

## Training and outreach activities of BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre, Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu

The BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre (BMSC) at Point Calimere (Kodiakkarai) is a research facility dedicated to the study of migratory patterns of birds along India's east coast. Established by the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) in 2008, the centre is strategically located at a critical stopover/wintering site for millions of migratory birds traveling along the central Asian and east Asian–Australasian Flyways.

Since its establishment, the centre has been actively involved in providing first-hand training on bird migration study techniques to various stakeholders from India and its neighbouring countries. Though BMSC was established in 2008, BNHS has its presence, studying bird migration and avian ecology since early 1960s. Its research has significantly contributed to understanding migration patterns, habitat use, and transboundary connectivity of birds across continents.

### Training and outreach programmes at BMSC

From July 2024 to March 2025, the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre at Point Calimere conducted extensive training programs, hosting 401 officer trainees from various forestry cadres, including assistant conservator of forests (ACF) trainees, range officer trainees, and in-service foresters. These participants came from renowned institutions across southern India, such as the Central Academy for State Forest Service (CASFOS) and the Tamil Nadu Forest Academy (TNFA). A week-long intensive training programme for four forest guards (in service) from the Bhagalpur and Jamui Division, Bihar, from 27 February 2025 to 5 March 2025 was also conducted.

In addition to forestry professionals, the centre also engaged with 217 students, comprising 40 school students and 177 college students from institutions across Tamil Nadu. These student-focused training sessions were conducted,



Visit of forest guard trainees from Tamil Nadu Forestry College, Vaigai Dam to BMSC on 10 February 2025. © Rose Fracis.

offering young learners a unique opportunity to understand bird migration research and conservation.

## Training sessions and key highlights

The training programs provided participants with an insightful overview of BNHS's history in nature conservation, emphasizing its research-driven approach. Sessions covered, included: bird migration research and conservation; bird marking procedures (ringing and colour-flagging); The global significance of Point Calimere for migratory shorebirds; and Broader conservation challenges, habitat protection, and long-term monitoring.

A major highlight of the training was the bird-marking studies conducted by BNHS. Trainees received hands-on exposure to shorebird and terrestrial bird ringing through live demonstrations of bird ringing technique

and equipment used in migration studies. Also provided practical insights into shorebird conservation efforts and the significance of long-term monitoring programmes.

Through these training initiatives, the BNHS Bird Migration Study Centre at Point Calimere continues to play a pivotal role in fostering awareness, capacity building, and scientific research in bird migration and conservation.

## Basic course in field ornithology & bird migration studies

For the year 2024–2025, seven batches of the “Basic course in field ornithology and bird migration studies” were carried out successfully at Point Calimere from November 2024 to January 2025. A total of 96 participants took part in these three-day capsule courses, comprising almost equal participation of males (51%) and females (49%). Participants ranged in



Participants viewing waterbirds during one of the basic ornithology courses. © S. Sivakumar.

## Participants of the forest department trainees, schools and colleges during 2024–2025

	Date	Institution	Participants / cadres	Details		
				Male	Female	Total
1	12.vii.2024	Tamil Nadu Forest Academy (TNFA), Coimbatore	52 <sup>nd</sup> batch of the In-Service Training Course for Foresters	57	3	60
2	28.vii.2024	Central Academy for State Forest Service (CASFOS), Coimbatore	ACF trainees	-	-	42
3	09.ix.2024	Kundal Forest Academy in Maharashtra	Forest Range Officer trainees	30	3	33
4	16.xii.2024	Karnataka State Forest Academy, Dharwad	Forest Range Officer trainees	25	16	41
5	16.xii.2024	Tamil Nadu Forest Academy (TNFA), Coimbatore	Foresters in-service	60	-	60
6	19.xii.2024	Karnataka State Forest Academy, Dharwad	Forest Range Officer trainees	26	10	36
7	10.ii.2025	Tamil Nadu Forestry Training College, Vaigai Dam	Forest Guard trainees	52	10	62
8	16.ii.2025	Tamil Nadu Forestry Training College, Vaigai Dam	Forest Guard trainees	53	10	63
9	27.ii.2025	Bhagalpur Division, Bihar	Forest Guard (In-service)	4	-	4
<b>School and College Students</b>						
1	19.ix.2024	Agriculture and Research Institute, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University	B.Sc. (Hons) Agriculture	8	23	31
2	19.x.2024	Forest College and Research Institute, Mettupalayam	B.Sc. (Hons) Forestry	48	42	90
3	20.x.2024	Babaji Vidhyashram Senior Secondary School, Chennai	8 <sup>th</sup> grade	9	10	19
4	07.xi.2024	Vanavil Trust, Nagapattinam	Second and fourth grades	14	7	21
5	27.xii.2024	Arignar Anna Government Arts and Science College, Karaikal	B.Sc. & M.Sc. Zoology	10	31	41
6	11.iii.2025	Sálim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON)	M.Sc. Wildlife and Ornithology	6	9	15

age from a few 18-year-olds from Bangalore and Chennai to a youthful 71-year-old retired French professor from Agra, reflecting a diverse group united by their passion for birds and nature. Participants came from across the country, spanning the length and breadth of India—from Kargil in the north to Kollam (Kerala) in

the south. The westernmost representation was from Mumbai, while the easternmost was from Kolkata. Notably, Bangalore accounted for the highest number of participants (37%), followed by Mumbai (21%). Interestingly, 25% of the participants were members of the BNHS. Among them were some who have been deeply

connected to the organisation for decades, with involvement in BNHS courses and fieldwork dating back to the late 1980s and early 1990s. The camps provided a unique platform for participants to deepen their understanding of field ornithology focused on bird migration studies, understanding bird populations, and promoting habitat preservation.

Participants learned major bird migration study techniques, including bird trapping, and explored the rich biodiversity of Point Calimere's diverse ecosystems. They observed various critical habitats, including natural and human-made wetlands, tropical dry evergreen forests, grasslands, saltpans and tidal mudflats—each a critical habitat for various migratory as well as resident bird species.

As part of the camp, participants visited key sites in Point Calimere and Great Vedaranyam Swamp. The classroom and practical sessions included introduction to birds of Point Calimere, bird migration study techniques, bird ringing and different tools used to capture wild birds, etc. Our in-house experts delivered case studies on conservation efforts, including “Helping the Skimmers Skim!” and “Vulture Breeding Programme”, online.

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