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BCI to Host Pacific Island Flying Fox Conference

Bat Conservation International is proud to announce that we will host a major conference on the conservation of Pacific island flying foxes. The conference will be held in Hawaii, February 1-2, 1990. Recent research indicates that bat populations are rapidly declining on many islands, making the development of a conservation strategy imperative. Some flying fox populations are already extinct-in some cases before they could even be declared endangered and others are in serious jeopardy. The threats are many (see "Flying Foxes in Melanesia: Populations at Risk", page 5). Independent of such threats as habitat loss, is the additional danger of unregulated hunting of flying foxes for commercial trade, a complex and widespread problem.

Working with wildlife managers and conservationists from the involved islands, the conference is intended to facilitate the development of management plans that will address the problems associated with hunting and trade and result in the reestablishment of healthy populations of flying foxes in the Pacific. The conference will also focus on implementing the new CITES amendments.

The conference opening will provide participants with information about the diversity, distribution, and importance of these bats. This will be followed by discussions of bat populations and threats, and policies and legislation. Promising conservation efforts, such as those on Yap and American Samoa, as well as the latest changes in the CITES treaty, will be presented, and additional research and education needs will be discussed.

The participation of local conservationists and wildlife biologists is crucial to the success of any conservation project. The Pacific Island Flying Fox Conference will provide a forum for personnel from most wildlife management agencies in the Pacific to coordinate their efforts with each other and with scientists and conservationists from around the world. It is hoped that the regional conservation strategies resulting from this conference will ensure the future of flying fox populations large enough to fulfill their ecological roles. As essential pollinators and seed dispersers for up to 40% of Pacific island tree species, flying foxes are inextricably intertwined with some of the world's most unique and beautiful rain forests.

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