



FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK

Dear Members,

Our country is blessed with diverse ecosystems, including wetlands, rivers, forests, deserts, and mountains. However, not all of these ecosystems receive the attention they deserve, and this lack of awareness often leads to their degradation and destruction. For instance, the destruction of the Aravalli Mountains went largely unnoticed until several NGOs highlighted their importance to the sustainable development of northern India's landscape before the courts. Similarly, very little attention has been paid to the Satpura Range, one of the oldest mountain systems in India.

I was fortunate to spend three decades of my life in the Satpura Mountains. Over the past few years, I have documented the natural history of this remarkable mountain range in my Marathi book, *SATPUDYACHA SAATBAARA (Natural History of the Satpura Mountains)*, which was published in December 2025 by Padmagandha Publications, Pune.

This 647-page volume received the Lokmat Sahitya Award in March 2026 in recognition of being the best-researched book of the year. More recently, it was honoured with the prestigious Sharadchandra Manohar Bhalerao Memorial Award 2026 by the 121-year-old Maharashtra Sahitya Parishad as a 'Noteworthy Literary Work'. The credit for these accolades undoubtedly belongs to the extraordinary richness and diversity of the Satpura Mountains, which inspired and shaped this work. In many ways, it is the mountain itself that has earned these two distinguished awards.

We are delighted to share the good news that our long-awaited dream book, *MAMMALS OF INDIA* by Dr A.J.T. Johnsingh and Dr P.O. Nameer, has received an overwhelming response from readers and well-wishers across the country. Thanks to your enthusiastic support, we have already sold more than 300 copies through the pre-publication offer. We are now planning to release the book at a grand launch event in the near future. If you have not yet reserved your copy, this is the perfect opportunity to do so. The book is currently available at a special discounted pre-publication price:

https://shop.bnhs.org/product_details/341.

Thank you for your encouragement and support. We look forward to bringing this landmark publication to you very soon.

As you know, BNHS has not only achieved remarkable success in breeding vultures, but has also released 110 vultures into the wild since 2021. The release of captive-bred vultures in Maharashtra, Haryana, West Bengal, and Assam, has brought immense joy to the entire BNHS family. The released birds are adapting well, and many are thriving in their new environments. Encouragingly, the mortality rate among released birds declined significantly during 2025–26.

In this issue, you will read the inspiring story of a rescued White-rumped Vulture (Ring No. X96). After being rescued in Karnataka's Koppal district, the bird was transferred to the Zoological Park at Hampi for observation and rehabilitation. It was later successfully rehabilitated and released near Sanapur, Karnataka. This remarkable

journey highlights the effectiveness of collaborative conservation efforts, and the growing success of vulture recovery programmes in India.

I would like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of our field teams, who not only monitor and track the released vultures, but also invest significant time and energy in conducting capacity-building workshops for various stakeholders.

On May 22, such workshops were organised for 66 frontline forest personnel in the Pench Tiger Reserve and for 30 community leaders representing villages across all seven forest ranges of the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. These initiatives play a crucial role in strengthening local conservation efforts, enhancing awareness, and fostering greater community participation in wildlife protection and vulture conservation.

I must also commend the efforts of all our Vulture Conservation Breeding Centres (VCBCs), which have evolved into important training institutions in addition to their conservation role. These centres regularly host forest officers and frontline staff from various states, providing valuable exposure to vulture conservation and breeding programmes.

This month, the VCBC at Pinjore hosted several batches of forestry personnel, including 38 Range Forest Officers (RFOs) from the Odisha Forest Rangers College, trainee RFOs from the Forest Training Academy at Kundal, Maharashtra, and 34 Forest Guard trainees from the Forest Academy, Gandhigram, Tripura. Such training programmes help strengthen conservation capacity and promote the exchange of knowledge and best practices across the country.

Another noteworthy tradition at BNHS is the organisation of training, awareness, and capacity-building programmes for students of all age groups on important national and international observance days. On the International Day for Biological Diversity, the BNHS Rajasthan team conducted an interactive session for students, researchers, and faculty members of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati (MDS) University, Ajmer, Rajasthan. Similarly, on World Migratory Bird Day, the BNHS Point Calimere team, in collaboration with the Forest Department, organised a training programme on bird migration studies for students, local communities, and conservation practitioners.

Such initiatives play an important role in nurturing environmental awareness, fostering scientific curiosity, and encouraging active participation in biodiversity conservation among diverse sections of society.

I regularly keep you updated on BNHS's path breaking, research-based conservation work at the Ujani Reservoir in Maharashtra. The BNHS team at Ujani continues to encounter various challenges. Such challenges are inevitable in any conservation project, but success lies in understanding local realities and identifying solutions tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of the area.

This month, the BNHS team at Ujani visited the Ambaghat Hatchery in Kolhapur, Maharashtra, to learn about and document best practices in the breeding of native freshwater fish species. The visit provided valuable insights into brood stock management, larval rearing, fish seed production, water quality monitoring, disease management, conservation breeding, sustainable aquaculture practices, and fisheries development. The

knowledge gained will help strengthen ongoing conservation efforts at Ujani, contributing to healthier wetland ecosystems and improved livelihood opportunities for local communities.

The team also conducted fish market monitoring and biometric evaluation surveys at the Bhigwan Fish Market to better understand freshwater fish populations, including the diversity, size structure, and conservation status of species being traded in the region.

In addition, our team undertook a major habitat restoration initiative in the Ujani–Bhigwan wetland landscape by removing invasive aquatic and semi-aquatic plant species from wetland areas around Madanwadi. This month, more than five tonnes of invasive suckermouth catfish were removed from the reservoir ecosystem. Continued removal of this invasive species will help reduce ecological pressure on native fish populations and enhance the productivity and sustainability of local fisheries. Is this not a remarkable example of how research, conservation, and community-oriented action can work together to restore and protect our precious wetland ecosystems?

I would also like to acknowledge the innovative efforts of the BNHS field team in Karnataka. The team has supported the Forest Department in establishing an artificial island habitat at Ankasamudra Lake to enhance bird conservation. Artificial islands are widely recognised as an effective conservation tool in wetland ecosystems because they create isolated and protected spaces that provide birds with safer nesting, roosting, and breeding sites while reducing pressures from habitat loss and human disturbance.

What I particularly appreciate is the team's strong partnership with the local NGO GreenHBH and its focus on multiple small, targeted conservation actions. In collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department, the team has successfully reintroduced a native plant species, *Pandanus odorifer* (locally known as Kedige), to restore the lake's banks and improve habitat quality at Ankasamudra. You will also be pleased to know that during these field operations, the team documented two nesting colonies of Blue-tailed Bee-eaters, with 175 active nesting burrows, including a thriving breeding site near Ankasamudra village. This discovery further highlights the ecological significance of the landscape and the success of ongoing conservation efforts.

On the coastal front, the efforts under BNHS's marine project are yielding encouraging results. Our Seahorse Project team has spent the past year building a strong network with fishing communities in the Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts. As a result, fishermen have begun actively sharing information on bycatch and reporting marine animals affected by ghost nets. In May, three seahorses were successfully rescued and treated at the BNHS Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre in Ratnagiri. These timely interventions highlight the growing effectiveness of community-based marine conservation efforts.

Recently, a World Bank delegation visited the field station and was impressed by the range of research and conservation initiatives focused on marine biodiversity and coastal ecosystems, including ongoing efforts to study and address the spread of the Green Mussel (*Perna viridis*), locally referred to as the 'Charu Mussel'.

This month, the national media took note of BNHS's first-ever telemetry study of River Lapwings in the Ganga River system in Bhagalpur, Bihar. The study was initiated by the BNHS Bird Ringing and Monitoring Station (BRMS), Bhagalpur, where researchers successfully deployed GSM-GPS transmitters on four River Lapwings on a sandbar near Barari Ghat in Bhagalpur district.

The BNHS-Conservation Education Centre (CEC) continued its mission of fostering environmental awareness and biodiversity appreciation through a series of engaging educational and outreach programmes during May.

For Mumbaikars, every flamingo-watching season brings great joy. This year, BNHS concluded the season with a special Flamingo Walk at NRI Lake, Nerul, offering members an opportunity to witness the last congregations of flamingos before their annual departure from the Mumbai region. BNHS's Central Marketing Department (CMD) also supported outreach efforts by engaging new audiences and promoting the organisation's conservation work, publications, and nature-inspired products.

Please take note of the appeal published in this issue for our library, where we are seeking support to digitise E.P. Gee's films, a project that requires funding. And yes, have you already purchased the "Anytime Planner" and "Undated Diary available through the CMD?

If you are not already following us on social media, please do so to receive the latest daily updates from BNHS.

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 *JBNS* (<https://bnhsjournal.in/index.php/bnhs/ga>), one of India's oldest scientific journals, which can also help institutions 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
Programmes: programmes@bnhs.org; Conservation Education Centre: cec-mumbai@bnhs.org

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.

Kishor Rithe

Director,

Bombay Natural History Society