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Editorial



This issue of *Hornbill* is dedicated to the stalwarts who built Bombay Natural History Society, which is now a historical institution. In the early 1900s, BNHS achieved a number of milestones. This period not only determined the course the Society would take in the years to follow, but also set a formidable challenge, to continue and to scale up actions in a changing socio-political and economic context, for all who followed in its footsteps.

Many of our young members and staff are not aware of the glorious past of one of the oldest conservation organizations of our country. In this issue, we have collated brief but informative details on individuals who have contributed to the history of BNHS.

Winston Churchill aptly stated on May 2, 1935, after the Stresa Conference, "When the situation was manageable it was neglected, and now that it is thoroughly out of hand, we apply too late the remedies which then might have effected a cure." The context of the statement was completely different, nonetheless it is truly applicable to today's wildlife conservation scenario globally. India is no exception and Great Indian Bustard is living testimony of this.

There are many more lining up to this tragedy; Bengal Florican, Lesser Florican, Dugong, Giant Clams, Baer's Pochard, White-bellied Heron, Himalayan Quail, Hawksbill Turtle, Leatherback Turtle, Whale Shark, Large-tooth Sawfish, Ganges River Dolphin to name a few. Over the next 2-3 decades the fate of most of these species will be nailed, if our apathy towards their habitats continues with impunity.

BNHS has for over a century voiced its concerns and recommendations, and has been instrumental in some changes that have shaped and saved our wilderness.

In 1908, W.S. Millard propelled amendments to the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act, and was instrumental in making these amendments, that finally came into existence in 1912. He succeeded in listing herons and kingfishers among protected species, as the enormous demand for their feathers was a great threat.

In 1933, S.H. Prater said, "... there is need for a real organization whose sole concern will be the protection of wild animals ... our efforts to protect wildlife have failed because of haphazard methods we employ, lack of any commuted policy and the lack of any protective agency to carry that policy into effect."

In 1934, when hunting was the order of the day in India, F.W. Champion wrote in the pages of the *JBNHS*, "Frankly, the position is appalling. The vast increase in gun licences which has taken place in recent years, combined with the greatly improved means of transport, has caused a drain on the wildlife."

In 1935, Sálím Ali after completing the survey of wildlife of Hyderabad stated, “At the back of all this senseless slaughter and law breaking which has brought about the present sorry plight is the apathy of public opinion towards the need for the preservation of our fauna.” He continued, “Good sciences, coupled with sharp interventions from conservationists are needed to defend our wilderness. This strategy must define the BNHS mission.”

In 1949, when news came in of the Maharaja of Surguja’s slaughter of the last three Indian cheetahs, there was no conservation movement to speak of and Sálím Ali’s was the lone voice in India that condemned the dastardly act through his editorial footnote in the *JBNHS*.

Humayun Abdulali was instrumental in drafting the Bombay Wild Animals and Wild Birds Protection Act of 1951 which he did along with J.A. Singh, a retired Chief Conservator of Forests. The Act was later modified to the present Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

During the centenary of the *JBNHS* in 2003, B.G. Deshmukh, President, BNHS, aptly described the Society’s role, “BNHS members and staff have built this society on an edifice of integrity and credibility. Ours has always been an independent voice, sometimes a lone voice in the wilderness. Fighting to protect our irreplaceable heritage has often been an uphill task, but one that has united some of the finest humans in joint purpose.”

In J.C. Daniel’s words, “Be active but do not be needlessly aggressive and fundamentalistic. Try and stir people’s imagination and conscience in support of the cause of conservation. A certain amount of idealism is vital for a conservation involvement or career. And please don’t come in search of get-rich-quick opportunities in this field, or you might be forced to compromise both your principles and your science.”

We have not only a glorious past to remember and to recount, but also a great future to chart! What we do as collective good over the course of the next few decades will decide the future of our wildlife in India. Institutions like the BNHS have to work relentlessly to pursue their goal of wildlife conservation.

Let me end with a very popular quote from author Syd Moore, “Disregard for the past will never do us any good. Without it we cannot know truly who we are.”

Deepak Apte

Editors' note:

The name of the country/city/museum listed below was officially changed in the year mentioned alongside. Any reference to the old name in this issue implies a time period before the year specified, when that name was in use.

Burma = Myanmar (1989); Ceylon = Sri Lanka (1972); Bombay = Mumbai (1995); Calcutta = Kolkata (2001); Orissa = Odisha (2011); Poona = Pune (1978); Simla = Shimla (1974); Prince of Wales Museum of Western India = Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (2001).



Guest Editorial



The BNHS era, as I know it.....

I had just written my final Masters exam in Marine Biology in 1984, and applied for the post of Junior Field Biologist. One lazy Saturday afternoon, the *whirr* of my doorbell announced a telegram that took me to BNHS for a job interview. I was ecstatic.

At the long teak table sat eleven old and not so old, bright-faced men, some intimidating just in their looks. After a long Q & A session, one of them pointed to the trees outside the Honorary Secretary's window and asked me to identify them. I did (the Jackfruit tree *Artocarpus heterophyllus*), and lo and behold, end of interview! I was asked to wait outside, so I sat in one of the chairs in front of the Director's room. Mr. Dinshaw Panday, an affable old man, came out and gave me the widest smile. My heart somersaulted. Mr. A.N.D. Nanavati, a stately gentleman with the kindest smile, went past. Was my fate sealed? I had not yet got my university results. I cursed the good times I had spent at the University. Would this be my waterloo? After anxious days and nights ... I got the job and was assigned to the Bird Hazard Project. Analysing remnants from bird hits became my forte!

The stalwarts of the BNHS Executive Committee were experts in their field. Dr. C.V. Kulkarni, a doyen of Marine Sciences, and Prof. P.V. Bole, Professor of Botany at St. Xavier's College, who was involved with the Blatter Herbarium and the Society for almost 30 years. Then there was Mr. J.C. Daniel, the Curator and Director BNHS. His wide smile was his gift for a good job done well and to his liking. Mr. Daniel was hawk-eyed; for him, if you were out of your seat, it meant you were up to something! He was the one man to be feared at BNHS. We made sure we were in our seats when 'JC' was on the prowl!

I remember my trepidation before my encounter with Dr. Sálím Ali. But he turned out to be kind and affable; he checked the microphotography of feathers that I had with me and marvelled at it ... showed me some delectable ones too. When Dr. Sálím Ali shifted to the Royal Yacht Club, Mr. Daniel assigned us young ones to the duty of ferrying books from BNHS to the Old Man, which gave us the opportunity to spend some time with him. Long after, I realized it was very thoughtful of Mr. Daniel to have been so resourceful! In conferences, he made sure that one young BNHS scientist was assigned to each visiting senior scientist exclusively, to make them comfortable, and for the youngsters to get a chance to interact with the seniors. JCD was integrity and compassion personified.

And when he turned eighty, he sent me an invite. I was travelling and could not attend, but I sent him a charcoal drawing of a Tiger from the School of Ranthambhore Art, couriering it to reach him on the day! Thanking me, he wrote, "Whenever I enter the drawing room Lima's tiger looks down at me from up there." Little things made him happy! On most visits to Mumbai I would meet him at the BNHS. In 2011, on 14th July, I met him for the last time; little had I imagined he would be gone forever!

Mr. S.A. Hussain was the quintessential Bird Migration Man. A person to approach for all your troubles, he patiently heard you, and when in a good mood, also offered you coffee from his personal brewer. Dr. Robert Grubh, my first Project Scientist at the BNHS, was a man of few words; he kept to his work, diligent and exacting. Credit goes to him for my being able to rattle off scientific names of birds.

P.B. Shekhar (PBS), our affable Membership Programmes Manager, was full of stories. While we adored the “Old Man”, Mr. Shekhar’s anecdotes of the Old Man and his legendary temper were a bit unsettling. He regaled us with those jungle stories that were never chronicled in the *Hornbill* or the *JBNHS*.

Ripley, a young zoologist with the US Army in Sri Lanka, later became Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Sálím Ali was primarily an ecologist, while Ripley’s main interest was in avian taxonomy. Their collaboration helped revive the fortunes of BNHS, as the Smithsonian became a source of ‘funding, collaboration and technical expertise’, laying the foundations for the emergence of BNHS as the premier wildlife research institution in India. As Ali observed, “... but for the methodical collecting of specimens in my earlier years – several thousands, alas – it would have been impossible to advance our taxonomical knowledge of Indian birds ... nor indeed of their geographic distribution, ecology, and bionomics.”

BNHS is intrinsically tied to Dr. Sálím Ali’s life path. His transition from a naturalist to a world renowned ecologist and his leadership of a post-independence NGO that has trained and nurtured most of the ecologists currently working in India, is well summed up by Madhav Gadgil: “Above all he will be remembered as the man who taught Indians to appreciate, to study at first hand, to treasure, to work towards conserving the rich living heritage of this country.”

Sálím Ali’s work with Dr. Erwin Stresemann at Berlin University was the differentiator between the traditional zoologist/botanist and ecologist. Armed with the latest ecological theories and techniques, Sálím Ali embarked on a new “behavioural ecology”. Evolutionary botany and the interactions between species was the new ecology approach – Conservation Biology as we now know it. Consequently, he paved the way to harnessing the interests of a generation of Indians who were moved by the innumerable opportunities of working in Indian forests, observing birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects. The legacy of a man who never completed a college degree, the Field Ornithology department of the Mumbai University is housed in BNHS. Due credit to Dr. Sálím Ali for having brought legitimacy to a pioneering area of science that was way ahead of ecological and behavioural studies not only in India, but the world over.

Humayun Abdulali an ace collector of bird, reptile, and snake specimens was a taxonomist of repute, having trained under Charles McCann, to whom went the credit for setting up the Natural History section of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in Bombay. Many scientists who came to the BNHS in the early 1980s lost out on Humayun’s magnificent taxonomy experience due to his reticence.

“Gen next” followed: Mr. J.C. Daniel, Dr. Robert B. Grubh, Dr. V.S. Vijayan, Dr. A.J.T. Johnsingh, Mr. S.A. Hussain, Dr. D.N. Matthew. They had trained under the Old Man and imbibed the rigours of behavioural sciences in ornithology and mammalogy. Mr. V.C. Ambedkar requires special mention as Dr. Sálím Ali’s first Masters student at Bombay University. Next came the scientists that joined BNHS in the early eighties, Vibhu Prakash, Goutam Narayan, Ravi Sankaran, and Ajay Desai, who went on to do excellent work in the conservation of endangered species like vultures, pygmy hog, and elephants, and are torch bearers of the conservation scenario in this country.

This editorial is like a nostalgic walk down the corridors of BNHS as I knew it. I learnt from great masters, got to do some great work, traversed fantastic landscapes in search of the Black-necked Crane, Bengal Florican, ringed a multitude of birds in the swamps of Point Calimere, looked at the intricate design of bird feathers through the lenses of Carl Zeiss microscopes. BNHS taught me a great deal; a covenant for me to continue the good work with diligence and pass on the knowledge.

Lima Rosalind

(Lima Rosalind worked in several BNHS ecology projects from 1984–1996)



The Beginning...

The year was 1883. Eight nature enthusiasts met at the Victoria and Albert Museum in South Bombay to exchange notes on Indian wildlife. Little did they imagine their meeting would result in one of the oldest and most respected conservation organizations in the world. Dr. D. MacDonald, E.H. Aitken, Col. C. Swinhoe, J.C. Anderson, J. Johnston, Dr. G.A. Maconochie, Dr. Atmaram Pandurang Tarkhadkar, and Dr. Sakham Arjun Ravut were the eight founding members of the Bombay Natural History Society.

It was Dr. D. MacDonald, a Professor of Biology, who first suggested early in 1883 that it would be an excellent idea to form a Society for the study of natural history. Such a study was slowly gaining momentum, with interested



The Founders

Dr. D. MacDonald

Mr. E.H. Aitken

Col. C. Swinhoe

Mr. J.C. Anderson

Mr. J. Johnston

Dr. Atmaram Pandurang

Dr. G.A. Maconochie

Dr. Sakham Arjun

people, mostly the British, exploring this rich colony of the Empire. Many of the early contributors were army or government officers posted in the countryside, who had an affinity to birds, butterflies, mammals, reptiles, and the whole world of nature. Amazed at the diversity of the country, numerous among them were converted into avid naturalists, especially many who until then had been involved in hunting.

The nineteenth century proved to be a stepping stone towards a long history of wildlife documentation and study. However, the study was fragmented, with individuals engaging in mostly self-funded and independent research activities, as research in natural history had not yet become a career option. It was necessary to bring together all the



The Society's Museum, in Apollo Street, housed mainly trophies in 1888



By 1921, many more specimens had been added



Dr. Atmaram Pandurang Tarkhadkar

work done on natural history in India, to give it cohesion, and that was where these eight pioneers of BNHS stepped in. Some were enthusiastic researchers, while others were amateurs just into the field. One of the most important contributors was E.H. Aitken, who was arguably the best naturalist writer in India at the time.

Swinhoe, being a keen shikari, contributed a lot to the collection amassed by the Society. He collected around 340 bird skins, and he also had a record collection of Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths). He published the first ever 'Catalogue of the Moths of India' (1887-89) along with E.C. Cotes of the Indian Museum, Calcutta, and authored 'A revision of the genera of the family Liparidae' which covered 1,130 entries. He also described 400 new species. He received an honorary M.A. for his work in Entomology after settling in Oxford, post retirement.

John C. Anderson, yet another nature enthusiast, helped the Society in many ways. He worked extensively on the wildlife of Simla and

contributed a number of animal and bird skins from there to the Society's collection.

The early history of the Society was dominated by Englishmen, especially Aitken and Swinhoe. The only two Indian founder members, Atmaram Pandurang Tarkhadkar and Sakharam Arjun Ravut, were medical doctors and did commendable work in their own fields. One common thread that connected them with the rest of the members of the Society was their interest in life sciences. Both of them were active in education and social reform, and were close associates of the well-known social reformer Bhau Daji Lad. Dr. Atmaram Pandurang was a member of a number of organizations like the Bombay Association and East India Association. He was among the first batch of students to pass out from Grant Medical College in 1851. He conducted a vaccination campaign against smallpox among an orthodox and unwilling population in Bhiwandi. It was his progressive



Dr. Sakharam Arjun Ravut

vision that got him into the company of the other founding members.

Similar was the story of Dr. Sakharam Arjun, who was an alumnus of Grant Medical College in 1863. He was a visionary, and his passion was botany which he taught at Grant Medical College; in those days, biology was taught as part



BNHS's taxidermy laboratory at Phipson's: Charles McCann at work, 1926

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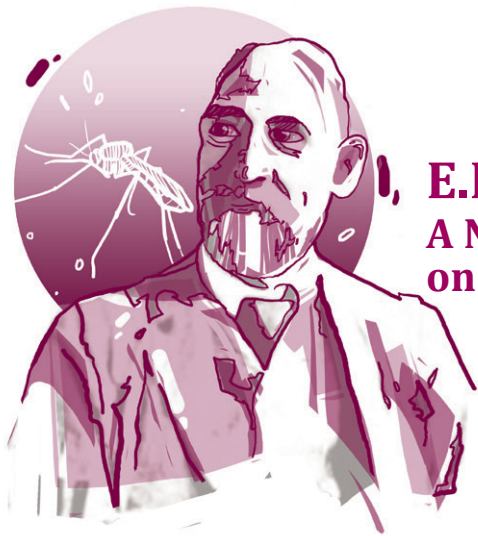
of the medical course. He put his knowledge of medicine and botany together and worked on medicinal plants. He even wrote a book *CATALOGUE OF THE BOMBAY DRUGS*, in which he included a list of plants used in indigenous medicine, classifying them by family, scientific name, local name, and medicinal use. Further harnessing his interest in botany and medicine, he cultivated and maintained a botanical garden at the back of his house where he grew and studied medicinal plants. He went on to experiment and develop a hybrid variety of an ornamental plant. This intense interest in botany made him part of the league of eight men and he became one of the founders of the BNHS.

These eight visionaries lived at a time when India's natural history had started to gain visibility, and their contributions were to fuel the engine for more than a century. It propelled a string of pan-India surveys, publications, cataloguing and maintaining documentation about the diversity of India. This special issue of *Hornbill* takes you on a journey through the conservation movement in the Indian region, through the stories of some of the stalwarts of the Bombay Natural History Society. ■

"So I take my gun, and net, and go where the leaves are spread. The gun or net I would gladly leave behind, but they cannot altogether be dispensed with. Without a collection a man's knowledge of natural history becomes nebulous and his pursuit of it dilettante ... [But] Cherish a tender place in your nature which feels a pang when you pick up a little corpse, so happy two minutes ago. And when you have killed enough, stop ...

Beware also of the snare which lurks under the intoxicating pleasure of collecting lest you degenerate into a collector and cease to be a naturalist ... As soon as you begin to feel that a rare bird or butterfly is not so much a bird or butterfly to you as a 'specimen', you have caught the distemper and take measures to check it."

... E.H. Aitken — A NATURALIST ON THE PROWL.



E.H. Aitken A Naturalist on the Prowl

"An accurate and amusing writer of natural history subjects ... a Christian gentleman of singular simplicity and modesty and great charm of manner." That is Edward Hamilton Aitken for you, as described in a memoir in the 1914 edition of his book *CONCERNING ANIMALS AND OTHER MATTERS*. Another among his delightful books, *A NATURALIST ON THE PROWL*, sums up what his vocation was, or rather, what he did during his spare time! Edward Hamilton Aitken, a.k.a. EHA, was one of the founders of Bombay Natural History Society and its first Honorary Secretary.

EHA was born in a missionary family in Satara in 1851. His father Revd James Aitken was a missionary of the Free Church of Scotland posted in India. EHA was initially educated at home, and subsequently entered the Bombay University (now University of Mumbai) to acquire BA and MA degrees. He joined the Provincial Education Service and taught at the Deccan College in Poona for a few years. He then moved to the Customs and Salt Department, and served in several regions including Bombay, progressing to become the Collector of Customs at Karachi. He retired in 1906

"It is impossible to conceive a fate of more unmitigated horror than that of a frog being sucked down by a snake, its foot already undergoing digestion, its leg stretching all the way down the enemy's slimy throat, and its body slowly but surely following. Happily frogs cannot have much imagination, yet they must realize the situation to some extent, for they give expression to the anguish of their souls every few minutes in a wail so unspeakably woeful, that it would melt the hardest heart. It has often melted mine to such an extent, that I have gone out with my stick to slay the snake, and release the frog."

... E.H. Aitken — *THE TRIBES ON MY FRONTIER*

and moved to Edinburgh in search of his Scottish roots, where he died on April 11, 1909.

Nothing in nature missed EHA's eye, whether mundane or unusual. His regular contributions to the *Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (JBNHS)* since its inception in 1886 (he was one of the first joint editors) reveal the vast expanse of his interest

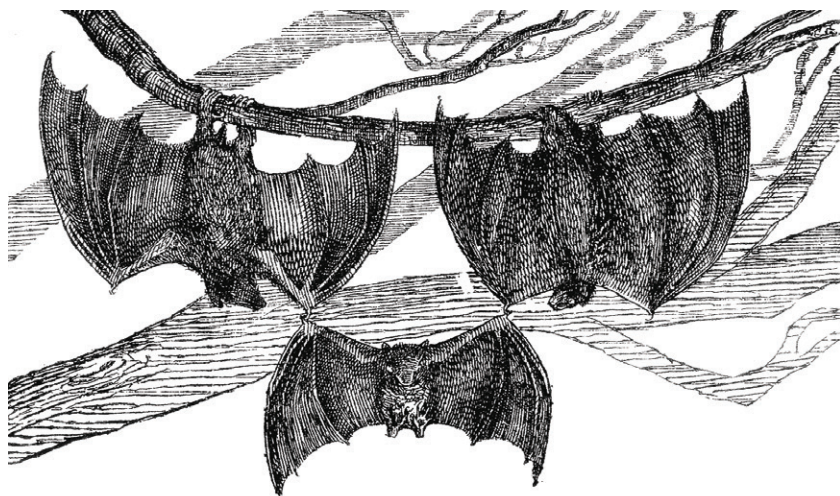
in and understanding of nature. All branches of Zoology fascinated him, but more so birds and insects, especially butterflies. He recognized in each animal a soul and a character of its own. He loved them all and kept numerous pets, including birds which he never tired of watching. EHA spent his spare time studying animal life, but was unwilling to hurt an animal, even for scientific collection. He believed in collecting just enough specimens to study and obtain knowledge of their life cycle and habits. EHA contributed significantly to the Society's bird collection.

Not only was he a master at grasping the characteristic features and behaviour of individual species, but also in rendering them eloquently in print, in a style punctuated by wry humour. And then, there were his rather quaint sketches, which could enliven even a less exciting subject such as hands and feet. His writings illustrated the joyousness of living, and there was a poetic quality to his narration, whether he was writing about rats, mosquitoes, lizards, or vultures. Some of his well-known books include *THE TRIBES ON MY FRONTIER: AN INDIAN NATURALIST'S FOREIGN POLICY*, *THE COMMON BIRDS OF BOMBAY*, and *BEHIND THE BUNGALOW*. His book *THE FIVE WINDOWS OF THE SOUL*, a philosophical and speculative masterpiece on the five senses and how they bring us in contact with our surroundings, reveals a different dimension of his personality.

EHA's popularity as a writer came from the columns he wrote for newspapers and magazines such as *The Times of India*, *Strand*, and *Pall Mall*. Loke Wan Tho, an ornithologist and photographer, remarked on his writings, "There is much poetry in EHA's writings built on a solid foundation of sound observation,



"Why do mosquitoes bite? The question has exercised me much, and it is painfully clear to my mind that modern science has made it more difficult to answer than it was before ... When a mosquito settles on you it pricks up its ears for a moment, to make sure that there is no danger near, and then walks about slowly, probing for a soft place. When it has found one, it fixes the tube and begins to drive it home. Then is the moment to smite it" ... E.H. Aitken — THE TRIBES ON MY FRONTIER



"Bats have one lovely virtue, and that is family affection. I shall never forget a captive family of demon bats which I once saw, the grim old papa, the mother perhaps a trifle more hideous, and the half-grown youngster, not quite able yet to provide for himself. There was something very touching in the tender attachment to one another of three such ill-omened objects"

... E.H. Aitken — THE TRIBES ON MY FRONTIER

yet made immortal by the magic of words. It is especially true for THE TRIBES ON MY FRONTIER, which is an extended metaphor on war and the frontier tribes associated with it." Loke Wan Tho also observed, "He contributed little in the field of original scientific research, except for some work on mosquitoes and butterflies there is nothing else to remember him by in science". This would be an unfair remark on EHA, who studied natural history not only for its own sake but also for making it beneficial to the people of India. For instance, his deep understanding of birds – a result of his study and keen sense of observation – comes through starkly in his book THE COMMON BIRDS OF BOMBAY. Aitken discovered a new species of anopheline mosquito which was named *Anopheles aitkeni* after him.

EHA was an equally shrewd observer of humanity, as evinced in his book BEHIND THE BUNGALOW where he talks about *The Ayah*, *The Body-guards*, *That Dhobie* and so on, all those seen but never noticed by society at large. Strongly religious, a pleasant companion, broad-minded, exceedingly tolerant of other's weaknesses, gentle and lovable, EHA was exemplary in having no enemies. Patient observation, charm, humour, and love for his subjects were some of the qualities that distinguished him from other naturalists and made him an eternal naturalist writer. ■

"Butterfly-hunting is a means, not an end. The end is to know them, to become intimate with them, so that, as you move about the garden, or lie dreaming, each gay pleasure-hunter that flits by you may be an acquaintance with a character and an individuality of its own. These are just the situations that butterflies revel in, where rippling water runs among shady trees, and Art has let Nature alone ... Every double flower is an abomination to butterflies."

... E.H. Aitken — THE TRIBES ON MY FRONTIER

Two Britishers who hold a special place in shaping the Society in its early stages are H.M. Phipson and Frank Wall. The reason why the two are remembered here together is their contribution to the reptile collection of the museum, particularly snakes.

Phipson, a British wine merchant and naturalist who offered his premises to the Society and helped to build up the Natural History Section in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, was greatly intrigued by snakes. Frank Wall, a Medical Officer, pioneered research on snakes in India and published much of his work in the Society's Journal – JBNHS.



H.M. Phipson The Society's Benefactor

Herbert Musgrave Phipson was born in London in 1850, and moved to Bombay in 1878. His association with BNHS began in 1884, a year after the Society was established, and in 1886, he took up the mantle of Honorary Secretary from EHA. Phipson's contribution to the growth and development of the

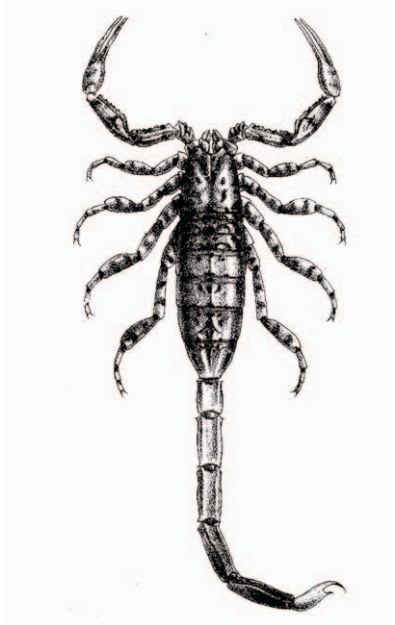
The Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in 1921, now known as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya; it retains many specimens from the BNHS collection



Society was immense. To begin with, he offered the Society a room in his office at 18, Forbes Street in the Fort area. For the members who met at the Victoria and Albert Museum in Byculla until then, the offer proved beneficial as the new site was more centrally located to hold their meetings and keep their collections. The Society bloomed in its new premises. So rapid was its growth that by 1886 it required a bigger space to house its collections. Yet again, Phipson came to the rescue, offering a larger office space at 6, Apollo Street (now Shaheed Bhagat Singh Road). This became the core location of the Society for the next 50 years. Phipson, however, did not stop with offering a new location. His investment in the collections was so tremendous that the new site soon came to be referred to as 'Phipson's Museum'.

As the Honorary Secretary of the Society, Phipson also became the editor of *JBNHS* in 1866 and manager of the Society's business outreach. He served as the editor for 20 years, and later as a joint editor with his successor W.S. Millard. Most of his time was spent in the service of the Society, where he focused on developing its reputation in natural sciences by getting high quality articles published in *JBNHS*. During his editorial tenure, *JBNHS* gained fame as one of the best known natural history journals in the Asian region, also influencing public science policy in the Bombay Presidency. His uninterrupted dedication to the *Journal*, however, left him with little time to pen down the immense knowledge he had gained in natural history.

Though Phipson was interested in the study of all animals, he was most

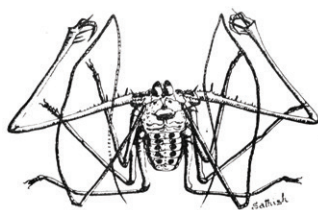


Isometrus phipsoni a scorpion named after H.M. Phipson

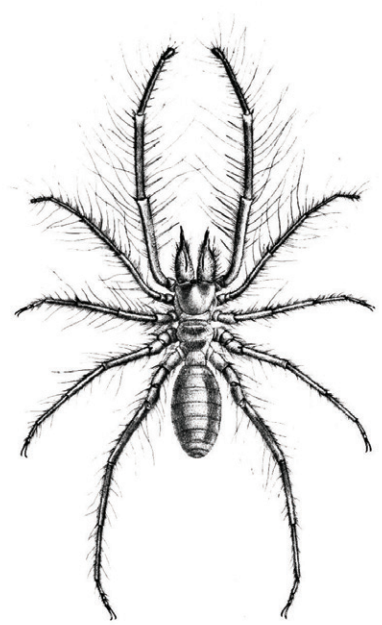
intrigued by snakes. This fascination for reptiles prompted him to publish a paper on the 'Poisonous Snakes of the Bombay Presidency' [Vol. 2(4)], adding to his few but memorable contributions in the *JBNHS*. In the initial days of BNHS, various animals, birds, and reptiles were kept live; among these was a cobra that Phipson used for his research. One of the papers he wrote in the *JBNHS* pertained to 'Observations on the feeding of the Indian Rock Snake (*Python molurus*) kept in the Society's Rooms, from May 27, 1886 to May 20, 1887' [Vol. 2(3)]. Recording his observations, he wrote, "During the twelve months ... the snake ate 25 rats, 3 hens, 3 crows, and 1 kestrel ... During the cold weather ... a period of 113 days, the snake refused food and remained in a very sluggish, sleepy condition ... the temperature of the reptile fell from 82° (normal) to 73°, a fall of 9 degrees." Since most of the early members of BNHS were hunters of big game and gradually collected fine horns and heads, the Society now had an enviable

collection of birds, bird eggs, reptiles, insects, mammals, and snakes. Phipson decided that there was a need to establish a zoological garden in Bombay with a very fine natural history museum, and he proposed the idea to the Government. The Govt. appointed Phipson to a committee, set up in 1904, to consider the question of a public museum and library for Bombay. Phipson recommended that these should be separate buildings: one for Art and Archaeology, the second for a public library, and the third for a Natural Science Museum. Phipson's efforts saw fruit in 1922 with the inauguration of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India with a Natural Sciences Section as a part of it. The collections from 'Phipson's Museum' were transferred to the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in 1921 — the Natural History Section was built by the Society largely with financial assistance from its benefactors.

Phipson's zeal for natural history and his love for the Society were contagious. He led people from all walks of life through the Society's collections with the singular purpose of kindling an interest in natural history. He encouraged zoologists and other scientists to make use of the collections, which led to several discoveries of new species. Many new species came to be named after Phipson, such as *Hydrophis phipsoni* (= *Distira cyrocincta*), a sea snake described by Murray in 1887; Phipson's Shieldtail *Uropeltis*



Phrynichus phipsoni a whip scorpion named after H.M. Phipson



Rhagodes phipsoni a Galeod spider named after H.M. Phipson

phipsonii, a burrowing snake found in the Western Ghats described by Mason in 1888; *Isometrus phipsoni*, a scorpion described by Oates in 1888; *Rhagodes phipsoni*, a Galeod spider described by Pocock in 1895; and *Phrynichus phipsoni*, a whip scorpion described by Pocock in 1894. Years after his departure, a beautiful squirrel discovered by the Society's Mammal Survey was named after him — *Petinomys phipsoni* — to commemorate his contribution to natural history.

Phipson and his wife Edith returned to England in 1906. After Edith's death, Phipson established a scholarship in her name at the London School of Medicine for Women. This scholarship was awarded annually to a medical student. Students from India or going to work in India were given preference in awarding this scholarship.

From providing office space to making the Society's mission his own, Phipson's singular contribution to the BNHS went a long way in ensuring it a firm place in the field of natural history. ■



Frank Wall Pioneer Snakeman of India

Frank Wall was born in Colombo in 1869. His father, George Wall, worked there and was responsible for initiating the study of natural history on the island. F. Wall studied medicine in London and joined the Indian Medical Service in 1893, serving until 1925. He became a member of the BNHS and went on to become a leading figure in the study of snakes of the Indian Empire.

During his tenure in the Indian Medical Service, Wall was stationed throughout the country in India, and also in Ceylon and Burma. He collected and studied snakes wherever he went during the three decades he lived in the Subcontinent. He preferred to be a field worker and chose to spend his time in the wild, rather than being a museum scientist. Yet he did not leave any museum unvisited, and

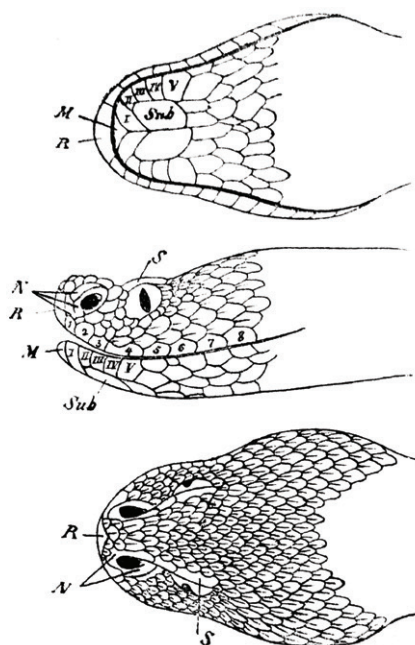


Illustration of *Hydrophis phipsoni* from
THE POISONOUS TERRESTRIAL SNAKES
by M.F. Wall

refurbished their collections with his research. For several years, Wall was the chief authority on Indian snakes.

Wall was a prolific writer who precisely combined both scientific and popular writing in the subject of his interest. He was a regular contributor to the *JBNHS*, and published a series of papers, pamphlets and books on the common Indian snakes, with valuable notes on their natural history, illustrated with fine coloured plates. Besides the *JBNHS*, he also wrote in several other Indian journals. His works include 'A Hand List of Snakes of the Indian Empire' in five parts, from 1923 to 1925, and 'A Popular Treatise on the Common Indian Snakes', in 28 parts, from 1906 to 1920, all of these published in the Society's *Journal*. Wall also brought out a book, *OPHIDIA TAPROBANICA OR THE SNAKES OF CEYLON*, published in 1921, a remarkable collection of references and research material.

Wall's specimens are distributed among the British Museum and many museums in India, especially in the Natural History Section of Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai. On retiring to England, Wall donated his holotypes (the single specimen upon which the description of a new species is based in the original publication) and collection of skulls to the British Museum, and gave up any further work on the subject. Wall died in Bournemouth in 1950. His contributions changed the face of research in herpetology. ■

"Phipson took a special interest in snakes. He once removed a cobra out of his blanket and patted its coils to make it sit up and expand its hood before visitors. The cobra, probably startled, turned and struck at Phipson and buried its fangs in one of his fingers. Phipson displayed his usual coolness in this dreadful situation. His remedy was drastic. He went to the Society's small laboratory and applied some cyanide of potassium to the wound. Except for some swelling of the finger he fortunately escaped unharmed." †

... Quoted from: THE SONG OF THE MAGPIE ROBIN by Zafar Futehally

† The Editors do not recommend this remedy.

F.V. Evans and J.D. Inverarity were two major contributors who endorsed the mission of BNHS. Both joined the Society out of interest and eventually rose to hold important posts. Being big game hunters and naturalists, they understood animals well and shared valuable knowledge and resources that enriched the Society's efforts towards conservation.



Evans donated to the BNHS his copy of THE BIRDS OF ASIA by John Gould, from which this image of Temminck's Tragopan by Henry Constantine Richter is taken

F.V. Evans The Altruist

Born in 1865 to a farmer, Frederick Victor Evans was attracted to science and natural history since childhood. He was one of the original founders and trustees of the Commercial Gymkhana at Wodehouse Road, Bombay, and also co-founded Evans, Fraser & Co in 1892. Evans, in later years, found recreation in shikar around Thane Creek and nearby districts, and in camping. He loved to sail and fish in the waters of Bombay. His love for Bombay was immense, which can be seen by his contributions and work.

Being closely connected to nature, Evans soon became associated with the BNHS. He was elected as Vice Patron

of the Society in 1928, in recognition of the support he provided to the Society. He made several monetary contributions, then amounting to well over Rs. 15,000/-, to the Society's coffers, which were used to fund the Natural History Section of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India. The Section was maintained by Evans for a period of more than 10 years. With his generosity, the Society was able to prepare a fine series of wax and papier mache models of local fishes, which were exhibited in the Section. The JBNHS also benefited from Evans' generous offer to meet the cost of the colour and black and white plates produced for the series 'The Wild Animals of the Indian Empire'. [Vol. 37(1) Suppl.] He also supported the publication of the enormous number of illustrations in Martin E. Mosley's series on caddisflies [Vols 36-38, 40].

Evans gifted rare and valuable books about Bombay and Western India, and a complete set of Gould's BIRDS OF ASIA and A CENTURY OF BIRDS OF THE HIMALAYAN MOUNTAINS to the Society's library. After retiring from India, he spent the rest of his life in England, where he passed away in 1940. ■





J.D. Inverarity In the service of the Society

Born in Bombay in 1847 and educated in England, John Duncan Inverarity returned to his place of birth to serve as a barrister in the Bombay High Court in 1869. Such was the reputation he built for himself as a barrister that the Chief Justice of the Bombay High Court was said to have remarked that “for thirty years [he] had no equal in India”! When not in his barrister coat, Inverarity pursued his passion as a big game hunter and naturalist. He became associated with the Society as member of the Managing Committee in 1891, and went on to become its Vice President in 1897.

Inverarity’s contributions to the Society’s *Journal* were tremendous. He excelled not only as a shikari, but also as a close and accurate observer of the habits and characteristics of the animals he hunted. With a flair for language and writing, he was able to describe his observations in his writings on sport and jungle life. In an interesting ‘Stray Notes on Old Indian Natural History and Sporting

Periodicals’ [1914, Vol. 22(4): 814–816], he writes about some of the periodicals such as the *Oriental Sporting Magazine*, published from Bombay from 1828 to 1833, the *Bengal Sporting Magazine* from Calcutta which later became *Bengal Sporting and General Magazine* and lasted till 1846, the *Calcutta Journal of Natural History* which lasted till 1848 and the *Indian Sporting Review* that lasted till 1851. The notes provide an insight into new revelations about Indian wildlife, even if mainly through sport. However, he does mention that the *Calcutta Journal of Natural History* was conducted very much on the lines of our own “*Journal*”, meaning *JBNHS*. “I find from it that the Thaming, Thamin or Eld’s deer, *Cervus eldii*, was first discovered in 1838 in Manipur by Lieut. Eld, Assistant Commissioner of Assam ...” he alludes to an article while also making suggestions for some of their articles to be reprinted in *JBNHS* as “the *Calcutta Journal of Natural History* is not easily got”.

Inverarity’s observations on the tiger helped to elucidate many points on the subject of the size of

the animal, its breeding pattern, mode of attack, and the treatment of its kill. One of his most endearing publications is ‘Unscientific Notes on the Tiger’, published in *JBNHS* [1888, Vol. 3(3):143–154] wherein he justifies his title saying he makes no “pretensions to the learned and scientific attainments ... hitherto read at our meetings” but nevertheless packs rich observations punctuated by amusing anecdotes. One such anecdote is about an existing superstition among the local hunters that “God allows the tiger one rupee a day for his food, so that if he kills a bullock worth Rs. 5, he won’t kill again for five days”.

He was a prolific writer and wrote on varied subjects based on his field experiences and reading; the range he covered included wild dogs, man-eating panthers, waters of western India, and even ‘... Mammalia of Somaliland’ [1891 Vol. 6(4): 457]. The latter was based on his expeditions to the Somaliland in 1889 and 1890. In his notes of the same, he even provides the Somali equivalent of the English names of the animals that he encountered there. He documented his study on the Indian Bison or Gaur through his paper ‘The Indian Bison, with some notes on stalking him [Vol. 4(4)]’, which was an important contribution to the understanding of this species. His articles were usually illustrated with photographs taken by him, some of which are displayed on the walls of the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya in Mumbai.

Inverarity was blessed with the keenest power of observation and a great love for nature and outdoor life, all of which are reflected in the writings he left behind. ■



Several stalwarts have contributed towards building the edifice of the BNHS. Many have sustained its growth and brought to it recognition as one of the foremost research and conservation organizations in the Indian region. Not least among them are those who served as editors of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society (JBNHS). Two such outstanding members of the Society were R.A. Sterndale and W.S. Millard.

"Even the wildest of the Gonds are keen sportsmen; it is a part of their natural training derived from their habits of life.

Where they cultivate, they cut down the trees on the hill-sides, and letting them dry for a while set to them; they turn up the soil loosely, and in the ashes of their huge bonfires they sow their scanty crops of millet and maize."

... Robert Armitage Sterndale –
DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES



R.A. Sterndale Editor & Writer



When *JBNHS* appeared in 1886, it became a platform for new discoveries and discussions on the natural history of the Indian subcontinent. One of the earliest authors who contributed in this way was Robert Armitage Sterndale, who later went on to edit the *JBNHS* for the Society. Sterndale was a naturalist, artist, writer, statesman, and an eminent member of the Zoological Society of London.

Born in 1839, Sterndale moved to India at the age of 17 to work for the East India Company. He began in the finance department, and was the assistant settlement officer for

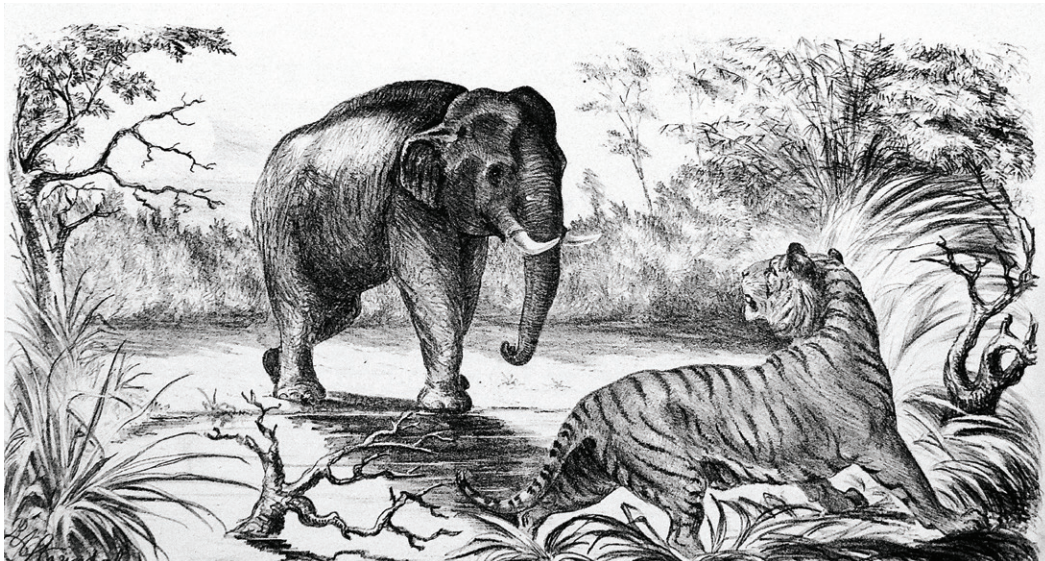
the finance departments of Nagpur, Calcutta, and Punjab. Sterndale later rose to be the Accountant General of Bombay in 1884 and Madras in 1887. Apart from finance, he had a keen interest in natural history, geography, and other scientific studies. Sterndale joined the Society the year it was formed in 1883. The idea of starting a journal, in fact, originated with him and "proved practicable only because of the way in which his ready pen and pencil solved all difficulties", according to a memoir on him in





"Not so fast asleep as he looks! This is a little game that our spotted friend often tries, though I doubt his success with the wary Monkeys" ... Robert Armitage Sterndale –

DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES



"I daresay that, if a young Elephant Calf strayed away from the protection of its mother, a Tiger would have but little hesitation in appropriating it, but the adults are not even on bowing terms"

... Robert Armitage Sterndale – DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES

JBNHS (Vol. 14). As one of the first editors from 1886 to 1895 (the others being Aitken and Phipson), Sterndale brought in his expertise in natural history to provide the *JBNHS* a strong foundation. He wrote prolifically, sometimes nearly five articles in one volume [for example, Vol. 1(2)]!

He published several books based on his experiences and

observations of wildlife in India. Some of his publications include *A NATURAL HISTORY OF THE MAMMALIA OF INDIA AND CEYLON* (1884), *SEONEE OR CAMP LIFE ON THE SATPURA RANGE* (1887), *DENIZENS OF THE JUNGLES* (1886), and *THE AFGHAN KNIFE* (1879). As an illustrator, he contributed pen and ink sketches, water colours, and oil paintings pertaining to natural history, and illustrated two books by

E.H. Aitken. His artistic works became an inspiration for Rudyard Kipling's *THE JUNGLE BOOK*. He contributed a few sketches to *LAYS OF IND.* by Aliph Cheem, besides his own books.

Sterndale died in 1902 in Westminster, while on leave from St. Helena, where he served as the Governor General. His contributions to BNHS and the field of natural sciences will be cherished forever. ■

In 1884, a young man of 20 came from England to Bombay to assist entrepreneur H.M. Phipson in his wine business. Soon he was drawn to his employer's other interest – natural history. That was Walter Samuel Millard, the man who eventually became the Honorary Secretary of BNHS and with his vision and enterprise, took the Society to new heights. Millard's stint with *JBNHS* began in 1893, when he became the assistant editor; in 1906 he assumed Phipson's place as editor of the *JBNHS*. It was during his tenure that BNHS started publishing books, beginning with E.C. Stuart Baker's *THE INDIAN DUCKS AND THEIR ALLIES* (1908), which had appeared earlier as a series in *JBNHS*. The book was a great success, running out of print sooner than expected. It heralded a new journey for BNHS in book publishing, enabling it to contribute significantly to the scholarship on natural history in India. The *JBNHS* itself grew to become the most important publication on natural history in Asia, bringing in a new wave of scientific writing and research. A significant contribution by Millard to the *Journal* was his article "The Founders of the Bombay Natural History Society", published in *JBNHS*, Vol. 35 (1 & 2). That was the very first time the founders were documented in the Society's annals.

Millard is best remembered for triggering Sálim Ali's interest in birds. In his autobiography *THE FALL OF A SPARROW*, the celebrated 'Birdman of India' acknowledges how, when he ventured into BNHS as a young schoolboy seeking identification of a bird he had shot, Millard had not only identified it as the Yellow-throated Sparrow but also shown him around the Society's formidable natural history collection. "It was

W.S. Millard Entrepreneur & Naturalist



largely the fatherly encouragement I received from him at that time, and continually thereafter; that set me off on a lifetime of enjoyable and rewarding bird study," writes Sálim Ali in his piece on Millard in *JBNHS*, Vol. 50. Sálim Ali and Millard's other students held him in high esteem for his initiatives and contributions



Hornbill House is named after the Great Pied Hornbill, William, that lived behind Millard's chair for 26 years

to the field of ornithology and to the Society as a whole.

Millard was the driving force behind the Society's historic Mammal Survey of India, Burma and Ceylon (1911–23). He devoted much time to the survey and to the establishment of the Mammal Survey Fund. However, this was just one of the many initiatives that he was associated with. Millard was instrumental in influencing amendments to the Wild Birds and Animals Protection Act that came into existence in 1912. The Act covered birds like bustards, ducks, floricans, junglefowl, peafowl, pheasants, quails, sandgrouse, Painted Snipe, Spurfowl, and Eurasian Woodcock. He pushed for the inclusion of herons and kingfishers (which were in enormous demand for their feathers) to the list of protected species. He also helped establish a "closed season" for certain birds so they would get a reprieve from hunters, while other species were given additional protection.

Though Millard took an interest in natural history, he thoroughly loved the craft of gardening, especially the



Illustrations of Variegated Bauhinia (L) and Burmese Pink Cassia (R) by Sr. Mary Chiona, from SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES by E. Blatter and W.S. Millard

cultivation of flowering trees. The credit of introducing the Burmese Pink Cassia *Cassia renigera*, Padauk *Pterocarpus indicus*, and Madre de Cacao *Gliricidia maculata* (= *G. sepium*) in the city of Bombay goes to him. When he shifted to a bungalow in Malabar Hill, Bombay, Millard developed a unique garden with a variety of trees and shrubs, and a large fernery with orchids and other tropical flowers. It became one of the most resplendent private gardens in Bombay; guests staying at the Government House were frequently sent to this garden to inspect its treasures. Millard also beautified the city by planting several flowering trees in different localities. Upon his suggestion, Fr Ethelbert Blatter, SJ, Principal and Professor

of Botany at St. Xavier's College in Bombay, wrote the series 'The Palms of India' for the *Journal*. Blatter and Millard together wrote the 20 part series SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES, which appeared in the *JBNHS* before being published as a book. This remains a valuable document of some of the indigenous and exotic flowering trees seen in India. To support the effort, Millard collected a series of paintings of flowering trees and studied the best way to propagate them.

Hornbill House, the headquarters of BNHS, gets its name from a Great Indian Hornbill (now called Great Pied Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*), William, which lived on the premises from 1894–1920. Popularly referred to as the office canary, he lived

behind Millard's chair in a cage for 26 years. William's untimely death, accidentally caused by swallowing a piece of wire, pushed Millard into depression and extreme sadness.

During his tenure, Millard not only contributed immensely to the Bombay Natural History Society but also to the field of natural history at large. After he retired and left India in 1920, he continued to manage the business of the Society from London. In the *JBNHS* [Vol. 35(1 & 2): 197], a note of gratitude to him reads thus: "Mr. Millard is a link with the old founders. He has ... continued to be an active official of the Society and as our London representative has lessened the labours of and earned the gratitude of the Editors." ■



In the early 1900s, BNHS saw the arrival of two stalwarts, the two botanists Fr. E. Blatter and Fr. H. Santapau, both based in St. Xavier's College. One of them, Revd Fr. E. Blatter, was instrumental in encouraging Sálím Ali to pursue a course in Zoology at St. Xavier's College, and thus obtain a college degree.



Revd Fr. E. Blatter A Leading Taxonomist

Illustration of Indian Laburnum by
Sr. Mary Chiona, from
SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES
by E. Blatter and W.S. Millard



Revd Fr. Ethelbert Blatter was born in 1877 in Switzerland. He developed an interest in Zoology and Botany, which soon became his leading career choices. Even in his childhood, he studied the flora of his native hills and could name almost all plants by sight and taste, according to his obituary by Charles McCann [1934 Vol. 37(2): 466–469]. Over the years, he acquired a sound knowledge of Geology and Zoology as well, but realised that he could not do justice to three subjects at the same time, and so he decided to focus on Botany.

Soon after his arrival in India in 1903, he joined St. Xavier's College, Bombay, as a Professor of Biology, and the BNHS as a member in 1904. He began to contribute important scientific articles to the Society's *Journal*. His first article was 'The Fauna and Flora of our Metallic Money' [1906 Vol. 16(2): 334], a task that he undertook at the behest of a friend who asked him to "examine some specimens of our current coins with a special view to plague bacilli". To his friend's disappointment, Blatter did not find what he set out to look for, the plague-engendering organism, but he found several other flora and fauna, one of which was a "parasitic fungi and a mite called *Demodex folliculorum hominis*, which seems to choose the hair follicles and sebaceous glands of man as a favourite haunt"! Several others followed, a few examples being 'The Mangrove of the Bombay Presidency and its Biology' [1906 Vol. 16(4): 644–656], 'Ceylon Ferns in the Bombay Natural History Society's Herbarium' [1908 Vol. 18(3): 639–648], 'Revision of the flora of the Bombay Presidency' in 27 parts published from 1926 to 1935 and 'The palms of British India and Ceylon, indigenous and introduced' in 20 parts from 1910–1918. The latter was published as a book by the Oxford University Press in 1926. Another important series which he



The Blatter Herbarium at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai, since 1906, is the only herbarium in India that holds over 2,00,000 specimens collected from various parts of the country and more than 2,500 books on taxonomic literature on plants. Listed in the Index Herbariorum published from Kew – Royal Botanic Gardens, the Blatter Herbarium specializes in vascular plants of western India; algae, mosses, and fungi of Mumbai; seed samples of medicinally and economically important plants of Maharashtra, and wood samples of Maharashtra

wrote with W.S. Millard in the *JBNHS* 'Some Beautiful Indian Trees' was also published as a book by BNHS in 1937.

During his stay in India, Revd Blatter travelled intensively across the country, making collections that became the base for his writings. He was elected a member of the Executive Committee of the Society in 1916, and in 1919 was appointed Principal of St. Xavier's College. In 1926, he was elected Vice President of the Society, and was also on the Advisory Board, where his advice carried much weight. He was also a prominent member of the Bombay University's Senate.

Blatter returned to Europe in 1909 to complete his priestly studies. By this stage, he had gained a great deal of knowledge about Indian flora and fauna, which would help him in furthering his studies. He gained recognition as the greatest systematist in the field of Indian botany.

While in London, Blatter was a frequent visitor to Kew Herbarium, where he spent time compiling THE FLORA OF ADEN, which was published by the Botanical Survey of India. He made friends among the staff of Kew Herbarium, and they were to prove very helpful to him after his return to India. Before returning to India for the second time, he took time out to complete his FLORA ARABICA, which held a place of pride among reference books on Arabian plants until the late 20th century. Although his main contributions were in British India, his books on the flora of Aden (1914–1916) and Arabia (1919–1936) are also important contributions to botanical literature.

On his return to Bombay, he once again resumed as Professor of Biology, and built up an extensive botanical collection, of which

St. Xavier's College is now the proud possessor. This collection formed the seed of the Blatter Herbarium at St. Xavier's, one of the finest herbaria in Western India. Blatter retired in 1924, as his health started to fail. Yet, after retirement, he went to Panchgani as Parish Priest and this gave him ample opportunity to pursue his botanical studies.

In recognition of his 'Conspicuous important contributions to the knowledge of Asiatic Botany', Blatter was awarded the Johannes Bruehl Memorial Medal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for the year 1931. The announcement was made at an Annual Meeting of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1932. He was the first to receive this medal.

Blatter died in 1934 at Poona. He left behind an enviable body of work and a tradition of excellence in the field of Indian Taxonomic Botany. ■



Fr. Hermenegild Santapau's association with the BNHS began in 1944, when he joined as a member and was elected to its Executive Committee in the very same year. He later served as the Editor of the *JBNHS* from 1948 and was designated as Vice President in 1954.

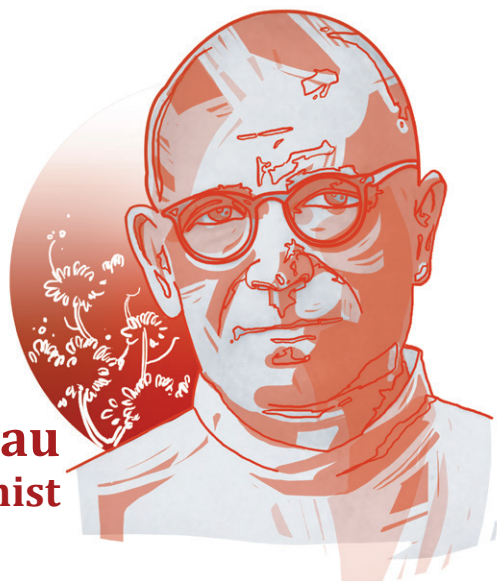
Born in 1903 in La Galera, Spain, Fr. Santapau completed his education in Spain and London. He acquired a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Rome in 1927, and another Ph.D. in Botany based on his extensive work on the flora of Khandala, which he worked on for two years at the Kew Herbarium, London.

Fr. Santapau came to India in 1928 and became a Professor of Botany at St. Xavier's College, Mumbai in 1940. He explored the Subcontinent from the deserts of Baluchistan to the rainforests of Assam, covering the Darjeeling hills in the Himalaya and the Nilgiri and Palni hills in the Western Ghats as well. He collected botanical specimens in every region that he surveyed, and amassed a collection formidable in time.

Fr. Santapau generously passed on his knowledge of Indian Botany and lectured at several universities across the country. He gained recognition as a favourite professor among many of his students. He was also a visiting faculty at the Universities of Delhi and Poona.

Fr. Santapau's publications on Indian Botany number more than 350, which include authoritative treatises on the taxonomy of the flora of Khandala, Purandhar, Saurashtra, and on several plant families. His 'Critical notes on the Orchidaceae of Bombay State' in 11 parts published

Fr. H. Santapau An Eminent Botanist



in the *JBNHS* from 1959 to 1963 was a notable contribution, which appeared in book form as *THE ORCHIDS OF BOMBAY* in 1966. His book *COMMON TREES* was published by the National Book Trust, India, which is an ideal example of Fr. Santapau's expert ability to reach out to both scientists and the lay

reader. The highly comprehensible language and overall appeal of this work made it a very popular read.

An eminent botanist, he was credited with the Latin nomenclature of several Indian plant species. He was a Fellow of the National Institute of Sciences, India, and was associated with many other scientific societies. Fr. Santapau was a member of various committees of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Government of India. He retired as Director of the Botanical Survey of India in 1968.

Fr. Santapau's contributions to the BNHS, to the Government of India, and to Indian Botany are immense. A Padma Shri was conferred upon him by the Government of India and the Birbal Sahani Medal by the Indian Botanical Society in recognition of his personal and professional excellence. The Spanish Government also honoured him by granting him the Orden de Alfonso X el Sabio (Order of Alfonso the Wise). ■



Illustration of the Bhendi Tree, from
COMMON TREES by H. Santapau



*Towards the end of the
'European Era' of
ornithological studies in India,
there were two Britishers
associated with the BNHS
who made significant contributions
to Indian Ornithology:
Norman Boyd Kinnear
and Hugh Whistler.*



N.B. Kinnear **Ornithologist** **across Continents**

Illustrations of *Corvus macrorhynchos*
culminatus and *C.m. macrorhynchos*
from the Vernay Scientific Survey of the
Eastern Ghats by Whistler and Kinnear,
published in series in the *JBNHS*



Norman Boyd Kinnear was born in 1882 in Scotland. He studied at the Edinburgh Academy before moving to Trinity College, Glenalmond. Before following his interest in natural history, he worked as an assistant in an estate in Lanarkshire and volunteered at the Royal Scottish Museum with the British ornithologist Dr. W. Eagle Clarke from 1905 to 1907. He then joined Dr. Clarke at Fair Isle. In 1907, Kinnear went aboard a whaling ship around Greenland to collect bird specimens. Having a sharp skill for identifying talent, Dr. Clarke

recommended Kinnear to the post of Curator at BNHS and so Kinnear entered the Society's service in 1907.

With over a quarter of a century of progress and development, the Society's collections had grown considerably by 1907. They had been donated to the society by enthusiastic amateurs, who were residents from all across India, Burma, and Ceylon. This massive collection of materials was lodged in the Society's rooms at 6, Apollo Street, Bombay. It was looked after and maintained by several keen and devoted amateurs who dedicated their time after office hours to this work. Kinnear took over as curator of these collections. During his tenure, Kinnear did the Society an incredible service by reorganizing the entire museum on a sound scientific basis, through rearrangement, labelling, and cataloguing of the collection. He brought to his work the art of organization and a detailed thought to specificity which not only benefited the museum as a whole but also contributed towards training the small team that worked under

him. He also served as one of the editors of the *Journal*, and wrote in it prolifically.

In 1911, the Society decided to undertake a systematic survey of the mammals of India, Burma and Ceylon. Professional collectors were engaged to secure a systematic series of skins and skulls of mammals, so as to aid a comprehensive study of the status, variation, and distribution of mammals of the Indian subcontinent. It was Kinnear's task to assemble this enormous collection, provisionally identify and catalogue, and arrange their dispatch to the British Museum in London for further clarifications. The growth and advances seen in systematic mammalogy through the Survey were largely due to Kinnear's organization and the utmost care with which he carried out this task.

During World War I, large collections of birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects were shipped to the Society by its members serving with the Expeditionary Force in Mesopotamia. Kinnear was then associated with the Brigade Headquarters, Bombay,

as Intelligence Officer. In spite of the new responsibilities on him, he succeeded in preparing and presenting a pamphlet on the 'Animals of Mesopotamia', which was circulated among the officers and men serving with the Expeditionary Force. It became a frequent book of reference and proved a great help for those who were collecting specimens.

Like the mammal survey, the Society undertook the Vernay Scientific Survey, an ornithological expedition to the Eastern Ghats in 1929. The important bird collections obtained during this survey were studied by Kinnear and another notable ornithologist, Hugh Whistler, and the results were published in the Society's *Journal* under their joint authorship in 16 parts from 1931 to 1937.

In 1920, Kinnear joined the British Museum (Natural History) as an assistant in the Bird Department and later served as Deputy Keeper of Birds. During his years of service in India, he had acquired an extensive knowledge of the birdlife of the region, and he soon made a mark in the field of ornithology. In 1945, he was appointed Keeper of Zoology, and went on to become the Director of the British Museum. He was the President of the British Ornithologists Union from 1943 to 1948 and was knighted in 1950.

Having contributed immensely to institutions of natural history both in India and England, and served in a number of scientific societies, Kinnear died in 1957 on his 75th birthday at his home in Wimbledon, leaving behind a vast repository of knowledge for future generations across continents. ■



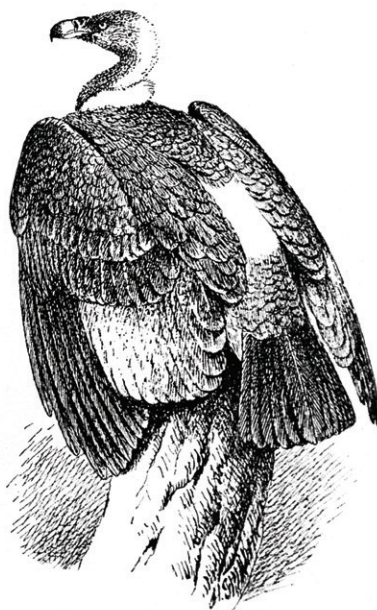
Hugh Whistler Last of the British Indian Ornithologists

Hugh Whistler was born in Lincolnshire, England, in 1889. He first came to India in 1909, where he was appointed to the Indian Police. Whistler was posted in several places from Phillour to Ambala and Simla. During these postings, he started corresponding with the British ornithologist Claud Buchanan

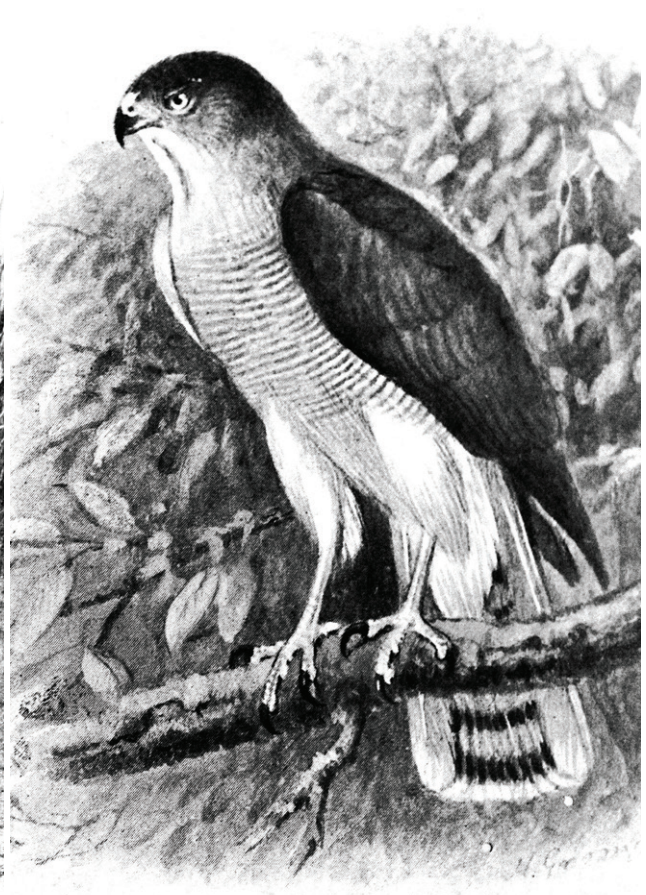
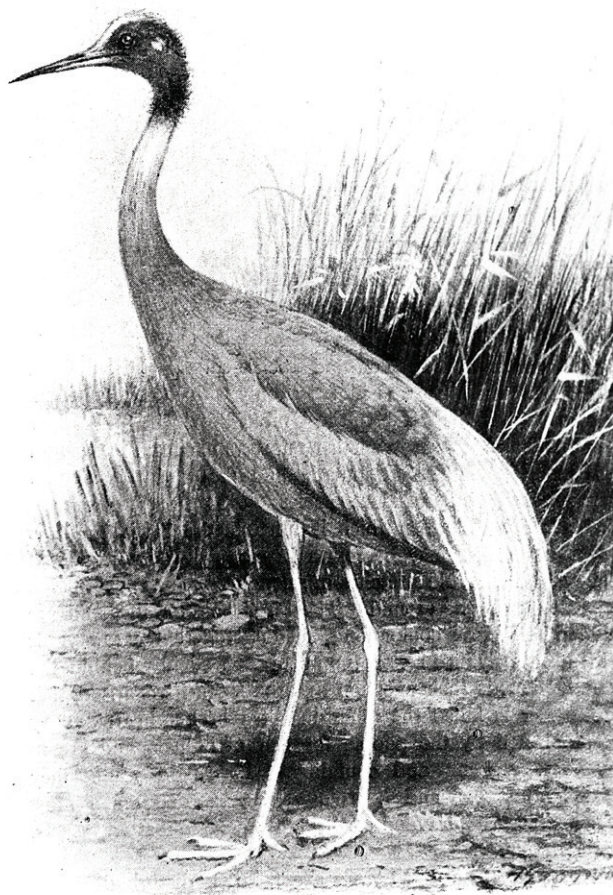
Ticehurst, whom he later met. The duo became close friends and, in the process, Whistler was introduced to scientific ornithology. Subsequently, he took an interest in the local birdlife wherever he was posted and kept careful notes and made collections. By the time Whistler retired, he had a very wide knowledge of the entire region of Punjab and its fauna.

After World War I, BNHS wanted to publish a popular illustrated work on Indian birds. Whistler was approached to take up the authorship as he had the requisite knowledge and an enjoyable literary style. The success of the *POPULAR HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS* (1928) and Whistler's expertise is seen from the fact that it passed through four editions, and even today is cited in references.

Whistler left India around 1926 only to return after two years on a visit to Kashmir, and he travelled to several higher and lesser known parts of the region collecting natural history specimens. For the next few years, Whistler settled at Battle, Sussex, where he worked on birds, and almost every year, made short collection



White-backed Vulture, from
POPULAR HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS
by Hugh Whistler



Sarus Crane (L) and Shikra (R), from POPULAR HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS by Hugh Whistler

trips with Ticehurst to some region of the Indian subcontinent. The Society approached him to contribute a series of articles on the study of Indian Birds, which was serialized in the *JBNHS* in 10 parts from 1928 to 1932. The Society also invited him to join their Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats in 1929, and to work on the collections from the survey. His hard work, and timely assistance from N.B. Kinnear, resulted in a series of scientific papers in *JBNHS* on the survey which ran into 16 parts from 1931 to 1937 under the title 'The Vernay Scientific Survey of the Eastern Ghats (ornithological section)'.

At around the same time, Ticehurst and Whistler started to work on a *HANDBOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS*. Whistler had hoped to complete the book even after his partner's death, but due to his increased civil duties, he had little time on hand. The publication of the *HANDBOOK*, however, happened after Whistler's demise (Whistler died two years after Ticehurst's death, in 1943), as their manuscripts served as a base for Sálim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley's *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT*.

Whistler was vigilant and meticulous in his work. He had

amassed a collection of 17,320 bird skins, which were donated to the Natural History Museum, London. Bird species like Whistler's Warbler *Seicercus whistleri* have been named in honour of this great ornithologist. Apart from species, several subspecies also bear his name, like the Andaman race of the Red-whiskered Bulbul *Pycnonotus jocosus whistleri* and the northwestern race of the Rufous-bellied Niltava *Niltava sundara whistleri*. The Whistler Prize of Sussex University, awarded to the best essay on natural history or archaeology, is named after him. ■





Lt. Col. R.S.P. Bates Indian Bird Photography Pioneer



"The lack of any popular work revealing the methods employed by the bird-photographer has led me to bring out this book in the hope that to a certain extent this gap may be filled. When I took up the subject some twelve years ago, I at once found myself at a great disadvantage through not knowing how to make a start on the proper lines, and consequently, as I have had to learn gradually by practical experience, those twelve years have by no means been used to the fullest advantage. If therefore my experiences prove a help to the beginner in bird-photography, I shall feel that this book has achieved its main object in filling the gap which still seems to exist in spite of the great number of nature books which have lately appeared."

... R.S.P. Bates — BIRD LIFE IN INDIA

An ardent lover of birds, a knowledgeable and extremely hardworking field researcher, one of the first bird photographers in the world and one of India's most valuable ornithologists, that is Lt. Col. R.S.P Bates for you. Bates was born in 1897 in Surrey, England. He loved India and its countryside, and in particular had an unquenchable passion for Kashmir. Most of his holidays were spent exploring the smaller valleys and meadows of this state for the birds that inhabited them. The precision of his descriptions made them valuable guides for nature lovers, ornithologists, and other travellers to Kashmir.

Bates joined the BNHS in 1921 and became a Life Member in 1937. After his field trips, he made numerous notes and wrote scientific articles which became major contributions to the *JBNHS*. A few of his many published works are 'Impressions of Panchmarhi Birds' [1927: Index Herbariorum published from Kew – Royal Botanic Gardens Vol. 31(4)], 'Notes on the Habits of

Some Indian Birds' [1935: Vol. 37(4)], 'Bird Photography in India' [1939: Vol. 40(4)], and 'Fighting among Birds' [1956: Vol. 54(1)].

The credit for popularizing bird photography in India goes to Bates. Up to the time he published his popular series on 'Birds nesting with a Camera in India' [in six parts: *JBNHS* 1924: 24(2), 1925: 30(1–4), 1926: 31(2)], bird photography was a neglected art. The articles opened a wide field of interest and possibilities, which were explored by budding photographers. Some of his bird portraits are still considered among the finest ever made; with the limited technology available at that time, his works can be considered as masterpieces. This perfection was due to his ingenuity in improvisation and skill in preparing the gadgets that he required. Bates and E.H.N. Lowther, an officer in the East Indian Railway Company, also an accomplished field ornithologist and bird photographer, coauthored *BREEDING BIRDS OF KASHMIR* (1952).

Throughout his service in India, Bates maintained a close association with the Society. Even after retirement, he kept up his interest in birds and bird photography, and through his letters he rued his restrained life in England as compared to India, and the lack of time from mundane domestic life. He, however, managed to keep his fascination alive by taking part in several local natural history societies. He had actively taken to trapping and ringing of birds. Gardening was another of Bates's minor hobbies.

After his retirement, Bates dreamt of one more spell of birding in his beloved Kashmir, but that was not to be due to failing health. Bates was a gentle, simple, modest man, and one of the strongest links in the chain of distinguished British ornithologists working on Indian birds. ■



E.C.S. Baker Prodigious Naturalist

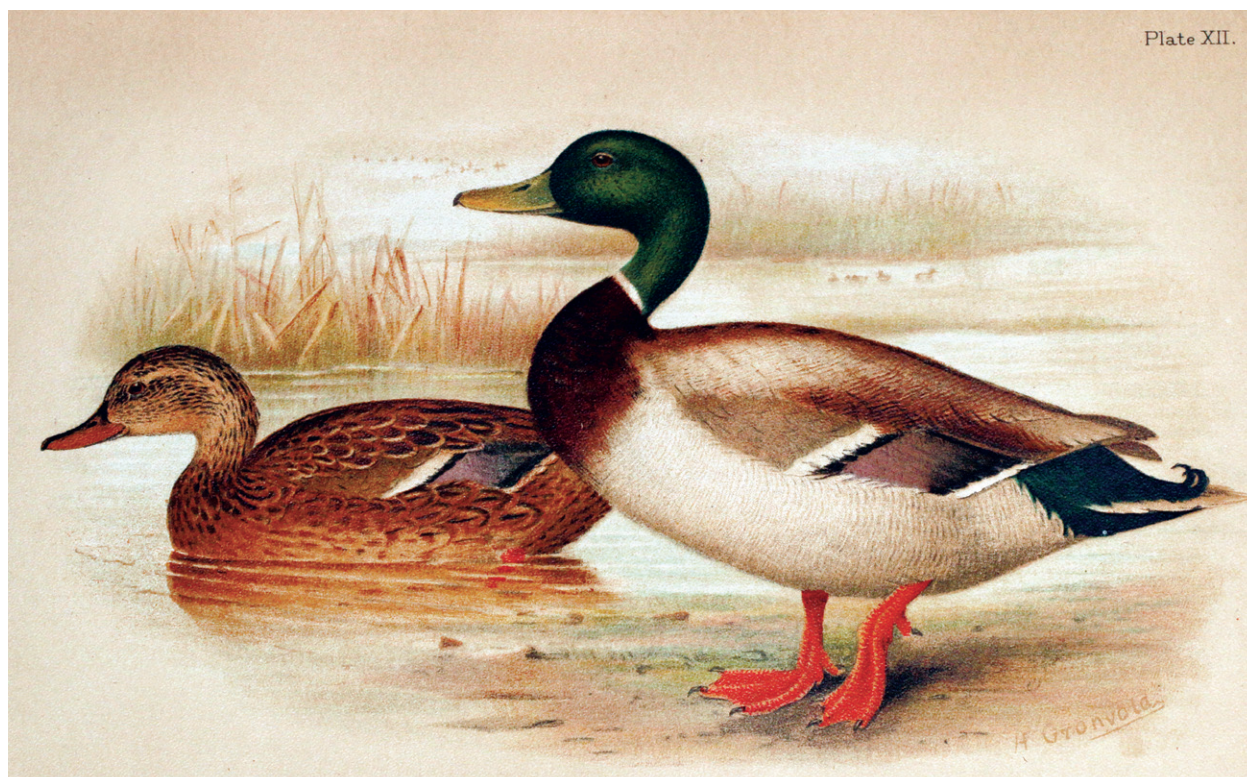
joined the Indian (Imperial) Police and spent most of his career in the Assam Police, rising to the rank of Inspector General. In 1898, he became a member of the Society. His first paper 'The genus *Chloropsis*' appeared in the sixth volume of the *JBNHS*. He contributed many other literary pieces, but his work on Indian ducks and game birds will always be remembered. The first of the series dealt with ducks, and it gained such popularity that the Honorary Secretary W.S. Millard decided to publish the papers in book form, which saw immediate success. Apart from financial success, the volume became a useful instrument in drawing attention to the activities of the Society, thereby increasing membership.

The year 1908 became a landmark in the history of the BNHS as the Society embarked on book publication. The very first book to be published was the British

ornithologist and police officer Edward Charles Stuart Baker's *INDIAN DUCKS AND THEIR ALLIES*.

Baker was educated at Trinity College, Warwickshire. In 1883, he

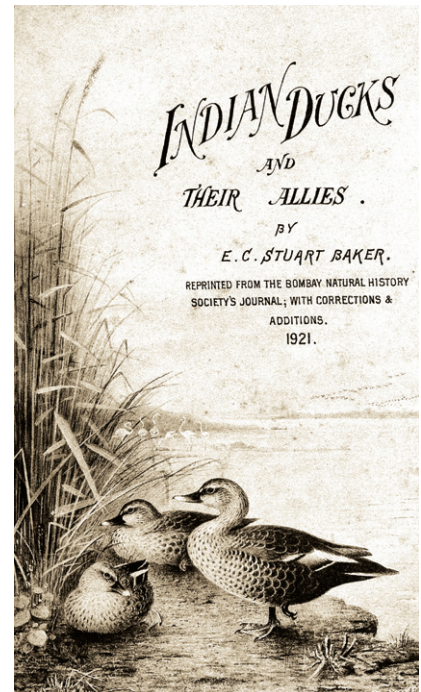
On request from W.S. Millard, Baker wrote another series of papers on game birds, starting with snipes, bustards, and sandgrouse. True game birds followed this volume, and rails



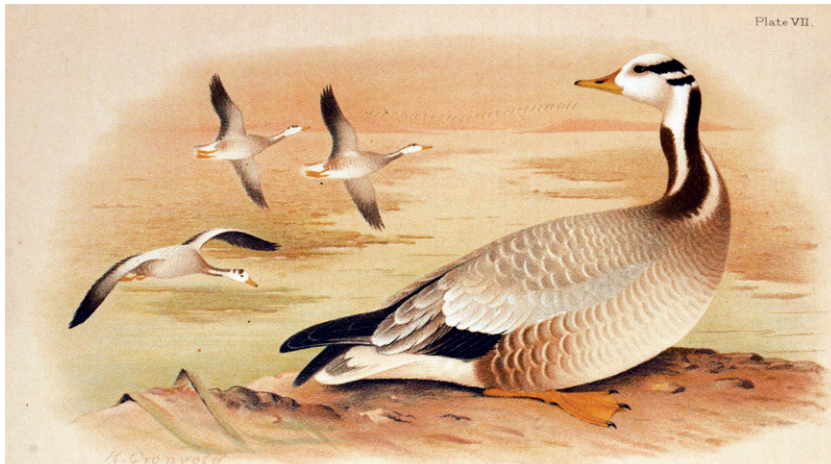
Mallard by Henrik Grönvold, from *INDIAN DUCKS AND THEIR ALLIES* by E.C. Stuart Baker

and waders were added, and these led to the publication of the book *GAME BIRDS OF INDIA AND CEYLON* (1921). A number of other books were published by him over the years: *THE FAUNA OF BRITISH INDIA, INCLUDING CEYLON AND BURMA – BIRDS* (1922), *MISHMI MANEATER* (1928), *THE NIDIFICATION OF THE BIRDS OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE* (1932), and *CUCKOO PROBLEMS* (1942). He was also prodigious in publishing his observations in the *JBNHS*, these a testimony to the quantum of field work that he packed into a lifetime, and his immense dedication and belief in the Society's *Journal* in which all these contributions appeared.

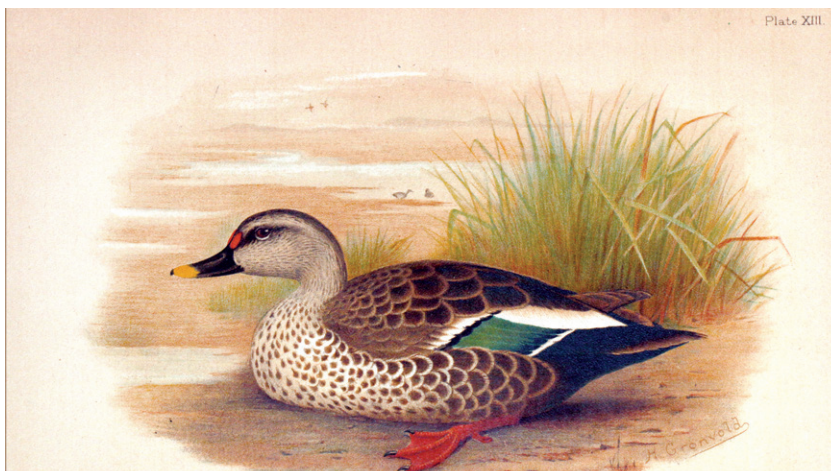
With great interest in birds' eggs in general, Baker amassed a huge collection of 50,000 eggs (and also nests), derived partly from his own collections, his contacts all over India, or purchased from collectors of Indian birds' eggs. He made a special study of the eggs and habits of the different Indian cuckoos and their foster parents, and wrote papers on this subject, which also resulted in two books mentioned earlier. Baker either sold or donated his collections to museums – BNHS has about a thousand eggs from his collections. However, since Baker depended a lot on local collectors, his collection has been considered of dubious



A revised 1921 edition of the first book published by the BNHS



Bar-headed Goose by Henrik Grönvold, from *INDIAN DUCKS AND THEIR ALLIES* by E.C. Stuart Baker



Spot-bill Duck by Henrik Grönvold, from *INDIAN DUCKS AND THEIR ALLIES* by E.C. Stuart Baker

provenance and unreliable. Baker had a good collection of skins, some of which he gave to the Society.

After moving to London, Baker was able to devote much of his time to ornithology and was elected Secretary and Treasurer of the British Ornithologists Union in 1913. He prepared and submitted *A HAND-LIST OF GENERA AND SPECIES OF BIRDS OF THE INDIAN EMPIRE*, which he later published in seven parts in the *JBNHS* (Vols 27–28).

Baker was an accomplished shikari and wrote interesting accounts of his experiences with big game. He had many fascinating escapades. He was twice tossed by a gaur, and trampled by a rhinoceros. As if that was not enough, in an encounter with a man-eating panther near Silchar, he lost an arm!

His contributions to Indian ornithology were commemorated in the naming of *Yuhina bakeri*, now commonly called White-naped Yuhina. ■

R.C. Wroughton Multi-faceted Naturalist

Robert Charles Wroughton was born in 1849 in Nuseerabad, Rajasthan. He was an ardent sportsman and naturalist, who spent his early childhood in India. As he grew up, so did his interest in natural history. He joined the Indian Forest Service as Assistant Conservator of Forests, Bombay Presidency, and subsequently served as the Inspector General of Forests until his retirement in 1904. During his period of service, he collected a large number of natural history specimens, giving special attention to ants. He came in touch with the well-known Swiss formicologist (one who studies ants), Auguste H. Forel, to whom he sent the abundant material he obtained, and in the process, derived in-depth knowledge of this taxa.

Wroughton's interest in small mammals was aroused by Captain Glen Liston's work on plague and his special address given to the members of BNHS [JBNHS 1908, Vol. 18(4)]. Wroughton started by collecting bats on which his first mammal paper 'Some Konkan Bats' was published in 1899. During a visit home on leave, while working at the Museum in South Kensington, Wroughton discovered his forte as a mammalogist, and did admirable work in the field. The study of mammals then involved collecting and arranging skins and skulls in large series, to which Wroughton contributed greatly.

Wroughton realistically assessed the lacunae in Indian natural history studies and worked towards filling them. When W.S. Millard took over as Honorary Secretary of the Society, Wroughton found a useful ally in him. Both conceived and carried through the splendid idea of the Society's Mammal Survey of India (1911–1923), along with S.H. Prater and Charles McCann. During the course of this survey, many trained collectors were sent to different parts of India; collections of perfectly formed specimens and a series of systematic reports on the material were prepared in London and printed in the Society's *Journal*. This survey is

believed to be the first collaborative biodiversity study in the world. The project accumulated 50,000 specimens during the 12 years of its tenure and the information was published in 47 scientific papers. Wroughton also wrote about 200



intervening war years, Wroughton prepared a summary of the work done in Indian Mammalogy during the Mammal Survey. No work was too laborious, too great, or too difficult for him to attempt and to successfully conclude. This was the key character of Wroughton that was admired by all. Numerous species are named after him, including Wroughton's Free-tailed Bat *Otomops wroughtoni* and several ant species, including *Aenictus wroughtonii*, *Camponotus wroughtonii*, and *Carebara wroughtonii*, to name a few. ■

"There are numerous investigations, anatomical, physiological, ecological, geographical, and evolutionary, which can only be made by the study of animal life. While considerable data have been accumulated by the study of dead specimens in museums, or of the living creatures in the laboratory, the 'whence, how and where' of his existence which man is seeking to discover cannot be discovered by these means alone. The study of the living creature under the natural conditions of its environment is equally important."

... Salim Ali – THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS

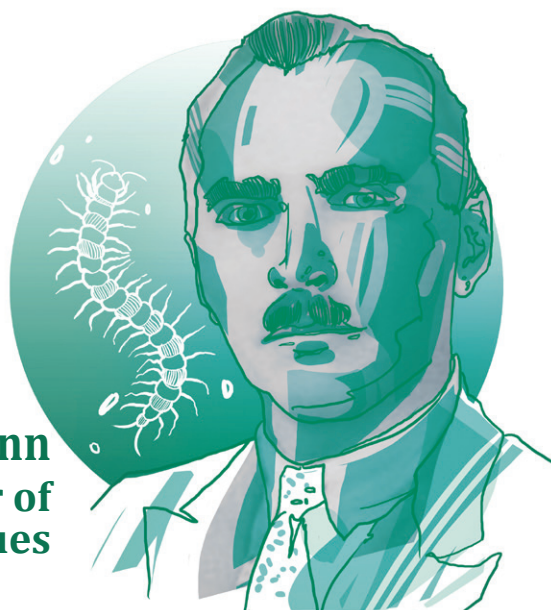


While browsing in the BNHS Library, you may chance upon Blatter and Millard's classic *SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES*. If you are lucky, you may have picked up a copy bearing the owner's signature on the flyleaf, which reads "Charles McCann". The scrupulous notes and comments in the margins reveal the keen mind of one of BNHS's greatest stalwarts.

Born in Goa in 1899, Charles McCann completed his education in Bombay. He worked under the eminent botanist Fr. Ethelbert Blatter at St. Xavier's College as a laboratory assistant, as general factotum in the biology laboratory, and as curator of the college museum. He carried out research in systematic botany both individually and for his mentor from 1916 to 1920. After having left college, he worked with the City Police for about a year.

McCann joined the BNHS in 1921 as a field collector for the Mammal Survey in the Palni Hills and later in the Indus Delta, and soon became the Society's Assistant Curator. For any natural history trip, he was an extremely valuable companion, as he took a delight in repairing flat tyres, skinning birds, and doing

Charles McCann Curator of many hues



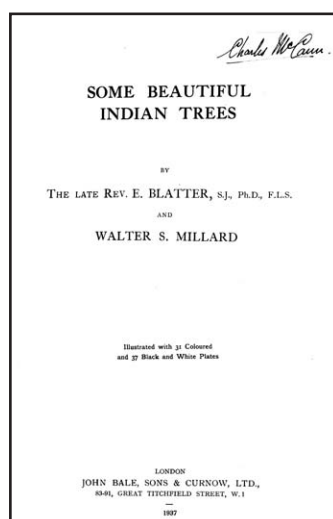
other grunt-and-groan work during surveys. Though busy with almost everything, he was always on the alert to spot features of natural history interest.

McCann was the editor of the Society's *Journal* from 1932 to 1947, and contributed 200 notes and papers covering an extraordinary range of subjects from taxonomic botany to bats. Some of his works include: 'On the breeding habits of some Myriapoda' 1918: Vol. 26(1), 'Notes on the flying-fox (*Pteropus*

giganteus, Brunn)' 1934: Vol. 37(1), and 'The flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber antiquorum* Temm.)' 1939: Vol. 41(1).

Charles McCann was also an outstanding botanist. He co-authored the 'Revision of the Flora of the Bombay Presidency' with Fr. Ethelbert Blatter, which was published in 16 parts in *JBNHS* (Vols 32–36). There was another collaborative monograph with

Blatter on the grasses of Bombay, published in 1935 under the aegis of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research. Another paper was 'The Study of Plant Life (3 parts, 1928–1929)' in *JBNHS* (Vols 32 and 33). McCann also undertook revisions on some Indian plants, which were published (along with scientific papers on Indian mammals, reptiles, and amphibians) by



Title page and photograph of flowers of Silk Cotton Tree by Charles McCann, from *SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES* by E. Blatter and W.S. Millard

the BNHS. McCann also published popular books on trees: *SOME BEAUTIFUL INDIAN TREES* (1937) and *100 BEAUTIFUL TREES OF INDIA: A DESCRIPTIVE PICTORIAL HANDBOOK* (1959).

The Society was at that time busy working on the construction of the Natural History galleries of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India in Bombay. McCann contributed his efforts to the collection, skinning, modelling, and preparation of several dioramas. Despite the passage of years, these are considered among the finest exhibits of their kind in the world.

During India's Independence struggle, the future of foreigners and Anglo-Indians in India became insecure, which made McCann resign his post and shift to New Zealand. Though this was a decision he regretted all through his life, and wrote about in his letters, he soon found work as Vertebrate Zoologist with the Dominion Museum in Wellington. Putting aside his regrets, he focussed on the arrangement of birds and mammals, and later specialized on the whale and seal collections. After retirement, he joined the New Zealand Oceanographic Institute, and worked on deep sea fishes. He wrote 'Lizards of New Zealand' and some other papers for the Whales Research Institute, Japan.

McCann's invaluable scientific contributions on Indian natural history inspired BNHS to institute the Charles McCann Fieldwork Fund, which offers financial assistance to those interested in undertaking specific projects of field research. ■



S.H. Prater
Curator
Par Excellence

If there is one stalwart who left an indelible mark as Curator of BNHS that would be Stanley Henry Prater. Assuming the role in 1919, when the Natural History section of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India was under the management of the Society, Prater mingled art with science to put together a natural history section in the museum.

Prater was born in the Nilgiris in 1890. The very first spark of interest in natural history glimmered in him during his school days in Khandala. With support from the Jesuit fathers of the German mission, and inspiring works by Revd Fathers Dreckmann (Herpetology), Assmuth (Entomology), and Blatter (Botany), Prater grew to be one of the most eminent naturalists in the Subcontinent. He often reminisced about them, and spoke of all three with immense reverence and affection.

Prater joined the BNHS in 1907. He initially worked under senior naturalist E. Comber, and later as assistant to N.B. Kinnear, who was then the first stipendiary Curator of BNHS. After a four-year probationary period,

and following Kinnear's resignation, Prater was appointed Curator in 1919, a position he held till his retirement in 1948 with marked distinction and pride. During the time when Prater took over as Curator, plans were afoot to establish a natural history section in the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India. Many such museums had already shaped up in the first world countries such as UK and the US. There were lessons to be learnt from their experiences, and Prater was sent to acquire the necessary skills. He was first deputed to the United Kingdom, the major motive for sending him there being to learn the art of modern taxidermy under the honorary taxidermist L.C. Harwood.

Returning to India, Prater made elaborate notes on his visit to "certain museums in Great Britain", especially drawing on those experiences to envision a future for the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India [*JBNS* Vol. 29(2)]. Prater was sent again in 1927, this time to the foremost museums in the United Kingdom and America, to pick up the techniques of modern natural



Paintings by Paul Barruel, from THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS by S.H. Prater

history museum exhibitionism, that is, the preparation of habitat groups or dioramas, which had started in Germany but had reached perfection in the United States (particularly at the American Museum of Natural History, New York). Everywhere Prater travelled, he assimilated the experiences of other museums.

His writings on museums are passionate accounts, reflecting an urgency for change. He noted firstly how the museums were recasting themselves to be "of service to the public". In a three-part series called 'Modern Museum Methods', which he later published in *JBNHS* [Vol. 32(3),

Vol. 32(4), Vol. 33(1)], he described at length what a museum should envision to be. Some of his observations on world museums went thus: "By giving the public something which it can understand and appreciate and something which it wants, the museums succeed in rousing its interest and ultimately its support. And in this the American Museums have been completely successful" [Vol. 32(3)]; "At the Natural History Museum, Berlin, radical changes are being made in the character and nature of exhibits. There, too, the museum is making a bid for popular interest and support..." [Vol. 32 (3)].

The artistically designed galleries of the Natural History section of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India and the group exhibits (which were acclaimed the finest in the East) were the outcome of Prater's remarkable skill and aptitude. Between 1923 and 1937, the new Natural History section was conceived, designed, erected, and finally opened to the public. It is a standing monument to Prater's genius.

Prater was the Executive Editor of the *JBNHS* for 27 years of his service. During his tenure as Editor, the *Journal* gained high standards and

earned international recognition as the foremost natural history journal in the whole of Asia. Prater also contributed his own writing to the *Journal*, and the topics he wrote about ranged from mammals, reptiles, and birds to aquatic animals like the dugong [Vol. 33(4)] and the game fishes of Bombay, the Deccan, and the neighbouring districts of the Bombay Presidency [Vol. 36(1)]. Some of Prater's more important contributions in *JBNS* were: 'Note on a Stranded Great Indian Fin Whale (*Balaenoptera indica*) at Ratnagiri', 'Progress of the Mammal Survey', 'An Old Time Buffalo Hunt', 'Black Tigers', and 'The Wild Animals of the Indian Empire'. Besides these, he wrote a section on fauna in Perceval Landon's *NEPAL*, which was published in 1928. He was a frequent and popular contributor of natural history articles to various other journals and magazines.

Along with being a voracious reader and prolific writer, Prater's hobbies included painting and plaster modelling, all of which he invested in during his retirement. Prater wrote in a readable and often humorous style, and was a good illustrator with pen-and-ink or brush. *THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS* bears some of these illustrations.

Prater has to his credit the honour of being the first to collect Wroughton's Free-tailed Bat *Otomops wroughtoni* in 1912 during the Society's Mammal Survey (1911–1923). He made a note of it in *JBNS* Vol. 22(4): "These bats were found at Talewadi in the Belgaum District, some 20 miles north of Castle Rock. They occupied a large cave which is locally known as the Bara Pede (12 caves) ... the year I was fortunate enough to obtain a specimen alive ... From what I observed this species seemed to prefer a fruit diet and invariably spat out any flies I offered him ... but showed no reluctance in swallowing pieces of banana. His involvement in the survey as field collector, and his experience of handling specimens that arrived from the field or from the British Museum after identification inspired him to write *THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS* (1948), which was a huge success and invaluable for the detailed information on the habits and behaviour of the species described. Sadly, an accident during the Mammal Survey incapacitated him for further field work and he was forced to be confined to intramural work.

Prater wrote at length in the *Journal* about 'The Wild Animals of the Indian Empire' [Vol. 36(5)]. This was in fact his address to the

Jubilee Meeting of the Society held in Bombay on August 10, 1933. The address set the tone for an outcry for the protection of wildlife in India. It is a revelation to note that even as early as the 1930s, the state of wildlife in India was at risk, for as a consequence of "changing conditions in the country, the gradual conquest of forests and waste lands, above all, the building of new roads and the radical improvement in methods and rapidity of transport have left few areas in the Peninsula of India which are free from intrusion by Man." Prater, in the address, urges the enforcement of Government laws that would ensure the protection of wildlife.

During his long service as Curator at BNHS, Prater acquired an all-round familiarity with the Society's natural history collections. Even though his own expertise related to specific animal taxa such as mammals, birds, and snakes, he welcomed the inclusion of specimens of all other groups to enrich the BNHS collection. He could not only precisely name the specimens brought in, but also give their distribution and characteristic traits. Prater was a remarkable man who stood for truth, and whose hard work and professional ambitions not only enriched Indian natural history but also BNHS particularly. ■

"If our wild life is to find protection at all, it must find it somewhere in our forests. It is often claimed that the proximity of forests to agriculture makes them a constant source of harassment to the cultivator. If this argument is pushed to its logical conclusion, the only remedy would be to remove such protection as is now given to wild animals in our forests, for it would not be possible to remove this menace entirely until all the large wild animals in them are killed or die of wounds, or are exterminated over large areas because of their inability to breed. Surely our goal is not the total extermination of our wild life, which is what must inevitably happen unless some form of protection is given to it within its natural domain. While it is essential that the cultivator should have reasonable latitude to defend his property, it is equally essential that there should be certain areas or reserves where the shooting of animals is regulated and where the laws for their protection are rigidly enforced." ... S.H. Prater – *THE BOOK OF INDIAN ANIMALS*

Born on November 12, 1896 in Mumbai, Sálím Ali's early interests were hunting and books on hunting in India. With a Daisy air gun at his disposal, Sálím Ali would go about shooting birds around his home. From hunting, Ali got hooked onto the study of birds through a visit to the BNHS. He had ventured into the Society intrigued by a sparrow that he had shot, which had a yellow patch on its throat. There he met W.S. Millard, who not only identified the bird as the Yellow-throated Sparrow *Petronia xanthocollis*, but also most kindly took the timid boy around the Society's collection of stuffed birds and lent him a few books. The rest, as they say, was fate, and thus was born 'The Birdman of India'. There was, indeed, "a strange providence" in the fall of that sparrow!

Having dropped out of college after the very first year, Sálím Ali went to Tavoy, Burma, in 1919 to manage the family's wolfram (tungsten) mining and timber business. He spent a lot of time in the surrounding forests and these excursions not

only improved his hunting skills but also developed his awareness about natural history. He soon became well acquainted with the Forest Department officials J.C. Hopwood and Berthold Ribbentrop. Sálím Ali learnt a lot from Hopwood about the birds of Burma, which helped him to refine his birding skills. After the business in Burma failed, Sálím Ali

returned to Bombay and under the guidance of Revd Fr. Blatter, head of the Biology department at St. Xavier's College, graduated in Zoology. Subsequently, he applied for the post of ornithologist in the Zoological Survey of India, but was rejected, which turned out to be a fortuitous and colossal gain for the BNHS!

In 1926, Sálím Ali was appointed as a guide lecturer at the newly opened Natural History Section of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India that was under the management of the BNHS. Later, realizing that it was important to pursue further studies to take up ornithology as a profession, he went on a study trip to train under Professor Erwin Stresemann at the Berlin Museum. In 1930, he took to field ornithology, through a detailed study on the polygamous breeding habits of the Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus* at Kihim, which was the first serious study of bird behaviour in India (see *JBNHS* Vol. 34(4): 947–97).

And after that Sálím Ali spent most of his adult life with the Society, travelling the length and breadth

Sálím Ali Birdman of India



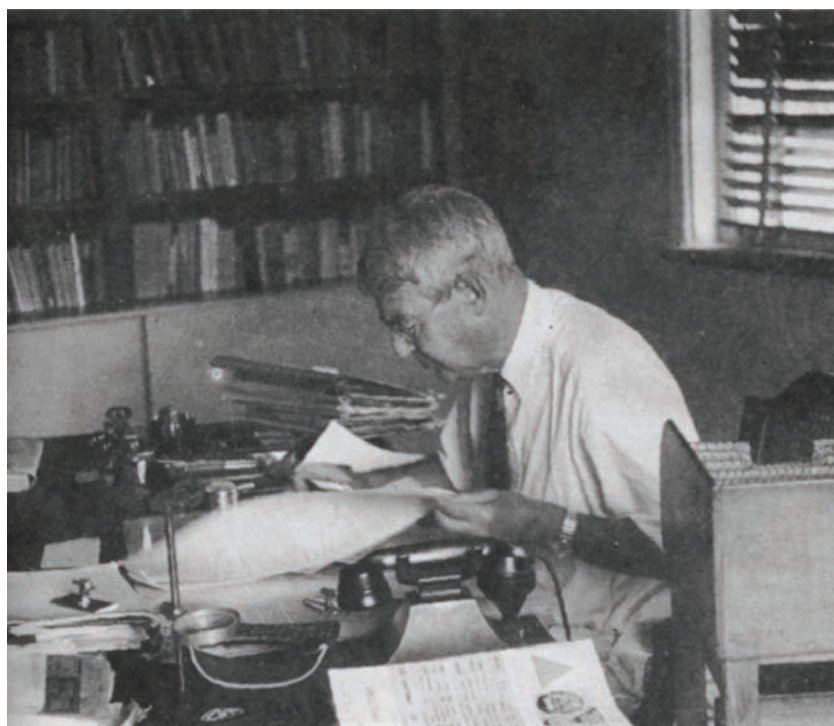
Indian Wild Ass, a special collection by Sálím Ali, being weighed against known-weight 'domestics' in Kutch in 1943

of India searching for and studying birds. He carried out bird surveys before Independence, of the states of Hyderabad (1931–32), Travancore and Cochin (1933), Central India (Bhopal, Gwalior, Indore, and Dhar) (1938), Mysore (1939–40), Kutch (1943–44), and Gujarat (1944–48), which were published in a series of articles in the *JBNHS* (Hyderabad: Vol. 36, 37 in five parts, Travancore and Cochin: Vol. 37–39 in eight parts, Central India: Vol. 41 in two parts, Mysore: Vol. 43, 44 in five parts, Kutch and Gujarat: Vol. 52 in two parts). The surveys culminated in the books *THE BIRDS OF KUTCH* (1945), *INDIAN HILL BIRDS* (1949), and *THE BIRDS OF TRAVANCORE AND COCHIN* in (1953) (revised and renamed *BIRDS OF KERALA* in 1968). Ali also carried out surveys of Orissa (1948–49), Berar (1951), Sikkim (1952–53), Bhutan (1966–69), Goa (1972), and Arunachal Pradesh (1979–82) after Independence. The results of these latter surveys were not published, though the Sikkim survey gave rise to *THE BIRDS OF SIKKIM* (1962), and the Bhutan survey to *THE BIRDS OF THE EASTERN HIMALAYAS*, written in collaboration with S. Dillon Ripley of the Smithsonian Institution, USA.

Other than these books, Sálím Ali made a seminal contribution to Indian ornithology by the publication of the *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN* (1968–75), popularly referred to as the *HANDBOOK*, which he co-authored with Dillon Ripley. At the time when Sálím Ali joined the BNHS, scientific ornithology mainly focused on taxonomy. It was he who drew attention to the need for field observations on birds. The notes he recorded paved the way for his masterpiece, the 10-volume *HANDBOOK*. With S. Dillon Ripley focusing on taxonomy, Sálím Ali on



R.E. Hawkins (L) amuses an audience gathered to celebrate the release of the *HANDBOOK*, Vol. 10. Among the amused listeners of the limerick are Sálím Ali (R), Ravi Dayal (centre), and Mrs. Indira Gandhi



The association between R.E. Hawkins and Sálím Ali laid the foundation for a long-standing partnership between BNHS and Oxford University Press

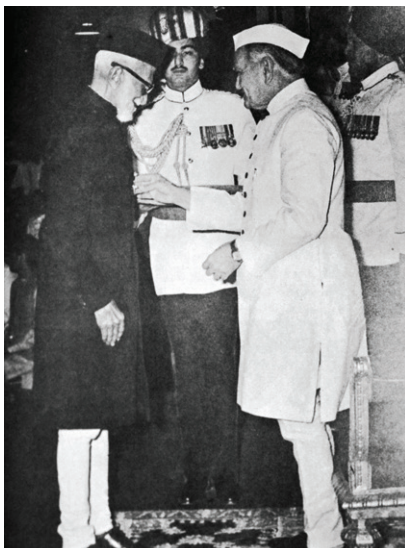
ecology, and with reference to Hugh Whistler's meticulous bird notes, this massive tome took 10 years (1964 to 1974) to complete, and after more than 40 years, it is still referred to by scientists and birders alike. He was instrumental in popularizing birdwatching and triggering an

interest in the birds of India through his *THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS*, first published in 1941 and now in its 13th edition, and which has also been translated into Hindi.

Sálím Ali, who was active in the conservation movement in India, helped BNHS greatly through his close



Tree planting on the Society's land at Goregaon



Being presented the Padma Vibhushan by the President of India Dr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, 3rd April, 1976

ties with the former Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, both of whom had personal copies of *THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS*. He was instrumental in getting the Keoladeo National Park declared as a protected area and in saving the pristine Silent Valley in Kerala. He also persuaded Indira Gandhi to reject the permission sought for falconry expeditions by Arab sheikhs targeting the Houbara Bustard in Rajasthan.

"If I hemmed and hawed in search of an excuse for having forgotten the task I had to do, Sálím Ali would smartly slap the arm of his chair in exasperation, a displacement activity which struck one where it should. The small eruption of anger over, he would admonish "That is why I have been repeatedly asking you to note down things." One could not afford to make a habit of forgetfulness or finding excuses. You were then labelled "unreliable" and consigned to the dust heap. He was a perfectionist who could not bear the general national attitude of *Jaane do* (= let it go). Seeing him in one of his moods of frustration at failing to get his staff to achieve, reminded one of the temper tantrums of Pandit Nehru at the shoddiness that surrounded him or Gandhiji's efforts to have his countrymen dig and use trench latrines. Their countrymen appreciated the anxiety for perfection and being unable to live up to the standards did the next best thing, elevated them into the nation's Pantheon of saints. Perhaps that is what is happening to Sálím Ali. He was by no means a saint, nor was Pandit Nehru nor Gandhiji.

Those of us who had worked with him over the years remember him not as the mellow and gentle old man of the TV and news media but as the tough and determined perfectionist who had deliberately set his foot on a path away from the mundane 'normal' path of conventionality. A man who would not listen to reason but set out jauntily to do what he wanted to do and not what other people wanted him to do. He was a non-conformist.

His abiding grace was his delightful sense of humour and the humility which made his hackles rise at fulsome praise."

... J.C. Daniel

Sálím Ali was a non-conformist. He was methodical in his work, and in almost everything he did. He had a clear and elegant handwriting, was a gifted writer, and had a mastery of the English language. He was simple, frugal, ate little, and was extremely strict with funds. A true conservationist, he ensured that a rupee given by a donor went a long way. He was known for his humility and delightful humour, but was also dreaded for his explosive temper and sarcastic wit, these reserved for the pretenders, the pompous, and those who did shoddy work. Sálím Ali devoted his life to work and to the Society. He gifted all that he had to the Society, including the money he received from the Paul Getty Award

(1975) to establish scholarship funds, and the royalties from his books to the Society.

Despite all his fame, he was a modest man. "I feel all this talk about world-wide renown and so on is fictitious. In the context of world ornithology, the work we have done here is nothing. I feel like a frog in the well or a one-eyed man in the land of the blind," he is supposed to have once remarked. But to this day, Sálím Ali's name continues to be synonymous with bird study in India. For more insights into the personality of this man, his life, work and association with Indian Ornithology and the BNHS, read his autobiography, *THE FALL OF A SPARROW*. ■



Loke Wan Tho A Tale of Friendship

Loke Diary 1955

On Sikkim Expedition, Kewzing-Pemionche trail:

"The man who wrote that 'it is better to travel than to arrive' clearly had never walked a Himalayan mile! Every time we do a march, I am always happy to arrive."

Originally from a wealthy family in Singapore, Loke Wan Tho landed in Mumbai with his mother and sister after fleeing his home, leaving behind a flourishing business, in anticipation of Japan taking over Singapore. Loke Wan Tho was passionate about bird watching and bird photography, besides English literature and writing.

J.T.M. Gibson, who knew about Loke's interest in birds, promised to acquaint him with his ornithologist friend, Sálím Ali. Gibson's dinner meeting proved to be beneficial for both the guests, saving Loke from impending boredom while in exile and giving Ali a great companion for

his birding trips. This meeting marked the beginning of a close friendship that grew with time, given their similarity in outlook and interests.

Sálím Ali invited Loke Wan Tho on a birding expedition to Kachchh in 1943 and Loke happily grabbed the opportunity. In the days that

followed, he revealed his capacity for spartan living during the four months of the camp. Loke passed the initial test at Kutch (now Kachchh) with flying colours, and Sálím Ali found in him a dedicated co-worker. Despite being used to an aristocratic lifestyle, Loke never complained about the food or living conditions and was always ready to pull his weight under all circumstances. In his obituary in *JBNHS* (Vol. 61: 418-421) to Loke who died in a tragic aircrash in 1964, Sálím Ali fondly writes, "His unfailing courtesy and quiet good manners, friendly disposition, and capacity to mix at all levels and to remain cheerful and unruffled under a leader not reputed for sweetness of temper were other qualities that made him a welcome adjunct to the field camps."

Loke loved being in the field, and the bird surveys with Sálím Ali gave him ample opportunity to indulge his passion for natural history, the outdoors, and photography. Some of his photographs of Indian birds



White-bellied Sea Eagle at its nest, from
LOKE WAN THO'S BIRDS, published in 2008



Loke Wan Tho and Sálím Ali poring over a volume on birds



Black-naped Tern, from LOKE WAN THO'S BIRDS, published in 2008

appeared along with a note on bird photography in the *JBNHS*. Ali again observes in his obituary, "He soon proved an exceptionally

enthusiastic observer and collector of birds, and later also a capable assistant in the taxonomical studies on the collections, acquiring in

the process a sounder all-round knowledge of Indian ornithology than is possessed by many a more seasoned amateur."

Finally, Japan had lost the war and refugees were being herded back to Singapore to bring trade and industry back to normalcy. Loke was one of the first businessmen who chose to return and was pleasantly surprised to learn that his business had not only survived but that he was one of the richest men in Singapore. He wrote about this in a letter to Sálím Ali, in which he also recalled a survey in Madhya Pradesh where they had to push a bus uphill. "I enclose a cheque: buy yourself a suitable station wagon; and remember there is more where this came from in case this much doesn't suffice," he wrote. Thereafter, on numerous occasions he funded surveys for BNHS, and also participated in some of them personally. His diaries of the surveys are replete with evocative anecdotes which recall many revealing incidents and details.

Loke Wan Tho and Sálím Ali shared an unfailing friendship for 22 years till his tragic death. In a gesture that befitted their friendship, his sister Lady Yuen-Peng McNeice donated among other things his field diaries and the entire set of negatives of his brilliant photographs of Indian birds and bird habitats. These were published in a premium quality volume by BNHS in 2008, *LOKE WAN THO'S BIRDS*, for which again Lady McNeice generously sponsored the cost of production. ■

In our area, the first phase of ornithology – the collection of specimens – is beginning to pass, and the study of ecology begins to take the place of systematics. It is a healthy sign. My photographs, therefore, represent not only the results of many happy hours spent in close company with the birds; they represent, too, the belief of one who holds the truth to be self-evident that a bird in the bust is worth two in the hand.

... Loke Wan Tho – A COMPANY OF BIRDS



S.D. Ripley A Well-wisher of the BNHS

Sidney Dillon Ripley was born in New York on 20th September 1913. As a youngster, he took a liking to waterfowl, and began watching, collecting and breeding cranes, ducks, swans, and geese. He studied Zoology at Columbia University and later did his PhD from Harvard in 1943, while simultaneously working at the US Museum of Natural History (part of Smithsonian Institution). His career as an ornithologist began when he participated in the Denison-Crockett Expedition to New Guinea in 1937-38, and in the Vanderbilt Expedition to Sumatra in 1939 where he collected and described his first new species for science.

In 1943, Ripley travelled to India as a member of the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency during World War II. That very year he travelled to Bombay to meet Sálím Ali, but could not do so as he was away on a field expedition. However, by 1948, the duo had not only met but

also embarked on field trips together and their first joint write-up on 'The birds of the Mishmi Hills' appeared in *JBNHS* 1948: Vol. 48(1). Thus began their bond which was to last till the death of Sálím Ali in 1987.

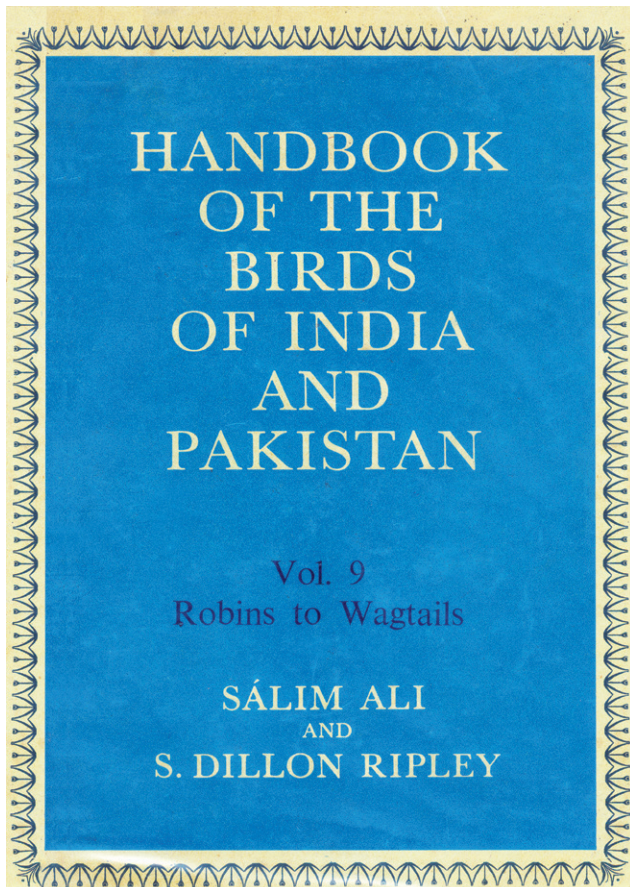
Sidney Dillon Ripley's association with the BNHS primarily relates to his interest in the avifauna of the Indian subcontinent and his friendship with Sálím Ali. He co-authored the *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN* along

with Sálím Ali, which is the magnum opus of Indian ornithology. The idea was discussed as early as 1946, during their field trip to the Mishmi Hills in Eastern Himalaya, but work on this ten-volume series began only in 1964 and was completed in 1974. The *HANDBOOK* became a bible for bird studies in the Indian region, and consequent to a major revision remains a masterpiece. Several researchers even today use the *HANDBOOK* as their primary reference. Some of his other works include the *LAND AND WILDLIFE OF TROPICAL ASIA* (1964), *RAILS OF THE WORLD: A MONOGRAPH OF THE FAMILY RALLIDAE* (1977), and *BIRDS OF BHUTAN* (1996), the last co-authored with Sálím Ali and B. Biswas.

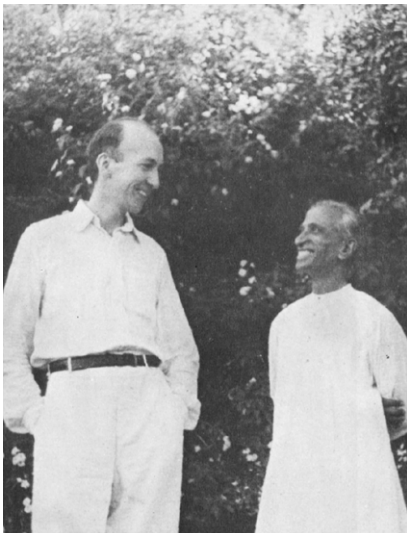
All along, Dillon Ripley's association with Sálím Ali bore rich fruit for BNHS, as he strove to garner support for the Society in its research and conservation activities. As Director of the Yale-Peabody Museum and later as Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, he helped to realize several BNHS expeditions to Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa, Bastar, and the Eastern and Western Ghats. When in 1967, BNHS stopped receiving



Sálím Ali with Mary and Dillon Ripley in a camp, skinning birds



The HANDBOOK remains the magnum opus for Indian ornithology till date



Sálím Ali with house guest Dillon Ripley, at Pali Hill, Mumbai

financial assistance from WHO to carry out its bird migration studies, Ripley stepped in, and he was instrumental in helping BNHS receive assistance from the Smithsonian Institution and the Migratory Animal Pathological Survey of the U.S. Army to continue its work in the bird migration area.

As for some of Dillon Ripley's distinctions, he served as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution and President of the International Council for Bird Preservation (now Birdlife International), was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom (the highest civilian award of the United States) in 1985, held multiple

honorary degrees from academic institutions including Yale, Harvard, Cambridge, and Johns Hopkins, and was one of the key persons involved in drafting the Endangered Species Preservation Act and the Red Book listing of endangered species.

Ripley was known for his enthusiastic personality. His charismatic persona won many hearts, both in his social and professional dealings. As an ornithologist and wildlife conservationist, Dillon Ripley's life and career trajectory are inspirational, and his contribution to the Society's research activities monumental. ■

"Anyone with a hobby or an interest outside his business or office work is like a man who keeps himself warm because of an inner glow which proceeds from himself and is therefore more fortunate than the man who depends upon a fire to keep warm and from which he must one day move away."

... Sálím Ali quoted by Loke Wan Tho



E.P. Gee Dedicated Conservationist

Edward Pritchard Gee (aka E.P. Gee) was born in 1904, in County Durham, the United Kingdom. This naturalist and professional tea planter was a dedicated conservationist, whose work was truly inspiring. After India gained Independence, he remained here for some years, and was among the first to address the threats faced by endangered species. He had very firm and rational ideas about which animals could or could not be sheltered in a sanctuary.

E.P. Gee was associated with the Indian Board for Wildlife (the apex body that advises the Union Government on wildlife matters), like his contemporaries Sálím Ali and M. Krishnan. He was in favour of having separate wildlife wardens within the Forest Department, who would be responsible for different fauna-related duties. He wished for cooperation between foresters and the forest ministers of each state, which he believed was needed for successful conservation. He looked upon the central government's role as advisory.

In 1959, the Fauna Preservation Society asked E.P. Gee to undertake a survey of Chitwan, an inner terrain valley in the south of Nepal. Gee recommended creating a national park north of the East Tapti river and a wildlife sanctuary south of the river. In 1963, after he surveyed Chitwan again, this time for both the Fauna Preservation Society and the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Gee recommended the extension of the national park to rhinoceros areas located south of the river. In December 1970, King Mahendra of



A pair of Slender Lorises photographed by E.P. Gee, from *THE WILDLIFE OF INDIA*

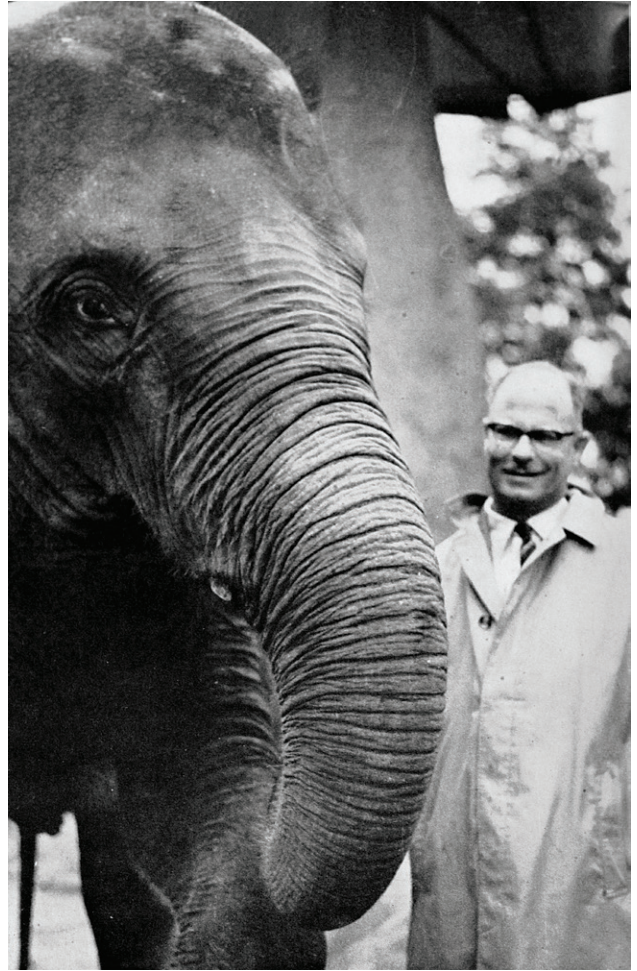
Nepal approved the extension, giving Nepal its first national park, the Chitwan National Park.

The news of the discovery of the Golden Langur, an Old World species, was first brought to the western world by E.P. Gee. In his article 'The Distribution and Feeding Habits of the Golden Langur, *Presbytis geei* Gee (Khajuria, 1956) in *JBNHS* [1961 Vol. 58(1)], he provides a short history of the discovery of this langur, tracing its record to Jamduar Forest Rest House on the east bank of the Sankosh river near the boundary of India and Bhutan, where it was noticed by a number of sportsmen and forest officers. "Probably the first...to report it was E.O. Shebbeare in 1907...," he notes in the article. E.P. Gee travelled to Jamduar with his team in 1953 and recorded many sightings of this elusive species little known even to the local people. The langur came to be known as Gee's Golden Langur or *Presbytis geei*. Now it is associated with the genus *Trachypithecus* and its scientific name is *Trachypithecus geei*. This cream and "gold" langur, with a very long tail, is one of the most endangered primate species of India. Along with writing and researching about these langurs, Gee also filmed and photographed them intensively.

As an active contributor to the early wildlife protection policy of India, E.P. Gee wrote about his experiences and observations in *THE WILDLIFE OF INDIA* published by Collins in 1964. This work makes a good point of comparison with the present day conservation efforts in India. Gee also wrote a 5-part series on 'The management of India's wildlife sanctuaries and national parks' in the *JBNHS* published from 1952 to 1967. Other than these, he wrote several articles for the *JBNHS*. E.P. Gee's contributions brought a new



Adult Spot-billed Pelican and its chick, photographed by
E.P. Gee – THE WILDLIFE OF INDIA



E.P. Gee at the London Zoo with Lakshmi in 1960,
when she was ten years old

energy to the conservation movement in India. His precise notes on wildlife and conservation problems and outstanding photography of animals

and plants bear evidence of his expertise and perfection.

After many years of service in wildlife conservation and protection,

Gee retired in 1959 and moved to Shillong, where he started one of the finest private orchid collections. He believed in ingenious conservation practices, ranging from ancient imperial edicts to village traditions of protecting nesting bird colonies. This cooperative and culturally sensitive style won him recognition from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

E.P. Gee was a member of the Advisory Committee of the BNHS, and was highly interested in all activities of the Society, and contributed much to its fulfillment and success. An altruist by nature, he donated all his books, photographs, films, and other works to the Society, which are a treasure in itself. ■



E.P. Gee filmed and photographed the Golden Langur,
an endangered primate, intensively



H. Abdulali Taxonomist, Naturalist & Builder

Hornbill House, the headquarters of BNHS in Mumbai, stands testimony to the stellar contribution of Humayun Abdulali. As Honorary Secretary (1950–1962), he negotiated with the State Government to provide suitable premises for the precious heritage collections remaining with the Society, that were till then housed in the former Honorary Secretary H.M. Phipson's building at Forbes Street in Fort area. His persistence paid off and the new building adjoining the Museum was inaugurated on 13th March, 1965.

Born in Kobe, Japan, in 1914, Humayun Abdulali first came to Bombay in 1924. The son of an importer of raw cotton and safety matches, Abdulali completed his education at St. Xavier's High School. At a very young age, he became interested in natural history, and accompanied his ornithologist cousin Sálím Ali on several field excursions and for hunts that took him to various corners of India. Abdulali joined the BNHS as a member in 1931. He was elected to the Executive Committee in 1942. In 1950, he became the

Honorary Secretary of the Society, and his 14-year tenure determined the direction in which the Society would traverse independent India.

With regard to ornithology, unlike Sálím Ali, whose work was field-oriented, Abdulali focused largely on collections and taxonomy. When he joined, the collections at

BNHS were yet to be examined as a whole, as each lot used to be sent to the British Museum in London for identification and returned separately. Abdulali re-examined the entire collection, and in the course of taxonomic rearrangement, he found several new subspecies. He described 17 and proposed reassignment for two. From 1968 to 1996, he published the 'Catalogue of the Birds in the Collection of the Bombay Natural History Society' in 37 parts in *JBNHS*. When he passed away in 2001, the Catalogue was almost complete; it was finalized soon after. While working on the collections, Humayun Abdulali also realized that there was a complete lack of ornithological material from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and took it upon himself to visit the area for bird material through eight trips from 1963–1977. Several specimens of birds were added to the collection including pitta, pigeon, and owl species that were peculiar to the island archipelago. Species



Humayun Abdulali was instrumental in procuring the Hornbill House building for the Society at a token rent of Re. 1/- per annum; this is his enduring legacy to the Society



Abdulali at work in camp, 1959



With Mrs. Indira Gandhi in Delhi, 1969, at a meeting of the Indian Board for Wildlife

of bats, and a fair number of frogs, toads, lizards, snakes, flying foxes, and skinks were also collected during these trips.

Throughout his lifetime, Abdulali published a prodigious number of scientific papers and notes, and especially made his mark in the field of bird taxonomy. The very first year he joined BNHS, Abdulali published a note in the *Journal* titled 'Eleven Koel eggs in a Crow's nest' [1931, Vol. 35(2)]. In all, he published 356 notes,

270 scientific papers which covered birds, snakes, frogs, and other fauna, and wrote 50 book reviews. Humayun's publication record is phenomenal in its precision and has stood the test of time. His papers record a range of ecological and behavioural observations such as the diet and foraging of diverse species like flamingos and harriers, distribution and habits of the batrachian *Ichthyophis glutinosus* Linn. [Vol. 52(3)], and insect-bird associations with nests of large ants [*Oecophylla smaragdina*

(Fabricius)] Vol. 57(2). Not only did he correct several misidentifications of the past, but he also referred the reader to appropriate literature, provided measurements of each specimen in the collection, noted aberrant individuals, drew attention to instances in which the variation did not seem to match the accepted range in taxonomy and often confirmed the validity of the subspecies.

Soon after Independence, poaching had become rampant, and the few existing laws to prevent illegal hunting were not adequate. Sensing this lacuna, the Director of Parks and Gardens requested the Society to draft a new bill to prevent poaching. It was Abdulali, as Honorary Secretary of the BNHS, who drafted the new bill with the assistance and advice of forest officers and experienced hunters. This bill finally got approved by both the houses of legislature and thus the Bombay Wild Birds and Wild Animals Protection Act 1951 was passed in 1953, the basis for the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. Another significant conservation achievement was in successfully persuading the Government of India to ban the export of frog legs in 1985, an industry that threatened to decimate the Indian Bullfrog. In an elaborate



Humayun Abdulali obtained a standing grant from the Maharashtra State Government for the housing and upkeep of the specimens in the Collection, which now numbers approximately 1,20,000 specimens



In 1975, Abdulali filed a petition in the High Court and stayed the construction of a highway through Sanjay Gandhi National Park. Owing to his continuous efforts, the Park was declared as a National Park. The Park is situated in the busiest location of the financial powerhouse of India – Mumbai

article 'On the export of frog legs from India' [*JBNHS* 1985 Vol. 82(2): 347–375], Abdulali not only wrote about how the business is ecologically and economically unjustified but also of the cruelty attached to it. Yet another was his role in getting the forests in northern Mumbai declared as the

Sanjay Gandhi National Park (earlier known as the Borivali National Park). The creation of the Park and its survival through its first two decades was largely due to the vision and efforts of Humayun Abdulali. He was familiar with this area since his school days and his frequent trips

to the site over the years laid the foundation for his 6-part series in the *JBNHS* on 'The Birds of Bombay and Salsette', co-authored by Sálím Ali and published between 1936 and 1938. As Honorary Secretary of the BNHS, Abdulali proposed the declaration of this area as a National Park, and after continuous efforts, the Park was born. Now covering an area of 103.84 sq. km, it is the lung space of the city of Mumbai.

Overall, Humayun Abdulali made many lasting contributions to the country's ornithology and wildlife and more specifically, to the conservation movement in India. Outspoken as he was, he locked horns with Sálím Ali and others on issues concerning the Society and its research focus, and was misunderstood on several occasions. However, none could fail to appreciate his contributions to natural history and to the Society. To quote J.C. Daniel [*Humayun Abdulali JBNHS* Vol. 100(3): 254] "He was, above all, a person of impeccable integrity, a character which he and Sálím Ali bequeathed to the Society. ■



"Humayun's report on the export of frogs' legs was examined in 1979 by a Parliamentary Committee, which called on Dr. Sálím Ali, then a Member of the Rajya Sabha, as an expert witness. He was asked whether it was feasible to implement a possible ban on export, to which he replied that certainly lack of implementation was the weakest point of all legislation for protection of wildlife, but that did not mean that we should not have the Act, but rather that we should try to have the machinery for implementation. Other experts had claimed that frogs and toads had only a marginal effect on agricultural pests, but Dr. Sálím Ali

pointed out that no proper ecological study had been carried out to prove this, and that even if it were so frogs were one among several biological factors which, acting together, had a great influence. Evidently he was convincing, since the Committee ultimately recommended the ban."

... Quoted from: HUMAYUN ABDULALI — NATURALIST

Zafar Rashid Futehally (19th March 1920 – 11th August 2013) completed his education in Economics and Political Science from St. Xavier's College, Bombay. In 1944, he was introduced to the BNHS by Sálím Ali, who was his distant cousin. He was selected to the Executive Committee in 1962, subsequently serving as the Honorary Secretary till 1973. In the 1950s, a poorly-written newspaper article on the Indian Magpie-Robin in the *Times of India* newspaper received the ire of Sálím Ali. The editor then asked Sálím Ali if he could suggest someone to write for the newspaper on birds. Zafar Futehally took the initiative and started a column called *Birdwatcher's Diary* which ran for thirty years! This also led to radio shows which became quite popular.

In 1973, he moved to a farm house in Bangalore where he mostly lived, barring a few years in Kodaikanal, and finally returned to his ancestral home in Kihim. He started a popular bulletin for amateur birdwatchers to communicate their observations, called the *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*, which was published as cyclostyled copies from Bombay in 1959 and

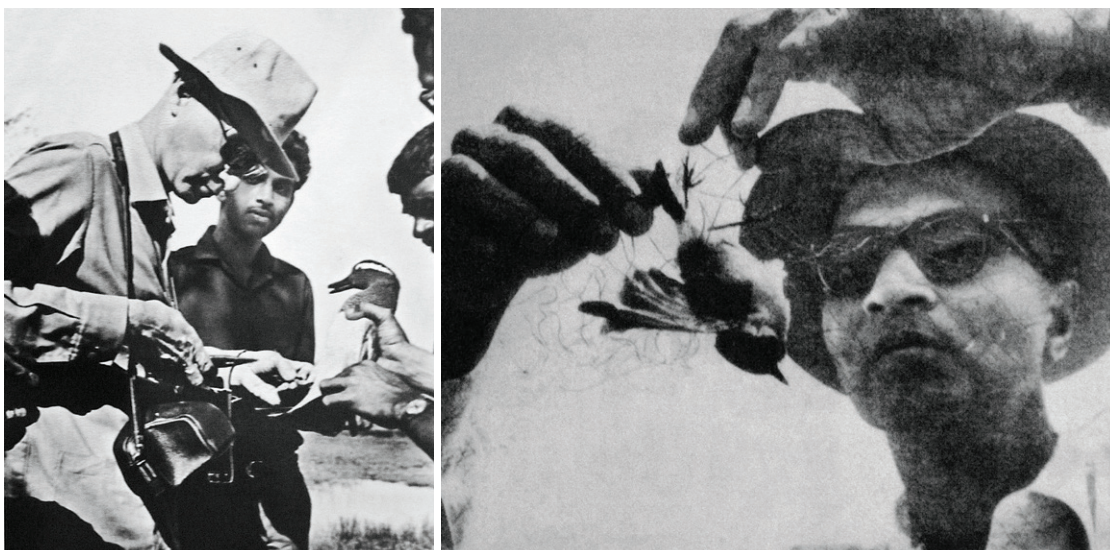
Z.R. Futehally The Gentleman Birder



later printed from Bangalore in 1973. With this, he created and sustained a nationwide virtual community for birdwatchers. The interest that readers showed in the *Newsletter* resulted in greater appreciation of nature. Due to differences in the editorial board, the newsletter split into two in 2004: *Newsletter for Birdwatchers* and *Indian Birds*. Futehally himself was a brilliant writer and his articles were highly professional. He also edited and

published an anthology of writings by Indian birdwatchers, *INDIA THROUGH ITS BIRDS*, published by Dronequill in 2007. In 2014, his memoirs were posthumously published as a book *THE SONG OF THE MAGPIE ROBIN* by Rupa Publications.

Futehally was active in the conservation movement. Under his leadership, BNHS upscaled its role as a conservation-oriented organization. Futehally was able to get the Society's conservation recommendations on



Zafar Futehally at work in 1962: bird ringing (L); releasing a bird from a mist net (R)



Zafar Futehally with C.M. Choudhury, Terai, UP in 1968

developmental project implemented, mainly by persuading the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi of their validity and importance. His letters to the government helped in the establishment of the Karnala Bird Sanctuary in 1968, which would have otherwise been lost to industrial development. He served as a member of the National Committee for Environment Planning, and along with M. Krishnan, was appointed as a 'non official' member of the Steering Committee of Project Tiger when it was launched in 1973. He supported S. Dillon Ripley and the Smithsonian Institution for a project proposed to radio-collar and study tigers in India, despite resistance from some

voices. Futehally was a member of the committee that was set up to study the impact of a dam on the Kuntipuzha river which threatened to destroy the forests of the Silent Valley region, an area which was ultimately notified as Silent Valley National Park in 1980. He was a co-founder of The Bangalore Environment Trust in 1987 that worked towards the conservation of lakes and trees in and around Bangalore. He was also closely involved with the International Ornithological Congress. He helped to organize IUCN meetings in New Delhi and became its Executive Member in 1966 and Vice President in 1969.

Zafar Futehally's honours included the Padma Shri in 1970,

Order of the Golden Ark in 1980, and the Karnataka Rajyostava Award in 1983. In 1997, BNHS conferred on him the Sálim Ali International Award for Nature Conservation in recognition of his efforts towards the conservation of Karnala Wildlife Sanctuary and Borivali National Park in Mumbai. It would be befitting to add an excerpt from 'Paradise Flycatcher' by the poet Nissim Ezekiel, who was inspired to write it after reading Zafar Futehally:

*White streamers moving
briskly on the green
Casuarina, rouse the sleepy watcher
From a dream of rarest birds
To this reality. A grating sound
Is all the language of the bird,
Spelling death to flies and moths
Who go this way to Paradise.*

Futehally was a great source of encouragement to younger amateur naturalists and professional scientists. Madhav Gadgil, the well-known ecologist, wrote in his memorial of Zafar Futehally in *Current Science* (Vol. 105: 9) "When I wrote what was the first ever scientific paper on sacred groves the staid editors of the *Journal of Bombay Natural History Society* refused to publish it. Zafar, then the Honorary Secretary of the Society, intervened and saw to it that the paper was accepted. By now sacred groves has become an established field of scientific research, and Zafar's timely intervention, with his broader outlook has played a valuable role in taking it forward."

Zafar Futehally lived in a bygone age when the world was less crowded and busy. He had a love for open spaces, which was why he left Mumbai to live in a farmhouse at the outskirts of Bangalore. Other than birds, he loved horses and was an excellent rider. He was a thorough gentleman, cultured, had a large circle of friends, and was devoid of prejudices. And to cap it all, he was a birder – the Gentleman Birder! ■



Futehally's efforts resulted in the establishment of Karnala Bird Sanctuary, which saved it from being lost to industrial development

Every organization has a public profile, but behind this profile is a professional support system of people who give the organization its name. They undertake the most important task, that of binding people together and building a team that executes the work, these reflecting the organization's public profile. J.C. Daniel was that person at the BNHS, and much more. In every matter, both official and personal, the dedication of JC or JCD, as he was known among his peers, was unique.

Jivanayakam Cyril Daniel was born in 1927 in Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu, and brought up in Trivandrum. From an early age, his parents inspired in him a curiosity in the natural world. He completed his post graduation in Zoology in 1950 from Madras University. Fresh out of college, an over-enthusiastic young JC applied for the post of Curator in the BNHS, but was appointed as a Research Assistant instead. However, little did he know that with this he would in future be dedicating more than 60 years of his life to the organization, in various capacities –as Editor of the *JBNHS* and *Hornbill*, Curator, Director, Honorary Secretary, a member of the Governing Council, and finally the Vice President of the Society.

Post-Independence, J.C. Daniel witnessed the horrendous early decades in which poaching and destruction of prime habitats was rampant and unhindered. Hunting laws were openly flouted, and as India struggled to cope with gargantuan socio-economic problems, wildlife concerns took a serious hit. In this scenario emerged some sensitive Indian wildlife scientists, many of them mentored by J.C. Daniel. Daniel's deepest concern was the conservation of nature. The Maharaja of Surguja's slaughter of the last three Indian

J.C. Daniel Naturalist, Editor & Administrator



Cheetahs in 1949 made a tremendous impact on him. His considered view was that species restricted to a small area need more attention than species like the Tiger (incidentally, his paper on the tiger 'The Tiger in India: An enquiry – 1968–69' 1970 *JBNHS* Vol. 67(2) provided the impetus for the Government-initiated

Project Tiger launched in 1973), or the Leopard which were spread over a vast landscape. He drew attention to the plight of the Asiatic Lion *Panthera leo persica* of Gir, Tiger, Wild Buffalo, Tiger, Nilgiri Tahr, Saltwater Crocodile, Hangul *Cervus canadensis hanglu* in



An administrator, editor, curator, and much more, J.C. Daniel dedicated more than 60 years of his life to the Society



J.C. Daniel (centre) at Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, during radio collaring operations, 1987

Dachigam, Manipur Brow-Antlered Deer *Panolia eldii eldii* in Manipur, and the hard-ground Barasingha *Rucervus duvaucelii branderi* in Kanha, which needed immediate and intensive attention. As Principal Investigator of some research projects of the BNHS from the 1980s till his demise, he showed the way for BNHS research and conservation programmes on endangered species, including the Asian Elephant, Jerdon's Courser

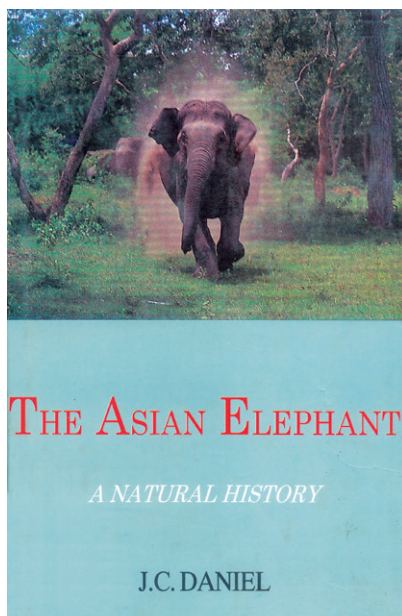
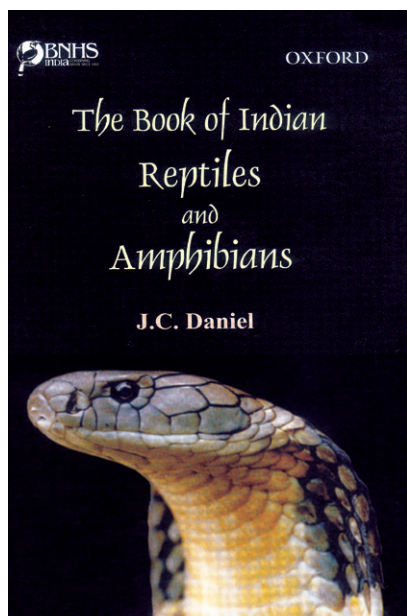
Rhinoptilus bitorquatus, and birds of prey and endangered habitats like Point Calimere, Eastern Ghats, high ranges of the Western Ghats, and peninsular forests in Bastar, among others.

Daniel was very particular about documentation and gave great importance to archiving information, as he believed that data collected in research funded by public money should serve society, and it was

crucial to make it accessible to future users. BNHS young scientists and staff gained from being urged by him to write scientific papers and popular articles, and to record their data with photographs. He saw these as tools to reach the general public, to generate awareness and gain support for BNHS's conservation programme. He never said a 'no' to anyone, however junior, who came to him with a manuscript; he would religiously peruse and promptly redraft, but careless grammatical errors annoyed him.

Daniel's contributions of scientific notes and papers to *JBNHS* ranged in subject from amphibians to whales. As the Editor of a notable series 'FIELD GUIDE TO THE AMPHIBIANS OF WESTERN INDIA' in four parts between 1963–1989 (the fourth part co-authored by A.G. Sekar) served as building blocks for his most cherished publication *THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS* (2002), which inspired young scientists in the BNHS and elsewhere. Yet another iconic publication by him was *BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT – A FIELD GUIDE* (2011) published by the BNHS, on which he worked for 10 years. Some of his other books included *A WEEK WITH ELEPHANTS* (1995), *THE LEOPARD IN INDIA* (1996), *A CENTURY OF NATURAL HISTORY* (1983), and *NATURAL HISTORY AND THE INDIAN ARMY* (2009). His 1996 revision of Sálím Ali's *THE BOOK OF INDIAN BIRDS* provided valuable additions to the classic original, and it remains a bestseller till date, despite several great new Indian bird books.

As Member of the Steering Committee and Regional Representative (Western Region), Indian Board for Wildlife, Government of India; Member, Governing Council, Wildlife Institute of India; Member, Programme

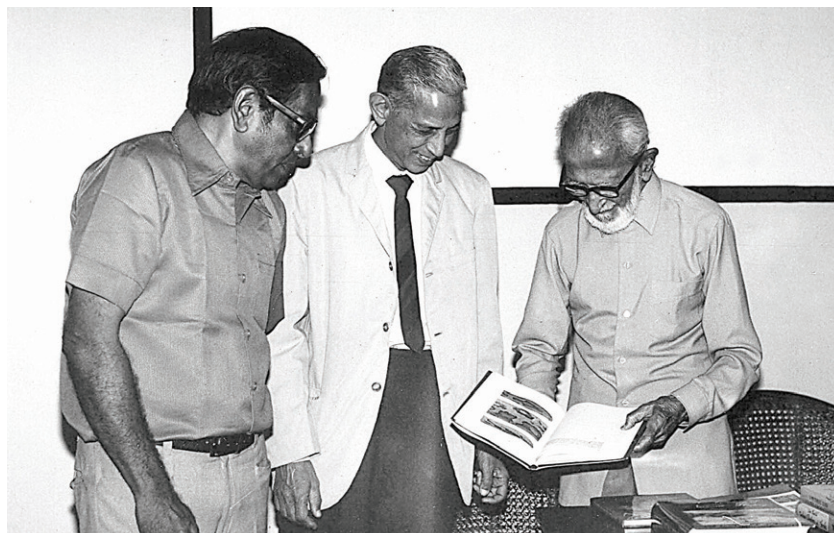


J.C. Daniel was particular about documentation and emphasized the need for archiving information as books, journal papers, and magazine articles

Advisory Committee, Animal Ecology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India; Vice Chairman, Species Survival Commission, World Conservation Union; Member, Indian National Council for WCU (World Conservation Union; Chairman, Asian Elephant Specialist Group, SSC, World Conservation Union; Member of the specialist groups on Primates, Asian Elephant, Crocodile, Snakes, and Asian subcontinent group on amphibians and reptiles; and Member, Governing Council, Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History, he lost no opportunity to voice BNHS's conservation concerns at every scientific forum.

As a Member of the Standing Committee, Indian Board for Wildlife, a rare courage marked his recommendations. Yet his despair at the virtual deafness of the powers that be may have goaded him to name his book CASSANDRA OF CONSERVATION after the mythological Greek prophetess of doom, whom nobody believed. Anyone who reads the Viewpoints (*Hornbill* editorials) compiled therein cannot fail to acknowledge the wisdom and relevance of his words. These editorials became synonymous with the voice of BNHS in its mission of research, nature conservation, and awareness.

J.C. Daniel was awarded many times for his contributions and remarkable role in the nature conservation movement in India. He was conferred the Peter Scott Award for Conservation Merit in 1988, Award of Kerala Agricultural University in 1989, the Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar in 1997, the Sanctuary-ABN Amro Lifetime Service to Conservation Award in 2000, and the Distinguished



Release of THE BOOK OF INDIAN REPTILES, with A.N.D. Nanavati and Sálim Ali in 1983

Service Award from the Society for Conservation Biology in 2007. This well-deserved glory shone equally on BNHS, the institution that he fostered with lifelong dedication. In recognition of his contribution, he was nominated as an Honorary Member of the Bombay Natural History Society in 1991.

JC the disciplinarian was legendary. He, like Sálim Ali, was

known for his punctuality, and late comers had to be ready to face a severe scolding. He would be the first to arrive and last to leave Hornbill House. But unlike many 'strict' bosses, he led by example, never enforcing a rule that he would not apply to himself. Yet he was approachable and ever ready to extend a helping hand to any staff in need. He treated the staff as his extended family and said that there is a reason why we call it Hornbill 'House'. To those who worked under him, he was more like a grand old patriarch.

For Daniel, retirement was never an option. Long after his retirement, he remained deeply involved in the affairs of the Society. He was diagnosed with cancer in August 2011, after the launch of his last publication BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT – A FIELD GUIDE. Even in those last days, when staff visited him in the hospital, his first question would be "How is work at the BNHS?" Such was his dedication. To him nature was the most beautiful thing, a treasure trove that we need to safeguard – for ourselves and for the coming generations. ■



J.C. Daniel autographing
BIRDS OF INDIAN SUBCONTINENT – A FIELD GUIDE,
for his admirers



B.G. Deshmukh The Quintessential Administrator

No organization can thrive without good leadership and swift decision makers. Even a research-based organization like the BNHS needs more than science to survive. BNHS was blessed with one such personality who entered the arena at a crucial juncture. Acknowledged to be one of the most fortunate things to happen to BNHS during a period of crisis, B.G. Deshmukh was invited

to join the Society as its President in 1993, and he held the reigns until his demise in 2011. A mentor, guide, and ardent conservationist, Deshmukh brought with him a strong bureaucratic background and work ethic. He uplifted the Society and restored its financial stability when it was most needed.

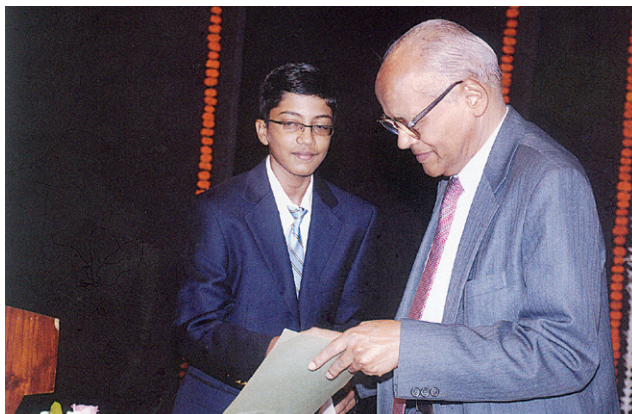
As a bureaucrat, he had held various important posts in both state and central governments,

including Chief Secretary, Maharashtra; Chairman of the Governing Board of the International Labour Organisation; Secretary of Union Labour and Rehabilitation Department; Additional Secretary; Union Ministry of Home Affairs; Municipal Commissioner of Bombay and Secretary to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra. He was the Cabinet Secretary from August 1986 to March 1989. He was the Principal Secretary to three consecutive Prime Ministers – Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, and Chandra Shekhar – from March 1989 to December 1990. He was also the Chairman of Janwani, an NGO of the Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture, and President and Trustee of a number of NGOs like KEM Hospital, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, and Mohalla Committee Movement Trust.

The years after Dr. Sálím Ali's passing left the Society in need of a visionary leader to guide it towards its larger goal of nature conservation, and at the same time, to address the important issue of financial stability of the Society. Having been the seniormost bureaucrat of the country



Celebrating B.G. Deshmukh's birthday at Hornbill House



B.G. Deshmukh encouraging young talent Sooraj Bishnoi, a budding photographer in the field of natural history



With the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh – at the Society's 125th year celebration, releasing LOKE WAN THO'S BIRDS

in his time, Deshmukh was just the right person for this herculean task. Having worked in government for long, Deshmukh had a clear and practical understanding of the issues rampant in the “systems” in our country, but at the same time, he was also sensitive to the issues of wildlife and its intricacies. This knowledge equipped him to guide the Society in its best interests.

He understood the need for BNHS to establish a corpus fund, and realized this dream by liaising with donors and acquiring funds for research and for running costs. He had significant personal connections that helped the Society financially in

going that extra mile. His contacts within the Government helped garner support for the varied conservation and research activities BNHS was engaged in.

At the Society, his commitment to work and the trust he demonstrated in his colleagues inspired everyone to give their best. It was not like him to hound someone into completing a job. He would instead allot a task, set a deadline, and provide everything one required to accomplish it. He would simply say, “Tell me what you need to complete this task”. Rational demands were promptly met, to ensure smooth working conditions. He was strict, professional, and result

oriented, and was gracious enough to appreciate a good effort.

Despite having held numerous high positions during his career, Deshmukh was a down-to-earth person who made it a point to know each of his staff and interact with them. He drew immense respect in bureaucratic circles during his tenure and even after retirement, which enabled him to intervene on behalf of the Society in many instances. He dedicated his time and knowledge to BNHS and his presence at Hornbill House was inspirational. His contribution towards establishing a sound financial base for the Society remains unmatched. ■



For this issue

We are grateful for the inputs received from many individuals who contributed their efforts to put together this special issue.

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Note from the Editors:

The list of stalwarts featured is not complete by any means and cannot be captured in one issue. This is an effort to list some of the most important and prominent contributions to institution building at BNHS.

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