the large diversity of snakes and people, these efforts need to focus specifically on communities that are at higher risk of human-snake conflict and snakebite. It is exciting

to support and collaborate with snake conservationists from around the world to create more harmonious relationships between people and snakes. Through initiatives such as the all new Snakebite [Community Engagement Network](#) and [Women Champions of Snakebite](#), we hope to gain more knowledge on snakebite activity on the ground, the movement of snakes and people and activities that need support to tackle snakebite. This multidimensional approach through various partnerships and different stakeholders will allow us to solve the problems of snakebite and encourage people to think of snakes in a more positive light.

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