



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



MAY, 2024

CONSERVATION NEWSLETTER

Dear Members,

We bring to you, our valuable members, the latest conservation newsletter of the BNHS, which is packed with updates from our field work, and the events we conduct for nature conservation.

This is our attempt to make sure you get to know about our work in real time, and that you are with us on our journey!

BNHS's Path-breaking Vulture Conservation Work Praised at the World Species Congress



The first-ever World Species Congress, hosted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums, took place on May 15, 2024, as a fully virtual 24-hour event encouraging commitments and actions towards species conservation. The Congress highlighted BNHS's pioneering work in

vulture conservation in India. It brought together government representatives, environmental agencies, conservationists, wildlife groups, and students to discuss species conservation issues and chart a "coordinated map of key actions" aimed at species recovery.

BNHS's years of successful conservation breeding of three of the most endangered vulture species, their successful release

programme, and research-based actions to make large countryside areas free from vulture-toxic veterinary drugs were showcased in a short film during the Congress. The film was well-received among conservationists and researchers.

In addition to raising more than 800 vultures at four conservation breeding centers in India, BNHS teams are currently engaged in conducting pharmacy surveys, carcass sampling, educating cattle owners, and sensitizing villagers about vulture nesting colonies and vulture food. They aim to keep vultures safe within a 100 km periphery of each release site, even beyond the tiger reserves in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Assam. BNHS is also raising funds to create 'Vulture Safe Zones' in these states and beyond. BNHS President Mr. Praveensingh Pardeshi and key scientists presented BNHS's vulture conservation work in the film. ■

Bhopal's Vulture Conservation Efforts Receive Praise

On May 17, 2024, Shri Mahip Gupta, IFS, PCCF Wildlife Maharashtra, along with Dr Prabhu Nath Shukla, IFS, Field Director of Pench Tiger Reserve, visited the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre in Bhopal. The VCBC Centre Head, Dr Samson Arockianathan, provided a detailed overview

of the centre's conservation efforts and facilities, highlighting the crucial role of the vulture breeding program and interstate collaboration in vulture conservation. The visit highlighted the importance of such centres in maintaining ecological balance. ■



Bhagalpur Bird Atlas: Unveiling the Wings of Diversity and Conservation



The development of the Bhagalpur Bird Atlas is an initiative by the Bird Ringing and Monitoring Station (BRMS) in Bhagalpur, a joint effort between the BNHS and the Department of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (DEF&CC), Government of Bihar. The project aims to document and compare the seasonal bird diversity in the city through systematic surveys and observations during both summer and winter.

This initiative is designed to establish a comprehensive database on the status of birds, their diversity, periods of occurrence, threats to birds and their habitats, and more in Bhagalpur. In addition to building the database, the Bhagalpur Bird Atlas aims to raise awareness about the importance of birds, their conservation, and habitat preservation among local communities. It also seeks to produce at least 100 active birdwatchers in the city within the next three years.

Mr Arvind Mishra, a Governing Council Member of BNHS, in Bhagalpur, is providing guidance for these local initiatives. Ms Shweta Kumari, IFS, Divisional Forest Officer, Bhagalpur, is leading the effort in mobilizing the required manpower and resources. ■



Wetlands get attention in meetings



Wetlands received significant attention in meetings this month, driven by court orders and the efforts of passionate officers. Tamil Nadu stands out as the only state in India with a State Bird Authority. At a recent meeting, the BNHS team, including Director Kishor Rithe, retired scientist Dr S. Balachandran, and Deputy Director Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, discussed various issues related to birds and their habitats in Tamil Nadu. Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu, Ms Supriya Sahu, IAS, and CWLW Mr Srinivasa Reddy, IFS, guided many actions in the state.

The BNHS wetland team attended a meeting led by the Collector

of Bhandara, highlighting urgent conservation work needed for the sarus crane in Vidarbha. The Wetland team has also submitted its recommendations on methods for removing invasive species and restoring wetlands in Maharashtra.

Additionally, Uttar Pradesh organized a 'State Bird of UP Sarus Crane Committee' meeting, which was attended by the Wetland team. The BNHS has proposed conservation measures for the sarus crane and tiger species in a letter submitted to the Uttar Pradesh State Government. These suggestions stem from discussions during the Committee meeting. ■

Tripura Forest Department visits Hornbill House



On Friday, May 28, 2024, 34 trainee Forest Officers from the Tripura Forest Department visited Hornbill House. Ms Neha Mujumdar, Scientist A, extended a warm welcome to the visiting officials. During their visit, the cadets explored the BNHS Natural History Collections. Neha provided valuable insights into BNHS's activities

and collections, guiding all the officials through the specimens. Mr Vithoba Hegde and Mr Shyam Jadhav provided assistance during the visit. The officials expressed that this was the first time they had visited such a wonderful collection of fauna specimens. ■

Animal Welfare Board passes speaking order on FRD issue

The Animal Welfare Board, in compliance with the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India order dated February 19, 2024, has issued a speaking order regarding the menace of free-ranging dogs (FRD) in wildlife habitats. BNHS, Conservation Action Trust, Nature Conservation Society, and Wildlife Conservation Trust jointly filed this petition in the Supreme Court, highlighting the issue of free-ranging dogs in and around key wildlife habitats in India. The Supreme Court had ordered the Animal Welfare Board to hear the petitioners and issue a speaking order. BNHS and its partner organizations appeared before the Animal Welfare Board last month.

The Animal Welfare Board has now issued a speaking order acknowledging the seriousness of this issue in wildlife habitats, but remains dependent on the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), the Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules 2023, and the guidelines issued by the Animal Welfare Board to address this serious issue.

BNHS and its partner organizations will now approach the Supreme Court with this speaking order to further argue whether the suggested mechanisms are effective in preventing wildlife deaths in wildlife habitats caused by free-ranging dogs. ■

Celebrating World Migratory Bird Day 2024 at Bhagalpur

On May 12, 2024, the Bird Ringing and Monitoring Station (BRMS) in Bhagalpur organised a school awareness programme at Gyan Vatika Vidyalaya in Naugachia, Bihar, on the eve of World Migratory Bird Day. The event aimed to educate and inspire the younger generation about the significance of bird migration and conservation.

The theme of the day, 'Protect Insects - Protect Birds', emphasized the intricate link between insect populations and bird health, highlighting the importance of preserving ecosystems that support

both. The BNHS team began the programme with an interactive session, engaging students in discussions about bird migration, the threats faced by migratory birds, and the role of students in wild bird conservation. Later, the students were taken for a nature walk at Ganga Prasad Lake to provide field experience in bird identification and behaviour observation. Local birders also joined the event to guide the students and make the walk more fruitful and exciting. A total of 37 students, four teachers, and three local birders participated in the event. ■



BNHS Leadership Course in Biodiversity 2023–24 – Concluding session

The concluding session of the BNHS Leadership Course in Biodiversity 2023–24 conducted on May 11 at the BNHS Conservation Education Centre in Goregaon included a nature trail by Ms Priyadarshini Supekar (Education Officer) and Mr Noah Telang (Intern), who explained the forest and its biodiversity. A presentation on marine life by Ms Fatema Hirkani (Assistant Conservation Officer) introduced participants to the wonders of intertidal and underwater creatures followed by hands-on experience in camera trapping. Ms Kiran Thumma (Education Officer) delivered a presentation on plant and animal interactions and taught participants how to identify flowers. All the 12 participants attending the session presented their project work and shared their learning experiences from the course, and expressed enthusiasm to join more BNHS courses and workshops. ■



Members explore unique and rare trees at Rani Baug in Mumbai

The tree walk at Rani Baug was a special opportunity for BNHS members to delve into the rich floral diversity of the garden. Seventeen members gathered at the iconic Baobab at the garden's entrance before embarking on a walk to observe trees. They discovered a variety of indigenous and exotic tree species, each with its own unique story, including the majestic Heaven Lotus Tree, Candle Tree, Pride of India Tree, Weeping Paperbark, Elephant Apple, and even the 'Chocolate' or Cacao Tree.

The Tree Walk was led by Dr Rajdeo Singh, Assistant Professor at St. Xavier's College, along with Prof. Manek Mistry, retired professor of St. Xavier's College, Sweedle Cerejo, Botanist and Educator, and Mr Asif Khan from the BNHS Programmes Department.

The BNHS Tree Walk series has been well received by our members, and we aim to reach more people through these nature walks in and around the city.

If you have suggestions for destinations for future tree walks write at programmes@bnhs.org. ■



Exploring Avian Diversity

BNHS hosted a two-day Bird Identification Workshop in Mumbai. The first day of the course began with an engaging presentation by Mr Asif Khan from the Programmes Department on the fundamentals of bird identification, including field tactics and equipment knowledge. He shared his extensive experience to provide participants with a solid understanding of bird identification theory.

Following the lecture, Mr Vithoba Hegde from the Collections Department expertly guided participants in a hands-on specimen study. He led them through an engaging historical investigation of bird research, drawing on his experience of over four decades. The BNHS members participating in the workshop had the opportunity to view well-chosen avian specimens housed at BNHS, which boasts an impressive collection of 29,000 birds under the direction of Mr Rahul Khot, Deputy Director.

On the second day, the BNHS members met at the underpass near the TS Chanakya Maritime Institute and walked to Karave Beach, skirting around the TS Chanakya pond. They recorded



around 25 species of birds, including 500 lesser flamingos. Other birds spotted by the members included the red avadavat, purple sunbird, pied myna, painted stork, and ashy prinia.

This concise beginners' workshop served as an introduction to the fascinating world of avifauna.

If you would like to join us for similar programmes write at programmes@bnhs.org ■

BNHS Records a New Bird During its Monthly SGNP Bird Count

On May 26, 2024, over 42 dedicated volunteers showcased their citizen science prowess during a bird count at SGNP and Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary. The day concluded with the team recording an impressive 83 bird species, highlighting the rich biodiversity of these areas. A new addition to the SGNP bird checklist was the white-bellied sea-eagle *Ichthyophaga leucogaster*, bringing the total number of recorded avian species in the region to 233, further enriching SGNP's ecological heritage.

The bird monitoring programme is supported by the staff of SGNP & Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, led by Director Mr G. Mallikarjuna (IFS – Chief Conservator of Forests) and Mr Sudhir Sonawale (Assistant Conservator of Forests, SGNP). With support from BNHS Director Mr Kishor Rithe, the count is coordinated by the CEC-Mumbai Team: Sumit Dhotre, Shardul Bajikar, Kiran Thumma, Priyadarshini Supekar, and Asif N. Khan from the BNHS Programmes Department.

The bird count is conducted monthly by the BNHS in collaboration with SGNP, and nature enthusiasts are welcome to participate. For more details, please visit www.bnhs.org. ■



Flamingo Deaths in Mumbai

In a tragic incident 39 flamingos died after a large flock was struck by a passenger aircraft over the Ghatkopar area while it was on its final approach for landing at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai at night on May 21. Upon learning about the incident, the BNHS informed Mr Rama Rao, Chief of the Mangrove Foundation, who promptly sent Mr Deepak Khade, Dy Conservator of Forests and an RFO and to the site. Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, emphasized the importance of protecting high tide roosting places along the Mumbai coast from any disturbance to prevent such incidents in the future. ■

Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, unveiled the Finn's Weaver poster



Dr Sonali Ghosh, the Field Director of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, unveiled the Finn's weaver poster in the company of sixty IFS probationers at Kaziranga

IFS Officers from Madhya Pradesh cadre visit VCBC Bhopal



Fifteen IFS officers from the Madhya Pradesh cadre visited the BNHS VCBC in Bhopal, where Dr Samson Arockianathan, Centre Manager, briefed them on the Centre's activities and objectives

International Museum Day



On International Museum Day (18 May) members of Anam Prem visited Hornbill House to appreciate the efforts of BNHS for preserving the specimen collection and museum. They met Mr Vithoba Hegde, Mr Rahul Khot, Dr Bharat Bhushan, Honorary Secretary, and Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, to greet them on this occasion

Dr Vidya Athreya visits Hornbill House



Dr Vidya Athreya, the Executive Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) India, recently visited Hornbill House to discuss a collaborative project. Dr Athreya has been associated with BNHS for a long time.

BNHS values working with other NGOs and maintaining strong collaborations with our partner organizations.

During her visit, she met with the Director and Honorary Secretary to explore potential collaborations.

'Of Feathers and Wings' released at Hornbill House



BNHS Life Member Ms Katie Bagli and Ms Zarin Virji authored their new pictorial book on 'Of Feathers and Wings', which was released at the Hornbill House on May 17, 2024. Katie has published more than 50 books so far and children also loved her books very much. This book has waded the interesting stories around 18 bird species. The foreword is written by Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS, and the beautiful illustrations are contributed by former BNHS staff Ms Sushmita Karmakar.

UPCOMING EVENTS



NATURALIST TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP

After the huge success of the first edition, the Conservation Education Center of the BNHS announces the second edition of the BNHS Naturalist Training and Leadership Training programmes.

This is unique opportunity for naturalists and nature enthusiasts to get acquainted with the different aspects of the Outdoors and the Wilderness. We hereby call upon the young minds to participate in the 'Naturalist Training Workshop' and get acquainted in the fields of natural history studies, field biology, geology, outdoor ethics etc. Spanning over two weekends through two over-night sessions, this workshop is bringing to you some of the well known names of natural history, conservation biology and outdoors to help you understand, imbibe and thereby better represent the cause of 'Conservation' to a much wider audience. The workshop will be a mix of field and classroom sessions and will be led by respected personalities from the various fields.

SESSION 1: 15TH – 16TH JUNE 2024
(SATURDAY – SUNDAY)

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SESSION 2: 29TH – 30TH JUNE 2024
(SATURDAY – SUNDAY)

02.00 PM Welcome, Registrations and Introduction to the BNHS (Shardul)
TEA/COFFEE
02.30 PM Camera Trapping an Introduction – Nikit Surve
03.30 PM Understanding The Earth Under Our Feet. – Dr Sunayana Sarkar
TEA/COFFEE/SNACKS
05.00 PM Field Visit – Nikit Surve + Dr Sunayana Sarkar + Dr Santosh Yadav.
07.15 PM Introduction to Arachnids & Invertebrates – Drashti Danani
08.30 PM Setting Up Insect Stations – Drashti Danani
DINNER BREAK
09.30 PM The Forest in the Night
LIGHTS OFF
06.00 AM Bird Watching Trail – Dr Parvish Pandya
BREAK FAST
09.30 AM Birds and Bird Behaviour – Dr Parvish Pandya
11.00 AM Group Activity Break
LUNCH BREAK
02.00 PM Plants and Plant Behaviour – Shardul S. Bajikar Disperse.

06.30 AM Assemble @Airoli Mangrove Interpretation Center.
TEA / COFFEE SNACKS
08.30 AM Creatures of the Intertidal Zone – Pradip Patade
11.00 AM Travel to CEC.
LUNCH AT CEC
02.00 PM Communicating Conservation – Shardul Bajikar
04.00 PM Group Activity Time
06.30 PM Retrieve The Camera Traps and Process the images
08.15 PM Introduction to Reptiles and Amphibians – Saurabh Sawant
DINNER
10.00 PM Insect Watching at Insect Stations.
LIGHTS OFF
06.30 AM Interpreting tracks and signs. (Field session) – Dr Anish Andheria
08.30 AM **BREAKFAST**
09.00 AM Nature Conservation - A Conundrum & Seeking Answers – Dr Anish Andheria
LUNCH
01.00 PM Group Presentations, Feedback/Q&A session and
02.30 PM Conclusion.
Disperse

IMPORTANT INSTRUCTIONS:

- Accommodation will be at the CEC. Separate dormitory style accommodations for gents and ladies, with bedding.
- Separate wash room facilities for both gents and ladies.
- This is a learning oriented workshop. Be ready for some long sessions and schedules.
- Clean, Hygienic vegetarian and ample food along with tea and coffee will be provided in the workshop.
- As mentioned The participants will have to pay INR 1200 per head separately for their food arrangements.
- Carry your personal necessities like medicines, insect repellents, toiletries with you.
- Advisable to carry your extra set of dry clothes and stockings.



Workshop Fee: For non-members INR 6,000; for members INR 5,500 (inclusive of accommodation, food, resource people, reading material)

PLEASE NOTE: For Food Arrangements, participants are requested to pay another Rs. 1200 separately at the CEC itself.

Register Here!



Contact Details: +91-9821120494 (Shardul)






TRAILS & CRAFTS

Family Fun in Nature....





LAST DATE FOR
REGISTRATION
15TH JUNE 2024

-
-
-
-

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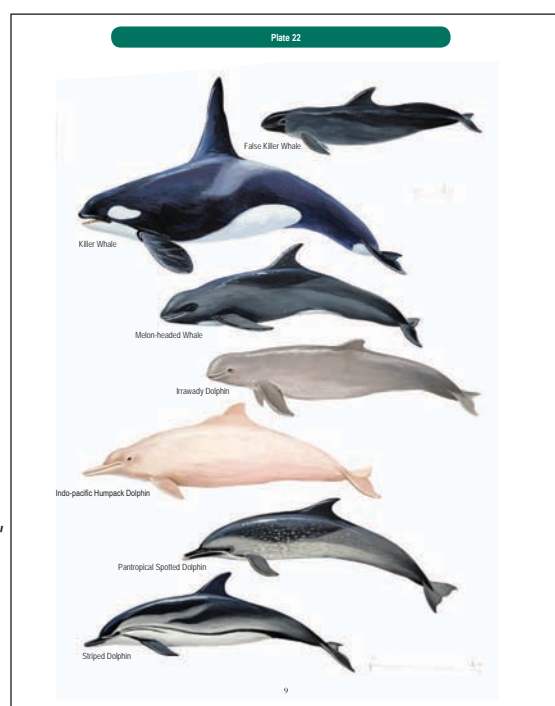
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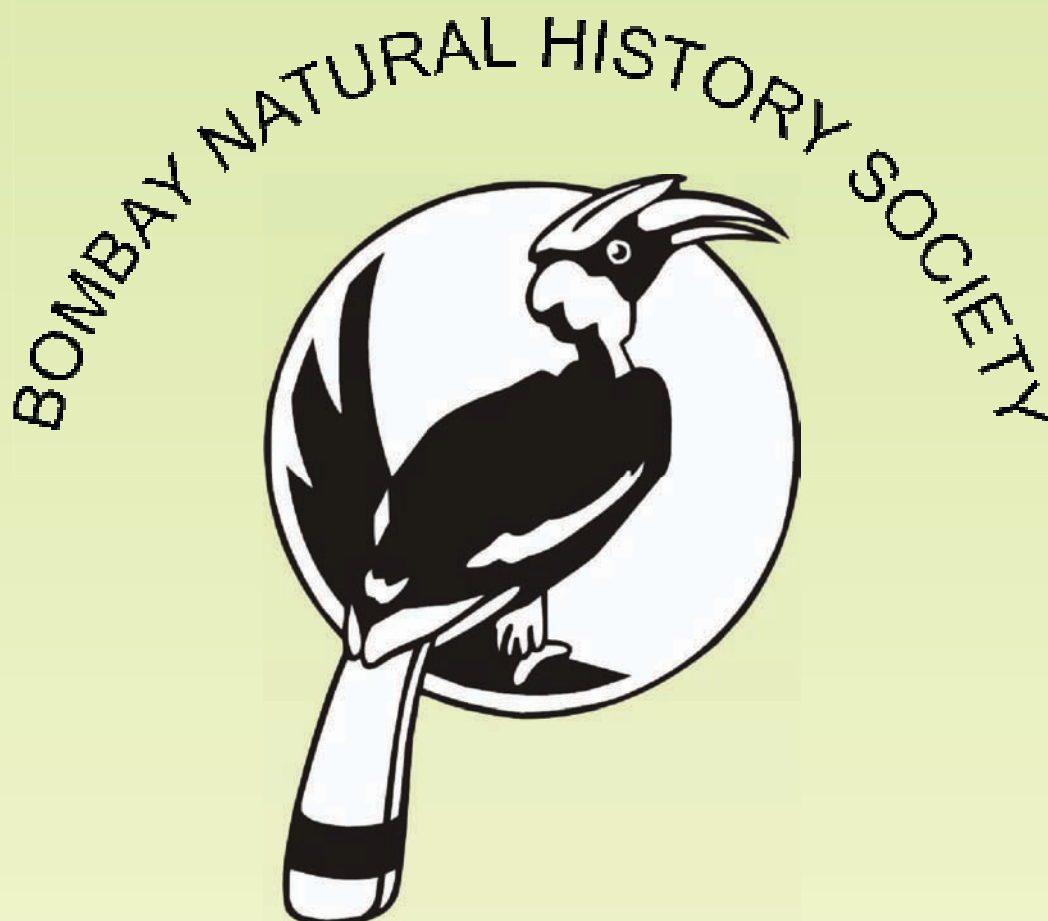
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Vision: Premier independent scientific organization with a broad-based constituency, excelling in the conservation of threatened species and habitats.

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

CONTACT US

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