

Project Update: September 2015

We had during the MBZ project (that got completed in January 2015) observed that the type locality is on the verge of destruction due to illegal stone quarrying activity. This was brought to the notice of the District Incharge and could successfully stall the mining operation temporarily. We later came to know that the process started again.

After the receipt of the Rufford grant we created awareness among the villagers, the staff of the forest department, the local honorary wildlife warden, the public works department staff, the mines and geology staff and also the government officials about the bats, their importance to Hanumanahalli village, Kolar district and the state of Karnataka as a whole and how losing such a highly endangered species would immensely damage the reputation of the state of Karnataka and the whole of India globally.

The Hanumanahalli village panchayat (elected members of the village namely the president, secretary, female representative, representative of other castes) convened a special meeting to which the Tahsildar of Mulbagal Taluk (under which the village is included), the RFO, Kolar division, Karnataka, staff from the Mines and Geology Department, the Assistant Commissioner were invited to attend.

All these officials were made aware of the unique species of bats that exist only in Hanumanahalli village and urged them to protect and conserve the habitat thereby the species. We also emphasised on the long term effects of protection of the habitat on the living conditions of the villagers in general (who were suffering with drying up of their local water bodies due to the mining activities). We submitted requisition letters to the persons and have asked the villagers to do so on their behalf demanding complete ban on stone quarrying activities in a 6 km radius of the locality where this species and its congeners are found.

We then with the help of the RFO have also initiated the process of establishment of Biodiversity Management Committee (BMC) that would give complete powers to the villagers who would elect a body of six members who would look into taking care of the biological diversity of their area and have ownership rights on the same. Also they would be responsible toward taking care of the Hill and the caves and the species in it.

We had raised awareness about the fluoride content in the water of Hanumanahalli village and had urged the village head to apply for a filtration unit the last time we had been here. We came to know during our recent visit that a filtration unit has been sanctioned to the village and now the villagers can have access to clean drinking water.

We have come to know recently that the Mines and Geology department have issued a Government Order banning issuance of orders for mining at and in the vicinity of Hanumanahalli village. We have also come to know that the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Karnataka Forest Department has expressed interest and also has asked the District In charge to ban any mining activity in the area.

We prepared and gave away education material to be disseminated among the school children of the Hanumanahalli village and other nearby villages to create awareness.

We were accompanied by Dr C Srinivasulu who is our scientific advisor and an IUCN Redlist expert.

