



FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK

Dear Members,

Though the month of March is usually hectic due to the closing of financial operations, this time it was even more demanding, as a series of important events took place across southern, northern, and northeastern India that required my presence.

Let me begin with a landmark moment. Mr M.K. Yadav, IFS, Special Secretary, Forests and Environment, Assam, released five captive bred White-rumped Vultures (WRV) into the wild from the release aviary at Nalapara near Rani, Assam. However, this occasion was especially touching for a different reason that I would like to share with you.

As this was the first-ever release of captive bred vultures in Assam from the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), established in Rani in 2007, local village –youth –both girls and boys – decided to sing the state anthem after the release, standing together in a circle. After the anthem, I felt compelled to say a few words about the remarkable 17-year contribution of Belguri village, which has successfully bred 134 WRVs and 58 Slender-billed Vultures, bringing the centre to a stage where it can now release 20 to 25 vultures annually.

Following my remarks, which aimed to instil a sense of pride and responsibility among the villagers, especially as more visitors from across the country are expected to come and learn from their work, a 25-year-old woman spontaneously asked for permission to speak. She said: “When I was five or six years old, I started visiting this centre. It had just been established, and the birds were housed in aviaries. Sachin Ranade Sir began engaging us through drawing and painting. I started painting birds. As I grew up alongside these birds and their increasing population, I came to understand the true importance of this centre. Sachin Sir, who dedicated 17 years of his life here, is our real hero. He connected with us through art and later even learned the Assamese language. Today, he has brought our entire village and our families closer to Jatayu. We are proud of our centre and our village.”

I had tears in my eyes, as did Sachin. We were both speechless. It was a deeply moving moment that filled me with pride for BNHS and our dedicated staff. I am sure you too will feel proud to be a member of this prestigious Society.

Another significant event was organised by BNHS along with its long-time partner, BirdLife International, where I spent four days in Delhi. Despite ongoing global conflicts, 45 BirdLife partners from 13 countries in the Central Asian Flyway region attended this capacity enhancement workshop from March 9–13, 2026. It was an insightful initiative focused on protecting migratory birds and their habitats, as well as mobilizing resources using TESSA – the Ecosystem Services Assessment Toolkit. Important bird habitats can be better managed through site-specific, nature-based solutions, including the development of nature-safe energy infrastructure to reduce hunting and poaching.

I was particularly inspired by the insights shared by Mr Rajeev Mital, Director General of the National Mission for Clean Ganga; Mr Praveensingh Pardeshi, Chief Economic Advisor to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra and CEO of MITRA (also President, BNHS); Mr Anand Mohan, CEO of National CAMPA; and Mr Clement Ben, Member Secretary of CZA and Additional IG (Forest). Their contributions to avifaunal conservation through their respective roles offered valuable lessons to all participants.

This month also brought encouraging news: the Ministry of Jal Shakti approved our project on the Indian Skimmer in the Chambal and lower Ganga rivers under Namami Gange Mission-II, during the 68th meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG). We are grateful to the Honourable Minister for Jal Shakti for making this announcement in Dehradun. While several states invest significantly in organizing bird festivals, relatively little attention is given to habitat conservation. We hope this initiative will inspire greater focus on river ecosystems, including sandbar habitats crucial for

nesting birds. BNHS has previously contributed significantly to the conservation of Kolleru Lake in Andhra Pradesh, an issue that has now reached the Supreme Court.

Before heading to Delhi, I attended the annual meeting in Chennai organized by our funding partner, The Habitat Trust. Conservation partners working on various species and habitats gathered for a two-day seminar. Alongside presentations, a thought-provoking brainstorming exercise encouraged participants to reflect on the most pressing challenges and the most hopeful opportunities within their respective landscapes. I was especially pleased to engage in discussions on grasslands in India—an issue of priority for BNHS.

I would also like to share some updates on our vulture monitoring efforts. Of the 15 Long-billed Vultures (LBV) released in Melghat, ten are currently scavenging within the Melghat Tiger Reserve (MTR). One White-rumped Vulture (WRV), released in Pench (J102), has joined this group after being rescued near Melghat. Notably, a migratory wild Himalayan Griffon Vulture (HGV) was observed on February 3, 2026 in MTR, scavenging alongside our flock near the aviary.

Among the remaining LBVs, one individual (X94) travelled 200 km across Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh before returning to MTR. Another (F12) travelled 36 km to Chikhaldara and returned. LBV Z29 was observed feeding on a jackal carcass in Nashik for two days.

Out of the nine WRVs and five LBVs released in Pench Tiger Reserve, seven WRVs and four LBVs are currently scavenging within the reserve. One WRV (J102) has moved to Melghat, while another LBV (J132) has joined a wild flock in Nashik. WRV Z33 and LBV XX82 have been regularly observed near the aviary by the BNHS team since December 11, 2025.

We also received updates from Haryana, where 25 WRVs were released on December 17, 2024. Of these, 12 individuals have survived after 15 months, although seven were lost due to electrocution. Power lines continue to pose a significant threat to these large raptors, highlighting the urgent need for collaboration with other stakeholders.

Academic institutions, particularly geography departments, have an important role to play in advancing biodiversity conservation through innovative approaches. I was pleased to attend a conference organized by the Geography Department of Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil College in Vashi, Navi Mumbai. I hope more such institutions will collaborate closely with BNHS.

If you are not already following us on social media, I encourage you to do so for daily updates from BNHS.

Finally, I invite 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 will also help them earn NAAC accreditation credits.

If you have not yet completed the Yearbook form for Life Members, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/12gPTSyTs9P2khue7>

For assistance, feel free to reach out: Central Marketing: cmd@bnhs.org; Membership: membership@bnhs.org;

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

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

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