

Goa Forest Department-Center for Wilderness Medicine workshop

Date: 01/07/2021, 10:00am

Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa



The first week of July is celebrated as Vanamahostava, a celebration of our forests, which Goa has a great wealth of. This year, on the first of July the festival focused on the frontline workers in human-wildlife conflict-the snake rescuers. A workshop was organised in Cotigao wildlife sanctuary by the forest department to reinforce good practices and to better equip them to perform their role as first responders.

Presided over by the ACF, Mr Damodar Salelkar, an interactive session was held with the rescuers, led by researchers, doctors and conservationists.

The session was declared open by the DCF, followed by a round of introductions and a preliminary discussion on their concerns and expectations.

Goa Forest Department-Center for Wilderness Medicine workshop



Mr Benhail conducting the introductory session.

More than a rescuer

Mr. Benhail Antao, a conservationist, led the discussion, addressing their concerns while explaining the multi-faceted role that they play in the field, as snake rescuers, leaders, role models, first responders and educators. The “Big Four” were introduced with a screening of “4 deadliest snakes of India” by Evanescence studios. The importance of good rescue practices was emphasized, to not only maintain control of the situation but also to ensure their safety and that of the people and the snake.

Goa Forest Department-Center for Wilderness Medicine workshop



Screening of “Four deadliest snakes of India”

Good, bad and dangerous

Mr Aaron Fernandes, a herpetologist, projected videos of good and bad rescue practices highlighting the dangers associated with such practices. He focused on the importance of personal safety as well as the safety of those involved in the situation.



Videos of bad rescue practices and the dangers associated with them.

Goa Forest Department-Center for Wilderness Medicine workshop

First response

The Centre for wilderness medicine, KMC Manipal, was called upon to offer training in first response and CPR in the event of a snake bite. This was conducted by Dr Freston Marc Sirur and Dr Vrinda lath, beginning with a stepwise approach from scene safety, evidence recording to securing the patient and transferring to definitive treatment. Patient positioning, airway protection and the importance of urgent hospitalization were explained and concluded with a demonstration and practice of hands-on CPR. The do's and don'ts in the management of snake bite were emphasized.



Hands on CPR training by Dr Freston and Dr Vrinda

A good rescue

The final session was a demonstration of snake rescue by Mr Alex Carpenter, a conservationist and snake rescuer, introducing four snakes, two of “Big Four” venomous snakes, Indian cobra and Russell’s Viper which are most often involved in human snake conflict. He emphasized the importance of taking responsibility, controlling the situation and planning. “A good rescue is one where the cobra doesn’t open its hood”, he said.

Goa Forest Department-Center for Wilderness Medicine workshop



Mr Alex Carpenter demonstrated good practices while rescuing snakes.



ACF, Mr Damodar Salelkar addressing the gathering

The importance of snakes

He then proceeded to introduce two non venomous snakes that are often involved in conflict situations- Whitaker's boa and Rat snake, which are not only harmless but extremely important for the local ecosystem and urged the rescuers to educate people about their importance and mitigate conflict situations that arise.

Goa Forest Department-Center for Wilderness Medicine workshop

Response

The discussion was officially closed with an address by the ACF, reiterating the important points of the discussion and urging them to better equip themselves to handle such situations. Before breaking for a sumptuous lunch, the rescuers eagerly engaged in a question and answer session, expressing their wish to have more such discussions and follow up sessions that would help them to better hone their skills.