

## FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

Your BNHS has continued its tradition of inviting its research staff to the Annual Research Seminar (ARS) to present and discuss the outcomes of their research projects and explore opportunities for translating research into conservation action. This year, ARS 2026 was held at the Central University of Rajasthan (CURAJ) in Ajmer. CURAJ proved to be an ideal academic institution, with its strong repository of advanced research on the Aravalli mountain range. Our staff thoroughly enjoyed their stay on campus, particularly their interactions with the faculty members and students. I sincerely thank the Vice Chancellor, Dr Vilas Bhalerao, for making this collaboration possible.

The BNHS Rajasthan team prepared a technical report based on their study of the CURAJ campus, which was released by the Vice Chancellor and our President, Mr Pravinsingh Pardeshi. Expert trainers from the Piramal Foundation conducted team-building sessions that encouraged staff to openly share their thoughts, concerns, and experiences.

One important observation from these sessions was that many of our Junior Project Fellows (JPFs), who join BNHS soon after completing their Bachelor's or Master's degrees to gain practical field experience, often miss their parents and loved ones. This reminded me that all of us, especially the senior members of BNHS, have a responsibility to provide them with a supportive and family-like environment. Equally touching were the experiences shared by colleagues from our service departments, who have spent more than 10–15 years at BNHS. They spoke about the challenges they faced while building their lives in Mumbai, transitioning from young professionals to family persons. I consider these two groups of employees to be the very foundation of BNHS.

Around nine trustees participated in the ARS and were delighted to witness the remarkable transformation of BNHS across the country. They interacted extensively with the staff and assured them that they would work towards strengthening employee welfare initiatives.

We also visited the agricultural fields at Shokaliya near Kishangarh and were deeply impressed by the community-oriented approach adopted by our scientist, Dr Sujit Narwade, and his entire team. When conventional research and conservation methods fall short, innovation becomes the key to success. The trustees visited several potential agricultural landscapes that could be restored as suitable habitat for the Lesser Florican. I am confident that BNHS will make significant investments in the near future to conserve the Lesser Florican and restore its grassland habitats in Rajasthan.

I visited Ladakh from July 18 to 23, where we held a series of meetings with General Pande, Mr S. Rajesh, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, and Mr Mandeep Mittal, Deputy Conservator of Forests, Ladakh. We also reviewed our free-ranging dog (FRD) sterilization programme near Hanle. The BNHS and The Habitat Trust (THT) teams are working together in Ladakh to address several critical threats facing endangered wildlife, including the Black-necked Crane. One of the major achievements of the project has been the sterilisation of more than 2,900 free-ranging dogs around Army establishments. This initiative is expected to help regulate FRD populations, reduce aggressive behaviour, and largely restrict their movement to villages. In the long run, this should contribute to the recovery of native wildlife populations while also creating greater opportunities for local communities to benefit from wildlife tourism.

Forest officers from several states visit BNHS every month to explore opportunities for collaboration. This month, senior forest officers from Arunachal Pradesh visited us to discuss several important conservation initiatives.

Another significant milestone this month was the launch of the much-awaited book *MAMMALS OF INDIA* by Dr A.J.T. Johnsingh and Dr P.O. Nameer. The book was released by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra,

Mr Devendra Fadnavis, and the Minister for Forests, Mr Ganesh Naik, during the Global Tiger Day celebrations held in Nagpur. Many members have informed me that they have already received their pre-booked copies. If you have not yet received yours, please contact our CMD Department. The book continues to be available at a special discounted price for members, and you can still reserve your copy through the BNHS online store.

This month, the BNHS team also achieved important milestones at Ujjani by establishing hatcheries for indigenous fish species and cultivating native aquatic plants that will play a crucial role in future eco-restoration initiatives.

As you may recall, in the previous issue we appealed for support to digitise the invaluable wildlife films of E.P. Gee, a project that requires dedicated funding. I sincerely thank everyone who responded generously, especially our members Dr K. Ullas Karanth and Mr B.M. Arora, for their valuable support.

If you are not already following BNHS on social media, I encourage you to do so. Our social media platforms provide regular updates on our research, conservation initiatives.

Finally, I encourage you to read the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>) for more inspiring stories from the field. Please feel free to contribute articles in any language. We also encourage academic institutions to subscribe to *JBNS* (<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 here:

<https://forms.gle/12qPTSYTs9P2khue7>

For assistance, feel free to reach out: Central Marketing: [cmd@bnhs.org](mailto:cmd@bnhs.org); Membership: [membership@bnhs.org](mailto:membership@bnhs.org); Programmes: [programmes@bnhs.org](mailto:programmes@bnhs.org); Conservation Education Centre: [cec-mumbai@bnhs.org](mailto: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](mailto:g.naidu@bnhs.org).

Thank you for staying connected with us. For any suggestions or queries, I am always available at [director@bnhs.org](mailto:director@bnhs.org).

Kishor Rithe

Director

Bombay Natural History Society