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The Memo From Our Executive Director

As we move into the New Year, all of us here at Bat Conservation International are especially grateful for our members, partners and friends whose support and dedication make our conservation successes possible. A stunning example: BCI won the Disney Friends for Change: Project Green vote (and the \$100,000 award that goes with it) – by a long shot. This online contest allowed the public to vote weekly for one of five worthy conservation projects. BCI's entry was for our efforts to protect bats in the Philippines, expanding the on-the-ground work we've been doing with Norma Monfort and other Philippine partners since 2006.

True to form, BCI members voted faithfully each week. We took a strong lead from day one and held it until we won the contest in early November. We were particularly pleased that bats and BCI posted such a strong showing against other, much larger conservation organizations, proving once again the loyalty of our members, as well as the sometimes-surprising popularity of bats. We have just received the award from Disney and have plans in place to expand our education and training programs in the region.

The power of combined forces in helping bats was also demonstrated by our visit this fall to Washington, D.C. BCI worked with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to raise awareness of White-nose Syndrome among other conservation groups and members of Congress. Our goal was to secure additional funding for federal agencies to conduct research into this devastating disease of bats.

Thanks to a grant from the Beneficia Foundation, BCI and NRDC brought key players together in Washington for two events: a meeting of conservation organizations to increase collaboration and capacity on this critical issue and a Capitol Hill briefing for congressional staffers. In addition, BCI staff visited more than 34 congressional offices to raise awareness of WNS and explain the need for more federal support.

The congressional briefing was particularly noteworthy. We held it in the Capitol Hill Visitor's Center, and the room, which seats 70, was packed with a standing-room-only crowd. NRDC provided opening comments. I discussed the background and current status of White-nose Syndrome, while Dr. Winifred Frick, lead author of the recent Science article on likely regional extinctions of little brown bats, described urgent research needs. James Roby, president of the Connecticut chapter of the Northeastern Organic Farming Association, provided testimony about the importance of bats for agriculture. The questions from Hill staffers after the presentations were intelligent and indicated a high level of interest in the impact of WNS.

Looking ahead, we are building exciting new partnerships and, as always, relying on the support and participation of our members as we work with colleagues to celebrate International Year of the Bat. Our friends in Europe at Eurobats and the Bat Conservation Trust are launching the Year of the Bat in 2011. The events will grow and expand to become fully international in 2012.



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BCI is working with The Lubee Bat Conservancy and other nonprofits, zoos, federal agencies and partners across the world to promote bat conservation. The photo above was taken by Dr. Allyson Walsh, Executive Director of Lubee, who wanted to capture an image of me with a baby bat, also named Nina. Allyson and I met to plan joint activities for the year ahead. We invite you to join us in our activities and to plan your own events on behalf of bats. Keep your eye on BCI's website in the upcoming months for announcements about Year of the Bat.

Working together, we can make the Year of the Bat a time of unprecedented achievements in bat conservation throughout the world.

Nina Fascione

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