



NOVEMBER, 2023

CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

Dear Members,

We bring to you, our valuable members, the latest conservation newsletter of the BNHS, which is packed with updates from our field work, and the events we conduct for nature conservation.

This is our attempt to make sure you get to know about our work in real time, and that you are with us on our journey!

Celebrating the Legacy of Sálim Ali

This year for Bird Week – 2023, BNHS collaborated with several NGOs like Dr Metan Foundation, Maharashtra Pakshimitra, Nature Conservation Society of Nashik, Maharashtra, and Lal Bahadur Bhandari Govt College, Gangtok, Sikkim, to organize several events. The Maharashtra Pakshimitra organized a series of webinars by BNHS scientists on various topics related to birds. Launched in 2020 by the Government of Maharashtra, Bird Week held from November 5–12 to celebrate the birth anniversary (November 5th) of the famous naturalist, and Marathi writer Shri Maruti Chitampalli, an IFS officer from Maharashtra, and the birth anniversary (November 12th) of the late Dr Sálim Ali, who was the first Indian to systematically conduct comprehensive bird surveys the country. This 8-day event honours their immense contribution to Indian ornithology.

Felicitation of Shri Maruti Chitampalli

An event to felicitate Shri Maruti Chitampalli was held at A.D.T.T.S. Mandal's College of Pharmacy, Solapur, Maharashtra, on November 5 in collaboration with the Dr Metan Foundation. Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, felicitated Shri Chitampalli and presented him with copies of his communication with Dr Sálim Ali in the BNHS archives.

The Dr Metan Foundation also organized a lecture series on birds in various colleges in collaboration with BNHS.



Webinars by experts



BNHS organized a series of webinars in collaboration with Maharashtra Pakshimitra every evening from November 5–12. Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, inaugurated these webinars and requested all bird watchers to join the bird conservation movement of BNHS. The webinars were well attended by bird watchers.

The following webinars were delivered by BNHS scientists on various bird related topics.

- Contribution of Shri Maruti Chitampalli and Dr Sálim Ali in Ornithology by Dr Raju Kasambe (Assistant Director, BNHS);
- Birds and badlands by Ms Parveen Shaikh (Scientist - C, BNHS);
- Great Indian Bustard: present status and conservation by Dr Sujit Narwade (Assistant Director, BNHS);
- Bird watchers' contribution to Flyway Conservation by Dr P. Sathiyaselvam (Deputy Director, BNHS);
- Bird migration and study techniques by Mr Mrugank Prabhu (Scientist - C, BNHS).

Bird walks



The Programmes team conducted a Bird Walk at the NRI Pond, Nerul, for members and enthusiastic bird lovers. The participants spotted a large congregation of migrating ducks that included the northern shoveler, northern pintail, and Eurasian teal that have arrived in Mumbai after migrating long distances from central Eurasia for the winter, and also resident ducks like the Indian spot-billed duck and a myriad of other migratory birds. This event emphasized the vital role of bird conservation in ecological balance.

The BNHS-CEC Mumbai team celebrated bird week with a nature trail to Sálím Ali Point, the highest spot of the Centre with 24 participants; the group sighted birds, butterflies, reptiles during the walk. The event ended with a group photo featuring Dr Sálím Ali's painting.



The BNHS-EIACP organized a birdwatching trail on November 5 at Bhandup Pumping Station – a well-known birding area in Mumbai to see migratory as well as resident birds. Led by Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, Programme Officer at BNHS-EIACP, 14 participants explored the area and spotted 36 species of birds, both migratory and resident.

On November 06, 2023, Nature Conservation Society Nashik (NCSN) in collaboration with BNHS organised an event for the local birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts. The event began with an exhibition – Vihang Birdwatch – at the NCSN office followed by a presentation on 'Basics of bird study and bird migration' and concluded with a bird walk in Gangapur Forest Nursery led by the BNHS and NCSN team.



On November 08, 2023, the BNHS Sikkim unit with the Zoology Department, Nar Bahadur Bhandari Government College, Gangtok held a programme, which was attended by 35 post graduate students. Mr Lukendra Rasaily (Chairman, Sikkim Tourism Development Corporation) graced the event. He briefed the students on potential of birding in Sikkim and encouraged them to establish a bird club, which would help them propel their career. Ms Usha Lachungpa, Member Governing Council, BNHS spoke on BNHS's

historical connection with Sikkim pre- and post-independence and activities conducted in Sikkim in the field of ornithology by Sikkim Ornithological Society and the State Forest Department. Dr Himadri Sekhar Mondal (Scientist BNHS) spoke on global bird diversity and birds of the Indian subcontinent, while Mr Atharva Singh (Scientist BNHS) spoke on bird monitoring in Sikkim. This engaging event acted as a knowledge sharing platform for the students and encouraged them to venture into the field of bird conservation.

Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre- Rani, Assam team conducted a bird count at Dorabeel wetland on the occasion of bird week.

Exhibition



Glimpses from Sálím Ali's archives were exhibited from November 5-12, at Hornbill House. The exhibition was inaugurated by Dr Ashok Kothari, ex-Chairman of Library Subcommittee and a senior member of the Society. The exhibition showcased a collection of original documents, photographs, and other memorabilia closely connected with Dr Sálím Ali; select documentaries filmed by him were screened on this occasion. The exhibition was well-appreciated by the visitors and some expressed that this exquisite collection should be exhibited permanently. ■

Overnight Bug Adventure!



BNHS-CEC, Mumbai hosted an overnight camp on November 4-5. The 16 participants explored the insect world through activities like baiting experiments, night trails, and morning walks. Led by Ms Drashti Danani and Shardul Bajikar, with support from volunteers and CEC staff, every participant, including the youngest a 4-year-old, were fully engaged. Our special thanks to 8-year-old Vikram Jadhav for presenting the organising team with a poster, which he made while being in at the camp. ■



Strengthening Bonds and Skills



Lieutenant General Ajai Kumar Singh AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM, General Officer-Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of Southern Command, Indian Army, paid a special visit to the BNHS on November 6 with senior army officials. Lt Gen Singh visited the exhibition on Sálím Ali's memorabilia at Hornbill House and commended BNHS for its efforts in preserving this valuable treasure. During his visit to the Society's remarkable natural history collection he recalled his days as an instructor in snake handling programs for the Armed Forces and shared his experiences of the unique behaviour of cobra and Russell's viper.

He invited Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, to conduct programmes for the Armed Forces to raise awareness on natural history, and collaborate on tangible actions to preserve ecosystems under the purview of the Indian Army. Lt Gen Singh affirmed the Indian Army's commitment to ecological conservation and pledged full support to BNHS activities within the military domain. ■



Trainees from Chandrapur Forest Academy, interacted with Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Parveen Shaikh, Rahul Khot, and Nirmala Barure, at Hornbill House. The enduring 140-year partnership between BNHS and the Forest Department is stronger than ever. ■



BNHS hosted a two-day Capacity Building Workshop for environmental governance from November 18–19, 2023 at BNHS-CEC, Mumbai, for those interested in levelling up their skills in effectively solving conservation challenges. Twenty-one participants from various professional fields attended the workshop. The event included talks by some of the experts in India's wildlife conservation scenario and also field trails with experts in BNHS-CEC. Certificates were later distributed to the participants for attending the workshop. ■

SGNP Bird Monitoring Programme

The Sanjay Gandhi National Park, Mumbai (SGNP) has been monitoring birds in SGNP and Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary since February 2021, through a citizen science programme called the SGNP Bird Monitoring Programme (or SGNP Bird Count). Under this programme, BNHS conducts a Bird Count every month at various locations of SGNP and Tungareshwar WLS. The count takes place every month with the help of BNHS Members, bird watchers, and other volunteers, and staff of the SGNP.

Multiple teams from BNHS and staff of the SGNP successfully conducted the Bird Count for October 2023 in SGNP and Tungareshwar WLS. The survey teams recorded three additions – Indian roller, Mongolian short-toed lark, and Eurasian hobby – to the checklist of SGNP. The November 2023 Count added two species – variable wheatear and long-billed pipit – to the diversity of SGNP birds. These new discoveries now join the esteemed company of 225 recorded avian species for the region. If you wish to join us for the December count please visit www.bnhs.org for details. ■



Exploring India and Sri Lanka's Tropical Wonders

BNHS held a riveting lecture, "Sky Islands," by Ian Lockwood, a distinguished photographer, on November 24. Renowned for his evocative storytelling through imagery, Lockwood delved into the enchanting world of 'Sky Islands' – unique ecosystems perched like islands in the sky, in the Southern Western Ghats of India, and the Sri Lankan Highlands.

Ian Lockwood's lens has captured the essence of these elevated landscapes, portraying not just their geographical beauty, but also the delicate ecological balance they house. BNHS Members got an immersive experience, offering insights into the photographer's journey, challenges faced, and the extraordinary stories behind each photograph. ■



Bird Walk at TS Chanakya

BNHS members got the chance to welcome the first batch of Lesser Flamingos arriving in the city during a bird walk on November 25 at the wetlands near TS Chanakya Maritime Institute, Navi Mumbai. The members recorded a total of 60 species, which included sightings of both lesser and greater flamingos, pied cuckoo, common hoopoe, osprey, gulls, terns, sandpipers and plovers. The participants also spotted birds tagged by the BNHS. The resighting of tagged birds plays an important role in the study of bird migration.

We will be organizing several bird walks during the migratory season, if interested, please write at programmes@bnhs.org for details. ■

Agencies come together to discuss stranding of marine mammals



In the recent past, there have been several instances of stranding of marine mammals – including sharks and blue whales – along the Maharashtra coastline, and this trend is increasing every year. In an effort to raise awareness among key agencies like Coast Guard, Indian Navy, Fisheries Department, Forest Department, Mangrove Foundation, and other coastal infrastructure agencies about the challenges and threats associated with the stranding of marine mammals, BNHS and Mangrove Foundation collaboratively

conducted a workshop on November 30, 2023 at Airoli, Mumbai.

The workshop focused on marine megafauna such as dolphins and whales, seabirds, shorebirds and the species' habits. Clement Ben, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF) (West), S.V. Ramarao, Executive Director, Mangrove Foundation, Praveensingh Pardeshi, President, BNHS, and Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS addressed the attendees from the coastal infrastructure in the gathering. ■



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.

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