

Project Update: August 2021 Project

January 2021 to August 2021

Updates on Project implementation

Though the project was sanctioned in July 2020, due to the COVID 19 pandemic and countrywide lockdown, project activities started from mid-December 2020. Field activities to achieve the project objectives began from January 2021.

All the necessary equipment for field assessment has been imported and procured.

Fieldwork started with networking with many villagers to find out major roosting sites in the region, so that visits shall be planned to assess the bat diversity. Simultaneously we started visiting different habitats of interest to locate sites for transacts and mist netting. So far, we have documented 10 important cave roosting sites in the region with bat populations, and two large open tree roosts of fruit bats.

Initial focus is to find common species and record their echolocation calls as references, a step towards creating reference call library for the region.

Total number of bat species documented so far is more than nine.

Total number of calls recorded from multiple individuals and on transacts is more than 500.

All the schools and colleges were shut down from March 2020 to date, hence physically we could not conduct any capacity building and outreach programme.

In July 2021, I conducted an online webinar for bat ecology and awareness.

A national webinar on "Amazing World of Bats ", was organized by DMS Mandal's, IQAC department, along with Department of Zoology, Bhaurao Kakatkar College, Belagaum 590001, Karnataka, India.

Webinar Topic: "Amazing World of Bats". Date: 2nd July 2021, Day: Friday, Time: 2.30 pm
Total number of participants were more than 150 students from the Bachelor of Science degree section, of Rani Chennamma University. (Session photos are attached in the document)

Google drive recording link of online session conducted –
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1m-v56QYjXuziZsEYY6cneexoNmW23Kh1/view?usp=sharing>

I have already established a good network with local organisations and nature enthusiasts in the region, explaining them about the project and seeking their support. All the organisations approached are happy to collaborate. Following is the list of organisations.

Maharashtra State Forest Department Malabar Nature Conservation Club Mhadei Research Center

Ongoing work in background –

Meanwhile off the field, I am analysing the echolocation calls recorded in the field, and also started designing a small poster to be distributed as outreach material, during awareness programmes.

Request and justification for time extension -

We could run the activities only for three and half months from January to 20th April 2021, as all the three states (tri state boundary region) initiated a strict lockdown due to the second wave of COVID 19 pandemic, and we had to stop the fieldwork from the end of April until August 2021. Even now, the Karnataka, Goa & Maharashtra state boundaries are not completely open for free movement, a negative RTPCR test report is required at each time of entry.

In the original project implementation schedule, we had already assumed and planned activities at slow pace from June to October, due to the heavy monsoon season. But because of lockdown we could not do bat assessment in summer season, and the project activities are stalled for the time being.

We are hoping (based on the government planning) that the schools and colleges reopen, and states open their boundaries for free movement for people with complete vaccination, from mid-September or early October 2021, to start the field activities again. The government is taking cautious steps in view of expected third wave of COVID 19 pandemic.

With these conditions we will need 6-8 months extension for the project and the estimated new date for project completion is May 2022.

I assure you that, my team is well capable of completing this project successfully and achieve all the objectives of the project.

I have attached few photographs of our field activities and habitats, our team visited during assessment work.

Field work with team members



Rahul Prabhukhanolkar taking biometric measurements of bat.



Team members at entrance of a cave roost



Rahul Prabhukhanolkar capturing bat in cave roost using hand net.

Few images of Chiropteran species diversity documented



Lesser false vampire bat with pup (*Megaderma spasma*)



Lesser false vampire bat colony



Leschenault's rousette fruit bat (*Rousettus leschenaultia*)



Rufous horseshoe nosed bat (*Rhinolophus rouxii*)



Left: Blyth's horseshoe nosed bat (*Rhinolophus lepidus*). Right: Lesser woolly horseshoe nosed bat (*Rhinolophus beddomie*).



Lateritic plateaus in the study region.



General terrain in the study region.



Cave roost documented during field work.



Mountain cliff and forest in the valley, Tillari region.



Backwater region of Tilari dam during summer season.



Tilari river before backwaters of the dam.

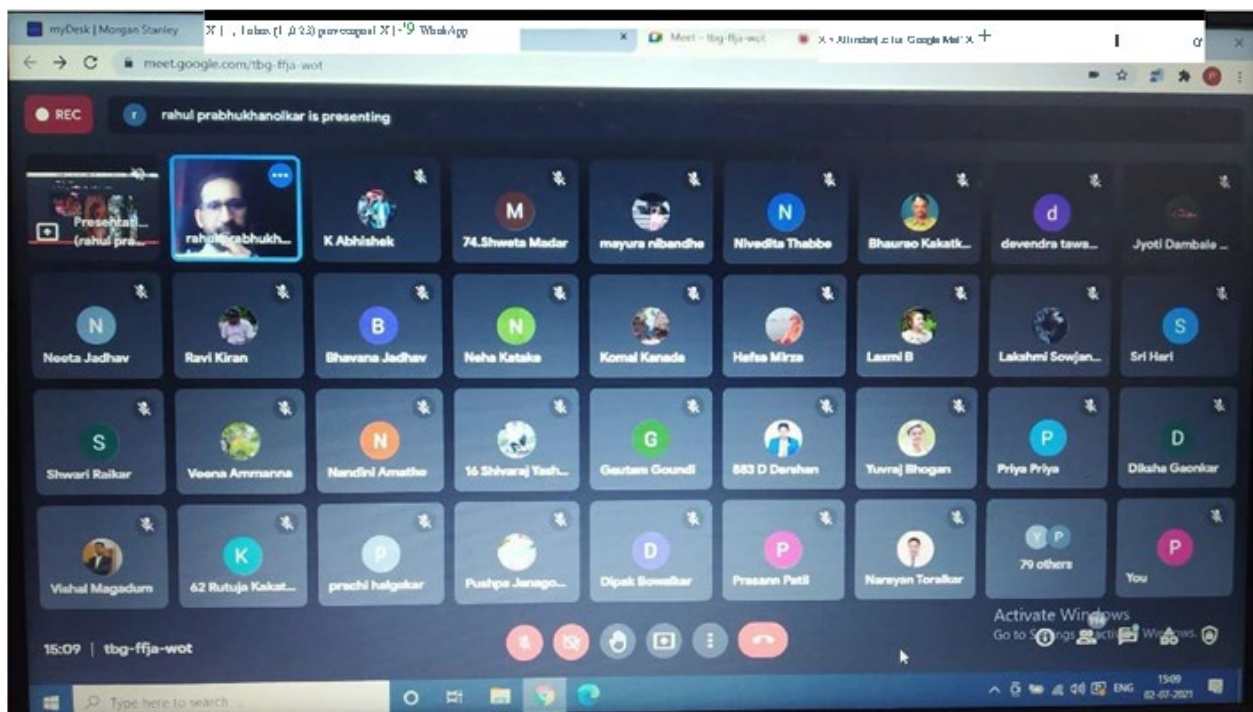
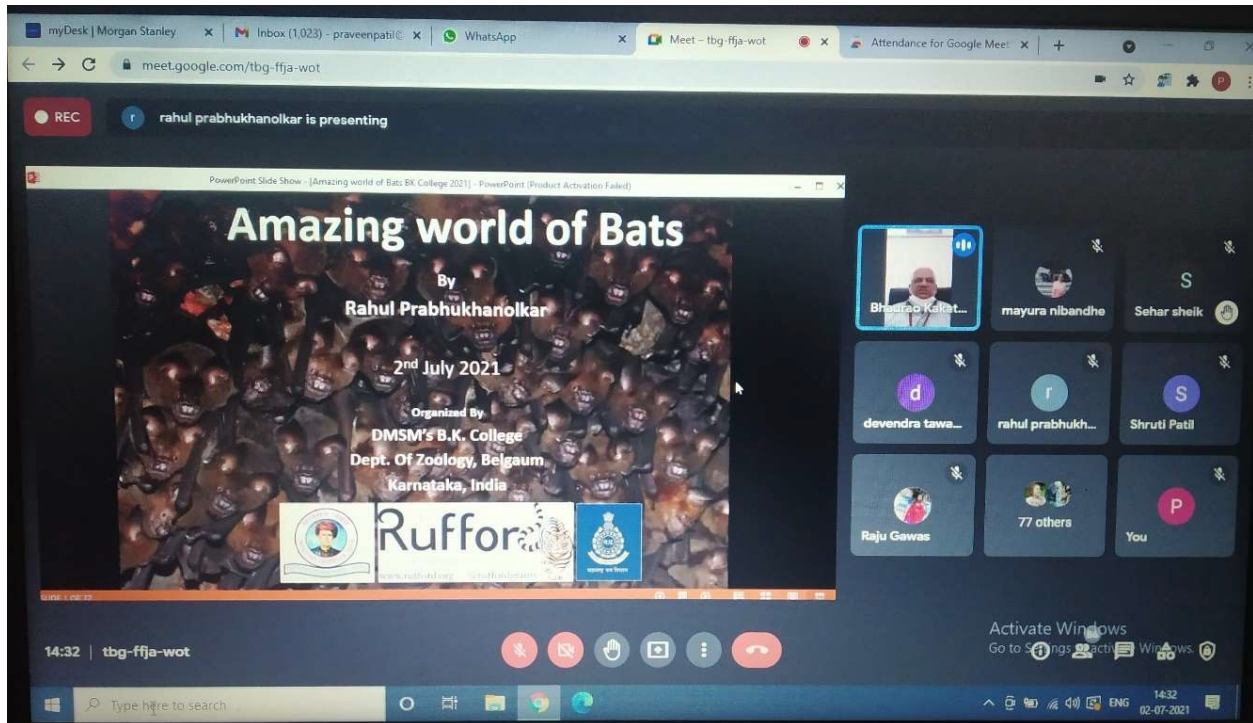


Moist deciduous forest, selected site for mist netting.

Photos of Online Outreach Programme conducted

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"Assessment & Conservation of Bats in Tillari Bioregion, a threatened wildlife corridor in Northern Western Ghats, India."

- Capacity building
- Bat diversity assessment
- Echolocation call library
- Habitat preferences
- Conservation

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Partner Organizations



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