

Every organization has a public profile, but behind this profile is a professional support system of people who give the organization its name. They undertake the most important task, that of binding people together and building a team that executes the work, these reflecting the organization's public profile. J.C. Daniel was that person at the BNHS, and much more. In every matter, both official and personal, the dedication of JC or JCD, as he was known among his peers, was unique.

Jivanayakam Cyril Daniel was born in 1927 in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, and brought up in Trivandrum. From an early age, his parents inspired in him a curiosity in the natural world. He completed his post graduation in Zoology in 1950 from Madras University. Fresh out of college, an over-enthusiastic young JC applied for the post of Curator in the BNHS, but was appointed as a Research Assistant instead. However, little did he know that with this he would in future be dedicating more than 60 years of his life to the organization, in various capacities –as Editor of the *JBNHS* and *Hornbill*, Curator, Director, Honorary Secretary, a member of the Governing Council, and finally the Vice President of the Society.

Post-Independence, J.C. Daniel witnessed the horrendous early decades in which poaching and destruction of prime habitats was rampant and unhindered. Hunting laws were openly flouted, and as India struggled to cope with gargantuan socio-economic problems, wildlife concerns took a serious hit. In this scenario emerged some sensitive Indian wildlife scientists, many of them mentored by J.C. Daniel. Daniel's deepest concern was the conservation of nature. The Maharaja of Surguja's slaughter of the last three Indian



J.C. Daniel Naturalist, Editor & Administrator

Cheetahs in 1949 made a tremendous impact on him. His considered view was that species restricted to a small area need more attention than species like the Tiger (incidentally, his paper on the tiger 'The Tiger in India: An enquiry - 1968-69' 1970 *JBNHS* Vol. 67(2) provided the impetus for the Government-initiated

Project Tiger launched in 1973), or the Leopard which were spread over a vast landscape. He drew attention to the plight of the Asiatic Lion *Panthera leo persica* of Gir, Tiger, Wild Buffalo, Tiger, Nilgiri Tahr, Saltwater Crocodile, Hangul *Cervus canadensis hanglu* in



An administrator, editor, curator, and much more, J.C. Daniel dedicated more than 60 years of his life to the Society



J.C. Daniel (centre) at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, during radio collaring operations, 1987

Dachigam, Manipur Brow-Antlered Deer *Panolia eldii eldii* in Manipur, and the hard-ground Barasingha *Rucervus duvaucelii branderi* in Kanha, which needed immediate and intensive attention. As Principal Investigator of some research projects of the BNHS from the 1980s till his demise, he showed the way for BNHS research and conservation programmes on endangered species, including the Asian Elephant, Jerdon's Courser

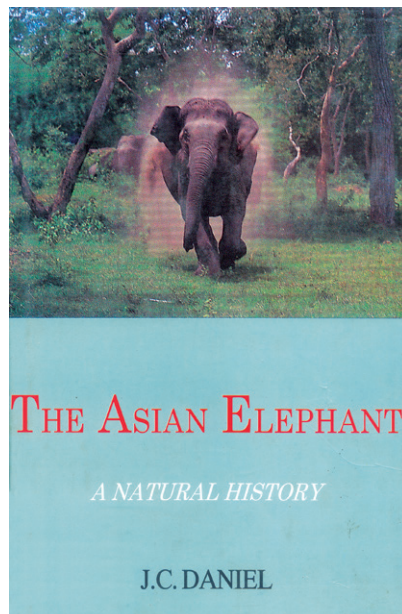
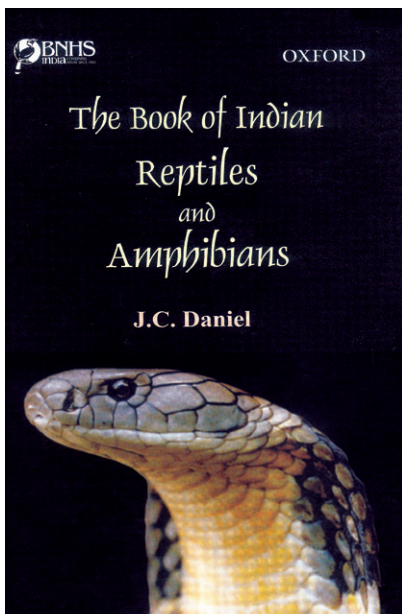
Rhinoptilus bitorquatus, and birds of prey and endangered habitats like Point Calimere, Eastern Ghats, high ranges of the Western Ghats, and peninsular forests in Bastar, among others.

Daniel was very particular about documentation and gave great importance to archiving information, as he believed that data collected in research funded by public money should serve society, and it was

crucial to make it accessible to future users. BNHS young scientists and staff gained from being urged by him to write scientific papers and popular articles, and to record their data with photographs. He saw these as tools to reach the general public, to generate awareness and gain support for BNHS's conservation programme. He never said a 'no' to anyone, however junior, who came to him with a manuscript; he would religiously peruse and promptly redraft, but careless grammatical errors annoyed him.

Daniel's contributions of scientific notes and papers to *JBNHS* ranged in subject from amphibians to whales. As the Editor of a notable series 'FIELD GUIDE TO THE AMPHIBIANS OF WESTERN INDIA' in four parts between 1963-1989 (the fourth part co-authored by A.G. Sekar) served as building blocks for his most cherished publication *THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS* (2002), which inspired young scientists in the BNHS and elsewhere. Yet another iconic publication by him was *BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT - A FIELD GUIDE* (2011) published by the BNHS, on which he worked for 10 years. Some of his other books included *A WEEK WITH ELEPHANTS* (1995), *THE LEOPARD IN INDIA* (1996), *A CENTURY OF NATURAL HISTORY* (1983), and *NATURAL HISTORY AND THE INDIAN ARMY* (2009). His 1996 revision of Sálím Ali's *THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS* provided valuable additions to the classic original, and it remains a bestseller till date, despite several great new Indian bird books.

As Member of the Steering Committee and Regional Representative (Western Region), Indian Board for Wildlife, Government of India; Member, Governing Council, Wildlife Institute of India; Member, Programme

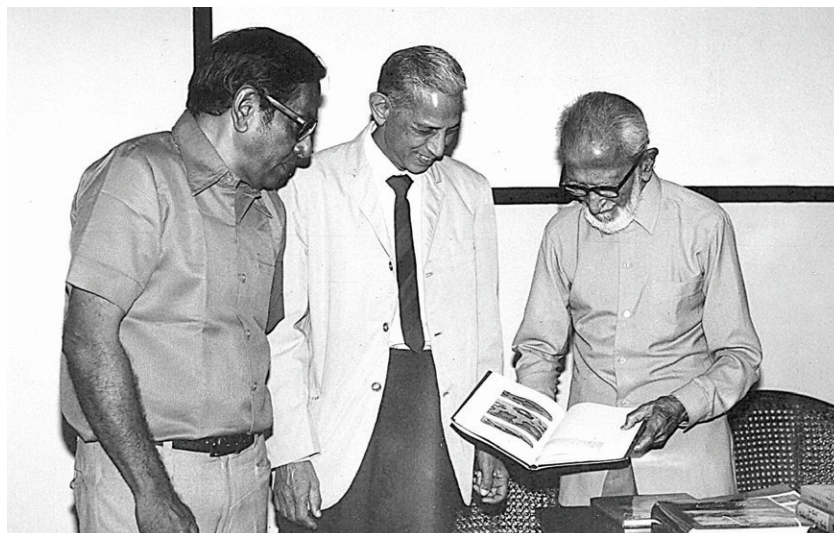


J.C. Daniel was particular about documentation and emphasized the need for archiving information as books, journal papers, and magazine articles

Advisory Committee, Animal Ecology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India; Vice Chairman, Species Survival Commission, World Conservation Union; Member, Indian National Council for WCU (World Conservation Union; Chairman, Asian Elephant Specialist Group, SSC, World Conservation Union; Member of the specialist groups on Primates, Asian Elephant, Crocodile, Snakes, and Asian subcontinent group on amphibians and reptiles; and Member, Governing Council, Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, he lost no opportunity to voice BNHS's conservation concerns at every scientific forum.

As a Member of the Standing Committee, Indian Board for Wildlife, a rare courage marked his recommendations. Yet his despair at the virtual deafness of the powers that be may have goaded him to name his book CASSANDRA OF CONSERVATION after the mythological Greek prophetess of doom, whom nobody believed. Anyone who reads the Viewpoints (*Hornbill* editorials) compiled therein cannot fail to acknowledge the wisdom and relevance of his words. These editorials became synonymous with the voice of BNHS in its mission of research, nature conservation, and awareness.

J.C. Daniel was awarded many times for his contributions and remarkable role in the nature conservation movement in India. He was conferred the Peter Scott Award for Conservation Merit in 1988, Award of Kerala Agricultural University in 1989, the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar in 1997, the Sanctuary-ABN Amro Lifetime Service to Conservation Award in 2000, and the Distinguished



Release of THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES, with A.N.D. Nanavati and Sálim Ali in 1983

Service Award from the Society for Conservation Biology in 2007. This well-deserved glory shone equally on BNHS, the institution that he fostered with lifelong dedication. In recognition of his contribution, he was nominated as an Honorary Member of the Bombay Natural History Society in 1991.

JC the disciplinarian was legendary. He, like Sálim Ali, was



J.C. Daniel autographing BIRDS OF INDIAN SUBCONTINENT – A FIELD GUIDE, for his admirers

known for his punctuality, and late comers had to be ready to face a severe scolding. He would be the first to arrive and last to leave Hornbill House. But unlike many 'strict' bosses, he led by example, never enforcing a rule that he would not apply to himself. Yet he was approachable and ever ready to extend a helping hand to any staff in need. He treated the staff as his extended family and said that there is a reason why we call it Hornbill 'House'. To those who worked under him, he was more like a grand old patriarch.

For Daniel, retirement was never an option. Long after his retirement, he remained deeply involved in the affairs of the Society. He was diagnosed with cancer in August 2011, after the launch of his last publication BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT – A FIELD GUIDE. Even in those last days, when staff visited him in the hospital, his first question would be "How is work at the BNHS?" Such was his dedication. To him nature was the most beautiful thing, a treasure trove that we need to safeguard – for ourselves and for the coming generations. ■