

Project Update: January 2016

1. The biodiversity management, the process of establishment of which in the village of Hanumanahalli was initiated by us a few months ago has been established.
2. Due to the Government Order issued by the Mines and the Geology Department to ban mining in the surrounding area, we have seen a gradual improvement in the habitat of the area and the waterbody located beside the hill where the cave is located that has been under disuse since many years has this year filled up with water. This waterbody was the only source of water for the villagers.
3. Preliminary acoustic surveys, and surveys in similar habitats with subterranean cave systems have been conducted to understand the presence/absence of this species elsewhere from the type locality. We have not been successful in locating this species elsewhere other than the type locality. Pettersson D500X bat detector has been procured and acoustic recordings of the species would be collected in the forthcoming survey. Due to heavy rains (due to cyclonic effect) we have not been able to conduct field surveys. We planned to conduct surveys in the past 2 months, but our previous experience with the species and its congeners have shown that their activity decreases drastically (they go into hibernation) as the temperatures in Kolar dip to sometimes 6-8 degrees Celsius. And now that the area had experience heavy rainfall over a period of one and a half months the cold there now is much greater and the bats do not venture out of the cave and we have observed that they go into hibernation. We do not wish to disturb hibernating bats and hence have postponed our field trips to the last week of January to 1st week of February when the cold wave is completely gone.
4. We have recently contributed to IUCN Red List reassessment of this species from being Endangered to Critically Endangered, due to very low population size, being restricted to only one roosting site and continued threat to the habitat and the species.
5. Enthusiastic, educated youth of the village have been identified and have been given preliminary training. We would be give training to the forest staff and also continue our paperwork for the recognition of the site as a BHS.
6. We are now proposing to the State Biodiversity Board, the Director, National Biodiversity Authority with the support of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Government of Karnataka to recognise the site as a Biodiversity heritage Site (This would ensure complete protection of the species and the land therein would be under the control of the National Biodiversity Authority thus ensuring all round and complete protection to the species and its habitat).
7. We are also proposing by writing to the PCCF, Government of Karnataka and the Central minister for Environment, Government of India to accord protection to the species by including it under the Wildlife Protection Act. Except for two species of bats, none of the other 117 species of bats are included under the Wildlife Protection Act and hence are treated as vermin and exterminated indiscriminately.

We would be pursuing the above said matters and personally meet the officials during the time we have for our proposed fieldwork and achieve these matters.