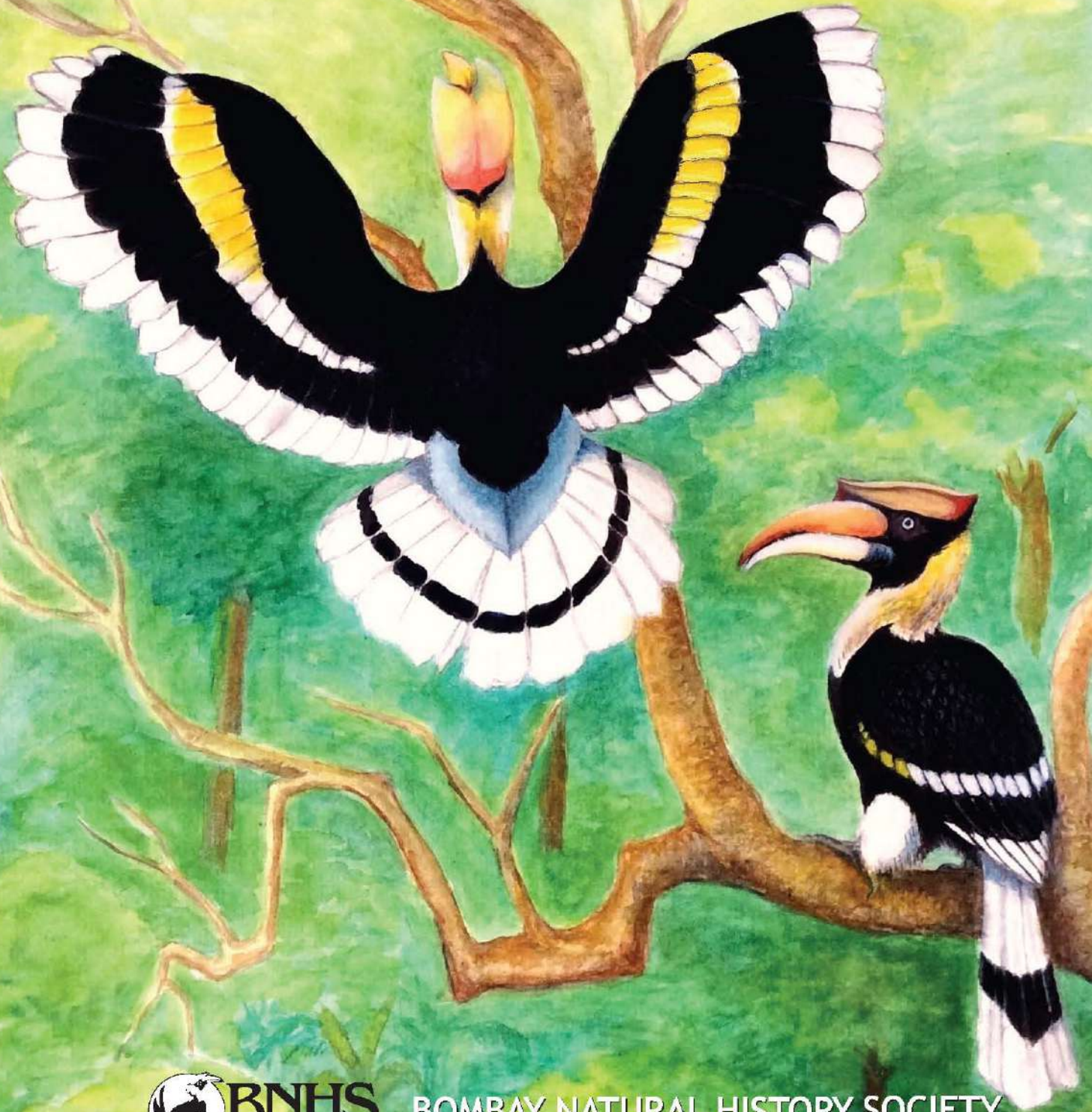


# HORNBILL

DISCOVER THE LIVING WORLD

JANUARY-MARCH, 2022



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## Editorial...


We are pleased to inform readers that with this issue of the *Hornbill*, we will be reverting to publishing four issues of the print copy each year. There was a slight delay in bringing out the current issue; however, we will strive to restore the magazine's periodicity of publication and dispatch schedule to that of the pre-pandemic days.

The front cover of this issue has been illustrated by Mr Ajai Saxena, an accomplished forester and a wildlifer *par excellence*. Before joining the Indian Forest Service, he had worked with the BNHS in the 1980s. We are glad that Mr Saxena decided to share his watercolour painting of the Great Hornbill with us and look forward to receiving such creative contributions from our esteemed members.

For the past one year, I have been travelling extensively in the Thar Desert. The roads in the Thar are well maintained and deliver a joyful ride to us, but they have become death traps for wildlife inhabiting this area. Roadkills of Hedgehog, Spiny-tailed Lizard, Bengal Monitor Lizard, Desert Fox, Chinkara, and a multitude of bird species are a common sight anywhere on the roads in the Thar. While safe keeping of our international borders needs good road connectivity, a good understanding of wildlife mortality hotspots along roads is also important to prevent such needless deaths. Designing a wildlife friendly linear infrastructure in a forest habitat is far easier than in a desert landscape, where the habitat looks more uniform and empty. Therefore, a critical understanding of roadkill hotspots is an absolute necessity for designing mitigation strategies.

One of the articles published in the current issue deals with my favourite protected area in India, Rajaji Tiger Reserve (RTR). Named after the last Governor-General of independent India – Sri C. Rajagopalachari – RTR has personally been a tremendous source of inspiration for me. A voluntary relocation of the Gujjar settlements from the area in early 2000s has completely transformed the wilderness of Rajaji for the better. I have had the privilege of monitoring the recovery of this wilderness for 17 continuous years. Spaces like Rajaji aptly demonstrate the resilience of nature; left to itself, the place bounced back within no time, immediately after the relocation of the human settlements.





There are very few successful conservation breeding programmes in India. The Pygmy Hog breeding programme led by Dr Goutam Narayan – a former BNHS scientist – is one such remarkable success story. Pygmy Hogs are bred in captivity and are being released in wildlife sanctuaries to increase wild populations and to ensure their survival. In this issue, the brilliant image of Pygmy Hog from Orang National Park by BNHS scientist Dr Biswajit Chakdar features two such animals released in the wild. The Pygmy Hog conservation breeding programme has undoubtedly brought the species back from the brink of extinction.

The issue also features interesting articles on life forms from the Deccan Plateau and semi-arid zones of the country. In another article, Leonard Rebello, a mechanical engineer by profession, has systematically documented the birds in his backyard.

BNHS has been in the forefront of the conservation movement in India and will continue to steer the movement through its research and interventions at the policy level. Ms Neha Sinha has been leading the policy cell of the BNHS and her recent interventions in the proposed amendments of Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 and Biological Diversity Act, 2002 are praiseworthy. We look forward to receiving inputs regarding conservation issues from our members, as well as other citizens of the country to continue our efforts in saving India's wilderness.

**Bivash Pandav**



# HORNBILL

January–March, 2022



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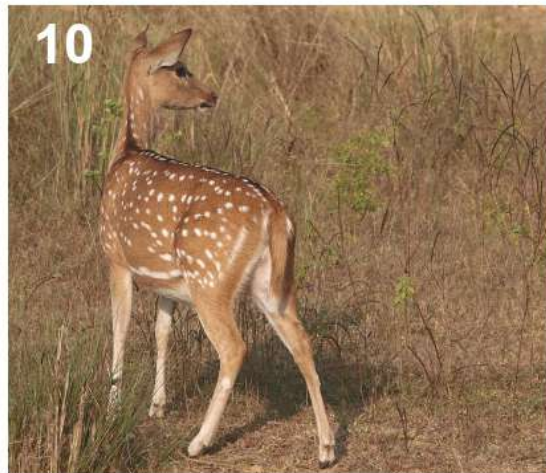
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no claims will be entertained.

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The story of an  
unpretentious, spiny  
neighbour

**Brawin Kumar and  
Saravana Karuna Moorthy** have  
undertaken a study on the South  
Indian Hedgehog to bridge the  
information gap on its habitat  
requirements, among other things,  
a crucial prerequisite for focused  
conservation action to save lesser  
known species. Read on ...



**Rajaji, the lesser-known  
cousin of Corbett**

Situated on the foothills of  
the Himalayan range,  
Rajaji National Park is an  
absolute feast for any  
nature enthusiast. It is  
therefore not unusual that  
**Gangadharan Menon** desires  
to keep returning to this green  
paradise over and over again.

## PHOTO FEATURE

**Deccan Plateau –  
the lateritic jewel of  
Maharashtra**  
**Shreyas S. Yadav** shares his  
trekking and nature experiences  
of the Deccan Plateau through his  
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images will inspire nature lovers to  
visit this biogeographic region of  
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