

## VOLUME 28, NO. 3 Fall 2010

The Memo from our Executive Director

Time and again, Bat Conservation International members prove just how dedicated they are to bats. Iâ€™m thrilled to report that, thanks to our members and supporters across the country, BCI has been leading in a vote that could earn us \$100,000 for our conservation work with bats of the Philippines.



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Bat Conservation Internationalâ€™s Philippines Bats: Extinction and Discovery! project was one of five conservation efforts selected by The Walt Disney Company for funding through Disneyâ€™s Friends for Change: Project Green. Those who go online to vote at the Project Green website will decide how \$250,000 will be distributed. The program that gets the most votes will receive \$100,000!

The Philippines is one of the planetâ€™s top five â€œbiodiversity hotspotsâ€ because of the nationâ€™s amazing number and variety of species. More than 70 species of bats inhabit the islands, including some of the worldâ€™s smallest and largest bats.

But deforestation, development, hunting and other pressures gravely threaten Philippine ecosystems, and bats face such Â-additional hazards as improper guano mining, mass killings and overharvesting by commercial and subsistence hunters. Several of the islandsâ€™ bat species are critically endangered.

Bat Conservation International began working on this Â-project in the Philippines in 2006, when land-use laws threatened a critical cave-dwelling bat colony. Norma Monfort, whose family has owned and protected the cave and its bats for generations, urgently requested BCIâ€™s assistance. The cave houses about 1.8 million Geoffroyâ€™s rousette fruit bats, recognized as the worldâ€™s largest colony of the species. But a BCI assessment of other caves in the area revealed catastrophic declines in cave-dwelling bats at those unprotected sites.

BCI and an impressive coalition of local government, academic and non profit partners joined Norma in preserving her stewardship of the cave. We helped launch education, conservation and research initiatives that are now blossoming into self-sustaining regional and national bat-conservation efforts. And Monfort Bat Cave has become a major platform for education and bat conservation â€“ a testament to what one person can achieve.

Unfortunately, however, most Philippine caves are unprotected, and many are seriously threatened. The Philippine Department of the Environment and Natural Resources has passed the Cave Conservation Act, but lack of funding has delayed implementation.

New funding from Disneyâ€™s Friends for Change: Project Green would help us expand bat conservation to --a national level in the Philippines. With this money, we will work with partners to convene national forums to identify and implement priority conservation actions across the country. We will expand training to empower Filipino partners to protect and conserve their bats, invest in sustainable priority conservation projects nationwide and work with local groups and communities to identify, protect and restore key bat roosts and foraging habitats.

We are already planning a conservation workshop in the Philippines in January 2011. And Bat Conservation International's first "Conservation Migration" ecotour will be in the Philippines January 15-28. I will be leading this tour, along with Fiona Reid, a noted bat expert and wildlife artist. We'll also meet a number of onsite bat biologists, including Dave Waldien, BCI's Vice President for International Programs, who will be working in the Philippines at the time.

We still have a few spots left for this exciting trip, so if you'd like to join us, please contact BCI at (512) 327-9721, ext. 26, or [dodegard@batcon.org](mailto:dodegard@batcon.org) as soon as possible.

A big thanks to everyone who has already voted for bats at Disney's Friend for Change: Project Green. You are making a difference! The vote ends on November 12, so please visit the site as soon as you receive this issue of BATS and vote once a week until November 12! You can access the Disney website right from BCI's home page at [www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org).

Nina Fascione

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