



# BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER, 2024

CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER



Dear Members,

Let me wish you a very happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year, 2025!

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Deputy Director and a leading scientist at BNHS, who also heads the BNHS Central Asian Flyway Programme, for winning the Sanctuary Wildlife Service Award 2024. BNHS is proud of him for this well-deserved recognition. By honouring such an outstanding scientist and conservationist, the credibility of this award is significantly enhanced. Dr Sathiyaselvam, who sustained an injury during a Sarus Crane tagging operation, underwent minor surgery and was unable to attend the award ceremony. We are pleased to share that he is recovering well.

This month, the BNHS Vulture Conservation Programme achieved another milestone by releasing 25 white-rumped vultures in Haryana from the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) in Pinjore. The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, Sh. Nayab Singh, spent nearly three hours at JCBC and lauded BNHS's over two decades of dedicated efforts toward vulture conservation. The event was also graced by Hon'ble Environment, Forests & Wildlife Minister Mr Rao Narbir Singh, ACS Environment, Forest & Wildlife Mr Anand Mohan Sharan (IAS), Secretary (Forest) Mr Atul Sirsikar, local MLA Smt. Shakti Rani Sharma, PCCF Mr Jagdish Chander and Chief Wildlife Warden Mr Vineet Garg.

In Assam, six rescued Himalayan vultures were released from the VCBC Rani, Kamrup, on December 13, 2024, in the presence of forest officers. These vultures were saved by the joint efforts of the forest department and BNHS in Kamrup and Lakhimpur districts.

The traditions established by passionate former BNHS Governing Council members like Dr Ashok Kothari continue to thrive under the guidance of our current trustees and Director. The 10th Rare Books Exhibition, a much-loved tradition, was successfully organised in collaboration with McGill Library and Collections, McGill University (Canada). Hosted at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) in Mumbai from December 17–22, 2024, the exhibition showcased a stunning collection of rare and antique books on natural history, wildlife, and the environment. Highlights included rare first editions by renowned naturalists such as Patrick Russell (1801), John Gould (1850–1873), and Nathaniel Wallich (1832). Hand-illustrated field guides and exquisite illustrations, particularly from Gould's *THE BIRDS OF ASIA* and James Forbes's *ORIENTAL MEMOIRS* (1813), were a delight for visitors.

Other noteworthy events this month included:

- The BNHS Naturalist Training and Leadership Course
- A sapling plantation initiative at BNHS-VCBC Bhopal in memory of the victims of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy
- A Wader Identification Trail at T.S. Chanakya Wetland, Navi Mumbai
- Training programmes for forest staff in Nashik, Maharashtra, focusing on bird identification and migration studies, organized by BNHS-EIACP
- A waste management campaign at Film City led by 100 BNHS-TCS volunteers

Special appreciation goes out to our VCBCs and Bird Migration Study Centres for their capacity-building initiatives for frontline forest staff. Regular training sessions for state forest training institutes have been particularly impactful, as seen in the monthly newsletter.

I am also thrilled to share that BNHS has signed two MoUs with the Mangrove and Marine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (MMBCF), Mumbai, for coastal projects. These include a study on the Charru Mussel along Mumbai's west coast and the large-scale production and sea ranching of the vulnerable Indian seahorse *Hippocampus kuda* in Maharashtra. We anticipate significant outcomes from our marine team in these projects. Team from TVS company, platinum corporate member of BNHS who made their Hosur campus declared as Other Effective Conservation Measure (OECM) visited Hornbill House to explore the opportunities to work more closely.

In Rajasthan, Dr Sujit Narwade and his team are working closely with local communities to protect sacred groves (Orans) by equipping them with scientific knowledge. This aligns with the Hon'ble Supreme Court's recent order emphasizing the legal protection of Orans.

Our gratitude extends to BNHS's foreign members for their contributions. Special thanks to Neil Simons for his efforts in preparing an outreach and fundraising plan for BNHS. We have also created a dedicated WhatsApp group for our foreign members to enhance collaboration.

The Satpuda Landscape Tiger Partnership (SLTP), a consortium of 12 conservation NGOs focused on tiger conservation in central India, celebrated its 20th anniversary this year. BNHS is proud to be one of its founding partners.

The Indian Skimmer Project continues to excel in achieving its conservation goals. BNHS scientist Parveen Shaikh conducted a national Skimmer count on January 4–5, 2025.

I also commend our Membership Officer, Mr Asif Khan, for launching several initiatives, including the new BNHS-Seva (volunteering) initiative, which attracted 85 participants within just 10 days. I look forward to working with this passionate BNHS-Force in the New Year.

Former BNHS Director Dr Asad Rahmani recently visited Hornbill House during the launch of his memoir, *LIVING WITH BIRDS*, at Kitab Khana in Mumbai. This inspiring book encourages birders to go beyond birdwatching and actively engage in habitat conservation, and I highly recommend it.

We were also delighted to welcome a young author and BNHS student member Katyayani Mahurkar, who donated her books, *MY TRYST WITH BIRDS* and *A POLAR BEAR TALE*, to BNHS.

Please explore the Systema Naturae section in the latest *Hornbill* magazine and consider contributing to the BNHS 150-Year Omnibus collection. If you have not yet completed the online form for the Life Members Yearbook, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/12gPTSyTs9P2khue7>. For assistance, feel free to reach out to our central teams via email, and don't forget to share event photos and brief write-ups with Mr Gopi Naidu ([g.naidu@bnhs.org](mailto:g.naidu@bnhs.org)).


Thank you for staying connected, and I am always available at [director@bnhs.org](mailto:director@bnhs.org).

Kishor Rithe

Director, Bombay Natural History Society

## Dr P. Sathiyaselvam receives the Wildlife Service Award 2024

Our senior scientist Dr P. Sathiyaselvam received the Wildlife Service Award 2024 at the Sanctuary Wildlife Awards presented by the DSP Mutual Fund. He was honoured with this award for his contributions in the field of avian research, wildlife conservation, and policy development. He has been instrumental in shaping wildlife policies and fostering international collaborations for the protection of migratory species along the Central Asian Flyway and safeguarding whale, shark and turtles. Dr Sathiyaselvam has ringed over 20,000 birds (over 300 species). His work has led to the creation of the Centralised Database System for bird ringing. He was one among those who helped develop the National Action Plan for Migratory Birds and their habitats along the Central Asian Flyway, as he did for the National Marine Turtle Action Plan (2018–2023). He is currently the Deputy Director and Head of the Wetlands and Flyways Programme at the BNHS. ■



**DSP**  
MUTUAL FUND

**Dr. P. Sathiyaselvam**  
**SANCTUARY WILDLIFE SERVICE AWARD 2024**  
*Zoologist, Avian and Wetland Conservationist, Policy Specialist*

**Sanctuary**  
NATURE FOUNDATION

## BNHS and Mangrove Foundation Collaborate on Coastal and Marine Conservation in Maharashtra



Director BNHS (L) exchanging MoU with S.V. Ramarao (R), APCCF, Mangrove Cell and Executive Director, Mangrove Foundation

In a significant step toward protecting Maharashtra’s coastal and marine ecosystems, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and the Mangrove Foundation of Maharashtra have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This collaboration will spearhead two pioneering projects aimed at conserving the state’s rich biodiversity.

One project focuses on investigating an invasive mussel species recently identified along the mudflats of Vashi-Sewri-Nhava. Researchers will map the species’ distribution across Mumbai and assess its ecological impact on the region’s sensitive marine habitats.

The second initiative, a first-of-its-kind in India, centres on seahorse conservation breeding in the Sindhudurg district. This groundbreaking project aims to develop sustainable breeding and ranching techniques for

seahorses while involving local communities in conservation efforts through awareness and engagement programmes. The MoU highlights the importance of collaborative action in biodiversity monitoring, habitat restoration, stakeholder capacity building, and public awareness campaigns. By combining expertise and resources, BNHS and the Mangrove Foundation aim to establish sustainable conservation practices and ensure the resilience of Maharashtra’s coastal and marine ecosystems. ■

## BNHS Hosts 10th Rare Books Exhibition in Mumbai



BNHS hosted its 10th Rare Books Exhibition at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai, in collaboration with McGill Library and Collections, McGill University (Canada), from December 17–22, 2024. The exhibition, showcasing rare manuscripts and antique books on natural history, wildlife, and the environment, was inaugurated by Mrs Pheroza Godrej, President of National Society for the Friends of Tree.

Visitors explored first editions by renowned naturalists like Patrick Russell and John Gould, hand-illustrated field



guides, and exquisite depictions of flora and fauna. Dr Ashok Kothari, Chairman of the BNHS Library Committee, emphasized the exhibition’s importance in celebrating scientific heritage and inspiring conservation efforts. ■

## Helping Vadakheda DyCF CR in Management Planning

At the invitation of the Deputy Conservator of Forests (DyCF) in Sirohi, the BNHS team conducted a visit to the Vadakheda Conservation Reserve (CR). Declared a Conservation Reserve in



Dr Sujit Narwade with Ms Kasturi Sule (fourth from right), IFS, DyCF, Sirohi, Rajasthan

2022, Vadakheda was previously managed as a grassland. The team provided key recommendations to enhance the management plan, focusing on habitat restoration, grassland development, rotational grazing, and ecosystem protection. Key initiatives include:

- Removing invasive *Prosopis juliflora*
- Mitigating threats from free-ranging dogs
- Installing bird flight diverters on powerlines
- Identifying wildlife corridors
- Establishing a rescue centre for injured wildlife

Monitoring and research programmes are crucial to assess the impacts of the conservation efforts. Systematic data collection will guide strategies that enhance biodiversity and ecosystem health. ■

## Collaborating with RSBB to Designate a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS) in Rajasthan



Dr Sujit Narwade (R) with Shri Arbind Jha (L), DyCF, IFS, (RSBB) at Shokaliya, Ajmer, Rajasthan

In partnership with the Rajasthan Biodiversity Board (RSBB), BNHS is spearheading efforts to designate the first Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS) in Rajasthan's Ajmer-Kekri area, focused on protecting the Critically Endangered lesser florican. Key actions include:

- Developing a proposal in collaboration with multiple departments.
- Creating a People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) and establishing Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) in local panchayats.
- Conducting awareness programmes to build community capacity.
- Implementing habitat conservation plans.
- Promoting florican-friendly farming practices.
- Controlling free-ranging dogs and restoring habitats.
- Engaging local communities through the Kharmor (florican) Mitra Network. ■

## Strengthening Conservation Ties

Naresh Yadav, a Family Life Member of BNHS since 2012, visited the great Indian bustard (GIB) Project field station in Khetolai on December 15, 2024. A retired Chief General Manager from SBI, Yadav had supported projects for Indian skimmers and black-bellied terns during his tenure. He engaged with the BNHS team in Khetolai, discussing ongoing conservation efforts and reflecting on past projects. His visit underscores his dedication to BNHS's conservation mission. ■



## Researching Painted Storks in Bhuj with Sahjeevan

BNHS, in collaboration with the NGO Sahjeevan, is investigating the decline of painted stork breeding colonies in Bhuj, Gujarat. Historically significant breeding grounds for these storks have seen no activity in recent years. The study aims to:

- Identify factors behind the decline.
- Restore wetland habitats to attract breeding colonies.
- Develop interventions to ensure the sustainability of local ecosystems.

This initiative will contribute to wetland conservation and the revival of painted stork populations. ■



## Charri Dhand Conservation Reserve, Gujarat

Charri Dhand, a vital wetland in the Kutch Desert, transforms during dry seasons into a prime birdwatching destination. This ecosystem supports diverse flora, including grasses like *Aeluropus*, *Cyperus*, *Cressa critica*, and *Soida* spp., essential for wildlife resilience in saline conditions. BNHS learned that proposed land use changes, such as the installation of solar plants and windmills in the surrounding areas, threaten this fragile ecosystem, highlighting the need for sustainable development. Consequently, the BNHS team visited the site to assess the situation on the ground. ■



## Sanganara Forest (Gujarat): Community-Led Conservation



Covering 1,200 hectares, Sanganara Forest is home to species such as chinkara, leopard, nilgai, and caracal. This community-managed site includes 81 hectares of Gauchar land for communal grazing. However, overgrazing and invasive plants like *Prosopis juliflora* challenge sustainability. Community involvement in conservation, bolstered by traditional camel raising and eco-tourism, highlights the forest’s potential for ecological preservation. Considering the rising anthropogenic pressure due to the upcoming projects, the local community invited BNHS to visit the site and provide recommendations for its conservation. ■

## Rankhar Conservation Reserve: A Biodiversity Hotspot in Rajasthan

A recent BNHS survey recorded impressive bird populations, including 10,000 great white pelicans, 8,000 lesser flamingos, and 2,000 common cranes in the Rankhar Conservation Reserve spanning 7,200 hectares on the northwest edge of the Great Rann of Kachchh. It is a saline and sandy habitat rich in birdlife. The presence of nilgai and a wild ass highlights the area’s ecological importance. However, the invasive *Prosopis juliflora* and increased human activity pose significant threats. The BNHS team visited the site to understand the on ground situation and provided recommendations to the DyCF office in Jalore, Rajasthan, to manage these challenges, which are crucial to preserving the reserve’s biodiversity. ■



## The Royal Family of Kutch transfers Chadva Rakhal to the State



Located in the arid Kutch Desert, Chadva village features a unique landscape of scrubland and agricultural fields. The region’s undulating terrain, seasonal rivers, and native vegetation contribute to its ecological diversity. Despite the proliferation of invasive *Prosopis juliflora*, native scrub forests provide habitats for local wildlife and sustain the livelihoods of villagers’ dependent on agriculture. Recently, the royal family of Kutch transferred ownership of the 4,900-hectare Chadva Rakhal forest block to the state government, marking a significant step in biodiversity conservation. The BNHS team visited the site to examine the conservation work done by the royal family to save the habitat. ■

## Rescue and Release of Himalayan Vultures

Six Himalayan vultures rescued in Assam were released into the wild on December 13, 2024, after successful rehabilitation at VCBC, Rani. The release, attended by forest officials and BNHS biologists, was a moment of triumph for conservation efforts.

Additionally, a black-eared kite rescued earlier was also released alongside the vultures. This effort highlights the importance of scientific rehabilitation and demonstrates a strong commitment to wildlife conservation. ■



BNHS President interacting with local villagers about the vulture release

## Vultures to be released in Kaziranga

Forest Department of Assam and the BNHS are working on the release of slender-billed and white-rumped vultures in Kaziranga Tiger Reserve. Director Kishor Rithe and President Mr Praveensingh Pardeshi visited Kaziranga and the proposed site on the fringe of the Tiger Reserve along with the forest staff. Mr Sachin Ranade, Centre Manager of VCBC Rani is working closely with the forest department to implement this project. Presently there are 46 slender-billed and 94 white-rumped vultures at VCBC Rani and we proposed to have regular releases every year. ■

## Vulture Release Programme at Pinjore, Haryana



The Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC), Pinjore, hosted a vulture release programme on December 17, 2024. The event was attended by Haryana's Chief Minister, Sh. Nayab Singh as Chief Guest, Mr Anand Mohan Sharan, IAS, ACS, EF&W, Environment, Forests & Wildlife Minister Mr Rao Narbir Singh and local MLA Smt. Shakti Rani Sharma among the other dignitaries.

Highlights included the release of critically endangered vultures, a keynote address by the Chief Minister emphasizing the ecological significance of vultures, and a guided tour showcasing JCBC's conservation efforts. Sh. Rao Narbir Singh addressed the audience, applauding JCBC's commendable efforts in vulture conservation

and underscored the importance of protecting vultures, which play a critical ecological role, and emphasized the state's commitment to environmental conservation. Mr Kishore Rithe, Director BNHS, gave a presentation on the detailed activities of JCBC through an engaging video. Mr Vineet Kumar Garg, IFS, PCCF & CWLW, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing heartfelt gratitude to the Chief Guest, and all stakeholders for their presence and continuous support.

The event reinforced the collaborative spirit between BNHS, the Haryana Government, and local leadership, underscoring the vital role of vultures in maintaining ecological balance. ■

## Forest Guards Visit Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre

On December 22, 2024, 24 forest guards from the Haryana Forestry Training Institute in Sohna, Gurugram, visited the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) in Pinjore as part of their Forestry Study Tour for the 2024–25 training course. The Centre Manager delivered an engaging presentation detailing the Society's pivotal role in vulture conservation.

The session emphasized the ecological importance of vultures, the threats they face, and conservation initiatives, including breeding techniques and habitat restoration. The forest guards gained valuable insights into the collaborative efforts required to protect critically endangered species and maintain biodiversity. ■



## Visit by DC Kamrup, Assam

On December 31, 2024, the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre at Rani was visited by the honourable District Commissioner (DC) Mr Mishra, IFS, accompanied by the Block Development officer Smt Renu Deori, Rani and Forest Range Officer (Rani) Smt Roji Barman.

The DC was briefed about the activities of the Vulture Centre by Mr Sachin Ranade, Centre Manager, VCBC Rani. The guests suggested to undertake a proactive programme to initiate a Vulture Restaurant in Kamrup. This programme would restore the natural balance by benefitting both vultures and villagers, vultures would get safe food and save efforts of villagers to bury animals.

The DC expressed his satisfaction and advised a district level meeting to advance the process. ■



## BNHS at The Habitats Trust Partners Meet 2024



**B**NHS participated in The Habitats Trust (THT) Partners Meet 2024, held on December 13 and 14, in New Delhi. This annual gathering serves as a platform for partner organizations to showcase their projects, share experiences, and discuss strategies for impactful conservation.

Representing BNHS, Parveen Shaikh and Niazul Hassan Khan highlighted their ongoing initiatives supported by THT, particularly focusing on the conservation of the endangered Indian skimmer & biodiversity monitoring and conservation with the Indian Army in Ladakh. These projects involve a multifaceted approach, including

scientific research, community engagement, and awareness campaigns to protect the iconic species and their habitats.

The meet provided an excellent opportunity for BNHS to present key achievements, such as the protection of nesting colonies of Indian skimmer at Chambal and improved awareness among stakeholders at Ladakh. It also facilitated meaningful exchanges with other conservation partners, fostering collaboration and the sharing of innovative ideas to tackle pressing ecological challenges. BNHS extends its gratitude to The Habitats Trust for providing a platform to amplify conservation efforts. ■

## Bird Training for Nashik Forest Staff

**O**n December 12–13, 2024, BNHS conducted a training programme for frontline forest staff in Nashik, Maharashtra, focused on bird identification and migration study techniques. The two-day workshop held at Gangapur Forest Nursery included engaging presentations and hands-on activities. Mr Nandkishor Dudhe delivered insightful sessions on bird migration study techniques and the Asian Waterbird Census while Mr Abhinav Nair, Junior Project Fellow (JRF), conducted a session on bird identification and discussed the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) National Action Plan, emphasizing the role of state governments in its implementation.

Interactive elements during the training programme included a bird identification game led by Mr Nikhil Ghadigaonkar (JRF), a session on the CAF Maharashtra Vision and activities conducted by Mr Mohijit Podder (JRF), and a workshop on wild bird handling techniques and precautions, presented by Mr Ganesh Pallela



The event was attended by active participation from 27 members of the forest department, including Forest Guards, Range Forest Officers (RFOs), and Assistant Conservators of Forests (ACFs).

The programme concluded with a birdwatching trail at Gangapur Dam, where participants observed species such as ruddy shelducks and small pratincoles. A total of 27 species, comprising 426 individuals, were recorded. ■

## Training Programme on Bird Conservation in Vaishali Forest Division, Bihar

**T**he BNHS conducted a specialized training for frontline staff and Pakshi Mitras in Vaishali Forest Division, Bihar, focusing on bird identification, monitoring, and migration studies. Inaugurated by Mr Amit Kumar, DFO, Vaishali, the programme highlighted the ecological importance of bird conservation.

The interactive training included sessions on species identification, survey techniques, and migration studies, along with a practical bird-ringing demonstration. A subsequent field session reinforced participants' skills, equipping them to contribute effectively to bird conservation efforts. ■



## Webinar on Avian Conservation for Course Participants

An online webinar was conducted on December 8 for participants of the Basic Course in Ornithology and Leadership Course in Biodiversity Conservation. Dr Kazveen Umrigar delivered an insightful talk titled “Providing Assistance in the Avian Crisis”, which guided participants on how to contribute to bird conservation. Over 40 attendees benefited from the session. ■

## BNHS Naturalist Training at Airoli Mangrove Center, Navi Mumbai

The second session of the BNHS Naturalist Training and Leadership Course (3rd cohort) commenced December 7, with an exploration walk at the Airoli Mangrove Interpretation Center, led by naturalist Pradip Patade. Participants observed diverse species and engaged in discussions about Mumbai’s coastal biodiversity. Later, the group moved to the Conservation Education Centre (CEC) for a session by naturalist Shardul Bajikar, focusing on the principles of the ‘Leave No Trace’ programme. Participants discussed the importance of responsible behaviour in natural spaces.

Field activities included retrieving camera traps, revealing exciting footage of species like leopards, sambar deer, chital, wild pigs, and the elusive small Indian civet. The day concluded with sessions on plant-animal interactions and reptiles and amphibians, followed by a campus walk in search of frogs and geckos. The final day began with a forest trail led by Dr Anish Andheria, President of the Wildlife Conservation Trust, and expert botanist Dr Santosh Yadav. Their expertise enriched the participants’ understanding of biodiversity, culminating in thought-provoking discussions during an indoor session.

The workshop concluded with participants presenting their findings through posters and presentations. ■



## Field Visits for Botany and Ornithology Courses

On December 22, BNHS organized field visits for participants of the Basic Course in Botany and Ornithology. One group explored Jijamata Udyan in Byculla, renowned for its historic trees and botanical diversity, under the guidance of expert Dr Sweedle Cerejo. The other group visited T.S. Chanakya in Navi Mumbai, learning about critical bird habitats from expert Mr Nandkishor Dudhe. ■

## Bridging Knowledge for Red Panda Conservation in the Eastern Himalaya

Gangtok, Sikkim — WWF-India’s Eastern Himalaya Programme hosted a two-day workshop, “Bridging Knowledge and Practice for Red Panda Conservation in the Eastern Himalaya,” from December 9–10, 2024. Over 20 participants, including representatives from national organizations, forest staff, and WWF teams from Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and North Bengal, attended the event.

The workshop featured presentations by leading experts. Dr Sunita Pradhan of ATREE addressed knowledge gaps in red panda research, while Dr Damber Bista emphasized holistic approaches to conservation in human-dominated landscapes. Dr Anuradha P. from CCMB, Hyderabad, shared advancements in genetics and population assessments.

Moderated by Dr Rishi Kumar Sharma, the event also focused on community engagement, with Dr Rajat Bhargava, Assistant



Director, BNHS, discussing strategies to foster pro-conservation behaviors and combat poaching.

The workshop concluded with identifying key stakeholders and building a collaborative network to advance red panda conservation in the Eastern Himalayas. ■



## IES College of Architecture Visits CEC-Mumbai for Design Thinking Session

On December 01, 2024, 55 students and faculty members from IES's College of Architecture visited the BNHS Conservation Education Centre (CEC), Mumbai, for a design thinking session focused on supporting BNHS with innovative solutions. The session explored potential design ideas to address soil erosion, improve water retention, and create an effective signage system for the CEC.

Naturalists Shardul Bajikar, Bhushan Jadhav, and Meehir Pawar guided the group through the forest, engaging them in discussions about the region's unique ecological challenges.



The field interaction was followed by a presentation highlighting key conservation issues faced by the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP).

The students and faculty will now collaborate to develop project concepts based on their observations. They plan to return with detailed proposals and practical implementation strategies to contribute to the conservation efforts at CEC. ■



## Workshops on Biodiversity Management

The Bihar State Biodiversity Board recently organized training workshops for Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) members across Jamui, Bhagalpur, and Banka Forest Divisions in November and December 2024. Aimed at raising awareness of the Biodiversity Policy, Act, and Rules, the workshops also introduced the Public Biodiversity Register to local communities. A total of 460 participants benefited from these sessions.

Experts from Agriculture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, Horticulture, the Forest Department, and the Biodiversity Board enriched discussions with their insights. BNHS researcher Ms Vertika Patel delivered a key presentation on the role of birds in agriculture. ■



## BNHS Campaign Shows the Way of Waste Management at Film City

CEC-Mumbai, has launched a campaign urging Film City's administration to improve waste collection and disposal practices. While recognizing Film City's vital role in the entertainment industry and its economic contributions, BNHS stressed the need to mitigate its environmental impact.

As part of the campaign, 100 volunteers from TCS MAITREE organized a cleanup drive on December 15, 2024, along a road bordering CEC, Sanjay Gandhi National Park, and Film City. In just one hour, over 100 kilograms of waste, primarily plastic and glass bottles, were collected.

The initiative highlighted the detrimental effects of improper waste disposal, such as increased wild pig activity damaging native flora, and the presence of feral dogs in forest areas. BNHS urged Film City to take responsibility for reducing waste generation and ensuring eco-friendly disposal methods. ■



## Commemorating the Bhopal Gas Tragedy

On the 40th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy, the BNHS-VCBC Bhopal team organized a tree-planting drive to honour the memory of those who lost their lives in the 1984 disaster. The event was attended by Shri Lokpriya Bharti, I.F.S., District Forest Officer; Dr Arockianathan Samson, Centre Manager; and Mr. Sanjay Parihar, Research Biologist. Together, they planted trees as a gesture of remembrance and hope.

The drive reflects a pledge to create a safer, greener tomorrow while paying tribute to the enduring legacy of the tragedy. It serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of resilience and collective action in addressing past and present environmental challenges. ■



## Bird Banding Camp at Point Calimere Highlights Migratory Bird Conservation

BNHS conducted a Bird Banding Camp from November 28 to December 1, 2024, at its Bird Migration Study Centre in Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu. Participants, including researchers and enthusiasts, learned bird banding techniques and their role in tracking migrations and habitat health.

Highlights included spotting over 2,000 greater flamingos and a boat safari in the Muthupet lagoon. This hands-on experience reinforced the significance of conserving habitats critical to migratory species. ■



## BNHS Education and Conservation Research Centre at Bhisi, Tah-Chimur, Dist-Chandrapur

National Payment Corporation of India (NPCI) has sanctioned BNHS project to establish a Education and Conservation Research Centre at Bhisi in Chimur tahsil of Chandrapur district. The proposed centre will be a global facility for Nature Conservation. The centre will have an administration office, a training hall with attached two lavatories, a library and a reading room, kitchen and dining (cooking, washyard, toilets, etc.), two dormitories, three scientist residence rooms.

This centre will be set up for conceptualizing various ecological studies and training and building capacities of its staff and other stakeholders involved in wildlife conservation for ecological security and economic development of India. The work has already started and the first phase of construction will be over by March 2026. ■



### BNHS TEAM



Saurabh Dande (Community Officer)



Sahil Borkar (Site Supervisor)



Roshan Patil (Watchman)

## School and Community Awareness Initiatives, in Bihar

In December 2024, the BNHS Bird Ringing and Monitoring Station (BRMS) team conducted eight awareness programmes across Bhagalpur, Begusarai, Darbhanga, and Muzaffarpur districts in Bihar, reaching 477 students. Through engaging audio-visual sessions, students learned about wetlands, bird migration, and conservation.

Additionally, eight community awareness programmes in Muzaffarpur and Begusarai engaged 109 local participants in discussions about wetland conservation and the role of communities in protecting wild birds. ■



## BNHS Tree Walk Explores Rani Baug's Botanical Diversity

On December 8, 2024, BNHS hosted a Tree Walk at Rani Baug Botanical Garden, South Mumbai, inviting participants to explore diverse plant species. Guided by experts Dr Abhishek Satam and Dr Rajdeo Singh, attendees learned about indigenous and exotic trees, including the Baobab, Heaven Lotus Tree, and the Cacao Tree.

The event blended botanical knowledge with historical context, highlighting the garden's ecological and cultural value. ■



## Wader Identification Trail at Navi Mumbai Wetlands

On December 7, 2024, BNHS-EIACP conducted a wader identification trail at T.S. Chanakya Wetlands, Navi Mumbai, attracting 25 participants, including children, students, and birding enthusiasts. Led by Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, the event showcased species such as marsh sandpipers, glossy ibises, purple swamphens, and more.

Participants learned to identify birds by calls, colour patterns, and body features, documenting 51 species during the event. ■

## A Unique Learning Experience at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu

Located along Tamil Nadu's Coromandel Coast and overlooking the Bay of Bengal, Point Calimere is recognized as a vital habitat for shorebirds, drawing thousands of migratory birds annually. Since its establishment in 2008, the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre has served as a hub for research, conservation, and education on bird migration and habitat preservation.

This year, so far, BNHS has successfully conducted four batches of its Basic Course in Field Ornithology and Bird Migration Studies camps at its Centre in Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu. The three-day capsule courses have been attended by 50 participants – 26 men and 24 women – from across India ranging in age from young

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adults in their late teens from Bengaluru and Chennai to a spirited 71-year-old retired French professor from Agra. During the camps, the participants learnt essential techniques in bird migration studies, including bird trapping, and explored the rich ecosystems of Point Calimere.

The program is led by Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Deputy Director of BNHS, supported by course coordinator Mr S.

Sivakumar, and senior research fellows Mr Paul Antony B. and Ms Rose Francis. Contributions from Nagapattinam Forest Department members, Mr Ilanchezhiyan (Forester) and Mr Jawahar (Watcher), further enriched the experience of the participants.

One of the camp's highlights was the sighting of over 2,000 greater flamingos at Siruthalaikkadu, a spectacular moment for participants. ■



## CSR Activity with Worley India Pvt. Ltd.

CEC-Mumbai conducted Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities for Worley India Pvt. Ltd. employees in December. On December 7th, the activity focused on "Fireline Maintenance", an essential task for preventing forest fires during the dry season. Employees actively participated in clearing forest trails and then explored the Karvi and Leopard trails within the BNHS Nature Reserve. On December 14th, participants engaged in a trail demarcation and clean-up activity to ensure safe and clear pathways for forest visitors. Both sessions concluded with guided nature trails, leaving the 50+ participants with a sense of contribution toward forest conservation. ■



## Nature Trails and Educational Visits



CEC-Mumbai hosted a variety of nature trails and educational events throughout December 2024:

- Santacruz (West) Education Society Trust School (December, 7): A group of 38 students explored the BNHS Nature Reserve, learning about local flora and fauna from experienced naturalists.
- Comini Microschool (December, 13): Seven students participated in an intimate nature walk, discovering insects, birds, and the rich biodiversity of the area.
- Ramnarain Ruia College Life Science Department (December, 14): Thirty-eight students observed butterflies, birds, and forest plants, gaining insights into biodiversity and conservation.
- Gandhi Shikshan Bhavan's Sri I.J. Patel High School (21st December): Students enjoyed an immersive nature trail followed by an audio-visual presentation on the biodiversity of the BNHS reserve. ■

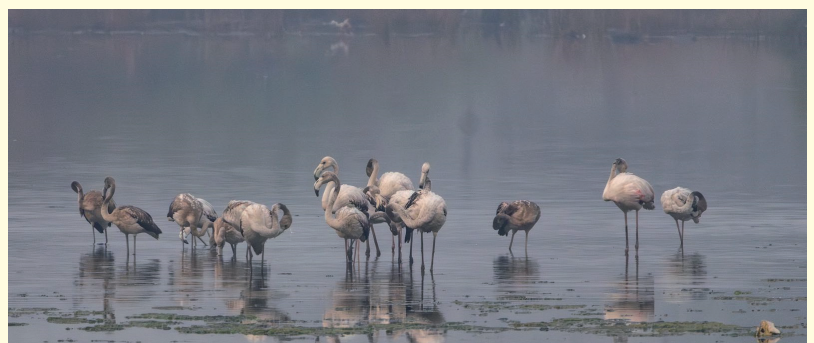


## Eco-Day Celebration

On December 8 CEC-Mumbai hosted a family group for an Eco-Day celebration, which included a nature trail through the reserve. Families, including children, parents, and grandparents, marvelled at butterflies, birds, and insects during their serene two-hour forest walk. ■

## Bird walk at TS Chanakya in Navi Mumbai

The BNHS Programmes department conducted a Bird Walk on December 22, at the wetlands near TS Chanakya Maritime Institute, Navi Mumbai. BNHS members welcomed the season's first Lesser & Greater Flamingos, with 10 & 55 individuals seen respectively. The group recorded 50 bird species in a couple of hours, including greater flamingos, indian golden oriole, siberian stonechat, tricolored munia, gulls, terns, sandpipers, and plovers. This educational trail emphasised the role of wetlands in ecological balance and the need for bird conservation. Such events deepen our understanding of wildlife and inspire collective efforts to protect these vital ecosystems. BNHS plans to organise more programmes at TS Chanakya in the near future. ■



## Workshop on Addressing the menace of free-ranging dogs in wildlife habitats of Ladakh

BNHS has been actively working in Ladakh since 2023 to address the escalating issue of free-ranging dogs and their detrimental impact on both wildlife and human populations. On November 23, 2024, BNHS Leh organized a one-day joint awareness workshop to discuss the challenges posed by free-ranging dogs and explore potential mitigation strategies.

The workshop was attended by Mr Pramod Jain (Chairman, New district committee), Mr B.M. Sharma (CWLW), Mr Mohd Ismail, Director AHD, Dr Stanzin Rabgias (CAHO), Mr Mandeep Mittal (IFS) Wildlife Warden, Leh (Wildlife Protection Department), Col. Carter, XIV Corps, Indian Army Ladakh, and dignitaries from the BNHS and The Habitats Trust. The representatives from the Wildlife Department Leh-Ladakh, the Animal Husbandry department Leh-Ladakh, the Indian Army, Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust, Ladakh Birds Club, WWF-India, Nature Conservation Foundation, Wildlife Institute of India, and the University of Ladakh also attended the workshop. The workshop highlighted the importance of a collaborative approach in identifying sustainable solutions to ensure the welfare of both wildlife and residents in Ladakh. ■



BNHS President (L) felicitating Mr B.M. Sharma (R), IFS, CWLW, Ladakh



## SGNP Bird Count


The SGNP Bird Count held on December 29, 2024, added remarkable observations to the counts' records. A winter migrant to India, the western marsh harrier *Circus aeruginosus* was spotted at the Bhindi Nala Transect in Yeoor. This species, commonly seen in marsh wetlands, occasionally ventures into




open areas near wetlands, making its sighting a notable addition to the park's bird diversity. During the count, 71 species were recorded across all transects.

In an unexpected highlight, volunteers on the Culvert 20 to Tulsi Dam transects encountered a leopard. This rare sighting was documented with photographs and videos by Members Sumrit Lahot and Dr Mita Gala, showcasing the coexistence of urban wildlife within SGNP's rich ecosystem. ■

# CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS CONSERVATION OF NATURE



## Big Cats Calendar 2025




Pravensingh Pardeshi

### MAR 2025

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
31					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

**Tiger**  
Maya raised more than 4 litters in her 12 years reign around Pandharpasuni (area with a meadow and a beautiful lake); this cub was her last litter, as competing males repeatedly tried to displace Maya's previous mates, sometimes killing current cubs to mate with Maya.




## Wall Calendar 2025

7 SHEETER SPIRAL BOUND  
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# BNHS in collaboration with INDIA POST

## Pre Exhibition Competition

### Wildlife in Maharashtra & Goa

Last date of submission  
10th January 2025



## Photography Competition

#### Rules and Regulations:

- The Participants must be over 18 years of age
- The participant must be from the state of Maharashtra & Goa & residing in the state of Maharashtra & Goa.
- The photograph submitted should depict the theme "Wildlife in Maharashtra & Goa".
- Only two entries are allowed per photographer.
- The photograph must be original and no watermark of any kind should be on the photograph
- The photograph must be of highest resolution possible.
- Photographs should be submitted in both hard copy and soft copy.
- The photograph could be in Landscape/Portrait mode.
- Photographs that have been digitally altered will be disqualified.
- Hard Copy of the Photographs should be submitted in the size 6x4 inches.

#### Judging Parameters:

- Images will be judged on originality, concept, technical excellence, composition, overall impact and artistic merit.
- In case of any dispute regarding the final selection of the photographs, the judge's decision will be treated as final.

#### Showcasing and Awards:

- 10 short listed Photographs would be used for releasing a pack of Picture postcards. Photo credit would be given.
- Three awards and seven certificates of appreciation would be presented.
- In case of any controversy on a matter not mentioned in the above regulations, the organizers will take an appropriate action.
- The organizer's word shall be final and binding.

#### Details of submission:

- Hard Copy of Photographs should be sent to following address through Speed Post only:  
Shri Ratnakar Topare, Secretary, Youth Promotion Committee, Mahapex 2025 & SSPO's Mumbai West Division, Dadar Head Post Office, Dadar, Mumbai 400 014.
- Soft Copy of Photographs should be sent to email ID : mahapex2025.entries@gmail.com

#### Details required:

A separate sheet of paper should be enclosed with the following details

- Name
- Age
- Profession (Students/Working)
- College/Company name
- Residential address with mobile no.
- Email
- Date of capturing of the photograph
- Camera details

Any entries received beyond the cut-off date (24:00 hrs on 05.01.2025) will be ineligible  
For further queries please contact Chairman, Youth Promotion Committee:  
Contact No. : 022-24150188 | Email ID : mahapex2025.entries@gmail.com

Visit  
**Mahapex 2025**  
22nd – 25th January, 2025  
(World Trade Centre),  
Mumbai

23rd January,  
BNHS Nature Quest and  
screening of BNHS Films

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Help us Preserve a Literary Treasure: Adopt a Rare Book

#### Introduction and Background

The BNHS Library holds a remarkable collection of rare books—treasures that house the wisdom of great thinkers from the past. These rare books are not just relics; they are a priceless heritage for humankind, preserving facts, ideas, and evidence on Natural History. These valuable resources are indispensable for present and future generations. Unfortunately, these literary gems face threats of deterioration due to climatic, physical, chemical, and biological factors. The loss of such irreplaceable materials would be devastating.

These rare books also contain crucial information about endangered flora and fauna, making them an important resource for students conducting research. The beautifully illustrated plates can be used for exhibitions in schools and colleges, and the wild stories in these books are excellent teaching aids for educators. By digitising these rare resources, we can make them more accessible for educational purposes and conservation awareness.

#### Why Your Support Matters

**Preservation:** Rare books are delicate and require expert conservation to prevent deterioration. Your donation will fund state-of-the-art techniques to preserve these literary treasures.

**Accessibility:** By adopting a rare book, you help make it accessible to scholars, students, and the public, ensuring its knowledge continues to inspire and educate.

**Legacy:** Your support ensures that these irreplaceable works will be preserved for future generations, keeping their historical and cultural significance alive.

#### How You Can Help

**Adopt a Book:** By contributing ₹1 lakh (for five years), you can adopt one of our rare books and support its preservation. Your donation will directly fund conservation efforts and ensure these books remain accessible for years to come.

**Acknowledgement:** Donors will receive an 80G tax-saving certificate, acknowledgement in our annual report, and recognition on the inner page of the book's front cover.

#### Books Available for Adoption

1. **Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds (Vol. I, II, & III) by Allan O. Hume (1889–1908)**

This invaluable work, authored by Allan Hume, a pioneer in Indian ornithology, is a rare gem, especially significant because the BNHS houses a unique collection of bird eggs.

2. **Indian Ducks & Their Allies by E.C. Stuart Baker (1908)**

This first publication of the BNHS features beautiful illustrations and holds great historical significance. It's essential to preserve this foundational book of our institution.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a meaningful impact.  
For more information on how you can contribute to preserving these literary treasures,  
please feel free to contact us at [library@bnhs.org](mailto:library@bnhs.org)



# BASIC COURSE IN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY AND BIRD MIGRATION STUDIES

Located at the southeastern tip of India in Tamil Nadu, Point Calimere is a crucial site for migratory shorebirds and landbirds.

**Shorebird Migration:** Shorebirds are remarkable birds that rely on wetlands, coastal mudflats, and marshy areas during their migration. Point Calimere's salt pans, mudflats, and shallow lagoons create the perfect habitat for these birds to rest and refuel. Some notable shorebirds found here include endangered (EN) species like the great knot and near-threatened (NT) species such as the eurasian curlew, bar-tailed godwit, black-tailed godwit, red knot, and curlew sandpiper. Rare sightings of species like the sanderling, dunlin, whimbrel, pacific golden plover and oriental pratincole further highlight the site's importance for shorebird migration. One won't miss the glitz of the greater flamingos and congregation of other larger wading birds like eurasian spoonbills, painted storks (NT), spot-billed pelicans (NT),

cormorants, egrets and more. The abundance of these species only adds to the rich birdwatching experience.

**Landbird Migration:** Besides shorebirds, Point Calimere also serves as a stopover for various landbird species during migration. These birds, which are mainly terrestrial, pass through or stop over at Point Calimere's tropical dry evergreen forests and scrublands during their migration. Common migratory land bird species seen here include the asian brown flycatcher, brown-breasted flycatcher, blue-throated flycatcher, Indian paradise flycatcher, Indian pitta, forest wagtail, large-billed leaf warbler, and grey-bellied cuckoo.

BNHS is excited to announce seven batches of the Basic Course in Field Ornithology and Bird Migration Studies in December 2024 and January 2025, hosted at the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, Point Calimere (Kodiyakarai), Tamil Nadu.

## About the Course

This course aims to establish a network of birders and ringers to support bird monitoring and conservation along the **Central Asian Flyway**, focusing on **bird population monitoring**, including bird count. Classroom sessions on **bird migration study techniques** to enhance participants' understanding of migration patterns and monitoring methods.

**Venue:** BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, Point Calimere (Kodiyakarai), Tamil Nadu

**Resource Persons:** Dr S. Balachandran, Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Mr S. Sivakumar, Mr Paul Antony B and Ms Rose Francis

**Topics Covered:** Bird Identification; Counting Techniques; Migration and Flyways; Global Importance of Bird Marking Studies

**Case Study:** Indian skimmer Conservation, Hands-on Demonstration of Bird Ringing

**Field Trips:** Great Vedaranyam Swamp, Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary, Siruthalaikadu Mudflats and Beach

**Contact Us:** Mr S. Sivakumar: s.swaminathan@bnhs.org | 91-94088 72745; Mr Paul Antony B: p.antony@bnhs.org

## REGISTRATION DETAILS:

### Course Schedule: 2025

<b>Batch IX</b>	: January 10 – 12
<b>Batch X</b>	: January 18 – 20
<b>Batch XI</b>	: January 24 – 26

<b>Fee</b>	: ₹ 10,000 (₹ 9,000 for existing BNHS members) Includes tent accommodation (two people per tent) with cots, fans, charging points, pillows, food, field visits, entry fees, etc
<b>Eligibility</b>	: Open to all, no age limit. Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate.
<b>Registration Deadline</b>	: Closes 7 days before the start of each batch To join us, please fill out the Enquiry Form. Payment details will be provided upon confirmation of registration.

Join us for this incredible opportunity to engage in bird conservation and gain hands-on experience in ornithology!

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## BNHS MISSION

**Vision:** Premier independent scientific organization with a broad-based constituency, excelling in the conservation of threatened species and habitats.

**Mission:** Conservation of nature, primarily biological diversity, through action based on research, education and public awareness.

## CONTACT US

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