

FROM THE DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

If you happen to travel to the southern part of India, do visit the BNHS Bird Migration Centre at Kodiakkarai, also called Point Calimere. I was birding in this coastal village when I noticed a woman carrying a heavy pot of water on her head. Dr S. Balachandran, a retired scientist of BNHS who has spent three decades of his life here, told me that the lady had been fetching water for a salt company ever since he remembers. The company has now laid a pipeline for drinking water, but the lady wants to continue this ritual, as her late husband did the same, for sentimental reasons. The company respects her sentiments and continues to pay her a monthly remuneration for this task.

Like this old lady, millions of birders in India follow a selfless ritual of birding and sharing their observations with BNHS or e-platforms. I am, therefore, happy to share with you that this year our team in the south is determined to organize several workshops on Bird Migration Study at our Bird Migration Study Centre at Point Calimere in Tamil Nadu. I have witnessed the enthusiasm and response of the participants of the first two workshops in mid-October and I am hopeful that many of you would enrol yourselves for the upcoming workshops in December 2023 and January 2024. The number of shore birds have increased since the second workshop! If interested, do write to Dr Ramesh Kumar (r.selvaraj@bnhs.org) or Mr Sivakumar (s.swaminathan@bnhs.org) for details.

BNHS is a membership-based organisation and your President and Governing Council insist that our members participate in generating actions on the ground. I am happy to share that our member Mr Hariharan Iyer and Ms Arati Singh from Thane, along with other members, arranged a meeting with the Thane Municipal Commissioner to discuss the possibility of starting a nature education programme in the Thane Municipal Corporation schools. We encourage members from other parts of the country to approach us and share ideas to address conservation concerns in your region through collective action.

We are thankful to the Nagpur bench of Mumbai High Court for entrusting the BNHS to study Sarus Crane in the wetlands of eastern Vidarbha. We have set up a field station in Gondia district and have deployed our team to study the bird. Our scientist Dr P. Sathiyaselvem and I have visited the project site and met forest officers, local NGOs, and villagers. We were lucky to see a pair of Sarus Crane at Zilmili lake during this visit.

You will be happy to learn that BNHS has signed an agreement with the Maharashtra Forest Department's Chandrapur Forest Academy to conduct 12 courses in the next two years.

Besides continuing the successful Vulture breeding programme, your Society has now started focusing on releasing the captive-bred birds into their natural habitat. A special team has been deployed at Nagpur that will work with the Forest Department of Maharashtra to release the vultures in Pench, Melghat, and Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve. Our long-time partner Royal Society for Protection of Birds (RSPB) visited Pench to discuss the way ahead of our Vulture Conservation

Programme in India. BNHS scientists have shared their research outcome in the Flyway Action Plan and Vulture Action Plan meetings held in New Delhi two weeks ago.

Recently, a white-tailed tropicbird specimen recovered from Sindhudurg on the request of Dy. CF, Sindhudurg has been preserved and kept at the Natural History Collection at Hornbill House with the permission of CWLW Maharashtra. The BNHS Collection Department has been a centre of attraction for many institutions. We have had several young IFS officers, as well as Range Forest Officers, visit the Collection to understand its significance, in the recent past. However, the Collection require an appropriate climate control system and other facilities to preserve them for posterity. We are immensely grateful for the funds made available by the JSW Foundation for the renovation of the BNHS Natural History Collection.

At times, I am pleasantly surprised by the visit of young and old members that come to Hornbill House or meet me. Dr Divyabhanusingh Chavda from Gujarat was here a few days ago; he enquired about the well-being of the organization and discussed the way ahead. A young boy came all the way from Hyderabad with his father to visit Hornbill House, and he was not a member!

By the time you read this letter, our research staff will be preparing to attend the Annual Research Seminar (ARS) after a gap of three years. Research is at the heart of BNHS, such gatherings will certainly help to enhance our research quality and outreach.



Kishor Rithe
Director
Bombay Natural History Society

1ST NOVEMBER 2023.