


## VOLUME 29, NO. 1 Spring 2011

The Memo from our Executive Director

Bat Conservation International has been protecting bats and their habitats around the globe since 1982. As we approach our 30th anniversary, and also celebrate the International Year of the Bat, we are very proud of all that we have accomplished over these past three decades. But we must also take a hard look at the tremendous needs that remain in order to conserve the world's bats and the ecosystems they serve so well.



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Dr. Paul Racey, one of BCI's Science Advisors, summarizes the history of worldwide bat conservation in his article, "Decades of Progress," in this issue. All of us who work on behalf of bats or who support bat conservation through memberships to BCI and other bat groups can celebrate our accomplishments to date. Yet, as you will read in Dr. Racey's other article, "Filling the Void: The Global Challenges Facing Bat Conservation," there is much left to be done. Many of the threats that have long plagued bats still remain: human ignorance and persecution, heedless exploitation and increasing loss of habitat. And there are new threats, as well, especially White-nose Syndrome, which has killed more than a million bats, and the host of hazards associated with global climate change.

At this critical juncture, BCI is renewing and enhancing its commitment to reduce the threats to bats and conserve their populations throughout the world. We are working to increase our global outreach by expanding our most successful efforts in the United States and internationally into additional countries and regions. To move forward strategically, we have been working for the past year with our Science Advisors, our Board of Trustees and our program staff to rank the areas and issues of greatest need and to assess how BCI can be most effective in helping to meet these challenges.

With input from bat researchers around the world, we have identified six conservation themes that demand the greatest attention. These are: Anthropogenic (human-caused) Mortality, including such issues as wind energy (in which BCI has long taken the lead), colony harassment and hunting bats for bushmeat; Bats and Human Conflict, such as bats in buildings or bats eating fruit crops; Habitat Loss and Fragmentation; Disease, such as White-nose Syndrome that impacts bats, as well as diseases that affect humans and can be carried by bats; Invasive Species; and Climate Change.

A great many geographical areas desperately need attention for bat conservation. The experts advise that we focus on areas with high bat diversity, plus existing networks of bat biologists and bat-conservation organizations. In these places, Bat Conservation International can help build capacity and resources, while local groups and individuals retain ownership of the effort and handle most on-the-ground work. Latin America and Asia, particularly Southeast Asia, typically have the diversity and the networks. And BCI has been engaged in conservation efforts in these regions for years, making them logical choices for expanded work. Other regions, such as Africa, have few conservation networks in place, but the urgency of their needs may demand our engagement.

We are, of course, working with many colleagues and partners in the United States and abroad as we expand our global programs. For example, funding from the U.S. Forest

Service Wings Across the Americas program is allowing BCI to work with local groups in organizing a bat-training workshop in Colombia during this coming summer. And I am looking forward to connecting with European colleagues when I present a lecture on White-nose Syndrome at the National Bat Conference in England in the fall. At the same time, we are striving to reinforce our own staffing and funding capacity to support urgently needed growth in our programs.

Meeting the challenges of the future will require partnerships and collaborations, increased funding from foundations, governments and individuals, and renewed and dedicated efforts by all of us who work to conserve bats. And we should not forget one of the simplest but most important actions we can all take: teaching others about the importance of bats. Share this issue of BATS magazine with a friend, leave it at your dentist's office or wherever people gather.

Our combined efforts will make a real difference to the future of bat conservation.

Nina Fascione

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