



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



SEPTEMBER, 2024

CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER



Dear Members,

While you are reading this message, some of our members may be enjoying the last remaining blooms of the beautiful karvi *Strobilanthes callosa*, which blossoms once every eight years, at BNHS-CEC in Goregaon. It is a breathtaking sight when Karvi flowers bloom in the Western Ghats.

I am sure you would be interested to hear about the status of the twenty vultures we released last month in the Pench and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra. Of the ten white-rumped vultures (WRVs) released in Tadoba, seven are being regularly monitored by our teams in the Tadoba landscape. Unfortunately, two vultures (J73 and J76) are missing, and one (N-11) is currently in Chhattisgarh. The vultures in Tadoba are fed on goat, cattle, or tiger kills once every 7–10 days, if they do not find natural wild carcasses. We had anticipated that younger vultures would explore further, and this has been confirmed as one subadult bird travelled non-stop to Chhattisgarh and was later rescued.

The ten Indian vultures released from the Pench aviary have been seen feeding alongside wild vultures. It is heartening to see the Vulture Conservation Programme progressing to this level. We are thrilled to receive daily videos and photos of our tagged Indian vultures feeding with wild white-rumped vultures and solitary red-headed vultures in the Pench landscape. The Field Director of Pench Tiger Reserve has also announced a special scheme for village Panchayats in the PTR buffer zone to establish Vulture Restaurants or carcass dumps near villages.

At the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) in Pinjore, Haryana, our vulture team is diligently working towards the release of 25 vultures, under the guidance of Mr Vineet Garg, IFS, Chief Wildlife Warden of Haryana. Trained officers from the Forest, Animal Husbandry, and Food and Drug Administration departments from five neighbouring states will play a crucial role post-release.

In other good news, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister felicitated BNHS staff member Ms Alka Dubey for her awareness work on the Vulture Safe Zone. The Forest Department has also inaugurated a conservation breeding centre for red-headed vultures in Gorakhpur, with Chief Minister Mr Yogi Adityanath presiding over the event. On September 7, our staff at VCBCs in Bhopal, Rani (Assam), and Pinjore (Haryana) celebrated Vulture Awareness Day with various programmes.

Your Bird Migration Study Centre (BMSC) at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu, continues to be a centre of excellence for forest staff from various state academies. This month, staff from the Forest Academy in Kundal, Maharashtra, visited the BMSC for field training.

I also visited the Department of Environmental Studies at MIT-WPU Pune to explore potential collaborations. I was pleased to see the enthusiasm among the professors to work with BNHS scientists. I hope to see a collaborative action plan soon.

Following the recent deaths of lesser flamingos in Navi Mumbai, the Government of Maharashtra established a high-powered committee that has taken serious steps to protect the coastal wetlands around Navi Mumbai. I attended its last meeting, where the majority of members expressed their support for giving these wetlands legal protection as Protected Areas (PAs). BNHS data from long-term research projects has been instrumental in guiding these wetland-specific conservation measures.

You may have seen a post shared by our President, Mr Praveensingh Pardeshi, on the state WhatsApp groups, highlighting the fundraising efforts of our trustees. He mentioned over ten new projects initiated with donor support. Additionally, he listed some of BNHS's major achievements in the 2023–24 fiscal year, which were also presented during our Annual General Meeting.

As you know, the Maharashtra State Wildlife Board requested BNHS to draft a proposal for the conservation breeding of wild water buffaloes at Gorewada, Nagpur. This proposal, along with projects for the conservation breeding of seahorses and a study on Charru mussels in the Mumbai seascape, has been approved.

I also visited the TVS plant in Hosur, Karnataka, where the company has created wetlands and protected biodiversity, making the campus a breeding habitat for several species, including painted storks and the slender loris. Other companies with large tracts of land could follow their example, as this campus has been designated an Other Effective Conservation Measure (OECM) site. I also attended

a BNHS members' meeting in Bengaluru, where they decided to establish a BNHS city chapter. The Indian Armed Forces have always been supportive of BNHS since its establishment in 1883. I had the opportunity to meet Vice Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, along with our Chairman of the Conservation Committee, Mr Debi Goenka, to discuss marine megafauna and the impacts of climate change. I look forward to seeing this collaboration strengthen in the coming months.

This month, we mourn the passing of Dr Robert Grubh, a retired BNHS scientist. His contribution to a major BNHS project "Ecological Study of Bird Hazards at Indian Aerodromes" (1981–1989) will be remembered. He also served on the BNHS Executive Committee from 2000–2002 and 2010–2012.

If you have not done so already, please fill out the online form for the publication of the "Yearbook for Life Members". Feel free to continue writing to BNHS Central Marketing (cmd@bnhs.org), Membership (membership@bnhs.org), Programme (programmes@bnhs.org), and Conservation Education Centres (cec-mumbai@bnhs.org) for assistance. You can also contact them by email to reserve your preferred event dates. I encourage you to send event pictures and a brief write-up to Mr Gopi Naidu (g.naidu@bnhs.org) for our newsletter. Thank you for reaching out to me at director@bnhs.org.

Kishor Rithe

Director

Bombay Natural History Society

Remembering Dr Robert B. Grubh

Yesterday morning, a mutual friend called to inform me that Dr Robert B. Grubh had passed away. Robert Grubh, as we knew him, was a student of my father at Scott Christian College. He later went on to complete his PhD in 1974 at the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), becoming the first student to be awarded a PhD under the BNHS-Bombay University research programme. Notably, he was also the first doctoral student of the legendary "Birdman" Dr Sálim Ali. Robert Grubh earned many accolades throughout his career. To my knowledge, he was the first Indian to pursue a PhD on vultures, specifically studying Griffon vultures in the Gir Lion Sanctuary.

Soon after completing his PhD, he and Dr Sálim Ali conducted the first comprehensive survey of the birds of Goa. Robert Grubh rose to prominence when he successfully handled a complex project aimed at addressing the persistent issue of bird-aircraft collisions in India. Remarkably, he provided solutions to this challenging problem.

I vividly remember one of his young students, Lima Rosalind, presenting her work in Bangalore in 1983. She remarked, "Samples of birds involved in a collision do not come to us on a silver platter. They arrive as masses of rotting flesh." She elaborated on the difficulties of identifying birds from such unrecognizable remains. In those days, electron microscopes were scarce in India, and DNA barcoding was unheard of. I have not met Lima Rosalind in many years, but I hope she will read this.

I first met Robert Grubh in 1983 at the Indian Institute of Science, where he had come with his colleagues and students



for a BNHS annual research seminar hosted by Madhav Gadgil in Bangalore. It was during this time that I had my only opportunity to personally interact with Dr Sálim Ali, although we had corresponded earlier. Over the past forty years, I had the privilege of working with Robert Grubh on several occasions, particularly on projects involving wetlands and birds. I also know his wife and two sons, though they may not remember me now.

A few brave men from Nagercoil ventured into the rough seas of natural history as a career. Robert Grubh was relatively younger compared to stalwarts like J.C. Daniel (former Honorary Secretary of BNHS and a close associate of Sálim Ali), E.G. Silas (fisheries), R.S. Lal Mohan (marine mammals), A.N. Henry (botany), and S. Bennett (bamboo), to name just a few I can immediately recall. I had the privilege of knowing each of them personally.

The metaphorical boat they set sail in the field of natural history has slowly begun to drift with the loss of almost all these seniors, leaving those remaining with limited capacity to keep it afloat. When Robert Grubh completed his PhD, I was still in tenth grade and could not have imagined that I would one day find my place in the boat they launched. Now, I find myself as perhaps the lone oarsman at the helm, with no one following behind. I am 65 and on the brink. Someone must step forward to carry the legacy of my hometown, Nagercoil, and its contributions to natural history.

A Tribute from Dr R.J. Ranjit Daniels

BNHS launches new projects

Over the past year, BNHS has collaborated with several major CSR foundations to mobilize resources for on-ground conservation efforts. Key achievements include:

- JSW Foundation: Approved Rs 2.65 crore for repairs and renovation at Hornbill House, with Rs 1.44 crore already received.
- ICICI Foundation: Allocated Rs 1.06 crore to protect GIB habitats in the Thar Desert.
- The General Insurance Corporation: Approved Rs 88.66 lakhs for Nest Guardians Programme for Indian Skimmer conservation in Chambal,



Mr Praveensingh Pardeshi, President, Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, Ms Parveen Shaikh, Scientist-D, of the BNHS with the MD and CSR Head of HPCL

Madhya Pradesh, contributing to the conservation of the great Indian bustard (GIB) by promoting grassland-based livelihoods for local communities in Rajasthan's arid region, with Rs. 44.43 lakhs already received.

- National Payment Corporation: Approved Rs 2.01 crore for a BNHS training and trade center in Nagpur.
- Mangrove Foundation (GoM): Approved Rs 7.98 crore for seahorse conservation, with Rs 3.5 crore for the current year.
- Government of Maharashtra: Allocated nearly Rs 1.93 crore for the release and monitoring of 30 vultures in Tadoba, Pench, and Melghat.

Additionally, BNHS has successfully rewilded 20 vultures in Tadoba and Pench, initiated an animal birth control programme for free-ranging dogs in Ladakh, and advanced bird migration studies along the Central Asian Flyway.

These milestones were made possible by the collective efforts of the BNHS team at Hornbill House and dedicated field scientists led by Mr Kishor Rithe, Director. BNHS continues to drive impactful conservation action on the ground. ■

BNHS Foundation Day – September 15th

Founded in 1883, the BNHS is one of India's oldest and most influential wildlife research organizations. Over the past 141 years, the Society has played a pivotal role in advancing biodiversity conservation, research, and education both nationally and internationally. Our contributions to scientific research are extensive, including pioneering studies on bird migration, the identification of crucial flyways for migratory species, and significant efforts in documenting India's flora and fauna through data-driven research.

Beyond research, the Society has inspired generations of naturalists and conservationists through its outreach programmes, nature camps, and citizen science initiatives. Our nature reserves and research stations continue to serve as hubs for biodiversity studies, conservation education, and public engagement. As we celebrate our 141st Foundation Day, let us reaffirm our unwavering commitment to protecting India's natural heritage and continue to play a key role in shaping the future of conservation both in India and globally.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to our President, Mr Praveensingh Pardeshi, for being honoured with the "Innovative Changemaker of the Year" award by Navbharat Times Online. The award was presented by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr Eknath Shinde.



On the occasion of Foundation Day, BNHS organized two nature trails at its reserve in Goregaon, Mumbai. Ms Priyadarshini Supekar (Education Officer), Mr Dilip Giri (Field Assistant), and Mr Sandeep Kacchap (Naturalist) led 25 participants on a two-hour walk along

(continued on next page)



the Leopard and Karvi trails. Participants enjoyed the monsoon season and experienced the beautiful Karvi bloom.

The 'Butterfly Walk & Talk' trail combined education with hands-on experience, allowing participants to explore the vibrant world of butterflies. The day began with an engaging lecture titled "Introduction to Butterflies", delivered by BNHS Scientist Neha Majumdar. Participants were introduced to the fascinating diversity of butterfly species, their roles in ecosystems, and tips on identifying them in the wild.

The informative session was followed by a guided Butterfly Walk through the 33-acre BNHS Reserve. This walk offered a unique opportunity to observe butterflies in their natural habitat, learn about their behaviour, and understand the importance of conserving these delicate pollinators. The event was further enhanced by the mass flowering of the karvi plant, which blooms once every eight years. ■

Vulture Conservation Efforts



VSZ-UP organized a workshop on vulture conservation with trainee range officers from Bihar, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. During this webinar, we promoted our message of vulture conservation in the presence of the Director of the Forest Training Institute, two Chief Conservators of Forests (CCFs), and three Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs). A total of 86 range officers from the three states participated.



The division staff members were educated on the critical role vultures play in the ecosystem, the vulture species found in India and Uttar Pradesh, and the importance of each species in the natural process of carcass disposal.

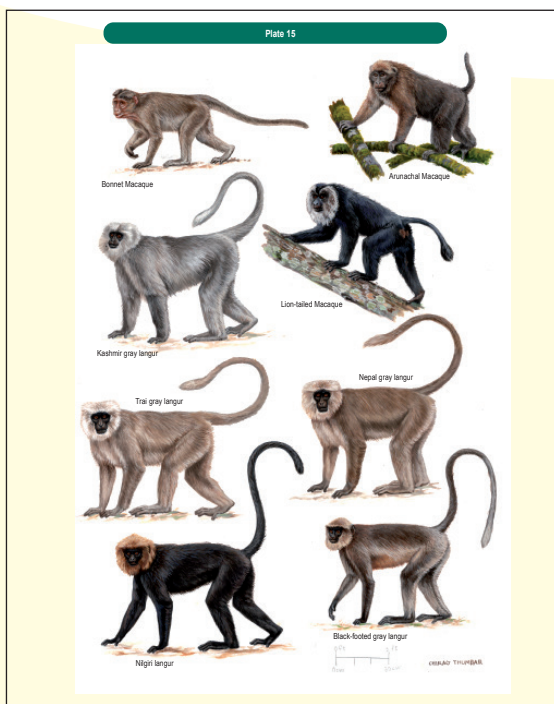
Meanwhile, the vulture conservation efforts of the BNHS were recognized by the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. The Chief Minister inaugurated the Red-headed Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, an event attended by forest officers and Members of the Legislative Assembly. Ms Alka Dubey, a BNHS staff member, collected a certificate of appreciation for the Society's work in the state over the past 10 years. ■



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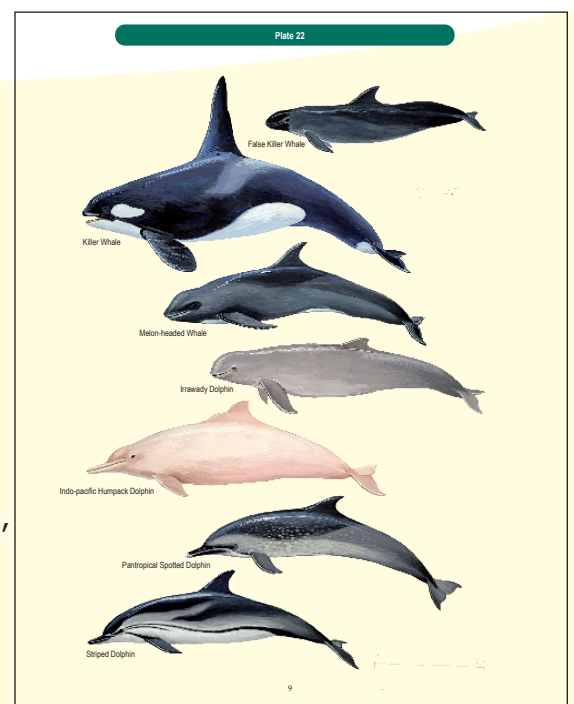
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STRENGTHENING BONDS AND SKILLS

Future Forest Officers train with BNHS



The BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu, hosted 33 officer trainees from Kundal Forest Academy on September 9, 2024. Led by Scientist D, S. Sivakumar, the trainees learned about bird migration, the global significance of Point Calimere, and conservation challenges. Researchers Paul Antony and

Rose Francis demonstrated bird marking techniques, emphasizing BNHS's role in wildlife conservation.

The visit was coordinated by Mr Ramdas G. Pujari, Retd. ACF & Course Director, Kundal Forest Academy and Mr Elanchezhyan, Forester, Point Calimere- Nagapattinam Forest Division. ■

BNHS and Armed Forces



The Director, Mr Kishor Rithe, met Vice Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, in South Block, New Delhi. The meeting, attended by Conservation Committee Chairman Mr Debi Goenka, focused on climate change and the role of the Indian Navy in addressing it. The Director also invited the Vice Admiral to join BNHS's Armed Forces Cell. ■

BNHS and Indian Army Collaborate for GIB Conservation in Pokhran



In a November 2023 visit to BNHS, Lt. Gen. A.K. Singh discussed Great Indian Bustard conservation at the Pokhran Field Firing Range (PFFR) with Director Kishor Rithe. Following this, the Southern Command constituted a study group in February 2024, nominating Dr Sujit Narwade from BNHS as their representative. Habitat restoration and grassland development work are scheduled to begin in October 2024. ■

BNHS and Indian Army Collaborate for sustainable waste management



BNHS continues its collaboration with the Indian Army in sustainable waste management by deploying organic waste composter machines (OWC) in remote areas such as Drass and Nyoma, with support from the Habitat Trust. These machines process up to 50 kg of organic waste daily, reducing the dependence of free-ranging dogs on human food waste generated by army units and producing compost for local use.

The OWC efficiently converts organic waste into high-quality compost within just 24 hours. This rapid process not only reduces the environmental impact of food waste, but also provides valuable compost for gardening and landscaping in army camps and local villages, fostering a sustainable approach. The

EnviCare OWC machines are designed for minimal maintenance, ensuring low operational costs while maintaining high efficiency. Their deployment highlights the Indian Army's commitment to innovative waste management solutions, enhancing sustainability and operational readiness.

The implementation of these composting machines marks a significant step towards environmentally responsible practices in military units, setting a benchmark for organic waste management in challenging terrains. The positive results from the OWC units exemplify the potential for similar initiatives across other formations, promoting ecological awareness and resource conservation. ■

BNHS and Fishermen Community at Mahanadi River, Odisha

In September, BNHS engaged with local fishermen communities along the Mahanadi River in Odisha to raise awareness about the conservation of sandbar-nesting birds, with a special focus on the Indian Skimmer.

BNHS researchers, supported by local field assistants, delivered presentations on the ecological importance of the Indian Skimmer, highlighting the species' global and national conservation status, distribution, migration

patterns, and the outcomes of BNHS's ongoing research. Future conservation plans were also discussed.

Over 30 fishermen participated in the sessions, engaging in group activities where they shared their observations of the river's ecosystem and bird species. Discussions also covered the changing hydrology of the river and its impact on nesting birds. Several participants expressed interest in contributing to ongoing research efforts and joined a WhatsApp group to help monitor bird movements and populations.

This initiative reflects BNHS's dedication to promoting conservation and fostering collaboration with local communities to protect biodiversity along the Mahanadi River. ■



Bhagalpur Bird Atlas: A Pioneering Citizen Science Initiative in Bihar



behaviour, and migration patterns of bird species in the Bhagalpur Landscape. The gathered information will support bird conservation and management efforts in the region. Two meetings were held in August and September 2024 to compile and analyse the collected data.

During the first phase, 40 out of 42 sub-cells of Bhagalpur City were surveyed, with participation from 32 members, including students studying life sciences, birders, and volunteers. The teams generated 156 bird checklists using the eBird application, recording a total of 105 bird species during the non-migratory season of June and July 2024. Divisional Forest Officer Ms Shweta Kumari

The first phase of the Bhagalpur Bird Atlas surveys was successfully completed in June and July 2024. This pioneering citizen science initiative in Bihar is a collaborative effort between the BNHS and the Bhagalpur Forest Division. The project aims to collect comprehensive data on the spatial distribution, population,

announced that the second phase of the surveys will take place during the migratory season, scheduled for January and February 2025.

Volunteers are invited to participate in the second phase of this initiative. For more details, contact R. Abhilash, Researcher at BNHS, at +91 70940 78267 or via email at bhagalpurbirdatlas@gmail.com. ■

Stakeholders Meeting for Kurja Conservation Reserve in Khichan, Jodhpur



On September 22, 2024, a stakeholders' meeting was organized by BNHS and the Deputy Conservator of Forests, Jodhpur, to develop a management plan for the newly declared Kurja Conservation Reserve. Participants, including local

community leaders and wildlife experts, provided valuable feedback on the proposed conservation efforts. A site visit was conducted to assess the habitat and identify areas for intervention. ■

Meeting with CWLW, Karnataka, for Lesser Florican Conservation in Bidar

In a recent online meeting, Shri Subhash Malkhede, CWLW, Karnataka, discussed the declining numbers of lesser florican in Bidar. Over the past three years, only seven sightings have been recorded, with no evidence of breeding. The meeting emphasized the need for habitat restoration and a coordinated approach across government departments to prevent the species' extinction in the region.

BNHS Research Activities



BNHS participated in the National Conference on “Climate Change Scenario and Environmental Sustainability” at Ladakh University on September 12–13, 2024. Research Fellows Ms Rigzen Angmo and Mr Mohd Raza presented a poster on free-ranging dog population dynamics and perceptions in Ladakh. This research was part of a broader project on biodiversity monitoring and conservation with the Indian Army, led by Project Investigator Mr Niazul Khan. ■

Unusual Sighting of Lesser Noddy in Madhya Pradesh



On August 30, 2024, a lesser noddy was rescued in the Dhamnod area of Dhar District, Madhya Pradesh – an unexpected location for this pelagic bird. Despite rescue efforts, the bird was exhausted and sadly passed away during treatment the same day.

The lesser noddy, typically found in high seas and coastal regions of India and known to breed in the Maldives, had travelled approximately 1,500 km from Pitti Island to Khalghat on the Narmada River. This sighting, possibly the first recorded in Central India, is of significant scientific importance. The bird had been fitted with a PTT transmitter (tracking ID: 261687-P09196 Lotek) and a BNHS ring (B-89059) by Dr Sureshkumar of the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) on May 8, 2024, on Pitti Island.

Recognizing its scientific value, BNHS Director proposed preserving the specimen in the Society’s natural history collection. With the necessary permissions granted by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife) & Chief Wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh, under the Wild Life Protection Act (WLPA) 1972 (amended 2022), the bird was transferred to BNHS for taxidermy on September 5, 2024. The preserved specimen will contribute to future research on pelagic bird behaviour and migration. ■

ICICI Foundation Supports BNHS’s Conservation Efforts in GIB Areas



The Thar Desert, facing threats from renewable energy projects and invasive species like *Prosopis juliflora*, remains a critical habitat for the great Indian bustard. To protect the remaining GIB population in Pokhran, Jaisalmer, BNHS has received support from the ICICI Foundation. On August 30, 2024, a meeting with ICICI Foundation representatives, Ram Gopal Samota, Zonal Head – Rajasthan, J&K and Ladakh Head – ICICI Bank RSETIs and Arun Chaudhary, Project Manager- Rajasthan, was held to discuss habitat restoration and nadi rejuvenation in Pokhran’s Gram Panchayats and adjoining Indian Army regions. Permissions for these activities have been secured. ■

GIC Supports Grassland Conservation in Thar Desert

BNHS, in partnership with the Bishnoi community, has established grassland reserves in the villages of Khetolai and Chandani. A 15-hectare area in Chandani has been enclosed by the BNHS, where plans for a permanent conservation research centre are underway; the Khetolai reserve, fenced by the Zilla Parishad, is currently maintained by the gram panchayat. The General Insurance Company (GIC) has provided significant support for these conservation initiatives. ■



Bidar Forest Division and BNHS Habitat Restoration Efforts

The Bidar Forest Department, in collaboration with BNHS, is working on restoring degraded grasslands by removing invasive species like *Gliricidia* spp. in areas like Sirsi-Aurad and Alur Belur. The BNHS team will monitor the ecological impact of these efforts, comparing restored habitats to agricultural and plantation areas. The study, beginning in May 2024, will provide insights into grassland restoration and sustainable conservation practices. ■



Lesser Florican Project Updates in Ajmer-Kekri, Rajasthan

In September 2024, BNHS conducted a survey of the lesser florican, recording only five male birds, down from 15 in 2023 and 35–39 in 2019–2020. An educational programme was organized at Shokaliya School, where students participated in quizzes, drawing, and essay competitions to raise awareness about the species and its conservation. ■



BNHS Continues Consultation Work at Gulab Bagh Bird Park, Udaipur, as Knowledge Partner

The Udaipur Forest Department continues its collaboration with the BNHS as a knowledge partner for the Gulab Bagh Bird Park in Udaipur. This partnership, formalized through a one-year Memorandum of Understanding that began on October 4, 2023, is currently in the process of renewal. A key highlight of this collaboration is the Green Avadavat Conservation Breeding Programme, along with efforts involving 28 bird species of both native and non-native origin. BNHS has also provided aviculture expertise to rehabilitate several rescued and injured birds, including vultures, kites, owls, storks, water birds, and various pet birds that could not be released back into the wild due to injuries or human imprinting.

In addition to the successful breeding of the green avadavat, BNHS experts have aided in the captive breeding of species such as the alexandrine parakeet, blue-breasted quail, bob-white quail, Bourke's parakeet, red avadavat, dark-rumped waxbill, red-cheeked cordon bleu, senegal fire-finch, diamond dove, African ring dove, and sun conure, among other common cage birds. BNHS has requested



the Rajasthan Forest Department to expand the Green Avadavat Conservation Breeding Programme. Currently, BNHS experts are assisting with the upcoming Galliformes section of the bird park, where authorities plan to keep and breed the grey junglefowl. ■

MITRA and Thane Collector's Office Host MMR Development Conference

The Maharashtra Institution for Transformation (MITRA), in collaboration with the Thane Collector's Office, organized the "MMR Development Conference: Unlocking the Suburban Powerhouse for a \$300 Billion MMR Economy by 2030" on September 21, 2024, in Thane. Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, and Dr Reshma Pitale, Scientist-C, of the BNHS, were panellists for the session on Environmental Sustainability.

The conference featured panel discussions across five key themes, including Environmental Sustainability and the Circular Economy. BNHS contributed its insights on tackling plastic pollution in Thane Creek, advocating for the inclusion of local fishermen in the development of an actionable plan. These suggestions were

integrated into the conference's broader coastal resilience and circular economy initiative.

The event was graced by the presence of the Hon. Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr Eknath Shinde, who, during his address, acknowledged BNHS's critical work on flamingo population monitoring at Sewri-Nhava as part of the long-term study for the Atal Setu (MTHL) project. This recognition underscored the vital role of scientific research in shaping sustainable infrastructure development.

The conference concluded with the announcement of the "Thane Declaration – 2024," reinforcing the commitment to regional development while prioritizing sustainability and resilience. ■



Talk on Wildlife Trade: Birds, People, and Law for Rajasthan Forest Staff in Jaisalmer

Dr Rajat Bhargava, Assistant Director, BNHS, was invited as a resource person to deliver a talk on wildlife laws and the current state of bird poaching and trade during a workshop titled "Combating Illegal Wildlife Trade in Jaisalmer". The event, organized to train Rajasthan Forest Department frontline staff and local volunteers, was held on September 21–22, 2024, at the Panchayat Samiti Hall, Jaisalmer. The workshop was chaired by Mr Ashutosh Ojha, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Jaisalmer.

Over 80 participants, including rangers, foresters, guards, volunteers, and representatives from local NGOs, attended the event. Expert speakers included Mr Sharath Babu R., Wildlife Consultant with the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics; Dr Sumit Dookia, Wildlife Biologist with the ERDS Foundation; and Debadityo Sinha, Lead on Climate & Ecosystems at the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy. The workshop aimed to enhance the



capacity of forest staff and volunteers to combat illegal wildlife trade and safeguard Rajasthan's rich biodiversity.

Key topics of discussion included the importance of human-wildlife coexistence and awareness of wildlife laws to prevent wildlife crimes. Speakers emphasized the need to curb poaching of protected species such as the spiny-tailed lizard, partridges,

migratory birds, and lesser-known wildlife. The enforcement of regulations on exotic species recently added to India's wildlife protection laws was also explored. Participants engaged in meaningful discussions on responsible tourism practices, with a focus on the role of frontline forest staff, local communities, tourists, and hospitality stakeholders in protecting the region's wildlife. ■

Celebrating International Vulture Awareness Day 2024

On International Vulture Awareness Day 2024, Van Vihar National Park & Zoo, in collaboration with BNHS and the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, Bhopal, organized several activities to raise awareness about vulture conservation. This global event, celebrated annually on the first Saturday of September, aims to highlight the ecological importance of vultures and the urgent need to protect these endangered species.

The event began with a workshop on vulture conservation, targeting representatives from Gaushalas (cow shelters) around Bhopal. The workshop emphasized the dangers of using Diclofenac in cattle and promoted safer alternatives like Meloxicam. Shri Avdhesh Meena, Field Director of Van Vihar National Park, discussed the importance of vultures in keeping the environment clean, while other experts, including Shri Mohammed Khaliq from Bhopal Birds and Ms Zainab Zaheer Khan from BNHS, presented on topics like vulture population monitoring and the impact of NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) on vulture health. They

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also introduced the concept of “Vulture Restaurants”, which provide safe feeding grounds for these birds.

Following the workshop, a prize distribution ceremony was held for a painting and drawing competition that engaged school students in vulture conservation themes. The students showcased their creativity and understanding of the critical role vultures play in nature. This competition aimed to inspire the younger generation to become more involved in environmental issues.

In the afternoon, tourists and participants were invited to engage in a Vulture Conservation-themed “Snake and Ladder” game and an “On the Spot Quiz” at the Snake Park of Van Vihar. These interactive activities helped raise public awareness about the challenges vultures face, such as habitat destruction and poisoning. Participants of all ages eagerly took part, with winners receiving prizes in recognition of their involvement.



The day’s events were a success, promoting deeper awareness and encouraging public participation in vulture conservation efforts. Through these educational and engaging activities, we hope to inspire future advocates for the protection of these essential scavengers. ■

The Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Rani, Assam, celebrated International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) at Carmel School on September 7, 2024. In August, VCBC staff held a district-level drawing competition for 50 schools and 3,000 students from Kamrup. The results were announced during the event, followed by a prize distribution ceremony for both school-level and grand winners. The programme was graced by Chief Guests Dr Oinam Sunanda Devi (Scientific Officer, Assam State Biodiversity Board), Dr Paul (Anthropologist), and Mrs Renu Deori (BDO, Rani, Kamrup district). We also recognized five local individuals for their outstanding contributions to vulture conservation: Mr Prasanna Kolita (monitoring & rescuing vultures), Smt Sahida Bibi & Mr Ranjit Nath (vulture rescues), and Smt Renu Nath & Smt Mallika Das Gogoi (innovative handloom designs). Forest officers attending the programme included Mr Dipen

Deka (Range Officer, Kulsi Range), Mr Mrinal Kanti (Range Officer, Rani Range), and Smt Shamim Akhtar (Range Officer, Loharghat Range). Tree saplings were distributed to all attendees. ■



Vulture Release Programme in Tiger Reserves of Central India



The audience was informed about the ongoing efforts at BNHS's Vulture Conservation Breeding Centres, where vultures are bred and subsequently released into the wild. He highlighted the continuing threats to vulture populations and the challenges that need to be addressed to prevent further decline of this critically endangered species.

The chief guest of the event was Dr Ben Clement, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF), Wildlife Division, Maharashtra Forest Department. The event saw the participation of forest officials,

Mumbai Tarun Bharat and Vivek PARC Foundation invited BNHS to collaborate and participate in their event organized on September 21, 2024, to mark International Vulture Awareness Day at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, Mumbai. Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS presented the Society's achievements over the past 20 years in vulture conservation, particularly in the field of conservation breeding.

researchers, and wildlife enthusiasts from Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Konkan, and Nashik.

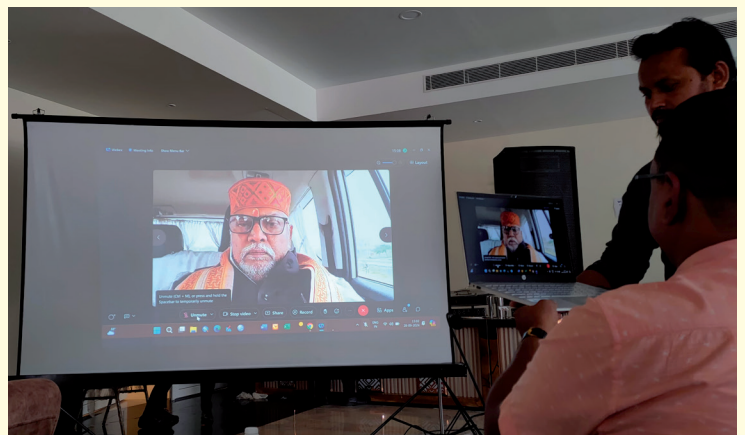
In addition to BNHS, representatives from ResQ Charitable Trust Pune, the Society of Eco Endangered Species Conservation and Protection (SEESCAP), Green Works Trust, and the Nature Conservation Society Nashik also showcased their efforts towards vulture conservation. ■

Training Workshops for Biodiversity Management Committees

The State Biodiversity Board, in collaboration with the Department of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (DoEF&CC), Government of Bihar, jointly organized two training programmes for the chairpersons and members of the Biodiversity Management Committees established at Gram Panchayats in the Gaya and Aurangabad districts on the 28th and 30th of September 2024, respectively. These programmes aimed to discuss the key provisions of the Biodiversity Policy, Act, and Rules, while highlighting significant biodiversity areas within the districts, including wetlands, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, as well as their conservation.



Ms Vertika Patel, a researcher at BNHS, gave a presentation on the 'Importance of Birds in Agricultural Landscapes', showcasing case studies in India on bird conservation by local communities. Experts from Agriculture, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, the State Biodiversity Board, DoEF&CC, and the Wildlife Society also participated and



delivered lectures during the technical sessions. A total of 100 participants attended the programme in Gaya, while 130 participants were present in Aurangabad.

Dr Prem Kumar, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change, Government of Bihar, attended the Gaya district programme virtually. ■

Amur Falcon brings livelihood for locals in Nagaland: BNHS shows hope

The BNHS Nagaland research team is working to protect amur falcons through conservation education, with substantial funding support from Zycus Infotech Pvt. Ltd. The conservation education team is tirelessly focused on improving the sustainable livelihoods of local communities, including former bird hunters. By adopting a species-centered conservation approach through education and continuous outreach programmes, three former hunters have transformed into falcon protectors. They are now part of Nagaland's BNHS conservation education team, actively supporting conservation initiatives. This accomplishment is a significant step toward ensuring the continued survival of the amur falcon. Conservation activities were conducted in collaboration with local people and other stakeholders to promote the protection of amur falcons in Pangti Village, Wokha District, Nagaland.

Additionally, about 45 students from Montfort School participated in a Conservation Education Programme and Nature Walk organized by BNHS, fostering appreciation for local biodiversity. BNHS also held a meeting with homestay owners to promote the upcoming bird festival in Pangti Village, aiming to enhance accommodation capacity for festival visitors through homestay partnerships. ■



EIACP – All India Coordinators' Meet

The BNHS-EIACP team attended the All India Coordinators' Meet on September 7, as part of the Environmental Information, Awareness, Capacity Building, and Livelihood Programme (EIACP) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), held in New Delhi. The meeting was chaired by Smt Nameeta Prasad (Joint Secretary, MoEF&CC) and Shri Unmana Sarangi (Director, MoEF&CC), and facilitated the exchange of strategies to enhance environmental awareness and livelihoods.

Dr Sujit Narwade (EIACP Coordinator & Deputy Director, BNHS), Mr Nandkishor Dudhe (Programme Officer), and Ms Natasha Girkar (Information Officer) represented BNHS-EIACP. Each EIACP centre presented a brief PPT highlighting their milestone achievements, with Mr Nandkishor Dudhe showcasing the work of BNHS-EIACP. With 54 EIACP centres nationwide, the Ministry discussed training programmes for remote communities, tree plantation drives, and sustainability initiatives under Mission LiFE,



which encourages eco-friendly practices such as minimizing waste, conserving water, and adopting healthy lifestyles. The agenda also emphasized engaging youth in mass awareness campaigns under Mission LiFE.

Additionally, the Ministry discussed the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP), which trains youth in environmental, forestry, and wildlife sectors to create sustainable

income opportunities. Capacity-building programmes through short courses were also part of the discussions. BNHS-EIACP plans to implement a series of capacity-building workshops on People's Biodiversity Registers at the district and village levels, along with awareness programmes to boost sustainability and environmental conservation. ■

Leadership Course in Biodiversity Conservation and Basic Course in Herpetology

The CEC Mumbai organized a field camp in Goa for participants of the Leadership Course in Biodiversity Conservation and the Basic Course in Herpetology from September 20 to 22, 2024, at Nature's Nest Goa. The camp was coordinated by Ms Priyadarshini Supekar (Education Officer, CEC Mumbai), with subject expertise provided by Mr Ramesh Zarmare.

During the three-day camp, participants visited the Bhagwan Mahavir Wildlife Sanctuary and other habitats, followed by presentations and interactive sessions. Notable sightings included amboli bush frogs, malabar gliding frogs, banded ground geckos, common vine snakes, malabar pit vipers, saw-scaled vipers, cat snakes, and the hump-nosed pit viper, an endemic species to India and Sri Lanka.

Other fauna spotted during the visit included the malabar pied hornbill, giant squirrel, hill myna, luna moth, paris peacock, malabar raven, red helen, and tamil lacewing, many of which are endemic to the Western Ghats.

Participants also learned about a water conservation project carried out by Nature's Nest in collaboration with nearby villages, which included provisions for wildlife. A total of nine participants attended the camp. ■



Karvi Blooms at BNHS Reserve in Mumbai



More than 200 participants have visited the BNHS Reserve in Goregaon, Mumbai, this month to witness the rare karvi bloom, which occurs only once every eight years.

On September 14, 2024, a group of 42 participants embarked on the Karvi trail, led by Ms Priyadarshini Supekar, Mr Dilip Giri, and Mr Hrishikesh Ghogare. The participants were mesmerized by the breathtaking display of karvi flowers. The vibrant purple blanket of blooms left everyone in awe as they explored the rich flora and fauna of the Reserve.

On September 21, 2024, CEC-Mumbai organized another Karvi trail for KPMG employees and students from the Santacruz West Education Society (SWES). This trail was guided by Ms Kiran Thumma (Education Officer), Mr Dilip Giri (Field Assistant), and other naturalists, with a total of 97 participants attending the event.

On September 22, 2024, Ms Kiran Thumma, Mr. Dilip Giri, Mr Hrishikesh Ghogare, and Mr Sumrit (Naturalist) welcomed 63 participants for another opportunity to experience the spectacular karvi bloom. ■

Would you like to experience this rare, karvi bloom this year at the BNHS Reserve?

If so, write to cec-mumbai@bnhs.org or call +91 95949 53425 | +91 95949 29107.

BNHS records a new bird during its monthly SGNP Bird Count

On September 29, 2024, over 40 dedicated volunteers and BNHS members participated in the monthly bird count at Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP). A total of 65 bird species were recorded that day, with a notable addition to the park's bird checklist: the knob-billed duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos*. Previously observed only in areas outside the park, such as Bhandup Pumping Station and Lokhandwala Lake, this marks the first time the species has been documented within SGNP. With this discovery, the total number of avian species recorded in the park has risen to 233. ■



For more information or to participate, please visit our website or email us at programmes@bnhs.org.

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 digitizing 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, 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



BASIC COURSE IN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY AND BIRD MIGRATION STUDIES

The migratory season has begun at Point Calimere, with thousands of birds arriving since late July. This year, between 20,000 and 30,000 birds have already congregated, including over 2,000 greater flamingos, 2,500 lesser sand plovers, 2,500 curlew sandpipers, 3,000 marsh sandpipers, 6,000 little stints, and 1,000 common redshanks. The total number of migratory birds is expected to reach hundreds of thousands in the coming months. In addition to these migratory species, flocks of various terns, gulls, and resident birds such as spot-billed pelicans and painted storks are also present in good numbers.

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is excited to announce 11 batches of the Basic Course in Field Ornithology and Bird Migration Studies from October 2024 to January 2025, hosted at the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, Point Calimere (Kodiyakarai), Tamil Nadu.

About the Course

This course aims to build a network of birders and ringers to support bird monitoring and conservation along the Central Asian Flyway. It offers hands-on training in bird population monitoring, including bird counts and tracking through marking. Classroom sessions will cover bird migration study techniques to enhance participants' knowledge 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

Registration Details:

Fee: Rs 6,000 (Rs 5,000 for existing BNHS members)

Includes tent accommodation (two people per tent) with cots, fans, charging points, pillows, and blankets

Additional Expenses: Rs 4,000 (covers food, field visits, entry fees, etc.)

Eligibility: Open to all, no age limit. Anyone with an interest is welcome to participate.

Registration Deadline: 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.

Contact Us: Mr S. Sivakumar: s.swaminathan@bnhs.org | +91 94088 72745; Mr Paul Antony B: p.antony@bnhs.org | +91 89511 06860

Course Schedule (2024–2025):

2024

Batch I	:	October 4 – 6
Batch II	:	October 11 – 13
Batch III	:	October 18 – 20
Batch IV	:	October 25 – 27
Batch V	:	November 29 – December 1
Batch VI	:	December 6 – 8
Batch VII	:	December 13 – 15
Batch VIII	:	December 20 – 22

2025

Batch IX	:	January 10 – 12
Batch X	:	January 18 – 20
Batch IX	:	January 24 – 26

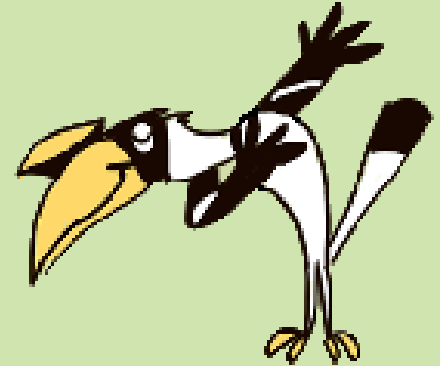
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Mission: Conservation of nature, primarily biological diversity, through action based on research, education and public awareness.

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