



WNE INDIA




Nature Beats

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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- A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consists of several overlapping circles of varying sizes, some solid and some outlined, creating a stylized, abstract shape.
- 4 **Sarpa Sathi**
 - 5 **Securing The Gentle Giants**
 - 6 **Heronries And Humans**
 - 7 **Web Of Knowledge**
 - 8 **From Tradition To Transformation**
 - 10 **Global News**

From the Editor

As we step into the financial year 2026–27, [WNE-INDIA](#) enters a phase marked by renewed energy, thoughtful planning, and a deepened commitment to conservation and community engagement. The year begins not just as a continuation of our efforts, but as a moment of momentum—where ideas are being shaped into action, and our growing team is ready to translate vision into meaningful impact on the ground.

The recent election period across West Bengal, Assam, and Kerala briefly paused several of our field activities. Yet, rather than slowing us down, this interlude became an opportunity for reflection and strengthening. Our teams turned inward—refining administrative processes, enhancing coordination, and building a more efficient operational framework that will support our expanding footprint. In parallel, [WNE](#) marked a significant transition by shifting its workspace from Tollygunge to Joka. This new establishment represents more than just a change in address; it symbolizes growth, adaptability, and a renewed environment for collaboration and innovation.

The new financial year has also opened doors to promising collaborations. In partnership with Prakriti Samsad, [WNE](#) is set to undertake multi-dimensional initiatives across the ecologically sensitive landscape of the Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve—an area where conservation and livelihoods are intricately intertwined. Simultaneously, our collaboration with BIOME’s Hasti Bondhu initiative strengthens our flagship effort, [SECURING THE GENTLE GIANTS](#). This initiative is actively working towards monitoring elephant populations across West Bengal and Assam, while addressing the pressing challenges of human–elephant interactions. Through community engagement, awareness-building, and conflict mitigation strategies, we aim to reduce crop and property damage, as well as prevent human casualties in vulnerable corridor settlements.

On another front, Team [EDM](#) continues to uphold its commitment to education and equity. By identifying gaps in infrastructure within educational institutions that serve socioeconomically challenged communities, the team is working to create environments where learning can truly thrive. At present, five schools in West Bengal and four in Odisha have been identified, and facility upgradation efforts are set to begin soon—bringing with them the promise of better opportunities for young learners.

Encouraging innovation remains at the heart of WNE’s mission. The announcement of the first quarter of the [WNE STARTUP GRANT](#) invites budding researchers and organizations from across the country to present bold ideas and grassroots solutions. From exploring new ecological landscapes to addressing critical issues in wildlife and habitat conservation—and understanding the human dimensions of conflict—this initiative continues to nurture the next generation of conservation leaders. Reflecting on the close of the financial year 2025–26, [WNE-INDIA](#) stands active across 13 states, a testament to the dedication of our teams and partners who work tirelessly at the grassroots. Each project, each collaboration, and each community interaction adds to a larger narrative—one of resilience, coexistence, and hope.

As we move forward, we do so with optimism and purpose. The path ahead is demanding, but it is equally inspiring. Together, with our partners, supporters, and communities, we look forward to building a future where conservation is inclusive, impactful, and enduring.

SUCHETA GANGULY



SECRETARY, CHIEF EDITOR

WNE INDIA



SARPA SATHI: TURNING AWARENESS INTO SURVIVAL—FOR PEOPLE AND SNAKES ALIKE



SARPA SATHI stands as a powerful bridge between awareness and action—where knowledge does not merely inform, but saves lives and nurtures coexistence. In a country where fear and misinformation around snakes often lead to both human fatalities and indiscriminate killing of these ecologically vital reptiles, the role of Sarpa Sathis has been transformative. Working tirelessly at the grassroots, they have been changing perceptions—replacing superstition with science, fear with understanding, and conflict with compassion.

Over the past seven years (2019–2026), Project Sarpa Sathi has made remarkable strides across West Bengal, Odisha, Assam, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra. During this period, the team has successfully rescued and rehabilitated over 1,00,000 snakes, including both venomous and non-venomous species. A significant proportion of these rescues were concentrated in West Bengal (approximately 28%), followed by Odisha (22%), Rajasthan (18%), and Karnataka (14%), reflecting both the prevalence of human–snake encounters and the strength of the rescue network in these regions. Each rescue represents not just the saving of a reptile, but also the prevention of potential human harm.

India accounts for nearly 50% of global snakebite deaths, with an estimated 58,000 fatalities annually. States like West Bengal and Odisha report some of the highest incidences, particularly in rural and agrarian landscapes. Assam and Meghalaya, with their dense vegetation and high rainfall, are also recognized snakebite hotspots. Despite the availability of effective treatment, many lives are lost due to delayed medical intervention, reliance on traditional healers such as ojhas and gunins, and lack of access to proper healthcare facilities.

Recognizing this gap, Sarpa Sathis have gone beyond rescue operations—collaborating with forest and police departments to curb the activities of snake charmers and unscientific practitioners who perpetuate fear and misinformation. At the same time, they have been actively engaging communities, conducting awareness programs, and building trust in scientific treatment protocols.

As we step into the financial year 2026–27, Project Sarpa Sathi is sharpening its focus on one of the most critical aspects of snakebite management: timely medical intervention through Anti-Snake Venom Serum (ASVS). The initiative aims to promote awareness around seeking immediate care from trained healthcare professionals and ensuring the availability and proper administration of ASVS in high-risk regions.

The project is currently targeting key snakebite-prone areas—11 districts in Assam, West Garo Hills in Meghalaya, 10 districts in Odisha, and 9 districts in West Bengal. These regions have been identified not only for their high incidence of snakebite cases but also for the persistent influence of harmful traditional practices that often result in preventable deaths.

Through this focused initiative, Sarpa Sathi aims to directly benefit over 60,000 individuals, while indirectly impacting more than 6,00,000 people across 200+ vulnerable zones. The ripple effect of awareness, preparedness, and access to life-saving treatment has the potential to transform entire communities.

This is a moment that calls for collective action. Your support—whether through donation, partnership, or advocacy—can strengthen this life-saving mission. Investing in Sarpa Sathi is not just funding a project; it is safeguarding lives, empowering communities, and protecting biodiversity.

Join us in this journey. Together, we can ensure that no life is lost to fear, and every snakebite victim gets a chance to survive and heal.

FROM EASTERN ROOTS TO NORTHEASTERN FRONTIERS: A UNITED EFFORT FOR ELEPHANTS



For over eight years, since 2018, WNE's [SECURING THE GENTLE GIANTS](#) has stood at the forefront of elephant conservation across Eastern India—working quietly yet persistently along some of the most conflict-prone landscapes. From monitoring critical elephant corridors to improving habitat quality, the initiative has combined science with community engagement to create pathways for coexistence. Its work has included studying elephant behaviour, analysing patterns of human–elephant conflict, introducing landscape-specific mitigation strategies, and even promoting crop pattern reversals in highly vulnerable zones to reduce encounters.

As the financial year 2026–27 begins, this journey takes a significant leap forward. In collaboration with BIOME's Hasti Bandhu initiative, WNE is expanding its footprint from Eastern India into the ecologically rich yet sensitive landscapes of Northeast India—beginning with Assam. This collaboration brings together shared expertise, stronger field presence, and a unified vision for safeguarding one of India's most iconic species.

The work has already begun. With a dedicated team of 55 trained individuals, WNE is actively monitoring 12 key elephant corridors—4 in West Bengal, 3 in Odisha, and 5 in Assam. Alongside monitoring, efforts are underway to strengthen local capacity through training, awareness, and community-based participation, ensuring that conservation is both inclusive and sustainable.

These corridors are lifelines—not just for elephants, but for the ecosystems and communities that coexist with them. Yet, sustaining such intensive, on-ground engagement requires continued support. A monthly fund requirement of ₹30,000 is essential to maintain monitoring, outreach, and mitigation efforts.

WNE invites collaborators, partners, and supporters to be part of this journey. Your investment can directly contribute to reducing conflict, protecting habitats, and securing a future where humans and elephants thrive together. You can visit our Website: [Click Here](#)

To support us, you can donate via NEFT, IMPS or UPI to our bank account:

Bank Name: Karur Vysya Bank

Account Name: Sarisha Wildlife And Ecology Society

Account Number: 3108135000004981

IFSC Code: KVBL0003108



Heronries and Humans: A Fragile Coexistence at the Edge

- by Prof. Clara Correia, Thane and Anagha S Jahgirdar, Mysuru

In many corners of our towns and villages, towering trees come alive each breeding season with the calls of herons, egrets, storks, and ibises. These heronries—dense nesting colonies—are not just spectacles of nature, but living indicators of ecological health. Yet, for the people who live beneath them, coexistence is becoming increasingly strained.

The reality is complex. Residents often struggle with constant noise, droppings, and the pungent smell that accompanies large congregations of birds. What is, scientifically, a thriving biodiversity hotspot becomes, in daily life, a source of discomfort. This tension has led to a worrying trend—trees being cut, nests destroyed, and colonies abandoned. In trying to reclaim immediate comfort, we risk losing an entire ecological network.

Scientifically, heronries are invaluable. They act as biological indicators of wetland health, support nutrient cycling through guano deposition, and help regulate food webs by controlling fish, amphibian, and insect populations. Their decline is not just about birds disappearing—it signals deeper environmental degradation.

But this crisis is not without solutions. The path forward lies in informed, community-driven coexistence. Awareness programs can transform perception—helping people see heronries not as a burden, but as natural heritage. Simple mitigation measures, such as seasonal management plans, protective coverings in high-impact zones, and designated buffer areas around nesting trees, can significantly reduce human inconvenience.

Equally important is the active involvement of local communities. When residents become stakeholders—through citizen monitoring, eco-club initiatives, or even eco-tourism opportunities—the narrative shifts from conflict to pride. Urban planning must also integrate these ecological spaces, ensuring that development does not come at the cost of survival.

Heronries remind us that coexistence is not always comfortable—but it is necessary. The choice before us is clear: adapt with awareness, or lose a vital part of our natural world.

WEB OF KNOWLEDGE: EXPLORING THE HIDDEN WORLD OF SPIDERS

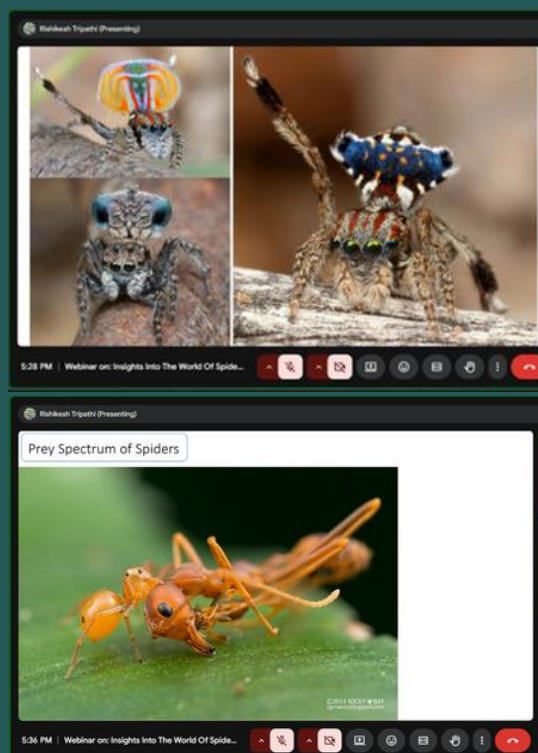
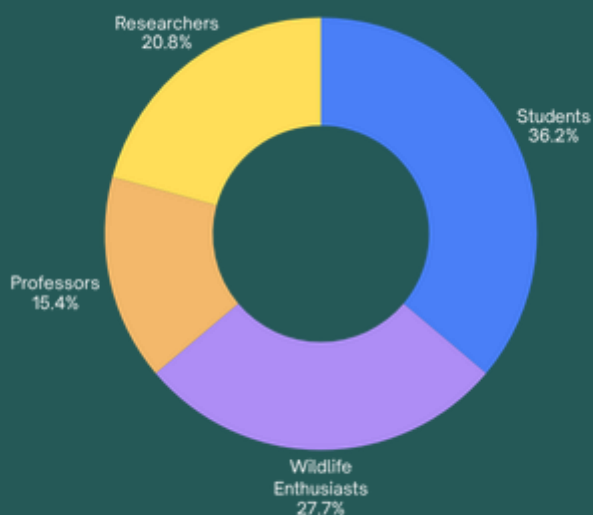
[WNE STARTUP GRANT](#) has played a pivotal role in nurturing emerging conservation leaders, and its very first awardee, young arachnologist [Rishikesh Tripathi](#), stands as a compelling example. His project focuses on the rare and endangered Gooty Tarantula, a striking species found along the border regions of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which faces severe threats from illegal pet trade.

With the support of the grant, Rishikesh initiated vital community-level conservation efforts—identifying species hotspots, assessing threat intensity, and understanding local perceptions. His work goes beyond research, actively addressing illegal trafficking while engaging communities to build awareness and stewardship.

This inspiring journey took center stage during WNE’s monthly webinar, “Insights into the World of Spiders.” In an engaging and thought-provoking session, Rishikesh opened a window into the fascinating yet often misunderstood world of spiders. Drawing from his field experiences, he highlighted the ecological importance of spiders and the urgent need to protect species like the Gooty Tarantula.

With over 35 participants from diverse backgrounds—including researchers, academicians, and wildlife enthusiasts—the session sparked curiosity, challenged fears, and encouraged meaningful dialogue. By blending science with real-world conservation challenges, Rishikesh not only shared knowledge but also inspired a shift in perception—from fear to appreciation.

The webinar exemplified WNE’s commitment to empowering young researchers and promoting grassroots conservation. More importantly, it left participants eager for more—making WNE’s future sessions a space to learn, engage, and be inspired.



FROM TRADITION TO TRANSFORMATION: LIVELIHOODS BLOOM IN JOHAR PARK



Ajodhya Johar Park

Teliavasa, one of the largest villages in the Ajodhya Hills of Purulia, has long lived in quiet isolation despite being surrounded by a region celebrated for its natural beauty and growing tourist interest. While nearby areas attract visitors for their landscapes, waterfalls, and hills, Teliavasa itself remained untouched by tourism, with little to offer in terms of economic opportunities. For generations, the people here have relied almost entirely on cultivation and forest-based livelihoods—collecting forest produce, practicing subsistence farming, and navigating seasonal uncertainties that often-left incomes unstable and limited.

This gap between potential and reality became the starting point of transformation.

Under Project Bana Bandhu, we initiated a community-driven intervention aimed at creating sustainable and dignified livelihood opportunities within the village. The establishment of a nursery in Teliavasa marked the first step in this journey. More than just a plantation space, the nursery became a source of empowerment—directly supporting 11 families with consistent income while also equipping them with skills in plant cultivation, maintenance, and environmental stewardship. It introduced a shift from dependency to ownership, from uncertainty to stability.

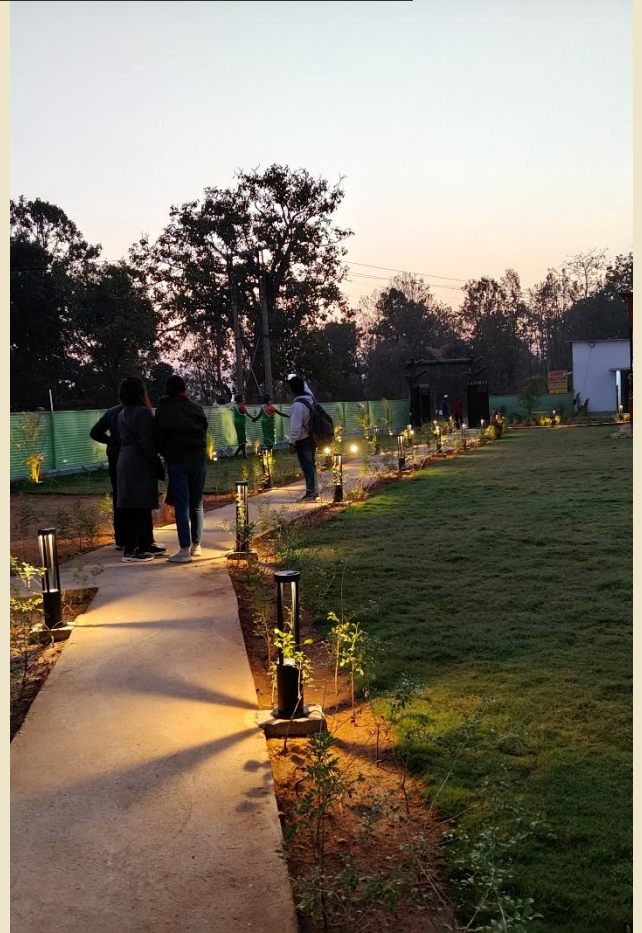
As an extension of this effort, we envisioned something larger—something that could connect Teliavasa to the broader identity of the Ajodhya Hills while celebrating its own uniqueness. This led to the creation of Ajodhya Johar Park, a thoughtfully designed space that serves both as a park and a living cultural museum.

Ajodhya Johar Park is not just a destination—it is a storytelling space. It brings alive the rich heritage of the tribal communities of the Ajodhya Hills, offering visitors a glimpse into their everyday lives and traditions. From traditional farming practices to the preparation of mohua, from hand-pounded rice to vibrant cultural expressions like hunting festivals and Badna Porob, the park preserves and presents knowledge that has been passed down through generations. It also highlights livelihoods such as silk, lac, and tasar cultivation—showcasing the deep connection between the people and their environment.

Adding another dimension, the park reflects the geological identity of the region. Situated along the edge of the Chotanagpur Plateau, Teliavasa is rich in diverse stone formations. By showcasing these natural resources, the initiative not only educates visitors but also instills pride within the community about their land and its uniqueness.

This transformation has been made possible through the unwavering support and dedication of our team members—Dinesh Singh, Hemanta Mahato, Samiran Amrit, Arup Mondal, Maya Fernandez, Koushik Mondal, Aprita Chakraborty, and many others—whose collective vision and grassroots efforts have turned ideas into impact.

The results are already visible and growing. While the initiative has directly created livelihoods for 11 families, it has begun to indirectly support more than 50 families through emerging opportunities—guiding visitors, selling local products, and engaging in small-scale enterprises linked to the park. As footfall increases, the village is expected to see the rise of small shops, food stalls, handicraft outlets, and additional attractions—creating a ripple effect of economic growth..



More importantly, this transformation is restoring a sense of identity and pride among the people of Teliavasa. What was once seen as a village with limited prospects is now being recognized as a place of culture, learning, and opportunity.

This is not just development—it is a shift in narrative.

With Bana Bandhu and Ajodhya Johar Park at its heart, Teliavasa is steadily moving towards becoming a model village—one that balances tradition with progress, preserves heritage while creating livelihoods, and builds a future rooted in sustainability and community strength

HOW THE U.S.–IRAN CONFLICT IS DEVASTATING ECOLOGY IN THE PERSIAN GULF



Recent military escalations between Iran and the United States have triggered significant environmental damage in the Persian Gulf, posing severe risks to marine ecosystems and wildlife conservation efforts. Strikes on oil tankers and coastal infrastructure have led to large-scale oil spills, releasing vast quantities of crude oil into the sea and spreading rapidly across sensitive habitats.

The Persian Gulf, known for its rich biodiversity, supports coral reefs, fish populations, and endangered species such as whales, sea turtles, and dugongs. Oil contamination forms a toxic layer on the water's surface, reducing oxygen exchange and blocking sunlight—both essential for marine plant life. This disruption cascades through the food chain, affecting organisms from plankton to top predators. Coastal ecosystems like mangroves and wetlands, which serve as breeding and nursery grounds, are also under severe threat and may take years or even decades to recover.

Beyond immediate damage, the conflict is significantly disrupting wildlife conservation efforts across the region. Field operations, monitoring programs, and anti-poaching patrols have been reduced or halted due to security concerns, leaving vulnerable species without protection. Restricted access to protected areas has further limited research and conservation activities, while increased human movement and resource pressure are placing additional strain on fragile ecosystems. Experts warn that even short-term disruptions could reverse years of progress, especially for species already at risk of extinction.

At the same time, war-driven pollution is compounding the crisis. Airstrikes, industrial fires, and infrastructure damage are releasing toxic chemicals, heavy metals, and smoke into the environment. These pollutants contaminate water, soil, and air, accumulating in living organisms through bioaccumulation. Over time, this can result in reduced reproduction, weakened immunity, and higher mortality rates among wildlife. Birds and small mammals are particularly vulnerable to toxic exposure, while aquatic species suffer from contaminated water sources.

Environmental experts caution that the long-term impacts of this conflict may persist for decades, affecting both biodiversity and human communities dependent on coastal resources. The situation highlights the far-reaching ecological consequences of warfare, emphasizing the urgent need for environmental protection measures even amid geopolitical tensions.