

HORNBILL

DISCOVER THE LIVING WORLD

JANUARY-DECEMBER, 2021



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Editorial...

December 2020, as I was getting ready to translocate myself from Dehradun to Mumbai, another translocation was going on in my vicinity in full scale. Tigers were being translocated to Rajaji Tiger Reserve from Corbett Tiger Reserve in order to supplement a dwindling population of two females in the western part of Rajaji. A male and a female were captured from Corbett and were released in Rajaji. It took me a couple of months to settle down in Mumbai. Both the tigers took even more time to settle down in their new home. By the time I gained a somewhat good understanding of BNHS, the tigers were well settled in their new home in western part of Rajaji Tiger Reserve. After several months of exploring the forest at a time when the entire world was on its knees due to the COVID pandemic, the two tigers met each other. A year has passed since then and we are patiently waiting to hear the good news about tiger cubs from Western Rajaji.

To set a new goal or to dream a new dream does not always come easily. Many of us feel too pressured at the workplace or stressed out at home to do this. But there are a few among us who allow nothing to dampen their zest, not even a COVID pandemic. They make the time to go out into the field, to travel to faraway places, and to share their experiences with our readers. The articles published in 2021 come from such brave-hearts. We have had some remarkable contributions to *Hornbill* since its inception, each adding to our knowledge of nature, and our present authors have continued this tradition with their informative and thought-provoking writings and unique images.

Environmental sustainability is a phrase commonly used in discussions on nature conservation and climate change. For those who believe that sustainability has become an overused, hackneyed term, an article on the effects of the 2004 tsunami is a must read. The waves that hit the Nicobar Islands during this disaster thrashed everything that came in their way, submerging most of the beaches and coastal villages. The devastation was enormous, but what followed was far more detrimental than the tsunami itself, which may be called an act of nature. Over the past two decades since 2004, the lifestyle of the Nicobarese moved away from their pre-tsunami self-sustaining systems, and now the negative impacts of this change have begun to show. Read more about it in this volume.

Invasive plants and animals have long been a cause for concern, as they threaten not just economic growth, but also disturb the ecological balance in natural habitats. Invasive species are now perhaps a far bigger threat to wildlife, more than illegal hunting or trapping. The world has recognised the urgent need to tackle invasive fauna



and flora, and there is a whole science that is trying to tackle this insidious problem. Physical removal of invasives is sometimes the only remedy, but it cannot be done on a continental scale. Besides, it provides no long-term solution, as can be seen in the persistent invasion by Water Hyacinth, that chokes and destroys our waterbodies. Yet, though failure to eradicate them is not uncommon, success is possible if there is timely intervention by governments to initiate the prevention, control, and eradication of aggressive exotic invaders, at least from protected areas. This volume of *Hornbill* has two articles on invasives; I hope you enjoy reading them.

Bird migration studies is one of the longest running projects of BNHS, the earliest record dating back to 1927. Our researchers have generated a large amount of data on both land birds and water birds, and now we have many bird enthusiasts contributing too, as they have realized the significance of Citizen Science in reporting colour banded/tagged birds along migrant flyways. For those who are new to birdwatching, please visit our website to know more about BNHS bird migration studies, and when you go into the field, do look out for interesting sightings. Please share your sightings of birds, especially tagged birds, with us at bands@bnhs.org. By reporting such sightings, you contribute crucial details that help to map the migration routes between breeding grounds, stopover points, and wintering grounds, as well as help our researchers to understand avian behaviour like mate pairing and family structure.

Many of the contributions to *Hornbill* are from participants in BNHS camps, who travelled to diverse wildlife destinations of their choice with our experts. An article on the quest for *Bugun liocichla* in Arunachal Pradesh is one such. The Northeast remains a lesser-known area for the vast majority of us, and until you can visit this paradise and see for yourself its unique biodiversity, do leaf through the article and enjoy the visuals. For the last many months, our Programmes department was not able to organize such camps as often as earlier. But in the words of Confucius, "It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop." We have begun conducting our trails and camps, with due precautions during the travel, and hope to resume their pre-pandemic frequency soon.

Would you like to see your written words and your photographs of Indian biodiversity find space in the *Hornbill*, your companion of the last many decades. Now is that time, as *Hornbill* edges towards its fiftieth birthday; let us all, researchers and nature enthusiasts, pledge that we will pen our experiences and share them, making this magazine a truly participative link with fellow BNHS members.

Bivash Pandav



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FEATURES

Mangroves, People, and Tsunami: The Nicobar paradigm

The tsunami of 2004 changed not only the boundaries of the Nicobar Islands, but also the lives of the people. The detrimental impacts of moving away from the pre-tsunami self-sustainable past have begun to show. Will the old days return to the islands? Read what **Nehru Prabakaran** has to say.



Sport Fishing in Bhutan

Is catch-and-release angling, involving the local people, the only way to save an iconic fish like the mahseer in its range in India? **A.J.T. Johnsingh** and **Sonam Wangchuk** believe that it is the way forward to conserve sport fish and their habitats in our country. Read on ...



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