

BAT WITH STICKY DISCS FOUND IN MEGHALAYA

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New discovery: A disk-footed bat has been recorded for the first time in India. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Meghalaya has yielded India's first bamboo-dwelling bat with sticky discs, taking the species count of the flying mammal in the country to 130.

The disc-footed bat (*Eudiscopus denticulus*) was recorded in the northeastern State's Lailad area near the Nongkhyllem Wildlife Sanctuary, about 1,000 km west of its nearest known habitat in Myanmar.

A team of scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) and a few European natural history museums stumbled upon this "very specialised" small bat with "disc-like pads in the thumb and bright orange colouration" while sampling in a bamboo patch almost a year ago.

The finding by the ZSI's Uttam Saikia, Rohit Chakravarty, Vishwanath D. Hegde and Asem Bipin Meetei has been published in the latest edition of *Revue Suisse de Zoologie* , a Swiss journal.

The European authors of this report are Sergei Krusko from the Zoological Museum of Moscow State University, Gabor Csorba of the Hungarian Natural History Museum, and Manuel Ruedi of Switzerland's Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle.

"There are a couple of other bamboo-dwelling bats in India. But the extent of adaptation for bamboo habitat in this species is not seen in the others," one of the ZSI scientists involved in the study said, declining to be quoted.

The newly recorded bat was presumed to be a bamboo-dwelling species, but its flattened skull and adhesive pads helped in identifying it as the disc-footed known from specific localities in southern China, Vietnam, Thailand and Myanmar.

Dr. Saikia and his colleagues found that the flattened skull and sticky pads enabled the bats to roost inside cramped spaces, clinging to smooth surfaces such as bamboo internodes. The disc-footed bat was also found to be genetically very different from all other known bats bearing disc-like pads.

Scientists analysed the very high frequency echolocation calls of the disc-footed bat, which was suitable for orientation in a cluttered environment such as inside bamboo groves.

The disc-footed bat has raised Meghalaya's bat count to 66, the most for any State in India. It has also helped add a genus and species to the bat fauna of India, the ZSI scientists said.

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