

Bombay Natural History Society

142st ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS
FOR THE YEAR

1st APRIL 2025 to 31st March 2026



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this report is in compliance of the rules of the Society's registration Act, Bombay Public trust Act and all other relevant acts like the Foreign Contribution Regulations Act 1976, Income Tax Act, CSR Act etc.

Director
BNHS

142nd ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR 1st APRIL 2025 to 31st MARCH 2026

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Bombay Natural History Society

Hornbill House, Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road, Mumbai 400 001

Email: info@bnhs.org; web: www.bnhs.org

Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Rani, Assam

Funder: The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), UK, and The Forest Department of Assam

Team members:

Centre Manager: Dr Sachin Ranade (Deputy Director, BNHS)

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Aniket Pawar, Mr Sthita Pragyan Mallik, Ms Aneena L.,
Mr Ghanashyam Gogoi, Mr Gitartha Borah

Veterinarian: Dr Krishna Mohan Chutia

Technical & Administrative Support: Mr Jayanta Rabha (Office Assistant)

Vulture Keepers & Field Assistants: Mr Dhiraja Rabha (Driver cum Keeper),

Mr Basanta Rabha (Vulture Keeper), Mr Dilip Rabha (Vulture Keeper),

Mr Pranab Deori (Vulture Keeper-Night Watchman), Mr Pradip Rabha (Vulture Keeper-Night Watchman),

Mr Hiren Majumdar Vulture (Keeper), Mr Hemanta Buragohain (Field Assistant),

Mr Karuna Rabha (Field Assistant, Release), Mr Akash Rajuwar (Field Assistant, Release),

Mr Timan Singh (Vulture Keeper) Mr AmarJyoti Das (Driver)

Location: Jorsal Reserve Forest, Rani Range, East Kamrup Forest Division, Kamrup District, Assam
(20 km off NH-17, 40 km from Guwahati)

The Vulture Conservation Breeding Programme started in Assam in 2007 in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department. Currently, the Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC) houses 181 vultures: 124 White-rumped Vultures and 57 Slender-billed Vultures. In addition, 14 White-rumped and 5 Slender-billed vultures hatched naturally in the colony aviaries this year. Routine activities focused on veterinary care, including ringing, blood sample collection, health check-ups, and post-mortem examinations. Husbandry and maintenance routines ensured the aviaries remained suitable for the vultures' health, providing regular food and water alongside specialized care for breeding stock.

This year, we initiated the reintroduction programme, establishing release aviaries in the Kamrup and Biswanath districts of Assam. Ten White-rumped Vultures fitted with PTT and GSM satellite tags were released in March 2026.

The VCBC plays an instrumental role in training and public awareness. This year, six students completed their internships, and exposure visits were conducted for forest staff from Mizoram, Tripura, Jharkhand, and Himachal Pradesh.

The Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) programme covers 27 districts in Assam and four adjoining districts in Meghalaya. As an *in situ* conservation initiative, it focuses on the well-being of vultures in their natural habitat. An undercover pharmacy survey was conducted to evaluate the availability of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in local markets. The findings showed that vulture-safe drugs accounted for 89% of available stock, while unsafe drugs comprised 11%. Notably, ketoprofen was not recorded during this survey.

Wild vulture colonies were monitored across Dimow (Sivasagar district), Mahamaya (Kokrajhar district), Lakhimpur, and Dibrugarh districts. At Dimow, 15 Slender-billed Vulture nests and 15 White-rumped Vulture nests were marked and routinely monitored; 80% of these nests remained active, with fledging expected by May–June 2026. At Mahamaya, a White-rumped Vulture colony with 22 nests was monitored. As of March 2026, 75% of the nests were active, with parents and nestlings documented throughout the colony.

Under the awareness and advocacy drive, multiple outreach initiatives were conducted:

- **9 meetings** engaging over 254 veterinarians and paravets
- **12 meetings** for forest personnel
- **151 school and college programmes** reaching approximately 12,000 students
- **43 community meetings** engaging village elders and local leaders ■

Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC), Pinjore, Haryana

Funder: MoEF&CC under the CSS scheme

Team members:

Centre Manager: Dr Arshvarinder Singh Virk

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Hemant Bajpai, Research Biologist and
Arindam Aditya, Conservation Biologist

Veterinarian: Dr Arshvarinder Singh Virk

Technical & Administrative Support: Mr Balakram Sharma, Administrative Assistant and
Niranjan Dalai, Administrative Officer

Vulture Keepers & Field Assistants:

Mr Lalit Kumar, Technical Assistant, Mr Jai Kishan Sharma, Supervisor, Mr Tek Chand, Vulture Keeper, Mr Ravi Sharma, Vulture Keeper, Mr Manohar Singh, Vulture Keeper, Mr Ved Prakash, Vulture Keeper, Mr Devi Dutt, Vulture Keeper, Mr Yuvraj Singh, Vulture Keeper, Mr Prakash Chand, Night Watchman, Mr Sukhdev, Night Watchman, Mr Md. Mansoor, Vulture Keeper cum Night Watchman and Mr Rajnish Sharma, Driver cum Vulture Keeper

Location: The centre is located at village Jodhpur on the edge of the Bir Shikargaha Wildlife Sanctuary, which is about 8 Km off National Highway-22 from Pinjore on Mallah Road.

The Jatayu Conservation Breeding Centre (JCBC), Pinjore – a collaborative initiative of the Haryana Forest & Wildlife Department and the Bombay Natural History Society – continues to play a pivotal role in the recovery of India's three Critically Endangered resident *Gyps* vultures: the Indian Vulture (*Gyps indicus*), the White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), and the Slender-billed Vulture (*Gyps tenuirostris*). Supported under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) Centrally Sponsored Scheme, the programme integrates conservation breeding with reintroduction into the wild.

Key figure	2025-26 achievement / status
Captive population	356 Vultures: 215 Indian, 75 White-rumped and 66 Slender-billed Vultures
Breeding	40 breeding pairs; 52 eggs; 35 chicks; 67.3% hatchability; 87.5% breeding success
Cumulative production	More than 470 vulture nestlings produced since breeding became established
Artificial incubation	15 first-clutch eggs incubated; 10 chicks hatched; 11 chicks' hand-reared
Conservation transfers	10 Indian Vultures to Nehru Zoological Park; 34 captive-bred vultures to Maharashtra for release
Post-release monitoring	25 White-rumped Vultures tracked; movements up to about 200 km; several birds integrated with wild vultures
Field conservation	59 pharmacies surveyed in 21 districts; new White-rumped Vulture colony with 2 active nests found in Sirmaur, Himachal Pradesh

The breeding programme remained highly productive, supported by double-clutching, artificial incubation, hand-rearing, and meticulous husbandry designed to minimize human imprinting. Annual clinical examinations, haematology, serum biochemistry, and disease surveillance confirmed that the flock remained in sound health. JCBC also strengthened the national conservation breeding network by transferring 10 Indian Vultures to Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad. Furthermore, it supported reintroduction efforts in central India by providing 20 Indian Vultures and 14 White-rumped Vultures for release across the Pench, Tadoba-Andhari, and Melghat Tiger Reserves.

Post-release monitoring of the 25 White-rumped Vultures released from Pinjore in December 2024 revealed wide-ranging dispersal across Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Uttar Pradesh. Several birds were observed feeding, perching, and soaring alongside wild vultures, demonstrating encouraging behavioural integration. Monitoring also identified critical threats – most notably electrocution

linked to power infrastructure – though no mortalities were attributed to NSAID toxicity. Additionally, GPS tracking and targeted field surveys led to the discovery of a previously undocumented White-rumped Vulture nesting colony near Bari Bhun Padahan in Sirmour district, where two active nests were documented.

The Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) programme combined road transects, carcass-dump monitoring, nesting surveys, food-availability assessments, and covert pharmacy surveys. Although meloxicam remained the most commonly available veterinary NSAID, harmful and banned formulations continued to be detected, underscoring the urgent need for sustained enforcement and targeted awareness. ■

Vulture Safe Zone Advocacy & Awareness Programme

Project Duration: April 2025 – March 2026

Team members: Alka Dubey

Location: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan

During the reporting period, the Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) programme in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan made significant progress in strengthening advocacy, awareness, institutional coordination and stakeholder engagement for vulture conservation. Despite limited dedicated resources, the programme maintained continuous engagement through virtual meetings, telephonic consultations, webinars and targeted stakeholder interactions, enabling conservation messaging and policy advocacy to reach multiple administrative levels across the three states. In Uttar Pradesh, extensive advocacy was undertaken with the Forest Department, Animal Husbandry Department and Food & Drug Administration (FDA), including 77 reported advocacy interactions, along with three state-level webinars. In Bihar, 18 virtual/telephonic interactions were conducted, while 15 interactions were undertaken in Rajasthan. These engagements strengthened coordination among government departments and supported implementation of vulture conservation measures.

A major focus of the programme was advocacy against the veterinary use of vulture-toxic NSAIDs, particularly diclofenac, aceclofenac, ketoprofen and nimesulide, while promoting safer alternatives such as meloxicam and tolfenamic acid. Continued engagement contributed to greater awareness among government officials, veterinary stakeholders, pharmacists and other relevant groups and supported regulatory implementation at district and state levels. More than 5,000 individuals/stakeholders were sensitized through targeted advocacy and awareness activities, predominantly through online platforms. Regular media outreach and newspaper coverage further extended the conservation message. ■

Vulture Conservation Breeding Centre (VCBC), Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Project Duration: 2025-2026

Supported by: Madhya Pradesh Forest Department

Partner Institutions: Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, Van Vihar National Park & Zoo,
Postal Department (Indore GPO)

Team Members

Centre Manager: Dr Arockianathan Samson

Research Biologist: Mr Sanjay Parihar

Centre Supervisor: Mr Raphick Uddin

Vulture Attender Cum Night Watchman: Mr Nishanth Sen

Driver: Mr Dharam Singh Evney

Location: Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

Summary for the period: Established as a joint initiative of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) and the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, VCBC Bhopal functions to build viable insurance populations and produce birds for future reintroduction of the critically endangered White-rumped Vulture and Indian/Long-billed Vulture. During the reporting cycle, the centre housed 99 vultures and advanced breeding output through natural incubation (one hatchlings) and artificial incubation protocols (eight hatchlings). In addition to routine husbandry, enclosure maintenance, and hematological health assessments, the centre actively undertook rescue and rehabilitation operations, successfully releasing six GPS-tagged vultures at Halali Dam. Collaborative public outreach, stakeholder workshops, and veterinary drug awareness campaigns further supported in-situ threat mitigation and species recovery. ■

Bird Ringing and Monitoring of Migratory Birds along the Central Asian Flyway & Development of State CAF Action Plan, and Promotion of Associated Extension Education & Outreach Activities in the State of Bihar

Project Duration: 5 years (2020–2025) + 2-year extension (2025–2027)

Supported by: Department of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (DEF&CC), Government of Bihar

Team members

Principle Investigator: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam (Deputy Director, BNHS)

Research & Field Biologists: Ms Khushboo Rani, Ms Vertika Patel, Mr Abilash R.,
Ms Ambika Rajoria, Mr Abhay Rai, and Mr Susmit Bole

Technical & Administrative Support: Md. Asik, Samsul Vajdar, Manish Kumar

Location: Six selected study sites in Bihar: Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS), Nagi-Nakti Dam Bird Sanctuary, Kanwar Lake, Baraila Lake, Kusheshwar Asthan, and Gogabeel Community Reserve. (Additional sites covered during surveys include Sundarvan and Ghatora Lake).

The project concluded its initial five-year phase in March 2025 and received a two-year extension through March 2027. During the reporting cycle, field activities were executed over three months across designated wetlands to evaluate avifaunal diversity, population trends, and habitat integrity. Scientific initiatives centered on bird ringing, satellite tracking, nest monitoring of sandbar-nesting riverine species, and assessing anthropogenic pressures. The team also provided technical expertise to the State Forest Department for the Asian Waterbird Census, Bhagalpur Bird Atlas, and Central Asian Flyway State Action Plan development. ■

Research, Monitoring and Conservation of Sarus Crane *Antigone antigone* in Vidarbha, Maharashtra

Project Duration: Three Years (2023-2026)

Supported by: Maharashtra Forest Department

Team members

Principle Investigator: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam

Advisor: Mr Kishor Rithe

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Akhash, Mr Mukund Dhurve, and Mr Ramesware Neware

Location: Gondia, Bhandara, and Chandrapur Districts, Maharashtra (Specific nesting and monitoring clusters located around Dasgaon, Ghatemni, Dhapedwada, and Birsi villages in Gondia District).

The Sarus Crane (*Antigone antigone*), the world's tallest flying bird, is an obligate wetland-dependent species primarily utilizing eastern Vidarbha's paddy ecosystems for monsoon nesting. During the 2025–2026 period, targeted ecological surveys and community-based interventions were undertaken across Gondia, Bhandara, and Chandrapur districts. The initiative evaluated Sarus population parameters, located breeding territories, initiated GSM-GPS telemetry and ringing to study movement ecology, and assessed critical landscape-level threats. Close engagement with agrarian communities was maintained to mitigate conflict and build local support for crane conservation across human-dominated wetlands. ■

Elucidating the Status of Migratory Waterbirds in Ornithologically Important Wetlands in Maharashtra; Central Asian Flyway Perspective

Project Duration: 5 years (2021–2026)

Supported by: Mangrove Foundation, Government of Maharashtra

Team members

Principle Investigator: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Abhinav Nair, Mr Nikhil Ghadigaonkar, Mr Mohijit Podder, Ms Gayatri ER and Mr Ganesh Pallela.

Technical & Administrative Support: Sunil Bhavsar (driver), Saras Kumar Behera (field assistant), Sivakumar Balasamy, and A. Kannadasan (trappers)

Location: Six selected wetlands in Maharashtra: Nandur-Madhmeshwar Wildlife Sanctuary, Jayakwadi Bird Sanctuary, Ujani Reservoir, Gangapur Wetland, Hatnur Reservoir, and Visapur Dam.

The project evaluates migratory waterbird dynamics across six key wetland ecosystems in Maharashtra to inform Central Asian Flyway conservation priorities. From October 2025 to March 2026, standardized total count vantage surveys were completed across all sites to track abundance trends, species distribution shifts, and wetland conditions. In addition to monitoring, the project delivered field training for members and frontline staff, coordinated AWC 2026 surveys, submitted research reports on stopover ecology, and provided scientific facilitation for the proposed Ramsar designation of Jayakwadi Bird Sanctuary. ■

Building a Surveillance Model for Detecting Zoonotic Spill-over in Increased Bird-Human Interaction Setting Using the One Health Approach: A Study at Selected Bird Sanctuaries and Wetlands

Project Duration: 3 Years (2025–2027)

Supported by: Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Government of India

Team members

Principle Investigator: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam

Research & Field Biologists: Mr S. Sivakumar, Dr Himadri Sekhar Mondal, Ms Deepa Sharma, Mr Abhinav Nair, Mr Ganesh Pallela, and Mr Shivdatt Mishra

Technical & Administrative Support: Mr Md. Arif, Mr Md. Aslam, Mr Lal Mohamed, Mr Saras Kumar Behera, Mr Md. Babul, Mr Balashore Thapa, and Mr Aniket Bhise

Location: Combined across two states:

Sikkim: Kitam Bird Sanctuary, Sidkeong Tulku Bird Park, Himalayan Zoological Park, Pangolakha (including Phedang Tso), and Fambong Lho Wildlife Sanctuary.

Maharashtra: Ujani Reservoir (Bhigwan), Veer Dam, Mayani Bird Conservation Reserve, and Visapur Dam.

Zoonotic diseases pose growing public health concerns globally, yet nationwide surveillance frameworks across human-wildlife interfaces remain limited. Undertaken with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) using a One Health framework, this study establishes a sentinel surveillance model for zoonotic spill-over among bird sanctuary workers and individuals in close proximity to avian populations. BNHS is mandated to conduct biological sampling—including cloacal/tracheal swabs, blood sera, and ectoparasites—across high-interaction wetlands and sanctuaries in Sikkim and Maharashtra. In FY 2025–2026, systematic trapping and screening identified 23 pathogen-positive cases across both landscapes while maintaining rigorous sample transit protocols. ■

BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre (BMSC), Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu – Activities

Project Duration: Not Applicable

Supported by: Various Donors

Team members

Principle Investigator: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam (Deputy Director)

Scientist In-charge: Mr S. Sivakumar (Assistant Director)

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Paul Antony B and Ms Rose Francis (Senior Research Fellows)

Technical & Administrative Support: Mr B. Vinothkannan (Office Assistant) and Mr G. Manimaran (Driver)

Location: Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu.

Operating within the ecologically sensitive Point Calimere Wetland Complex—a key crossroads for the Central Asian and East Asian–Australasian Flyways—the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre (BMSC) advanced its research, ecological monitoring, capacity-building, and conservation education mandates during 2025–2026. Core undertakings encompassed the School Bird Club Project, structured field ornithology certificate courses, bird ringing demonstrations, synchronized census drives, and multi-tiered stakeholder training involving frontline forest staff, researchers, students, and local communities. ■

Conducting a National Symposium on Wetland Conservation and Sustainable Tourism and Coffee with Corporates

Supported by: Government of Andhra Pradesh

Team members

Principle Investigator: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam

Research & Field Biologists: Dr Himadri Mondal and Khushboo Rani

Location: Krea University, Sri City, Pulicat Lake, Andhra Pradesh.

As part of the Flamingo Festival 2026, the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department and BNHS organized a two-day multi-stakeholder platform on 10–11 January 2026 at Krea University, Sri City, focused on Pulicat Lake’s ecological integrity and governance. The initiative comprised a National Symposium addressing hydrological connectivity, waterbird monitoring, policy, and community stewardship, alongside the “Coffee with Corporates” forum to mobilize sustainable CSR/ESG funding for landscape-scale conservation. The events highlighted adaptive management, standardized census data integration, and collaborative pathways for the long-term conservation of the Pulicat lagoon ecosystem. ■

Capacity Enhancement Workshop to Strengthen BirdLife Partnership's Ability to Implement Migratory Bird Conservation in the Central Asian Flyway

Project Date: March 9–14, 2026

Supported by: BirdLife International

Team members

Dr P. Sathiyaselvam, Ms Khushboo Rani, Mr Sivakumar, and Dr Himadri Sekhar Mondal

Key Dignitaries & Speakers: Shri Sushil Kumar Awasthi, IFS (DG of Forests & Special Secretary, MoEFCC); Dr Clement Ben, IFS (IG of Forests - Wildlife, MoEFCC); Shri Anand Mohan, IFS (CEO, National CAMPA); Mr Rajeev Mital (DG, NMCG); Mr Praveensingh Pardeshi (President, BNHS); Mr Kishor Rithe (Director, BNHS); Mr Vinayagan Dharmarajah (Regional Director, BirdLife Asia)

Location: New Delhi (Field demonstrations conducted at Sultanpur National Park and Bird Sanctuary, Haryana)

Organized by BNHS in collaboration with BirdLife International from March 9–13, 2026, in New Delhi, this regional capacity-building initiative brought together key conservation partners across 13 countries in the Central Asian Flyway. The workshop focused on operationalizing ecosystem assessment tools (TESSA), mainstreaming nature-based solutions, reconciling renewable energy infrastructure with avian safety, and curbing illegal bird taking. The event also facilitated the signing of a three-year conservation initiative for endangered riverine birds on the Mahanadi River and featured high-level addresses from leaders across MoEF&CC, the National Mission for Clean Ganga, CAMPA, BNHS, and BirdLife Asia. ■

Marine Megafauna Spotting Mobile App Development (Jalchar)

Project Duration: Long Term

Supported by: Mangrove and Marine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (MMBCF), Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra

Team members: App based project

Principle Investigator: Dr Tejal Vijapure

Research & Field Biologists: Seahorse and MTHL marine team involved in the outreach

Technical and Administrative support: Technical support by Harrier Information Systems Pvt Ltd.

Location: Western coastline (with targeted field outreach in Malvan and Ratnagiri, Maharashtra) and expanded nationwide to riverine basins across India.

Jalchar is a BNHS citizen-science mobile application engineered to empower fishers and riverine stakeholders to monitor and report strandings, bycatch occurrences, and megafauna encounters across Indian waters. Originally initiated for the western seaboard, the tool's taxonomic scope was expanded during the reporting cycle to document vulnerable riverine fauna. From its launch on October 15, 2024 through March 2026, the platform mobilized 271 users and documented critical opportunistic sightings while driving grassroot conservation engagement through field workshops and fisherfolk interactions in coastal Maharashtra. ■

Understanding the Distribution and Population Trend of Invasive Charu Mussels in Mumbai Seascape

(Project no. 517)

Project Duration: January 25–March 2027

Supported by:

Mangrove and Marine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (MMBCF),
Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Dr Tejal Vijapure

Research & Field Biologists: Kangkana Pal and Kongala Maheswari

Technical and Administrative support: -

Location: Airoli, Mumbai, Maharashtra

The American Charu mussel (*Mytella strigata*) is an aggressive invasive bivalve that poses substantial ecological and economic risks to intertidal biodiversity and coastal infrastructure through rapid biofouling. During 2025–2026, the project carried out comprehensive surveys covering 17 coastal and estuarine sites across Thane, Mumbai, and Raigad districts to map bioinvasion vectors and seasonal presence patterns. Findings established extensive mussel carpets and severe structural fouling across Thane Creek, Panvel Creek, Gorai Creek, and Sewri, alongside notable shell length and colormorph variability. Concurrently, laboratory and field assessments advanced across 261 macrobenthic samples and 258 sediment cores to evaluate community-level impacts, with project activities formally extended through September 2026. ■

Mass scale production and sea ranching of vulnerable Indian seahorse (*Hippocampus kuda*) Bleeker, 1852, in the west coast (Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg district), Maharashtra

Project Duration: 5 Years (2024–2029)

Supported by: Mangrove and Marine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation of Maharashtra

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Dr Tejal Vijapure (Scientist 'D')

Research & Field Biologists: Ms Jessica Barman (Research Associate II),
Mr Suyash Patil (Research Associate I)

Technical and Administrative support: Mr. Prathamesh Nachankar (Field Assistant) and Mr. Sairaj More (Driver)

Location: Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg Districts, Maharashtra (*Field surveys covered Dharan, Tarkarli, Kolamb Creek, and Achara Creek in Sindhudurg; Sakhartar Creek and Pandhara Samundar in Ratnagiri*).

The project addresses population declines of the vulnerable Indian seahorse (*Hippocampus kuda*) along the Konkan coast through captive propagation and planned sea-ranching interventions. Covering the initial implementation phase from December 2024 to March 2026, the team completed baseline field station setup, live-feed aquaculture infrastructure, and architectural layouts for a dedicated hatchery at Pandhara Samundar, Ratnagiri. Ecological diving and intertidal surveys mapped vital seagrass nurseries across Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg districts, while continuous fisher interactions provided essential baseline data on accidental bycatch and local habitat use, completing the project's foundational phase. ■

Monitoring and Mitigating the Impacts of Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link on Flamingos and Other Avifauna and Formulating a Conservation Blueprint for the Sewri-Nhava Seascapes

Project Duration: September 2017- September 2027

Supported by:

Mangrove and Marine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation (MMBCF), Mangrove Cell, Maharashtra

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Dr P. Sathiyaselvam

Co-Principle Investigator: Dr Tejal Vijapure (Marine)

Research & Field Biologists:

Sashank Sankpal (SPF-Ornithology), Atish Manna(JPF-Ornithology), Atharva Sakpal(JPF-Marine), Prabir Sahoo(JPF-Marine), Harita V Nair(JPF-Marine), Kaushiki Basak(JPF-Marine), Bhumika Ghosal(JPF-Marine), Jodhikumaran.B(JPF-Ornithology), Balavignesh.S.S(JPF-Ornithology), Jayawant More (Driver), Jayawant Pawar (Driver), Md. Sikandar(Trapper), Manoj Sahani (Trapper), Md. Aashik (Trapper), Shribrij Prajapati (Driver), Bhautik Sondarva(JPF-Ornithology), Kangkana Pal (JPF-Marine), Kongala Maheshwari(JPF-Marine)

Location: Mumbai, Thane, Raigad, and Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra (focusing on Thane Creek and the Sewri–Nhava seascape)

The project evaluates avifaunal population trends and potential ecological disturbances associated with the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link (MTHL) across the Sewri–Nhava marine landscape. Regular monthly ornithological monitoring between March 2025 and April 2026 across Thane Creek documented 58 bird species, tracking substantial congregations exceeding 100,000 migratory shorebirds at peak season. The study established demographic baselines for both Lesser and Greater Flamingos, evaluated flock distribution across operational and adjacent bridge construction zones, and monitored the diversity of intertidal benthic communities alongside eco-toxicological factors to inform a long-term conservation blueprint for the Mumbai–Navi Mumbai coastal corridor. ■

Reinitiating Bird Migration Studies at Keoladeo National Park and Expanding to Other Selected Sites in Rajasthan

Project Duration: Nov 2026 to Oct 2027

Supported by: SITA, BNHS Internal Funds;

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Parveen Shaikh (Scientist 'D')

Research & Field Biologists: Omkar Joshi (Senior Project Fellow)

Location: Keoladeo National Park (Bharatpur), Chambal River and Sambhar Lake, Rajasthan

Commencing in November 2025, this initiative re-establishes BNHS's legacy of migration tracking at Keoladeo National Park. Operating across key wetland and woodland habitats (including Rescue Centre, Shanti Kutir, Bhaisa Mori Road, Keoladeo Mandir, Python Point, and K-Block), the station established standard ringing protocols. Exploratory ringing at Sambhar Lake and the Chambal River extended spatial coverage across Rajasthan's flyway nodes. A technical capacity-building training was conducted during Wildlife Week for 32 local guides and forest personnel to support local resighting networks. Additional funding secured for strengthening outreach and awareness associated with the Programme from Exotic Heritage Group. ■

“Guardians of the Skimmer”-Conserving riverine birds through community participation

Project Duration: 2 year (from March 2023 to March 2025),

Supported by: The Habitat Trust Grant

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Parveen Shaikh (Scientist ‘D’)

Research & Field Biologists: Omkar Joshi (Senior Project Fellow), Satya Siddharth Das (Project Biologist)
Mukesh Kumar (Field Driver)

Location: National Chambal Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan)

The programme focuses on the safeguarding of critically endangered sandbar-nesting avifauna facing threats from seasonal reservoir water releases, egg predation, livestock trampling, and sand mining. Through the Nest Guardian framework, local community members were deployed directly onto nesting islands to install predator fencing and maintain round-the-clock watches. ■

‘Helping skimmers skim’: Expand protection and establish a community-based monitoring and conservation model for Indian Skimmer and Black-bellied Tern at the River Mahanadi, India

Project Duration: 1 year (June 2023 to December 2024)

Supported by: BirdLife International

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Parveen Shaikh

Research & Field Biologists: Satya Siddharth Das (Project Biologist)

Location: River Mahanadi, Odisha

Monitoring of Indian Skimmer and Black-bellied Tern breeding colonies continued along the lower Mahanadi River from January to July 2025, covering nesting colonies in lower Mahanadi. Inundation of the nesting sites remained the key threat to the breeding colonies, although egg poaching was completely controlled in 2025 and no incidences were recorded. The final project report was submitted to and accepted by BirdLife International, and the experience gained under the project led to the development of a new three-year BirdLife International project for continued conservation action in the Mahanadi River system. ■

‘Securing & Protecting breeding habitat of Indian Skimmer and conservation through community participation in Chambal, Madhya Pradesh, India

Project Duration: 1 year (July 2024 to Sep 2025)

Supported by: General Insurance Corporation of India GIC

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Parveen Shaikh (Scientist ‘D’)

Research & Field Biologists: Omkar Joshi (Senior Project Fellow), Satya Siddharth Das (Project Biologist)

Technical and Administrative support: Mukesh Kumar (Field Driver)

Location: River Chambal, Madhya Pradesh

The Nest Guardian Programme continued through the deployment of trained local community members at key nesting islands along the Chambal River. During the 2025 breeding season, more than 500 chicks hatched successfully. The project was extended till July 2026. ■

Safeguarding Breeding Habitats of Indian Skimmer and Sympatric Birds through Monitoring and Community Participation in the Ganga Basin

Project Duration: 2 years (Jan 2026 to Dec 2027)

Supported by: National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Parveen Shaikh

Research & Field Biologists: Deval Kadam (Project Scientist, Chambal), Rajdeep Sarkar (Junior Project Fellow, Prayagraj), Satya Siddharth Das (Project Biologist)

Technical and Administrative support: Mukesh Kumar (Field Driver)

Location: River Chambal, Upper Ganga, Prayagraj and Lower Ganga

The project was formally launched in January 2026. The aim is to scale up the monitoring and conservation of sandbar nesting birds on the River Ganga. Systematic baseline surveys were initiated across the Chambal, Prayagraj, Bijnor-Narora and Lower Ganga stretches to identify nesting habitats of Indian Skimmer and other sandbar-nesting birds. ■

Strengthening Community-led Conservation of Indian Skimmer and Black-bellied Tern in the Mahanadi River System

Project Duration: 2026–2028

Supported by: BirdLife International

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Parveen Shaikh

Research & Field Biologists: Satya Siddharth Das (Project Biologist) and community assistants

Location: River Mahanadi, Odisha

The project agreement for a new three-year BirdLife International project on the Mahanadi River was signed in March 2026. The three-year programme mainly aims to address the water regulation threat to skimmers by engaging multiple stakeholders, such as the irrigation department, forest department and local community, in planning the conservation plan. The project will also initiate detailed monitoring of the upstream nesting colonies and threat mapping. Surveys and preparatory field activities began in March 2026 to assess the status of Indian Skimmer and Black-bellied Tern populations and nesting sites. ■

Ujani Wetland Eco-Restoration Climate Resilient and Fisheries Development

Project Duration: Long term

Supported by: Cipla Foundation

Team members

Principle Investigator: Dr Unmesh Katwate

Research & Field Biologists: Ms Devi Waingankar, Mr Mayank Sharma, Mr Mahesh Mane

Technical and Administrative support: Mr Balaji Survase

Key stakeholders of the project:

1. Mr Bharat Mallav – Community representative and Chairman of Tanvi Fisheries and Ambika Fisheries Cooperative Society, Bhigwan

2. Bhigwan Krishi Utpanna Bazar Samiti, commonly known as APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee)
3. Water Resource Department, Govt. of Maharashtra
4. Fisheries Department, Govt. of Maharashtra
5. Forest Department, Govt. of Maharashtra
6. Maharashtra Tourism Department, Govt. of Maharashtra
7. Police department, Govt. of Maharashtra
8. District Magistrate and Collector Office, Solapur, Govt. of Maharashtra
9. District Magistrate and Collector Office, Pune, Govt. of Maharashtra
10. District Magistrate and Collector Office, Ahilya Nagar, Govt. of Maharashtra

Location: Ujani Reservoir and the Bhima River basin - Bhigwan, Pune District, Maharashtra (Surveys covered Bhigwan, Madanwadi, Palasdev, Kalthan, Takali, Wangi, Kedgaon, Sonwadi, and adjoining reservoir areas).

Supported by the Cipla Foundation and implemented by BNHS from August 2025 to March 2026, the project addresses ecosystem degradation in the Bhigwan–Ujani wetland complex by restoring native fish diversity, curbing biological invasions, and enhancing local livelihood resilience. Core undertakings integrated biometric fish assessments, hydro-acoustic bathymetry, wetland avifaunal monitoring, and spatial mapping of invasive macrophytes. Substantial management interventions included the destruction of 9.4 tonnes of illegally farmed African Catfish, mass stocking of 1.22 crore carp fingerlings, and technical training for 85 fishers and bird guides. Inter-agency alignment with fisheries, forestry, and water resource bodies established an institutional baseline for climate-resilient wetland management despite challenges involving water-level fluctuations and socioeconomic reliance on exotic fish species. ■

Securing Habitat for the Great Indian Bustard – Rajasthan

Project Duration: September 2024 – March 2027

Supported by: ICICI Foundation

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade, Deputy Director, BNHS

Research, conservation & Field team s: Dr Neelkanth Bora, Mr Vinay Sharma, Mr Pankaj Bishnoi,
Mr Sachin Bishnoi

Location: Khetolai & Chandani, Pokhran, Rajasthan

Collaboration – Station HQ, Pokhran Field Firing Range (PFFR), Indian Army; Bishnoi community; Gram Panchayat Khetolai.

The project addresses severe population and habitat declines of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*) within the Thar Desert landscape of Pokhran, Rajasthan. Supported by the ICICI Foundation and active through the reporting cycle, interventions focused on establishing functional predator-proof enclosures totaling 40 hectares across Khetolai and Chandani, eradicating invasive *Neltuma juliflora* to promote native grassland recovery, and curbing feral dog predation through a targeted 1,000-canine sterilization campaign. Central to the program is participatory conservation with local Bishnoi pastoralists and trained youth ‘Godawan Mitras’ to sustain community-led monitoring and grazing management. ■

Grassland-Based Livelihoods and GIB Conservation – Chanani, Pokhran

Project Duration: 2024 – 2027

Supported by: GICRe Foundation

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Dr Neelkanth Bora, Mr Pankaj Bishnoi

Location: Chanani, Pokhran, Rajasthan; **Collaboration** – Gram Panchayat Odhaniya

The project focuses on linking sustainable grassland-based livelihoods with the conservation of the critically endangered Great Indian Bustard (*Ardeotis nigriceps*) within the Chanani landscape of Pokhran, Rajasthan. Supported by the GICRe Foundation across 2024–2027, foundational project activities during the reporting period centred on setting up on-ground research infrastructure, establishing a field station, developing rainwater harvesting systems, and creating water resources to sustain local wildlife and domestic herds while rolling out community-level livelihood interventions. ■

Saving the Lesser Florican – Ajmer Agro Pastoral Landscape

Supported by: SITA Inc.

Project Duration: 2024 – 2026

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Sachin Bishnoi, Ms Sanchi Shrivastav, Mr Vinay Sharma

Community Engagement: Kharmor Mitra Network volunteers

Location: Ajmer, Rajasthan

Collaboration – Gram Panchayat Shaokliya, Baheda, Kalyanpura

Highly sensitive to agricultural transformations, the Lesser Florican (*Sypheotides indicus*) is the focal species of this conservation project, supported by SITA Inc. During the reporting cycle, confirmed florican sightings were recorded while adaptive habitat management measures remained active. Key interventions centred on promoting wildlife-friendly agricultural practices, setting up demonstration plots, engaging farming communities, and deploying trained local Kharmor Mitra volunteers to monitor breeding areas and ensure coexistence between agricultural production and species protection. ■

Biodiversity Heritage Site Proposal – Ajmer

Project Duration: 2025 – 2027

Supported by: Rajasthan State Biodiversity Board (RSBB)

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Sachin Bishnoi, Ms Sanchi Shrivastav, Mr Vinay Sharma

Location: Ajmer, Rajasthan

Collaboration – Gram Panchayat Shokaliya, Bandanwada, Kalyanpura, District Administration, Ajmer

The Lesser Florican, India's smallest bustard, is experiencing severe population declines driven by agricultural intensification, chemical pesticide exposure, invasive flora, high-voltage power transmission lines,

and free-ranging dog predation. Supported by the Rajasthan State Biodiversity Board (RSBB), this initiative works to secure core breeding landscapes in Ajmer and Shokaliya through formal declaration as Biodiversity Heritage Sites. During the reporting period, draft BHS dossiers and People's Biodiversity Register datasets were compiled alongside ecological surveys that verified active monsoon breeding habitats. However, local governance challenges – notably electoral uncertainties surrounding Gram Panchayats – temporarily affected village-level outreach and BMC operations, underscoring the need for sustained institutional intervention to secure these grasslands. ■

Stubble Burning and Avian Ecology – Punjab

Project Duration: 2025 – ongoing

Supported by: The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Mr Rahul Nandi, Mr Vinay Sharma, Mr Neelkanth Bora, Mr Pankaj Bishnoi, Mr Sachin Bishnoi, and Mr Rajesh Parmar

Technical Support: Data entry staff and project drivers

Location: Punjab (includes Malwa, Doaba, Terai, and western Punjab, including Ramsar sites Keshopur–Miani and Kanjili)

Collaboration - EcoSikh

Supported by The Nature Conservancy (TNC), this baseline research initiative evaluates how intensive rice–wheat agricultural regimes and seasonal crop residue (stubble) burning influence avian community dynamics across Punjab. Progress achieved during the reporting period includes completing multi-season ecological surveys, clearing regulatory compliances, and submitting the February 2026 comprehensive progress report. Findings establish that while agro-wetlands and peri-urban zones temporarily absorb displaced bird populations post-harvest, the pervasive practice of stubble burning significantly degrades agro-grassland biodiversity, depletes invertebrate food supplies, and accelerates local habitat homogenization. ■

Monitoring Lesser Florican – Madhya Pradesh

Project Duration: 2025–2028

Supported by: Madhya Pradesh Forest Department

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Ms Sanchi Shrivastav, Mr Tahir Shaikh, Mr Rajesh Parmar, and Mr Rushikesh Pawar

Location: Ratlam, Western Madhya Pradesh (Survey areas – Sailana Wildlife Sanctuary, Sardarpur, Petlawad, Jeeran Range in Neemuch District, Cheeta Kheda, and Gandhi Sagar)

Supported by the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, this initiative focuses on the critically endangered Lesser Florican across its historical strongholds in Western Madhya Pradesh (Sailana, Sardarpur, Petlawad, and Jeeran). During the reporting period, the project established a seasonal ecological baseline and confirmed breeding-season presence at Sailana. Emphasizing a shift from isolated protected-area management to landscape-scale stewardship, the project drafted a comprehensive progress report, advanced ongoing statistical analyses, and formulated policy inputs for new protected reserves and multi-agency partnerships involving BNHS, the Forest Department, WII, and local agrarian communities. ■

Brahmaputra Floodplain Grassland Birds – Assam & Arunachal Pradesh

Project Duration: 2022–2027

Supported by: BirdLife International

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Rahul Nandi, Akash Rajuvar, and Arindam Sinha

Location: Assam and Arunachal Pradesh

Supported by BirdLife International, this long-term initiative focuses on conserving the critically endangered Bengal Florican and its associated avifaunal community across the Brahmaputra floodplain grasslands of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Despite constraints leading to limited fieldwork during the reporting period, community-based awareness and monitoring campaigns continued actively. Field assessments quantified key anthropogenic threats, including agricultural expansion, overgrazing, infrastructure pressures, hunting, and industrial incidents such as the 2020 Baghjan blowout while demonstrating that participatory stewardship, seasonal grazing restrictions, and ecotourism linkages provide viable models for floodplain grassland bird conservation. ■

Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve – Karnataka

Project Duration: 2025

Supported by: Inhouse & Benevity crowdfunding

Team Members

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: H. Ramesh, Haarmisha Parmar

Technical Support: Deepak Rajanna

Location: Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve & Tungabhadra backwaters, Karnataka

Supported by internal funds and Benevity crowdfunding, the project conducts systematic avian surveillance and habitat management across the Ramsar-designated Ankasamudra Bird Conservation Reserve and the Tungabhadra reservoir backwaters. During the reporting cycle, intensive monitoring and AWC 2026 surveys affirmed the landscape's international importance for over 100,000 migratory and resident waterbirds. While certain taxa (such as Glossy Ibis) showed population increases, declines among wintering ducks and terrestrial specialists like the Indian Courser highlighted mounting pressures from reservoir fluctuations, agrochemical runoff, tree die-offs, and powerline infrastructure. Interventions integrated active bird banding (92 species), flight diverter installations, nesting island management, and multi-stakeholder stewardship to guide long-term adaptive conservation. ■

Grassland Restoration & Avian Rewilding – TATR, Maharashtra

Project Duration: 2025 – ongoing

Supported by: TATR Foundation

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Rushikesh Pawar, Ashish Patil, and Tahir Shaikh

Key Technical Collaborator: Dr G.D. Muratkar

Location: Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR), Chandrapur District, Maharashtra (Surveys areas – meadow complexes across Palasgaon, Khatoda, Jamni, Pandharponi, Navegaon, Botezari, Kolsa, and Devada)

Supported by the TATR Foundation, this collaborative initiative between BNHS and Tadoba–Andhari Tiger Reserve investigates the ecological succession and wildlife value of indigenous meadows created on vacated village sites in the core Critical Tiger Habitat. During the reporting cycle, baseline assessments across eight major meadow complexes established that active restoration interventions – such as invasive species eradication, ungulate exclosure fencing, native grass planting (*Apluda*, *Eragrostis*, *Sehima*), and legume enrichment – have enhanced structural heterogeneity and insect prey availability. The August 2026 progress report established an empirical baseline tracking vegetation succession, herbivore grazing, and bird guild colonization to guide multi-taxa conservation and pilot rewilding of the critically endangered Lesser Florican. ■

Conservation of Lesser Florican – Bidar, Karnataka

Project Status / Duration: Concluded July 2026

Supported by: Karnataka Forest Department

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Rushikesh Pawar

Location: Bidar, Karnataka

Supported by the Karnataka Forest Department, this project focused on securing remnant grassland patches for the Lesser Florican in the Bidar landscape. Through a combination of population surveillance, targeted grassland restoration, and local stakeholder awareness, the initiative sought to counter habitat loss from agricultural encroachment and lay the groundwork for community-supported habitat protection. The project successfully completed its planned scope of work and formally concluded in July 2026. ■

Biodiversity Management Plan for the CURAJ Campus, to develop a proposal for recognition as an Other Effective Conservation Measure (OECM)

Project Duration: 2025 – ongoing

Supported by: Self-funded

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Vinay Sharma, Rahul Nandi

Location: Central University of Rajasthan (CURAJ) Campus, Bandar Sindri, Ajmer District, Rajasthan

Collaboration – Environment Department of CURAJ

This collaborative initiative between BNHS and the Central University of Rajasthan (CURAJ) develops science-based management pathways to secure OECM designation for an academic campus. During 2026 field assessments, the team mapped key ecological assets, identified degraded zones requiring active intervention, and integrated existing environmental utilities (biogas, wastewater treatment) into biodiversity planning. The plan sets up phased actions to document seasonal biodiversity, rehabilitate abandoned quarry sites, restore campus ponds, launch campus citizen-science modules, and establish a Nature Interpretation Centre, positioning the University as a vital contributor to non-protected area conservation. ■

Estimation of NSAIDs in livestock carcasses and vulture monitoring at Jorbeer Conservation Reserve, Bikaner, Rajasthan

Project Duration: 2025 – ongoing

Supported by: BNHS

Team Members:

Principal Investigator: Dr Sujit Narwade

Research & Field Biologists: Vinay Sharma, Rahul Nandi

Location: Jorbeer Conservation Reserve (Bikaner) and Central University of Rajasthan / CURAJ (Ajmer), Rajasthan.

Supported by internal BNHS institutional funding, the project combines laboratory-based toxicological surveillance with population monitoring of scavenging guilds at the critical carcass dump landscape of Jorbeer Conservation Reserve in Bikaner. During the reporting cycle, efforts focused on refining HPLC–UV chromatographic resolution for detecting veterinary NSAIDs in livestock tissues in partnership with NRCE and CURAJ. Concurrently, regular block counts and a synchronized two-day vulture census affirmed the reserve's significance as a wintering and resident haven for six vulture species – dominated by Egyptian and Griffon vultures – while highlighting the conservation challenges posed by feral dog expansion and the ongoing threat of carcass contamination. ■

EIACP Resource Partner on Avian Ecology under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Project Duration: Long Term

Supported by: Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

Team members: Dr Sujit Narwade (Project Coordinator), Mr Nandkishor Dudhe (Senior Programme Officer), Ms Natasha Girkar (Information Officer), Mr Niraj Patel (IT Officer), and Mr Yogesh Dhamnaskar (Data Entry Operator).

Operating as the EIACP Resource Partner on Avian Ecology under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, the centre executed nationwide environmental education, avian database enhancement, capacity building, and citizen-science programs from April 2025 to March 2026. Highlights included publishing three issues of *BUCEROS*, releasing seven thematic bird conservation posters, deploying two custom mobile applications (*Birdle* and *Vulture Data Collection App*), and integrating 2,242 new references into the DRC portal. Outreach centered on Mission LiFE priorities, nature trails under the *Seva Parva* initiative at BNHS Nature Reserve, field training sessions in basic ornithology, birdwatching walks (Bhandup Pumping Station, TS Chanakya), and extensive representation across high-level national symposia and public exhibitions. ■

Ecological Restoration of Kihim Talav

Project Duration: 2025–26

Partner Institutions: Transweigh (International) Pvt. Ltd., Mangrove Cell (Maharashtra Forest Department), Raigad District Administration, Zilla Parishad Raigad, NMIMS, and local educational institutions

Supported by: Transweigh (International) Pvt. Ltd.

Team members: Mr Nandkishor Dudhe (Project In-Charge) and Mr Rohan Chavan (Project Associate)

Location: Kihim Village, Alibag Taluka, Raigad District, Maharashtra (*Surveys and activities also covered Kamath, Akshi Beach, and Satirje*)

Originally initiated in 2023 as a lake rejuvenation project in partnership with Transweigh (International) Pvt. Ltd., the initiative expanded in 2025–2026 into the comprehensive ‘Ecological Development of Kihim Village’ program. Supported by the establishment of a BNHS regional project office in July 2025, operations spanned four key verticals: administrative advocacy for Bhileshwar Lake restoration, site preparation and tendering for the Kihim Mangrove Park with the Mangrove Cell, inter-agency legal facilitation to operationalize the Dr. Salim Ali Nature Interpretation Centre, and widespread community-based outreach. Although confronted with budgetary constraints, administrative delays, and land record regularizations, consistent inter-departmental coordination across the District Administration, Zilla Parishad, and Forest Department sustained steady progress toward long-term ecological restoration and community stewardship in coastal Raigad. ■

PUBLICATIONS

Team: Vibhuti Dedhia, Assistant Director, Publications

Sonali Vadhavkar, Publications Officer

Gopi Naidu, Consultant Designer, Sanchita Kadge, Assistant Designer

The Department continued its commitment to the dissemination of scientific knowledge and the promotion of biodiversity conservation in India. Throughout the reporting period, the Publications team actively developed and published new content, provided editorial and design support across the Society’s other Departments.

Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (JBNHS):

- Edited, designed, and published 59 papers online for Vol. 122(1–3) and Vol. 123(1) (17 Main Articles, 2 New Descriptions, 1 Book Review, 39 Miscellaneous Notes). Printed and dispatched the tripartite hardbound volumes of Vol. 122 containing 51 processed papers.

Hornbill:

- Produced, published, and distributed 4 quarterly issues (April–June 2025, July–September 2025, October–December 2025, and January–March 2026).

Books:

- Completed scanning of all 10 volumes of the monumental Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan by Sálim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley (proofreading for Volumes 1–3 completed; Volumes 4–5 underway). Updating and Printing the Ten-Volume Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan is supported by TVS MOTORS LTD.

- Titles reprinted: The Book of Indian Birds (Sálim Ali, English); Bharatna Pakshiyon (Ashok Kothari, Gujarati translation); and The Book of Indian Trees (K.C. Sahani).

- Forthcoming titles: Pre-publication release announced for Mammals of India by A.J.T. Johnsingh and P.O. Nameer.

Institutional Support: Provided regular graphic, formatting, and editorial support (including across three regional languages) to the other Departments (Research, Administration, Accounts, Programmes, CMD, Director Office) of the BNHS for their publications (scientific, popular, and others). ■

Natural History Collection Department 2025–2026

Supported by: Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM) Government of Maharashtra
Department of Cultural Affairs

Team: Dr S.R. Chandramouli, Curator, Mr Vithoba Hegde, Senior Zoological Assistant,
Mr Vinod Patil, Junior Zoological Assistant, Ms Pooja Patil, Field Zoologist,
Mr Shyam Jadhav, Collections Assistant, Ms Priyanka Das, Senior Entomologist,
Mr Gaurang Tawde, Junior Entomologist

The BNHS Natural History Collection Department holds a scientific repository of approximately 150,000 biological specimens of rare and threatened fauna spanning present-day India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh, Iraq, and Iran. Designated as a 'National Faunal Repository' under the Biological Diversity Act 2002 by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India, the department has five primary divisions: Invertebrates, Fishes, Amphibians & Reptiles, Birds, and Mammals. The collections serve as an indispensable reference resource for major national and international research institutions, including the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), Smithsonian Institution, Natural History Museum (London), IISER Bhopal, and Flame University.

During this period, the department launched an Online Visitor Access Portal, with academic researchers accounting for 52.9% of visitors, the general public and educational users for 35.3%, and government and institutional delegations for 11.8%. Key achievements included the installation of a high-density compactor unit, funded by Directorate of Archaeology and Museums (DOAM), Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Maharashtra; the accessioning of 15 new amphibian specimens, including eight type specimens; the renewal of statutory Rectified Spirit licences; the conduct of annual specimen-verification audits; and the advancement of digitization workflows.

Future plans include reorganizing specimens into new compactor units, updating taxonomic catalogues, completing portal validation, and rolling out member and global scientific access to the e-museum. ■

Digitization of Natural History collection at BNHS

Supported by: MMRDA and CIDCO

Location: Hornbill House, BNHS, Mumbai

Project Duration: 2018 – 2028.

Team: Mr Deepak Rajanna (IT Expert & Database Manager),
Dr S.R. Chandramouli (Curator & Project Investigator w.e.f 17/6/2026), Ms Pooja Patil (Field Zoologist),
Mr Vedant Sawant (Junior Project Fellow)

The digitization of the BNHS Natural History Collections continued extensively during the current reporting year with sustained efforts towards high-resolution imaging, metadata standardization, archival data management, and digital accessibility. The ongoing project aims to systematically digitize the institution's vast collection comprising over 1,50,000 specimens belonging to diverse taxonomic groups including mammals, birds, bird eggs, amphibians, reptiles, insects, fishes, and select marine invertebrates.

During the year, the digitization team continued photo-stacking, image post-processing, cataloguing, and metadata verification of priority specimens across multiple taxonomic groups. Previously digitized collections, including bird egg specimens, reptile and amphibian type specimens, and rare mammal and bird specimens, underwent further quality assessment, data validation, and integration into the digital database system. Multiple-angle imaging and stack processing were continued to ensure accurate representation of morphologically significant features for future taxonomic and research applications.

The digitized specimen database and associated image repository are presently being integrated into the institutional e-museum platform developed in collaboration with IT experts. The portal has now entered the internal testing and standardization phase and is currently accessible to institutional staff for workflow review, metadata verification, and system evaluation prior to phased public and member access.

In addition to specimen digitization, ongoing efforts were undertaken for verification and organization of historical collection records and accession-related data. The team also continued supporting the digitization and preservation of archival bird ringing records from different regions of India to facilitate long-term data accessibility and research use. Regular data backup, file organization, and standardization procedures were carried out throughout the year to ensure digital preservation and efficient retrieval of collection information.■

LIBRARY AND INSTITUTIONAL ARCHIVES

Team Members:

Gouri Uchgaonkar Assistant Librarian, Ankush Pimpalkar Assistant Librarian,
Chandahas Mahakal Library Attendant.

The Library & Archives Department serves as a premier repository of India's documentary and scientific heritage in the fields of natural history, wildlife biology, and environmental conservation. Its holdings comprise an invaluable array of rare books, peer-reviewed scientific publications, historical institutional reports, archival correspondence, photographs, and early cinematographic records. Prominent among these are the Dr Sálím Ali Collection and the E.P. Gee Collection, which chronicle over a century of pioneering ecological research and conservation milestones across the subcontinent. The primary mandate of the BNHS Library is to systematically curate, preserve, and provide access to these historical assets, catering to BNHS scientists and members, visiting scholars, university researchers, students, and conservation practitioners.

- **Present Holdings:** 25,525 Books, 4,950 Bound Volumes, 35 Subscribed Journals, 186 Dissertations/Theses, and 2,152 Historical Scientific Reports.
- **Procured and Donated Books:** Procured 13 environmental volumes and integrated 724 donated volumes (including Dr Ketaki Marthak (3 books), Mr Kamlesh Gandhi (6 books), Cdr.JVK Unnithan (8 books), Dr Bharat Bhushan (18 Books), 689 donated by Ms Shakuntala Indu Bharwani).
- Regularized catalogue records via the online OPAC portal. Users can access and browse the library collection through the online catalogue available at the BNHS Library OPAC.
(<https://libopacbnhs.itsinformatics.com>)
- **Archival Digitisation:**
 - Institutional documents: Scanned and processed 388 BNHS Reports, 90 e-reports, 15 rare volumes, and 17 academic theses.
 - Dr Sálím Ali Heritage Archives: Preserved 506 domestic letters, 232 international letters, 76 official records, 99 press clippings, 39 radio talks, 9 field diaries, 2,091 historical glass slides/photographs, 36 archival films, and 2 recorded oral history interviews.
- **isitors:** Hosted more than 150 participants, students, and research scholars during Open Library Week (2–6 February 2026).

- **Outreach Initiative:** The BNHS Library organized Open Library Week from February 2–6, 2026, drawing over 150 students, researchers, and nature enthusiasts. Visitors explored rare archives, lithographs, and the personal collections of Dr Sálím Ali and E.P. Gee. The program featured guided tours, thematic exhibitions, and open access to wildlife and botanical resources. Beyond boosting academic engagement and reading interest, the successful initiative expanded library memberships and deepened research outreach across Mumbai colleges. ■

CENTRAL MARKETING DEPARTMENT (CMD)

The primary objective of the Central Marketing Department includes the development of new products, the sale and distribution of BNHS publications, membership promotion, fundraising through donations, and organizing exhibitions and awareness programmes.

Team Members:

Sandesh Kadam Sales Manager, Archana Sonawane Account Assistant,
Amzad Hussain Office Attendant

Key Highlights:

- **Events & Exhibitions:** Coordinated, set up, and managed stalls across 38 exhibitions, wildlife fairs, corporate corridors, and Van Mahotsavs across Mumbai, Pune, Amravati, Delhi, and Udaipur. Organized World Environment Day sales drives with 16 corporate entities.
- **Product Development & Sales:** Developed new nature-oriented awareness merchandise including Any Time Planners, Desk Calendars, Bamboo accessories, Wildlife T-shirts, and Lapel Pins. Dispatched publications and products via the BNHS Hornbill House Sales Counter, BNHS Website, Amazon, and Mystore (ONDC Network).
- **Corporate Partnerships:** Recruited 6 new Corporate Members: MSPL Limited, RPG Foundation, Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co., Harrier Information Systems, Heritage River Journeys, and Matix Fertilisers. Secured sponsorship support for the 2025–2026 Product Catalogue and corporate advertisements for Hornbill. ■

BNHS Conservation Education Centre (CEC), Mumbai

Team Members:

Centre In-Charge : Aqsa Majgaonkar

Education Officer: Aqsa Majgaonkar, Kimaya Gajare

Technical and Administrative Support: Prakash Ghadshi, Dilip Giri

CEC Mumbai continued its work of building environmental awareness and conservation action through experiential learning, outreach and field-based education. Across 2025–26, the Centre functioned as a space where students, teachers, members, communities and other participants could engage directly with biodiversity and conservation.

Objectives

- Promote environmental awareness and conservation ethics.
- Provide experiential and field-based learning.
- Engage communities and institutions.
- Strengthen conservation education frameworks

Key Highlights:

- **Visitor Footfall & Engagement:** Recorded a total footfall of 5,495 visitors (4,426 non-members and 1,069 BNHS members) through educational campus trails, public walks, and specialized events, with peak attendance in July, December, January, and February.
- **Nature Camps & Specialized Field Programs:** Executed experiential biodiversity camps across key ecosystems:
 - *Goa Birding Camp:* Focused on Western Ghats avifauna (Oriental Dwarf Kingfisher, frogmouths, hornbills).
 - *Sattal–Pangot:* Himalayan birding and structured ecology discussions.
 - *Bharatpur–Chambal:* Wetland and riverine birding covering migratory waterfowl and Indian Skimmers.
 - *Amboli Herpetology Camp:* Western Ghats herpetofauna surveys focusing on the Malabar Gliding Frog, Amboli Toad, and Malabar Pit Viper.
- **Hybrid Courses & Capacity Building:** Conducted structured hybrid certificate courses combining online webinars, expert mentorship, and field camps in Ornithology, Botany, Herpetology, and Butterfly Studies.
- **Teacher Training & Institutional Learning:** Delivered interactive educator workshops focused on experiential pedagogy, activity-based nature education, and linking curriculum concepts with field ecology.
- **Public Events & Thematic Walks:** Organized Earth Day initiatives, monsoon biodiversity walks, insect trails, and community nature walks at the BNHS Nature Reserve.
- **CSR Partnerships & Financials:** Received CSR grant support of USD 12,450 from BlackRock under the *Promote Environmental Conservation* project (Project Code: 552-FC); generated a total reported revenue of ₹ 42,40,558 through programs, hybrid courses, CSR grants, and field camps.
- **Innovations & Improvements:** introduced a more discussion-oriented learning approach, strengthened pre-camp communication, expanded the use of eBird and other digital tools, and worked to improve programme delivery and participant experience.
- CEC recorded a **total reported revenue of ₹ 42,40,558**, comprising programme revenue, course revenue, CSR funding and field camp profits. Overall, the year reflected continued growth in experiential education, biodiversity engagement and conservation outreach, with CEC aiming to further strengthen advanced field programmes, research-linked education and long-term conservation engagement.

Way Ahead:

Expand advanced-level field programs, integrate research datasets and digital technologies into educational modules, cultivate long-term alumni and participant engagement, and build structured, progressive conservation learning pathways. ■

On a War Footing: Biodiversity Monitoring and Conservation with the Indian Army

Project Duration: Long-term (Phase 1: 2022–2025 completed; Phase 2: 2025–2028 proposed)

Supported by: The Habitats Trust (THT)

Team members:

Principle Investigator: Mr Niaz ul Hassan (up to October, 25) | Mohd Raza, Ph.D. (December, 2025 onwards)

Researcher and Project Biologists: Ms Prakruthi, Mr Marmagaya (Researcher)

Technical and Administrative support: Mr Arief Ahmed Khan (Para Vet), Mr Sarfaraz Ahmad (Para Vet), Mr Mohd Hassan (Field Assistant), Mr Nawang Gailson (Field Assistant), Mr Akhtar Hussain (Animal Handler), and Mr Mohd Hassan (Mir) (Animal Handler)

Principle Investigator: Mohd Raza, PhD

Researcher and Project Biologists:

Technical and Administrative support: Mr Arief Ahmed Khan, Mr Sarfaraz Ahmad, Mr Mohd Hassan, Mr Nawang Gailson, Mr Akhtar Hussain, and Mr Mohd Hassan (Mir)

Location: Changthang, Nubra, and adjoining protected areas (Hemis National Park, Karakoram Wildlife Sanctuary, and Changthang Wildlife Sanctuary) in Leh District; Drass and Suru Valleys in Kargil District, Union Territory of Ladakh.

Operating along sensitive trans-Himalayan border frontiers, this long-term initiative partners with the Indian Army to institutionalize conservation stewardship, monitor threatened fauna, and mitigate critical ecological threats across Leh and Kargil districts. During the reporting cycle, the project completed a customized army environmental training module, carried out intensive wildlife and feral predator surveys, executed large-scale ABC camps sterilizing 2,069 free-ranging dogs across military stations and protected areas, and operationalized food-waste bio-digestion units. The team also concluded the Phase 1 technical report, submitted a Phase 2 proposal (2025–2028), and consolidated formal institutional frameworks with the University of Ladakh, the Wildlife Protection Department, the Animal Husbandry Department, and Indian Army commands. ■

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve Buffer Conservation Education Programme (Saving Leopard and Tiger Populations - SLTP)

Project Duration: April 2025 – March 2026

Supported by: Born Free Foundation, In collaboration with: Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

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Location: Buffer Zone of Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) and Chandrapur District, Maharashtra

Summary for the period:

The SLTP conservation education programme addresses rising human–wildlife interactions in the forest-agriculture mosaic buffering the Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve, a stronghold for the Endangered Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris tigris*). Operating across 106 village schools, the project used classroom pedagogy, audio-visual screenings, and standardized knowledge assessments to evaluate and improve conservation literacy. In tandem, the ‘Chala Mazya Tadobala’ safari campaign provided thousands of rural students and teachers direct experiential exposure to tiger reserve ecosystems. Combined with outreach during traditional festivals and ecological observance days, the initiative engaged over 4,190 students and buffer-zone residents, reinforcing coexistence values and community stewardship around TATR. ■

Membership & Programmes Department

The Membership & Programmes Department of the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) continued to play a pivotal role in expanding community engagement and fostering a sense of belonging among members throughout the 2025–2026 fiscal year. The department delivered engaging, nature-focused experiences that foster environmental awareness and conservation consciousness across all age groups. A wide range of themed walks, educational events, and camps were conducted, enabling deeper public involvement in biodiversity appreciation and citizen-led science.

Membership Figures:

Please find below the Membership Figures for FY 2025-2026:

Category	Opening	Balance As of 31 March 2026
Life Membership	2483	2554
Annual Membership	464	273
Annual Membership 3 years	145	176
Annual Membership 5 years	118	92
Student Membership	123	53
Institutional Membership	7	9
Armed Forces Membership	1	1
Family (Life) Couple	450	450
Complimentary List-	2	2
Friends of Bnhs (Silver)	0	2
Friends of Bnhs (Gold)	0	5
Friends of Benhs (Platinum)	2	3
Life Foreign	82	84
Ordinary Foreign	0	0
Life (Saarc)	12	12
TOTAL	3889	3716

Given below are the comparative numbers for New and Renewal of Membership:

	2024-2025	2025-2026
New members	454	382
Renewals	205	127
TOTAL Members Gained	659	509

In the 2025-2026 period, membership gained has been 509. However, this includes New members: 7 corporate members, 4 institutional members and 39 Life. In addition to renewals of 4 institutional members and 3 ordinary members who converted to Life Members.

BNHS Membership at Pakshi Mitra Samelan

During the annual Pakshi Mitra Samelan (1st–2nd November 2025), the BNHS Membership Department set up a dedicated enrolment drive to engage avian enthusiasts and birdwatchers. This initiative successfully onboarded new members into the Society's network, expanding grassroots participation in bird conservation while providing delegates direct access to member benefits, scientific publications, and citizen science programs.

Members Programmes

Mumbai-based themed events—including Tree, Bird, Marine, Butterfly, and Flamingo walks—helped spread awareness of BNHS membership and its broader conservation work while actively engaging members.

Birds & Beyond: Exploring Indian Avifauna

A first-of-its-kind collaborative workshop was organised with the Sarmaya Art Foundation at Kala Ghoda. Participants explored historic BNHS taxidermy specimens alongside rare ornithological literature, including works by John Gould.

Sketching in the Forest Series

BNHS organised multiple wildlife illustration sessions during the year. These programmes demonstrated the growing popularity of art-based conservation engagement.

At the Point Calimere Centre, a specialized camp offered members hands-on bird ringing and tagging experience. Participants observed migratory species up close and interacted with BNHS researchers to learn bird migration study methodologies and long-term monitoring techniques firsthand.

Member-led community walks:

Led by members like Girish Gopal Rao (Bengaluru) and Ranjeet Rane (Pune), grassroots walks at Cubbon Park and Vetal Tekdi promoted urban biodiversity documentation and public outreach. Members contributed valuable field observations and photos to the BNHS Newsletter, advancing nationwide conservation.

Members conduct Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)

As part of BNHS's wetland conservation efforts, members conducted the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) across key Mumbai biodiversity hotspots. The initiative provided valuable citizen science data for long-term monitoring while highlighting the ecological importance and climate resilience of Mumbai's urban wetlands.

SGNP Bird Monitoring Programme

A total of 11 systematic counts were conducted to document avian diversity and seasonal patterns in the park. The total number of bird species recorded during the SGNP Bird Monitoring Programme till the end of FY 2025-26 stands at 250 species. During the year 10 new species were added to the SGNP Bird Count list.

The program has successfully tracked migration patterns and guided conservation efforts for SGNP, highlighting its critical role as a stopover and winter habitat for many bird species.

BNHS Online Talk Series for Members:

To keep members actively engaged and informed, BNHS organized a series of online lectures featuring BNHS scientists and expert conservationists. These interactive sessions provided valuable insights into ongoing research, critical wildlife conservation initiatives, and biodiversity protection strategies across India. ■

VISION:

Premier independent scientific organisation 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



