

## **Project Update: April 2006**

The project began with an assessment of preliminary research on the topic conducted in caves of the nearby municipality of Batuan, Bohol and two caves in Barangay Cambigsi, Bilar, Bohol where the barangay formulated ordinances for the protection of swift caves. The assessment determined a number of caves previously investigated were continually broken into and nests stolen.

New caves were investigated in the vicinity of Magsaysay Park in Barangay Riverside, Bilar. Three of these caves were previously mapped during the inventory in 2002. In early March two of these caves were assessed with the Cave Impact Assessment Rating System (CIARS) to be able to quantify the effects of disturbance during monitoring and harvesting. Three more caves will be assessed in early April. All caves regardless if they are gated or not will have the CIARS evaluation. So far six caves have been selected for the study, with two more to be determined.

Gating of half the caves is in the planning stage due to the presence of bats roosting in sections of the caves with swiftlets in other sections. The gates, therefore, must be designed so both species can pass through the entrance.

Two caves already have sectional markers to easily identify locations of nests by sections of the caves. More detailed markers were then installed below each nesting site but without disturbing the cave formations.

The survey teams have had a refresher course held at the Foundation's training center to improve skills for use in vertical cave entrances. These teams also include forestry students from the nearby Central Visayas State College of Agriculture, Forestry and Technology who participant on a volunteer basis.

Observations of the life cycle started January 5 in one of the two Cambigsi caves but were stopped when the caves were broken into three times. The cave has been closed to humans but still open for swiftlet entrance and exit. The project staff decided to leave the cave and enter it at the end of the project period to see if there are major changes in the swift population after no disturbance.

The social aspect of the swiftlet nest collection will have to be dealt with more extensively than first planned to stop poaching of the nests.

