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### Bat Extermination in India

BCI member, Dr. A. Gopalakrishna recently reported on the values and conservation needs of Indian bats in the Bombay Natural History Society's publication, *HORNBILL* (1984, no. 2).

He reports that India's "archaeological department, in their enthusiasm to keep the monuments clean, have destroyed by fumigation hundreds of thousands of bats inhabiting the old monuments." The killing even included bats in caves, sometimes with apparently serious consequences. Dr. Gopalakrishna states that extermination of bat populations in the caves at Ellora and Ajanta "was an added factor of the failure of the jowar crop in adjacent regions." Caves near Nasik in Maharashtra that were "full of bats about 25 years ago do not have a single bat now."

Among the values of India's bats, Dr. Gopalakrishna notes the enormous consumption of insects by large bat colonies, the great value of fruit and nectar-eating species to tropical forests and the Durian industry and the huge potential for mining guano as fertilizer. just one cave could yield more than 100,000 tons of guano, with an annual continuing production of 50 to 60 tons.

He concludes that there is an urgent need to survey and protect India's remaining bat colonies and notes that many species are in danger of being lost from India unless immediate action is taken to save them.

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