

FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

BNHS believes in collaborating with grassroots level NGOs to maximize its impact. Tiger Watch, an NGO active around Ranthambhore for two decades, invited me to speak to youngsters at their annual event. They felicitated individuals, including BNHS supporter Mr Sevaram Mali, who received an award. I was thrilled to attend the book release of 'Caracal: An intimate history of a mysterious cat', authored by BNHS member Dr Dharmendra Khandal and co-authored by Ishan Dhar. BNHS takes pride in its members bring out such thoroughly well-researched publications! Additionally, Mr Nelson Rodrigues authored the book on 'Discover the Beautiful Mammals of India', which was released at Hornbill House. I hope these books receive a warm response from you!

I love meeting BNHS members wherever I travel to across the country. During my visit to Rajasthan, Dr Dharendra Devarshi, Dr Pratapsingh Katariya, and Mr Satish Sharma requested a separate WhatsApp group for Rajasthan, which I promptly facilitated. Mr. Sharma shared wonderful stories of Dr Sálim Ali and Rajasthan, including Dr Ali's correspondence with him.

In Rajasthan, led by Dr Sujit Narwade, the BNHS team took me to Jorbeer near Bikaner city, known as the "heaven of raptors". We observed Egyptian, Cinereous, Long billed and Himalayan Griffon vultures in good number, along with many Steppe and Tawny eagles. I discussed conservation issues with DFO Mr Sandeep Chalani and his staff. I hope the BNHS Rajasthan team and local members like Dr Katariya and Dr Jitu Solanki will initiate conservation actions soon.

Following the visit of Lt. General Mr A. K. Singh, GOC-in-C, Southern Command to Hornbill House and his orders to form a study group, I had a productive meeting with Indian Army officers from Pokharan to discuss grassland and GIB conservation within Army areas. I will update you on further actions soon.

I am pleased to see updates on state-wide WhatsApp groups about conservation actions in your respective states. Members from Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Gujarat are active, and I encourage members from other states to start conservation efforts. Let me know if you need support from BNHS.

BNHS is proud of its women scientists. Our scientist Dr Reshma Pitale, who is passionately working on neglected marine flatworms, was featured in Travellers World Online Magazine on World Women's Day.

There are several encouraging developments on the vulture conservation front, BNHS and the Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK have decided to continue their nearly 25-year collaboration. RSPB UK team recently visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBS) Rani, Assam, and discussed further collaboration. RSPB is currently funding BNHS's Vulture Breeding and Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) programs in Assam and other states. More states are approaching BNHS for help to start either Vulture breeding, translocation or VSZ programme.

You must have read our latest Conservation E-Newsletter; Hornbill House visits from students, other groups, and our partner NGOs. However, the impending renovations of Hornbill House planned after 40 years will temporarily impact such visits. I assure you that when you visit Hornbill House in 2025 you will be pleasantly surprised with what you see.

BNHS is investing in youngsters, with school and college interns gaining experience in various departments. BNHS life member and senior Advocate C.S. Kaptan recently briefed the Bombay High Court Nagpur bench on the Sarus Study project in Vidarbha landscape. I appreciate such pro bono work of our passionate members. BNHS celebrated World Forest Day on March 21 with a fund-raising event, "Wind under the Wings," attended by donors, aiming to strengthen collaborations.

Recently a veteran Indian Forest Service officer and Retd Chief Wildlife Warden of Madhya Pradesh Mr J.S. Chauhan visited the BNHS collection at Hornbill House. His message in the visitor book reads "I am speechless with the kind of hard work done by the scientists here in BNHS. I am short of words to appreciate the efforts". Mr Chauhan regretted not having had the opportunity to visit earlier during his time in the forest service and emphasized that every Chief Wildlife Warden should make a point to visit this remarkable place. Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) of Government of Maharashtra Mr O.P. Gupta (IAS) visited BNHS's Conservation Education Centre and appreciated the team's energy and innovation.

National Geographic team recently visited Hornbill House to explore collaboration possibilities. BNHS is built by dedicated staff and trustees, including former PRO, Dy. Director (Natural History) and Butterfly man Isaac Kehimkar, who was recently filmed at Hornbill House, the workplace he loved so much.

The Publications Department is working tirelessly to publish on Indian Mammals by Dr A.J.T. Johnsingh and Dr P. O. Nameer. We appeal to our supporters to sponsor the excellent hand-drawn paintings of Indian mammals and imprint their company names on the print copy to support this publication. Interested donors can contact publication@bnhs.org for a catalogue.

BNHS Ph.D. Cell is streamlining its Ph.D. programme, and we hope to welcome dedicated research aspirants in 2024-25. While writing this, new GC members' names are already uploaded on the website. Let's welcome them!

Kishor Rithe
Director
Bombay Natural History Society

1st April 2024.