

## FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

Let's welcome the newly elected BNHS Governing Council members. Our Society is now in the capable hands of visionary leaders committed to its growth and success. Thank you to everyone who participated in the election and cast a vote. However, only 334 BNHS members exercised this right, a concern we must address. Let us work together to increase participation in the next election and strengthen our collective role in shaping BNHS.

First let me share some big news for BNHS and also our country. BNHS scientist Parveen Shaikh and another Indian scientist Barkha Subba are among the six winners recognised by the prestigious 'Green Oscars' aka the #WhitleyAward. Parveen and Barkha received their awards from Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, a patron of the Whitley Awards in London.

In the first week of April 2026, I was invited by fishermen at the Ujani Reservoir in Maharashtra. They had gathered at the Bhigwan fish market yard to inaugurate their first dedicated weighing machine, designed specifically to measure invasive alien fish species (IAS). While the machine itself is modest, its purpose is significant. In a unique initiative for India, it will be used exclusively to weigh only invasive fish species. The fishing community has resolved to segregate African catfish (ACF) and suckermouth catfish from their catch, ensuring these species do not enter market sales. Instead, the segregated fish will be weighed and transported directly to industries for oil extraction, preventing their sale for consumption due to associated health risks. This system was established with support from the Agro-Producer Market Federation. The initiative received widespread appreciation from the Gram Panchayat, Block Panchayat, and Zilla Parishad, uniting political representatives behind this shared cause.

Dr Unmesh Katwate and his team have built a strong and trusting relationship with fishermen across the reservoir and river, fostering meaningful collaboration. In recognition of his vision, dedication, and tireless efforts, Dr Katwate was felicitated by the community.

The BNHS fishery project at Ujani is achieving remarkable success. Notably, even after seizures of invasive fish by the Fisheries Department, fishermen warmly felicitated the Assistant and Deputy Commissioners of Fisheries. They also extended a grand welcome to us, expressing appreciation for BNHS's vision.

Mrs Swati, a fisherwoman who has built a strong riverine network and provided employment to 25 fishermen, contributed native species as brooder stock. She was felicitated for her efforts, along with others addressing invasive species in different ways. Meanwhile, the BNHS team has converted existing hatcheries to produce fingerlings of native species, strengthening conservation and promoting sustainable fisheries in the region.

In the third week of April, I arrived at Kishangarh Airport near Ajmer, Rajasthan. It soon became clear why an airport exists in this relatively small town – Kishangarh is a major hub for marble trade and mining-based industries. As I travelled onward, the Aravalli Hills appeared fragile yet enduring, standing in quiet contrast to the surrounding landscape. I then reached the expansive over 500-acre campus of the Central University of Rajasthan (CURAJ), where I was welcomed by the sights and sounds of grassland wildlife, such as francolins, jackals, nilgai, and wild cats roaming freely. At CURAJ, I interacted with Vice Chancellor Dr Anand Bhalerao and several Heads of Departments engaged in high-quality field research on the Aravalli region. I spent time in the School of Earth Sciences, exploring facilities ranging from HPLC laboratories to remote sensing and GIS units. I also met Master's and Ph.D. scholars working on critical topics such as protected

area networks, ecological connectivity, ecosystem sensitivity, river systems, and the spread of invasive species.

Despite this rich knowledge base, policymakers often rely on a limited number of institutions in Dehradun for scientific advice. In contrast, BNHS has taken a forward-looking step by signing an MoU with CURAJ, opening avenues for collaborative programmes in the coming year.

I also visited the Forest Department headquarters in Jaipur to discuss ongoing and future projects with PCCF (Wildlife) Mr Arun Prasad. During this visit, I met Mr Harshvardhan, a BNHS Life Member who has been contributing to conservation efforts in Rajasthan for over four decades.

At Sariska Tiger Reserve, I learned that the Critical Tiger Habitat (CTH), earlier proposed for deletion, has now been reaffirmed as part of both the Sanctuary and the CTH through a notification dated November 11, 2025. I also observed a healthy sambar population, a positive indicator for tiger conservation. The Sariska Tiger Reserve, led by Mr Sangram Singh Katiyar and DFO Mr Abhimanyu Saharan, is effectively managing the resettlement of the Gujjar community.

On my return, the Hon'ble Governor confirmed our appointment, allowing us to meet and brief him on BNHS's priorities in Rajasthan. I also visited Poddar School and Rajasthan University, where I engaged with students, staff, and trustees, strengthening academic and community connections.

I am pleased to share that the long-awaited book MAMMALS OF INDIA by Drs A.J.T. Johnsingh and P.O. Nameer has finally been announced. If you have not yet reserved your copy, you can do so now at a special discounted price: [https://shop.bnhs.org/product\\_details/341](https://shop.bnhs.org/product_details/341)

The release of captive bred vultures in Assam has been a significant milestone for BNHS. Most of the released birds are adapting well to their new environment, though a few continue to face challenges. A migratory wild Himalayan Griffon Vulture (HGV), first sighted in Melghat on February 3, 2026, spent some days with the released birds, before departing on March 28, 2026, is an encouraging sign of integration.

While writing this, I received the sad news of the passing of Mr Jamshed P. Irani on April 28, 2026. A gifted artist admired by Dr Sálím Ali, whose books he illustrated, and a valued supporter of BNHS, he will be deeply missed.

If you are not already following BNHS on social media, I encourage you to do so for regular updates. Finally, I invite you to explore the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>) for more field stories and insights. Contributions in any language are welcome. Academic institutions are also encouraged to subscribe to JBNHS (<https://bnhsjournal.in/index.php/bnhs/ga>), one of India's oldest scientific journals, which can support NAAC accreditation.

If you have not yet completed the Yearbook form for Life Members, you can do so here:

<https://forms.gle/12gPTSyTs9P2khue7>

For assistance, feel free to reach out:

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For event reservations and content submissions, please send your photos and write-ups to Mr Gopi Naidu at [g.naidu@bnhs.org](mailto:g.naidu@bnhs.org).

Thank you for staying connected with us. For any suggestions or queries, I am always available at [director@bnhs.org](mailto:director@bnhs.org).

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