



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



MAY, 2025

CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Members,

On May 31, 2025, India lost one of its fiercest tiger conservationists, Mr Valmik Thapar, a BNHS Life Member and former Chairman of the BNHS Conservation Committee. His passing is a significant blow to wildlife and tiger conservation in India. Mr Thapar supported numerous NGOs and conservationists and consistently raised his voice for the voiceless creatures.

Just two days earlier, we had lost a young green warrior – Radheshyam Bishnoi – in a tragic road accident in the Thar Desert. He was returning from an anti-poaching operation when the accident occurred. Radheshyam was a messiah for the wildlife of the Thar, and his untimely demise is a great loss not just to his family, but to the entire ecosystem he so passionately protected.

We recently also bid farewell to former BNHS Executive Committee member Mr Sunjoy Monga. I remember his visit to our office in 2024, which gave me hope that he had recovered from his illness and would soon return to the field. He had promised to return to discuss a few ideas at BNHS.

We will forever remember and honour the remarkable contributions of Mr Valmik Thapar, Mr Radheshyam Bishnoi, and Mr Sunjoy Monga by continuing their mission through the dedication of our members.

At Hornbill House, the energy remains high with enthusiastic young interns eager to learn tools and strategies needed to make our planet biodiversity rich and climate resilient. Whenever time permits, I enjoy engaging with them, sharing stories to ignite their curiosity about ornithology and wildlife conservation. Our staff at Hornbill House ensure that these young minds are well cared for and make the most of their valuable time here.

Our Membership Department has become more efficient and attentive to members across all states. However, there is still room for improvement. Recently, an elderly visitor, who had served as an IBCN state coordinator, visited Hornbill House and expressed his disappointment over not receiving any communication from the Society. Initially, I was disheartened, assuming it reflected a flaw in our system. However, upon investigation, our Membership Officer discovered that he was not a member of BNHS. Understandably, he was not included in our communication systems or WhatsApp groups. I encouraged him to renew his membership and gifted him a book as a token of appreciation. I urge all of you to encourage others to become BNHS members so we can strengthen our collective efforts.

I am thrilled to share that the vultures we released in December 2024 at Pinjore, Haryana, are thriving, despite initial setbacks with a few fatalities caused by electrocution. Another group of 34 vultures relocated to Melghat, Pench, and Tadoba in Maharashtra are also healthy, adapting well to their new environment, and learning to fly and feed independently.

I also invite you to explore the *Systema naturae* section in the latest issue of *Hornbill* magazine and contribute your observations to the BNHS 150-Year Omnibus Collection.

If you have not yet completed the online form for the Yearbook for Life Members, please do so here:

<https://forms.gle/12gPTSYTs9P2khue7>

For assistance, you can contact:

Central Marketing: cmd@bnhs.org

Membership: membership@bnhs.org

Programmes: programmes@bnhs.org

Conservation Education Centre: cec-mumbai@bnhs.org

For event reservations and content submissions, feel free to reach out via email, and remember to send event photos and write-ups to Mr Gopi Naidu at g.naidu@bnhs.org.

Thank you for staying connected with us. For any questions or suggestions, I am always available at director@bnhs.org.

Kishor Rithe

Director

Bombay Natural History Society

BNHS, Indian Army, ICICI Foundation, and Local Communities Unite to Conserve Great Indian Bustard Habitat in Pokhran

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), in collaboration with the Indian Army, ICICI Foundation and the local communities, has launched a major habitat restoration project to protect the endangered great Indian bustard and associated wildlife in the Pokhran region of Rajasthan.

The Thar Desert, especially Jaisalmer, faces acute water scarcity. The region heavily relies on artificial water bodies – locally known as *nadis* and *khadins* – which store monsoon rainwater and serve as lifelines for both humans and wildlife. These essential lifelines, however, suffer from siltation due to summer heat and sandstorms, diminishing their effectiveness for humans and wildlife alike.

The Thar's unique mix of grasslands, fallow lands, and sand dunes supports diverse flora and fauna, but is increasingly threatened

by the invasive *Prosopis juliflora*. This dense, thorny plant disrupts the ecosystem, making native animals like the chinkara more vulnerable to predators and crowding out the open habitats vital for the great Indian bustard.

To address this, BNHS has undertaken restoration of around 1,000 hectares near the Pokhran Field Firing Range (PFFR), positively impacting nine villages. The ICICI Foundation supported the effort with over 6,000 hours of heavy machinery work to remove *Prosopis* and rejuvenate critical water bodies.

The results have been transformative – improving grazing resources for cattle, securing water for wildlife, and restoring open landscapes essential for bird movement and survival. The Indian Army has also benefited from enhanced visibility for monitoring and patrols. ■



Before-and-after photographs illustrate the remarkable transformation of both habitat and water bodies as a result of these interventions

BNHS Partners with ICMR on Bird-Human Disease Surveillance Project

BNHS has partnered with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) on a pioneering three-year project focused on developing a surveillance model aimed at detecting potential zoonotic disease. This initiative – rooted in the One Health framework – aims to monitor potential disease spillovers arising from increased interaction between humans and wild birds.

The project, involving multiple institutions, will focus on the collection, analysis, and genomic study of samples from free-ranging birds, humans, and the environment. As part of the programme, a one-day hands-on training was conducted on May 2, 2025, by the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, for BNHS staff. The session was attended by seven scientists and researchers.

Led by Dr Shailesh Pawar and his team, the session included live demonstrations on the safe and effective collection of tracheal and cloacal swabs, blood samples, and serum extraction. The



participants were introduced to the instruments used for sample processing and storage.

Special emphasis was placed on maintaining the cold chain for sample storage and transport, ensuring data integrity for genomic analysis. Safety protocols and best practices for field collection were also rigorously covered. ■

National Meeting Strengthens Waterbird and Wetland Conservation Efforts Across India

The Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) India Coordinators' Meeting was successfully held on May 10–11, 2025, at Hotel Maurya, Patna. This significant national-level event convened 69 participants from 12 states – including forest officers, AWC state coordinators, researchers, wetland experts, and civil society representatives – to evaluate the implementation of the AWC and strengthen collaborative strategies for wetland and waterbird monitoring.

The meeting was jointly organized by the Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of Bihar, the BNHS, and Wetlands International South Asia (WISA). Dr Sunil Kumar, Hon'ble Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of Bihar, attended as the Chief Guest.

As part of the global International Waterbird Census (IWC), the AWC serves as a critical tool for assessing wetland health and informing India's commitments under the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The meeting provided a platform for stakeholders to share regional experiences, assess challenges, and develop strategies to expand and enhance the AWC's reach and utility.

A highlight of the event was Bihar's exemplary model for AWC implementation. Since 2022, the state has conducted



synchronized, state-wide waterbird surveys during both pre- and post-migration periods, setting a benchmark for data collection that aligns with international standards.

The meeting concluded with strategic recommendations aimed at strengthening national and state-level implementation of the AWC, emphasizing data integration, stakeholder coordination, and long-term sustainability.

A parallel session focused on Bihar's State Action Plan, where District Forest Officers (DFOs) and AWC coordinators shared insights from fieldwork. Discussions centred on integrating AWC data into state planning frameworks, building grassroots capacity, and establishing long-term institutional support for wetland conservation. ■

Vulture Tagging Initiative in Chhattisgarh

A BNHS team from VCBC Assam conducted a tagging operation at Bijapur, Chhattisgarh. The effort was led by Mr Sachin Ranade, with support from Mr Basanta Rabha and Mr Pradip Rabha. The activity was hosted by Indravati Tiger Reserve under the leadership of Mr Sundeep Balaga, IFS, Deputy Director, Indravati Tiger Reserve.

Two vultures – an Indian Vulture (Ring A36) and a white-rumped vulture (Ring A37) – were successfully tagged with GSM transmitters and released in the wild in the presence of local officials. The birds are currently being tracked as they frequent the Sundar Nagar Range of Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. Mr Suraj Nair, biologist at ITR, is monitoring their movements and overall wellbeing.

The Regional Meteorological Centre, Guwahati, has committed to providing an Automatic Weather Station to VCBC Assam. This station will offer critical real-time data – such as temperature, humidity, and wind speed – at no cost, further aiding scientific monitoring and habitat management efforts. ■



Sensitivity Mapping for Sarus Crane Conservation in Gondia



From May 11 to 13, Dr Sujit Narwade and his team conducted a sensitivity mapping exercise in Maharashtra's Gondia district to identify critical habitats for the vulnerable sarus crane. The effort focused on mapping foraging grounds and nesting sites to inform conservation zones and land-use planning aimed at minimizing human disturbances.

Surveys of both active and historical nesting sites were complemented by community outreach to raise awareness of the crane's ecological significance. The BNHS team also met with Mr Prajit Nair, the District Collector, to discuss mitigation strategies for threats such as habitat degradation and collisions with power lines. The meeting reinforced the need for coordinated efforts among government bodies, NGOs, and local communities. ■

Exploring Wetland Grasslands: Vital Habitats for Colonial Ground-Nesting Birds

From May 4 to 6, a BNHS team surveyed heronries and ground-nesting bird habitats at Ankasamudra and the Tungabhadra Dam backwaters in Karnataka. Ankasamudra supports tree-nesting waterbirds, like the painted stork and grey heron, while the exposed wetland grasslands along the Tungabhadra backwaters provide critical breeding grounds for ground-nesting species such as the small and Oriental pratincole, little tern, black-winged stilt, and blue-tailed bee-eater.

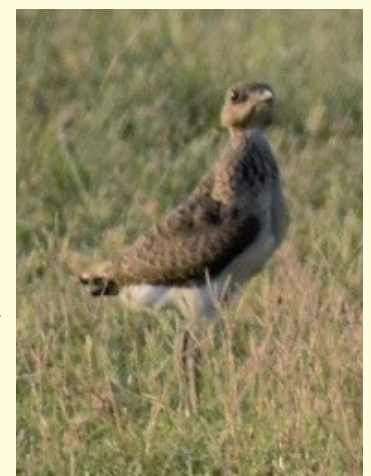
This initiative, a collaboration between BNHS and the local NGO GreenHBH, aims to integrate scientific research with community engagement and traditional ecological knowledge. By fostering local partnerships and raising awareness, the project seeks to ensure the continued survival of the region's rich avian biodiversity for future generations.

The survey is part of a broader goal to establish a year-round bird monitoring programme focussed on both migratory and resident ground-nesting species. BNHS and GreenHBH plan to use

satellite tagging and bird ringing to study migration patterns and nesting behaviours.

During the visit, the teams engaged with the Forest and Animal Husbandry Departments and addressed recent threats to birdlife, including a Greater Flamingo electrocution incident. In response, GreenHBH installed bird diverters to prevent future accidents. Community-based conservation strategies were discussed with the Taluka Panchayat Office.

A highlight of the visit was meeting Mr Bobby Vallabhchandra, a conservationist and descendant of the Vijayanagara royal family, whose commitment to wildlife deeply inspired the team. ■



Strengthening Bengal Florican Conservation in Assam



In May 2025, the BNHS Assam team participated in a Bengal Florican population survey at the Koklabari Agricultural Farm near Manas National Park. Conducted in collaboration with the Manas Maozigendri Ecotourism Society (MMES) and the Assam Forest Department, the survey recorded 21 Bengal floricans – including one female – the highest count this season.

Deputy Field Director of Manas National Park, Mr S. Reddy, joined local community members, students, and conservationists during the exercise. As part of the outreach efforts, Mr Arindam

Sinha, Senior Project Fellow at BNHS, delivered an educational session at Koklabari College, engaging students in discussions about Bengal Florican ecology and conservation efforts in the Brahmaputra floodplains. A complementary community survey in fringe villages gathered insights on local perceptions and attitudes towards the species.

This initiative reflects BNHS's broader strategy of integrating scientific research with community-based conservation to protect threatened grassland species. ■

BNHS Participates in Sambhar Lake Conservation Workshop

On May 7, 2025, a BNHS team comprising Dr Neelkanth Bora, Mr Sachin Bishnoi, Ms Sanchi Shrivastav, and Mr Rajesh Parmar participated in a workshop on Sambhar Lake held in Jaipur. Jointly organized by the Rajasthan Forest Department and the Wildlife Trust of India, the event addressed the recent avian mortality caused by a botulism outbreak.

Dr Bora, Programme Officer at BNHS, delivered a detailed presentation on the Biodiversity of Sambhar

Lake, highlighting the lake's role as a critical habitat for migratory birds and its broader ecological importance. The presentation emphasized the need for targeted conservation measures and proposed strategies to prevent future ecological disruptions. BNHS reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to biodiversity monitoring and conservation at Sambhar Lake and engaged in meaningful discussions with stakeholders from various organizations. ■



Training Workshop on Grassland Bird Conservation in Maharashtra



On May 9, 2025, BNHS conducted a training workshop at Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), Maharashtra, focused on grassland bird identification. Led by Dr Sujit Narwade, Mr Saurabh Dande, and Rushikesh Pawar of the Lesser Florican Project, the workshop aimed to enhance frontline forest staff's capabilities in identifying and monitoring grassland bird species, with a special focus on the Critically Endangered lesser florican *Sypheotides indicus*.

Prompted by a rare sighting of the species in May 2021, the session trained staff to recognise key species through visual and auditory cues, and highlighted the importance of systematic data collection and long-term monitoring. During the workshop, Mr Rundan Katkar, Range Forest Officer and a noted birdwatcher, led practical sessions on using field equipment, further enriching the training experience. The workshop is a step forward in strengthening conservation efforts for India's diminishing grassland habitats. ■

Birdwatching for Conservation: BNHS Workshop in Kihim Village, Maharashtra

The BNHS conducted a two-day workshop – May 10–11, 2025 – on 'Bird Identification and Basic Ornithology in the Context of Ecotourism' at Kihim Village, bringing together 19 enthusiastic participants. Ranging from local residents to students and amateur birdwatchers, attendees gained hands-on experience and theoretical knowledge to promote responsible and informed birdwatching.

Led by Programme Officer Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, the sessions explored identification techniques, migratory behaviour, and the use of digital platforms like eBird. Participants received resource material, including a regional bird brochure and the latest Buceros newsletter.

BNHS Director Mr Kishor Rithe interacted with the attendees, encouraging dialogue and deeper engagement with avian ecology. A 'Know Your Birds' quiz added an element of fun and reinforced learning.

The second day featured a field excursion to Kihim Beach, where participants applied their skills to observe and document species like Sand Plovers, Ruddy Turnstones, Gulls, and Terns. Project Assistant Mr Aditya



Karve provided essential logistical support, ensuring smooth coordination throughout the event.

The workshop concluded with strong participant feedback and an expressed desire to remain engaged in local conservation initiatives, emphasizing the value of community-based education in protecting India's rich birdlife. ■

BNHS-VCBC Team Advances Vulture Conservation Efforts in Assam with Strategic Meetings

As part of ongoing efforts to strengthen vulture conservation in Northeast India, Mr Sachin Ranade (Centre Manager, Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre - VCBC) and Mr Aniket Pawar (Biologist, VCBC) met with Dr C. Ramesh, IFS, Field Director of Manas National Park, at his office on May 26. The meeting focused on site-specific conservation strategies for vultures in and around the park. Discussions covered potential survey zones, awareness initiatives, and opportunities for collaboration. Dr Ramesh extended his full support for future conservation initiatives in the region.

On the same day, the team also held discussions with Shri Suman Mahapatra, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) of the Bodoland Territorial Council, in Kokrajhar. The focus of the meeting was to explore the role of the Bodo community and the BTC in advancing in-situ vulture conservation efforts across



the Bodoland Territorial Region. Shri Mahapatra welcomed the initiative and underscored the importance of active community involvement in conservation work. ■

Awareness Drives in Assam

The Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Assam, continued its outreach and conservation efforts throughout the month of May with awareness programmes across three districts – Kamrup, Sivasagar, and Biswanath.

Kamrup District: Ms Aneena and Mr Jayanta Kr Rabha organized two school outreach events: on May 3 at Loharghat MV School (130 students, 5 teachers), and on May 21 at Brahmaputra Valley English Academy, Bongra (160 students, 5 teachers). The programmes included presentations on vulture ecology and conservation, sparking engaging discussions on scientific topics such as bird-watching and butterfly gardening. Participating schools were provided with 'bird nests' to encourage the return of House Sparrows.

On May 27, 2025, Mr Jayanta Kumar Rabha (Office Assistant, VCBC) and Ms Aneena Lakshmanan (Biologist, VCBC) conducted a programme at Rani High School in Kamrup to highlight the critical role vultures play in the ecosystem, the factors contributing to their decline, and the conservation efforts being undertaken by the BNHS.

On May 29, 2025, two awareness programmes were held at Bartari Anchalik High School in Jiyakur and Rohini Kumar Chaudhary High School in Kukurmara to educate students about the ecological importance of vultures and the urgent need to protect these threatened birds.

Mr Jayanta Kumar Rabha and Ms Aneena Lakshmanan led the sessions with engaging presentations that



underscored the vital role vultures play in maintaining environmental balance and safeguarding public health. Their talks shed light on the severe threats facing vulture populations and emphasized the importance of conservation efforts. As part of the initiative, quiz competitions were organized, and prizes were awarded to the winners, adding an interactive element to the educational sessions.

Sivasagar District: On May 8 and 9, Mr SthitaPragyan Mallik and Mr Hemanta Buragohain conducted awareness sessions at Shakardey Jatiya Vidyalaya (40 students, 3 teachers) and Shyam Sundar Duwara High School (60 students, 4 teachers). These sessions focused on the ecological importance of vultures and the threats they face.

Biswanath District: On May 21, Mr Ghanashyam Gogoi and Mr Dhiraj Rabha conducted awareness sessions at Chatia Higher Secondary School (65 students and 4 teachers) and Bhaskarjyoti Adarsha Vidyapith (36 students and 5 teachers). The sessions featured presentations on vulture conservation, followed by an interactive quiz session. Winners were awarded vulture-themed T-shirts.

These programmes emphasized the need for awareness among diverse stakeholder groups and successfully fostered greater understanding and interest in vulture conservation among students and educators alike. ■

Seasonal Wetland Grasslands in Pench Tiger Reserve

As summer sets in, the receding backwaters of the Totladoh Dam in Pench Tiger Reserve reveal expansive stretches of wetland grassland, forming a vibrant seasonal ecosystem. These newly exposed habitats become vital breeding grounds for species like the small pratincole and little tern, which nest amid the lush, sun-drenched grasses. The area not only supports avian life but also offers habitat to a variety of grassland-associated wildlife, creating a dynamic landscape of ecological richness and natural beauty. A BNHS team will study the grassland birds in this area. This project is currently in its initial phase, and a recent site visit offered a valuable opportunity to gather insights to strengthen our project proposal. ■



Kaziranga Bird Survey and Aviary Site Visit with Experts



A special field visit to the northern bank of Kaziranga National Park took place on May 13, led by renowned ornithologist Dr Asad R. Rahmani and celebrated wildlife photographer Mr Dhritiman Mukherjee. The team conducted a bird count survey, recording an impressive 38 species in the area. The group also assessed the ongoing construction of a release aviary site in collaboration with members of the Turtle Survival Alliance (TSA) Foundation India, underscoring a shared commitment to integrated conservation efforts in the region. ■

BNHS Presents at International Conference on Sustainable Development and Conservation

Dr Sujit Narwade, Deputy Director of BNHS, served as a keynote speaker at the International Conference on Emerging Challenges in Sustainable Development and Environmental Conservation (ICECSDC 2025), held at Maharaja Ganga Singh University (MGSU) in Bikaner, Rajasthan, from May 25–27, 2025.

Dr Narwade introduced BNHS's innovative Bird Sensitivity Mapping Tool, explaining its role in conservation planning. The tool integrates ecological and spatial data to prioritize key areas for conservation, aiding scientists and policymakers in identifying habitats critical to avian species survival. His address highlighted how this approach can bridge the gap between science and policy, fostering data-driven conservation initiatives. ■



Building Capacities of Enforcement Agencies

The Wildlife Institute of India (WII) organized a two-week special course on Wildlife Protection, Law, and Forensic Science for officer trainees of the Indian Revenue Service (Customs and Indirect Taxes) from May 19 to 30, 2025, at its Dehradun campus. The programme aimed to sensitize IRS officers to India’s rich biodiversity and the challenges posed by illegal trade in wildlife and its derivatives. Participants were introduced to the legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms available in the country to combat wildlife crime and support biodiversity conservation.



Dr Rajat Bhargava, Assistant Director, BNHS, was invited as guest faculty to deliver a session titled Birds, People, and Laws. A total of 83 Group A officers from the 76th batch attended the course. During his talk, Dr Bhargava emphasized the conservation concerns surrounding endangered native and exotic bird species. He elaborated on the legal protections afforded to avifauna under Indian law and international agreements such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). His session also covered bird identification techniques, along with the challenges involved in the rescue and rehabilitation of seized birds. ■

Greater Flamingo Poster Released on Biodiversity Day

On May 22, 2025 – International Day for Biological Diversity – BNHS launched an educational poster titled ‘Meet the Greater Flamingo: A Wader of Wetlands’. This vibrant and engaging visual highlights the behaviour, beauty, and ecological importance of one of India’s most iconic wetland birds. The release aims to raise awareness about the fragility of wetland ecosystems and inspire collective action for the conservation of flamingos and their habitats. ■

BNHS Promotes Eco-Conscious Living Through Art

In a creative blend of ecology and art, the Conservation Education Centre (CEC) of BNHS at Mumbai hosted a hands-on Eco-Dyeing Workshop for members and nature enthusiasts on May 18, 2025. The workshop, led by Ms Aqsa Majgaonkar (Senior Education Officer) and Mr Dilip Giri (Field Assistant), introduced participants to the sustainable art of dyeing fabric using natural plant material such as leaves, flowers, and seeds.

Held on a sunny Sunday, the session encouraged participants of all ages to engage with nature. Participants learned to extract colours from leaves, flowers and other plant material and create unique, eco-dyed fabric pieces. The workshop not only promoted sustainable living, but also provided an enriching experience that deepened participants’ appreciation for the beauty and utility of plants in everyday life. ■



Marine Walk at Carter Road, Mumbai



The BNHS Programmes Department recently organized an engaging Marine Walk along the iconic Carter Road promenade in Bandra on May 18, 2025, aiming to shed light on the rich but often-overlooked marine biodiversity within Mumbai's intertidal zones.

Part of BNHS's ongoing initiative to foster a deeper connection between citizens and nature, the walk offered participants a rare glimpse into the thriving ecosystems that line the city's coastline. Guided by marine experts, attendees explored tidal pools and rocky shores, discovering a variety of fascinating marine organisms such as gastropods, squid egg cases, crabs, and delicate sea anemones.

Far from being just a nature excursion, the event underscored the vulnerability of marine ecosystems and the pressing need for their conservation. Participants walked away with a heightened awareness of coastal biodiversity and a renewed commitment to environmental stewardship.

The programme also served as a valuable learning opportunity for on-the-job training (OJT) Sheetal Singh from Mumbai University, along with Shruti Dhanalkot and Shriya Vaghela from Sophia College, who assisted in conducting the walk and engaged with participants throughout the session. ■

Flamingo Season Ends with Inspiring Walk in Navi Mumbai

The BNHS successfully concluded its final Flamingo Walk of the season on May 25, 2025 at the wetlands behind TS Chanakya Maritime Institute. Despite unexpected showers, the event saw a good turnout and rich sightings, with over 200 lesser flamingos and a few greater flamingos delighting participants. The walk commenced near the service road and continued around the pond, offering close views of both migratory and resident bird species. Among the notable sightings were scaly-breasted munias, little green herons, painted storks, grebes, and cormorants.

The event also provided valuable on-the-job training (OJT) experience for student volunteers Sheetal Singh (Mumbai University) and Shruti Dhanalkot (Sophia College), who supported the BNHS Programmes Department during the walk.

Beyond birdwatching, the session served as a platform to discuss the vital role of wetlands in sustaining biodiversity and the



pressing need to conserve such ecosystems, especially in urban landscapes. The event reinforced BNHS's mission of connecting people with nature and inspiring grassroots conservation action. This concluding walk of the season was not only a celebration of avian wonders, but also a meaningful reminder of our collective responsibility to protect and cherish the natural world. ■



May Bird Count at SGNP and Tungareshwar

In a successful citizen science effort, over 45 enthusiastic volunteers came together for the May Bird Count at Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) and Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. Their observations resulted in the documentation of 66 bird species across both locations. A highlight of the count was the sighting of the Indian Pitta *Pitta brachyura*, a passage migrant, along the Tulsi Dam to Kanheri Gate transect.

Initiatives like this not only foster community involvement but also contribute valuable data for bird conservation and habitat monitoring.

Interested in joining the next count? Visit www.bnhs.org or email programmes@bnhs.org for more details. ■

REMEMBRANCE

This month, India lost three of its most dedicated environmentalists – individuals whose unwavering commitment to conservation inspired many and left an indelible mark on the natural world. They were fierce, compassionate, and resilient in their efforts to protect our planet. With their passing, the animal kingdom has lost some of its greatest allies, and the conservation movement some of its brightest guiding lights.



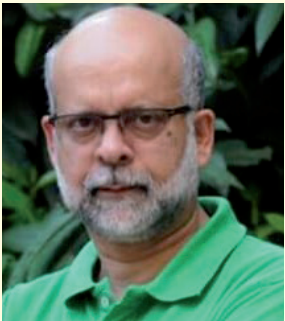
Radheshyam Pemani Bishnoi

Radheshyam Pemani Bishnoi, a dedicated wildlife conservationist and animal rescuer from Rajasthan's Jaisalmer district, tragically lost his life in a road accident on May 23, along with three others, while pursuing a tip-off about deer poaching. His untimely death is a profound loss for India's conservation community.

Born into the Bishnoi community – renowned for its deep-rooted reverence for nature – Radheshyam began rescuing injured animals as a child. He later trained at the Jodhpur Rescue Centre, learning basic veterinary care and wildlife rescue techniques that would shape his life's mission.

Radheshyam was instrumental in protecting the endangered Great Indian Bustard (GIB), patrolling habitats, monitoring threats such as power lines and railway tracks, and leading a network of local volunteers through the Ecology, Rural Development and Sustainability (ERDS) Foundation. He strongly advocated for underground power lines to reduce bird collisions – one of the leading causes of GIB mortality. His anti-poaching efforts were equally impactful. He frequently provided critical intelligence that led to arrests and the filing of multiple FIRs against wildlife offenders. He was honoured with the Sanctuary Wildlife Service Award in 2021 and later named a Mud on Boots Project Leader by Sanctuary Asia, for his conservation work.

Radheshyam dreamed of establishing a full-scale wildlife rescue centre in Jaisalmer and firmly believed in community-led conservation. "Only locals can truly protect their land and wildlife," he often said. His legacy will endure in every life he saved and every heart he inspired. ■



Sunjoy Monga

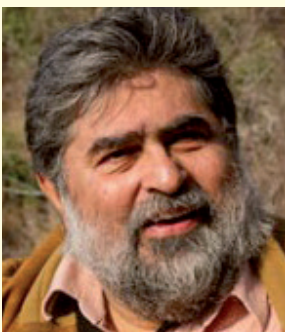
Veteran naturalist and Mumbai's beloved 'BirdMan,' Sunjoy Monga, passed away on May 28 after a long battle with cancer. A passionate advocate for wetland protection and urban biodiversity, his passing has left a deep void in the conservation community. Sunjoy dedicated his life to educating and engaging people, especially young minds, in environmental stewardship.

He was best known for conceptualising and organising Mumbai's first bird race in 2005, an initiative that has since grown into a nationwide movement, Wings – Birds of India, now held in 33 cities across the country. Inspired by the Hong Kong bird race, Monga encouraged birdwatchers to dedicate 12 hours to spotting as many avian species as possible. During the inaugural race, over 100 participants recorded 277 species in and around Mumbai.

One of Monga's favourite birding haunts was Sanjay Gandhi National Park, which he fondly referred to as his 'City Forest'. He championed its preservation and served as its Honorary Warden. In 2006–07, he was among the first to raise the alarm over the destruction of 85% of Uran's wetlands, warning that continued neglect could drive flamingos and other wildlife away from the coast forever.

Monga served on the Governing Council of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and was a valued member of several state environmental bodies, including the MMRDA's Environment Improvement Society and the Maharashtra Nature Park Society.

Sunjoy Monga will be remembered for instilling a deep love for birds and biodiversity in countless hearts. ■



Valmik Thapar

Conservationist, naturalist, and revered tiger chronicler Valmik Thapar passed away on May 31 after a courageous battle with cancer. A towering figure in Indian conservation, Thapar spent over four decades tirelessly championing the cause of the wild – especially the tiger.

Though he had no formal training in wildlife science, Thapar cultivated an extraordinary understanding of tiger behaviour simply by observing them in their natural habitat. His lifelong journey began in 1976 with a chance meeting with Fateh Singh Rathore, then director of the Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve. That encounter changed his life – and through his work, the fate of tigers. In 1988, he co-founded the Ranthambhore Foundation to promote community-based conservation. He advocated fiercely for stronger anti-poaching measures and the

long-term protection of tiger habitats.

Thapar served on over 150 government committees and panels, including the National Board for Wildlife and the Supreme Court's Central Empowered Committee. He was a member of the 2005 Tiger Task Force, formed after the alarming disappearance of tigers from Sariska. Though the official report promoted human-animal coexistence, Thapar issued a dissenting note, arguing that only exclusive, inviolate spaces could ensure the tiger's survival. Valmik Thapar's deep reverence for the tiger, paired with his fierce advocacy, reshaped India's conservation landscape. His books, documentaries, and public engagements made him a powerful voice for the voiceless. He leaves behind an unmatched legacy. ■

BNHS CEC Mumbai's Online-Hybrid Courses in Biodiversity & Wildlife Studies (2025–26)



The Bombay Natural History Society's Conservation Education Centre (CEC), Mumbai, one of the first environmental education centres in the city, is pleased to announce registrations for its Online-Hybrid Certificate Courses in Biodiversity and Wildlife Studies for the academic year 2025–26.

These courses are designed to offer a comprehensive blend of online theoretical learning and hands-on field experiences, making them accessible to nature enthusiasts, students, professionals, and wildlife lovers across India.

● **Let's learn, explore, and protect nature – together!**

Join us in building a community of informed and passionate conservationists.

Enroll Now



Courses Offered:

- Leadership Course in Biodiversity Conservation
- Basic Course in Ornithology (Birds)
- Basic Course in Herpetology (Reptiles & Amphibians)
- Basic Course in Botany
- Basic Course in Butterfly Studies

Why Join?

- Flexible Online Learning
- Field Training Sessions by Experts
- Open to Participants from Across India
- Learn from BNHS's 140+ years of expertise in conservation
- Ideal for students, educators, nature guides, corporate employees, and biodiversity enthusiasts



Download the Brochure: Click here

Register Here: <https://forms.gle/bWn3xczuCEVmhBsZ8>

Last Date to Register: Extended to June 15, 2025

For More Information:

Email: cec-mumbai@bnhs.org

Call: 9594953425 / 9594929107

BASIC COURSE IN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY AND BIRD MIGRATION STUDIES



Join us in learning the art and science of bird migration monitoring.
Be part of India's growing network of citizen scientists protecting migratory birds across
the Central Asian Flyway. Enroll Now:

BNHS's Basic Course in Field Ornithology and Bird Migration Studies (Oct 2025 – Jan 2026)

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) is pleased to announce six batches of its Basic Course in Field Ornithology and Bird Migration Studies, to be held between October 2025 and January 2026 at the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, located in Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu - a globally significant migratory hotspot.

About the Course: This specialized field-based course is designed to provide hands-on training in bird monitoring and migration studies, while fostering a network of birders and citizen scientists along the Central Asian Flyway.

Why Join?

- ❖ Field-based learning at one of India's most important migratory bird sites
- ❖ Practical sessions on bird identification, census techniques, and demonstration of bird ringing
- ❖ Classroom lectures on bird migration, monitoring tools, and data collection methods
- ❖ Focus on both shorebirds and migratory landbirds

Location: BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, Point Calimere (Kodiyakarai), Tamil Nadu

Located at the southeastern tip of India, Point Calimere is a biodiversity-rich site, home to:

Endangered shorebirds like the Great Knot. Near Threatened species including Eurasian Curlew, Bar-tailed Godwit, and Spot-billed Pelican, Spectacular Greater Flamingos, Eurasian Spoonbills, and large wader congregations. Rare sightings such as Sanderlings, Dunlins, Whimbrels, Pacific Golden Plovers, and more Migratory landbirds such as the Asian Brown Flycatcher, Indian Pitta, Paradise Flycatcher, Forest Wagtail, and leaf warblers. This rich diversity makes Point Calimere the perfect live classroom for bird migration studies.

Who Should Attend?

- Birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts
- Students of ecology, wildlife, or environmental science
- Aspiring ornithologists
- Researchers and conservation volunteers

Course Duration: Six batches from October 2025 to January 2026

Venue : BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre,
Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu

Field trips : Great Vedaranyam Swamp;
Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary;
Beach, Siruthalaikadu mudflats.

Registration Fee (per person): Rs. 5,000/- (for BNHS Members); Rs. 6,000/- (for non-Members)

Fee includes tent accommodation -Two person per tent; Facilities: cots, fan, charging points, pillow and blankets

Other expenses: Rs. 4,500/- (includes food, field visits, entry fee etc.);

Eligibility: No prior field experience is required – just a passion for birds and conservation.

Registration closes 7 days before start date of each batch

The payment details will be shared once the enquiry form is filled and confirmed the registration.

Resource Persons: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Mr Sivakumar S., Ms Parveen Shaikh, Mr Paul Antony B., Ms Rose Francis

For More information: Mr S. Sivakumar- s.swaminathan@bnhs.org; 94088 72745; Mr Paul Antony B.- p.antony@bnhs.org

Schedule for 2025-2026:

Batch I	October	17 - 19	Batch IV	December	19 - 21
Batch II	November	28 - 30	Batch V	January	9 - 11
Batch III	December	12 - 14	Batch VI	January	23 - 25

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Help us Preserve a Literary Treasure: Adopt a Rare Book

Introduction and Background

The BNHS Library holds a remarkable collection of rare books—treasures that house the wisdom of great thinkers from the past. These rare books are not just relics; they are a priceless heritage for humankind, preserving facts, ideas, and evidence on Natural History. These valuable resources are indispensable for present and future generations. Unfortunately, these literary gems face threats of deterioration due to climatic, physical, chemical, and biological factors. The loss of such irreplaceable materials would be devastating.

These rare books also contain crucial information about endangered flora and fauna, making them an important resource for students conducting research. The beautifully illustrated plates can be used for exhibitions in schools and colleges, and the wild stories in these books are excellent teaching aids for educators. By digitising these rare resources, we can make them more accessible for educational purposes and conservation awareness.

Why Your Support Matters

Preservation: Rare books are delicate and require expert conservation to prevent deterioration. Your donation will fund state-of-the-art techniques to preserve these literary treasures.

Accessibility: By adopting a rare book, you help make it accessible to scholars, students, and the public, ensuring its knowledge continues to inspire and educate.

Legacy: Your support ensures that these irreplaceable works will be preserved for future generations, keeping their historical and cultural significance alive.

How You Can Help

Adopt a Book: By contributing 1 lakh (for five years), you can adopt one of our rare books and support its preservation. Your donation will directly fund conservation efforts and ensure these books remain accessible for years to come.

Acknowledgement: Donors will receive an 80G tax-saving certificate, acknowledgement in our annual report, and recognition on the inner page of the book's front cover.

Books Available for Adoption

- 1. **Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds (Vol. I, II, & III) by Allan O. Hume (1889–1908)**
This invaluable work, authored by Allan Hume, a pioneer in Indian ornithology, is a rare gem, especially significant because the BNHS houses a unique collection of bird eggs.
- 2. **Indian Ducks & Their Allies by E.C. Stuart Baker (1908)**
This first publication of the BNHS features beautiful illustrations and holds great historical significance. It's essential to preserve this foundational book of our institution.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to make a meaningful impact.
For more information on how you can contribute to preserving these literary treasures,
please feel free to contact us at library@bnhs.org

Book Donations to the BNHS Library

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) warmly invites individuals and organizations to contribute to the enrichment of our Library through the donation of books and relevant literature. Your generosity plays a vital role in expanding our knowledge base and supporting our mission to promote the conservation of nature and natural resources.

Over the years, donations – from rare, historic volumes to the latest publications – have significantly enhanced our collection, all in alignment with the Vision and Mission of BNHS. We remain deeply grateful to all who have supported us in this endeavour.

To help us manage donations efficiently, we kindly request you to follow the guidelines:

Submission Guidelines:

If you are considering a donation, please email a list of the books or literature you wish to contribute to library@bnhs.org and director@bnhs.org.

Please Note:

- Donors will not receive goods or services in exchange for their contributions.
- All accepted books will be catalogued in the Library’s accession register at the earliest possible opportunity.
- Due to space and operational constraints, donated materials will be incorporated into the main Library and Archives and will not be housed in a separate collection.

We sincerely thank you for considering a donation to the BNHS Library. Your support makes a lasting difference.

For more information on the Donation Policy, please contact the Librarian at library@bnhs.org



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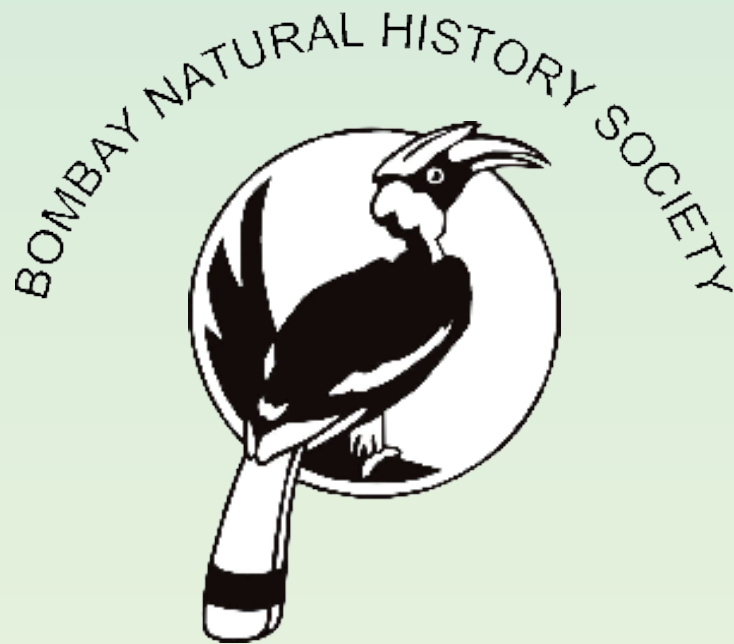
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BNHS MISSION

Vision: Premier independent scientific organization with a broad-based constituency, excelling in the conservation of threatened species and habitats.

Mission: Conservation of nature, primarily biological diversity, through action based on research, education and public awareness.

CONTACT US

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