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Photography and bat conservation

BCI's photo collection is unique in all the world. Consisting of more than 80,000 35mm transparencies, the photographs of Merlin Tuttle represent approximately one third of the world's nearly 1,000 bat species, some documented nowhere else. Covering all continents where bats occur, the collection represents the most complete record of bats and their behavior ever assembled.

Scientists, educators, and conservationists, as well as publishers, rely on it for a wide variety of informational and illustrative needs. For the past decade, the collection has served as the backbone of BCI's educational and conservation efforts.

Today BCI provides photographs to publishers around the world, a service that also helps fund BCI operations. Hundreds of publications feature bats, from newspapers and magazines to textbooks, encyclopedias, and other books. Museum exhibits, educational filmstrips, and video disk compilations also make use of BCI's unique collection. Demand is rapidly increasing, more than doubling in each of the past three years.

Through photography people are learning about the amazing diversity of bats and that they have important roles to fill in the scheme of nature. And as Tuttle discovered before BCI was founded, even a positive article can have a negative impact if accompanied by photos that reinforce fears.

A top priority in our Anniversary year is to assure permanent protection for this priceless resource. Transferring the images to video disk will eliminate the need to handle the fragile originals and make access to the complete collection highly efficient. Originals can then be transferred to permanent storage in an environmentally constant and fireproof vault. After all originals are individually catalogued and indexed on a computer database, reproduction quality duplicates can be made and catalogued for use. This is a large and urgent project. For specific information on funds required, contact Cindy Lind, Director of Development and Public Information.



Photography has been a major factor in changing attitudes. People begin to appreciate bats when they see that bats can be just as appealing as other more popular animals.

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