



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

From the DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

This month, I visited Jalgaon in Maharashtra to support the green education courses that BNHS plans to undertake in collaboration with universities. Meeting the dynamic Superintendent of Police, Mr Shrikant Dhiware, in Jalgaon could help us finalise a training workshop for police personnel on illegal wildlife trade.

I found it difficult to spare time for field visits, but I wanted to personally see the BNHS plantation at Mulashi, near Lonavala. Here, we planted around 90,000 saplings across 14.7 acres of private land owned by Tata Power, in the watershed of the Mulashi Reservoir. The plantation has grown remarkably well, and the site was thriving in the monsoon mist.

In mid-August, I decided to take our team to Gadchiroli district to see the wild buffalo habitat and plan project activities in the 180 sq. km Kolamarka Conservation Reserve (CR) in Maharashtra. I had first visited the forests of Gadchiroli in 2003 and found them virgin and serene, but overshadowed by fear due to extremist activities. I always travelled here under the shadow of Naxal threats. During my visits in 2003, 2004 and 2011, I spent several weeks in the region but could not fully enjoy the forest's beauty, birding or wildlife sightings because of this fear. After 15 years, I returned to these forests. This time, for the first time in my life, I was able to enjoy my dream area, Kolamarka, without the fear of Naxal violence.

The virgin forest patch known as the 'Glory of Alapalli' has since been declared a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS). We visited the wild buffalo habitat along the Indravati riverbed and also met residents of two villages to discuss how they could be engaged in wild buffalo conservation. Kolamarka CR includes six villages – Chitveli-1, Chitveli-2, Tonder, Bangarampetha, Asha and Mukhanpalli – spread across an area of just 5 sq. km.

Today, the situation in Gadchiroli district has changed. With the decline in Naxal presence, the government is planning several infrastructure projects, including the expansion of a National Highway cutting through the corridor between Kolamarka CR and Pranhita Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS). While such development may threaten parts of the district's green heritage, there is also encouraging news: wild elephants have begun reclaiming the northern part of the district. Their presence is stronger in the Wadsa and Gadchiroli forest divisions, though less so in Bhamaragad. I hope the government will designate a reserve for these elephants, providing them with a safe space while helping to reduce the growing human–elephant conflict.

With the fading of Naxal fear, villagers are now venturing deeper into the jungle. As a conservationist, I feel that the responsibility of the Forest and Tribal departments has increased significantly, particularly in engaging with communities around the forests. The role of the Forest Department, in particular, has become more challenging.

We also visited the adjoining Pranhita Wildlife Sanctuary, which was notified in August 2014. We were amazed to see open grasslands and Anjan-dominated forest patches in this stretch of Pranhita WLS. A few uncultivated agricultural fields were covered with lush green natural grass, creating meadows that attracted

grassland birds. Could the Lesser Florican occur here? However, proposed mining activities may threaten this sanctuary.

BNHS is a partner of BirdLife International. Mr Martin Harper, CEO of BirdLife International, visited Delhi for the AVPN meet at Pragati Maidan. We seized this opportunity to invite him to learn more about BNHS projects. A meeting with selected BNHS scientists was organised at the Gothangaon Nature Conservancy near Nagpur. He was fortunate to witness a tigress with four cubs and a male tiger, along with several bird species.

He also visited the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) to see the BNHS vulture aviary and was able to observe N06, one of the released birds. In addition, he inaugurated BNHS's National Centre for Bird Hazard Management and Avian Safety at Bhisi, Chimur. We hope this visit will further strengthen the ties between BirdLife International and BNHS.

By the time you read this newsletter, we will be celebrating International Vulture Day on September 5. I will share the amazing programmes that the BNHS vulture team has organised across the country.

If you are not already following BNHS on social media, I encourage you to do so and stay updated with our latest activities and conservation initiatives.

Do read the page on Handbook of the Birds of India (and South Asia) in the June issue of *Hornbill* magazine, and consider contributing your observations to the revised edition of this magnum opus on ornithology. Finally, I encourage you to read the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>) for more inspiring stories from the field. Please feel free to contribute articles in any language. We also encourage academic institutions to subscribe to *JBNHS* (<https://bnhsjournal.in/index.php/bnhs/ga>), one of India's oldest scientific journals, which can also help institutions earn NAAC accreditation credits.

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

Kishor Rithe
Director
Bombay Natural History Society

BNHS Office Inaugurated at Gorewada Zoo

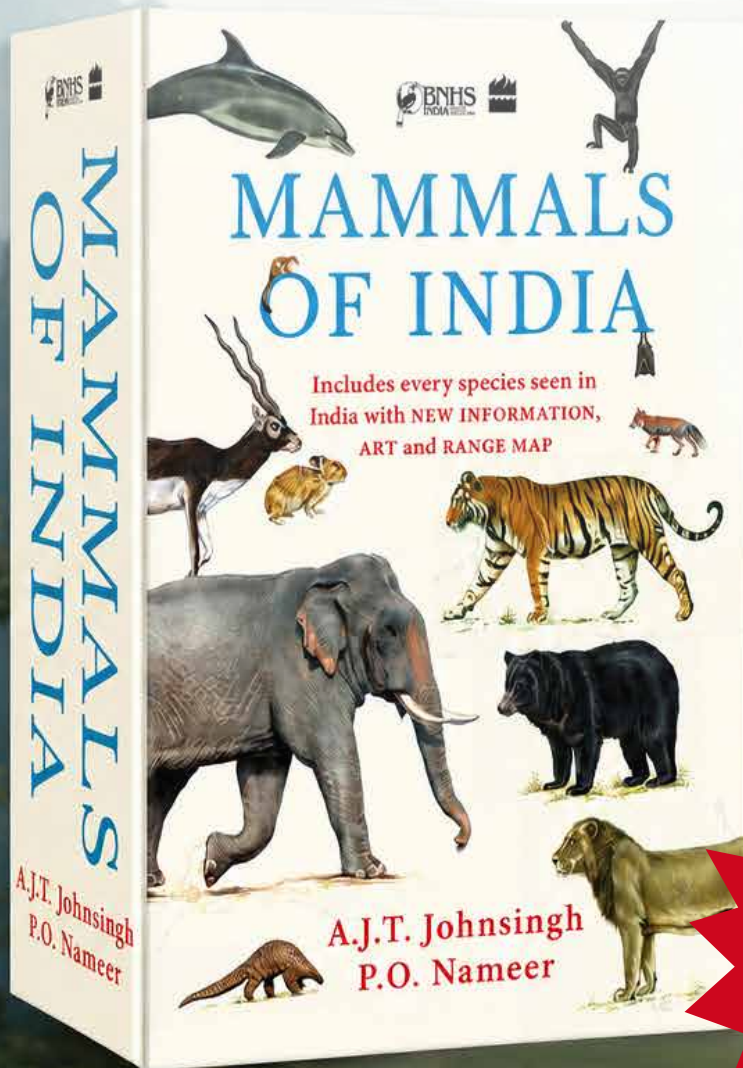
The BNHS has inaugurated its field office at Balasaheb Thackeray Gorewada International Zoological Park, Nagpur, to strengthen its operations in ex-situ and in-situ conservation breeding programmes. The office was inaugurated by Mr Martin Harper, CEO, BirdLife International, in the presence of Mr Pandurang Pakhale, Zoo Director, and Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS.

The new office will support BNHS's ongoing work in conservation breeding and scientific research. It will also provide a platform for closer collaboration with conservation partners, government institutions and other organisations involved in conservation breeding programmes. The inauguration marks another step towards building stronger partnerships for the conservation breeding of endangered species in Maharashtra. ■



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By A.J.T. Johnsingh and P.O. Nameer



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BNHS Scientist Parveen Shaikh

Recognised in India Today's She List 2026

Parveen Shaikh, Conservation Scientist at the BNHS, has been recognised in *India Today's She List 2026*, a "50 Under 50" list celebrating self-made women who are making a difference across India.

Parveen's conservation journey with the Indian Skimmer began in 2016, when she started research along the Chambal River. Over the years, this research evolved into a community-led conservation programme, with local residents trained to monitor nesting colonies and support the protection of breeding sites. Collaboration with the Forest Department has further strengthened conservation efforts on the ground.

The work has since expanded beyond the Chambal to several sites along the Ganga and Mahanadi rivers, bringing together scientific research, community participation, and field-based conservation. These efforts are helping build a stronger conservation network for the Indian Skimmer, a distinctive riverine bird that depends on open sandbanks and islands for breeding.

While the She List recognition celebrates Parveen's individual journey, it also reflects the collective effort behind the conservation programme. Community members, field teams, Forest Department staff, and conservation partners have all played an important role in translating research into action. The recognition is a testament to the power of science, local knowledge and collaboration in addressing conservation challenges – and to the many people working together to secure a safer future for the Indian Skimmer and India's threatened riverine ecosystems. ■





Protecting Ladakh's Black-necked Cranes Through Collaborative Action

A collaborative conservation initiative by the BNHS is helping protect the Black-necked Crane and other wildlife in Ladakh's fragile alpine wetlands. Since 2022, BNHS, in partnership with the Indian Army, the Animal Husbandry Department, the Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment, and The Habitat Trust, has sterilised more than 2,950 free-ranging dogs (FRDs) in areas where Black-necked Cranes breed.

Free-ranging dogs have emerged as a significant threat to the cranes, particularly by disturbing nesting birds and killing eggs and chicks. Their presence also prevented cranes from settling in suitable areas to breed. By reducing dog populations around key breeding sites, the initiative aims to improve breeding success while supporting the long-term conservation of Ladakh's wetlands.

The Black-necked Crane, Ladakh's State Bird and an important cultural symbol, is classified as Vulnerable globally. Fewer than 100 individuals are estimated to occur in India, while the global population is estimated at around 11,000–12,000 birds, most of which are found on the Tibetan Plateau. In Ladakh, around 110–130 individuals are recorded annually, including approximately 20–25 breeding pairs. Important breeding areas include the wetlands of Hanle, Tso Kar and Nyoma in the Changthang Cold Desert Wildlife Sanctuary, as well as wetlands in the Suru Valley.

The cranes are deeply valued by Ladakh's communities and Buddhist traditions, where they are associated with peace, compassion, longevity and harmony with nature. Protecting their breeding grounds therefore has both ecological and cultural significance.

The conservation programme takes a broader approach than sterilisation alone. BNHS and its partners are also working to reduce the availability of food waste that sustains free-ranging dog populations around settlements, tourist areas and institutional establishments. A pilot waste-management programme at selected Indian Army outposts is improving the handling and disposal of food and kitchen waste. Combining waste management with sterilisation is expected to provide a more sustainable, long-term response to the problem.

Capacity-building is another important component. Around 1,000 armed forces personnel have been trained in biodiversity conservation and wildlife management, strengthening local capacity to safeguard Ladakh's unique ecosystems. BNHS also continues to monitor the breeding population of Black-necked Cranes in Changthang. During annual monitoring in early June 2026, 19 breeding pairs were recorded across Ladakh's wetlands. According to BNHS scientist Dr Muhammad Raza, several sites could not be surveyed because of logistical and accessibility challenges, making this a conservative estimate. Further monitoring is underway to build a clearer picture of the breeding population. ■



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BNHS VCBC-Bhopal Steps-in to Save an Injured Egyptian Vulture

A timely intervention by the BNHS Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Bhopal, on August 25, 2026, has provided critical care to an injured Egyptian Vulture rescued in Raisen district, Madhya Pradesh. The BNHS-VCBC team responded to an emergency call from Van Vihar National Park (VVNP) and immediately travelled to assess the bird. On examination, the Egyptian Vulture was found in serious condition, with a severe fracture to its left wing that had left it unable to fly and significantly affected its health. Recognising the urgency of the situation, the team conducted a detailed physical assessment and began appropriate treatment and supportive care. The bird is currently under close observation, with its condition being closely monitored to determine its recovery and prospects for rehabilitation and eventual release.

The Egyptian Vulture, classified as Endangered, faces several threats across its range. Every rescued individual therefore represents an important opportunity to contribute to the long-term conservation of the species. The incident also reflects the broader role of BNHS's vulture conservation programme, which combines field support, veterinary intervention, technical expertise and scientific guidance. BNHS will continue to monitor the bird's recovery while supporting wider efforts to protect vultures and their habitats across Madhya Pradesh and beyond. ■

Building Partnerships and Restoring Ujani Wetland, Maharashtra

The Ujani Wetland Eco-restoration, Fisheries and Climate Resilience Programme, implemented by the BNHS, continued its work through stakeholder engagement, native fish conservation, invasive species management and efforts to strengthen sustainable fisheries. This month also saw growing interest from potential partners and closer collaboration with government agencies and local fishing communities.



Tata Realty Visits Madanwadi Hatchery: On July 30, 2026, representatives from Tata Realty visited the Madanwadi Hatchery to learn about the programme's ongoing work. The team toured the hatchery and observed native fish conservation activities, broodstock management, and hatchery operations. The visit provided an opportunity to showcase BNHS's integrated approach to restoring the ecological health of Ujani while supporting sustainable livelihoods for local fishing communities. The Tata Realty team appreciated the progress made and expressed interest in the programme's conservation and fisheries interventions. The interaction also opened possibilities for future collaboration and support.



Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement: On August 1, 2026, the Ujani programme team participated in a discussion with BNHS President Mr Pravinsingh Pardeshi in Solapur, focusing on conservation challenges around the Ujani Reservoir. Discussions highlighted concerns, including the illegal cultivation of African catfish, the spread of invasive suckermouth catfish and invasive aquatic vegetation, all of which can affect water quality, aquatic biodiversity, native fish populations and the livelihoods of communities' dependent on the reservoir. The meeting provided a platform to explore solutions that balance agricultural needs with environmental conservation.

Cipla Foundation Reviews Programme Progress: On August 11, 2026, representatives of the Cipla Foundation visited Bhigwan to review the programme's progress. The team assessed key interventions in wetland restoration, invasive species management and sustainable fisheries development. A significant achievement has been the successful breeding of the native fish species *Labeo kontius* and *Labeo*

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kawrus within just one month. This marks an important step towards restoring native fish populations in the Ujani ecosystem. The programme has also made substantial progress in invasive species management. Nearly 36 tonnes of suckermouth catfish have been collected through the dedicated collection initiative at Bhigwan Fish Market. In addition, around 2,000 hectares of invasive aquatic vegetation have been removed, helping improve aquatic habitats and restore important wetland areas. The Cipla Foundation team appreciated the progress and the efforts of the field team and local stakeholders.



Joint Action Against Illegal Mangur Cultivation: On August 19, 2026, the Fisheries Department, Pune, and BNHS carried out enforcement action against the prohibited cultivation of Mangur fish at Kalthan No. 1 in Indapur. More than 700 kg of Mangur fish was recovered and scientifically destroyed, and a criminal case was registered against the concerned individual. The operation involved the Fisheries Department, Irrigation Department, Revenue Department, Water Resource Department, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board and Police Administration and BNHS. The coordinated action demonstrates the importance of interdepartmental collaboration in preventing the spread of prohibited and invasive fish species and protecting native aquatic biodiversity.

Continued Removal of Suckermouth Catfish: Efforts to control invasive suckermouth catfish continued through August. Between August 1–25, local fishers collected 1,568 kg of the invasive species through the Suckermouth Catfish Collection Centre at Bhigwan Fish Market. The monthly collection was lower than in previous months, largely because monsoon conditions temporarily reduced fishing activity. Despite the seasonal slowdown, cumulative collection from April to August has now crossed 36 tonnes. The initiative involves local fishers and provides a ₹2 per kg incentive from BNHS for the removal of suckermouth catfish. By combining community participation with targeted invasive-species management, the programme is helping reduce pressure on native fish and improve the ecological health of the wetland. ■



Strengthening capacity of frontline staff for wetland conservation in Bhagalpur, Bihar

Building field-level capacity is essential for protecting wetlands and ensuring that their ecological and community values are properly documented. In this direction, the BNHS Bhagalpur team conducted a hands-on training programme for forest frontline staff of the Kahalgaon Range, Bhagalpur Forest Division, on August 24, 2026, focusing on wetland boundary demarcation and documentation.

As part of the training, the BNHS team worked alongside forest staff to demarcate and document two wetlands – Nardo Bandh and Ghanshyamchak Lake. The practical sessions introduced participants to field techniques for accurately identifying wetland boundaries, collecting information and maintaining digital records using mobile-based applications. Participants received hands-on guidance in recording geographic coordinates, survey tracks and key site attributes. The training also covered the documentation of wetland characteristics, biodiversity, ecosystem services, community rights and resource-use practices, as well as threats and pressures affecting these ecosystems.

By combining practical field training with standardised digital documentation, the initiative aims to strengthen the ability of frontline staff to independently assess and monitor wetlands. Better field-level information can support informed management decisions and help ensure that important wetland ecosystems are recognised, monitored, and conserved over the long term. ■



Vulture Conservation Webinar Series 2026 Concludes with Focus on Reintroduction of Vultures

The Vulture Conservation Webinar Series 2026 concluded on August 21, 2026 with a session focused on restoring vultures to the wild. The final webinar was held as part of the International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) 2026 celebrations, bringing together conservation practitioners, students, researchers, and enthusiasts from across India.

Organised by the BNHS and funded by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) under the Vulture Conservation Programme, the series was conducted in collaboration with JCBC Pinjore, MoEF&CC, BNHS-EIACP, Mission LiFE, and the Haryana Forest & Wildlife Department. Across the series, participants explored key aspects of vulture conservation, from understanding and identifying these important scavengers to protecting their habitats and supporting their recovery in the wild.

The session, titled “Vulture Safe Zones, Reintroduction and Restoring Vultures into the Wild,” was led by Mr Hemant Bajpai. Around 100 participants from across India joined the webinar.

Exploring Vulture Conservation Through Webinars: The Vulture Conservation Webinar Series 2026 brought together around 394 participants for three online sessions organised by JCBC, Pinjore, in collaboration with CZA, BNHS-EIACP and the Haryana Forest & Wildlife Department. The series began on August 6 with “Vultures: An Introduction to Their Ecology, Importance and Conservation”, delivered by Mr Sachin Ranade. The session explored vulture diversity, their role as nature’s scavengers, the decline caused by toxic veterinary drugs such as diclofenac, and ongoing conservation-breeding and reintroduction efforts.

The second webinar, held on August 13, was led by Dr A. Samson and focused on “Identifying Vultures: How to Recognize Vultures and Distinguish Them from Other Birds”. Participants learned how to identify India’s vulture species and distinguish them from other raptors—an important skill for field monitoring and conservation.

The series concluded on August 21 with Vulture Safe Zones and Reintroduction Programmes: “Restoring Vultures to the Wild”, conducted by Mr Hemant Bajpai. The session explained Vulture Safe Zones, pre-release conditioning, soft-release techniques and satellite tracking, while highlighting the challenges of helping captive-bred birds establish themselves alongside wild populations. ■



BirdLife International CEO Visits TTC Nagpur, Maharashtra

Mr Martin Harper, CEO, BirdLife International, visited the Transit Treatment Centre (TTC), Nagpur, and gained an insight into the centre's work in rescuing, treating and rehabilitating wildlife. Mr Kundan Hate outlined the centre's efforts to provide appropriate and timely care to wildlife in need. Mr Harper was accompanied by Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS, along with BNHS scientists, during the visit. The interaction provided an opportunity to understand the range of expertise and coordinated efforts involved in caring for wildlife in need. ■

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Exploring TATR's Restored Meadows

The Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) is demonstrating how community participation can contribute to the restoration of wildlife habitats. Mr Martin Harper, CEO, BirdLife International, visited restored meadows in the reserve that have emerged following the voluntary resettlement of villages from the protected area. During his visit, Mr Anand Reddy, Deputy Director, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, guided Mr Harper through the restored meadows and explained the process and outcomes of the voluntary village resettlement initiative. He highlighted how the resettlement has created opportunities for habitat recovery, allowing grasslands to be restored and supporting a wider range of biodiversity. Mr Harper observed the transformation of these former village landscapes into open grassland habitats. He appreciated how the restored meadows are providing valuable habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife, contributing to the ecological diversity of the reserve.

The visit also marked the launch of a study report prepared by BNHS on the meadows of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. The report documents the ecological significance of these restored landscapes and highlights their contribution to biodiversity and habitat conservation. The restored meadows offer a compelling example of how community participation, habitat restoration and scientific research can complement one another. As these landscapes recover, they are providing important habitat for grassland birds and other wildlife, including the Endangered Lesser Florican, a species closely associated with open grassland ecosystems. The study strengthens the case for recognising and conserving grassland habitats within protected areas. It also reinforces TATR's importance as a significant landscape for grassland conservation in Central India, while providing insights that could inform similar habitat restoration efforts elsewhere. ■



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BNHS launched National Centre for Bird Hazard Management and Avian Safety in Central India

The BNHS inaugurated its National Centre for Bird Hazard Management and Avian Safety, at Bhis, near Nagpur, Maharashtra, on August 22, 2026, marking an important step towards advancing scientific approaches to bird hazard management and promoting safer coexistence between aviation and wildlife.

The new centre aims to strengthen efforts to understand and manage interactions between birds and aviation through scientific research, monitoring and evidence-based approaches. By bringing together conservation knowledge and aviation safety, the initiative seeks to support safer skies while contributing to the protection of birdlife.

The inauguration was presided over by Mr Pravinsingh Pardeshi, IAS (Retd.), President, BNHS, and inaugurated by Mr Martin Harper, Chief Executive Officer, BirdLife International. The occasion was attended by senior BNHS representatives and scientists, including: Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS, Mr Farshid Fatakia, COO & CFO, BNHS, Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Deputy Director, BNHS, Dr Sujit Narwade, Deputy Director, BNHS, Dr Naga Jogayya, Principal Scientist – Genomic, BNHS, Dr Kamalakannan Kutti, Scientist – Genomic, BNHS, Mr Saurabh Dande, Senior Education Officer, Central India, BNHS, and Dr Sachin Ranade, Scientist, BNHS. ■

Advancing Green Finance for Bird Conservation – Martin Harper

At AVPN 2026 in New Delhi, Mr Martin Harper, Chief Executive Officer, BirdLife International, highlighted the urgent need to strengthen green finance for the conservation of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) across the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) – a vital migration route connecting breeding and wintering grounds across a vast region. The wetlands, grasslands and other critical habitats along the CAF support millions of migratory birds during their annual journeys. Protecting these ecosystems requires not only effective conservation action, but also sustained and innovative sources of finance.



Mr Harper emphasised the importance of directing sustainable financing towards the protection and restoration of critical habitats. Such investment can strengthen conservation programmes, support communities living around these important landscapes and help address the growing pressures faced by migratory birds. Mr Piyush Gupta, former CEO of DBS Group, also echoed the importance of strengthening green finance to support conservation and sustainable development. Strengthening green finance mechanisms can play a vital role in safeguarding these ecosystems and generating livelihoods for local communities by supporting local conservation efforts, while helping ensure a safer future for migratory birds across the Central Asian Flyway. ■



Recognising the Champions of Bird Conservation at Tadoba, Maharashtra

The dedication of frontline forest staff to understanding and protecting birdlife was celebrated at the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) when Mr Martin Harper, Chief Executive Officer, BirdLife International, recognised outstanding birdwatchers among the reserve's forest staff. The recognition acknowledges staff members whose enthusiasm for bird observation and identification has strengthened their understanding of the reserve's rich avian diversity and the habitats that support it. Their knowledge and regular observations can provide valuable insights into the diversity and distribution of birds across the Tadoba landscape.

Mr Harper appreciated the TATR management for encouraging and nurturing an interest in birds among its frontline staff. Encouraging forest staff to develop their knowledge of birds helps bring an important additional dimension to wildlife protection and habitat management.

Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS, and Mr Anand Reddy, Assistant Conservator of Forests, TATR, along with BNHS scientists and staff, were present on the occasion. ■



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BNHS Team Visits Kolamarka Wild Buffalo Habitat in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra

The BNHS team recently visited the Kolamarka Wild Buffalo Conservation Reserve in Gadchiroli, together with staff from the Sironcha Forest Division, to engage with local communities on the conservation of the Endangered Wild Water Buffalo and the protection of its habitat.

Reaching the reserve involved travelling approximately 15 km across rugged terrain by motorcycle. The team then met residents of Chitveli village to discuss the importance of conserving the Wild Water Buffalo, a species that holds both ecological and cultural significance for the region. During the interaction, villagers shared their experiences and expressed their support for protecting buffalo habitat while promoting sustainable livelihoods. Their perspectives highlighted the important role that local communities can play in conserving wildlife and maintaining healthy ecosystems.

The visit also underscored the value of collaboration between scientific institutions, forest staff, and local communities. BNHS highlighted the need for continued joint efforts to address conservation challenges, including habitat restoration and monitoring of the buffalo population. ■



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BNHS Team Revisits the Glory of Allapalli Biodiversity Heritage Site, Maharashtra

The BNHS team recently revisited the Glory of Allapalli, a designated Biodiversity Heritage Site known for its rich forests and distinctive ecological value in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. The visit provided an opportunity to reflect on the site's conservation journey and its continuing importance as a repository of the region's natural heritage.

The Glory of Allapalli holds a special place in BNHS's conservation efforts. Its recognition as a Biodiversity Heritage Site a decade ago was supported by the dedicated efforts of the then Director and President of BNHS, who championed the importance of securing formal recognition and protection for this ecologically significant landscape.

During the visit, the BNHS team highlighted the site's role in safeguarding rare flora and fauna, maintaining ecological processes and preserving biodiversity for future generations. Its forests provide habitat for a range of species and represent an important component of Gadchiroli's natural landscape. The revisit also offered an opportunity to reflect on the importance of translating conservation efforts into lasting outcomes on the ground. Biodiversity Heritage Sites can play an important role in protecting ecologically valuable landscapes while building greater awareness of their significance among local communities and stakeholders. ■



BNHS Team Visits Guru Granth Sahib Bagh in Guruser Sahib, Punjab

The BNHS team recently visited Guru Granth Sahib Bagh in Guruser Sahib – a five-acre garden showcasing a diverse collection of plant species mentioned in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib – in Moga, Punjab. Established to commemorate Guru Nanak Dev Ji's 550th Gurpurab, the garden serves as an educational space that brings together the themes of faith, culture and the natural world.

During the visit, BNHS experts appreciated the vision behind the garden and interacted with EcoSikh to explore opportunities to further strengthen its ecological value. Particular attention was given to the health of the lake within the garden, with BNHS offering recommendations to improve water quality and enhance aquatic biodiversity. The proposed measures include improving water inflow and circulation, introducing native aquatic plants to increase biodiversity, and creating reed buffer zones to help reduce the movement of soil and pollutants into the lake. Regular desilting and appropriate landscaping were also recommended to maintain water quality and the overall health of the aquatic ecosystem.

A healthier lake would enhance both the ecological and educational value of Guru Granth Sahib Bagh, creating a more vibrant habitat for plants and other forms of life while complementing the garden's cultural significance. ■



Bird Ringing Seminar Builds Conservation Capacity Among Karnataka Forest Staff

A bird ringing seminar was organised on August 22 for Forest Department staff from Karnataka, strengthening their understanding of avian biodiversity and the role of scientific monitoring in bird conservation.

The seminar brought together RFO Nagaraj and his team from Daroji Sloth Bear Sanctuary, along with RFO Kiran Kallamanavara from Social Forestry, Huvina Hadagali. The participants received an overview of the project from BNHS and Green HBH, with a focus on the importance of birdlife in the Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve and the Tungabhadra Dam Backwaters. The session included an introduction to bird ringing – such information can provide valuable insights into bird movements, migration routes, survival and habitat use. A practical demonstration using a Yellow-eyed Babbler and a Baya Weaver helped participants understand the ringing process and its application in the field. The presentation emphasised how information on bird movements can contribute to better conservation planning, particularly for species that depend on wetlands and other connected habitats.

The training also highlighted the important role of frontline forest staff in biodiversity monitoring. The Karnataka Forest Department plays a key role in protecting forests and wildlife and promoting biodiversity across the state. Building the scientific knowledge and field skills of its personnel can strengthen these conservation efforts. ■



Conservation Icons Visit Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve

The BNHS team at Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve welcomed renowned wildlife filmmakers and conservationists Krupakar and Senani on August 18. The duo, Asia's first winners of the prestigious Green Oscar for their film *The Pack*, brought decades of experience in wildlife filmmaking and grassroots conservation to an engaging exchange with conservation practitioners and researchers.

During their visit, Krupakar and Senani interacted with teams from BNHS, Green HBH, and the Karnataka Forest Department, sharing insights from their extensive work in documenting and protecting wildlife. The discussion explored several aspects of conservation science, including the value of bird ringing, developing meaningful research questions and identifying key parameters for ecological studies.

Their practical perspectives were particularly valuable for young researchers, offering insights into how careful observation, scientific enquiry and field experience can contribute to effective conservation. The duo also shared stories from their decades of work in wildlife filmmaking and conservation, illustrating the dedication, curiosity, and perseverance required to work in the field. The interaction served as both a learning opportunity and a source of inspiration for participants. The visit concluded as a memorable exchange of knowledge and experience, further strengthening the spirit of collaboration among researchers, conservation organisations, filmmakers and the Forest Department working to protect birds and their habitats in Karnataka. ■



Seahorse Rescue and Rehabilitation Strengthen Conservation Efforts in Ratnagiri

The BNHS continued its collaborative efforts of rescue, rehabilitation, and release programme of sea horses across Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. Supported by the Mangrove Cell of the Maharashtra Forest Department and the Mangrove and Marine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (MMBCF), this effort addresses key threats to seahorses, including habitat degradation, accidental capture in fishing gear and discarded fishing nets, commonly known as ghost nets.

On August 1, 2026, the BNHS team carried out its second rescue operation, recovering two seahorses from ghost nets in the Shirgaon and Kalbadevi areas of Ratnagiri. The rescued animals were brought to the BNHS Ratnagiri Field Station, where they received care and rehabilitation under close observation. Following veterinary health assessments, both seahorses were successfully released into their original habitats on August 18. The programme goes beyond individual rescues. By working closely with local fishing communities, BNHS is building awareness about seahorse conservation and encouraging fishers to report seahorses found as bycatch. These community-based efforts are helping strengthen rapid-response mechanisms so that rescued animals can receive timely care and, where possible, be returned safely to the wild. ■

Vulture Conservation Programme in Assam

August was a month of significant progress for the Vulture Conservation Programme in Assam, with the release of captive-bred vultures into the wild, veterinary support for flood-affected livestock, and field-based training for students.



First Captive-Bred Slender-billed Vultures Released into the Wild: On August 7, 2026, the Forest Department of Assam and the BNHS released 10 captive-bred vultures into the wilderness at Tewaripal, Kaziranga National Park, Biswanath district, Assam. The two organisations have been working together on vulture conservation since 2007. The release included five Slender-billed Vultures and five White-rumped Vultures. All 10 birds were born in captivity and are being introduced to the wild through 'soft release' method. The release marked a major milestone for vulture conservation as it was the first release of a captive-bred Slender-billed Vulture into the wild anywhere in the world.

The event was attended by Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest & Climate Change Shri Jayanta MallaBaruah; Hon'ble MLA from Biswanath district Shri Pallab Lochan Das; Special Chief Secretary Shri M Yadav, IFS; District Commissioner of Biswanath Chariali Mrs Karabi Saikia Karan; Chief Wildlife Warden of Assam Dr Vinay Gupta, IFS; Director, Kaziranga National Park, Dr C Ramesh; and Dr Sachin Ranade, Deputy Director, BNHS. The dignitaries remotely opened the gate of the release aviary using a pulley system. They later visited the 'Jatayu Observation Tower', where they viewed the vultures inside the aviary through a CCTV monitoring system. This release represents an important step in efforts to rebuild populations of these threatened scavengers and strengthen vulture conservation in Assam.

Veterinary Health Camp Supports Flood-Affected Livestock in Sivasagar: The Vulture Conservation Programme extended support to communities affected by floods in Sivasagar district. A veterinary health camp was conducted on August 19–20 in Panbecha, Loraputa, Panbecha Chenimora, Aamguri and Balijan villages. Led by Dr Krishna, the team included Mr Dhiraj Rabha, Mr Dilip Rabha and Mr Hemanta Buragohain. The camp provided primary veterinary healthcare to approximately 600 flood-affected animals.

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The medicines required for the camp were purchased with ₹28,000 raised by BNHS staff and well-wishers, demonstrating how support from within and beyond the organisation can help address urgent community needs during times of crisis. The campaign was further strengthened by the participation of the Local Veterinary Officer and Veterinary Field Assistant from the Animal Husbandry Department, who worked alongside the BNHS team to treat livestock.



Building Conservation Capacity Through Student Internships: Twelve students from Dudhnoi College, Goalpara, Assam, successfully completed a one-month internship at the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Rani, Assam. The students undertook field-based projects covering bird surveys, butterfly monitoring and surveys for the presence of veterinary NSAIDs. Such training provides students with practical exposure to biodiversity monitoring and conservation research while helping them understand the links between wildlife health, habitat and human activities.

On August 18, the interns presented their findings through PowerPoint presentations and submitted their project reports. Dr Sachin Ranade, Ms Aneena and Mr Ghanashyam Gogoi evaluated the presentations and certified the successful completion of the internships. ■



Building Conservation Awareness Around Tadoba: BNHS Engages 1,243 Students

The BNHS continues to promote nature education and conservation awareness among children living around the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), helping the next generation better understand and value the rich biodiversity of Chandrapur district and the wider Central Indian landscape. In August, BNHS conducted nature education and awareness sessions in 17 upper primary and 15 high schools across the buffer areas of TATR. The programme reached 1,243 students and 66 teachers, who took part in interactive learning activities designed to connect classroom concepts with the natural environment around them.

The initiative builds on more than two decades of BNHS's school nature education work in the region. Children living in villages around TATR regularly encounter wildlife and other elements of the local environment while travelling to school and working in agricultural areas. Building their understanding of this shared landscape is therefore an important step towards fostering a more harmonious relationship between communities and nature.

During the sessions, students explored the biodiversity of Chandrapur and the importance of maintaining ecological balance. They were introduced to concepts such as ecosystem services, the benefits that healthy ecosystems provide to people, and biodiversity conservation. Discussions also examined how deforestation, pollution and habitat loss can affect wildlife and the environment. Wildlife examples from the Tadoba landscape were used to explain how animals occupy different roles in nature, including carnivores, herbivores, and omnivores. Group discussions, quizzes, and observation-based activities encouraged students to participate actively, ask questions and consider how their own actions can contribute to protecting nature.

The sessions showed encouraging learning outcomes. Students demonstrated a better understanding of local biodiversity and ecological balance, as well as greater awareness of the direct and indirect effects of human activities on wildlife. Their ability to classify animals according to their feeding habits also improved. Teachers welcomed the programme and expressed interest in incorporating biodiversity and conservation topics into regular classroom teaching. Continued engagement with schools, teachers and local communities can ensure that young people grow up with a deeper understanding of their natural heritage. The programme was conducted by Atharva Sathe, Education Officer, and Charandas Shende, Field Assistant, under the guidance of Saurabh Dande, Sr. Education Officer, Central India, BNHS. ■

Inspiring the Next Generation of Conservationists Through Nature and Vulture Awareness

From classrooms and school nature clubs to online platforms and creative competitions, EIACP-led initiatives in August brought students and teachers closer to India's wildlife. The activities focused on building environmental awareness and encouraging scientific curiosity.



Nature Clubs Take Root in Satara: A Nature Club Workshop was conducted in Karad, Satara district, Maharashtra, bringing together 43 school teachers from across the district. The workshop aimed to strengthen nature education, biodiversity awareness, environmental conservation, and outdoor learning in schools.

Mr Rajendra Latkar, Joint Secretary, Shikshan Mandal, Karad, and Mr Rohan Bhate shared their experiences of conducting environmental activities in schools and encouraged teachers to actively involve students in conservation. Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, Senior Programme Officer, BNHS-EIACP, introduced teachers to the BNHS Nature Club programme, including the process of establishing Nature Clubs and preparing School Biodiversity Registers. Mr Rohan Chavan, Project Associate, BNHS, presented the proposed annual activity calendar and suggested activities that Nature Clubs can undertake throughout the academic year. The workshop also introduced teachers to the Science Kit, with Mr Kusumakar Damle explaining how it can be used to encourage scientific thinking among students. Books were distributed to participants, and schools were informed that Science Kits would be made available according to their requirements.

The enthusiastic participation marked an important step towards expanding the BNHS Nature Club network in Satara and encouraging young people to understand, appreciate, and protect the natural world.

An important component of this effort is the Hands-on Science Kit (Vidnyan Peti). BNHS Member Mr Kusumakar Damle is supporting underprivileged schools by donating science kits to institutions that do not have adequate laboratory facilities. Each kit contains essential equipment, including a dissection box, compact microscope and other basic scientific instruments, enabling students to conduct simple practical activities in their classrooms. The kits will be provided free of cost to eligible underprivileged schools, giving students an opportunity to learn through observation, experimentation and direct experience. **Students Put Vultures in the Spotlight:** As part of the International Vulture Awareness Programme, the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC), Pinjore, collaborated with the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), BNHS-

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The top section of the image contains two educational posters about vultures. The left poster, titled "MYTHS VS FACTS", features a central illustration of a vulture with a split face (dark on the left, light on the right). It lists several myths in circular icons: "Dark birds", "Attack livestock", "Are bad vision", and "Disappeared". The right poster, titled "FACTS", features a large, colorful vulture with a human face, set against a background of a sunset and a temple. It lists several facts in circular icons: "Ancient's Cleaners", "Can see people", "Vultures are scavengers", and "Vultures are important for the environment".

The bottom section of the image is a photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, a vulture stands on the left, and a black and white dog stands on the right. In the middle ground, a herd of cattle is grazing in a field. In the background, there are several small houses and a large orange structure.

A Digital Photography Competition was also organised on the theme “Human–Vulture Co-existence”. Open to amateur and professional photographers across India, the competition encouraged participants to document examples of coexistence between people and vultures through geotagged photographs. The competition received 42 entries from 15 states and one Union Territory, with three winning photographs selected for recognition. Through photography, the initiative highlighted the ecological importance of vultures and the relationship they share with human landscapes.■

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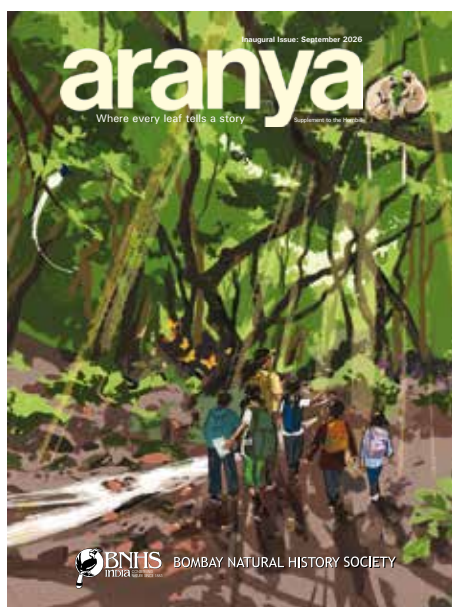


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Building a New Generation of Bird Conservationists at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu

At Point Calimere on Tamil Nadu's east coast, wetlands provide critical habitat for thousands of migratory and resident birds. The 385 sq. km wetland complex is recognised as a Ramsar Site for its ecological importance and supports millions of birds each year, including several species of global conservation concern. The long-term protection of this remarkable landscape depends not only on habitat conservation, but also on building awareness among the communities that live around it. To encourage young people to understand and value their local birdlife, the BNHS has launched a focused school-based bird conservation programme with support from the Buimerc India Foundation.

Ten schools have been selected for the programme, with 20 students from each school forming a Bird Club. Teacher coordinators have also received orientation and training to strengthen their understanding of birds and equip them to engage students in environmental activities. Each Bird Club has been provided with two binoculars and a tablet loaded with bird education resources. Monthly classroom sessions introduce students to the world of birds, covering topics such as bird groups, their ecological roles, threats and conservation efforts. Students are also introduced to citizen-science tools, opportunities for further study and careers in ornithology and conservation, and creative activities, such as making bird-friendly materials.

Learning extends beyond the classroom. Students receive hands-on training in using binoculars and are encouraged to observe and identify birds on their school campuses and in surrounding areas. A booklet featuring common birds of Point Calimere has also been prepared and distributed to club members to encourage regular birdwatching. During August, two classroom sessions were conducted across all 10 schools, introducing students to birds, their diversity, ecological services, threats, and ongoing conservation efforts.

The Buimerc India Foundation has committed financial support for three years, enabling the programme to build a network of around 600 student members and trained teachers. Through exhibitions and other Bird Club activities, the conservation message is expected to reach an even wider audience. BNHS gratefully acknowledges the support of the Buimerc India Foundation and looks forward to building further partnerships that can extend the programme's reach and strengthen conservation awareness across this bird-rich landscape. ■

Taking Science and Nature Learning Beyond the Classroom

From hands-on science experiments to forest trails and field-based learning, the BNHS Conservation Education Centre (CEC) continued to create opportunities for students, teachers and nature enthusiasts to engage directly with science and biodiversity in August.



Bringing Hands-on Science to Underprivileged Schools: Through the BNHS Nature Club initiative, BNHS is promoting environmental awareness and conservation values among students in Satara, Amravati, and Jalgaon districts. The programme combines environmental lectures, workshops, interactive sessions, nature-based learning and conservation activities for students and teachers.

Learning from Nature at BNHS-CEC: On August 9, the Sálím Ali Point Trail introduced participants to the diversity of the CEC campus. Sightings included Purple Sunbirds and Puff-throated Babblers, along with a variety of invertebrates such as Wolf, Lynx and Signature spiders, grasshoppers and Sun Cockroaches. An elusive Velvet Ant was among the highlights, offering participants an opportunity to explore the often-overlooked diversity of forest ecosystems.

A nature walk on August 16 focused on the rich biodiversity of the monsoon season. Participants explored the lush vegetation and diverse fauna of the CEC, experiencing the forest as a living classroom and a welcome retreat from the city.

Inspiring Students Through School Nature Trails: On June 30, 150 students of Grades 7–9 from Yashodham High School, Goregaon East, explored biodiversity, pollinators and the ecological functions of forest ecosystems. The guided hike, led by BNHS Naturalists and coordinated by Education Officers, was followed by a presentation on the biodiversity of the CEC campus.

On August 21, students from Bombay Cambridge School undertook a study trail focusing on local trees, freshwater streams and forest ecosystems. An interactive biodiversity presentation and Q&A session helped students understand forest dynamics and the importance of protecting local habitats.



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On August 22, 100 students from St. Joseph High School, Bandra, explored native flora, streams and forest life. A presentation introduced them to techniques used by field researchers to study wild animals, followed by an interactive discussion on wildlife conservation and field ecology.



Also, on August 22, 40 students from St. Joseph High School, Malad, took part in a guided trail exploring plants, streams and forest ecosystems. The accompanying session focused on the adaptations that help animals and trees survive in their natural environments.

On August 24, 30 fourth-grade students from Dodibai Jijibhai Primary School participated in a nature trail. The young participants learned about the life cycle of butterflies, the ecological importance of mushrooms and fungi, and methods used by scientists to study wildlife.

Together, these trails are helping children develop a direct connection with nature and understand that conservation begins with observing and appreciating the biodiversity around us. ■





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Eco Clubs Turn Awareness into Action

BNHS-CEC, in collaboration with BNHS-EIACP, also conducted Eco Club sessions at schools in Mumbai. On August 20, 60 students from the Nature Club and Science Club at Veer Bhagat Singh High School, Malad, explored practical ways to protect local biodiversity and adopt more sustainable habits in their daily lives.

The following day, 40 students at Prime Academy, Andheri, along with the school Principal, explored the biodiversity of the Western Ghats and discussed practical conservation measures such as composting, kitchen gardening, and waste segregation. The session concluded with a documentary on bird tracking presented by the BNHS MTHL team, demonstrating how scientific research contributes to conservation. ■



Exploring Matheran's Herpetofauna

The BNHS-CEC Matheran Herpetofauna Camp, held on August 21–22, provided 10 course participants, BNHS members and non-members with an immersive field-learning experience. Led by Mr Yashraj Thakare, Naturalist; Mr S.M. Chandramouli, Curator, BNHS Natural History Collection; and Mr Kartheek Thevar, Education Officer, BNHS-CEC, the two-day camp introduced participants to Matheran's remarkable amphibian and reptile diversity.

Night-trail sightings included the Bamboo Pit Viper, Green Vine Snake, Ghate's Bush Frog, Bombay Bush Frog, Leith's Leaping Frog and Deccan Banded Gecko. The morning trail added sightings of the Malabar Whistling Thrush, Greater Coucal, Red-whiskered Bulbul and Great Eggfly Butterfly. Participants learned about species identification, taxonomy, distribution, ecology, natural history, and habitat associations. The programme demonstrated the value of field-based learning in developing a deeper understanding of biodiversity and the need to conserve Matheran's unique ecosystems. ■



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This course aims to create a network of birders to support conservation along the Central Asian Flyway. The training would help us to create a network of voluntary forces to contribute to bird monitoring and bird ringing. This workshop focuses mainly on bird migration study techniques including bird banding, bird population monitoring, bird identification and habitat observations through classroom sessions and field visits.

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BNHS Members Contribute to Preserve E. P. Gee's Wildlife Film Legacy

The BNHS community has once again come together to safeguard an important part of India's natural history heritage. Following an appeal published in the BNHS monthly newsletter, members contributed around ₹9 lakh towards the digitisation of the historic wildlife films of E. P. Gee, one of India's pioneering naturalists.

These rare films offer a remarkable visual record of India's wildlife and natural landscapes. They capture the observations and field experiences of a naturalist whose work forms an important part of the country's conservation history. Preserving this fragile film heritage through digitisation will help ensure that it is not lost to time and can continue to inform and inspire future generations.

The fundraising effort was made possible through the generous support of Mr Chandrashekhar Apte, Mr B.M. Arora, Mr Amogh Bharadwaj, Ms Gangapriya Chakraverti, Mr Nandkumar Chaugule, Ms Isha Chawla, Mr Marcus Cotton (England), Ms Priya Davidar, Mrs Kshama Joglekar, Mr Raman Jokhakar, Dr K. Ullas Karanth, Mr Sundarraj Kaushik, Mr Nandan Maluste, Mr Lingareddy Mandra, Mrs Bandana Mujumdar, Mr Shrikant Pundalik, Mr Anil Singh, Mr Durgesh Singh (Sinali Experiences Pvt Ltd), Mr G.V.K. Unnithan, Ms Manjula Vinjamuri, and Ms Sushama Yerawadekar (USA).

Once digitised, these films will provide a valuable resource for researchers, conservationists, students and wildlife enthusiasts, while also making this historical record more accessible for education and future conservation work. ■



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