



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



APRIL, 2025

CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

I hope you have read the encouraging news that the Government has decided to declare the DPS Lake in Navi Mumbai a Conservation Reserve. This welcome development was announced during the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) meeting held on April 17, 2025, at Mantralaya, Mumbai. During the meeting, I raised the issue of the Delhi Public School Lake – commonly known as DPS Lake – and formally requested the SBWL to grant it Conservation Reserve status.

Our sincere thanks go to the Hon'ble Forest Minister, Mr Ganesh Naik, who supported this request and highlighted how miscreants had obstructed the sea water inflow into the lake. This blockage has led to a significant decline in the number of lesser flamingos and other waders visiting the site. In response, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra approved the proposal and instructed the necessary actions to be taken.

I would like to thank all BNHS members in Navi Mumbai and the local NGOs who have long championed the cause of our avian friends. Their tireless efforts have given Navi Mumbai its identity as the 'Pink City' for its flamingos. We also extend our gratitude to the Forest Department and the Mangrove Cell of Maharashtra for their continued support throughout this journey.

BNHS has been conducting scientific studies of Thane Creek and its surrounding high-tide roosting sites since 2011, under the Terms of Reference (ToR) granted by CIDCO for the NMIA project. These bird ringing and telemetry studies have confirmed that Thane Creek hosts over 250,000 migratory and resident birds each season since 2015. So far, BNHS has ringed 29,877 birds across various species and has resighted or recaptured 4,252 individuals from regions as far as the Middle East, Central Asia, Siberia, Russia, and China.

Nutrient-rich mudflats such as those at Mahul-Sewri, Thane Creek, the wetlands of Navi Mumbai, and intertidal zones in Mumbai provide vital feeding grounds for these migratory birds. Our research shows that during high tide, large numbers of birds seek refuge in nearby water bodies like DPS Lake, TS Chanakya Wetland, NRI Complex Wetland, Panje Wetland, and others, using them as roosting sites.

In 2011, there were approximately ten such high-tide roosts across Raigad and Navi Mumbai. Today, only half remain available to support migratory bird populations. These wetlands not only play a critical ecological role, but are also vital for the flight safety of the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA). Following the tragic death of 39 lesser flamingos in Ghatkopar last year due to an aircraft collision, the Government has shown increased commitment to protecting these habitats. This recent decision is a clear sign of that resolve.

I encourage all BNHS members and our NGO partners to write letters of appreciation to the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Forest Minister. If you organise any public events related to this cause, please share photographs for inclusion in the BNHS newsletter.

On another note, 16 out of 25 white-rumped vultures raised at the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) in Pinjore, Haryana, have been successfully soaring high since their release on December 17, 2024. This is a promising sign that vultures bred in captivity can adapt and thrive in the wild. Meanwhile, the Forest Department of Madhya Pradesh released six vultures using a 'hard release' method, contrary to established protocols, again demonstrating its ineffectiveness.

This month, 34 vultures have been relocated from JCBC Pinjore to various Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra: 15 long-billed vultures (LBV) to Melghat, 9 white-rumped vultures (WRV) and 5 LBVs to Pench, and 5 LBVs to Tadoba-Andhari. Field Directors, Deputy Conservators of Forests, and staff at these reserves are doing commendable work to care for these birds, especially amid the scorching summer temperatures in central India.

Following the unfortunate electrocution death of a sarus crane in Gondia district last month, the district administration has initiated sensitivity mapping to develop mitigation strategies. We hope our BNHS scientists will complete this task soon.

This month, we were pleased to welcome Mr Vinayagan Dharmarajah, Regional Director of BirdLife Asia, who visited our projects in Rajasthan and appreciated our collaborative efforts with the Forest Department.

Thank you for the enthusiastic response to our launch of commemorative merchandise – a coffee mug, water bottle, and cloth bag featuring the great pied hornbill, inspired by our beloved former resident 'William'. We also express our gratitude to the Archaeology Department of the Government of Maharashtra for sanctioning Rs 39 lakh in support of our museum specimens.

As we celebrate the Diamond Jubilee year of Hornbill House, I invite you to encourage more nature lovers and institutions to join the BNHS family. We have launched a special membership campaign with tailored offers for other organizations and corporate partners.

Do explore the 'Systema naturae' section in the latest issue of Hornbill magazine and consider contributing your observations to the BNHS 150-Year Omnibus Collection.

Lastly, if you have not yet completed the online form for the Life Members' Yearbook, please do so here: <https://forms.gle/12gPTSYTs9P2khue7>.

For any assistance, please contact the following:

- Central Marketing: cmd@bnhs.org
- Membership: membership@bnhs.org
- Programmes: programmes@bnhs.org
- Conservation Education Centre: cec-mumbai@bnhs.org

For event reservations and submissions, please send your content and photos to Mr Gopi Naidu at g.naidu@bnhs.org.

Thank you for staying connected with us. I am always available at director@bnhs.org for any questions or suggestions.

Kishor Rithe

Director, Bombay Natural History Society

DPS Wetland Declared Flamingo Conservation Reserve

The Maharashtra State Wildlife Board approved the declaration of the DPS Lake in Nerul as a Flamingo Conservation Reserve during its meeting on April 24. The Board's meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, marks the first time a wetland linked to the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS) has been granted such protection.

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and several Navi Mumbai-based NGOs had campaigned vigorously for the wetland's conservation. Environmentalists credited the milestone to the sustained efforts of multiple stakeholders. The decision follows a year of heightened concern over the lake's health after 17 flamingos died when tidal inlets were blocked during nearby construction.

The 30-acre DPS Lake serves as a vital feeding and resting site for flamingos that migrate from the TCFS during high tides. Experts, including BNHS researchers, have long warned that loss of satellite wetlands could force flamingos closer to the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), raising the risk of bird strikes. The NMIA's environmental impact report acknowledges this risk and commits to following BNHS recommendations to mitigate it.

Meanwhile, the Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC) has announced plans to partner with BNHS to maintain DPS Lake and other wetlands under its jurisdiction. BNHS has now added DPS Lake and a wetland near Sanjivani School in Kharghar to its list of priority sites under the satellite wetland management plan for TCFS. ■



Indian Skimmer Conservation Efforts Presented at SCCS Cambridge 2025



Parveen Shaikh, Scientist B, from BNHS was selected to present her research at the prestigious Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS) 2025 at the University of Cambridge. Awarded a full bursary covering travel, accommodation, visa, and registration, Parveen joined over 160 young conservationists from more than 40 countries.

Her oral presentation focused on the conservation of the endangered Indian skimmer along the Chambal River, emphasizing the importance of community-based initiatives for protecting

riverine nesting habitats. Through her talk, Parveen highlighted how engaging local communities can be pivotal for species recovery.

Beyond sharing her work, Parveen engaged with global conservation experts, gaining insights into interdisciplinary approaches that integrate ecology, policy, and social science. Her participation at SCCS Cambridge underscores the value of grassroots conservation efforts and the critical role of early-career researchers in global biodiversity preservation. ■

Captive-bred Vultures Transferred from Pinjore to Maharashtra for Release

As part of the vulture reintroduction programme, 34 captive-bred vultures – 20 long-billed and 14 white-rumped – were successfully transferred from the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) in Pinjore to three major tiger reserves in Maharashtra: Melghat, Pench, and Tadoba-Andhari on April 22.

The vultures, aged between 2 and 6 years, underwent extensive health checks before the move to ensure fitness for release. Each bird was transported individually in wooden boxes and carried in temperature-controlled vehicles to minimize stress. The transfer, coordinated by RFO Rundun Katkar (TATR) and supported by a dedicated team from BNHS and forest departments, is a critical step toward restoring vulture populations and maintaining ecological balance in Central India. This initiative was a joint effort by the BNHS, Haryana Forest Department, and Maharashtra Forest Department. Before their soft release, the vultures will undergo a period of acclimatization. ■



Monitoring White-rumped Vultures Released in Haryana

In December 2024, the BNHS, in collaboration with the Haryana Forest Department, released 25 captive-bred white-rumped vultures *Gyps bengalensis* from the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, Pinjore. The initiative aimed to strengthen wild vulture populations through carefully monitored reintroductions. Prior to release, each vulture was fitted with a gps-gsm tag to enable close post-release monitoring. Over the following months four



months, four vultures exhibited promising dispersal patterns and successfully interacted with wild conspecifics across Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Punjab. Meanwhile, ten vultures remained near the release site, suggesting a gradual acclimatization to their new environment.

Post-release tracking revealed that several of the released vultures consistently used the area around the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre as a primary roosting site. These individuals foraged over long distances with wild vultures but regularly returned to roost at the release site, suggesting strong site fidelity and successful early-stage integration into the wild population.

Challenges and Mortality: Despite these encouraging signs, the release faced several challenges. Tragically, nine vultures died – primarily due to electrocution from high-tension power lines –resulting in a mortality rate of 36%. Other difficulties included limited tracking capabilities in remote regions, poor adaptation among hand-reared individuals, and reduced food availability in the area.

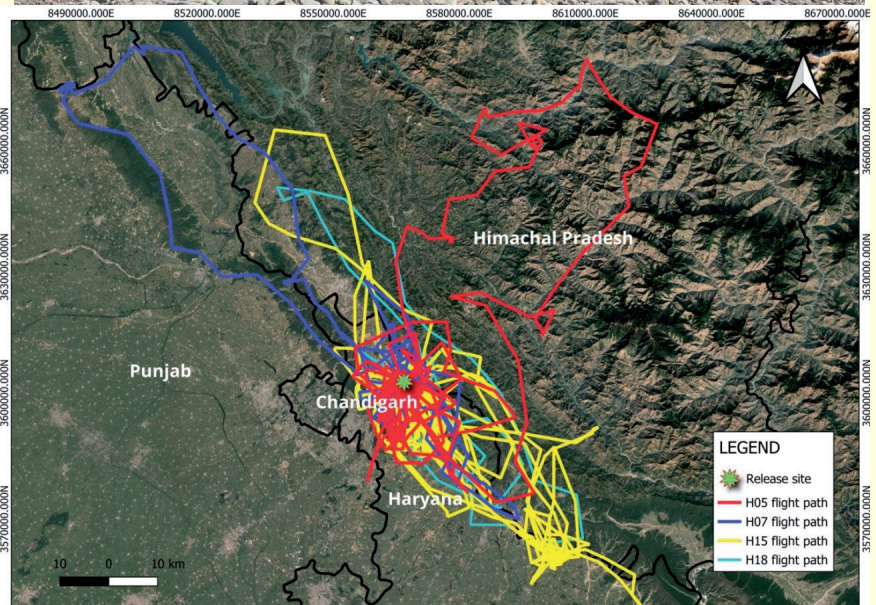
Dispersal Patterns and Adaptability: The six vultures that successfully integrated into the wild demonstrated remarkable adaptability across diverse terrains and elevations. Notable observations include:

- A05: Reached the highest altitudes, observed at 2,600 m and soaring up to 3,300 m, and travelled up to 78 km to Teban village, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh.

- A18: Observed at approximately 1,500 m elevation, soaring to 2,400 m, and travelled 57 km to Ambwala, Solan, Himachal Pradesh.
- A15 and A09: Both operated around 800 m elevation, with soaring heights up to 2,500 m and 2,200 m respectively, travelling 68 km (A15 to Bhaniawala, Yamunanagar, Haryana) and 81 km (A09 to Bhakhra, Bilaspur, Himachal Pradesh).
- A11 and A21: Remained closer to the release site, moving within 8 km (A11 to Khol Hi-Raitan Wildlife Sanctuary, Panchkula) and 25 km (A21 to Barwala, Hisar), with soaring heights reaching 1,300 m and 2,400 m.

These movements highlight the vultures' expanding spatial range and their increasing proficiency at navigating complex natural landscapes.

A particularly encouraging development occurred in Bhorian village, near the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre. Thirteen tagged, released white-rumped vultures were observed feeding on a cattle carcass alongside 20 Himalayan Griffons and 15 wild white-rumped vultures. The released birds exhibited natural behaviours such as feeding, perching, resting, and soaring in unison with their wild counterparts. ■



First Release of Captive-Bred Vultures from VCBC Bhopal into the Wild

In April 2025, the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Bhopal conducted its first-ever release of captive-bred vultures into the wild. Established in 2014 under the South Asia Vulture Recovery Plan, VCBC Bhopal is a joint initiative of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and the BNHS.

The Centre has successfully bred 36 vultures in captivity, focusing on the critically endangered white-rumped vulture *Gyps bengalensis* and long-billed vulture *Gyps indicus*. This release marks a key step in the vulture reintroduction plan for Madhya Pradesh, aimed at rebuilding wild populations. Six vultures – two white-rumped and four long-billed – were carefully selected for release based on specific criteria, including age (over four years), health status, and behaviour. Prior to release, the birds were fitted with 50g GPS-GSM telemetry tags to enable post-release monitoring. The tagging operation was led by BNHS experts Mr Sachin Ranade and Mr Hemant Bajpai, with veterinary support from Dr Shravan Singh Rathore and overall coordination by Dr Arockianathan Samson. This tagging exercise also served as essential training and capacity building for researchers and local



staff, with a strong emphasis on maintaining a calm and stress-free environment for the birds during the process.

On April 16, 2025, the tagged vultures were released using the Hard Release Method at Halali Dam in Raisen district, although not strictly in accordance with recommended protocols. The event was officiated by senior forest officials, including Shri Subhranjan Sen, IFS (PCCF Wildlife), Shri L. Krishnamurthy, IFS (Addl. PCCF), Shri Himanshu Tyagi, IFS (DFO Vidisha), Shri Avadesh Meena, IFS (Field Director, Van Vihar), and Dr Sujit Narwade (Assistant Director, BNHS), among others.

Challenges and Mortality: Tragically, within one week of release, three vultures (O83, H52, M16) succumbed to dehydration and exhaustion due to extreme temperatures reaching 44°C. One bird (M52) was rescued in time, while the remaining two (O84 and H97) were recaptured to prevent further fatalities. These events have underscored the critical importance of adopting a soft release strategy for future efforts.

VCBC Bhopal remains committed to evidence-based practices aimed at enhancing the long-term survival and recovery of vulture populations across the Indian subcontinent. ■



Safety Testing of Paracetamol on Himalayan Griffons: A Joint Initiative

In a collaborative effort, the BNHS, Haryana Forest Department, and Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Bareilly, have launched a study to test the safety of paracetamol on vultures at the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, Pinjore.

The research aims to determine if paracetamol – a commonly used veterinary drug – is safe for vultures when they ingest carcasses treated with it. This study is critical for identifying vulture-safe alternatives to harmful drugs such as diclofenac, ketoprofen, and nimesulide. The vultures are being closely monitored under expert veterinary supervision, with strict adherence to ethical protocols. Findings from this project will shape future veterinary practices and conservation policies, playing a pivotal role in safeguarding India's critically endangered vulture populations. ■



BNHS Advocacy Team Strengthens Vulture Protection Efforts in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh

Between April 21 and 23, the BNHS advocacy team – comprising Mrs Alka Dubey (Advocacy Officer), Jeff Francis (Conservation Biologist), and Lalit Sharma (Technical Assistant) – conducted a series of high-level meetings across Haryana and Himachal Pradesh to promote vulture conservation. The team submitted advisory letters and gazette notifications concerning the ban on vulture-toxic veterinary drugs to key government departments, including Forest, Animal Husbandry, and Drug Control. Notable outcomes from the meetings included:

- Proposals for joint awareness programmes with veterinarians, para-veterinarians, and forest staff.
- Plans for a new, state-of-the-art Vulture Interpretation Centre at JCBC, Pinjore.
- Agreements to organize district-level workshops in Haryana in partnership with the Drug Control Department.
- Submission of undercover pharmacy survey data to aid enforcement actions.
- Initiation of the formal process to obtain permission for vulture nesting surveys in Himachal Pradesh.



The team received strong reaffirmations of support for vulture conservation from top state leadership, marking a critical step towards securing the future of India's endangered vulture populations. ■

Community Engagement Around VCBC Rani

An awareness program was conducted at Siparia High School, Tewari Pal, on April 26, 2025, addressing approximately 150 students and five teachers. Mr Ghanashyam Gogoi delivered a slideshow presentation on vulture conservation, with support from Mr Amar Jyoti in organizing the event. ■



Efforts to establish Biodiversity Heritage Site for Lesser Florican in Rajasthan

The Ajmer team of the 'Lesser Florican Project' held a meeting with Mr Mukesh Tiwari, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Rajasthan, and Mr Virendra Singh Jora, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Ajmer, on April 19, 2025 to discuss a proposal for establishing a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS) dedicated to the conservation of the Kharmor (lesser florican).

The team emphasized the urgent need to protect the remaining populations of this critically endangered and ecologically vital grassland bird species. A detailed presentation outlined the proposed site locations, the integral role of People's Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs), and a strategic framework for long-term conservation and site management.



The proposed Kharmor BHS was highlighted as a vital step in safeguarding fragile grassland ecosystems and their unique biodiversity. Discussions also included precautionary measures, conservation strategies, and potential areas of collaboration with the Forest Department to ensure smooth project implementation. ■

BNHS Urges Immediate Action for Grassland Conservation in Karnataka

In a significant appeal, Mr Kishor Rithe Director-BNHS submitted a detailed report to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) of Karnataka, calling for urgent measures to conserve the state's rapidly degrading grasslands. These ecosystems are vital for supporting unique wildlife species such as the lesser florican, blackbuck, and Indian grey wolf, besides offering essential ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, soil conservation, and water regulation.

The report highlights growing threats to grasslands, including land degradation, land-use conversion, and infrastructure development. Since 2021, BNHS has been working in Bidar District to conserve the endangered lesser florican. Field surveys conducted between 2021 and 2023 recorded a 13% decline in grassland cover – an alarming trend that is expected to worsen, potentially resulting in severe habitat loss within the next five to six years.

A key concern raised in the report involves current afforestation practices, particularly the establishment of tree plantations by digging pits in existing grasslands, often on lands managed by the Forest Department. BNHS emphasizes that such afforestation in natural grasslands is ecologically inappropriate and harmful, leading to significant habitat alteration and biodiversity loss. The organization has called for the immediate cessation of these practices – not just in Bidar but across all grassland ecosystems under the management of Karnataka's Forest Department.



As a technical partner to the Bidar Forest Division, BNHS has been actively involved in grassland restoration, invasive species removal (notably *Gliricidia* spp.), and wildlife monitoring. The submitted report outlines several key recommendations, including:

- Restoration of degraded grasslands
- Legal protection for critical grassland habitats
- Long-term monitoring of priority species
- Management of free-ranging dogs
- Enhanced stakeholder engagement

These measures aim to safeguard Karnataka's grasslands and ensure the long-term conservation of the species and ecosystem services they support. ■

Bringing Back Wildlife Through Habitat Restoration

In March 2024, BNHS launched a comprehensive habitat restoration initiative across seven villages and the Pokhran Field Firing Range (PFFR) in Rajasthan. The programme focused on replanting native flora, rehabilitating degraded landscapes, and promoting sustainable land management. By April, significant wildlife recovery was observed, with a noticeable return of birds, small mammals, and reptiles to the restored habitats. This successful restoration highlights the critical role of community engagement and sustained conservation efforts in reviving local biodiversity. Chestnut-bellied sandgrouse and spiny-tailed lizards are now frequently observed in the restored area near Chacha Village, Pokhran Tehsil. ■



BNHS Donates Dart Gun to Rajasthan Forest Department

The BNHS has donated a dart gun to the Rajasthan Forest Department to assist in addressing the growing issue of free-ranging dogs in wildlife habitats. The dart gun, handed over on April 26, will aid forest officials in safely capturing and relocating stray dogs that pose a threat to native wildlife. This initiative marks an important step toward ensuring safer ecosystems for endangered species. ■



Community-Led Conservation and Livelihood Initiatives Gain Momentum in Nagaland

Awareness Programme: An awareness and coordination meeting on the conservation of Amur Falcons was held on March 20, at the Community Hall in Makharung Village, Wokha District, Nagaland. The event was attended by community leaders and representatives from the village council, and facilitated by the Education Officer of the BNHS. The session featured a brief presentation on the Amur Falcon, its migratory behaviour, and conservation status. The Education Officer emphasized the detrimental impact of hunting on falcon populations and urged the community to impose a complete hunting ban in the village. In response, village leaders expressed strong support for reinforcing their existing resolution against hunting and requested assistance from BNHS in drafting a comprehensive conservation framework. The community pledged to set a regional example in wildlife conservation and explore opportunities to develop ecotourism as a sustainable livelihood alternative.



Empowering Local Women: On March 31, BNHS, in collaboration with Zion Welfare Society and MTZ Fish Processing Unit (Sanis Town), conducted a one-day skill development training programme on fish processing and preservation at Doyang IBA. The programme aimed to enhance community-based livelihoods, particularly among those affected by hunting bans. The event commenced with a brief note on Amur Falcon conservation by the BNHS Education Officer. Participants – primarily women from Self-Help Groups and wives of former hunters—received hands-on training in fish preservation and processing techniques from experts at MTZ Fish Processing Unit. In addition to technical training, participants were informed about the availability of startup loans to help initiate their own fish processing enterprises. The programme concluded with an informative session on health education, focusing on HIV awareness, delivered by the Program Manager of Zion Welfare Society, Baghty. ■



Regional Director-Asia, BirdLife International, Visits BNHS Field Station in Khetolai, Rajasthan

Mr Vinayagan Dharmarajah, Regional Director for Asia at BirdLife International, recently visited the BNHS base camp in Khetolai, Rajasthan, where significant grassland restoration initiatives are underway. The efforts focus on rejuvenating the surrounding grassland reserve, managing a critical waterbody, and maintaining a designated carcass disposal site to support ecological balance. Mr Dharmarajah also reviewed the progress of the Demoiselle Crane project in Khichan, which combines community involvement with focused conservation strategies to create safe wintering grounds for migratory birds. Additionally, he visited the Vulture Conservation Reserve in Bikaner and held discussions with senior forest officials in Jaipur. ■



Grassland Revival in TATR

Over the past decade, the successful rehabilitation of several village sites within the core zone of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) has led to the emergence of expansive grassland ecosystems. These restored habitats now play a crucial role in supporting a diverse array of wildlife, including herbivores and other fauna. Importantly, they have also become increasingly vital for a variety of grassland bird species. Among the species of particular conservation interest is the lesser florican, a rare and endangered grassland bird. As these grassland ecosystems continue to evolve, the need to assess and monitor faunal diversity has become more pressing.

In response, the Maharashtra Forest Department invited the BNHS to conduct a baseline study of fauna, with a special focus on avifauna in the grassland habitats of TATR. As part of this initiative, BNHS has already undertaken a rapid assessment of bird diversity in the meadows of TATR. Mr Kishor Rithe, Director of BNHS, and Dr Sujit Narwade, Deputy Director, visited TATR to prepare a comprehensive study design. During their visit, BNHS presented a preliminary report on grassland conservation to Mr Vivek Ramesh Natu, Assistant Conservator of Forests, TATR Core. BNHS will further evaluate the



suitability of these grasslands for key species, such as the lesser florican, and develop a standardized bird monitoring protocol to support long-term conservation planning in the region. ■

Citizen Science Collaboration in Rajasthan

A BNHS team recently met Shri Arijit Banerjee, Head of Forest Force (HoFF), Rajasthan, to discuss a project titled 'A Citizen Science Programme Dedicated to Empowering Individuals in Rajasthan, India, to Become Stewards of Their Avian Companions, Engage in Long-Term Monitoring, and Support Bird Conservation'. BNHS expressed strong interest in collaborating with the Rajasthan Forest Department to implement this citizen science initiative. The program will train local residents in systematic bird counting and data collection methods, enhancing community involvement in conservation. ■



Inspiring the Next Generation



In a community outreach effort, the Director of BNHS addressed students at Prabodhan Vidyalaya in Daryapur, speaking about the importance of wildlife science and biology. He highlighted the ongoing vulture release programme in Melghat, encouraging students and their families to take an active role in conservation efforts to restore vulture populations in the region. ■



Range Officer Trainees from Telangana Visit VCBC Haryana

On April 2, a group of 33 Range Officer Trainees from the Telangana Forest Academy visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Haryana. As part of their visit, the trainees attended a presentation on the objectives, achievements, and importance of India's vulture conservation efforts. They were then taken on a guided tour of the breeding facility, where they observed the enclosures, learned about specialized husbandry practices, and gained insights into the collaborative work between the BNHS and the Haryana Forest Department. ■



Forestry Students from Dehradun Visit VCBC Haryana



On April 25, 17 Master's students in Forestry from Dolphin PG Institute, Dehradun, visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre in Haryana. The visit included a presentation on conservation strategies for critically endangered vulture species, followed by a guided facility tour. Students received first-hand exposure to breeding protocols and the practical challenges faced in species recovery efforts, highlighting the importance of field-based learning in conservation education. ■

Forestry Trainees Receive Field Training at VCBC Haryana

On April 28, 31 Forestry Trainees from the Haryana Forestry Training Institute, Sohna (Gurugram), visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre as part of their field training program. The trainees participated in an introductory session on vulture conservation initiatives and toured the breeding enclosures. They learned about vulture husbandry techniques, the ecological significance of vultures, and ongoing efforts to reintroduce them into the wild. The visit aimed to strengthen their practical understanding of species recovery programmes and the role of conservation in forest management. ■



Zoology Students Visit VCBC Bhopal



As part of their academic field tour, B.Sc. and M.Sc. Zoology students from Lachoo Memorial College of Science & Technology (Autonomous), Jodhpur, visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC). The visit began with an informative presentation on India's vulture conservation initiatives, followed by a guided walk through the centre. Students observed the breeding enclosures, learned about conservation breeding protocols, and explored the critical ecological role vultures play. The visit provided valuable hands-on exposure, significantly enriching the students' academic learning experience. ■

School Awareness Programmes in Assam

On April 26, Mr Sthita Pragyan and Mr Hemanta Buragohain conducted a culture conservation awareness session at Magaraghat High School, Sibsagar. The event was attended by approximately 100 students and six teachers. A presentation on culture conservation was followed by an engaging question-and-answer session, fostering curiosity and environmental awareness among the young audience. ■



MSc Students from Wildlife Institute of India visit BNHS Field Station at Ajmer

led by Dr Bivash Pandav, Scientist-G and Head at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun, the BNHS team recently organized an interactive session with MSc Wildlife Science students at the WII campus in Ajmer. During the meeting, BNHS team shared insights on ongoing efforts to conserve the critically endangered lesser florican. They discussed various conservation activities, challenges, and success stories, offering students valuable real-world perspectives on wildlife management. The session provided an excellent platform for budding conservationists to engage with experienced professionals. ■



Debate on Legal Trade of Peacock Feathers Marks Earth Day Event in Udaipur

On the occasion of Earth Day 2025, Dr Rajat Bhargava, Senior Ornithologist at the BNHS, was invited as the Chief Guest for a special lecture in Udaipur. The event, hosted at Van Bhawan Conference Hall, was jointly organized by the Green Peepal Society (GPS), the Udaipur Forest Department, and WWF-India. Dr Bhargava delivered a talk titled 'An Overview of Peacock Tail Feathers Trade and Utilization in India – Should We Ban or Allow It?', exploring the complex dynamics surrounding the collection and use of peacock feathers across the country. He shed light on grassroots-level collection practices, often involving farmers and children, and discussed the cultural and religious significance of peacock feathers, particularly in Rajasthan and bordering areas of Gujarat.

The event drew over 60 attendees, including local NGO representatives, forest officials, and nature enthusiasts. The session was chaired by Shri Rahul

Bhatnagar, President of GPS. The discussion sparked a lively debate on the legality and ethics of trading peacock tail feathers in India, particularly the poisoning of peafowls using pesticide-laced grains by certain communities that consume and trade in their meat and the importance of habitat restoration and controlling stray dog populations, which pose a threat to peafowl eggs and chicks in human-dominated landscapes. ■



Celebrating Culture and Conservation: BNHS at 'Rongali Bwisagu' in Koklabari

On April 25, the BNHS Assam team participated in the 'Rongali Bwisagu' celebrations organised by the All-Bodo Students' Union at Laxmi Bazar, Koklabari, near Manas National Park. During the event, Mr Arindam Sinha, Senior Project Fellow at BNHS, met with Mr Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Minister of Welfare, Bodoland. They discussed BNHS's ongoing efforts to conserve the critically endangered Bengal florican in the Koklabari Agricultural Farm area. Mr Sinha emphasized Koklabari's importance as a high bird-density area and outlined BNHS's plans to establish a Community Conserved Area (CCA) for long-term protection. The Minister appreciated the conservation efforts and encouraged BNHS to submit a formal proposal to the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). ■



BNHS Conducts Snakebite Awareness Training for Film City Security Force



The Conservation Education Centre (CEC) of BNHS, in collaboration with the Filmcity Security team, has launched a series of 'Awareness and First Responders Conduct' sessions focused on snakes and snakebite management. Given the forested surroundings shared by the CEC and Dadasaheb Phalke Chitranagari (Film City), the sessions address the urgent need for snake awareness among security personnel. Members of the Maharashtra Security Force (MSF) participated in the sessions held on April 26 and 29. Shardul Bajikar, Education Officer at BNHS, led the session alongside the CEC team, equipping participants with essential knowledge on snake behaviour, first aid responses, and safe handling practices. ■

Birds & Beyond: Exploring Indian Avifauna through Art and Heritage



In a first-of-its-kind initiative, BNHS Programmes hosted a workshop titled Birds & Beyond: Exploring Indian Birds, on April 12, in collaboration with the Sarmaya Art Foundation, Kala Ghoda. Participants explored India's rich birdlife through historic taxidermy specimens from BNHS and rare ornithological books from Sarmaya's collection, including A CENTURY OF BIRDS FROM THE HIMALAYA MOUNTAINS by John Gould. The session emphasized the scientific and educational importance of historic taxidermy, ethical considerations in specimen preservation, and the cultural significance of birds, sparking thought-provoking conversations on conservation and heritage. ■



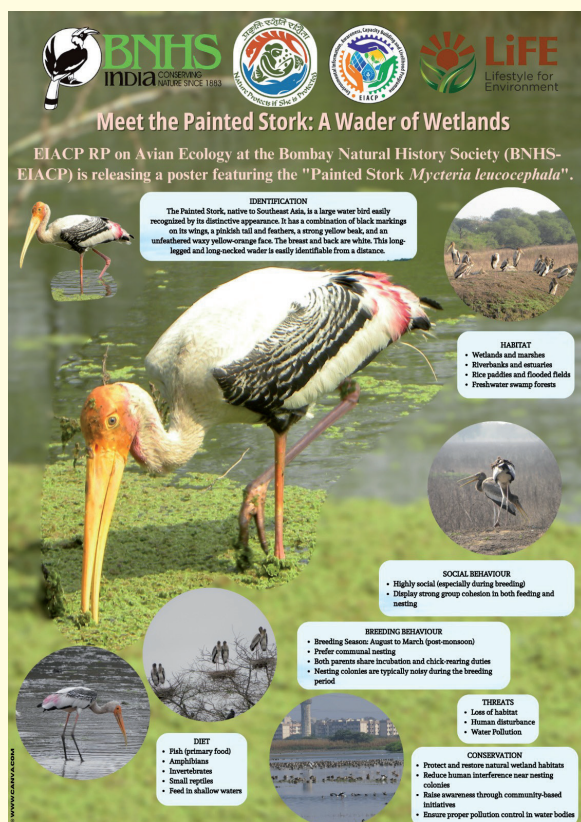
BNHS and Sarmaya Museum Celebrate Nature Through Warli Art Workshop

The BNHS and the Sarmaya Museum organized a workshop titled "Colours in the Warli Traditions," blending nature education with indigenous art on April 26, 2025. Nineteen participants attended the workshop, which opened with a presentation Shardul Bajkar, Education Officer, on the role of colours in nature. The session was followed by a forest trail led by Warli artist Prakash Sathe, where participants explored the forest to discover natural material. The workshop culminated with a visit to a traditional Warli household in the Aarey Forests, offering participants a firsthand experience of Warli art and its deep connections to sustainable and nature-friendly traditions. The session shed light on the intricate links between indigenous cultural practices and environmental conservation. ■



New Poster Highlights the Painted Stork and Wetland Conservation

The EIACP Programme Centre (PC) and Resource Partner (RP) on Avian Ecology at BNHS (BNHS-EIACP) has released a new educational poster titled Meet the Painted Stork: A Wader of Wetlands. This initiative aims to raise awareness about the ecological significance of wading birds and the urgent need to conserve their wetland habitats. The poster provides detailed insights into the life, behaviour, and conservation challenges of the Painted Stork, highlighting the essential link between wetland ecosystems and the species they support. ■



Flamingos in Focus: Sketching in the Forest Special Session

Building on the success of the 'Sketching in the Forest' programme held in March, BNHS organized a special session focused on flamingos. Led by renowned wildlife illustrator and BNHS Life Member Ashvini Menon, the event was held at TS Chanakya and introduced participants to fundamental sketching techniques suited for wetlands. Attendees keenly observed and artistically documented flamingos and their vibrant habitat, blending art with conservation education and fostering a deeper appreciation of Mumbai's wetland biodiversity. ■





Tree Walk at Malabar Hill Highlights Mumbai's Urban Green Spaces

On April 20, BNHS Programmes hosted a Tree Walk at the scenic Malabar Hill in South Mumbai. Members explored the area's lush greenery, learning about tree species such as the Mysore Fig, Todi Palm, and Baheda Tree. The walk emphasized the ecological importance of urban green spaces and tree identification techniques, inspiring participants to value and protect Mumbai's natural heritage through engaging discussions in a picturesque setting. ■



April Bird Count at SGNP

The April Bird Count at Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) was conducted on April 27, attracting over 38 enthusiastic volunteers, including birders, naturalists, and nature lovers. Together, participants documented more than 80 bird species across SGNP's diverse habitats. A major highlight was the sighting of the marsh sandpiper warbler at Thakurpada – a remarkable new addition to the park's bird checklist.

Those interested in joining future bird counts can visit www.bnhs.org or email programmes@bnhs.org for more information. ■



Donation of Books to BNHS Library

The Bombay Natural History Society extends its heartfelt gratitude to Mrs Shakuntala Bharvani for her generous donation of 530 valuable books to the BNHS Library. This contribution reflects a deep commitment to fostering education and preserving the scientific heritage for future generations. The BNHS Governing Council and Library Committee truly appreciate this support, which will significantly enrich the organisation's learning resources. ■



About BNHS Conservation Education Centre (CEC Mumbai) / BNHS Nature Reserve CEC Mumbai is a 33-acre forest reserve that serves as a habitat for Mumbai's leopards and diverse biodiversity. Situated between Sanjay Gandhi National Park and the urban forest of Film City, it is one of Mumbai's pioneering environmental education centers. Since its inception, CEC Mumbai has played a crucial role in raising awareness about the city's biodiversity through nature trails, workshops for educators, corporate CSR programmes, and various public outreach initiatives.

CEC Mumbai also plays a pivotal role in offering BNHS online-hybrid courses, allowing participants from across India to engage in structured biodiversity education. These courses provide valuable opportunities for individuals who may not have access to in-person training.

For more information on these courses, follow BNHS CEC Mumbai on Instagram: @bnhscec_mumbai

Connect with CEC Mumbai: cec-mumbai@bnhs.org



Online-cum-field Courses for Amateurs – 2025–26

Leadership Course in Biodiversity Conservation (LeadBio)

Duration: 11 months (July 2025 to May 2026)

***Fee:** ₹ 14,556/- (non-BNHS Member)
₹ 13,150/- (BNHS Member)

Basic Course in Herpetology

Duration: 4 months (July 2025 to October 2025)

***Fee:** ₹ 9,556/- (non-BNHS Member)
₹ 8,150/- (BNHS Member)

Basic Course in Botany

Duration: 6 months (July 2025 to December 2025)

***Fee:** ₹ 9,556/- (non-BNHS Member)
₹ 8,150/- (BNHS Member)

Basic Course in Butterfly Studies

Duration: 6 months (August 2025 to January 2026)

***Fee:** ₹ 9,556/- (non-BNHS Member)
₹ 8,150/- (BNHS Member)

Basic Course in Ornithology

Duration: 11 months (August 2025 to June 2026)

***Fee:** ₹ 14,556/- (non-BNHS Member)
₹ 13,150/- (BNHS Member)

Qualification required for all courses: Matriculation
Study Material and Medium of Instruction: English

Write to cec-mumbai@bnhs.org
Mobile: 095949 53425/095949 29107

REGISTRATION STARTED

For more information follow us on
instagram @bnhscec_mumbai
(BNHS-CEC, Mumbai)

*Course fee excludes camp fees.

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



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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