

In memoriam: Bhavbhuti Mukundray Parasharya

Taej Mundkur

Dr Bhavbhuti Mukundray Parasharya was an accomplished ornithologist, having undertaken extensive research on the ecology, distribution and conservation of flamingo in Gujarat, in western India. He has been a long-time member of the Flamingo Specialist Group and had contributed articles to its newsletter. He was born on 4th July 1955 in Bhavnagar, Gujarat and to where he retired until his untimely death due to COVID 19 on 9th October 2020.

Bapu as we all called him respectfully, was a wise man of great wit with a sharp tongue. Our first meeting was in mid1984 when I joined the Department of Biosciences at the Saurashtra University, Rajkot, to start my Ph.D. This was around the time Dr Parasharya had just completed his degree, both of us did our work under the able guidance of late Prof Dr R. M. Naik. His thesis had focused on the ecology of western reef heron (*Egretta gularis*), painted stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*) and other coastal waterbirds. Dr Parasharya then served as Research scientist - 1984 to 2017 at the Gujarat Agricultural University in Anand, where his research focussed on management of birds, insect and rodent predators and conservation of birds in agricultural landscapes leading to several recommendations for both farmers and scientific community as part of the *All India Coordinated Research Project on Agricultural Ornithology* or later the *All India Network Project on Agricultural Ornithology*. Through this work, many important advances were made in understanding the positive and negative interactions of birds and insects with different agricultural crops.

Flamingos remained his special passion and he spent many years surveying potential nesting areas in the expanses of the Great and Little Rann of Kachchh under hostile weather conditions, and researching various aspects of their ecology and conservation. He published extensively on these issues and also contributed to the 2008 International Single Species Action Plan for Lesser Flamingo produced by IUCN-SSC/Wetlands International Flamingo Specialist Group, Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Wetlands International and BirdLife International Africa Partnership and published by the Convention on Migratory Species and African Eurasian Waterbird Agreement.

Besides birds, Dr Parasharya took great interest in all forms of flora and fauna, and he published a range of articles on insects, reptiles and mammals in English and Gujarati. He has guided four doctoral students and more than 12 masters' students in, as well as ecology of flamingos, Indian sarus cranes (*Grus antigone*) and many other birds, as well as in agricultural entomology (specifically concerning spider, butterfly and insect diversity).

Dr Parasharya served as the state coordinator of the Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) for Gujarat for several decades and through this work got an opportunity to work with amateur birdwatchers, researchers and forest staff from across the state. As I coordinate the AWC regionally for Wetlands International during this time, we had many opportunities to discuss a range of bird identification, monitoring and conservation and I was impressed by his knowledge and understanding of local issues. Dr Parasharya had been one of the driving forces in the establishment of the Bird Conservation Society of Gujarat in 2002 and had served on the editorial board of its newsletter aptly named *Flamingo - Bulletin of Gujarat Birds*. Through his keen interest, *Flamingo* has grown to be an important publication for bird enthusiasts and ornithologists in the state and country.

Bhavbhuti Mukundray Parasharya

Even after his retirement from the university, Dr Parasharya was active in research and conservation activities until his untimely death. He had recently discovered a new breeding location for the greater flamingo in private salt pans in the Gulf of Khambhat in Gujarat, quite some distance away from the known breeding sites for the species. Since then, he had been working with the salt pan owners to encourage them to enhance protection (including from bird photographers) and on an expansion of the nesting sites.

Bapu will be greatly remembered for his hard work and life-long dedication to the cause of bird and nature conservation. Selected publications of his, pertaining to flamingos are listed below.

Jadhav, A. & Parasharya, B.M. (2004). Counts of flamingos at some sites in Gujarat State, India. *Waterbirds* 27(2): 141–146.

Parasharya, B. M & Tere, A. (2005). Population estimates of flamingos in India, 1945 - 2003. In: Childress, B., Béchet, A., Arengo, F. & Jarrett, N. (Eds.). *Flamingo 13*. Bull IUCN-SSC/Wetlands International Flamingo Specialist Group..

Parasharya, B. M. & Tere, A. (2006). Lesser Flamingos in India: a knowledge update. Anand Agricultural University, Anand, India. Pp. 1–23.

Parasharya, B.M. (2009). Nesting of flamingos in India, 2009. *Flamingo*, Bull IUCN-SSC Wetlands International Flamingo Specialist Group 17:54–55.

Parasharya, B. M., Tere, A. & Vyas, R. (2010). Bela-Mowana: a lesser known nesting site of flamingos in India. *Flamingo Bulletin of the Flamingo Specialist Group* 18: 20–23.

Parasharya, B.M., Rank, D.N., Harper, D.M., Crosa, G., Zaccara, S., Patel, N. & Joshi, C.G. (2015). Long-distance dispersal capability of lesser flamingo *Phoeniconaias minor* between India and Africa: genetic inferences for future conservation plans. *Ostrich* 86: 221-229.

Parasharya, B. M. & Gadhvi, I. R. (2019). First report of successful breeding of Greater Flamingo in the Gulf of Khambhat, India—outside its traditional nesting range. *Indian BIRDS* 15 (5): 136–139.

Tere, A. & Parasharya, B. M. (2005). Post breeding distribution of flamingos and their population estimation. *Flamingo*, Newsletter of the Bird Conservation Society, Gujarat 3: 2-5.

Tere, A. & Parasharya, B.M. (2011). Flamingo mortality due to collision with high tension electric wires in Gujarat, India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa* 3: 2192-2201.



Dr B.M. Parasharya (second from right) with fellow Asian Waterbird Census coordinators at the launch of the latest AWC India report during the 13th Conference of the Convention on Migratory Species Conference, Gandhinagar, India