

Project Update: April 2011

Survey of bat roosts

Extensive survey of bat roosts is continuing in the study area to find new bat inhabited areas. GPS data collection, photography etc., are in progress to map and document prime bat habitats. Seasonal congregation / fledging of bats are being closely monitored.

Breeding biology of bats

Monitoring of reproductive cycle of resident species of bats is in progress.

Special training programmes for post-graduate and college students

A special training programme for undergraduate zoology students (Semester I) of The M.S. University of Baroda was organised in two phases. The first phase of training comprised of a lecture and Powerpoint presentation providing an overview of various species of bats found in Indian subcontinent and their ecological importance. In the second phase, the students were taken to Jambughoda Wildlife Sanctuary in batches. Each batch stayed at base camp (Ecotourism Campsite, Bhat) for 2 days. They were escorted to bat habitats and were educated about the fragility of these habitats and the urgent need to conserve such ecological niches. The students gave a positive feedback and were quite thrilled to correlate their theoretical knowledge with the practical sessions.

Similar set of awareness programmes were followed up for college students of other disciplines (engineering, microbiology, political science, economics, history etc.). During their feedback sessions, only the students of history discussed about prior exposure to bats during their study of ecological ruins in different parts of India. All the students were distributed educational material on bats. These students found the educational material very informative and interesting.

A special training program was organised for the graduate students of science (zoology and environmental science). This was an intensive training programme comprising five levels.

Level 1: Preliminary information about bats.

Level 2: Bat handling, collection, preservation of dead samples.

Level 3: Bat taxonomy (morphometric study).

Level 4: Field training to monitor bats (observations and photographic evidence).

Level 5: To render services as RSGF volunteers in bat awareness campaigns.

A total of 22 volunteers had joined this training, out of which 10 completed the training programme successfully. Ever since the completion of training, they have been rendering voluntary services till date, in bat awareness campaigns in schools, amongst locals and tourists.

Conservation and awareness campaign for bats and their habitat

Few locals were also identified (along with the university students) as volunteers for RSGF project. They were presented with mementos and a RSGF T-shirt so as to encourage them to

actively participate in bat awareness campaign. Ever since the first awareness camp on 6th October 2010, about 68 major awareness camps have been done so far covering more than 100 schools and 11 colleges. These include schools / colleges in urban as well as rural areas within a radius of 80 km from the study area.

An educational booklet entitled “Know about Bats” (25 pages with colour picture, sketches and illustrations in both English and Gujarati) has been prepared for bat awareness campaign. Key features of this booklet are as follows:

- a. Information on ecological importance of insectivorous and fruit bats.
- b. Classification of Bats.
- c. Clues for broad classification of bats (up to family level).
- d. Visual representation (Sketches - 08) and one liner for busting myths associated with bats.
- e. Visual representation (sketches – 08) on identifying threats to bats.
- f. Color plates of microchiropteran bat species (12) and their habitats (03).

This booklet has been very well received by the students and general public and we had lots of curious telephonic inquiries on bats and their importance.

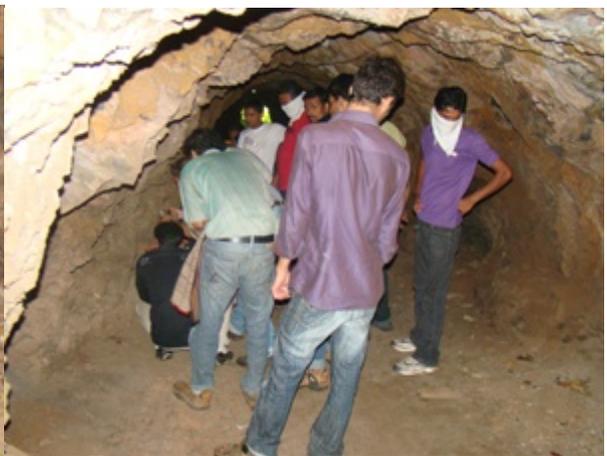
Ongoing awareness campaign in a nutshell

1. Acquainting the students / participants with importance of insectivorous bats in urban environs, forests and agro ecosystem through a power point presentation. In cases when the campaign is in a remote village and a LCD projector is not available Powerpoint presentation was substituted with big pictures / banners of bats and text content.
2. Distribution of the booklet “Know about Bats” to all the participants (school and college students and accompanying people and general public or tourists) free of cost. The first stock got exhausted, so we had to order a reprint of the same.
3. A television program was organised on the vernacular television channel for spreading conservation and awareness on bats.
4. Information on importance of bats was published in a local vernacular newspaper for spreading awareness amongst general populace.
5. “Initiative for Conservation and Awareness of Bats” (ICAB) blog is under construction. This blog will have all the information uploaded for speedier and long reaching results.

All the students were distributed educational material on bats. School students were the most receptive audience in the awareness campaigns.



Left: Awareness campaign for college students at base camp (Bhat ecotourism campsite), Jambughoda wildlife sanctuary. Right: RSGF volunteers during awareness campaign for school students.



Top left: College students during field work as a part of intensive training on bat habitat monitoring. Top right: College students during field work as a part of intensive training on bat habitat monitoring. Middle: Greater Indian false vampire (*Megaderma lyra lyra*) with its prey, Indian field mouse (*Mus booduga*) inside Terra mine, near Jambughoda wildlife sanctuary.