

Obituary for J.C. Daniel

BNHS Vice-President J.C. Daniel passes away. Conservation movement loses one more supporter

BNHS Vice-President and veteran conservationist Shri J C Daniel passed away 23 August at S L Raheja Hospital in Mahim in Mumbai at 10.10 pm. He was recently diagnosed of cancer, which had spread to the lungs and the liver. He was 84 years old. This is another loss to the conservation movement in India after the recent sad demise of BNHS President Shri B G Deshmukh on 7th August 2011.

Late Shri Daniel got associated with BNHS as a researcher in the 1950s. Subsequently he had held several posts in BNHS including Curator, Director, Honorary Secretary, Executive Editor of JBNHS, Editor of Hornbill, Research Guide to MSc and PhD students and as head of various sub-committees. He was the mentor at BNHS in many ways and was a pioneering figure in various conservation initiatives in the country. A condolence meeting in BNHS would be announced shortly.

Late Shri Daniel had received several awards during his lifetime including Peter Scott Award for Conservation Merit (1988), Award of Kerala Agricultural University (1989), Indira Gandhi Paryavaran Puraskar (1997), Sanctuary – ABN Amro Lifetime Service to Conservation Award (2000) and Distinguished Service Award from Society for Conservation Biology (2007). He had also held several positions in various institutions across India including Member Steering Committee and Regional Representative (western region) – Indian Board for Wildlife, Member – Governing Council – Wildlife Institute of India, Vice-Chairman – Species Survival Commission, Chairman – Asian Elephant Specialist Group, Member – Executive Committee – World Congress of Herpetology and Member – Punjab Ecology. He had worked on various projects involving oriental vertebrates, species and habitat conservation and natural history publications. His research work spans several species such as Indian Wild Buffalo, Asian Elephant, Blackbuck, Tiger, Nilgiri Tahr, Saltwater Crocodile and Golden Gecko. He had authored and edited various books at BNHS such as "The Book of Indian Reptiles and Amphibians", "Cassandra of Conservation", "Petronia", "A Century of Natural History", "The Leopard in India" and "A Week with Elephants". His most recent book "Birds of the Indian Subcontinent – A Field Guide" was recently released in BNHS. He had written dozens of research papers in various journals. He had also initiated various pioneering activities such as recording and documenting the old trees in the Mumbai region, with the help of nature lovers and BNHS members.

Conservation and BNHS have indeed once again lost one of its greatest supporters with the death of Shri Daniel. We pray that his soul finds eternal peace.

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J.C. Daniel passing

It is shocking for the entire conservation fraternity. For me J.C. Daniel and BNHS are synonymous. He has been a very revered senior guide who always encouraged me in so many ways. He will remain alive with me as long as I am there. He guided the UNDP/FAO/Government of India crocodile conservation programme from its beginning. In 1984: at Government of India we were planning for representation at the next Crocodile Specialist Group Meeting in Caracas, Venezuela in October. JCD was requested to represent.



J.C. Daniel, Distinguished Conservationist and Scholar, BNHS

Pointing towards me, he said, 'these young men are doing all the work, they should go now. Finally three researchers attended the meeting.

Mr. J.C. Daniel was there for all important things that have ever happened to wildlife/biodiversity conservation in the country. He first initiated the letter-based survey for tiger population in India, even before the official 1972-tiger-census. It was 2002, when I met him last in Delhi—a meeting was convened by MoEF to discuss about Management Plan of Sanctuaries and Tiger Reserves.

He will remain alive in memory, but I will miss him in person.

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Dignified and disciplined gentleman and scholar

J.C. Daniel was such a dignified and disciplined gentleman. I am happy, given his age and disease, that he could pass away in a relatively short time after the diagnosis of cancer. Many people linger cruelly, spending weeks or months without joy or dignity. I hope J.C. Daniel had very few or no helpless days of pain and suffering. Living to an advanced age and contributing so very much to so many species of plants and animals and to conservation generally, his total contribution to the natural world and to his many students and colleagues was great. A long life well lived and, apparently, well relinquished. We all should be so fortunate.

Sally Walker,
Zoo Outreach Organisation

A medley of photographs of J. C. Daniel life and work



JCD with Salim Ali and Maharaja of Vansda's son



JC Daniel at BNHS book release function



J.C. Daniel at a book signing



J.C. Daniel at a tree planting