

## VOLUME 5, NO. 2 Summer 1987

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### Bat Education Programs for Latin America

Countless thousands of highly beneficial bats are needlessly killed each year in poorly managed vampire control campaigns in Latin America. To alleviate this problem, BCI member Pat Morton was awarded a grant from the World Wildlife Fund to implement an educational campaign stressing the importance of bats in Costa Rica and the rest of tropical Latin America. There are 103 species of bats in Costa Rica, constituting 50% of Costa Rica's mammals, and nearly all are highly beneficial. Morton has been working on this project for the past year with Mario Boza at the Foundation for Environmental Education in Costa Rica. Dr. Boza is considered the "father" of Costa Rica's national park system.

They are using a multi-media, multi-institutional approach to build an awareness about the values of bats in tropical ecosystems and associated economies. Various mediums such as magazines, newspapers, television and radio, are being used to educate people about their diverse bat fauna. Morton also is presenting bat programs to schools and interested organizations, using a translated Spanish version of BCI's "Bats: Myth and Reality" program. Helping her with the program is a female Yellow-shouldered Bat (*Sturnira lilium*), "Motita" (little soft one). Motita can be petted and eats bananas out of a spoon.

The project also includes production of a book and poster, utilizing BCI's photographs and information. The book will be distributed to many parts of Latin America by WWF. The Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture and Cattle is also working with Morton on the production of the poster which distinguishes the common vampire bat from the many beneficial species. The poster, which will be distributed by the Ministry to its regional offices, contains a section on bat conservation as well as advice on recommended vampire control techniques that minimize effects on other bats.

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