



BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

From the DIRECTOR DESK



Dear Members,

Funding is essential for any organization, yet it is rarely sufficient to fulfil all our aspirations. We must therefore continuously align our ambitions with the resources available. The Asian Venture Philanthropy Network (AVPN), founded in 2011, is Asia's largest impact network to address social challenges bringing together more than 700 resource providers, innovators, and intermediaries across 43 markets.

I attended the AVPN Global Conference 2026, held at New Delhi, from August 25–27. I am pleased to share that BNHS has already received encouraging responses from several stakeholders I met during the conference. We hope these new connections will help us scale up some of our successful pilot projects and strengthen our conservation initiatives.

After the AVPN conference, we turned our attention to another landmark event. The Bombay Natural History Society's (BNHS) Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) at Pinjore completed 25 years of dedicated service to vulture conservation. To commemorate this milestone, the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), BNHS, and the Haryana Forest Department jointly organized a national workshop to mark the occasion.

BNHS established India's first Vulture Care Centre (VCC) at Pinjore in September 2001 to rehabilitate vultures rescued from across the country during the vulture crisis. With support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK, the facility was subsequently upgraded to the Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC) under the South Asian Vulture Recovery Plan. Over the past 25 years, the centre has played a pivotal role in the conservation and recovery of India's threatened vulture populations.

Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav spent considerable time at the centre and at the event and commended the efforts of BNHS, the Haryana Forest Department, CZA, and partner states for their collective contribution to vulture conservation.

Working closely with the Government of India, State Forest Departments, the CZA, and international conservation partners, BNHS has played a pioneering role in identifying threats, advocating the ban on harmful veterinary drugs such as diclofenac, aceclofenac, ketoprofen, and nimesulide, establishing conservation breeding populations, and creating safe habitats for the reintroduction of vultures into the wild.

Following this memorable event, I had only a day before travelling to Nairobi, Kenya, for the BirdLife International Global Partnership Meeting (GPM). As Martin Harper, CEO of BirdLife International, had recently concluded his visit to India, I attended the meeting with a greater sense of familiarity and less pressure.

Nairobi was at its picturesque best, with jacaranda trees in full bloom, adding vibrant colour to the city. The GPM venue, Safari Park Hotel, proved to be an excellent setting, rich in birdlife and well-suited to the occasion. Around 125 BirdLife partners from 120 countries participated in the GPM and the Global Flyway Summit. A key outcome of the meeting was the launch of the Nairobi Declaration, reaffirming the global partnership's commitment to bird conservation and sustainable development.

The partners collectively pledged through the Nairobi Flyways Declaration which was also signed by BNHS:

"Nature is in crisis. Habitat destruction, species loss, and climate change are global challenges that require action at a global scale. Every year, billions of birds travel along flyways, the avian superhighways that connect breeding and non-breeding grounds across countries, continents, and hemispheres. A bird's journey does not stop at national borders, and neither can conservation."

Through this commitment, we recognized migratory birds as important indicators of planetary health and flyways as ecological connections that no single nation can conserve alone. We called for a coherent network of protected and restored habitats across entire flyways and reaffirmed our commitment to a simple but powerful goal: ensuring that birds can fly free from harm.

We also had the opportunity to visit Nairobi National Park, where we recorded nearly 120 bird species in a single day, alongside iconic African wildlife such as lions, white rhinos, hippos, zebras, giraffes, buffaloes, jackals, impalas, and hartebeests.

However, one of my most lasting memories of the visit is the simplicity and warmth of Her Imperial Highness Princess Takamado of Japan. An avid birder, wildlife enthusiast, and photographer, she attended all the conference sessions over the three days. What impressed me most was that each of her interventions was thoughtful, concise, and relevant.

Several BNHS members visit Hornbill House for personal conversations. I was inspired by the visit of Kusumakar Damle, a retired railway officer and BNHS Life Member, who strongly believes that investing in children is the key to solving the planet's environmental challenges. He generously donated ₹1 lakh to support BNHS School Nature Clubs and committed his time to interacting with students and distributing activity and experimentation kits.

His enthusiasm motivated us to expand the programme, leading to the establishment of 80 School Nature Clubs across Satara, Amravati, Akola, and Jalgaon districts of Maharashtra. More recently, BNHS Governing Council members pledged support to extend this initiative to Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Sikkim.

Another BNHS member, Godson Samuel whose passion for palm trees is truly remarkable, recently visited Hornbill House to share his observations on the relationship between birds and palm trees. He even undertook a motorcycle journey from Mumbai to Tamil Nadu to document birdlife associated with palm trees along the route. I have encouraged him to share his fascinating findings with our readers, and I hope to see his article published in *Hornbill* soon.

On September 29, 2026, during the BNHS Annual General Meeting, we launched *Aranya*, a new magazine specially created for young naturalists. The magazine aims to become a vibrant green platform for schools across India.

As you know, BNHS launched *Hornbill* as a newsletter in 1967, and it subsequently evolved into one of India's oldest wildlife magazines. As *Hornbill* will complete 50 years this November, it is fitting that BNHS introduces a new publication to inspire the next generation of nature enthusiasts.

Aranya is envisioned as a magazine "by young members, for young members." School students will be encouraged to become BNHS members, contribute content, and actively participate in shaping the magazine. If you are a student or a teacher, this magazine is for you. We invite you to join this growing movement by sharing your school's details and becoming part of the BNHS family.

The inaugural issue features several inspiring stories written and edited by BNHS Life members and has been sent as a supplement to *Hornbill*. The attractive cover was designed by BNHS member Ashvini Menon (artist, designer, and cartoonist) while the publication was generously supported by BNHS Life Member Amit Badiyani. My sincere thanks to both for helping bring this exciting initiative to life.

If you are not already following BNHS on social media, I encourage you to do so and stay updated with our latest activities and conservation initiatives.

Finally, I encourage you to read the BNHS Blog (<http://blog.bnhs.org>) for more 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 can also help institutions 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; Programmes: programmes@bnhs.org

Conservation Education Centre: cec-mumbai@bnhs.org

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

Director, Bombay Natural History Society



Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre Pinjore Celebrates 25 years of Success

This September, Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and its partners joined conservation organisations around the country to mark International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD), drawing attention to the vital role vultures play in healthy ecosystems and the urgent need to safeguard these remarkable scavengers.

Observed annually on the first Saturday of September, IVAD was initiated in 2009 by the Birds of Prey Programme, South Africa, and the Hawk Conservancy Trust, United Kingdom. What began as a dedicated awareness initiative has grown into a global platform connecting conservationists, researchers, communities and wildlife enthusiasts around a shared commitment to vulture conservation.



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Union Minister Bhupender Yadav lauded efforts of the BNHS, Government of Haryana, Central Zoo Authority, and all other states participating in vulture conservation

Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre, Pinjore: Pinjore, Haryana: Twenty-five years after BNHS established India's first Vulture Care Centre at Pinjore, the pioneering conservation programme has evolved from rescuing distressed birds to breeding, reintroducing and monitoring vultures in the wild. The milestone was commemorated on International Vulture Awareness Day by the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), BNHS and the Government of Haryana, through a national workshop reflecting on the programme's journey and future direction. Union Minister Bhupender Yadav attended the event, spending several hours with participants and acknowledging the efforts of the BNHS team and Haryana Forest Department.

The centre's story began in September 2001, when BNHS established India's first Vulture Care Centre at Pinjore to care for vultures rescued from across the country. It subsequently evolved into a Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre under the South Asia Vulture Recovery Plan, with support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK.

The initiative emerged in response to the catastrophic decline of more than 99% in India's populations of three resident Gyps vultures—the White-rumped, Indian/Long-billed and Slender-billed Vultures. Research identified the veterinary drug diclofenac as a major cause of mortality, leading to concerted conservation action by BNHS, government agencies and partners.

The success at Pinjore helped establish a wider national conservation-breeding programme. BNHS subsequently established centres at Rajabhatkhawa, West Bengal; Rani, Assam; and Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, while CZA established additional centres in other parts of the country.

Today, more than 700 vultures have been hatched and fledged across eight centres, with approximately 470 bred at Pinjore alone. The programme has also moved beyond captive breeding to reintroducing vultures into the wild, establishing Vulture Safe Zones, monitoring veterinary drugs, investigating disease, estimating populations and engaging local communities. The national effort has been strengthened through

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collaboration with the Government of India, state forest departments, CZA, RSPB, ZSL, the Darwin Initiative and state governments, among others. Measures to reduce exposure to harmful veterinary drugs have also played an important role in creating safer landscapes for vultures.

BNHS has so far released 134 vultures of three species across Haryana, West Bengal, Assam, and Maharashtra. Released birds are individually tagged and monitored using GSM-GPS and satellite transmitters, providing valuable information on their movements and survival. In 2026, the programme entered a new phase with the first captive-bred Slender-billed Vultures moved into a soft-release programme in Assam. The ultimate goal, however, extends beyond successful releases, it aims to establish self-sustaining vulture populations in the wild.

Looking ahead, BNHS is also keen to support state governments in developing conservation programmes for Red-headed and Bearded Vultures, while expanding efforts to return vultures to suitable habitats.

After 25 years, Pinjore's journey – from rescuing vulnerable birds to helping return captive-bred vultures to the wild – offers an important example of how sustained science, collaboration and conservation action can support species recovery. ■

International Vulture Awareness Day 2026

The Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Rani, Assam, marked International Vulture Awareness Day (IVAD) 2026 by bringing together around 250 students, teachers, conservationists and community members at Carmel School, Rani, on September 12.

The event highlighted the ecological importance of vultures and the need for continued community participation to protect these vital scavengers. Representatives of the Assam Forest Department – Mr Dharanidhar Boro, Retired DCF; Mrs Roji Barman, RFO, Rani Range, Sister Maria Monika, Principal, Carmel School, Mr Bhaskar Jyoti Goswami, Block Project Manager, Chayani, Rani Block and community organisations – Diya Foundation and Rani Sahitya Sabha – joined the celebrations, reflecting the growing network of support for vulture conservation in the region.

A major highlight of the IVAD programme was an interschool drawing competition organised in August on the theme 'Vulture and Nature'. The response was remarkable: 55 schools from Kamrup district participated, with around 5,000 drawings submitted by students. The scale of participation demonstrated the growing interest among young people in wildlife and environmental conservation.

The winning entries were recognised during the IVAD celebration. Kaustabh Pran Das of Jnan Jyoti Jatiya Vidyalaya, Bagan, received the First Prize, while Deepjyoti Das of Chaygaon Higher Secondary School, Chaygaon, received the Second Prize. The Third Prize was jointly awarded to Taison Rabha of Pragjyoti Jatiya Vidyalaya, Loharghat, and Nikita Das of St. Joseph School, Azara.

The programme also recognised individuals who have contributed to vulture conservation and awareness as 'Vulture Friends'. The honourees included students and interns, a researcher and a wildlife photographer, acknowledging the diverse contributions that support conservation beyond formal programmes.

Speakers at the event highlighted the important ecological role of vultures, the threats responsible for their decline and the need for continued conservation action. Students, teachers and local communities were encouraged to become active participants in creating safer environments for vultures and protecting the habitats on which they depend.

The awareness campaign extended beyond Rani. During September, VCBC Rani and its partners conducted community and school meetings in Kamrup and Biswanath, along with drawing competitions involving schools in Biswanath, Jorhat and Sivasagar. In Jorhat alone, 30 schools participated in a drawing activity.

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Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre, Bhopal: Vultures took centre stage at Van Vihar National Park & Zoo, Bhopal, where the park and BNHS-VCBC, Bhopal joined hands to mark International Vulture Awareness Day 2026. The two-day programme brought vulture conservation closer to students, visitors and the wider public through a range of interactive activities designed to make learning engaging and accessible. The initiative highlighted the ecological importance of vultures and encouraged people to become active participants in their conservation.

Among the most popular activities was the 'Selfie with Vulture & Conservation Oath' campaign, which invited visitors to combine a fun experience with a commitment to conservation. Others like the 'Wings of Hope' Signature/Pledge Campaign, The Inter-School Drawing and Painting Competition, On-the-Spot Vulture Conservation Quiz, Vulture Conservation Snake and Ladder Game, and Vulture Conservation Awareness Display and Information Materials provided another opportunity for participants to publicly express their support for protecting vultures.

The awareness programme also focused on some of the key conservation challenges facing vultures. Participants learned about the risks posed by certain veterinary drugs, particularly diclofenac, and the importance of using safer alternatives. Messages on appropriate veterinary practices and the care and management of vultures further connected everyday actions with wider conservation outcomes.

The programme encouraged active participation rather than simply presenting information. Visitors and students took the conservation oath, added their signatures to the Wings of Hope pledge board, participated in quizzes and competitions, and explored the educational displays and game. These activities created opportunities for conversations between conservation teams and members of the public.

The collaboration between Van Vihar National Park & Zoo and BNHS-VCBC, Bhopal demonstrated the value of combining scientific knowledge with creative conservation education. By bringing vulture conservation into a public space and engaging visitors of different ages, the programme helped build greater awareness of the challenges facing vultures, and the role that individuals and communities can play in their recovery.

Vulture Advocacy through Stakeholder Awareness: As part of International Vulture Awareness Day and International Vulture Awareness Week 2026, BNHS engaged government departments and other stakeholders across Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh through a series of awareness

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programmes focused on strengthening vulture conservation. Alka Dubey represented BNHS, at these events for communicating the scientific and conservation significance of vultures and the need for coordinated action to protect them.

Seven webinars were organised in collaboration with Forest Departments, Animal Husbandry Departments and Food & Drug Administration (FDA) authorities. The sessions highlighted the ecological importance of vultures, major threats to their populations, the risks posed by harmful veterinary medicines,



and the need for coordinated action across wildlife, veterinary and pharmaceutical sectors. Each webinar combined a presentation with an interactive discussion, allowing participants to understand their respective roles in reducing threats to vultures.

In Himachal Pradesh, three webinars were conducted on September 1–2. The Forest Department session on September 1 focused on vulture conservation, habitat protection and coordinated conservation efforts, with 27 participants. On the same day, a session with the Animal Husbandry Department addressed the importance of vulture-safe veterinary practices and the risks associated with unsafe medicines, attracting 72 stakeholders. On September 2, a specialised session with the Food & Drug Administration engaged 38 Drug Inspectors on harmful veterinary drugs, regulatory awareness, monitoring and the promotion of vulture-safe alternatives.

In Rajasthan, webinars with the Forest Department on September 2 and the Animal Husbandry Department on September 3 focused on the state's vulture species, their ecological significance, conservation concerns and the importance of vulture-safe practices. The sessions brought together 42 forest officials and field personnel and 47 Animal Husbandry Department participants, respectively.

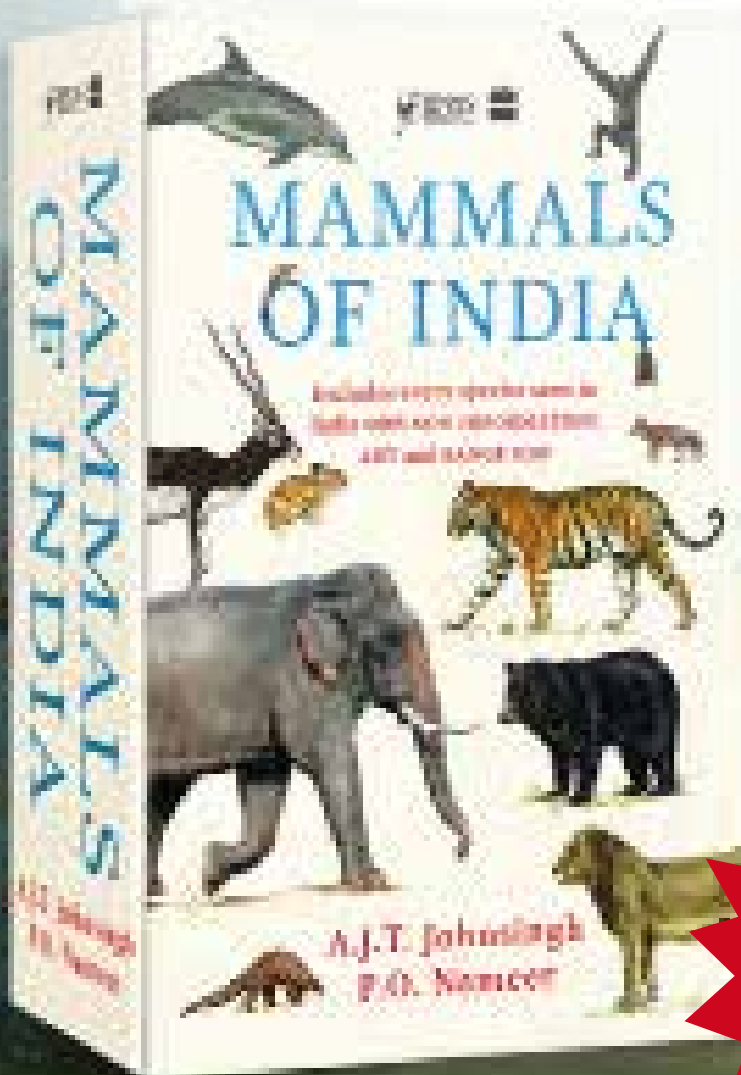
A webinar with the Food & Drug Administration, Bihar, on September 3 placed particular emphasis on the legal and regulatory aspects of banned and vulture-harmful veterinary drugs. Relevant Gazette Notifications and regulatory provisions were shared with 27 FDA officials, helping strengthen awareness of the responsibilities of drug regulatory authorities and the importance of effective implementation.

The awareness campaign also extended to Uttar Pradesh, where a state-level programme was organised on September 5 at the Auditorium of Kanpur Zoo in collaboration with the Forest Department, Uttar Pradesh, Kanpur Zoo and BNHS. The programme brought together the Director of Kanpur Zoo, forest trainees, veterinary professionals, academics, college and school students, and other local stakeholders. A total of 120 participants attended the event.

The IVAD celebrations concluded with a strong message: vulture conservation is not only a scientific endeavour, but a shared responsibility involving communities, schools, conservationists, and government agencies. ■

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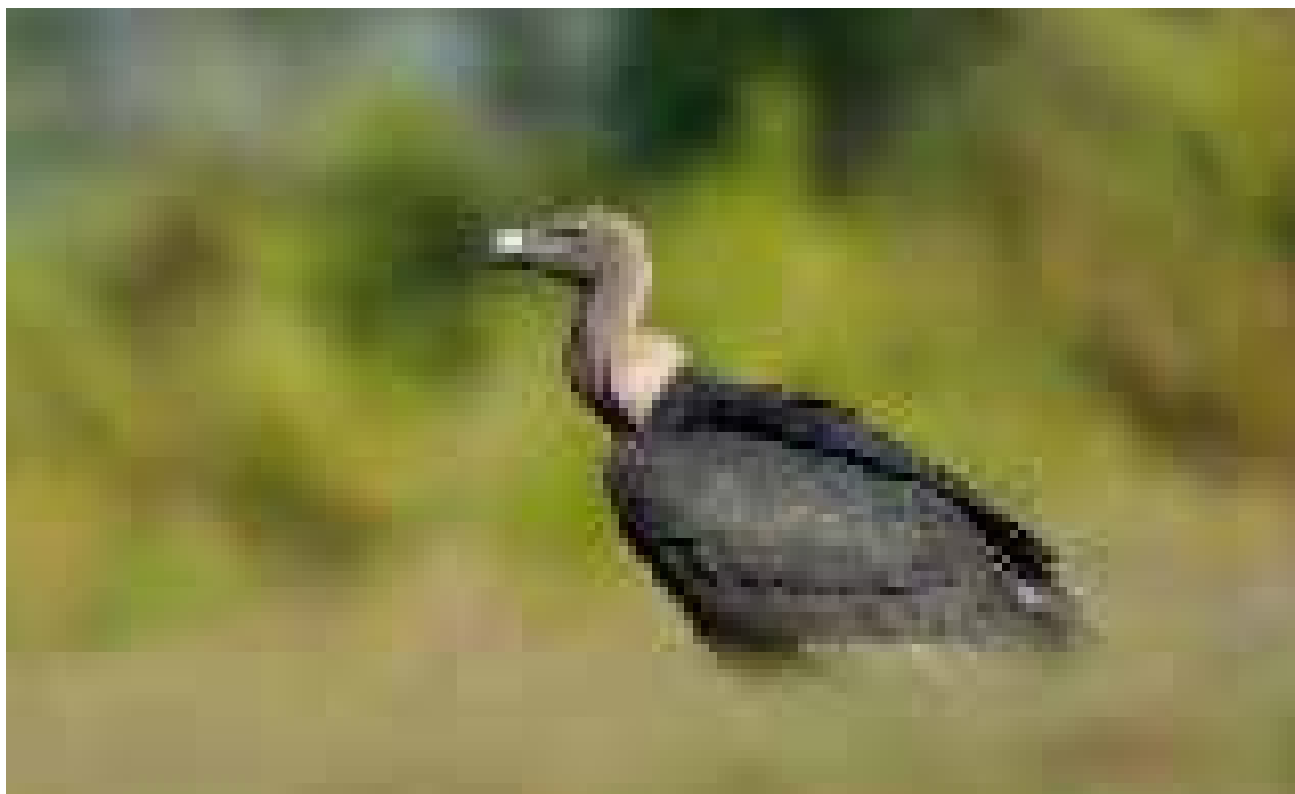
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Vulture Reintroduction Shows Promise in Maharashtra's Melghat and Pench

Release aviaries in two tiger reserves – Melghat and Pench – are showing encouraging results, with captive-bred vultures released through pre-release aviaries recording promising survival rates. The results highlight the potential of carefully selected tiger-reserve landscapes to support the return of vultures to the wild.

The findings come as India's vulture conservation-breeding programme completes 25 years, having bred more than 700 vultures of three species. BNHS began releasing captive-bred vultures in 2020, working with state governments and with the required permissions from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the Central Zoo Authority (CZA). So far, BNHS has released 134 vultures across Haryana, West Bengal, Assam, and Maharashtra.

In recent years, the programme has increasingly focused on protected areas where suitable habitat and food resources are available. Tiger reserves with recovered wildlife populations and landscapes opened up through village relocation can provide extensive, relatively undisturbed areas as well as naturally available carrion – important conditions for released vultures.

In Maharashtra, BNHS and the Maharashtra Forest Department have been collaborating on vulture reintroduction. In December 2025, 14 vultures – nine White-rumped and five Long-billed Vultures – were released in Pench Tiger Reserve. Monitoring over the following nine months recorded a 78% survival rate. A further release of 15 Long-billed Vultures took place in Melghat Tiger Reserve in January 2026. After eight months of monitoring, the release recorded a 60% survival rate.

As monitoring continues in Melghat and Pench, the results will provide valuable information for refining future releases and identifying landscapes where captive-bred vultures can successfully return to the wild. ■



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X67 and X65: Two captive-bred vultures reveal the remarkable journeys and challenges of returning to the wild

The story of X67 and X65, two female Long-billed Vultures released in Maharashtra, offers a remarkable glimpse into what happens when captive-bred vultures take to the skies. Their journeys across central India are providing valuable insights into how reintroduced birds disperse, adapt and find suitable landscapes in the wild.

Released in Melghat Tiger Reserve, X67 demonstrated remarkable resilience after requiring early rehabilitation in Akola. By late May, she had resumed her journey, travelling an extraordinary 4,911 km across central India. Her movements took her through Kuno, Sheopur, and Ranthambore, before returning to Kuno and subsequently Sheopur in Madhya Pradesh. Her movements have also revealed a potential conservation corridor linking the Satpura landscape with Kuno and Ranthambore. Such information is important for understanding the larger landscapes that vultures may use after release, and for identifying areas where conservation measures need to be strengthened.

Another Melghat release, X65, has travelled approximately 4,257 km. After requiring rehabilitation in Nashik, she was subsequently recorded in Surat, Jalgaon, Burhanpur, Amravati, Nagpur, Chhindwara and Kanha Tiger Reserve, and has more recently been moving through Katni and Shahdol in Madhya Pradesh. Her movements demonstrate the ability of released vultures to navigate across state boundaries and adapt to diverse landscapes.

These journeys are part of a broader picture emerging from the reintroduction programme.

At Pench Tiger Reserve, 24 captive-bred vultures have been soft-released in two phases – 10 Long-billed Vultures in 2024, followed by nine White-rumped and five Long-billed Vultures in 2025. Thirteen birds are currently surviving in the wild, including two Long-billed Vultures from the first release that have persisted since 2024. Pench is also supporting an encouraging wild population. In the East Pench Range, monitored wild vulture nests continued to show high breeding success, with 8 of 9 monitored nests (89%) successfully fledging chicks during the 2024–25 breeding cycle and all 3 monitored nests (100%) successfully fledging chicks during the 2025–26 cycle. In Melghat, 15 Long-billed Vultures were soft-released in January 2026. Nine have so far established themselves in the wild, representing a 60% survival rate. Satellite telemetry is tracking

their movements across central India and helping conservation teams understand how released birds use the landscape.

Making the landscape safer: Successful reintroduction requires more than releasing birds. BNHS and the Maharashtra Forest Department are working to reduce threats across the landscape and strengthen Vulture Safe Zones.

- More than 100 awareness programmes have been conducted with forest personnel, local communities, gaushala managers and tourism guides, covering issues such as safe carcass disposal and vulture ecology.
- Pharmacy surveys are also helping promote vulture-safe veterinary alternatives while monitoring the use of drugs known to pose risks to vultures.
- A rapid-response network further enables field teams to locate, rescue and rehabilitate grounded birds and return them to the wild when possible. ■



Jatayu N09 travels 13,000 km and 21 Months in the Wild

A captive-bred White-rumped Vulture (Jatayu N09) released from the JCBC, Pinjore, has completed nearly 21 months in the wild, offering valuable insights into the adaptation and movements of reintroduced vultures.



N09, a male White-rumped Vulture hatched at JCBC in 2023, was among 25 captive-bred vultures released in December 2024 in the presence of Haryana Chief Minister Shri Nayab Singh Saini. Fitted with a GSM-GPS transmitter and individually identified with a leg ring, N09 has since been closely monitored by BNHS teams. For its first 15 months, N09 remained largely within the Pinjore–Shivalik landscape, gradually becoming familiar with its surroundings. From March 2026, it began undertaking much longer movements, travelling east towards Uttarakhand, including the Haldwani and Terai landscape, before returning towards the Shivaliks.

It subsequently explored the broader Himachal Pradesh–Pathankot–Jammu landscape, reaching its farthest recorded location at approximately 405 km from Pinjore. N09 later returned to Himachal Pradesh and has spent several months in the Kangra–Una foothills, where BNHS monitoring teams have observed it soaring, foraging and feeding alongside wild vultures.

Over the monitoring period, N09 has accumulated more than 13,000 km of recorded movement and reached a maximum recorded GPS altitude of approximately 3,144 metres above sea level. The movement figure represents the cumulative distance between GPS locations and is therefore an indicator of landscape use rather than the bird's exact flight distance.

N09's experience also highlights the importance of scientific soft-release protocols. Captive-bred birds undergo health screening and acclimatisation before release, and are individually tagged and fitted with tracking devices. Post-release monitoring allows teams to understand their movements and intervene when birds require assistance.

But the story also carries a warning. Monitoring of released vultures has highlighted the threat posed by power infrastructure, including electrocution and collisions with overhead lines. GPS data can help identify frequently used flight paths, feeding areas and roosting sites, enabling conservation teams to work with electricity agencies and local administrations to reduce these risks.

Creating a safe landscape is therefore as important as breeding and releasing birds. Vulture recovery requires protection from harmful veterinary drugs, access to safe food, protection of nesting and roosting sites, and mitigation of threats such as poisoning, electrocution and power-line collisions. N09's journey demonstrates what sustained conservation breeding, careful release, scientific monitoring and wild-vulture populations can achieve. At the same time, it reinforces an important lesson: successful reintroduction ultimately depends on ensuring that the landscapes these birds return to are safe enough for them to survive and thrive.

Every kilometre travelled by the released vultures is helping BNHS understand not only where released vultures go, but what they need to survive once they get there – knowledge that will shape future reintroduction and landscape-level conservation efforts. ■



BNHS Marks 143 Years with a Special Focus on the Central Asian Flyway

The BNHS marked its 143rd Foundation Day with a special focus on the Central Asian Flyway (CAF), bringing together science, conservation practice, community engagement and the Society's rich natural-history legacy.

Since its beginnings in 1883, BNHS has played a longstanding role in documenting India's biodiversity and advancing its conservation. Its work has grown far beyond scientific research to include conservation education, public awareness, advocacy and partnerships with communities. Today, its membership brings together nature enthusiasts, students, researchers and conservation supporters across generations.

This year's Foundation Day at Hornbill House highlighted BNHS's continuing work to protect migratory birds and the habitats they depend on along the Central Asian Flyway, a major migration route connecting breeding and wintering grounds across Asia and Africa.

The programme featured presentations by BNHS teams on the conservation of priority bird species and sites in CAF-India. Project teams shared stories of how scientific research has been combined with local community engagement to achieve conservation outcomes. Discussions also explored the restoration of important flyway habitats, including sandbars, grasslands, coastal areas and landbird habitats, while creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

The event also offered a glimpse into BNHS's long history of bird research. The Society's Library and presented archival material, including correspondence relating to data sharing, alongside historic accounts of bird migration. These records provided a valuable perspective on how generations of researchers have built knowledge about migratory birds and their journeys.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS, said, "Our Foundation Day is both a celebration of our rich history and a platform to address critical conservation challenges across the Central Asian Flyway. By sharing scientific research, historical archives and community impact stories, we aim to inspire collective action for habitat protection and migratory bird conservation."

The celebration reaffirmed BNHS's commitment to combining science, partnerships and community participation to address conservation challenges. As migratory birds cross national and ecological boundaries, protecting their routes requires collaboration across landscapes and communities. BNHS's work along the Central Asian Flyway aims to strengthen that collective effort while ensuring that the habitats supporting both wildlife and people remain healthy.

After 143 years, BNHS continues to build on its natural-history legacy – using knowledge from the past to inform conservation action for the future. ■



BNHS Signs Nairobi Flyways Declaration

A new global commitment to protect migratory birds and the interconnected landscapes they depend on was launched in Nairobi, with BNHS among the organisations endorsing the Nairobi Flyways Declaration. At the BirdLife International Global Flyways Summit in Nairobi, BNHS signed the Nairobi Flyways Declaration, recognising the need for conservation action that matches the extraordinary journeys of migratory birds.

Every year, billions of birds travel along established flyways between breeding and non-breeding grounds, crossing national borders, continents and hemispheres. Their survival depends on a chain of wetlands, grasslands, forests, coastal habitats and other sites spread across these vast routes. The loss or degradation of even one important site can affect birds far beyond the country in which it occurs. The Declaration recognises migratory birds as indicators of planetary health and flyways as ecological networks that require coordinated action across nations. It calls for an ecologically coherent network of sites along each flyway, with important habitats protected, restored and effectively managed.

For BNHS, signing the Declaration represents a commitment to strengthen such international cooperation and contribute to conservation that extends beyond individual protected areas and national boundaries. ■





BNHS Strengthens Conservation Partnerships in Nairobi

BNHS Director Kishor Rithe and Deputy Director Dr Sujit Narwade, attended the BirdLife International Global Partnership Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya, held from September 8–12, 2026. They joined partners from across the world to explore new approaches to reversing bird declines and financing nature conservation.

A key contribution from BNHS was its presentation on avian sensitivity mapping for bustards and cranes—a systematic, long-term approach that can help identify areas where conservation action and development planning need to be carefully balanced. The meeting also highlighted India’s distinctive position at the intersection of the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) and the East Asian–Australasian Flyway (EAAF), creating opportunities for coordinated monitoring, habitat restoration and conservation planning across migratory routes.

BNHS highlighted the potential of blended finance, carbon credits and ecotourism to support biodiversity initiatives while creating benefits for local communities. Discussions with donors indicated a growing focus on conservation programmes that can demonstrate measurable biodiversity outcomes, align with climate priorities and deliver tangible community benefits.

Several areas emerged as potential priorities for future initiatives. These include genomic conservation, pilot projects for grassland restoration, integrating avian risk mapping into policy frameworks, and exploring biodiversity-financing opportunities through institutions such as the World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

The meeting also offered an opportunity to learn from conservation initiatives elsewhere. Presentations included the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds’ bittern recovery programme in the UK, carbon-credit forest initiatives in Cambodia, and Audubon’s bird-focused tourism work. Looking ahead, BNHS proposed hosting the BirdLife Global Partnership Meeting in India in 2030. The proposal would provide an opportunity to showcase India’s experience in grassland conservation, community engagement and flyway-scale bird conservation, while contributing to the global 30x30 ambition for biodiversity conservation. ■

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100 Bird Species Ringed in 97 Days at Ankasamudra–Tungabhadra, Karnataka

A new bird-ringing programme of the BNHS in Karnataka has reached a remarkable milestone, recording 550 individual birds representing 100 species in just 97 days. The achievement highlights the exceptional diversity of the Ankasamudra–Tungabhadra landscape and establishes a foundation for long-term research on bird movements and habitat use.

The BNHS bird-ringing programme at Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve and the Tungabhadra backwaters began on June 18, 2026 as part of its work in the region. The programme is led by Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Deputy Director and Head, Wetland Birds and Bird Migration Studies, BNHS, and Dr Sujit Narwade, with support from experienced ringing teams and Mr Paul Anthony from Point Calimere. The work is being carried out in collaboration with the Karnataka Forest Department and Team Green HBH.



The birds recorded span wetland, riparian, agricultural and terrestrial habitats, reflecting the ecological diversity of a landscape where wetlands and surrounding habitats form an interconnected mosaic. Among the notable records are the Yellow-footed Green Pigeon *Treron phoenicopterus*, the first individual of the species ringed by BNHS, and the Black-rumped

Flameback *Dinopium benghalense*. Eight individuals of the latter have been ringed, marking the return of ringing records for the species after nearly five decades.

The value of the programme extends beyond the number of species recorded. Each ringed bird becomes an individual data point that can contribute to understanding movement, dispersal, site fidelity, survival, longevity, habitat use, seasonal movements and breeding ecology. Subsequent re-sightings and recoveries reveal how birds move between wetlands and surrounding habitats and how these sites function as part of a larger ecological network.

This is especially important in a landscape connected to the Central Asian Flyway, where resident and migratory birds depend on a network of wetlands and other habitats. Long-term individual-based monitoring can complement conventional bird surveys and provide evidence for understanding habitat connectivity and conservation priorities.

The milestone is also the result of sustained field effort. Teams have worked across Ankasamudra, the Tungabhadra backwaters and surrounding satellite wetlands, conducting early-morning surveys, identifying suitable ringing sites, operating and monitoring mist nets, taking biometric measurements, recording individual information and safely releasing birds.

Local knowledge has been central to this effort. Team Green HBH and local Rekki Mitras/Friends of Wings have helped identify bird-rich locations, navigate difficult habitats, support field logistics and contribute knowledge of seasonal bird movements and local conditions. The Karnataka Forest Department has also played an important role in facilitating field activities across the landscape. For BNHS, this achievement marks the beginning of a longer scientific journey. ■



Taking Gangetic Biodiversity Aboard Antara River Cruises

BNHS conducted a nine-day journey along the Ganga aboard two Antara River Cruises vessels to survey birds. In September 2026, Satya Sidharth Das and Ashit Parida travelled along the Kolkata–Murshidabad route, covering approximately 600 km by river. Along the way, the team conducted bird surveys of sandbanks, riverbanks, and mudflats, recording waterbirds and other common riverine species. Gangetic dolphins were also observed during the journey.

The programme extended beyond field observations. A dedicated session on the Gangetic Dolphin was organised for 20 guests from Australia. The session introduced participants to BNHS and its Indian Skimmer Conservation Programme followed by the dolphin's habitat, feeding ecology, behaviour, conservation status, and major threats. An interactive question-and-answer session allowed guests to discuss the challenges faced by birds and other biodiversity.

The team also engaged with cruise staff and officials aboard both vessels. On the first vessel, 33 staff members and officials participated, while another 20 participants joined the programme aboard the second. Through photographic presentations, the sessions introduced participants to wetland and urban birds, with discussions covering bird identification, diet, and habitat requirements.

By bringing conservation conversations directly onto the river, the BNHS team helped turn an ordinary journey into an opportunity to observe, understand and appreciate the biodiversity of the Ganga. ■



Tracking the Grasslands of Tadoba–Andhari, Maharashtra

As part of the TATR Grassland Project, BNHS teams continued surveys across core and buffer areas during the September 2026, covering grasslands at Kolsa, Karwa, Botezari, Rantalodhi, Jamni, Ramdegi, Adegaon, Junona, Jamunbodi, Palasgaon, Pandarpouni, and Nawegaon.

Repeated visits to these sites are allowing the team to track changes in vegetation condition, grass growth, habitat structure, insect availability and wildlife use, while also documenting the presence of the Lesser Florican. Grass height across surveyed areas generally ranged between 10 and 30 cm, with inflorescences of short-cycle grasses recorded at several locations.

Insects—an important component of grassland food webs—were particularly active at Junona, Nawegaon, and Pandarpouni. Recording such changes alongside vegetation characteristics is important for understanding how food availability and habitat structure may influence the distribution and abundance of grassland birds.

At Karwa meadow, collaborative monitoring with forest staff provided additional observations on habitat conditions and wildlife use, strengthening the field-based understanding of this important grassland landscape.

The ongoing surveys are building a more detailed picture of the ecological conditions that support avian diversity across TATR. ■



Tracking the Lesser Florican Across Western Madhya Pradesh

From August 26 to September 9, 2026, the BNHS Lesser Florican team surveyed areas across western Madhya Pradesh known to be important for the species during the breeding season. The team undertook extensive observations to locate Lesser Floricans and suitable breeding habitats, while documenting vegetation and habitat conditions, other bird sightings and potential threats across the landscape. The field programme also provided an opportunity to engage directly with the Forest Department. Sensitisation workshops were conducted for frontline officials at Amba, Sardarpur, and Gandhisagar, focusing on the ecological importance of the Lesser Florican and the habitats it uses.

The interactions brought together field observations and local management experience, allowing the team to share information from the survey while discussing the challenges involved in conserving the species. ■



Forester Trainees Visit Bird Migration at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu

For 61 forester trainees from the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, a visit to the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre at Point Calimere on September 23, 2026, offered an opportunity to learn about the work of the BNHS, the ecological significance of the Point Calimere landscape and its diverse habitats and birdlife. The group was led by G.K. Deelipan, Forest Range Officer, Tamil Nadu Forest Academy, and accompanied by S. Mahalakshmi, Forester, and C. Nagooran, Forest Watcher, from the Vedaranyam Range Office.

The session, led by S. Sivakumar, Assistant Director, covered a range of topics including avian diversity, bird migration, and techniques used to study migratory birds. The trainees were also introduced to the tools and equipment used in migration studies, making the programme more interactive and providing a practical perspective on field-based research.

The trainees participated enthusiastically, asking questions throughout the session and discussing their observations and doubts with the BNHS team. They were also requested to inform BNHS if they encounter any marked or tagged birds during their future field duties. The Point Calimere landscape is an important setting for understanding migratory birds, bringing together a variety of habitats that support birds during different stages of their annual journeys. For future forest personnel, understanding how birds use these habitats can strengthen their ability to recognise and respond to conservation priorities in the field. ■



Departments Join Forces to Tackle Invasive Fish at Ujani, Maharashtra

A coordinated effort to curb the spread of invasive African catfish in the Ujani landscape took shape in Pune, bringing together government departments and BNHS to strengthen enforcement, monitoring and community action.

On September 2, 2026, an interdepartmental meeting was held at the Pune Collector Office to address the illegal cultivation and transportation of African catfish and its spread across the Ujani landscape. Representatives from the Fisheries Department, Police, Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), Water Resources Department (WRD), Revenue Department, and BNHS participated in the discussions.

The meeting highlights:

- Strengthens enforcement against illegal African catfish farming and transportation.
- Promotes native fish species and Indian Major Carp (IMC) as alternatives to invasive fish culture.
- Develop coordinated invasive species management initiatives, including removal and disposal mechanisms.
- Establish taluka level coordination teams involving relevant government departments and BNHS.
- Strengthen monitoring of water quality and pollution in affected areas.
- Conduct public awareness through workshops, social media, posters and brochures.
- Explore departmental funding and schemes to support invasive fish management.

The meeting marked a step towards bringing enforcement, fisheries management, environmental monitoring, and community engagement into a common framework. ■



Taking Invasive-Fish Awareness to Ujani's Fishing Communities

On September 4, 2026, while carrying out fieldwork for native fish broodstock collection, the BNHS project team interacted with local fishermen at Sonawadi and conducted a brief awareness session on invasive fish species found in the Ujani landscape. The discussion focused particularly on suckermouth catfish and African catfish, highlighting their potential impacts on native fish populations and the wider aquatic ecosystem. The team discussed how invasive species can alter aquatic communities and place additional pressure on the biodiversity and ecological functioning of wetlands such as Ujani. The interaction also provided an opportunity for the project team to connect its ongoing native fish conservation and broodstock collection work with the wider need to protect Ujani's aquatic biodiversity. ■



Native Fish Stocking Supports Pond Restoration in Solapur

On September 7, 2026, the BNHS Wetland Eco-Restoration and Climate Resilient Fisheries Development Programme provided 4,000 native fish fingerlings to BNHS President Pravinsingh Pardeshi for stocking. The initiative forms part of the programme's efforts to promote the ecological restoration and enhancement of small waterbodies. The fish stocked included Mola Carplet, Slender Rasbora, Glassy Perchlet, loach and Deccan Labeo fingerlings. Introducing native species will help strengthen the biological diversity of restored waterbodies while supporting naturally functioning aquatic food webs. ■



India Today Documents Wetland Conservation Work at Bhigwan

On September 8 and 9, 2026, India Today reporter Dhaval Kulkarni and photographer Mandar Deodhar visited Bhigwan to document the ongoing work of the BNHS Wetland Eco-Restoration and Climate Resilient Fisheries Development Programme. During the visit, the team interacted with local fishermen and explored the Bhigwan fish market, gaining an understanding of local fishing practices and the livelihoods linked to the fishery sector. These interactions provided a ground-level perspective on the relationship between the wetland, fisheries and the communities that depend on them. The media team also visited project sites and interacted with the BNHS project team to understand the scope of conservation interventions being implemented around Ujani Wetland. These include wetland restoration, fisheries management, invasive fish species control, native fish conservation and community engagement. The visit offered an opportunity to document not only the ecological aspects of the programme, but also its emphasis on working alongside local communities. ■



Ujani Wetland: Collector Directs Coordinated Action for Fisheries and Biodiversity

A stakeholder meeting was held at the Solapur Collector Office on September 10, 2026, under the chairmanship of Shri S. Karthikeyan, IAS, Collector of Solapur, to strengthen conservation, fisheries management, and ecological restoration efforts at Ujani Wetland. Following the discussions, a formal circular incorporating the directives was issued on September 18, 2026.

Key outcomes and directives:

- Strengthen control and removal of invasive fish species, particularly Suckermouth Catfish, African Catfish and Tilapia.
- Promote native fish restoration through scientific stocking and strengthened hatchery infrastructure.
- Explore technology based monitoring including AI, cameras and remote surveillance for fisheries management and enforcement.
- Ban harmful fishing gear, including small mesh nets, traps, shrimp cages and undersized gillnets.
- Mandate a minimum 85 mm (4 finger) mesh size for gillnets.
- Prohibit the sale and transport of undersized fish, Indian Major Carp and native fish below 1 kg must be released alive into the reservoir.
- Conduct 15 days monitoring and enforcement reviews with legal action against violations.
- Ensure monthly review meetings and submission of departmental compliance reports for continued monitoring.

The meeting brought together multiple stakeholders around a common objective: ensuring that fisheries management supports rather than undermines the ecological health of Ujani Wetland. ■



Restoring Native Aquatic Habitats at Madanwadi Hatchery, Maharashtra

As part of the Ujani Wetland Eco-Restoration and Climate Resilient Fisheries Development Programme, the BNHS team undertook plantation of aquatic plant species at the hatchery, including *Alocasia*, Water Lily, Lotus, and Hydrilla. The plants were established in polybags to support their growth before they are transplanted into suitable habitats across the Ujani Wetland. Native aquatic vegetation can provide important habitat and shelter for aquatic organisms while contributing to the ecological complexity of restored waterbodies.

Alongside the plantation work, the team also undertook pond maintenance and protection measures at the hatchery. Protective fish nets are being planned for installation over individual ponds to reduce predation of stocked fish by piscivorous birds during the rearing period. To support this work, bamboo was cut and prepared to create the framework needed to install the protective nets over the ponds. The measures are intended to improve the survival of fish being reared for native-fish conservation and restoration activities. Together, the planting and pond-management activities strengthen the hatchery's role as more than a facility for raising fish. ■



Building Local Bird-Guide Skills at Bhigwan, Maharashtra

BNHS conducted a Bird Guide Capacity Building Workshop at Bhigwan under the Wetland Eco-Restoration and Climate Resilient Fisheries Development Programme, with a focus on strengthening local capacity around Ujani Wetland. The workshop brought together community members and local stakeholders, including Akshay Rathod, CM Fellow, Government of Maharashtra; Bharat Mallav, Chairman, Ambika Fisheries; Balasaheb Kale, fish trade merchant, Bhigwan; and Kalyanrao Salunke, schoolteacher, Karmala.

Participants received practical training in bird identification, bird-call recognition, citizen science, checklist preparation, field-data collection and mobile applications. The sessions were designed to equip participants not only to recognise birds, but also to document their observations systematically and contribute to the growing body of information on Ujani's birdlife. Devi Waingankar, Project Scientist, BNHS, introduced participants to the conservation interventions being undertaken through the project, while Mayank Sharma, Junior Project Fellow, BNHS, led the technical sessions on bird identification and citizen science.

Interactive exercises on bird calls and mobile-based bird identification encouraged participants to put their new skills into practice. Discussions also explored the importance of Ujani Wetland as part of the Central Asian Flyway, as well as concerns surrounding pollution and the role that local communities can play in protecting the wetland. The workshop concluded with the distribution of certificates and discussions with participants interested in pursuing bird guiding as a livelihood opportunity. ■



Community Incentives Support Suckermouth Catfish Removal at Ujani, Maharashtra

During September 2026, collection of Suckermouth Catfish varied across the month, with removal concentrated on days when fishing activity was possible. An ongoing strike at the Bhigwan Fish Market related to the Ujani tender affected collection on several days, resulting in periods when no fish were brought in for removal. On active collection days, however, substantial quantities were recorded. Approximately 400 kg was removed around September 8, followed by another significant collection of around 350 kg on September 25. Smaller quantities were collected on other active days.

The incentive paid to participating fishermen also increased during the opening days of the month. The rate rose from approximately ₹27 per kg to ₹28 per kg, reaching ₹30 per kg by September 5th. It remained at ₹30 per kg for the rest of the month, providing a consistent incentive for fishermen contributing to invasive-fish removal. While the monthly pattern was intermittent, the continued participation of fishermen demonstrates the value of linking invasive-species management with community engagement and livelihood incentives. Local fishers are well placed to encounter invasive fish during routine fishing activity, making their participation important. ■



BNHS Highlights JALCHAR App at National Marine Mammal Conservation Workshop

Marine megafauna monitoring depends not only on scientific surveys, but also on timely observations from people who spend their lives along India's coasts. BNHS highlighted this community-driven approach at the two-day National Workshop on "Marine Mammal Conservation: Science, Fisheries & Community Action", organised by the Fishery Survey of India (FSI) in Mumbai on September 25–26, 2026.

Dr Tejal Vijapure, Scientist, BNHS, delivered a presentation "From Sightings to Science: Jalchar App for Marine Megafauna Spotting and Stranding". The presentation showcased the JALCHAR mobile application and its role in encouraging people to report sightings and strandings of marine megafauna. By bringing such observations into a structured reporting system, the platform supports wider public participation in marine biodiversity monitoring.

BNHS also presented a poster titled "JALCHAR App: Strengthening Public Outreach and Awareness for Reporting of Marine Megafauna Sightings and Strandings". The poster was presented by Mr Prathamesh Nachankar and co-authored by Sairaj More, Suyash Patil and Dr Tejal Vijapure. It highlighted BNHS's outreach and awareness initiatives aimed at expanding the use of the app and strengthening fisher community participation in documenting marine and coastal biodiversity.

The workshop brought together researchers, fisheries professionals, conservation practitioners and other stakeholders working on marine mammal conservation in India. For BNHS, it provided an opportunity to share ongoing work while exchanging knowledge and exploring potential institutional collaborations. The discussions also reinforced the value of connecting technology, scientific monitoring, and local knowledge. ■



Strengthening Wildlife Conservation and Free-Ranging Dog Management in Ladakh

The BNHS continued its conservation efforts in Ladakh through a combination of stakeholder engagement, wildlife surveys and field-based management of free-ranging dogs. BNHS President Mr Praveensingh Pardeshi, accompanied by Ms Poonam Dhanwatey, Governing Council Member, BNHS, and the BNHS Ladakh team, met key stakeholders and participated in wildlife surveys across the region. The delegation held individual meetings with the Hon'ble Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena; Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh, Mr Ashish Kundra; Drukpa Thuksey Rinpoche; and Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (APCCF), Mr Rakesh Kumar. Discussions centred on biodiversity management, wildlife conservation and the need for effective and humane animal birth control measures across Ladakh.

A key concern raised during these interactions was the growing population of free-ranging dogs and their potential impacts on wildlife, particularly the Black-necked Crane and its chicks. Mr Pardeshi highlighted the importance of coordinated action involving government agencies, religious institutions, local communities, conservation organisations and the Indian Army. He also briefed the dignitaries on BNHS interventions in Ladakh, including the sterilisation of nearly 3,000 free-ranging dogs under its Animal Birth Control programme.

Surveying Wildlife in the Dapsang Plains: Conservation efforts were complemented by field surveys in the remote Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) sector. The survey route extended from Qazi Langar through Gapshan to the Dapsang Plains, focusing on Chiru (Tibetan Antelope) and other wildlife inhabiting this high-altitude ecosystem. The team recorded 68 Chiru, all females, along with Blue Sheep, Pika and Himalayan Marmots. Such field observations provide valuable information on wildlife distribution and occurrence in this remote landscape and contribute to ongoing monitoring and conservation planning in Ladakh.

Supporting Animal Health and Dog Management: The BNHS Ladakh team also continued its animal health and population-management work in collaboration with the Department of Animal Husbandry, Changthang District. To mark World Rabies Day on September 28, the team conducted anti-rabies vaccination drives for free-ranging dogs. During the month, nearly 50 dogs were also sterilised, complementing BNHS's wider Animal Birth Control programme. These engagements and field activities reflect BNHS's continued commitment to advancing wildlife conservation, promoting collaborative partnerships, and safeguarding the unique biodiversity of Ladakh. Through sustained dialogue, scientific research, and field-based conservation action, BNHS continues to work with diverse stakeholders to ensure the long-term protection of the region's fragile ecosystems and iconic wildlife. ■



Books, Conservation and Conversation: A Special Book Meet in Nagpur, Maharashtra

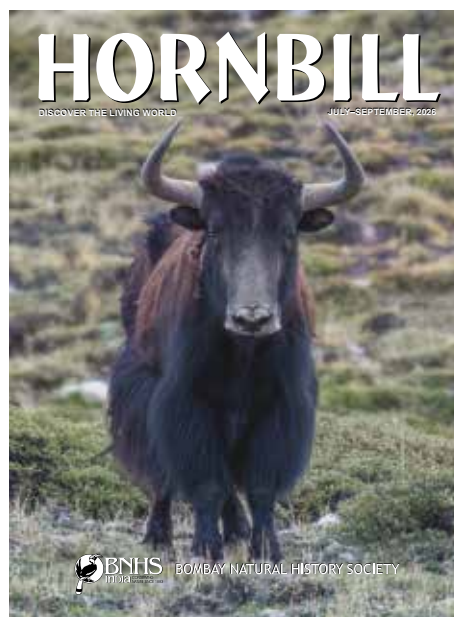
Books became a starting point for conversations on wildlife, conservation and citizen participation at a Special Book Meet held on September 17, 2026 at the India Peace Centre, Nagpur. Jointly organised by the BNHS, Nagpur Book Club and India Peace Centre, with Aamozish-e-Urdu as Knowledge Partner, the evening brought together readers, conservation enthusiasts, and local citizens for an engaging exchange with two authors – Dr Bharat Bhushan, Honorary Secretary, BNHS, and Mr Kishor Rithe, Director, BNHS. Dr Tejinder Singh Rawal delivered the welcome address, while Mr Angelious Michael, Director, India Peace Centre, Nagpur, introduced the Centre's mission and activities.

A central feature of the evening was a question-and-answer session around four books authored by the two guests. Dr Bharat Bhushan discussed Meeting Management and The Black Tiger of Konamitta, while Mr Kishor Rithe presented Satpudayacha Satbara (सातपुड्याचा सातबारा) and Jan Jungle (जन जंगल). The authors shared the experiences and stories that shaped their works, drawing on their journeys in wildlife conservation. The discussion opened up questions around the changing relationship between people and nature, the challenges of conservation, and the role that citizens can play in documenting and protecting biodiversity.

The audience participated enthusiastically, engaging the speakers with questions and reflections. The evening also offered visitors an opportunity to browse and purchase conservation and natural-history publications at the dedicated BNHS bookstall. ■

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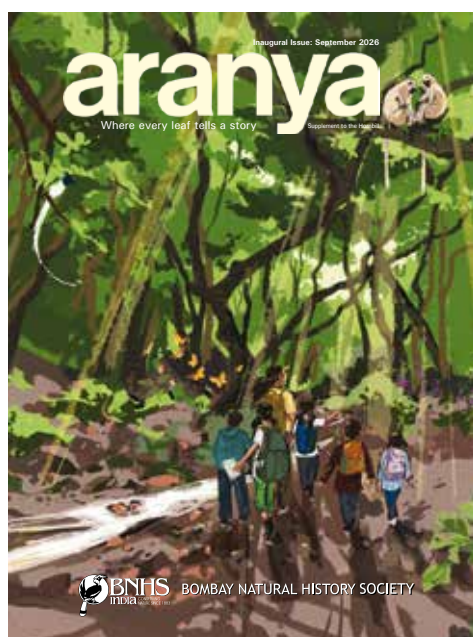


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Learning Taxonomy Through Specimens at BNHS

The BNHS-CEC organised a two-day Taxonomy Workshop and Collection Tour on August 29–30, offering participants practical exposure to species identification and the scientific collections that support biodiversity research. The workshop began on August 29 with a hands-on session on snake identification, where participants learned to distinguish species using scale counting and scalation techniques. The exercise introduced them to the detailed morphological characters used in herpetological identification and taxonomy.

Participants then received a tour of the BNHS Collection Department, where they were introduced to the principles of wet preservation of herpetofauna. Examining a range of preserved specimens gave them an opportunity to appreciate how scientific collections serve as valuable resources for documenting, studying and understanding biodiversity. The sessions were guided by renowned herpetologist Mr Ashok Captain and coordinated by Education Officer Kartheek Thevar. ■



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Tata Power Employees Explore Butterflies at BNHS-CEC, Mumbai

Butterflies offered a window into urban biodiversity when BNHS hosted employees of its Corporate Member, Tata Power, for an educational programme at the Conservation Education Centre (CEC), Goregaon, Mumbai. The programme began with an introduction to butterflies, covering their ecological importance, life cycle, host plants and role as pollinators and indicators of healthy ecosystems. Participants then explored the CEC on a guided nature trail, observing butterflies and other elements of forest biodiversity in their natural surroundings. Designed as a hands-on conservation education experience for BNHS Corporate Members, the programme encouraged participants to look more closely at the biodiversity within an urban landscape. ■



Students Explore Everyday Actions for Biodiversity

On September 9, 2026, the BNHS-CEC, in collaboration with BNHS-EIACP, organised an interactive Eco Club session at Veer Bhagat Singh High School, Malad, Mumbai. Around 60 students from the school's Nature Club and Science Club participated in discussions and activities focused on local biodiversity and sustainable living. Students explored ideas for protecting biodiversity in and around their communities, along with practical ways to adopt more sustainable habits. Through school-based Eco and Nature Clubs, BNHS continues to create opportunities for students to learn about the environment, and take an active role in building more sustainable communities. ■



Building BNHS Nature Clubs in Amravati Schools – Maharashtra

Teachers from across Amravati district came together in September to explore practical ways of bringing nature education into schools. Through two training workshops organised by BNHS in collaboration with the Nature Conservation Society Amravati (NCSA), educators were introduced to Nature Clubs, School Biodiversity Registers and a range of activities that can connect students more closely with their local environment.

The first workshop was held on September 1, 2026 at the Melghat Tiger Reserve and Tourism Centre, bringing together 23 teachers from schools across the district. Anchored and coordinated by Aarti Verma, the programme included sessions by Nandkishor Dudhe, Senior Programme Officer, BNHS, who introduced the structure and objectives of the BNHS Nature Club programme and guided teachers on establishing nature clubs and preparing School Biodiversity Registers (SBRs).

A School Biodiversity Register can help students document the plants, animals and other forms of life found in and around their school, turning their immediate surroundings into a living classroom. The exercise also encourages students to observe, record and understand the biodiversity they encounter every day. Rohan Chavan, Project Associate, BNHS, presented a proposed annual activity calendar featuring birdwatching, nature trails, biodiversity studies and environmental-awareness programmes. Prof. Nishikant Kale, member of NCSA, shared experiences from local environmental initiatives and encouraged teachers to nurture students' interest in nature through regular engagement.

The second one-day workshop on September 2, organised at the Muthwa Centre, Van Samvad Kendra, Dharni, focused on strengthening school-based environmental activities. The workshop was inaugurated by Ms Shubhangi Raut, Forest Range Officer, Harisal Forest Range, who highlighted the importance of forest and environmental conservation and assured teachers of support from the Forest Department.

Mr Dudhe introduced the objectives of the programme, while Prof Nishikant Kale presented NCSA's environmental initiatives and activities at the Muthwa Training Centre. Mr Chavan guided teachers on developing year-round nature-learning activities, with discussions extending beyond nature clubs and SBRs to include school kitchen gardens and water conservation. Representatives from four of the six invited schools participated in the second workshop. Compered and coordinated by Mr Dhananjay Sayre, NCSA, it concluded with a shared commitment to making nature-based learning a sustained part of school life. ■



Exploring Careers in Wildlife Conservation at Colleges in Akola, Maharashtra

For students interested in wildlife and the environment, a career in conservation extends well beyond the classroom. On September 3, 2026, BNHS brought this perspective to students in Akola through a lecture series on wildlife conservation, environmental education and career opportunities. Sessions were held at Shivaji Science College, Shankarlal Khandelwal College and RDG College, reaching 147 Zoology students and faculty members. Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, Senior Programme Officer, BNHS, and Mr Rohan Chavan, Project Associate, BNHS, interacted with participants and introduced them to opportunities for gaining practical experience and building careers in the conservation sector.

The sessions highlighted BNHS courses, the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP), internships and field-based learning opportunities. Discussions focused on the importance of combining academic knowledge with practical skills, including species identification, biodiversity documentation, field observation, data collection and environmental education. Students actively participated in discussions and explored how field experience and specialised training can complement their academic studies and prepare them for professional opportunities in wildlife conservation and related fields. By connecting students with conservation professionals, the lecture series encouraged young learners to look beyond conventional academic routes and consider how their interest in biodiversity can develop into meaningful skills and careers. ■

Bringing Experiential Nature Learning to Akola Schools – Maharashtra

Taking nature education beyond the classroom, BNHS and Nisarg Katta brought teachers together at Katepurna Wildlife Sanctuary, Akola, for a Nature Club Teacher Training Workshop on September 4, 2026. Twenty teachers from schools across Akola district participated in the workshop, which introduced practical approaches to nature-based and experiential learning. Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, Senior Programme Officer, BNHS-EIACP, introduced the BNHS Nature Club initiative and guided teachers on establishing Nature Clubs and preparing School Biodiversity Registers (SBRs).



Mr Rohan Chavan, Project Associate, BNHS, presented a proposed annual activity calendar designed to keep students engaged with nature throughout the year. Activities included birdwatching, nature trails, biodiversity studies and environmental awareness programmes, offering teachers a structured way to connect classroom learning with direct observation and field experience. The workshop also emphasised the importance of making nature education interactive and accessible to students. Mr Amol Sawant, Founder, Nisarg Katta and Honorary Wildlife Warden, demonstrated engaging nature-learning activities and shared approaches for encouraging students to develop an interest in wildlife and participate in conservation. ■

Akola school Students Take a Stand Against Plastic



Students of Jasnagara Public School, Akola, turned their attention to one of the most familiar environmental challenges in everyday life – plastic pollution – during a BNHS Nature Club awareness activity on September 21, 2026. The programme featured an interactive brainstorming session that encouraged students to examine how plastic affects the environment and consider practical ways to reduce its use. Discussions covered the impacts of plastic pollution, the problems associated with single-use plastic bags and the importance of choosing more sustainable alternatives. Particular emphasis

was placed on the benefits of reusable cotton cloth bags and the role of individual choices in reducing plastic waste. Rather than focusing only on the problem, the session encouraged students to identify actions they could adopt at home and share with their families and communities. ■



BNHS Nature Club Students Turn Learning into Action at Mardi in Satara, Maharashtra

At Chhatrapati Shivaji Vidyalaya, Mardi, Satara, the BNHS Nature Club organised a series of activities in September. From celebrating trees and observing birds to exploring eco-friendly festival practices, the activities encouraged students to connect everyday actions with biodiversity conservation.

On September 8, 17 Nature Club students took part in a Rakhi Festival with Trees, tying rakhis to trees and plants on the school campus. Supported by seven coordinating teachers, the activity conveyed a simple message – trees are essential to our lives and deserve care and protection.

The following day, students stepped outdoors for a Bird Trail around the school premises and surrounding area. Mr Divate, school teacher introduced the participants to the Coppersmith Barbet, discussing its characteristics, habitat, and nesting habits. With 32 students and three teachers participating, the trail offered an opportunity to observe local birds in their surroundings and build familiarity with the avifauna found around the school.

On September 12, the BNHS Nature Club organised an Eco-friendly Ganpati Workshop, introducing students to environmentally responsible ways of celebrating Ganesh Chaturthi. Thirteen Nature Club students and three teachers participated, exploring the importance of eco-friendly materials and sustainable festival practices.

Together, these activities brought conservation closer to students' everyday lives. By combining observation, creativity and familiar cultural traditions, the BNHS Nature Clubs are helping young learners develop a practical understanding of biodiversity. ■



Undergraduate Students Explore Vulture Conservation at Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

For students studying wildlife and ecology, seeing conservation in practice can bring classroom concepts to life. On September 23, 2026, 25 undergraduate students and two faculty members from Somaiya Vidyavihar University visited the BNHS–Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Bhopal, as part of their Wildlife – Ecology, Conservation and Community Engagement field programme. Coordinated by Ms Kriti Jain, the visit was welcomed by Dr Arockianathan Samson, Centre Manager, BNHS–VCBC Bhopal. Students were introduced to the sharp decline in India’s vulture populations and the conservation response, including the impact of veterinary diclofenac, vulture-safe alternatives, conservation breeding, Vulture Safe Zones, and vulture release and post-release monitoring programmes.

The field session provided an insight into the detailed husbandry and management involved in conservation breeding. Students learned about vulture health monitoring, feeding, breeding, artificial incubation and chick rearing. They were also introduced to tools used to identify and monitor individual birds, including identification rings, GPS/satellite tags and microchips, as well as equipment such as incubators, brooders, and transportation boxes. Dr Krishna Mohan, Sr. Veterinarian, Assam demonstrated the centre’s CCTV surveillance and monitoring system, showing how technology supports the observation and management of birds within the facility. The programme concluded with a guided tour of the aviaries, incubation facilities, feeding areas, and monitoring units. ■



Building Green Skills at Nandur Madhameshwar, Maharashtra

At Nandur Madhameshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, one of Maharashtra's important wetland landscapes and a Ramsar Site, a 54-day training programme is helping build skills for nature conservation and responsible ecotourism. On September 28, 2026, the BNHS-EIACP Resource Partner on Avian Ecology inaugurated the Green Skill Development Programme (GSDP) course in "Nature Conservator Cum Ecotourism Guide" in Nashik district. The inaugural session was attended by Shri Hiralal Chaudhari, Range Forest Officer, Shri Rajendra Dound, Round Officer, and Mr Nandkishor Dudhe, Senior Programme Officer, BNHS-EIACP. Following a welcome address by Mr Dudhe, the forest officials shared their field experiences in wildlife conservation and encouraged trainees to make the most of the programme.

The orientation combined classroom learning with practical and participatory approaches. Mr Dudhe introduced trainees to the work and initiatives of BNHS, the ecological significance of Ramsar Sites and the framework of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs). Interactive educational games and team-based activities encouraged participation, teamwork and experiential learning. Each trainee also received a resource kit containing a course T-shirt, field hat, daily note register, relevant training materials and The Book of Indian Birds by Dr Sálim Ali. Ms Natasha Girkar, BNHS-EIACP, anchored and coordinated the inaugural session, while Mr Niraj Patel and Mr Yogesh Dhamnaskar managed the programme arrangements and provided technical support.

With Nandur Madhameshwar as its living classroom, the GSDP course aims to equip participants with knowledge and practical skills relevant to nature conservation and ecotourism, while deepening their understanding of the biodiversity and ecological importance of the landscape. ■

Herpetofauna Course Participants Explore Western Ghats during the Goa Field Camp

The BNHS-CEC organised a Field Camp at Goa for the participants of the Herpetology Course from September 4–6. Set amid the biodiversity-rich landscapes of the Western Ghats, the camp offered an introduction to amphibians, reptiles and other forest fauna in their natural habitats. Day and night explorations around Nature's Nest took participants through dense vegetation, streams and varied microhabitats.



Among the reptiles encountered were the Malabar Pit Viper, Hump-nosed Pit Viper, Saw-scaled Viper, Kukri Snake, Common Wolf Snake, Indian Flying Lizard (Draco), Deccan Banded Gecko and Prashad's Gecko. Amphibian encounters were equally rewarding, with sightings of the Amboli Bush Frog, Bombay Bush Frog, Malabar Gliding Frog, Castle Rock Night Frog, tree frogs, and burrowing frogs. Nocturnal walks also revealed a fascinating diversity of invertebrates, including the Giant Forest Scorpion, Indian Red Scorpion, Tailless Whip Scorpion, Tarantula and Purple Tree Crab.

Beyond identifying species, the camp encouraged participants to observe how wildlife responds to its surroundings and how different species are adapted to particular microhabitats. Through close observation and hands-on field experience, the Goa Field Camp helped participants strengthen their identification skills while developing an appreciation of the ecological richness of the Western Ghats. ■

Nature and Creativity Come Together at BNHS-CEC



On September 4, 2026, the BlackRock CSR team visited BNHS-CEC. The programme began with a Nature Trail through the lush surroundings of the CEC, where participants observed butterflies, flowers and other elements of biodiversity. The experience continued with a Nature Mandala Workshop, where participants used natural materials to create their own mandalas. The activity encouraged

them to look closely at natural forms, textures and colours while translating their observations into creative expressions. By combining a guided nature experience with hands-on art, the programme offered participants a different way to engage with biodiversity. ■

Learning Through Nature at BNHS Conservation Education Centre

September brought a steady stream of students and nature enthusiasts to the BNHS-CEC, Mumbai. Through nature trails, a butterfly walk, a botany field visit and an insect safari, participants explored biodiversity through observation and hands-on learning.

Nature Trails for School Students | September 10–11: On September 10, 50 students from Convent Girls High School explored the CEC through a guided nature trail. Students observed plants, butterflies, birds and other wildlife, discovering the diversity within the Centre's forested surroundings.

The following day, 120 students from Sane Guruji School visited the CEC for a similar nature experience. The trail encouraged students to observe their surroundings, ask questions, and explore the importance of protecting local biodiversity. Together, the two visits gave 170 students an opportunity to take classroom learning outdoors and develop a closer connection with nature.



Foundation Day Butterfly Trail | September 13: As part of the BNHS Foundation Day celebrations on September 13, participants joined a Butterfly Trail at the CEC. The guided exploration introduced them to butterfly diversity, life cycles and behaviour, while highlighting their role in healthy ecosystems. The trail offered a fitting way to celebrate BNHS by exploring the biodiversity in its own surroundings.



Botany Field Visit to Bhandup Pumping Station | September 20: Students undertaking a Botany course visited Bhandup Pumping Station for a field-based learning experience. They observed and documented plants, flowers, fruits and other organisms in their natural surroundings, including Celosia and Papaya, as well as Grass Yellow caterpillars, Red Silk caterpillars, Woolly Aphids and dragonflies. The visit helped students connect botanical concepts learned in the classroom with real examples.



Insect Safari | September 27: The month concluded with an Insect Safari Walk at the CEC on September 27. Participants explored the often-overlooked world of small creatures, encountering beetles, grasshoppers, spiders, and butterflies. The walk introduced them to insect behaviour, adaptations and ecological roles, highlighting how even the smallest organisms contribute to healthy ecosystems. ■



BNHS Nature Club Activities at Jijau Kanya Vidyalaya, Akola, Maharashtra

At Jijau Kanya Vidyalaya, Ramdas Peth, Akola, environmental learning moved beyond the classroom into practical action. Through activities ranging from seed-ball making and vulture awareness to waste segregation and plastic reduction, the school's students explored different ways of caring for their environment.



On August 27, c. 375 students and teachers participated in a Seed Ball Preparation Workshop. Guided by Science Teacher Mrs Sandhya Pravin Kandilkar, students of Classes IX and X used seeds they had collected during summer and combined them with soil and cow dung to prepare seed balls. In the presence of Principal Mrs Deshpande, the seed balls were distributed among classes and teachers, while students learned how this simple technique can support natural regeneration and tree plantation.

The school then marked International Vulture Conservation Day on September 5, alongside Teachers' Day and Gopal Kala celebrations. An awareness session led by Mrs Kandilkar introduced the students to the ecological role of vultures. Using charts and visual materials, the session explained how these scavengers rapidly dispose of animal carcasses, help reduce disease risks and contribute to ecological balance. Students also learned why healthy vulture populations can be an important sign of a healthy environment.

On September 7, environmental responsibility took a practical turn with a Go Zero Waste and Solid Waste Management Awareness Workshop under the Swachh Bharat Mission. Around 400 students from Classes V–X, along with teaching staff, participated. Resource persons Mrs. Chittewar and Mrs Wadhve introduced responsible waste management, followed by a hands-on segregation exercise. Students worked in groups to identify different types of waste and place them in the appropriate bins, reinforcing the importance of segregation at source.

The month's activities concluded on September 29 with a "Say No to Plastic" Pledge and Awareness Session, involving around 400 students from Classes V–X and teaching staff. Students pledged to reduce plastic use, with particular emphasis on avoiding unnecessary single-use items such as plastic tiffin boxes and bottles. They were encouraged to carry these commitments into their homes and communities and help create a more plastic-conscious school environment.

Together, these activities connected biodiversity, waste management and everyday choices, giving students practical ways to participate in environmental conservation. From putting a seed in a ball of soil to refusing a piece of single-use plastic, the Nature Club is helping turn environmental awareness into action. ■

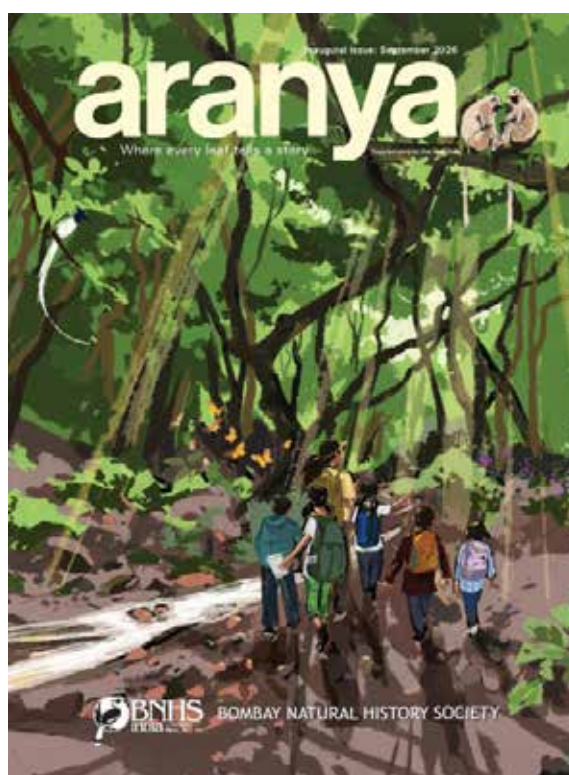


BNHS Launches Aranya, a Nature Magazine for the Readers of Tomorrow

The BNHS launched *Aranya*, a new quarterly nature magazine for young readers, at its Annual General Meeting on September 29, 2026. The magazine was launched by BNHS President Mr. Pravinsingh Pardeshi in the presence of its founder editors, Mr. Kishor Rithe, Dr. Bharat Bhushan and Ms. Vibhuti Dedhia, along with BNHS members and conservation enthusiasts.

The initiative comes at a time when children are spending an increasing amount of time indoors and online. *Aranya* seeks to bridge that distance by making India's landscapes accessible, relevant and exciting, while encouraging young readers to step outdoors and discover nature for themselves.

Developed through the efforts of Society members Katie Bagli, Yasmin Khan and Medha Rajadhyaksha, *Aranya* has been published for children aged 8–14. Building on the five-decade legacy of *Hornbill*, *Aranya* will take a distinctly India-focused approach to nature education. The magazine will explore Indian landscapes, species, indigenous knowledge and conservation efforts through stories, photographs, illustrations, field observations and hands-on activities. *Aranya* seeks to do more than inform. It hopes to nurture curiosity, environmental awareness and a sense of responsibility towards the natural world, inspiring a new generation to not only read about nature, but observe it, explore it and become its stewards. ■

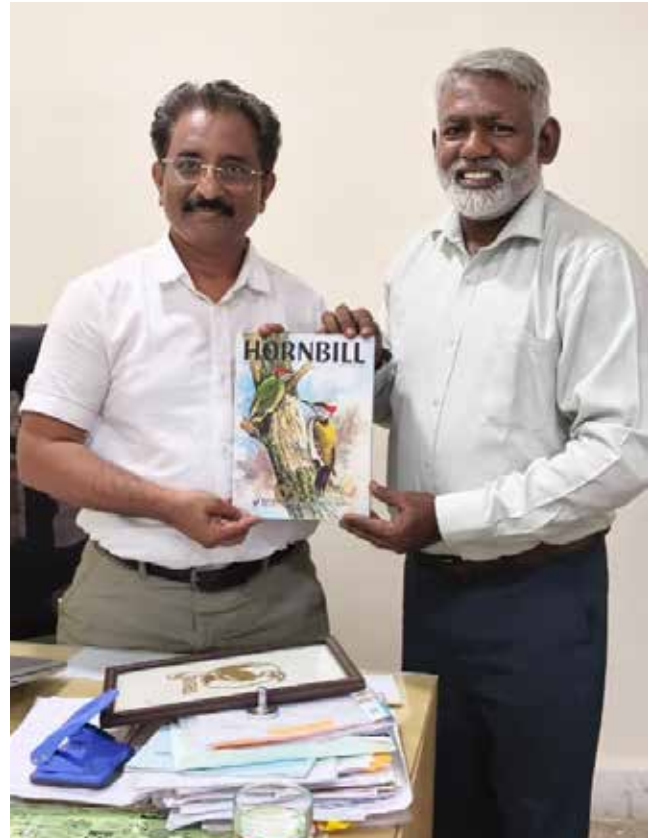


Investing in Young Minds for a Greener Future



BNHS Life Member Kusumakar Damle generously contributed ₹1 lakh towards BNHS School Nature Clubs and also spent time inspiring the next generation to explore, learn, and care for nature.

A Journey through Palms and Birds



A passionate BNHS member, Godson Samuel explored the fascinating connection between palm trees and birds during his motorcycle journey from Mumbai to Tamil Nadu.



BASIC COURSE IN FIELD ORNITHOLOGY AND BIRD MIGRATION STUDIES

This course aims to create a network of birders to support conservation along the Central Asian Flyway. The training would help us to create a network of voluntary forces to contribute to bird monitoring and bird ringing. This workshop focuses mainly on bird migration study techniques including bird banding, bird population monitoring, bird identification and habitat observations through classroom sessions and field visits.

VENUE:

BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, Point Calimere (Kadiyankana), Tamil Nadu

TOPICS COVERED:

Bird Identification; Counting Techniques; Migration and Flyways; Global Significance of Bird Marking Studies; Case Studies – Indian Skimmer Conservation/Vulture Conservation /Grassland Conservation; Demonstration of Bird Ringing

FIELD TRIPS:

Great Vedaranyam Swamp; Point Calimere Wildlife Sanctuary; Beach, Siruthalvikadu mudflats

REGISTRATION FEE (PER PERSON):

Rs. 11,000/- (for non-members) ; Rs. 9,500/- (for existing BNHS Members)

Fee includes tent accommodation -Two persons per tent; Facilities: cots, fan, charging points, pillow and blankets, food, field visits, entry fee etc.

Eligibility: No age limit, anyone with an interest can participate.

Scan for Enquiry Form

Payment: The payment details will be shared once the enquiry form is submitted for registration.

Registration closes 7 days before start date of each batch!

CONTACT US:

Mr. S. Sivakumar, Email: s.sivaminathan@bnhs.org; Mob: 94088 72745
Email: bmscpointcalimere@bnhs.org

SCHEDULED BATCHES

2026	2027
Batch 1 09 – 11 October	Batch 5 01 – 03 January
Batch 2 30 October – 1 November	Batch 6 08 – 10 January
Batch 3 27 – 29 November	
Batch 4 18 – 20 December	



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CONTACT US

Bombay Natural History Society

Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400 001.

Email: director@bnhs.org; Web: www.bnhs.org; Mob: +91 91372 73106

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