



# Small Mammal Mail

Newsletter celebrating the most useful yet most neglected Mammals

for CCINSA & RISCINSA -- Chiroptera, Rodent, Insectivore, & Scandens  
Conservation and Information Networks of South Asia

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## New Network Members

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In CCINSA and RISCINSA we have never passed a period of six months (and actually it is now eight months) between newsletters and had so few new members. Either we have everybody who is interested in bats and rats already a member (VERY unlikely) or we have lost our reach into the academic and nature study institutions that have provided our current collection of members. I hope we haven't lost "our touch" to satisfy some of the needs of batty and ratty scholars and enthusiasts. Please let us know if there is something we can do to improve that doesn't cost money.

We had not mentioned before but we lost over half our funding about 3 years ago when the economy plummeted around the world, and our donors have not recovered. Be that as it may we have still brought out SMM and also conducted a training in some South Asian country every year. This year we don't have funds to go outside of India or bring anyone here so, our own Dr. Sanjay Molur, who today (really and truly) had his Viva to obtain a Ph.D. with a thesis on bats and rats. He won't get the letter confirming before we go to press so ... if we are wrong about the Dr. in Sanjay Molur, we are sorrier than anybody! See you next issue with a summary of his thesis! Sally Walker, Editor, SMM

# Bat Conservation begins in Pakistan

Muhammad Mahmood-ul-Hassan\*

The idea of bat conservation is almost unheard of in Pakistan. Bats are totally ignored by the government and civic organizations and even by most conservationists.

Few Pakistani know much about bats, and most of what they know is wrong and usually damaging. Bats are mostly misunderstood and largely unwelcomed in most of this wildlife-rich country.

It was in 2004, when I heard that the India-based Chiroptera Conservation and Information Network of South Asia (CCINSA) and its founder, BCI South Asia Liaison Sally Walker, had accepted an invitation to coordinate and led a Conservation Assessment and Management Plan (CAMP) workshop for Pakistan Mammal at Lahore in collaboration with IUCN Pakistan. I had recently joined the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore at that time and was not known to anyone in the conservation circles of Pakistan. So I could not attend that workshop.

Later when I went through the proceedings of that CAMP workshop, I came to know that there was not a single bat biologist in Pakistan. Keeping in mind this situation, I started taking interest in bats and thought to play a leading role in bat conservation in my country. At first, I requested Madam Walker to organize another bat training workshop at Lahore where I could host her from the platform of my University providing here some partial funding to hold this workshop. Keeping in mind, my level of interest she invited me to attend a training workshop at Nepal where I was able to learn field techniques for studying both Volant and non-Volant small mammals. This workshop was a turning point in my career where



**Dr. Mahmood and Mr. Arshad teaching the students how to fold and unfold the mist nets**



**Female post-graduate students erecting mist nets**

I learnt non-lethal techniques for studying both bats and rodents from Prof. Dr. Paul A. Racey and Mike Jordan, respectively.

Prof. Dr. Racey took special interest to refine my project proposal for studying bats in Pakistan. It was only due to his encouragement and support, that in 2008 I could win the first bat project in Pakistan. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan further supported me by providing funds to obtain a three months' training in Bat Ecology

and Bioacoustics Laboratory, School of Biological Sciences, Bristol, UK.

I feel honored to state that I have worked for some time with Professor Dr. Gareth Jones in his Laboratory at the University of Bristol. He taught me basic techniques for recording bat sounds and their analysis. He

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also taught me molecular techniques for analyzing bat's DNA. It was only due to untiring efforts that we could compile the first book on bats of Pakistan that was later published by the Verlag Dr. Muller, Germany.

While I was in his laboratory, I applied to the Rufford Small Grants, UK to provide me funds for studying bats as well as educating other people about the importance of bats. I was lucky enough that I got this funding and after returning back to Pakistan I had everything with me to work as leading bat biologist of the country. Again, I requested Madam Walker to provide me literature for educating school children which she very kind to sent me within a few days. I translated this English literature into Urdu and got it published locally.

At the moment I along with Ms. Bushra Khan, Zoo Education Officer at Lahore Zoo, have distributed this literature to more than 400 school children. We have concentrated our efforts on children, hoping that an early appreciation and understanding of bats might produce lifelong changes in attitudes toward these invaluable mammals. Our overriding message: conservation is the responsibility of all of us who share this Earth.

Our teams take school students to bat-roosting areas, where we familiarize them with bats' physical features and their roosting and foraging needs. We help the youngsters identify threats to bats and suggest ways in which they and their families and communities can improve things. We encouraged them to share their new knowledge with classmates and families.

In addition to imparting conservation education to school children, I am helping other university teachers to initiate bat research at their own institutions. Dr. Muhammad Sajid Nadeem, Assistant Professor at



**One of the female trainee finally stopped hesitating and took the initiative**



**Dr. Mahmood showing students how to capture bats in their hand**

Department of Zoology, University of Arid Agriculture, Rawalpindi is another bat enthusiast who has initiated bat research at his own University. We have a small group of students working with us on various aspects of bat biology.

Three of my M. Phil. students have already earned their post-graduate degrees on bat biology while two others are underway. Five of my Ph. D. students are also working on different aspects of bat biology.

Recently, I arranged a two days workshop for imparting bat education at Govt. Post-graduate College Gojra. The students not only learnt the field techniques

for capturing and handling bats, they also attended lectures about the importance of bats, taxonomy and identification, and recording and analysis of bat sounds. Mr. Suhail, Mr. Khalid and Mr. Aun along with their Head of Department took keen interest to learn these techniques. They were convinced that from now onward, their students will also study bats for fulfilling their research requirements. They were also very keen to purchase all the field and laboratory equipment needed for studying bats.