

## VOLUME 13, NO. 2 Summer 1995

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### BCI Graduate Student Research Program Project

BCI's GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH Program has been helping to sponsor Shahroukh Mistry's work in India for the past three years. This program, which is supported by grants and individual contributions, awards small grants to students conducting conservation-relevant bat research throughout the world. Because very little is known about the ecology of India's bats, Mistry's research has been especially important in laying the foundation for their conservation.

In addition to documenting the role of fruit-eating bats in India's diverse ecosystems, education has been an important part of Mistry's work. Educational outreach is a natural companion to field research when dealing with animals as little understood as India's bats. Mistry has talked about bat conservation to the public and to university students. Audiovisual and other educational materials from BCI enabled his audiences to gain a better understanding and appreciation of their country's bats. He also hosted a program about bat conservation on Indian classroom educational television.

Mistry's conservation efforts have extended to the government as well. He has spearheaded an international effort to persuade the Indian government to remove fruit bats from the section of the country's Wildlife Protection Act that classifies these bats in the same category as vermin. The considerable progress he has made on this issue is encouraging, even though fruit bats have not yet been officially reclassified. With new documentation on the importance of the bats and preliminary evidence that they are declining, India's Ministry of Environment and Forests is at least listening.

Research projects like this are essential to documenting the importance of bats throughout the world and to mounting conservation efforts. If you want to help support a graduate student project (or for more information about how to apply for a small grant), please contact: Scholarship Awards Committee, BCI, P.O. Box 162603, Austin, TX 78716.

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