

FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

Your society completed 142 years on September 15, 2025. Personally, I do not believe in celebrations, so we decided to mark this auspicious day with a brainstorming session for the BNHS staff to discuss a common strategy for working together at our optimum capacity. The BNHS staff from CEC-Goregaon, Airoli, and Hornbill House gathered at the newly renovated Museum Collection at Hornbill House, while other colleagues joined us remotely. People are more important than buildings, and BNHS can only grow when its staff performs at their best.

Together with senior staff members and HoDs, I designed parameters to assess monthly staff performance in order to select the best-performing staff. I am confident that the incentives and public recognition planned for such individuals will inspire every staff member to aspire to this achievement. We also felicitated staff members who have made significant contributions. Our Vice President, Mr Saurabh Kant Singh, Honorary Secretary, Dr. Bharat Bhushan, and Governing Council Member, Mr. Debi Goenka, graced the concluding function and addressed the audience.

I also visited the project site at the Ujani wetland in Maharashtra, where the BNHS team is working on an eco-restoration project. Thanks to our President, concerned government departments have been brought together to make this initiative successful. The local fishing community is excited about the project. During my interactions with them, I realized how their struggles reflect the degradation of the wetland. Although the Government of India has banned the artificial breeding of African catfish, awareness of this ban has not fully reached local levels. I observed that about 95% of fish species in our wetlands today are invasive. We hope this project will raise awareness among law enforcement agencies and also provide alternatives for cultivating indigenous fish, enabling communities to earn better livelihoods.

BNHS is also an academic institution. Thanks to Dr Sálím Ali, BNHS formally affiliated with Mumbai University in the 1980s for Botany and Zoology, and later with MAHE University, Manipal. Our Ph.D. programme allows students to work on field research projects. I recently met the Vice Chancellor of Mumbai University, Prof Ravindra Kulkarni, who encouraged BNHS to contribute further to academics, particularly within the framework of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. This summer, several students completed internships at Hornbill House and field sites such as Jaisalmer (Rajasthan) and Bhagalpur (Bihar), reflecting the new academic opportunities created by NEP 2020.

BNHS also shares a longstanding association with the Indian Armed Forces, and we have collaborated on several conservation projects in border areas. This requires mutual understanding and trust. The President and I visited New Delhi to meet Defence Secretary Mr Rajesh Kumar Singh, who was briefed on BNHS conservation initiatives and key issues. He assured us of his prompt support. We also met the Forest Secretary Mr Tanmay Kumar to seek support from the MoEF&CC for our conservation breeding programmes.

This month, our dynamic Librarian, Ms Nirmala Barure, opted for voluntary retirement to attend to family responsibilities. During a rare and emotional farewell, she urged the staff to focus on what we can contribute to the Society rather than on what it can give us. Her heartfelt message was deeply moving and motivating. BNHS is proud to have had such a dedicated staff member.

Your Society has also taken an important decision to allow ordinary BNHS members (annual, 3-year, and 5-year) to upgrade to Life Membership by paying the balance amount (₹ 17,700). I encourage you to take advantage of this scheme. Please contact our Membership Officer, Asif (WhatsApp: +91 9819570758), for assistance.

I would also like to congratulate birdwatchers Mr Shashank Dalvi, Mr Harish Thangaraj, Mr Adesh Shivkar, and their team for rediscovering the Jerdon's Courser on August 24, 2025, this time outside the Lankamalla Hills. This remarkable sighting comes nearly four decades after Dr Bharat Bhushan, our present Honorary Secretary, originally rediscovered the bird – once thought extinct – after 86 years in 1986 at Lankamalla Hills, Andhra Pradesh, with the help of local hunter Aitanna. Later, BNHS scientist P. Jeganathan worked extensively in the area from 2004 to 2008.

The BNHS library has now reopened in the renovated space at Hornbill House and is preparing to launch innovative programmes for readers. Our Museum Collection team, led by young professionals, is already engaged in organizing various

programmes and workshops for students and forest officials. Please visit our website for revised guidelines and prior appointment details.

Finally, I encourage you to read the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>), voluntarily curated by our member Ms Oishimaya Sen, for its unique stories. 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/12gPTSYTsgP2khue7>

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