



FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK

Dear Members,

Regular annual meets of bird watchers in Maharashtra have now become a pilgrimage of sorts. India is a country where devotees regularly visit the places associated with their Gods and Goddesses. Similarly, the community of birders in the country is growing, visiting birding destinations regularly. They meet every year to share their observations on birds and their habitats, discuss issues, and take action to conserve birds and their important habitats. This tradition has now completed 38 years in Maharashtra, and I congratulate all bird lovers, their organisations, and especially Maharashtra Pakshimitra organisation for carrying this baton forward. This year, the gathering was held in Amravati, where BNHS participated actively and the BNHS President Mr Pravinsingh Pardeshi presided over the annual meet. BNHS would like its members to reflect on this initiative and attempt to replicate similar annual gatherings in their respective states.

I would also like to highlight another replicable initiative from Maharashtra – the Government of Maharashtra has been celebrating 'Bird Week' from November 5–12. Launched in 2020, Bird Week commemorates the birth anniversaries of two renowned ornithologists: Shri Maruti Chitampalli (November 5), an esteemed naturalist, Marathi writer, and retired forest officer; and the late Dr Sálím Ali (November 12), who pioneered comprehensive bird surveys and bird conservation in India. The eight-day event honours their immense contributions to Indian ornithology. BNHS staff organised several activities during Bird Week, including workshops, quiz competitions, and seminars. In Bihar, a public display of old postal stamps collected by BNHS member Mr Rahul Rohistwa from Bhagalpur was organised to mark the remembrance of the 'Birdman' Dr. Sálím Ali. Can such celebrations be organised in your states too to drive the mission of bird conservation?

A recently published report on the Egyptian vulture by the Wildlife Institute of India sparked discussions on social media regarding whether the species is resident or migratory in India. I request you to join hands with us in disseminating credible information generated by BNHS among the public through print, electronic and social media. In such cases, you can seek information directly from BNHS and share it through appropriate communication channels. I truly appreciate the efforts of BNHS staff members who have begun writing articles in regional media to disseminate such knowledge – like the recent article by Dr S. Sivakumar, which appeared in a Tamil Nadu daily.

On the international front, BNHS attended the 12th Meeting of the Parties (MoP) of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway (EAAF) Partnership in Cebu (Philippines), held from November 8–14, 2025 and organised by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) of the Philippines in collaboration with the EAAFP Secretariat. Dr P. Sathiyaselvem, who heads the BNHS Central Asian Flyway (CAF) programme, and I attended the MoP. Dr Sathiyaselvem presented BNHS's experiences from the CAF, while I raised specific concerns regarding hunting of migratory species along flyways passing through other countries and the overall illegal trade in birds. We also learnt about best practices implemented in the EAAF that can be adopted in the CAF.

The legacy of BNHS attracts support from all walks of life, including celebrities. The social enterprise Dolce Vee, an online platform for pre-loved fashion, recently raised ₹1,29,432 through a

'celebrity charity closet sale' (featuring Alia Bhatt's 'closet favourites'). The proceeds have been directed to activities of the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre at Point Calimere. I have always advocated citizen-science initiatives and information sharing, which make a significant contribution to conservation. I also extend thanks to the Head of Forest Force (HoFF) of Punjab, Mr Dharminder Singh, for informing me of the wonderful news that the first batch of about 1,500 Bar-headed Geese has arrived at Phangota Valley in Pathankot.

To support such excellent fieldwork and record conservation achievements efficiently, we must also strengthen our internal systems. The Governing Council has improved the Human Resources Department by making it fully digitised, enabling online monitoring of staff attendance and fieldwork. Very soon, financial disbursements to staff will also be provided through an online portal. This is expected to greatly improve performance and enhance donor satisfaction by enabling timely provision of utilisation certificates.

We are set to once again release our captive-bred vultures into the wild in Maharashtra and Assam and will update you on their progress next month. Meanwhile, the Eurasian griffon once rescued and treated at the BNHS Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre in Kerwa, Bhopal, run by Van Vihar National Park, has returned to the skies with extraordinary strength after completing a 15,000 km journey from India to Kazakhstan and back. This stands as proof of the success of rescue, rehabilitation and release – and of the resilience of species when given a second chance.

Bird conservation is impossible without the participation and support of local communities. I would like to commend the annual meeting of Sarus Mitras (Friends of Sarus Cranes) held in Gondia, Maharashtra, jointly organised by BNHS, local NGOs and the Forest Department of Maharashtra. A total of 42 Sarus Mitras, along with 109 students, farmers and frontline forest staff participated. As you know, BNHS research projects are also driving on-ground action. Ujani, designated as an Important Bird Area (IBA) in Maharashtra, is witnessing strong community support for its wetland eco-restoration project. The Fisheries Department acted against illegal catfish farming in the Ujani Wetland and seized 2.5 tonnes of the banned African mangur catfish *Clarias gariepinus*, an Invasive Alien Species (IAS), which poses a severe threat to Ujani's native aquatic biodiversity.

Finally, I encourage you to read the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>) for inspiring stories from the field. Please feel free to contribute articles in any language. We also encourage academic institutions to subscribe to JBNHS (<https://bnhsjournal.in/index.php/bnhs/ga>), one of India's oldest scientific journals, which will also help them earn NAAC accreditation credits.

If you have not yet completed the Yearbook form for Life Members, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/12gPTSyTs9P2khue7>

For assistance, feel free to reach out: Central Marketing: cmd@bnhs.org; Membership: membership@bnhs.org;

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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

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