

BNHS Mission

Conservation of Nature, primarily Biological Diversity,
through Action based on Research,
Education and Public Awareness.



Advisor

Dr. Asad R. Rahmani

Editor

Shripad Kulkarni

Editorial Board

Dr. Rachel Reuben

Isaac Kehimkar

Congratulations !



Dr. Shubhalaxmi for recording a form of carpenter bee-hawkmoth (*Sataspes tagalica f. hauxwelli*), first time in India, with observations in the Sanjay Gandhi National Park.

Wish you all a Happy New Year!

It is rather hectic for me to write so many letters and editorials, but all of them are very special because they communicate with different audiences.

To start with, I would like to bring to your notice the crisis that we are facing in Andhra Pradesh. It is about Jerdon's Courser. The Telugu-Ganga canal is being built across the habitat of Jerdon's Courser. Jegannathan is working on this project and now we, as a team must support the Society's effort in the conservation of the Jerdon's Courser habitat.

The Bird Flu or Avian Influenza is recurring in the news for the last couple of months, you must be thinking about it too. We can take care by avoiding close contact with birds. If we buy chicken products from good and well known companies/brands, I guess this will assure us of safe products. **There is no need to panic, but being careful is always better.**

We are starting a new project for monitoring migratory birds in India for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI-H5N1). The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India has sanctioned this project. **The Society will monitor birds at various identified wetlands such as Point Callimere, Bhitarkanika, Chilika lake, Nandur Madhameshwar, Pong Dam, Harike, and Patna Bird Sanctuary.** The Society will use its own expert scientists along with trained volunteers. This project will give the Society the much needed opportunity for studying and monitoring migratory routes of various bird species.

I also noticed Mr. Chaturvedi's inputs for this issue. He wrote about butterflies and plants at Hornbill House. His observations share his wonderful experience. Please do share such experiences which rejuvenate you and inspire you to keep doing good work.

I read the mail sent by Shripad to all of you requesting for material for this newsletter. We need to make this newsletter a continued effort. It is very much needed for good internal communication. We should publish and share our professional experiences. I am giving a list of all the Field Stations, Projects and Project Coordinators for your record. First lets get introduced, and then we might talk about our professional experiences.

I would appreciate if you would express your opinions about 'Samvardhan' to Shripad at pro@bnhs.org. This will definitely help him improve and come up with better content and presentation in the future.

I am already looking forward the to next exciting issue of 'Samvardhan' so please send in your inputs at pro@bnhs.org.

Dr. Asad R. Rahmani



Varad Giri for Honourary Mention of your photograph in the ABN Amro Calendar.

"A green Vine Snake has a Shield Tail Snake in its jaws. It is an image that captures drama and a very unusual natural history event since the Vine Snake is a tree dweller and the Shield Tail Snake is ground burrower. Such images are key research tools and help us evolve a better understanding of the world around us." - Sanctuary Magazine.





BNHS Buzz

Collections

All of you must have visited Hornbill House, our Head Office at Mumbai. The potted plants at the entrance are diligently looked after by Mr Vithoba Hegde, Senior Field Assistant in the Collection Department of the Society.

These plants have a few varieties of Areca and Phoenix palms. Recently in the vicinity of these Palms we have sighted a **Common Palmfly** butterfly—a rare entrant to the urban area. During the period of mid-November to Mid-December 2005 we recorded six females and three males. Three of the females were collected, tagged and released but there has been no recovery so far.

A patch of Ixora plants at the corner of the entrance attracts many butterflies such as, Common Mormon, Common Jay, Common Grass Yellow, Common Wanderer, Great Egg Fly, Common Jay etc.

The Kadamba tree in the parking area provides “rent free accommodation” to live and complete progeny on this plant. So next time you visit the office please look for the winged jewels welcoming you.

A report in DNA, Mumbai (9th December 2005) mentioned the rare sighting of a bird, Grey Hypocolius (*Hypocolius ampelinus*) by naturalist Mr. Sunjoy Monga in Andheri mangrove area of Mumbai. The report also indicates about its occurrence in Kutch recorded by Jugal Kishore Tiwari in 1990. The bird is found in



Photo: Isaac Kehimkar

Arabia, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

The Bombay Natural History Society's Bird Collection has a specimen collected by Sálím Ali in 1930 at Kihim, Kolaba. The records indicate that it was collected on 14th November 1930. The collection also has two specimen collected by Mr P B Shekar at Kuarbet, Kutch on 27th May 1960.

A rare species of snake, which was thought to be extinct, the Indian egg-eater (*Elachistodon westermanni*), was rediscovered in Maharashtra. Mr. Parag Dandage, a member of the Society deposited this only known specimen of this species from India in the Society's collection. This is a valuable addition to the Society's pristine collection.

IBA

The Asian Waterfowl Census is an international programme that focuses on monitoring the status of waterbirds and wetlands. It also aims at increasing public awareness on issues related to wetland and waterbird conservation. The census is carried out each January as a Voluntary Activity as part of a global programme, the “**International Waterfowl Census**”. The BNHS IBA/ IBCN programme is actively involved in this programme.

CEC Mumbai

The inclusion of Environment Education in the school syllabus as a mandate is testimonial to the change in our attitude towards our environment. As part of the outreach programme the Conservation Education Centre conducted a Teachers Training Workshop in Environment Education from 28th to 30th November 2005.

The workshop was based on the curriculum of the ICSE Board for standard 9 and 10 and thirty teachers from Secondary English Medium Schools attended it. The workshop had modules on the Introduction of Basics, Concepts and Approaches in teaching Environmental Education. Fresh ways of teaching Environment Education by means of several out-of-the-box methodologies were discussed to make the topic of environment an interesting, informative and thought provoking exercise for both the teachers and students.

Highlights of the Workshop were nature walks, beyond-class room teaching methods, talks by experts in fields of Waste Management and Sustainable Development; and promoting Eco Clubs in Schools.

Conservation

The fifteen transects selected in April 2005 each on Kavaratti and Agatti islands were resurveyed for a total count and habitat assessment. Each clam on transect was photographed with 1 sq. mt. frame for the habitat analysis. The digital database is maintained for



further analysis and associate identification. The project team is split into four units and is travelling to their respective units from 23rd December 2005 and will cover 20 islands.

Training programme on the environmental and cross-cultural communication

Ms. Andrea Deri, Director, Training, LEAD-International is presently visiting Lakshadweep. A six-day training programme on environmental and cross-cultural communication was completed in Kavaratti. The programme aims at capacity building of 15 youths as tour guides who can assist tourists in reef related visits and SCUBA diving. Ms. Andrea Deri and Jafer Hisham

conducted programmes in Kadmat and Agatti.

An assessment was done to finalize various skill modules to keep up with the training needs. The training programme provided useful insight into the local culture, traditions and perceptions about biodiversity. This will be a valuable resource for the preparation of the Tourism Management Plan.

The training programme was conducted in collaboration with Dolphin Dive Center and Society for Promotion of Nature, Tourism and Sports (SPORTS).

Documentary on Lakshadweep project

To explore the possibility of a documentary on the BNHS Project Giant Clam, a grant was offered by LEAD-International for Mr. Krishnendu Bose, a noted wildlife movie maker to travel to Lakshadweep and prepare a theme and schedule for the movie.

Leopard Awareness Programme

Krishna Tiwari visited two sites which faced leopard

attacks in December 2005. From the Yeoor range of Sanjay Gandhi National Park, two leopard attacks were reported in 72 hours from Mulla Baug, which is spread over 3-4 sq. km. The lack of proper fencing and lighting around the construction site caused this human-leopard confrontation. Another incident took place in Owala range, an area with tribal settlements. Thick vegetation surrounds the area and the problem is aggravated with an inadequate and porous boundary wall of the National Park. Krishna could not undertake the Leopard Awareness Programme in these areas because he met with an accident and was out of action till the date of attack.

Yawal Management Plan

After the final survey of the plants of Yawal WLS, from 26th September to 5th October 2005, tagging and family specific sorting is completed and identification of plants on species level is continues under the guidance of Dr. M. R. Almeida.

The BNHS Scientific Staff:

Dr. Vibhu Prakash (Vulture Conservation Breeding Project, Principal Scientist)
Mr. Sachin Ranade (Senior Research Fellow, Vulture Project)
Dr. Kalu Ram Sanecha (Researcher, Vulture Project)
Ms. Percy Erach Avari (Veterinarian, Vulture Project)
Dr. Jerul Islam (Veterinarian, Vulture Project)
Dr. Divojit Das (Veterinarian, Vulture Project)
Mr. Deepak Apte (Conservation Officer, Giant Clam Conservation Project)
Mr. Rushikesh Chavan (Assistant Conservation Officer)
Mr. Sanjay Karkare (Tiger Cell, Conservation Dept.)
Mr. Pravin Kale (Project Officer, Conservation Dept.)
Mr. Idris Babu K. K. (Research Fellow, Lakshadweep)
Mr. Jaffer Hisham (Research Fellow, Lakshadweep)
Mr. Zafar-ul-Islam (Project Manager, IBA/IBCN)
Mr. Kulojyoti Lahkar (Science Officer, IBA/IBCN)
Mr. Girish Jathar (In-charge, ENVIS, working on Forest Owlet)
Mr. Sujit Narwade (Information Officer, ENVIS)
Mr. N. Chaturvdi (Curator)
Mr. Varad Giri (Herpetologist, Scientist 'A')
Mr. P. Jeggannathan (Senior Research Fellow, Jerdon's Courser)

Mr. V. Kannan (Senior Research Fellow, Asian Elephants)
Mr. Koustubh Sharma (Senior Research Fellow, Four Horned Antelope)
Mr. S. Sivakumar (Sr. Res. Fellow, Sriharikota)
Mr. J. Patrick David (Sr. Res. Fellow, Sriharikota)
Mr. P. Sathya Selvam (Sr. Res. Fellow, Chillika)
Mr. S. Swaminathan (Research Fellow, Asian Elephants in Andhra Pradesh)
Mr. L. Leef Damaries (Research Fellow, Gulf of Manner)
Mr. Sirajuddin M. Horaginamani (Jr. Research Fellow, Chillika and Bhitarkanika)
Mr. Merwyn Fernandes (Research Fellow, Pong, Himachal Pradesh)
Ms. Neelam Pereira (Systematic Taxonomist)

The Education Department Staff:

Mr. Prashant Mahajan (Centre Manager, CEC)
Dr. V. Shubhalaxmi (Senior Education Officer, Entomologist, CEC Mumbai)
Mr. Amit Chavan (Project Co-ordinator, Nature Information Centre, Mumbai)
Mr. Sajeev T. K. (Education Officer, CEC Delhi)



Expressions

'Hornbill House to Courser's Cubicle'

A STORY OF A STRUGGLE

I joined the Bombay Natural History Society in August 2000. Since then I have been working on the critically endangered Jerdon's Courser in Cuddapah, Andhra Pradesh. Like most of our field researchers I am also not a frequent visitor to Mumbai. My longest stay in Mumbai was about nine months (from January to September 2005) to finish a project report and my thesis, after the first phase of our project.

It was wonderful staying in the city because I was not commuting in the local trains! Mumbai is a beautiful city. A few of you may not agree with me for some obvious reasons, but I find the fort area gorgeous!! This part of the city is packed with magnificent heritage buildings and various modern architectural structures. I started my career as a 'birdwatcher', but Mumbai made me an avid '*buildingwatcher*'!!! I also enjoyed the food in Mumbai, especially *Malai Kofta* and *Vada Pav*.

It would be a nice change for a field researcher working in a remote part of India to visit Mumbai for a short time. Coming to office in the morning and leaving in the evening is not the way of life for a field researcher. Of course it is imperative to

publish what we find in the field; however we should not be in the city for long time. I left Mumbai in the first week of October 2005 to start my fieldwork. I stayed in the city for a long time, so I guess, I was bit corrupted by the 'city life'. I miss my colleagues, friends, office environment, the weekend holidays and the 'city life' too. I was bit unhappy when I left. But I was very excited because I was heading to my favorite place—the Courser's Cubical.

Our field station is based at Badvel, a small non-descriptive town in Cuddapah District. I neither get *Vada Pav* nor can see any beautiful buildings here. I like being here because, if you travel about 15 km south from this town you will reach a village called Reddipalli. From there you can go the Sri Lankamaleswara Wildlife Sanctuary, and only here you can see the Jerdon's Courser—no where else in the world!!! That's why I like to be in hot and dusty Badvel.

I was in Mumbai when heavy rains shattered the normal life of many. Lots of people were stranded in their office and were unable to reach their home. And when they eventually reached home, many of them witnessed rainwater flooded their homes and destroyed all of their valuables. I was in the same situation when I saw some heavy vehicles moving near the Sri Lankamaleswara Wildlife Sanctuary. I followed those giant vehicles and was shattered when I saw the



Telugu-Ganga Canal being constructed around the eastern part of the sanctuary.

How will this canal affect the bird? A large amount of forested land suitable for this bird was cleared for constructing the canal. The proposed route of the canal would endanger the habitat of the bird and would diminish the Jerdon's Courser population. Fortunately, a timely warning given by BNHS and prompt action taken by Andhra Pradesh Forest Department resulted in stopping this canal. We prepared a detailed report on the effects of the canal on the bird's habitat. We submitted this report to the Government of Andhra Pradesh and also requested them to realign the canal route. We as staff can spread this message to our naturalist friends and request them to protest by writing letters to authorities. The Jerdon's Courser needs more support, and I am sure we must extend our helping hands to save this bird.

P. JEGANATHAN



My experience of the BNHS

I joined BNHS as an event coordinator in May 2005 for the 'BNHS Green Governance Award 2005'. The team for the award ceremony comprised Deepak sir, Rushikesh, Payal, Praveen and I.

Rushikesh visited two sites, the Garhwal Rifles Regimental Centre, Lansdowne and Tata Chemicals Limited, Mithapur and coordinated the selection process for the awards. He also coordinated with the PMO for booking the venue, meeting officers and applying for the required permissions from different agencies. Payal was engrossed in the special publication designed for the awards. She was thinking about different articles, editing, drafts and the presentation of this special issue. Mr. Gopi was of great help to Payal, for the layout of all the special publications. Praveen was our 'one man back office' in Mumbai, when we went to Delhi, taking care of the dispatch of invitation cards. I was in charge of making the brochures, the application form for the Awards, studying the

nominations and compiling required reports for the Evaluation Committee and Steering Committee to facilitate the selection process, making the invitee list, trophy design and citation. The Green Governance Programme is Deepak Sir's brainchild so he was guiding and coordinating our efforts for the award ceremony.

We reached Delhi, the afternoon on 6th November, and planned our programme with very minute detail for the coming 4 days. We worked following the work plan, but on 8th November we got the news that ex-president Mr. K. R. Narayanan was critically ill followed by the news of his death on 9th December. Would the Prime Minister attend the ceremony...what if he cancels it...all of us were tensed.

To keep us busy and working, Deepak sir said, 'the show must go on! We will not stop our preparations', and these words set us back to work. We prepared 350 goodie bags for the guests. We also prepared media packages. We were so engrossed in these works, that

we lost track of time and also forgot the uncertainty about the award ceremony. Late in the evening, we received a call from the PMO informing us that, the Prime Minister will be attending the award ceremony as per schedule. Relief!!!

we were ready early on 10th morning, and reached Vigyan Bhavan at 7 a.m. We had to pass through two rounds of strict security checks. They checked each and every corner of the hall, and each bag that we carried. The Hon'ble Prime Minister arrived at 12 noon and attended the award ceremony.

The award ceremony was a big event in itself and because my educational background is different, co-ordinating this event was a great experience. We were a team and this team-spirit kept us working. Together, we successfully handled the gigantic work required for the award ceremony and I am proud to be part of this team.

Shital Negandhi



Sadananda Shirsat, Peon from the BNHS library often makes beautiful collages out of newspaper cuttings, published photographs and so on. He is also a great admirer of Dr. Sálim Ali. This collage lists the Awards received by Dr. Sálim Ali.



I hope this newsletter is mainly for internal circulation. If so don't you think it is a good idea to give something like "For internal circulation only" somewhere in the newsletter?

-P. Jeganathan

It was a fresh beginning, but my complaints with some of the latest BNHS publications pertain. There were some minor grammatical and language related mistakes that could have easily been done without. Please see if you can edit the whole issue a bit more intensively, it will make reading it a more pleasant experience.

The birthday gaga was interesting and so was the introduction to the new members of the BNHS family.

-Koustubh Sharma

Please increase the font size, for better readability.

-Dr. Nita Shah

BNHS Welcomes



The New IBA Team:

- Abhijit Malekar, Arya Rastogi, Umesh Pawar,
Noor-I-Khan, Kuloljyoti Lahkar,
Zafar-ul-Islam and Mohammed-E-Dilawar



Rajitha Menon
Publication Assistant



Neelam Pereira
Systematic Botanist

Thought to remember!

No one knows what one can do until one tries!

(Ms. Shabnam Shaikh, Assistant Accountant collects such thoughts and oneliners as her hobby.)

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March 10th, May 10th, July 10th, September 10th

All articles need to reach **FIFTEEN** days before the date of publication. Contributions should reach the **Public Relations Officer** at Hornbill House through mail or sent to **pro@bnhs.org** through e-mail in the form of an attached .doc file, with photographs, illustrations inserted into the file. **FOR INTERNAL CIRCULATION ONLY. © Copyright BNHS 2006**