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Local Kids Helping Bats - Bat House Building Workshop

by Michelle Noe

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The students arrived around 10am and after unloading the wood, got straight to work. The first set of houses were a challenge as everyone figured out how to put the pieces of the puzzle together using cordless drills, helpful hands and trial and error.

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After a whirlwind building session, the students were given a short talk on Washington state bats and were then whisked away on a school bus to return to Mercer Island.

Sean shows students how to seal the seams of a Rocket Box.
The Western Bat Working Group: Issues of Current Concern to Wildlife Managers

By John E. Bassett

The Western Bat Working Group (WBWG) is an organization of governmental agencies, non-governmental groups, and individuals interested in the biology, management and conservation of bats in the Western United States, Western Canada and Northern Mexico. Members are primarily professional wildlife managers and scientists from the states west of the line from Texas to New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota and North Dakota including Alaska. The Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia, the Northwest and Yukon Territories, and the states of Northern Mexico are represented in the group’s membership. Wildlife managers active in the group generally work for local, state, provincial or federal governments in their respective countries, while scientists work for state or private universities, state or federal governments, or commercial consulting firms. Private individuals interested in bats and their conservation in this geographic area are also active in the group.

The WBWG is not an official government agency and, therefore, has no power to initiate or carry out programs. It does, however, provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and information useful in the management of bats which can be used by all members in their jobs as wildlife managers, research scientists, and conservationists.

The organization holds biennial meetings where the membership assembles at an appropriate venue somewhere in the geographic region to discuss topics of current interest and concern in bat management and conservation. These meetings also provide opportunities to socialize and network as well as opportunities to participate in field trips of interest to bat biologists. WBWG members attending the annual North American Symposium on Bat Research also conduct a short meeting to discuss topics of interest regarding western bats.

The most recent WBWG biennial meeting was held in Tucson, Arizona, during the middle of April, 2007. As one would expect in April, the weather in Tucson was magnificent, the desert was in full bloom, and the local bats were active. Field trips conducted as part of the meeting included several nights of observing and netting bats in local parks and natural areas, a trip to Kartchner Caverns State Park, and a social and dinner at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum.

The issue of most immediate concern to managers from throughout the region was the effect on bats of ongoing wind energy development throughout the west. Wind turbines appear to cause elevated mortality in migrating bats, primarily lasurines such as the hoary, red and silver-haired bats. Mortality information was presented from wind farm projects in Maryland and West Virginia in the eastern United States and in Alberta, Canada.

Problems encountered in assessing the true mortality at a wind energy site, i.e., how do you find most of the bats killed by turbine blades to get an accurate estimate of the mortality, were also discussed.

The process of developing state guidelines that must be followed in planning and building wind energy projects was discussed by representatives of states that currently have such guidelines and by representatives of states that are preparing guidelines. The perspective of the energy industry on the need for these guidelines and the form they should take was presented by a biologist employed in the utility industry. As one might suspect, the industry prefers uniform guidelines over all the states where they operate, but they did not object to the use of guidelines. In fact, the industry finds guidelines important because they explicitly define the steps that must be completed to site a facility before the facility permitting process begins. In essence, guidelines ensure that no costly surprises appear as the application process nears completion.

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- Monday, August 20 - 7:30 PM

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This group is completely free. Hope to see you at one of our events sometime!

Take good care.
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Green Lake Bat Walk June 10

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Utah state agencies in cooperation with non-governmental groups have developed geographic information system models which can be used to predict locations within the state where a given bat species should be found. Such models aid managers in determining where to focus their efforts when looking for a given species while conducting species inventories.

In California, the coastal subspecies of the pallid bat (Antrozous pallidus pacificus) has been declining for some time. A plan to slow the loss of roosting and foraging habitat in the state, the primary reason for the decline, was presented and discussed.

Finally, the newly adopted California Bat Conservation Plan was presented and discussed as an example of the strategies being employed by state fish and game departments to conserve bats. Since the bats and the landscape are different in all states, the strategies which work best for a given state will vary depending on local conditions.

Several sessions were presented on techniques useful for inventorying and monitoring bats and their habitats. These presentations ranged from the use of ultrasound monitoring to determine species composition and activity at a given location to the chemical characterization of glandular secretions deposited in roosts as a method to determine the use of a given roost by a species of concern, in this case Townsend’s big-eared bat. Also, sessions were presented on the biology of western bats which included roosting ecology, habitat use by bats, and the use of new DNA-based techniques to non-invasively determine the species composition of the bats occupying a roost and to follow subspecies in the field at the geographic location where their ranges meet and often overlap. While the presentations were about specific bats and locations, the techniques presented would be useful to workers managing and studying bats throughout the West.

If you are interested in learning more about any of the topics reviewed above, a summary known as an “abstract” will be published soon for each presentation given at the 2007 WBWG biennial meeting. These abstracts will appear in the WBWG Newsletter which is available online for download from the organization’s web site. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to open the abstracts. The website, a button entitled “Newsletter” is located on the bottom left of the page. Past and current newsletters are available on the Newsletter page as PDF files. New abstracts are scheduled to appear in the next newsletter, Spring 2007, and should be available before September 1, 2007.

**BATS OF THE NORTHWEST**

| Eptesicus fuscus | Big brown bat |
| Lasionycteris noctivagans | Silver-haired bat |
| Lasiurus cinereus | Hoary bat |
| Corynorhinus townsendii | Townsend’s big-eared bat |
| Antrozous pallidus | Pallid bat |
| Euderma maculatum | Spotted bat |
| Parastrellus (Pipstrellus) hesperus | Western pipistrelle |
| Myotis lucifugus | Little brown myotis |
| Myotis evotis | Long-eared myotis |
| Myotis thysanodes | Fringed myotis |
| Myotis volans | Long-legged myotis |
| Myotis yumanensis | Yuma myotis |
| Myotis ciliolabrum | Small-footed myotis |
| Myotis californicus | California myotis |
| Myotis keenii | Keen’s myotis |

**Feature Bat:**

**Anoura fistulata - A Nectar Bat**

by Meg Lunnum

What if you were 5’7” tall and your tongue was 8 feet long? If you were a rare South American bat, the Anoura fistulata, your tongue would be ½ times as long as your whole body. The Anoura is about the size of a mouse, but its tongue is 3.3 inches long. The bat’s tongue evolved exclusively to feed on the flower of the Centropogon nigricans, found in the “cloud forests” on the eastern and western slopes of Ecuador. While the bat dines on the nectar, it pollinates the plant.

A tongue longer than your body would surely be a mouthful. The length of the Anoura’s tongue makes it impossible to keep it in its mouth when not in use. To accommodate such a long tongue, the Anoura stores its tongue in its rib cage when it isn’t using it to drink nectar from long floral tubes.

Nathan Muchhala of the University of Miami, Florida, measured the bat’s tongue by training them to drink sugared water from a tube. The tube resembled the flower of the Centropogon nigricans. This is the first known example of a flower pollinated by only one species of bat.

This bat is from the family Phyllostomidae which means “leaf-nose” and the sub-family, Glossophaginae, which means “long tongued.” Anoura means tailless. So, if you had this bat in hand, it would have a leaf-nose, long tongue and no tail.

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www.batcon.org
www.wdfw.wa.gov/wildwatch
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www.ubbe.org
www.tolgabathospital.org
www.batbox.org
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www.californiabats.com
www.batcrew.com
www.walksbats.co.uk

Photos by Dr. Nathan Muchhala
BATS NORTHWEST
Envisions a Future . . .

Where the essential role of bats is understood

Where the public recognizes the vital place of bats in our environment and economy

Where all are inspired by the remarkable attributes and invaluable contribution of bats to our natural heritage

BATS OF THE NORTHWEST

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Photos by Dr. Nathan Muchhala
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afected by wind turbines, a session was devoted to the problem of marking and recovering bats to determine movement in the field. The ability to recover and recognize individual animals marked at a specific location allows biologists to determine where animals killed at wind turbines came from and where animals that avoided the turbine blades ultimately went.

The established technique of bat banding was examined. Practiced extensively in the 1950s and 1960s, banding has provided much information about bat movements, especially in the eastern United States. Banding, however, is not without its problems since the bands can cause injury and reduce the survival of animals in the wild. Other techniques to mark bats were also discussed, but nothing new is poised on the horizon to replace banding. The session concluded that banding was a useful technique to track the movement of bats in the field which has numerous advantages as well as potential problems. The same can be said of most useful techniques employed in any scientific discipline.

The second big issue of concern to wildlife managers affecting western bats to be discussed at the meeting was the problem of preserving abandoned mines which provide bats with suitable roosting habitat. Throughout the development of the American West, extractive industries such as hard-rock mining played a major part in driving settlement. As a result of this activity, much of the West contains large numbers of abandoned mines of various types which were never economically viable or were abandoned when they ceased to be profitable. Today these open shafts, pits and tunnels have become a safety hazard to the general public as well as a useful resource for bats.

The management problem presented by mines is to determine which ones provide suitable bat roosting habitat and which ones can be sealed without causing harm to bat populations. Once a mine has been determined to be an important roost, it is usually gated to keep the public out while allowing the bats free access. Given the large number of these abandoned mines across the landscape, physically examining each one in sufficient detail to determine whether they shelter bats has become problematic.

Therefore, managers are developing profiles of the physical characteristics of mines and caves which are important to bats. By evaluating all the mines and caves in an area with these criteria, managers can narrow the list of geological features they must seriously evaluate. Those mines not identified by the criteria to be of potential importance to bats can then be closed sooner rather than later to protect the public.

Other topics related to bats and mines which were presented and discussed at the meeting included the need to evaluate the landscape as a whole when determining which mines are of importance to bats. In numerous areas of the West, bats use a group of geological features as roosting habitat, using these features on a rotating basis to provide a diversity of roosts as protection against potential predators. Leaving just one or two of the important abandoned mines and closing the remaining mines in the area may have a severe impact on the survival of the local bat population. Again, the size of the local population and the rarity of the bat species involved may influence how many of the mines in an area will be preserved. Techniques for evaluating mines both externally and internally for their importance to bats were presented and discussed.

Finally, the reclaiming of abandoned mines, which have previously been gated to exclude the public and preserve bat roosting habitat by the state of Colorado, for potential uranium extraction under the Federal Mining Law of 1872 is an emerging problem. Corporations and individuals have recently begun staking claims on these features as the commodity price of uranium has increased with renewed interest in nuclear power as an alternative to fossil fuels for the generation of electricity. While the state of Colorado is unable to claim these mines and other geological features, several individuals and organizations with an interest in bat conservation have begun to stake claims on these features to prevent groups with mining interests from acquiring them. Conflict over abandoned mines between conservation and mining interests would appear to be an issue that we will continue to hear about for the foreseeable future.

Several presentations were given about the development of conservation strategies which have been useful in protecting and increasing bat populations across the West.

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by Michelle Noe

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