



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

From the DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

I am always curious to hear the arguments when someone talks about the extinction of species or range extinction (the loss of a species from its known geographic range). Do you know how extinction is declared? The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), a globally respected authority on the status of species and ecosystems, reviews published scientific literature based on field studies and surveys, consults experts and expert organisations, and then reaches a conclusion on the conservation status of such species.

However, the rediscovery of some species makes us rethink the concept of "extinction." Are our birders and ornithologists truly scanning every habitat within a species' known range, spending sufficient time and following proper methodology? Do they also rigorously explore areas outside the known range of species, especially when climate change has significantly altered the distributions of many?

I first encountered these questions in 1998, when I rediscovered the Forest Owlet (now listed as Endangered by the IUCN) in Melghat. Since then, the bird has been recorded at several new locations, some outside its historically known range, including Burhanpur district in Madhya Pradesh, Navsari district and Valsad district in Gujarat, and Tansa Sanctuary in Thane district of Maharashtra. This month, the species was recorded by a tourism operator in the Parond Beat of Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh. This record reminds us that we must continue exploring habitats even outside the known range of species.

I cannot resist sharing another amusing observation that is increasingly becoming common. Last month, while passing through the city of Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh, I spent a morning at a lake at historic Hanumantal, located in the heart of the city and surrounded by Jain and Hindu temples. Suddenly, I heard a man calling birds while throwing food into the lake. To my surprise, a flock of Slender-billed Gull, which had not been visible earlier, suddenly appeared and began catching the floating food. Slender-billed Gulls breed inland but are usually restricted to coastal wetlands and do not typically visit urban centres. Some birders have also reported observing coastal birds feeding on *gathia* and *fafda* in coastal wetlands. Could such religious feeding practices be influencing the distribution of winter migrants?

This month, World Wetlands Day was celebrated across the globe. BNHS staff organised several events in different parts of India. I spent a day at SIES College of Arts, Science and Commerce in Nerul, Navi Mumbai, attending an event organised by the Navi Mumbai Environment Protection Society (NMEPS), where local activists and birders expressed their commitment to protecting birds and wetlands in and around Navi Mumbai.

As you may know, BNHS released 34 captive-bred vultures into the wild in Pench, Melghat, and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra during December 2025 and January 2026. Several individuals have already recorded encouraging short-term successes.

Of the nine White-rumped Vulture (WRV) and five Long-billed Vulture (LBV) released in Pench, eight WRV and two LBV have been actively exploring the Pench landscape over the past two months and are attempting to settle locally. One female WRV, J102, travelled nearly 215 km over the last two months, reaching Melghat via Narkhed, Amravati, and Akola, where it was subsequently rescued and re-released in Melghat.

Another individual, J132, a Long-billed Vulture born in Haryana and released from Pench (now named *Anjan*, after Anjaneri Cliffs of Nashik), travelled 750 km westward from Pench. It located a cow carcass on its own in Nashik and began competing with wild scavengers. For three days, it fed independently.

Of the 15 LBVs released in Melghat, around 10 birds remained around the release aviary for nearly two months. One individual, F12, stayed in Melghat and explored the landscape extensively. Another individual, Z29, travelled 476 km across the Satpura landscape (covering Betul district and Khandwa district) over two months before returning to the Melghat aviary area.

Out of the five WRVs released in Tadoba, three individuals – X91, X96, and N16 – have been exploring the Tadoba landscape around Botezari over the past two months. Another bird, Z25, flew to Karnataka, where it was rescued. These early results provide valuable insights into the success of the conservation breeding programme.

BNHS's rewilding efforts have also attracted wild vultures to Melghat. It was once believed that vultures were locally extinct from Melghat. However, following the reintroduction efforts in the Melghat Tiger Reserve, a wild Himalayan Griffon Vulture was observed visiting the area. The bird has been feeding and socialising with the released vultures for more than a month.

In another notable observation last month, wild Himalayan Griffon Vulture and Eurasian Griffon Vulture were seen together in Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve after nearly a decade.

Melghat has historically been a stronghold for vultures. The continued presence of Himalayan Griffons and their exploration of the reserve over the past month are encouraging signs. Even more remarkable is the social interaction between captive-bred Long-billed Vultures and the wild Himalayan Griffon. This indicates that the released vultures are attracting wild individuals and that the habitat is gradually being accepted once again.

The chances of survival of wild vulture populations in India are also improving due to the dedicated efforts of several government officers. The Food and Drugs Administration Department of Haryana has taken commendable action against veterinary NSAIDs that are lethal to vultures. Officials inspected 113 chemist shops and collected 93 drug samples for laboratory testing.

We appreciate the proactive leadership of Mr Lalit Goel, Drug Controller of Haryana, who organised visits for chemist association members to the BNHS Vulture Breeding Centre and later conducted raids on pharmacies illegally selling banned veterinary drugs such as Aceclofenac, Ketoprofen, and Nimesulide. Continued enforcement could soon help make Haryana a Vulture Safe Zone.

Following the advice of the BNHS President, our staff also organised several nature camps at Point Calimere, Nandur Madhameshwar, Melghat, Bharatpur, and Punjab. Thank you for your enthusiastic participation.

This month, our team working at the Ujani Reservoir in Maharashtra, in collaboration with the Fisheries Department, released 12.2 million fish fingerlings into the reservoir in Pune district. BNHS had recorded a decline in native fish species due to invasive alien species such as Tilapia, African catfish, and Suckermouth catfish. This intervention aims to restore the ecological balance of the reservoir.

The fingerlings released belong to Rohu, Mrigal, and Catla, collectively known as Indian Major Carps, which play an important role in maintaining freshwater ecosystems.

I am also happy to share that the BNHS popular magazine for children will soon become a reality. This initiative has been driven entirely by our members, including fundraising efforts to support its launch. Thank you for suggesting many interesting names for the upcoming magazine. The committee will soon announce the final name.

If you are not yet following BNHS on social media, please do so to receive daily updates on our activities.

Finally, I encourage you to visit the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>) and read inspiring stories from the field. You are welcome to contribute articles in any language. We also encourage 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 using the provided link <https://forms.gle/12gPTSyTs9P2khue7>

For assistance, please feel free to contact:

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



BNHS Vulture Programme Records Major Milestone in Maharashtra

The Vulture Conservation Programme of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) has achieved a significant milestone in Maharashtra with the sighting of a Himalayan Griffon in the Melghat Tiger Reserve. The high-altitude species, known to migrate across several Indian states, is believed to have been drawn to the area following the recent release of captive-bred vultures under BNHS's restoration initiative.

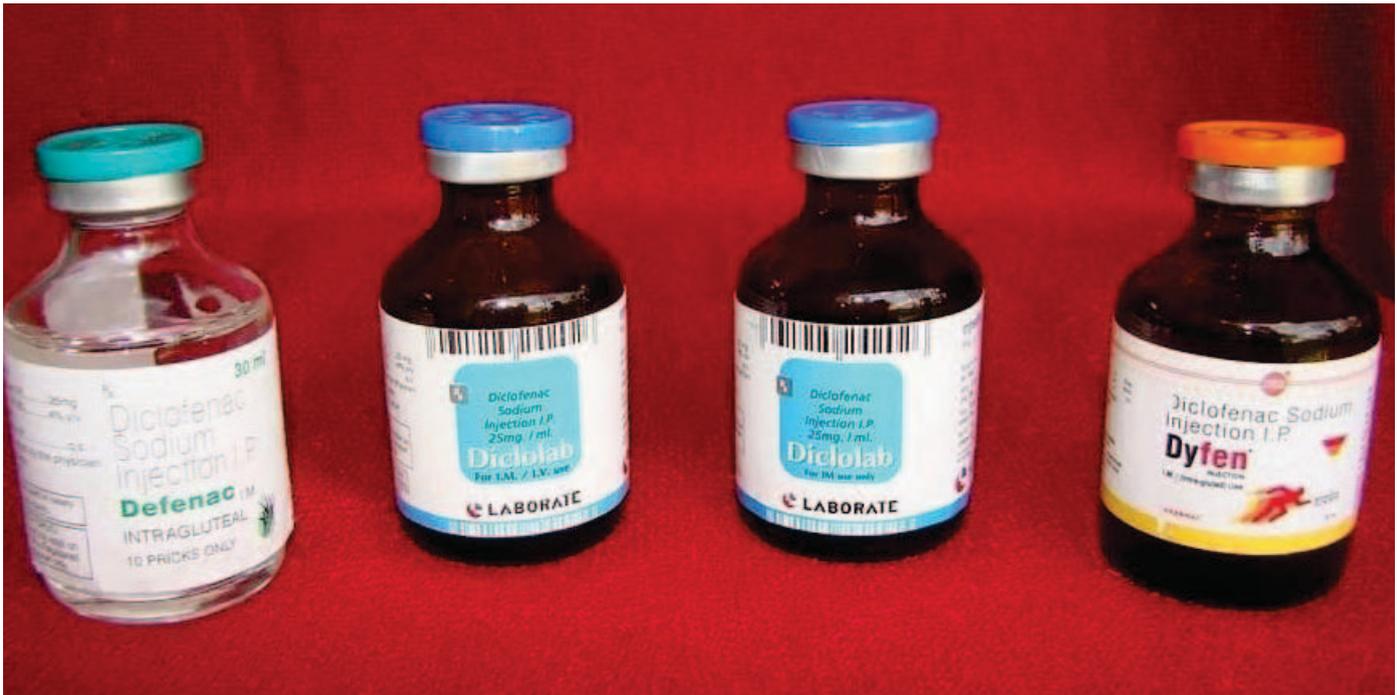
The development is particularly noteworthy as vultures had become locally extinct in the Melghat and Tadoba landscapes nearly a decade ago. Soon after the Himalayan Griffon was recorded in Melghat, an Eurasian Griffon Vulture was also sighted in the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, further underscoring the growing impact of the conservation programme.

Vulture populations in Maharashtra had declined precipitously by 2004, primarily due to the widespread use of certain non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), including diclofenac, aceclofenac, ketoprofen and nimesulide, which proved fatal to the birds. In response to the crisis, the Maharashtra Forest Department partnered with BNHS to revive the state's near-extinct vulture populations.

As part of the ongoing restoration efforts, 15 critically endangered Long-billed Vultures were translocated from the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre in Pinjore to the Somthana range of Melghat Tiger Reserve on April 23, 2025. The birds were initially housed in an aviary for acclimatisation before their release. On December 19, 2025, the vultures were fitted with GSM and satellite transmitters to monitor their movement, behaviour, and survival. They were soft-released from the aviary on January 2, 2026, with BNHS continuing to provide supplementary food outside the enclosure to support their gradual adaptation to the wild.

Historically a stronghold for vultures, Melghat is now showing encouraging signs of recovery. The continued presence and exploration of the released birds in the reserve over the past month indicate positive adaptation. Their recent social interaction and feeding alongside a wild Himalayan Griffon marks a particularly remarkable development. The Himalayan Griffon's integration with captive-released birds signals growing ecological acceptance of the Melghat landscape and renewed hope for the region's vulture population.

A pioneer in vulture conservation, BNHS operates multiple Vulture Conservation Breeding Centres (VCBC) and release sites across India and currently cares for around 700 vultures. In the financial year 2025–26 alone, a total of 34 vultures have been soft-released across Melghat, Pench and Tadoba Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra, reinforcing the organisation's long-term commitment to species recovery. ■



BNHS Efforts Support Haryana Government's Action on Harmful Veterinary Drugs

The sustained efforts of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) to address the catastrophic decline in vulture populations are beginning to show positive outcomes in parts of the country.

For years, BNHS scientists have generated scientific evidence demonstrating that toxic non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) entering the food chain are a major cause of vulture mortality, and have advocated for stricter regulation and enforcement of bans on these drugs.

As part of these ongoing conservation efforts, the BNHS Vulture Safe Zone team, led by Ms Alka Dubey and Mr Hemant Bajpai, has been actively engaging with state authorities to strengthen regulatory compliance. Their continued communication with the Haryana Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has contributed to recent enforcement measures undertaken by the Government of Haryana.

The Government of Haryana has launched an extensive enforcement drive to curb the sale and use of veterinary painkillers known to be lethal to vultures. On January 15, 2026, authorities carried out large-scale inspections at 113 wholesale and retail chemist shops across Haryana, collecting 93 drug samples for urgent laboratory analysis.

Officials confirmed that the samples have been sent to government-approved laboratories for testing and strict legal action will be initiated under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act if any violations are detected. The crackdown is aimed at reversing the catastrophic decline in vulture populations caused by toxic non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) entering the food chain. Experts at the BNHS Vulture Conservation and Breeding Centre in Pinjore explained that drugs such as diclofenac, aceclofenac, ketoprofen, and nimesulide cause acute kidney failure and visceral gout in vultures. When livestock are treated with these medicines shortly before death, the residues remain in the carcass. Even if less than one per cent of carcasses are contaminated, it is enough to decimate entire colonies, with birds often dying within 24 to 48 hours of feeding.

Haryana's proactive approach acts as a model for other states. The large-scale inspection of chemist shops to check the availability of banned veterinary NSAIDs reflects a strong commitment to enforcement and biodiversity conservation. Such coordinated state-level action sends a clear message that protecting wildlife must go hand in hand with regulatory vigilance and accountability. ■

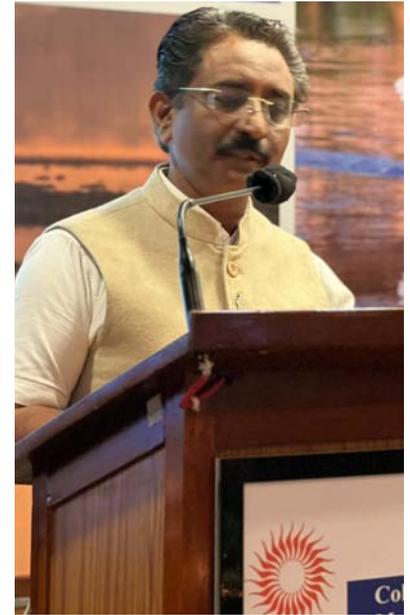
Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Leads Successful Rewilding of Rescued Vultures



In a significant milestone for avian conservation, Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr Mohan Yadav successfully released five rescued vultures into their natural habitat at the Halali Dam forest area under the Raisen Forest Division on February 23, 2026. The rewilding event featured one juvenile Cinereous Vulture and four Long-billed Vultures, all of which had undergone an intensive rehabilitation process at Van Vihar National Park and the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre in Bhopal. Among the birds released was a 1.5-year-old Cinereous Vulture *Aegypius monachus*, a massive Eurasian species and rare winter visitor to India, which had been rescued from the Sironj area of Vidisha District in late 2025. Accompanying it were four approximately one-year-old Long-billed Vultures *Gyps indicus*, an IUCN-listed Critically Endangered species endemic to India that has faced catastrophic population declines due to the veterinary drug diclofenac.



These birds were originally rescued throughout 2025 from the Vidisha, Mandla, Betul, and Seoni districts before being placed under a strict health and recovery protocol. Following an initial 30-day quarantine at Van Vihar, the vultures were moved to the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, where experts from the BNHS provided specialized medical care and continuous monitoring. Before their successful return to the wild, the vultures passed comprehensive health examinations at the State Animal Disease Investigation Laboratory in Bhopal. To ensure their long-term survival and track their integration into the wild, experts from BNHS and WWF equipped the birds with GPS tags, allowing for real-time monitoring of their movements across the landscape. This successful rewilding underscores Madhya Pradesh's commitment to restoring its raptor populations and protecting the delicate ecological balance of the region. ■



Wetlands: Key to Mumbai's Ecological Security – BNHS Director on World Wetlands Day

Wetlands in and around Navi Mumbai play a vital role in providing shelter, food and roosting grounds for thousands of migratory birds, particularly during high tide, said Kishor Rithe, Director of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). Without these critical ecosystems, Mumbai – the country's economic capital – could face serious environmental consequences, he cautioned while addressing a gathering to mark World Wetlands Day.

On the eve of the occasion, the Navi Mumbai Environment Preservation Society (NMEPS) organised a special awareness programme at SIES College of Management Studies, Nerul. The event drew an enthusiastic audience of over 200 students and nature enthusiasts from across the city.

Delivering the keynote address, Mr Rithe highlighted the ecological importance of wetlands and the broader need for nature conservation. Drawing upon more than three decades of field experience, he shared compelling anecdotes and real-life encounters that underscored the urgency of safeguarding natural ecosystems.

The programme brought together environmental experts, activists and educators, fostering meaningful discussions on contemporary conservation challenges. Addressing the impact of rapid urbanisation, NMEPS President V.K. Gandhi outlined the organisation's ongoing environmental initiatives and urged students to actively participate in conservation efforts.

Students engaged enthusiastically with the speakers, posing thoughtful questions and sharing innovative ideas. Praising their involvement, Mr Gandhi said it was heartening to witness such active participation from young people and expressed confidence that the next generation would carry forward environmental protection efforts with commitment and responsibility. He reaffirmed NMEPS's dedication to empowering communities to preserve natural heritage.

The event also featured student-led activities, including a Hackathon and Aaj Ki Adalat, where participants adopted creative approaches to address environmental issues. A panel discussion featuring Rohit Joshi, Kishor Rithe (BNHS), Stalin and Nandkumar Pawar, moderated by Anjali Parasnis, served as a key highlight. The panellists shared insights from their work in research, conservation and activism, followed by an interactive question-and-answer session.

The programme concluded with the announcement of winners of the Best Out of Waste competition from Pillai Institute of Management Studies & Research, along with the Hackathon winners, marking a fitting end to a day dedicated to celebrating and conserving wetlands. ■



1.22 Crore Fish Released in Ujani Reservoir in Maharashtra to Restore Ecological Balance

In a landmark initiative to revive native aquatic life and restore ecological health, the Maharashtra Fisheries Department released 1.22 crore (12.2 million) fish fingerlings into the Ujani Reservoir on February 14, 2026. The 'Fish Stocking Festival', held at Palasdev in the Pune district, represents a strategic push to strengthen sustainable fisheries and protect the livelihoods of local communities dependent on one of the state's most vital inland water bodies. The release focused on Indian Major Carps, specifically Rohu, Mrigal, and Catla, which are essential for maintaining the integrity of freshwater ecosystems. Early indicators of the programme's success are already emerging; recent catch data analyzed by the BNHS shows that the population of invasive Tilapia has declined by approximately 30-40%, signalling a promising shift back toward native species dominance.

The programme received comprehensive scientific backing from the BNHS through its Wetland Eco-restoration and Fisheries Development Programme. The release was overseen by a technical team including Senior Scientist Dr Unmesh Katwate, Project Scientist Ms Devi Waingankar, Ms Vaishnavi Patil, and Project Coordinator Ms Vidhi Eriyathalay. To ensure maximum survival rates, the fingerlings were transported in specialized oxygenated tanks across three trucks and released in controlled batches of 2,500 fish per net. Proper scientific handling methods were followed to minimize stress and mortality, ensuring a safe and uniform distribution across the reservoir.

Looking toward the future, the BNHS, with support from the Cipla Foundation, plans to expand these efforts during the early monsoon months of June and July. This next phase will focus on breeding 12 threatened and endemic species in alignment with their natural migration patterns. The ambitious roadmap includes the release of an additional ten lakh Indian Major Carp and ten lakh fingerlings of the threatened Deccan Mahseer. This intervention is particularly timely following the detection of invasive African catfish in November 2025, an identification made with BNHS assistance that underscored the urgent need to rebalance the Bhima River ecosystem and the Ujani wetlands. ■



Monitoring and Removal of Sucker Mouth Catfish at Bhigwan

Under the Wetland Eco-restoration and Climate Resilient Fisheries Development Programme at Ujani, the BNHS team conducted seasonal fish market survey from February 2–6, 2026, at Bhigwan Fish Market to collect data for research analysis. During the survey, researchers recorded length-based biometric data of the invasive suckermouth catfish. Detailed morphometric measurements were taken to assess the population structure and size distribution of the species within the study area. The data collected will help researchers better understand the population dynamics of the species and the ecological pressure it exerts on native fish communities. As part of efforts to control the spread of this invasive species, BNHS is also providing additional incentives to local fishermen to catch and collect as many suckermouth catfish as possible. This initiative aims to reduce the population of the species to the greatest extent feasible. During this month, nearly 2,400 kg of suckermouth catfish were collected and subsequently sent to the fishmeal industry for processing. ■



Conservation Milestone Achieved at Mhalungi, Maharashtra

In mid-February 2026, the quiet upstream waters of the Mhalungi River, a tributary of the Ujani reservoir, became the site of an important conservation milestone when local fishermen discovered a large school of the native fish species *Hypselobarbus kolus*. As part of the Wetland Eco-restoration and Climate Resilient Fisheries Development Programme, a BNHS team led by Senior Scientist Dr Unmesh Katwate successfully collected and relocated a healthy school of these native fish to a specialized hatchery for conservation breeding on February 19, 2026.

The effort was made possible with the support of Mr Bharat Mallav, Chief Executive Officer of the Bhigwan Carp Fish Seedling Production, Research and Training Centre and Chairman of the Ambika Fisheries Co-operative Society, who alerted the project team immediately after local fishermen reported a large congregation of the species.

The delicate mission began with a day of strategic planning, utilizing a large shore seine net to gently guide the fish toward the riverbank. Working alongside experienced local fishermen, the team carefully documented essential biological data, including individual lengths and weights, to inform future management efforts. Over 50 kilograms of *H. kolus* stock were collected and transported in tanks aerated with liquid oxygen to ensure optimal conditions. The meticulous handling and scientific precision of the team resulted in a remarkable 98% survival rate. This initiative represents a vital stride toward the stock restoration of *H. kolus*, laying the foundation for a more resilient freshwater ecosystem at Ujani Reservoir through dedicated captive breeding and strong community partnerships. ■



Conservation Breeding Programme for Native Fishes

On February 17, 2026, as part of the ongoing Wetland Eco-restoration and Climate Resilient Fisheries Development Programme led by Dr Unmesh Katwate, a significant conservation milestone was achieved at Dalaj No. 1, Indapur, in the Ujani reservoir. In a collaborative effort, the Fisheries Department of the Government of Maharashtra released carefully measured Rohu (*Labeo* sp.) fingerlings into the reservoir's waters. Each specimen, ranging from 70–100 mm, was meticulously counted and recorded prior to release, marking a strategic step toward strengthening native carp populations and fostering sustainable fisheries. Rohu, one of India's most ecologically and economically significant major carps, plays a vital role in maintaining the balance of freshwater ecosystems and supporting local livelihoods. Complementing the stocking exercise, the BNHS conducted an outreach programme for local fishermen, focusing on responsible aquaculture and the importance of prioritizing native species over invasive ones. During the session, field observations of invasive catfish (Magur) breeding prompted discussions on the ecological risks these species pose; fishermen were encouraged to transition toward culturing Indian major carps to ensure both biodiversity and long-term income stability. To support these biological interventions, the team also performed water quality assessments using Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) and Dissolved Oxygen (DO) meters, establishing essential baseline data to ensure habitat suitability for both stocked and resident aquatic life. ■

SONAR Survey and Water Sampling at Ujani reservoir, Maharashtra

February marked the completion of an important phase of BNHS's ongoing wetland eco-restoration research at Ujani Reservoir with the successful conclusion of SONAR surveys at Ajoti and Kalthan of Pune District. These sites were the final two among the 12 planned survey locations, bringing the hydro-acoustic mapping component of the project to a close. During the survey, the team also collected water samples from multiple locations to assess key water quality parameters. The data gathered will help researchers understand spatial variations in water quality and support more informed management of freshwater resources. The completion of these surveys represents another significant step in BNHS's efforts to protect and restore aquatic ecosystems through systematic research and long-term monitoring. ■



Collaborative Steps Toward Wetland Restoration at Ujani Reservoir, Maharashtra



On February 26, 2026, at 14:00 hrs, BNHS representatives met Dr Pradeep Surve, Deputy Commissioner of the Fisheries Department, at the Government Fisheries Office in Hadapsar, Pune, as part of the Wetland Eco-restoration and Fisheries Development Programme for Ujani Reservoir.

The meeting focused on strengthening collaboration between BNHS and the Fisheries Department to support the ecological health and sustainable fisheries management of Ujani Reservoir. During the discussion, the BNHS team presented informative posters highlighting the native fish species of the reservoir, as well as recently recorded invasive species that

require urgent management due to their negative impacts on the ecosystem. The interaction was both productive and encouraging. BNHS looks forward to formalizing this partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Fisheries Department, Government of Maharashtra, to advance science-based conservation and sustainable development efforts at Ujani Reservoir. ■



Significant Congregation of Demoiselle Cranes at Malvi Dam Backwaters, Karnataka

From February 13–19, 2026, a significant congregation of over 1,000 Demoiselle Crane was recorded at the Malvi Dam backwaters in Taluk Hagaribommanahalli, Karnataka. The birds were observed circling at high altitudes before descending in large numbers onto exposed mudflats during the evening hours. Systematic monitoring conducted over the week documented a gradual decline in numbers—from more than 1,000 individuals on the first day to approximately 50 individuals by February 19th — indicating a short staging period of six to seven days before the flock continued its migration.

The congregation coincided with the seasonal drawdown phase of the reservoir, which exposed extensive mudflats and shallow water margins adjacent to agricultural fields, including sunflower, wheat, millets, and rice. These conditions created a productive wetland–farmland ecotone that supported both feeding and roosting behaviour. The event underscores the emerging regional importance of the Malvi Dam backwaters as a temporary migratory stopover site within the Deccan landscape. In light of these observations, the BNHS and the local NGO GreenHBH have submitted a proposal to the Forest Department recommending that procedures be initiated to declare the area a Conservation Reserve. ■

BNHS Surveys Avifaunal Diversity in the Grasslands of Petlawad and Sardarpur, MP

With the onset of summer, a BNHS team conducted a specialized three-day survey across two key grassland sites in Madhya Pradesh—Petlawad in the Jhabua district and the Sardarpur Wildlife Sanctuary, Dhar district. The survey was designed to document and study the unique avifaunal diversity supported by these critical grassland ecosystems. At Petlawad, the team recorded several notable migratory species, including a flock of Common Teal alighting on a local waterbody, followed by northern pintails observed during the evening hours. Field visits to monitoring points within the Sardarpur Wildlife Sanctuary further revealed a rich tapestry of biodiversity; observations included ashy-crowned sparrow-larks engaged in active calling and foraging, as well as the yellow-wattled lapwing. Beyond avian life, the survey also documented an Indian hare and a fan-throated lizard within the grassland habitat. These findings reaffirm the immense ecological significance of these landscapes in supporting both resident and migratory species, highlighting the urgent need for continued monitoring and dedicated conservation efforts in the region. ■





High Congregation of Steppe Eagle at Jorbeer Conservation Reserve, Rajasthan

Jorbeer Conservation Reserve continues to serve as a vital wintering and foraging habitat for several raptor species, supported by the steady availability of livestock carcasses in the area. Regular monitoring undertaken jointly by BNHS and the Bikaner Forest Department recorded peak counts of 119 Steppe Eagles in December 2025 and 137 individuals in January 2026—the highest numbers documented during the current monitoring cycle.

The reserve plays a critical role in sustaining wintering populations of scavenging raptors and other wildlife species during the colder months. The abundance of livestock carcasses across the landscape provides an important and reliable food resource, reinforcing Jorbeer’s ecological significance as a key wintering ground in the region. These observations highlight the continued importance of systematic monitoring and collaborative management efforts to conserve this crucial habitat. ■

BNHS Completes Third Phase of Punjab Bird Survey to Assess Stubble Burning Impacts

On February 16, 2026, the BNHS team successfully conducted an extensive field exercise marking the third phase of the Punjab Bird Survey, an initiative dedicated to systematically assessing the impacts of stubble burning on the region’s avifauna. During the survey, the team documented critical ecological parameters, including species diversity, population abundance, and behavioural patterns across standardized monitoring sites. In addition to collecting quantitative field data, team members interacted with local farmers to gain ground-level perspectives on prevailing agricultural practices and the perceived effects of crop residue burning on both wildlife and agricultural systems. By integrating these community insights with empirical scientific data, the survey continues to build a comprehensive understanding of the complex ecological challenges within the region. These findings are expected to serve as a vital foundation for evidence-based conservation strategies aimed at safeguarding bird populations while promoting sustainable, wildlife-friendly landscape management across Punjab. ■



BNHS Highlights Thar Desert Restoration at National Conference, held in Rajasthan

The National Conference on Ecosystem Restoration was held at the Central University of Rajasthan from February 12–13, 2026. The event brought together researchers, practitioners, and conservation professionals from across the country to deliberate on strategies for restoring degraded ecosystems. The BNHS was represented at the conference by Dr Sujit Narwade, Deputy Director, and Rahul Nandi, Project Fellow.

Dr Narwade delivered a presentation on habitat restoration efforts in the Thar Desert ecosystem. His address emphasized the urgent need to manage invasive species, specifically *Prosopis juliflora*, which poses a significant threat to the native habitats essential for the survival of the great Indian bustard. To illustrate the path forward, he presented a comparative case study on the impacts of overgrazing, contrasting a fenced, protected site with an area left open to high grazing pressure. The study's data demonstrated marked improvements in vegetation recovery and overall ecosystem health within the protected plot, underscoring the vital role of controlled grassland management. The conference served as an important platform for knowledge exchange, reinforcing the BNHS's commitment to science-based restoration in safeguarding India's most fragile ecosystems. ■



Discussion on Habitat Restoration at Udaipur Workshop in Rajasthan

BNHS participated in an insightful workshop on habitat restoration hosted by the Ecological Restoration Alliance (ERA) and the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) in Udaipur from February 1–2, 2026. Representing BNHS, Dr Neelkanth Bora, Assistant Director, presented an overview of habitat restoration initiatives in the Pokhran landscape.

During his presentation, Dr Bora detailed the specific grassland management strategies currently in place, addressed the multifaceted challenges encountered during the restoration process, and emphasized the indispensable role of community participation in ecological revival efforts across the Thar region. The workshop served as a vital platform for knowledge exchange, highlighting the technical complexities of restoring fragile arid ecosystems while reinforcing the necessity of engaging local communities as active partners. By bridging scientific expertise with grassroots involvement, the BNHS continues to advance sustainable conservation practices aimed at the long-term health of India's desert landscapes. ■





Future Forest Leaders Explore Vulture Conservation at VCBC Pinjore, Haryana

On February 18, 2026, as part of their comprehensive North India Tour, 65 Officer Trainees from the 2025–27 batch of the Central Academy for State Forest Service visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Pinjore. Representing nine states across India, the delegation, which included 21 women officer trainees and senior faculty members, gained firsthand exposure to one of the nation's most critical wildlife recovery initiatives. Led by Shri Lalit Kumar, the programme featured detailed technical presentations and guided field interactions focusing on captive breeding protocols, species recovery strategies, and the intricate management of health monitoring systems. Trainees engaged in high-level discussions regarding the ecological significance of vultures as 'nature's sanitation workforce' and explored the practical challenges of protecting critically endangered species from extinction. This immersive experience successfully bridged the gap between theoretical forestry training and on-ground conservation practice, equipping these future forest leaders with the specialized knowledge and professional responsibility required to advance India's wildlife protection mission. ■



Somaiya Vidyavihar University Students Visit BNHS VCBC Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

On February 16, 2026, a group of 50 undergraduate students from Somaiya Vidyavihar University visited the BNHS Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) in Bhopal as part of their academic field exploration programme. The visit was coordinated by Dr Shibajee Mitran and Dr Sandesh Waghmare to provide students with practical exposure to vulture conservation initiatives in India.

The students were formally welcomed by Dr Arockianathan Samson, Centre Manager, who delivered a detailed introductory presentation on the alarming decline of vulture populations in the country. He emphasised the birds' critical ecological role as nature's scavengers and outlined the catastrophic population crash caused primarily by the veterinary drug diclofenac. Dr Samson also discussed the promotion of vulture-safe alternative drugs and highlighted the objectives and national importance of the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme, including the network of breeding centres established across India.

Mr Hemant Bajpai briefed the students on the concept and implementation of Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs) and the structured release programme for captive-bred vultures. He explained the scientific protocols followed by BNHS for soft releases and the post-release monitoring strategies designed to ensure successful reintroduction into the wild.

Providing further operational insights, Dr Samson elaborated on the day-to-day management practices at the Bhopal centre, including husbandry protocols, health assessments, feeding regimes and breeding management. He highlighted key achievements in artificial incubation and chick-rearing techniques, which have significantly improved breeding success rates for critically endangered vulture species.

An interactive technical session introduced students to essential conservation and monitoring tools such as identification rings, GPS and satellite transmitters, microchips, incubators, brooder boxes and specialised transport crates. The functional importance of each instrument in research, monitoring and safe handling procedures was explained in detail.

Mr Sanjay Parihar demonstrated the CCTV-based surveillance and monitoring systems used within the aviaries, offering insights into remote breeding observation methods, behavioural monitoring and systematic record-keeping practices followed at the centre.

The visit concluded with a guided tour of the facility, where students observed aviaries, incubation units, feeding enclosures and monitoring systems firsthand. The programme proved highly interactive and educational, significantly enhancing participants' understanding of applied wildlife conservation and ongoing vulture recovery efforts in India. ■



Students from Sri Sathya Sai College Explore Vulture Conservation at BNHS–VCBC, Bhopal

On 27 February 2026, five students from Sri Sathya Sai College, Bhopal, visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) at Kerwa Dam, Bhopal, as part of their academic field project and educational exposure programme.

On behalf of BNHS–VCBC Bhopal, Dr. Arockianathan Samson conducted an engaging and interactive session introducing the students to the application of biotelemetry in wildlife research and monitoring, with special emphasis on endangered species conservation. Through a detailed PowerPoint presentation, he explained various biotelemetry tools and techniques, including VHF radio telemetry, GPS telemetry, GPS–GSM/satellite telemetry, PIT tags/RFID systems, and camera trap–based monitoring approaches. The session underscored the critical role of modern tracking technologies in studying animal movement, survival rates, and post-release monitoring.

The programme also addressed the status of vultures in India and the historical population declines caused primarily by diclofenac and other harmful non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) used in livestock. The students were informed about the nationwide ban on veterinary diclofenac and the ongoing conservation initiatives aimed at the recovery of vulture populations, including an overview of the Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme – ranging from captive husbandry and artificial incubation to specialized chick-rearing and health management protocols.

In addition to captive breeding, the session explored the implementation of Vulture Safe Zones (VSZs). These zones involve intensive community outreach, NSAID monitoring, and carcass management to create a secure environment for wild populations. Dr. Samson further detailed the rigorous release protocols required to transition vultures back into the wild, which include pre-release conditioning in large aviaries, fitness assessments, and post-release monitoring via telemetry.

The visit concluded with a guided tour of the facility's infrastructure, offering the students a firsthand look at the breeding aviaries and incubation units. This field exposure successfully bridged the gap between classroom theory and conservation practice, significantly enhancing the students' understanding of the modern technologies and dedicated efforts required to save India's vultures from the brink of extinction. ■

VCBC Rani Expands Vulture Outreach and Capacity-Building Across Northeast India

Throughout February 2026, the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) Rani significantly advanced its conservation mandate through a series of strategic awareness and capacity-building programmes across Assam and Mizoram. These initiatives reached a total of 733 participants, including students, local residents, and government personnel, to foster a collaborative approach to vulture protection. ■

School and College Outreach

VCBC Rani organised multiple awareness programmes at institutions including Nature Learning Centre, Mizoram; Burha Madhab Higher Secondary School, Biswanath; Nowgong Girls' College; Nowgong University; and Monabari High School, Behali. Sessions focused on the ecological importance of vultures, threats such as poisoning from contaminated carcasses, and ongoing captive breeding and reintroduction efforts in Assam. Interactive presentations encouraged student and faculty participation. A total of 579 participants were reached through these educational initiatives. ■

Community Engagement

Community outreach was conducted at Panpur Ghat in Biswanath district to sensitise local residents about the public health and ecological importance of vultures. The programme emphasised safe carcass disposal practices, the objectives of Vulture Safe Zones, and the importance of community stewardship in conservation success. Fifty-eight community members participated and engaged in discussions on strengthening local support for vulture protection. ■

Forest Department and Capacity Building

VCBC Rani also organised technical sessions for forest personnel and trainees, including participants from Himachal Pradesh Forest Academy, Assam Forest School (Range Officer trainees), and the Tripura Forest Department. The sessions covered vulture identification, ecological roles, captive breeding protocols, major threats, soft-release methodologies under the reintroduction programme, and telemetry-based post-release monitoring. In total, 96 forest officials and trainees benefited from these capacity-building programmes.

By bridging the gap between scientific research, community stewardship, and government policy, VCBC Rani continues to strengthen the regional network essential for the recovery of India's critically endangered vulture populations. ■

Date	School	Attendees	District
03-02-2026	Nature Learning Centre, Mizoram	36	Mizoram
05-02-2026	Sivasagar Commerce College	200	Sivasagar
06-02-2026	Burha Madhab High School	81	Biswanath
12-02-2026	Nowgong Girls College	67	Nagaon
14-02-2026	St. Louis School, Chaygaon	18	Kamrup
20-02-2026	Nagaon University	107	Nagaon
24-02-2026	Monabari High School	70	Biswanath

Date	Community	Attendees	District
03-02-2026	Panpur Ghat	58	Biswanath

Date	Forest Department	Attendees	District
04-02-2026	Himachal Pradesh Forest Academy (9th batch)	34	Kamrup
12-02-2026	Assam Forest School	28	Kamrup
13-02-2026	Assam Forest School	29	Kamrup
21-02-2026	Tripura Forest Department	5	Tripura



Himachal Pradesh Forest Academy during training programme at VCBC



Nowgong University during Vulture Conservation Awareness Programme



Nature Learning Center, Mizoram at VCBC Rani, Assam



Students Visit at Pinjore Vulture Breeding Centre, Haryana

On February 4, 2026, an inspiring educational exposure was organised at VCBC-Pinjore for 40 students and five teachers from PM Shri Rajkiya Inter College, Bareilly. The programme was led by Centre Manager Hemant Bajpai. The visit offered an overview into the lives of vultures, often described as nature's 'silent guardians', as students learned firsthand about the critical role these scavengers play in maintaining ecological balance and safeguarding public health. Through interactive sessions and guided tours of the breeding enclosures, experts detailed the catastrophic decline of vulture populations caused by harmful veterinary drugs and explained how scientific captive breeding is now working to restore their numbers. The students engaged actively with the conservationists, asking insightful questions that bridged the gap between classroom textbooks and real-world environmental challenges. By witnessing the dedication of the BNHS team, the students left with a renewed sense of environmental stewardship, marking a meaningful step toward nurturing the next generation of conservationists committed to protecting India's vultures and ensuring a healthier ecosystem. ■

BNHS–EIACP at The Peacock’s Call, Travancore House, New Delhi



From 3–5 February 2026, Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, Senior Programme Officer, BNHS–EIACP, participated in The Peacock’s Call: Mission LiFE for a Greener Tomorrow, an awareness and exhibition event highlighting the cultural and ecological significance of the peacock, India’s National Bird. The programme was organised at Travancore House, New Delhi.

As part of the event, BNHS–EIACP set up an information stall showcasing key publications and outreach materials. The display featured Buceros, the quarterly newsletter of the BNHS, along with educational bird posters such as Sparrows of India, Vultures of India, and Hornbills of India. These resources, particularly Buceros, provide a vital platform for researchers and enthusiasts to share observations on avian ecology and special conservation themes. The stall proved to be a major attraction, drawing more than 1,120 students who engaged in interactive sessions with the team. Many young visitors expressed a deep interest in migratory patterns and the plight of threatened species, sparking meaningful dialogues on habitat protection and citizen science. By bridging the gap between scientific documentation and public curiosity, the event successfully strengthened BNHS’s outreach efforts and inspired a new cohort of environmental stewards. ■

BNHS–EIACP Participates in Van Mela, Kota, Rajasthan

The BNHS–EIACP team actively participated in the Van Mela held in Kota, Rajasthan, on February 7–8, 2026, setting up a awareness stall to highlight its ongoing environmental education and outreach initiatives. The stall received high-profile visits from distinguished dignitaries, including Hon’ble Shri Sandeep Sharma (MLA, Kota South) and Smt Kalpana Devi (MLA, Ladpura, Kota), alongside senior officials such as IG Shri Rajendra Prasad Agarwal and Ms Tejaswini Gautam, SP, Kota City. During these interactions, the BNHS–EIACP team briefed the visitors on the Society’s specialized knowledge products, environmental awareness programmes, and the strategic outreach activities designed to promote regional conservation. The Hon’ble MLAs commended the team’s dedication to environmental protection and encouraged the continued pursuit of sustainable conservation practices. Furthering their engagement with nature enthusiasts, team members Mr Niraj Patel, Mr Yogesh Dhamnaskar, and Mr Amzad Hussain also participated in a guided birdwatching trail organized as part of the Mela’s festivities. This successful participation at Van Mela reinforced the importance of public-government partnerships in fostering a culture of conservation across Rajasthan. ■



BNHS–EIACP Participates in Van Mela, Jaipur, Rajasthan

The BNHS–EIACP team continued its streak of successful public engagement by participating in the Van Mela held in Jaipur, Rajasthan, on February 9–10, 2026. The team’s dedicated outreach stall served as a vibrant interactive platform, attracting a large number of visitors eager to learn about the Society’s wide range of conservation initiatives. Attendees engaged in detailed discussions with the team, gaining insights into biodiversity protection and environmental awareness strategies. A notable highlight of the event was a visit



from Mr Yogesh Kumar, Assistant Conservator of Forests (Alwar District), who interacted with the team and formally commended the organization’s steadfast commitment to conservation outreach. By bridging the gap between professional forestry and public education, the BNHS participation at the Jaipur Van Mela further solidified the regional network dedicated to safeguarding Rajasthan’s natural heritage. ■

BNHS Participates at the 29th Indian Birding Fair in Jaipur, Rajasthan



The 29th Indian Birding Fair, a gathering for birdwatchers and conservationists, was held in Jaipur on February 6–7, 2026. Organized by the Tourism and Wildlife Society of India (TWSI) under the guidance of renowned conservationist Harsh Vardhan, the event served as a vibrant hub for researchers and wildlife enthusiasts from across the country. Representing the BNHS, Community Engagement Officer Pankaj Bishnoi and Junior Project

Fellow Vinay Sharma participated actively, showcasing the Society’s innovative, community-led initiatives. Their presentations focused on the protection of fragile grassland ecosystems and the urgent restoration of habitats critical for the survival of the Great Indian Bustard, a species currently facing severe threats from habitat loss and anthropogenic pressures. Throughout the two-day fair, discussions emphasized the indispensable role of grassroots engagement, highlighting successful models that empower local communities to act as primary stewards of their natural heritage. By bridging scientific expertise with community action, the BNHS participation reinforced the importance of inclusive conservation strategies in safeguarding India’s avian diversity. ■



Forest Trail Introduces Underprivileged Children to Nature

The BNHS–CEC hosted 28 children and eight adults from Little Gurus’ Nest Preschool and Daycare, an initiative run by the Street Angels Foundation, on February 6. The forest trail introduced participants to the wonders of nature through guided exploration. The children observed a variety of birds, butterflies and flowering plants, while learning about biodiversity and the importance of conservation. The programme was coordinated and executed by Kimaya Gajare, Education Officer, and Dilip Giri, Field assistant, BNHS CEC. ■

Nature Trail and Kokedama Workshop Encourages Urban Green Living



On February 8, the BNHS–CEC organised a Nature Trail and Kokedama Workshop, attended by eight enthusiastic participants seeking to reconnect with nature in the heart of the city. The programme began with a guided trail highlighting the importance of urban forests as vital habitats for birds and wildlife. Participants learned how such green spaces support biodiversity and provide essential ecosystem services that enhance urban life. The session concluded with a hands-on Kokedama workshop, where participants crafted their own plant arrangements using the Japanese technique of growing plants in compact, soil-bound forms. The workshop combined creativity with lessons in sustainable gardening practices. ■

Zoology Students Gain Field Insights at BNHS–CEC

The BNHS–CEC conducted an educational field programme for 27 students and three teachers from the Zoology Department of Bhavan’s College on February 9. The visit included guided walks along the Sálim Ali Point Trail and Karvi Trail, where participants observed diverse bird and insect species. Students also gained practical exposure to identifying animal tracks and signs. The programme concluded with a presentation on biodiversity and an overview of the conservation education initiatives undertaken by the CEC. ■



Online Course Participants Explore Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Botanical Udyan, Mumbai

The BNHS–CEC organised a field visit to Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Botanical Udyan and Zoo on February 15 for participants enrolled in its online courses. Led by Dr Rajdeo Singh, the trail was attended by six participants. The visit offered insights into various native and exotic tree species, their habitats, traditional uses and ecological significance. The field experience enabled participants to connect theoretical knowledge with practical observations. ■



NMIMS Students Participate in Biodiversity Walk

On February 16, 2026, the BNHS–CEC hosted 24 students from Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS), Mumbai, for an engaging biodiversity walk at the BNHS–CEC campus. Students explored the rich flora and fauna of the area, learning about various tree species and their ecological and traditional uses. They also observed spiders, butterflies and birds, making the session both immersive and educational. ■



DIY Sustainable Wellness Workshop Held at SP Jain College

A 'DIY Sustainable Wellness' workshop was conducted on February 19, 2026, at SP Jain College of Global Management, bringing together 40 participants for an interactive session on sustainability and personal well-being. Organised at the invitation of the institution's Deputy Principal, the workshop aimed to blend environmental responsibility with everyday wellness practices.

The workshop focused on understanding the connection between environmental health and personal well-being, creating simple do-it-yourself sustainable products, reducing reliance on chemically intensive and plastic-heavy alternatives, and promoting mindful consumption habits. Participants engaged in discussions, hands-on demonstrations and reflective exercises. ■



Exploring Urban Biodiversity: BNHS Awareness Trail at Vetal Tekdi, Pune

As part of its ongoing Awareness Trails initiative, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) organized a specialized bird walk for its members at Pune's iconic Vetal Tekdi on Sunday, February 8, 2026. The excursion was led by dedicated BNHS member Ranjeet Rane, who provided participants with an in-depth introduction to the rich natural heritage and ecological significance of the hillock.



The walk served as a practical exploration of the diverse habitats found along the trail, allowing members to experience firsthand the impressive avian diversity that this urban green space supports. For many attendees, this marked their inaugural visit to Vetal Tekdi; participants expressed high praise for the unique mosaic of habitats that make the site a premier location for birdwatching and urban biodiversity. By bridging the gap between city life and the natural world, the event reinforced the critical need for sustained public awareness and community-led stewardship in safeguarding such vital green lungs within rapidly developing urban landscapes. ■

February Bird Count Records 87 Species at SGNP, Mumbai



The February Bird Count at Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) was successfully conducted on February 22, 2026, with the active participation of over 40 BNHS members and volunteers. This single-day survey documented a total of 87 bird species, further showcasing the park's vital role as a haven for avian diversity within an urban landscape.

This month's count marked a significant milestone, with three new records added to the monitoring programme. The Jungle Bush-Quail was recorded along the Jambhul Maal Transect (Sunil Desai and team), the Indian Thick-knee was observed on the Culvert 20-Tulsi Dam transect (Apoorva Tiwari and team), and the Common Greenshank was documented on the Thakurpada Transect (Ashwin Mohan and team). These additions highlight the value of

sustained and systematic monitoring in enhancing our understanding of biodiversity within urban protected areas.

Initiated in February 2021 as a citizen science initiative, the "SGNP Bird Count" is conducted monthly across various locations in both SGNP and the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. The programme is made possible through the continued support of the Forest Department, BNHS members, and dedicated birdwatchers.

For those interested in contributing to future counts, please visit www.bnhs.org or contact programmes@bnhs.org for further details. ■

Members' Trail Highlights Rich Biodiversity at BNHS Reserve, Mumbai

The BNHS recently hosted an members' trail at the BNHS Reserve, a sprawling 33-acre forested sanctuary situated near Film City in Mumbai. Gifted to the Society in 1983 to commemorate its centennial conservation legacy, the Reserve remains a vital green refuge, supporting remarkable biodiversity within the heart of the city's urban landscape.

The walk along the Leopard Trail provided participants with an engaging introduction to the Reserve's avian wealth. Notable sightings included the Spot-breasted Flycatcher, the elegant Indian Paradise-Flycatcher, and three distinct species of sunbirds. A particular highlight for many was observing the Yellow-throated Sparrow, a species famously linked to the early ornithological inspirations of Dr Sálim Ali. Members expressed great appreciation for



the diverse habitats preserved within the Reserve and the rare opportunity to witness such species in close proximity to the metropolitan center.

The trail also served to highlight the long-standing impact of the BNHS Conservation Education Centre (CEC). Since its inception in 1993, the CEC has been a cornerstone of environmental advocacy, reaching thousands of students, educators, and professionals annually through structured nature walks, specialized workshops, and academic courses. This February trail reaffirmed the BNHS's enduring commitment to bridging the gap between urban life and the natural world through education and active community engagement. ■

BNHS Scientist Shortlisted for Whitley Award 2026

The BNHS is pleased to announce that Ms Parveen Shaikh Scientist D has been placed on the official shortlist for the prestigious Whitley Award 2026, presented by the Whitley Fund for Nature.

This year, 12 conservation leaders were shortlisted from 270 applications worldwide, marking a highly competitive selection process. Parveen's project, "Guardians of the Skimmer: conserving riverine birds through community participation," focuses on the protection of the endangered Indian Skimmer. The initiative works to safeguard nesting sandbars and strengthen collaboration with local communities along key river systems to ensure the species' long-term survival.

According to the official shortlist announcement, the selection process will now proceed to the next stages, including reference checks, financial screening and rigorous due diligence before the final awardees are chosen. The 2026 Whitley Award winners will be announced live at a ceremony in London on April 29, 2026.

BNHS extends its warmest congratulations to Parveen Shaikh on reaching this significant milestone and conveys its best wishes as the conservation community awaits the final announcement. ■



BNHS Scientist Awarded Best Paper at International Conference on Climate and Sustainability

A significant academic milestone was achieved at the International Conference on Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability in Mountainous and Hilly Landscapes – 2026, held on January 30–31, 2026. The prestigious Best Paper Award was conferred upon a collaborative study titled 'acro Anatomy and Biometry of Pelvic Girdle, Symsacrum, Pygostyle, Sternum and Ribs of Himalayan Griffon Vulture *Gyps himalayensis*'.

The award-winning paper was presented by Anil Deka (Department of Anatomy & Histology, College of Veterinary Science, Assam Agricultural University) and jointly authored with Sachin Ranade of the BNHS and Krishna, representing the BNHS Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Assam. The study provided an exhaustive examination of the macro-anatomical and biometric characteristics of the skeletal framework of the Himalayan Griffon Vulture, a species of critical ecological importance. By documenting the specialized structural adaptations and extensive skeletal fusions in the pelvic girdle, sternum, and ribs, the research established vital baseline anatomical data. These findings are set to significantly bolster veterinary education, clinical diagnostic applications, and ongoing conservation-oriented research for the species.

Organized by Assam University, the conference served as a global platform for experts to deliberate on environmental sustainability in fragile highland ecosystems. This Best Paper Award recognizes the scientific rigor and originality of the study, while highlighting the instrumental role of VCBC Assam in advancing high-level vulture research. Such collaborative successes underscore the Society's commitment to combining academic excellence with practical conservation efforts to safeguard India's avian scavengers. ■

BNHS Marketing Department Expands Outreach Through February Exhibitions

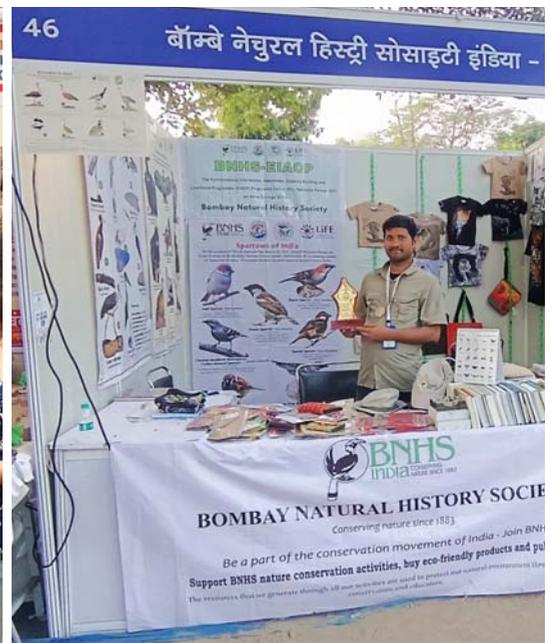
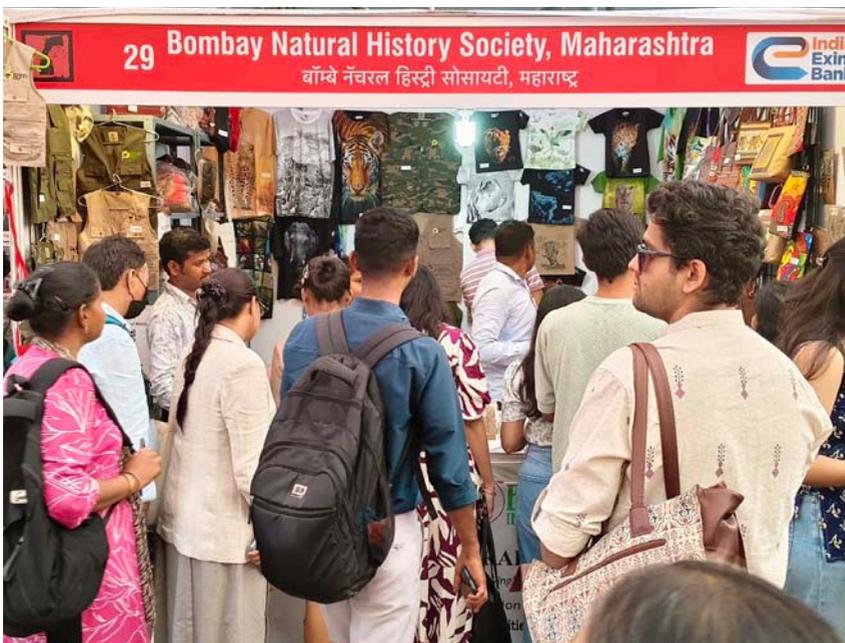
The Marketing Department of the BNHS actively participated in several prominent exhibitions during February 2026, strengthening public outreach and engagement.

The department set up promotional stalls at the following events:

- Kala Ghoda Arts Festival, Rampart Row (January 31–February 4, 2026)
- BNHS, Hornbill House, Mumbai (February 5–8, 2026)
- Van Mela, Kota, organised by the Divisional Chief Conservator of Forest, Kota, Rajasthan (February 7–8, 2026)
- Van Mela, Jaipur, organised by the Rajasthan Forest Department (February 9–10, 2026)

Additionally, the Marketing Department and EIACP participated in the National Science Day celebration held on 27 February 2026 at the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Anushakti Nagar, Mumbai.

At each venue, the Marketing team showcased BNHS's conservation initiatives, publications and educational resources, while also promoting and selling BNHS merchandise. The exhibitions provided valuable opportunities to engage directly with the public, enabling the organisation to reach thousands of visitors and raise awareness about its conservation work across diverse audiences. ■



BNHS Meets DSIR to Discuss SIRO Renewal

On February 4, 2026, Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, Senior Programme Officer at BNHS, met Dr Anoop Singh, Scientist-E and Member Secretary (SIRO), at the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Technology Bhawan, New Delhi. The meeting focused on the renewal of the organization's Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (SIRO) recognition, a vital credential for advancing scientific research and development (R&D). During the discussion, Mr Dudhe briefed Dr Singh on the Society's latest research milestones and ongoing conservation initiatives, while also seeking an update on the status of the renewal application. As a gesture of appreciation, he presented Dr. Singh with a selection of BNHS knowledge products.



SIRO recognition facilitates access to research funding, provides critical tax benefits, fosters institutional collaborations, and strengthens an organization's influence in scientific and policy-related spheres. The successful renewal of this recognition will ensure that BNHS continues to operate at the forefront of conservation science in India. ■

BNHS Library Hosts Open Library Week



The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) Library successfully organized Open Library Week from February 02–06, 2026, attracting an overwhelming response from college students, researchers, nature enthusiasts, and book lovers.

More than 150 visitors attended the weeklong initiative and explored the library's rich collection that includes rare books and archival collection of Dr Sálím Ali and E.P. Gee.

(Continued on next page)

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Students from the several institutions visited the BNHS library during the week, including

- Sathaye College (Dahanukar College)
- Smt. Chandibai Himathmal Mansukhani College
- Sophia College for Women
- B.K. Birla College of Arts, Science and Commerce
- D.G. Ruparel College of Arts, Science and Commerce
- Ramnarain Ruia Autonomous College
- Lords Universal College
- International Institute for Population Sciences

The orientation sessions conducted during the week introduced visitors to the BNHS Library's rare and historical books, research reports, theses, glass slides, lithographs, and special issues of *Hornbill*. The sessions also displayed glass slides and films of E.P. Gee.

Students and visitors had the opportunity to browse through the BNHS Coffee Table Books and explore special collections in Botany, Zoology, and Wildlife. They also visited the library stacks and spent time reading and engaging with the valuable collection.

Owing to the Open Library Week and the free access provided, several students and researchers utilized the library resources throughout the day for their academic assignments and ongoing research work. The initiative successfully helped raise awareness about the library's heritage collections and encouraged greater academic engagement, inspiring young scholars and nature enthusiasts alike. This event also encouraged many visitors to enroll as members of the BNHS, with some already registered as member during the week. ■



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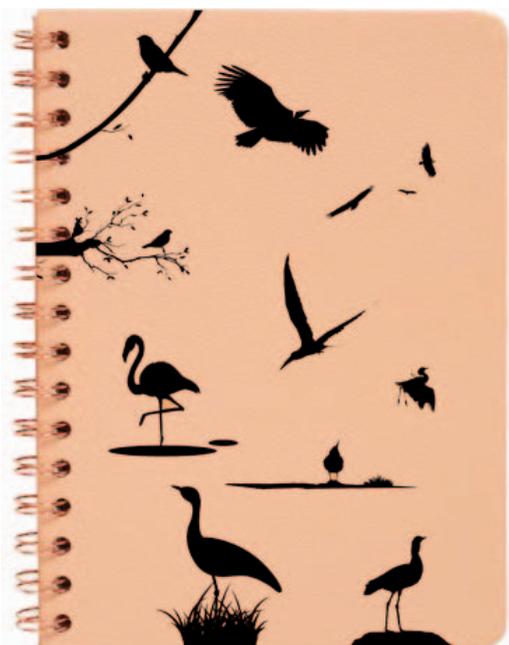
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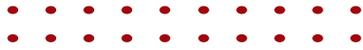
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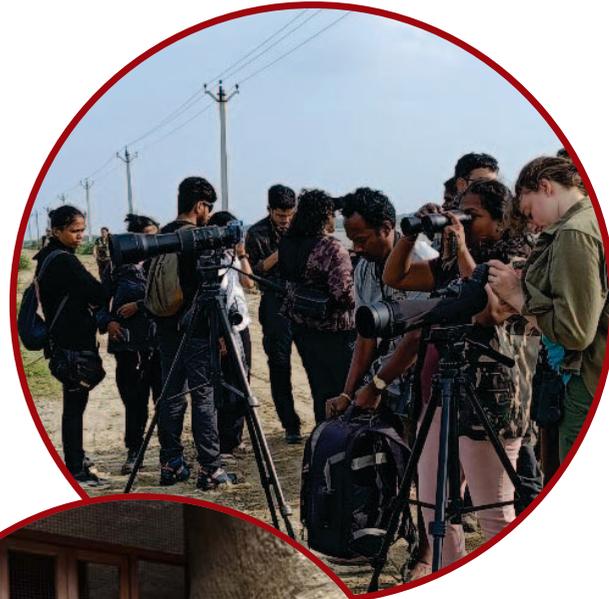
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Bombay Natural History Society

Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400 001.

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