



FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK

Dear Members,

Diwali greetings from all of us on this auspicious occasion! I hope you had a joyous and fulfilling festive season. Diwali, the festival of lights, reminds us that even in challenging times, hope and dedication can illuminate the path forward. I am confident that our newsletter will continue to serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for conservation.

There is an English idiom, 'Easier said than done', meaning it is easy to promise action but much harder to deliver results. I have truly experienced the depth of this idiom while working to place BNHS at the forefront of several conservation challenges. Having spent over three decades as a conservation practitioner, the satisfaction of achieving conservation goals is not new to me. However, the vast and varied Indian landscapes where BNHS operates present unique challenges.

As our President and Governing Council have rightly emphasized, BNHS must take research-based action in every landscape. With this vision, we have reoriented the entire BNHS fraternity toward that mission – and the results are now visible.

Our Ladakh team successfully tackled the issue of free-ranging dogs (FRDs). Under the Animal Birth Control (ABC) programme, and with the support of the Animal Husbandry Department of Ladakh, over 2,000 FRDs were sterilized in and around wildlife habitats near Army establishments. Army officers have already observed positive behavioural changes in treated dogs.

Similarly, BNHS collaborated with Canine Control and Care, a Pune-based organization, to treat over 300 dogs in and around the Great Indian bustard (GIB) habitats in Pokhran, Jaisalmer (Rajasthan). The Bishnoi community has expressed happiness at seeing noticeable behavioural improvements in the FRDs post-surgery, and local forest staff have also conveyed their gratitude. These outcomes demonstrate that real change is possible when we work collaboratively with local communities and the right partners.

Adding to this success, an Army officer recently informed us that the two Organic Waste Composter (OWC) machines (50 kg/day capacity) installed at Army formations in Drass and Nyoma are now efficiently managing organic food waste. This initiative has also helped reduce the dependence of free-ranging dogs on discarded food. The OWC machines convert organic waste into high-quality compost within just 24 hours. We extend our gratitude to our donor partner, The Habitat Trust, for funding this project, and to the Indian Army for turning a challenge into an opportunity.

This brings to mind a belief: 'Courts are the last resort'. While cases concerning the FRD menace continue to await resolution in the Supreme Court and various High Courts, our field-level successes offer hope and a practical way forward for protecting endangered wildlife.

On the international front, the World Bank and BirdLife International have announced plans to scale up conservation across the African–Eurasian Flyway, home to nearly 2 billion migratory birds. BirdLife CEO Martin Harper and the World Bank's Juergen Voegelé highlighted that a network of over 50 national partners will implement integrated conservation actions for nature, birds, and people. This month, BNHS will participate in the Meeting of Partners (MOP 12) of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership in the Philippines to learn from global best practices and apply them to our Central Asian Flyway Programme in India.

Working in high-altitude landscapes is especially challenging, requiring physical fitness, endurance, and a spirit of adventure. I thank the Government of Sikkim for inviting me to speak on integrating adventure with biodiversity

conservation. BNHS has also signed an MoU with the Indian Himalayan Centre of Adventure and Ecotourism (IHCAE) to incorporate biodiversity conservation values into IHCAE's training curriculum.

Our Annual General Meeting, held on October 10th at BNHS, was a resounding success. Members attended in large numbers and appreciated the Society's continued progress. During the meeting, the Honorary Secretary and President released the Anytime Planner and digital banners for the Omnibus Natural History Project, which aims to revise classic Indian natural history books on birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians, and trees.

We are also delighted to share a long-awaited announcement. On the birth anniversary of eminent wildlife scientist Dr A.J.T. Johnsingh, HarperCollins India and BNHS announced the upcoming release of the first comprehensive guide to Indian mammals, covering over 450 recognized species, 400 distribution maps, and 50 pages of illustrations. The book is scheduled for release in March 2026 – we hope you will be among the first to reserve your copy!

At the end of this month, BNHS, in partnership with the EcoSikh Charitable Trust, launched the Sacred Fauna Mission during the Global Wildlife Fair in New Delhi. This collaboration aims to support in-situ and ex-situ conservation of the northern goshawk, shaheen falcon, and laggar falcon. BNHS has already initiated conservation breeding programmes for wild water buffalo, lesser florican, otters, and falcons at Gorewada Zoo. We extend our gratitude to the JSW Foundation, Tata Trusts, and MAHATRANSCO for their financial support toward these initiatives.

We were deeply saddened by the passing of actor Satish Shah, a strong admirer of BNHS's work. He helped connect the Society with influential members of the film industry. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family.

Finally, I encourage you to visit the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>), voluntarily curated by our member Ms Oishimaya Sen, for its rich and diverse conservation stories. We welcome your contributions in any language. I also urge academic institutions to subscribe to the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (JBNHS)* (<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.

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

Kishor Rithe
Director, BNHS