



Dear Members,

This month brought several pieces of good news! The Sarus Crane population in Maharashtra has risen to 34 in 2025, with Gondia district leading the count at 30 individuals. This was revealed during the annual Sarus count conducted by birders across the Vidarbha region. BNHS continues its study of the Sarus Crane and supports the Maharashtra Forest Department by providing regular guidance and expert input. While members from Uttar Pradesh—home to the largest Sarus Crane population in the country—may not find this development particularly significant, it is a crucial milestone for us. Strengthening and managing the dwindling populations in central Indian habitats is of utmost importance.

In another exciting development, the Chinese Rose Windmill butterfly *Papilio genestier* – a species native to the Sino-Tibetan region—was recorded in India for the first time. It was spotted in the high-altitude landscape of Mechuka, Arunachal Pradesh, by a team comprising Dr Monsoon J. Gogoi, Tajum Yomcha, and Duyir Buni Yedi.

We also received heartening news at Hornbill House: BNHS member Katie Bagli's books 'FLIGHT OF THE PINK-HEADED DUCKS AND OTHER STORIES' – published by BNHS – and 'STORIES OF TREES FROM INDIA', have been nominated for the Sahitya Akademi's Bal Sahitya Puraskar 2025 in the English category. We hope this recognition will help these important works reach more children across India and inspire them to engage in conservation.

Amidst the celebrations, we were deeply saddened by the loss of two eminent personalities. Mr Maruti Chitampalli, a retired forest officer from Maharashtra, author of 25 books on wildlife, and recipient of the Padma Shri, passed away this month. In November 2023, BNHS had the honour of felicitating him at his Solapur residence, presenting him with historical correspondence between himself and the late Dr Sálím Ali. He may well be the only forester to have authored such a rich body of work while still actively serving in the field.

We also lost our former Executive Member, Dr Saramma Marselin Almeida, a respected botanist who mentored and inspired hundreds of young students to explore and appreciate the remarkable world of plants.

While work at Hornbill House is important field visits remain essential to our mission, allowing us to connect directly with members, NGO partners, and government officials. I recently visited Ladakh, where BNHS has initiated a project to address the growing issue of Free-Ranging Dogs (FRDs) threatening wildlife. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr Tsewang Dorje Day, President of the Wildlife Conservation and Birds Club of Ladakh (WCBCL), and former President Mr Lobzang Visudha. Both have pledged their support to BNHS in tackling this issue.

It was equally enriching to meet Dr Tsewang Namgail, Director of the Snow Leopard Conservancy–India Trust, one of Ladakh’s leading NGOs. We have agreed to collaborate on pressing conservation challenges in the region. Our work with the Indian Army continues, supporting them in making their establishments eco-friendlier.

From Ladakh’s sub-zero temperatures, I travelled south to Tamil Nadu, where we addressed the importance of salt pans—critical habitats for migratory birds. The BNHS team had a productive meeting with Deputy Salt Commissioner Mr C. Raghu in Chennai. We also had a fruitful discussion with the dynamic Chief Wildlife Warden of Tamil Nadu Mr Rakesh Kumar Dogra, who assured us that action would be taken to resolve issues at Point Calimere Sanctuary. An additional meeting with Dr B. Balaji, Member Secretary of the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), was promising. The trip concluded in Jaipur, where the State Board for Wildlife meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Mr Bhajan Lal Sharma, resulted in several key decisions for the protection of Rajasthan’s wildlife habitats.

In other important updates, BNHS scientists are collaborating with experts from NIV Pune, NIHSAD Bhopal, and MAFSU Nagpur on a project focused on disease surveillance in wild birds. This kind of collaborative work becomes especially important when incidents like the recent rabies case in Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) make headlines – the first instance where a stray dog in the buffer zone succumbed to rabies. Thankfully, the case is isolated, and proactive vaccination and monitoring efforts are now in place to prevent any further spread. This serves as a critical learning moment for all states where FRDs are present in key wildlife habitats.

We are pleased to report that our recent online interaction with BNHS members saw growing participation and engagement. We thank our President for initiating these dialogues on a regular basis to encourage broader involvement of our members in the Society’s day-to-day activities.

We have noticed that many individuals working closely with BNHS in areas such as membership, programmes, education, research, and publications are not formal members. We invite all our well-wishers to officially join BNHS. Your membership will ensure uninterrupted access to our services and enhance collaboration.

Do not miss out on 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 completed the Yearbook form for Life Members, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/12gPTSyTsgP2khue7>

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, Bombay Natural History Society