



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



JULY, 2024

CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Members,

I am pleased to inform you that while drafting this communication, I received a government order appointing BNHS to the Rajasthan State Wildlife Board. We hope this will provide us with an opportunity to share our conservation management recommendations, based on the extensive studies we have conducted in Rajasthan.

July has been a very busy month for BNHS. On July 2nd, 2024, our President organized an open dialogue with you to brief you on the society's progress and gather your valuable suggestions for improving our operations. Thank you for participating in these online meetings; your input will help us enhance the workings of BNHS. I will keep you updated on the decisions that we had taken in this meeting.

While the Governing Council was discussing policies at Hornbill House on July 4th, a team of 12 BNHS scientists and researchers were working tirelessly in the Pench and Tadoba Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra. Their mission was to place GPS tags on 20 vultures to track their movements after release into the wild. They successfully completed this task in collaboration with local veterinarians, Forest officers, and Forest department field staff. We hope these tagged vultures will explore the tiger habitats, locate wild carcasses, and eventually establish their own breeding grounds.

At the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) in Pinjore, Haryana, our vulture team worked closely with the Chief Wildlife Warden of Haryana, Mr Vineet Garg, IFS, to plan another mission: the release of 25 vultures in Haryana. We are grateful to the Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Nayab Singh Saini for launching a special booklet, *JATAYU*, to raise awareness among stakeholders about the need to provide a safe environment for vultures in the state. The BNHS team in Haryana is also planning two workshops in early August for officers from the Forest, Animal Husbandry, and Food and Drugs Administration departments from five adjoining states, as well as the University professors. We hope these workshops will support the Vulture Safe Zone programme we have launched in these states and further our conservation efforts.

Following the recent deaths of lesser flamingos in Navi Mumbai, the Government of Maharashtra established a high-powered committee on July 5th, 2024. BNHS has submitted its representation to the committee, emphasizing the need to protect coastal wetlands used by migratory and local birds as high-tide roosting sites.

BNHS works closely with forest staff and officers across various states, and these relationships have strengthened over the years, making them an integral part of the BNHS family. This month, we mourn the loss of Mr G.V. Reddy, retired PCCF of Rajasthan and former Field Director of Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. He supported the conservation of the Green Avadavat in Udaipur and the Lesser Florican project in Ajmer, Rajasthan, in recent years. We will remember his long and fruitful association with BNHS which will help BNHS to proceed ahead in Rajasthan. Additionally, we lost one of our life members and former BNHS scientist, Dr Saraswathy Unnithan, who worked under Dr Sálím Ali. Her passing is a significant loss to the society.

One of our passionate life members, Mr Sushilkumar Agrawal, who is also the CEO of Ultra Media & Entertainment Pvt. Ltd., has a hobby of collecting and studying stamps (philately) and currency (numismatics) with a focus on interesting subjects. He has compiled a collection of stamps featuring parrots from different countries, an intriguing topic for law enforcement agencies like customs, wildlife and forest department given the illegal trade of these birds. The book on his collection will be released at Hornbill House at the end of August.

We have received several emails from members, both within India and overseas, offering their assistance to BNHS in various ways. I extend my sincere thanks to all of you. Many of our members have initiated state-level WhatsApp groups, and some have also started city-specific groups. I am especially impressed to see that these groups are actively discussing conservation issues and avoiding routine greetings. I hope these groups will soon evolve into member-driven conservation and awareness campaigns.

Your Point Calimere Bird Migration Study Centre has announced several training courses for the 2024–25 migratory season. I hope you have seen these announcements on our website, social media platforms, and WhatsApp groups. The BNHS Central Marketing Department (Mr Sandesh Kadam, cmd@bnhs.org), Membership Department (Ms Shreeya Sontakke, membership@bnhs.org), Programmes Department

(Mr Asif Khan, programmes@bnhs.org), and Conservation Education Centres (Ms Kiran Thumma and others, cec-mumbai@bnhs.org) have compiled the annual calendar, which are now available on the website. Please feel free to contact them through email to reserve your preferred dates for the events.

If you're satisfied with the BNHS membership services, I would appreciate it if you could share your feedback via email.

I would also appreciate your assistance with the membership department in completing the online forms for the publication of the "Yearbook for Life Members." Additionally, we need to plan BNHS member meetings—one in Mumbai and another in a location outside of Mumbai. Please let me know if anyone is interested in taking on the responsibility of hosting one of these meetings.

The Conservation eNewsletter will now include activities from BNHS state-wide chapters. I encourage you to send event pictures and a brief paragraph to Mr Gopi Naidu (g.naidu@bnhs.org).

Lastly, your BNHS needs funds to continue running its projects and programmes. Please reach out to me at director@bnhs.org if you have any potential contacts or opportunities for support.

Kishor Rithe
Director

BNHS GPS Tags Vultures



On January 21, 2024, the Hon Mr Sudhir Mungantiwar, Maharashtra's Cabinet Minister for Forests, Cultural Affairs, and Fisheries, inaugurated the Jatayu Conservation Project at Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. This project, a collaboration between the Maharashtra Forest Department and BNHS, aims to re-establish the population of endangered vultures in the region. In the first phase, ten white-rumped vultures were acclimatized in a pre-release aviary in the Botezari area of the Kolsa range of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve for five months before their release into the wild. Additionally, ten Indian vultures were transported from Pinjore and released into pre-release aviaries at Pench Tiger Reserve in the East Pench range, a longstanding habitat for vultures.

In a significant advancement for vulture conservation in India, the Forest Department of Maharashtra, in collaboration

with BNHS, has successfully equipped ten endangered Indian vultures and white-rumped vultures with GPS tags prior to their release.

The GPS tagging operation was handled by the BNHS team, including Dr Kazveen Umrigar, Sachin Ranade, Hemant Bajpai, Manan Singh Mahadev, Bhanu Pratap Singh, Bhaskar Das, Jeff Francis, Jonathan D'Costa, Mohammad Qasim, Lakhn Basudev, Lokesh Gurjar, and the team at Pench: Mr Rajurkar (RFO East Pench) and his staff; and the team at Tadoba: Mr Rundan Katkar (RFO Kolsa Range) and his staff, under the direction of Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS.

The BNHS team successfully executed the tagging operation. These vultures will now be monitored post-release as they reintegrate into their natural habitat. ■

Celebrating Wildlife Conservation in Bihar



The 75th Wildlife Week celebration was held on July 21 by the Bhagalpur Forest Division at Sundervan, Bhagalpur. The programme was graced by Dr Prem Kumar, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Government of Bihar. The BNHS team at the Bird Ringing and Monitoring Station in Bhagalpur, played a pivotal role in the celebration.

The Hon'ble Minister expressed a keen interest in bird ringing and migration and had an in-depth discussion on bird ringing, a traditional and modern scientific method used to study the movement,

distribution, lifespan, and population dynamics of birds, with the BNHS researchers. Mr Sudhir Kumar, IFS, Regional Chief Conservator of Forests (RCCF) Bhagalpur, and Ms Sweta Kumari, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), Bhagalpur, were also present and shared their insights on the fascinating aspects of bird migration with the Minister. They emphasized the importance of Bihar for migratory birds, highlighting how the state's wetlands serve as critical stopover sites for numerous migratory species.

The Hon'ble Minister released a ringed spotted dove on this occasion. ■

Capacity Building Workshop and Training Programme at the National Chambal Sanctuary



BNHS recently conducted two workshops at the National Chambal Sanctuary (NCS) on July 24 and 25, 2024. Held at the Deori Campus of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, these events were supported by The Habitat Trust and the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department.

The first workshop saw the participation of 50 officials, including forest guards, foresters, and rangers. Notable attendees included the Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) Gwalior, the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Morena, and the Sub-Divisional Officers (SDO) of the Morena division. BNHS Scientist Ms Parveen Shaikh, along with her team, presented on the conservation efforts for the Indian Skimmer at NCS. The presentation covered the species' global and national status, distribution, migration patterns, BNHS's conservation initiatives and their outcomes, and future plans.

The second workshop focused on the nest guardians of the Indian Skimmer – local community members who work with the BNHS team to protect and conserve the Indian Skimmer's nesting sandbars. Twenty-six nest guardians participated in this session. The BNHS team introduced the breeding birds of NCS and facilitated a group activity where participants shared their knowledge of the river and its avian inhabitants. They also outlined the implementation of nest monitoring and conservation activities, emphasizing the vital contributions of the nest guardians.

The workshop concluded with an appreciation certificate distribution ceremony conducted by Mr Swaroop Dixit, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Morena. This initiative underscores BNHS's commitment to advancing conservation efforts and fostering collaboration among local stakeholders in safeguarding biodiversity. ■

Bird Count at Sanjay Gandhi National Park



On June 30, over 46 dedicated volunteers participated in the Bird Count at SGNP, as part of BNHS's SGNP Bird Monitoring Programme. By the end of the day, the team had recorded 67 bird species, reaffirming the park's status as a hotspot for avian diversity. This monthly Bird Count is a key activity that highlights the park's incredible biodiversity and encourages community involvement in wildlife conservation.

The total number of recorded bird species in the region has now reached 232. The BNHS invites nature enthusiasts to join these monthly counts and contribute to ongoing efforts in preserving and

understanding the rich avian life in the park. For more details on how to participate, visit www.bnhs.org.

The bird monitoring programme is supported by the staff of SGNP and Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary Forest Department, led by Director Shri G. Mallikarjuna (IFS – Chief Conservator of Forests) and Shri Sudhir Sonawale (Assistant Conservator of Forests, SGNP). With support from BNHS Director Shri Kishor Rithe, the count is coordinated by Mr Asif N. Khan from BNHS Programmes Department and the CEC-Mumbai Team Sumit Dhotre, Shardul Bajikar, Kiran Thumma, and Priyadarshini Supekar. ■

CEC-Mumbai conducts Naturalist Training Workshop



CEC-Mumbai conducted a Naturalist Training Workshop on July 26th, attended by 16 participants. This workshop was designed for nature enthusiasts passionate about sharing their knowledge of our forests' biodiversity and spreading awareness about the importance of nature conservation.

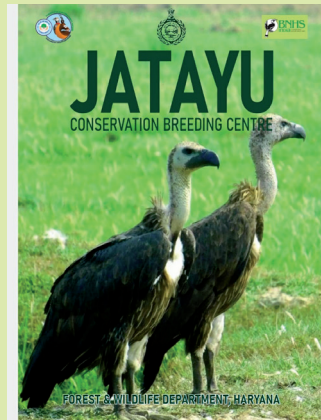
The workshop began with an orientation session that included an introduction to BNHS and the workshop participants, who shared their areas of interest. Following the introductions, participants embarked on a 2.5-hour nature trail led by Mr Dilip Giri (Field Assistant) and Ms Priyadarshini Supekar. The trail followed the Karvi and Leopard routes of the BNHS Nature Reserve, where the flora and fauna encountered were discussed in detail.

After the trail, the indoor session commenced with a presentation by Mr Asif Khan (Associate Officer, Programmes Dept.), who provided a comprehensive overview of 'Planning Wildlife Trails and Camps, and Etiquette'.

The next interactive presentation was led by Mr Shardul Bajikar, who focused on the role and importance of a naturalist. This was followed by Dr Kazveen Umrigar (Conservation Breeding Specialist), who emphasized the 'Importance of Outreach and Awareness Programmes in Conservation Breeding'.

The workshop concluded with a final presentation by Ms Fatema Hirkani (Conservation Officer), who introduced participants to the fascinating world of the intertidal zone with her talk on 'Introduction to Marine Life'. ■

BNHS and Haryana Forest Department develop a booklet on vulture conservation



BNHS and the Haryana Forest Department have developed a booklet titled *JATAYU CONSERVATION BREEDING CENTRE* to raise awareness among stakeholders and decision-makers. The booklet was officially released on July 14, 2024, by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Haryana, Shri Nayab Singh Saini during the 75th State Level Vanmahotsav celebration in Karnal. This publication highlights the center's contributions to vulture conservation. ■

BNHS conducts Training Programme for Tamil Nadu Forest Staff

The BNHS-Bird Migration Study Centre (BMSC) at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu, hosted sixty officer trainees from the 52nd batch of the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy's In-Service Training Course for Foresters (Coimbatore, TN) on July 12, 2024. The team was led by Mr N. Naveenkumar, FRO, Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, Coimbatore. Shri V. Thirunavukarasu, IFS, Principal, Central Academy for State Forest Service (CASFOS), Coimbatore, played a key role in organizing this bird conservation training. The Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has recognised BNHS as a Nodal Agency for bird ringing and as a training partner.

The BNHS team, comprising S. Sivakumar, Paul Antony B., and Rose Francis, delivered presentations on bird migration, marking techniques,



the global significance of BNHS studies conducted at Point Calimere and across India, as well as general conservation issues. ■

Organic Waste Composter Machines installed at Indian Army Formations in Drass and Nyoma

Two Organic Waste Composter Machines have been installed at the Indian Army Formations in Drass and Nyoma to effectively manage organic waste and reduce reliance of free-ranging dogs, wild animals, and birds that feed on anthropogenic food subsidies. These machines (EnviCare Company), offer a highly efficient solution for processing organic waste, converting it into nutrient-rich compost in a short time with minimal effort and logistics.

Furthermore, the compost generated can be used in kitchen gardens and can be given to locals for farming purposes, which will aid in reducing the dependency on food subsidies and maintain the natural diet of wild animals.

In border units where space and resources are limited, effective waste management is crucial. The compost generated can be used to



enhance soil quality, supporting efforts to grow fresh produce in challenging conditions. This technology not only improves waste management but also contributes to the sustainability of operations in remote locations.

The use of organic waste machines to address the issue of free-ranging dogs around army units is innovative. By properly processing food waste, these machines reduce the amount of waste that might attract stray dogs. However, while this approach minimizes waste attraction, additional measures such as sterilization and dog control programmes with local authorities may be necessary to manage the broader issue of free-ranging dogs. ■

BNHS Conducted Vulture Conservation Awareness Programme in Assam



The BNHS team conducted an awareness programme on vulture conservation and other nature conservation activities for students from five schools in the Chhaygaon block, Kamrup district. The programme took place from July 17–20, 2024, and was led by Ms Aneena, Mr Jayanta Kr. Rabha, Mr Aniket Pawar, and Mr Sachin Ranade. Our team is focused on raising awareness among the youth about the Vulture Safe Zone in Assam. The programme concluded with a certificate distribution ceremony by RFO Dipen Deka of the Kulsi Range, Assam. ■

BNHS Conservation Committee visits Tansa Sanctuary



The BNHS Conservation Committee visited Tansa Wildlife Sanctuary to study the potential impacts of the proposed Gargai irrigation project. The team, including the President, Mr Debi Goenka, Chairman of the Conservation Committee, and the Director, visited the site along with concerned officers from the Bombay Municipal Corporation and the Forest Department. The Committee also interacted with the villagers. ■

BNHS Makes Representation to Supreme Court-Appointed Committee in Jaisalmer

In March 2024, the Supreme Court of India affirmed the fundamental right to protection from the adverse effects of climate change. This ruling arose from a case focused on conserving two critically endangered bird species – the great Indian bustard (GIB) and the lesser florican – threatened by pollution, climate change, predators, invasive species, and overhead transmission lines.

Previously, the Court had banned overhead transmission lines across 80,688 sq. km. However, concerns about managing such a large area led to calls for more targeted conservation efforts. In response, the Court restricted the installation of overhead lines and appointed a committee to evaluate the feasibility of underground high-voltage lines. Recognizing the impracticality of undergrounding all lines, the Court emphasized the need to balance species protection with climate goals.

An eleven-member committee visited Jaisalmer on July 2, 2024 to assess the impact of power lines on GIBs and explore underground alternatives. The committee consulted various stakeholders, including representatives from wildlife conservation and renewable energy sectors.

1. Shri V.R. Tiwari, Director, Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun
2. Dr Hari Shankar Singh, Member, National Board for Wildlife
3. Dr Niranjana Kumar Vasu, Ex-Principal Chief Conservator of Forest
4. Shri B. Majumdar, former Chief Wildlife Warden and Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Maharashtra
5. Dr Devesh Gadhavi, Deputy Director, The Corbett Foundation
6. Shri Lalit Bohra, Joint Secretary, Ministry of New and Renewable Energy
7. Shri Sujit K. Bajpayee, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Environment, forests, and Climate Change



8. Shri Ashok Kumar Rajpur, Member Power Systems, Central Electricity Authority
9. Shri P.C. Garg, Chief Operating Officer, Central Transmission Utility of India Ltd.
10. Dr Bilal, Scientist, Wildlife Institute of India
11. Shri Rohit Thakwani, Scientist 'D', Ministry of New and Renewable Energy

The BNHS Bustard project team, led by Dr Sujit Narwade, Dy Director of BNHS, attended the consultative meeting and made major recommendations, along with additional support documents like maps.

Recommendations included maintaining priority conservation areas, forming a Grassland Authority of India, creating infrastructure-free habitats for captive bustards, and installing Bird Flight Diverters on power lines. Urgent actions such as habitat restoration, controlling free-ranging dogs, and mandatory environmental impact assessments for new energy projects were also proposed. The findings and actions from this initiative will significantly impact India's conservation efforts and its renewable energy expansion. ■

Remembering Dr G.V. Reddy



It is with deep sorrow that we mourn the untimely passing of Dr G.V. Reddy, a stalwart in the field of wildlife conservation. Dr Reddy's lifelong dedication to Rajasthan's wildlife, spanning over three decades, leaves an indelible mark on our hearts and the landscapes he worked tirelessly to protect.

Dr Reddy's exemplary career, from his early days as Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Banswara to his transformative leadership as Chief Wildlife Warden of Rajasthan, epitomized unwavering commitment and integrity. His efforts in restoring Ranthambhore National Park and advancing conservation practices set benchmarks admired both nationally and internationally.

Beyond his professional achievements, Dr Reddy's passion for wildlife and profound understanding of ecosystems made him a beacon of inspiration. His loss is deeply felt not only by his colleagues but by all who shared his vision for sustainable wildlife management.

As we bid farewell to Dr G.V. Reddy, let us honour his legacy by continuing to uphold his ideals of conservation and ethical governance. Our thoughts are with his family and loved ones during this difficult time.

Rest in peace, Dr Reddy. Your spirit will forever guide us in the protection of Rajasthan's precious wildlife. ■

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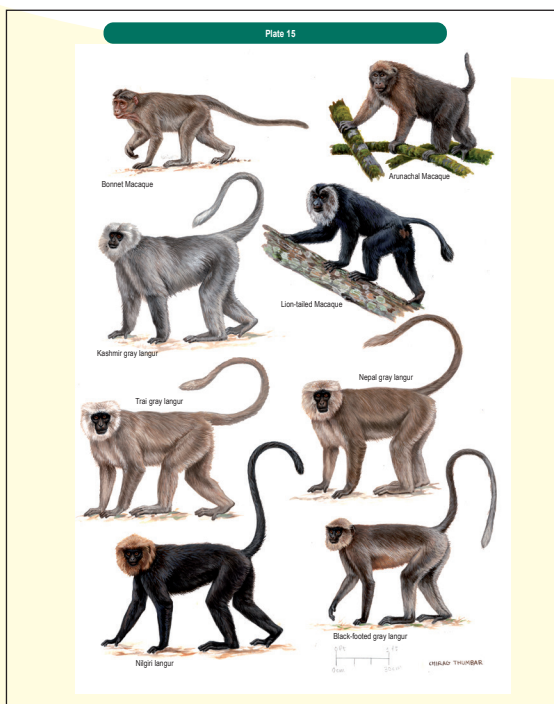
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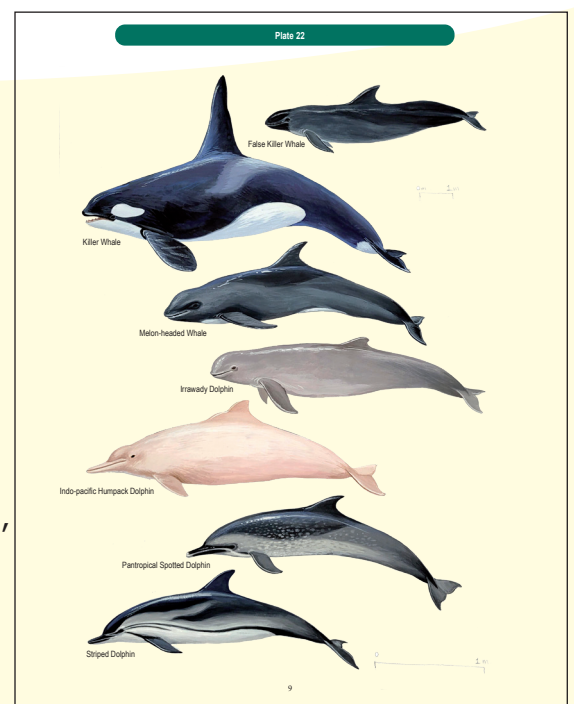
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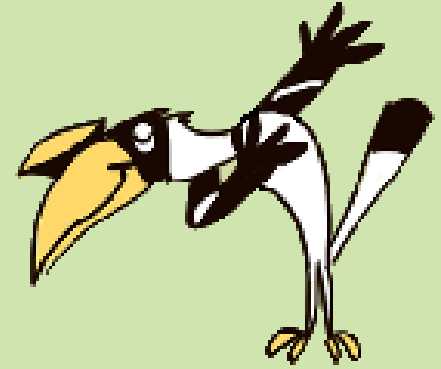


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