

## DIRECTOR DESK

Dear Members,



Funding is essential for any organization, yet it is rarely sufficient to fulfil all our aspirations. We must therefore continuously align our ambitions with the resources available. The Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), founded in 2011, is Asia's largest impact network to address social challenges bringing together more than 700 resource providers, innovators, and intermediaries across 43 markets.

I attended the AVPN Global Conference 2026, held at New Delhi, from August 25–27. I am pleased to share that BNHS has already received encouraging responses from several stakeholders I met during the conference. We hope these new connections will help us scale up some of our successful pilot projects and strengthen our conservation initiatives.

After the AVPN conference, we turned our attention to another landmark event. The Bombay Natural History Society's (BNHS) Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) at Pinjore completed 25 years of dedicated service to vulture conservation. To commemorate this milestone, the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), BNHS, and the Haryana Forest Department jointly organized a national workshop to mark the occasion.

BNHS established India's first Vulture Care Centre (VCC) at Pinjore in September 2001 to rehabilitate vultures rescued from across the country during the vulture crisis. With support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK, the facility was subsequently upgraded to the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) under the South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan. Over the past 25 years, the centre has played a pivotal role in the conservation and recovery of India's threatened vulture populations.

Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav spent considerable time at the centre and at the event and commended the efforts of BNHS, the Haryana Forest Department, CZA, and partner states for their collective contribution to vulture conservation.

Working closely with the Government of India, State Forest Departments, the CZA, and international conservation partners, BNHS has played a pioneering role in identifying threats, advocating the ban on harmful veterinary drugs such as diclofenac, aceclofenac, ketoprofen, and nimesulide, establishing conservation breeding populations, and creating safe habitats for the reintroduction of vultures into the wild.

Following this memorable event, I had only a day before travelling to Nairobi, Kenya, for the BirdLife International Global Partnership Meeting (GPM). As Martin Harper, CEO of BirdLife International, had recently concluded his visit to India, I attended the meeting with a greater sense of familiarity and less pressure.

Nairobi was at its picturesque best, with jacaranda trees in full bloom, adding vibrant colour to the city. The GPM venue, Safari Park Hotel, proved to be an excellent setting, rich in birdlife and well-suited to the occasion. Around 125 BirdLife partners from 120 countries participated in the GPM and the Global Flyway Summit. A key outcome of the meeting was the launch of the Nairobi Declaration, reaffirming the global partnership's commitment to bird conservation and sustainable development.

The partners collectively pledged through the Nairobi Flyways Declaration which was also signed by BNHS:

*"Nature is in crisis. Habitat destruction, species loss, and climate change are global challenges that require action at a global scale. Every year, billions of birds travel along flyways, the avian superhighways that connect breeding and non-breeding grounds across countries, continents, and hemispheres. A bird's journey does not stop at national borders, and neither can conservation."*

Through this commitment, we recognized migratory birds as important indicators of planetary health and flyways as ecological connections that no single nation can conserve alone. We called for a coherent network of protected and restored habitats across entire flyways and reaffirmed our commitment to a simple but powerful goal: ensuring that birds can fly free from harm.

We also had the opportunity to visit Nairobi National Park, where we recorded nearly 120 bird species in a single day, alongside iconic African wildlife such as lions, white rhinos, hippos, zebras, giraffes, buffaloes, jackals, impalas, and hartebeests.

However, one of my most lasting memories of the visit is the simplicity and warmth of Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado of Japan. An avid birder, wildlife enthusiast, and photographer, she attended all the conference sessions over the three days. What impressed me most was that each of her interventions was thoughtful, concise, and relevant.

Several BNHS members visit Hornbill House for personal conversations. I was inspired by the visit of Kusumakar Damle, a retired railway officer and BNHS Life Member, who strongly believes that investing in children is the key to solving the planet's environmental challenges. He generously donated ₹1 lakh to support BNHS School Nature Clubs and committed his time to interacting with students and distributing activity and experimentation kits.

His enthusiasm motivated us to expand the programme, leading to the establishment of 80 School Nature Clubs across Satara, Amravati, Akola, and Jalgaon districts of Maharashtra. More recently, BNHS Governing Council members pledged support to extend this initiative to Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Sikkim.

Another BNHS member, Godson Samuel whose passion for palm trees is truly remarkable, recently visited Hornbill House to share his observations on the relationship between birds and palm trees. He even undertook a motorcycle journey from Mumbai to Tamil Nadu to document birdlife associated with palm trees along the route. I have encouraged him to share his fascinating findings with our readers, and I hope to see his article published in *Hornbill* soon.

On September 29, 2026, during the BNHS Annual General Meeting, we launched *Aranya*, a new magazine specially created for young naturalists. The magazine aims to become a vibrant green platform for schools across India.

As you know, BNHS launched *Hornbill* as a newsletter in 1967, and it subsequently evolved into one of India's oldest wildlife magazines. As *Hornbill* will complete 50 years this November, it is fitting that BNHS introduces a new publication to inspire the next generation of nature enthusiasts.

*Aranya* is envisioned as a magazine "by young members, for young members." School students will be encouraged to become BNHS members, contribute content, and actively participate in shaping the magazine. If you are a student or a teacher, this magazine is for you. We invite you to join this growing movement by sharing your school's details and becoming part of the BNHS family.

The inaugural issue features several inspiring stories written and edited by BNHS Life members and has been sent as a supplement to *Hornbill*. The attractive cover was designed by BNHS member Ashvini Menon (artist, designer, and cartoonist) while the publication was generously supported by BNHS Life Member Amit Badiyani. My sincere thanks to both for helping bring this exciting initiative to life.

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.

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:

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

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

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Director, Bombay Natural History Society