

Project Update: August 2002

In February 2002, two populations of the critically endangered, endemic fruit bat *Latidens salimalii* were discovered by the author in the southernmost part of the Western Ghats. Prior to this, the global distribution of Salim Ali's fruit bat was thought to be restricted to just one site, 120 km to the east.

This Rufford Small Grant funded project will have four main aims: to conduct more detailed surveys to determine the population status and distribution of this little known fruit bat; to identify key sites for bat conservation within the study region; to assess the principal threats to bats; and to promote the concept of bat conservation, emphasising the role of bats as keystone species within the ecosystem.

Information generated by the project will be used to actively promote the conservation of this wild but threatened region, which is currently home to a rich fauna and flora, including large mammals such as tiger, elephant, sloth bear and gaur and is considered an area of outstanding biodiversity interest (No. 20 in the WWF Global Ecoregion 2000 series).

