

**Press Release from Dr. J.R.B. Alfred,
Director, Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata**

On the occasion of inaugural function of renovated Marine Aquarium, Marine Biological Station, Zoological Survey of India, Chennai.

India's 7600 km coastline incorporating east and west coasts Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep groups of islands is endowed with a variety of ecosystem including numerous lagoons, estuaries, mangrove swamps, sandy, muddy and rocky shores and coral beds. These ecosystems harbour rich and diverse marine fauna.

The Marine Biological Station had its origin in the year 1960 as Marine Survey Unit at the Zoological Survey of India, Kolkata. In the year 1973 it was shifted to Chennai as full fledged Marine Biological Station with mandate to study the marine fauna of the east and west coasts of India, Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep groups of islands. The scientists of the Marine Biological Station have made valuable contribution to various aspects of marine biology including systematics, ecology, fouling, pollution and gastronomic and bio-medical values.

The Marine Aquarium project was accomplished with the scientific and technical expertise of the scientists of the Marine Biological Station under the constant guidance and encouragement of Dr. J.R.B. Alfred, Director, Zoological Survey of India. It was funded by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and the project work has been completed at a cost of Rs. One crore.

The Marine Aquarium has 18 eight feet long rectangular tanks with front side viewing glass and a central octagonal tank. Each tank has been provided with under gravel filter system, interior decoration replicating different marine habitats, proper lighting and provision for circulation, aeration and filtration of contained sea water. Water quality is checked at regular intervals and animals are fed with food pellets, fresh prawn / bivalve meat and small live fishes on selective basis. The tanks are maintained pollution free by physically removing the remnants left behind after feeding.

The aquarium hall has been designed artistically with glazed wall and floor tiles, and false roofing. The hall is centrally air-conditioned and provided with dim illumination. Steel hand bars have been elegantly fitted to regulate the visitors. Proper name board has been fitted above each tank. The visitors are provided with information on the animals maintained in the aquarium.

Volunteers needed

The Chiroptera Conservation and Information Network of South Asia (CCINSA) along with Dr. Shahroukh Mistry, USA, have embarked on a project that involves identification and monitoring of fruit bat (*Pteropus giganteus*) colonies/roosts all over South Asia. The project will be an ongoing one with regular monitoring of colonies to understand the dynamics, population trends and various other aspects of the region's largest bats.

If you or any one of your colleagues or friends are interested in joining this exciting project, please write with your name, address, occupation, interest in this subject, and the geographical area you would like to participate in monitoring fruit bats.

We already have a few volunteers who have started work in different parts of South Asia. South Asia is a large region and we need many more people.

Write to us at the earliest to be part of this long-term, first of its kind project:

Ptero Count

Sanjay Molur / Sally Walker / Sripathi Kandula
(Scientific Chair), CCINSA
Zoo Outreach Organisation, 29-1 Bharathi Colony,
Peelamedu, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu 641004, India
Email: herpinvert@vsnl.com, zooreach@vsnl.com;
Ph: +91 422 2568906, 2561743, 2561087;
Fx: +91 422 2563269