

HORNBILL

DISCOVER THE LIVING WORLD

JULY-SEPTEMBER, 2019



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Water Crisis: “Today’s Myth, Tomorrow’s Reality”

I hope you enjoyed reading our latest insightful issue on Human-Wildlife Conflict, another addition to our series of thematic special issues of *Hornbill*. The present issue is a regular number that features articles on natural history written by members.

Monsoonal flora is in full bloom and you must have enjoyed the nature trails arranged by our Programmes team to Kaas, Valley of Flowers, and Sanjay Gandhi National Park to explore the magic of the south-west monsoon. Monsoon brings with it another priceless commodity – fresh water, which has been abused by all of us for decades. The recent UN convention to combat desertification (UNCCD COP 14) held in New Delhi clearly sent alarm signals regarding our vulnerability to climate unpredictability. The state of our water resources, be it surface or ground water, is precarious and it is a frightening thought that all future wars will be fought over water. Most of the deteriorating impacts on our wetlands are human induced, be it unplanned and unscientific land use that enhances climate unpredictability, or any other; the reasons will be many. It is time we realize that our water and food security eventually depends completely on our immediate actions to save water and its catchment forests. If we do not get our act together to save every drop of fresh water, before it is too late, we will have lost the opportunity for remorse too.

Another issue that will dominate debates among government and conservation groups is a paradigm shift in the way governments are looking at infrastructure development. Personally, I feel that the debate is not about development; it is about how we go about it. The current discourses virtually ignore wildlife, and moreover, the issues are no longer restricted to development projects outside protected areas. Development of all kinds, e.g., linear infrastructure like roads, highways, transmission lines, canals, passing through protected areas, is now the focus of debates. Such short-sighted approaches will only fragment forests further and bring human-wildlife conflict to epic proportions. But with the growing aspirations of the 1.2 billion strong human population, choices for sustainable development and alternative models of development are tough. Thus, population control again needs to be the thrust agenda for governments.

But all is not lost. There are some very positive developments. Conservation breeding of vultures, great Indian bustard, lesser florican, green avadavat, and Finn’s weaver is a case to rejoice. Many will say – it is too late or too little. But I feel it is better late than never or nothing. Launch of the Central Asian Flyway Action Plan aims to work on saving migratory birds and critical wetlands along the flyway, as well as to develop bird sensitivity tools. And the Prime Minister’s recent pitch to ban single use plastic is something we all should embrace.

I hope you have registered to attend the BNHS International Conference on ‘Wetlands, Migratory Waterbirds, and Flyways of Asia’ from November 18–22, 2019 at Lonavala, Maharashtra. Please visit the website <https://cwamwaf.in/conference/> for registration. There





It is necessary that we recognize the key role wetlands play for life on earth

are now only 50 seats available for registration. Please do register if you have not already done so, to avoid disappointment.

BHĀRATNĀ PAKSHIYO, our much awaited Gujarati translation of Sálím Ali's THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS is now available for sale. Please visit this link https://shop.bnhs.org/public/product_details/143 on our website to order or gift a copy.

This quarter was laced with rather sad news. Our longstanding member and past Vice President Dr Pratap R. Saraiya passed away recently. The passing of Sally Walker and Dr P. Kannan has left a large void in the conservation community.

Deepak Apte



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