



Dear Members,

It was a sweltering first week of July in New Delhi when I arrived to attend a crucial meeting at the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC). The ministry had convened the meeting to discuss the growing threat of free-ranging dogs in critical wildlife habitats, ranging from the high-altitude wetlands of Ladakh to the arid grasslands of Rajasthan. Chief Wildlife Wardens from several affected states attended and highlighted the severity of the issue. We hope the MoEF&CC will soon issue state-specific guidelines to mitigate this problem.

The Annual Research Seminar (ARS) continues to be a much-anticipated event for BNHS scientists. It brings together new and seasoned researchers to present their findings, exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and foster collaboration. This year, our President – also the Former Member of the Capacity Building Commission of India – suggested a special team-building session led by an external expert to strengthen staff capabilities and motivation.

The seminar was held at the Bamboo Nature Conservancy in Gothangaon, near the Umred Karhandla Wildlife Sanctuary. In addition to insightful discussions and knowledge-sharing, staff enjoyed birdwatching – and the sightings of tigers and wild dogs, which proved to be the icing on the cake.

This year, MoEF&CC supported BNHS in organizing two workshops for veterinarians – one at the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Pinjore, Haryana, and the other in VCBC Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh. Veterinarians from nine states participated and gained valuable insights into how their expertise can enhance conservation breeding programmes for endangered species. We extend our sincere thanks to MoEF&CC and to Dr Kazveen Umrigar, BNHS's conservation breeding specialist, along with her team for making these workshops a success.

A heartfelt thank you to our BNHS members who actively respond on WhatsApp groups to strengthen our programmes. One such instance was during the garbage collection drive led by the CEC team at Film City, Mumbai. As Film City borders the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), litter from visitors poses a risk to wildlife straying into the area. It is disheartening that others' waste must be cleaned by someone else. The CEC team is now working with Film City authorities to explore the possibility of employing locals for clean-up activities by collecting a 'nuisance fee' from littering visitors.

Mumbai continues to grapple with respiratory illnesses linked to pigeon overpopulation. The issue recently reached the Maharashtra State Assembly, prompting a government directive to take action against kabutarkhanas – feeding stations where pigeons are lured and allowed to congregate, fuelling their population explosion.

In response, animal rights activists moved to the High Court, challenging the action. (Is it really the pigeon's 'right' to be fed by humans?) BNHS foresaw this problem in its 2017 study and warned of its potential consequences. We hope the High Court will consider the health and welfare of urban citizens not just in Mumbai, but across other cities where kabutarkhanas exist. For more, see the Conservation Notes section in the *Hornbill* (Apr-Jun, 2025).

The BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>), voluntarily created and managed by member Oishimaya Sen, is gaining popularity. We invite members to contribute in any language. As BNHS continues to lead in conservation breeding – most notably with vultures – several state governments have sought our assistance in replicating similar programmes. Recently, our scientists visited the Gorewada Zoo in Nagpur, Maharashtra, as part of a new agreement with the Zoo (and WRTC too) to run breeding programmes for key species. We will keep you updated as this initiative progresses. In a promising development, genomics experts from the renowned Wellcome Sanger Institute (Cambridge, UK) visited Hornbill House this month to explore opportunities for capacity-building in modern genomics. We hope to integrate cutting-edge science into BNHS's core areas of expertise.

On July 29, Global Tiger Day, BNHS shared its work on tiger conservation in a webinar hosted by the UK-based Born Free Foundation. The session received an overwhelmingly positive response from a global audience of millions.

Be sure to check out the 'Systema naturae' section in the latest issue of *Hornbill* magazine. We welcome your contributions as part of the BNHS 150-Year Omnibus Collection.

If you have not yet completed the Yearbook form for Life Members, please do so here: <https://forms.gle/12gPTSYTs9P2khue7>

For assistance, please reach out to the relevant departments:

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, 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