

## FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

I hope you have read the encouraging news that the Government has decided to declare the DPS Lake in Navi Mumbai a Conservation Reserve. This welcome development was announced during the State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) meeting held on April 17, 2025, at Mantralaya, Mumbai. During the meeting, I raised the issue of the Delhi Public School Lake – commonly known as DPS Lake – and formally requested the SBWL to grant it Conservation Reserve status.

Our sincere thanks go to the Hon'ble Forest Minister, Mr Ganesh Naik, who supported this request and highlighted how miscreants had obstructed the sea water inflow into the lake. This blockage has led to a significant decline in the number of lesser flamingos and other waders visiting the site. In response, the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Maharashtra approved the proposal and instructed the necessary actions to be taken.

I would like to thank all BNHS members in Navi Mumbai and the local NGOs who have long championed the cause of our avian friends. Their tireless efforts have given Navi Mumbai its identity as the 'Pink City' for its flamingos. We also extend our gratitude to the Forest Department and the Mangrove Cell of Maharashtra for their continued support throughout this journey.

BNHS has been conducting scientific studies of Thane Creek and its surrounding high-tide roosting sites since 2011, under the Terms of Reference (ToR) granted by CIDCO for the NMIA project. These bird ringing and telemetry studies have confirmed that Thane Creek hosts over 250,000 migratory and resident birds each season since 2015. So far, BNHS has ringed 29,877 birds across various species and has resighted or recaptured 4,252 individuals from regions as far as the Middle East, Central Asia, Siberia, Russia, and China.

Nutrient-rich mudflats such as those at Mahul-Sewri, Thane Creek, the wetlands of Navi Mumbai, and intertidal zones in Mumbai provide vital feeding grounds for these migratory birds. Our research shows that during high tide, large numbers of birds seek refuge in nearby water bodies like DPS Lake, TS Chanakya Wetland, NRI Complex Wetland, Panje Wetland, and others, using them as roosting sites.

In 2011, there were approximately ten such high-tide roosts across Raigad and Navi Mumbai. Today, only half remain available to support migratory bird populations. These wetlands not only play a critical ecological role, but are also vital for the flight safety of the upcoming Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA). Following the tragic death of 39 lesser flamingos in Ghatkopar last year due to an aircraft collision, the Government has shown increased commitment to protecting these habitats. This recent decision is a clear sign of that resolve.

I encourage all BNHS members and our NGO partners to write letters of appreciation to the Hon'ble Chief Minister and Forest Minister. If you organise any public events related to this cause, please share photographs for inclusion in the BNHS newsletter.

On another note, 16 out of 25 white-rumped vultures raised at the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) in Pinjore, Haryana, have been successfully soaring high since their release on December 17, 2024. This is a promising sign that vultures bred in captivity can adapt and thrive in the wild. Meanwhile, the Forest Department of Madhya Pradesh released six vultures using a 'hard release' method, contrary to established protocols, again demonstrating its ineffectiveness.

This month, 34 vultures have been relocated from JCBC Pinjore to various Tiger Reserves in Maharashtra: 15 long-billed vultures (LBV) to Melghat, 9 white-rumped vultures (WRV) and 5 LBVs to Pench, and 5 LBVs to Tadoba-Andhari. Field Directors, Deputy Conservators of Forests, and staff at these reserves are doing commendable work to care for these birds, especially amid the scorching summer temperatures in central India.

Following the unfortunate electrocution death of a sarus crane in Gondia district last month, the district administration has initiated sensitivity mapping to develop mitigation strategies. We hope our BNHS scientists will complete this task soon.

This month, we were pleased to welcome Mr Vinayagan Dharmarajah, Regional Director of BirdLife Asia, who visited our projects in Rajasthan and appreciated our collaborative efforts with the Forest Department.

Thank you for the enthusiastic response to our launch of commemorative merchandise – a coffee mug, water bottle, and cloth bag featuring the great pied hornbill, inspired by our beloved former resident 'William'. We also express our gratitude to the Archaeology Department of the Government of Maharashtra for sanctioning Rs 39 lakh in support of our museum specimens.

As we celebrate the Diamond Jubilee year of Hornbill House, I invite you to encourage more nature lovers and institutions to join the BNHS family. We have launched a special membership campaign with tailored offers for other organizations and corporate partners.

Do explore the 'Systema naturae' section in the latest issue of Hornbill magazine and consider contributing your observations to the BNHS 150-Year Omnibus Collection.

Lastly, if you have not yet completed the online form for the Life Members' Yearbook, please do so here: <https://forms.gle/12gPTSYTs9P2khueZ>.

For any assistance, please contact the following:

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For event reservations and submissions, please send your content and photos to Mr Gopi Naidu at [g.naidu@bnhs.org](mailto:g.naidu@bnhs.org).

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

Kishor Rithe

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