

BATWEEK

2015 Bat Week A Soaring Success

Introduction

Bat week is an annual, international celebration of the importance of those flying, furry mammals we love—and need—so much. In order to build support for the protection of bats, future stewards must be fostered. And, conservation agencies around the globe joined forces to focus attention on the dynamic roles that bats play in our environment and our economy. Invisible or unobserved to many, bats are hard at work every night eating tons of insects, pollinating flowers, and spreading seeds to grow new plants and trees. This year's Bat Week focused on providing healthy places for bats to live and culminated in a World Record attempt to build the Most Bat Houses in a Single Day.

Signature Event

Bat Week began with a large press conference held at the Department of the Interior. During the event, both the Departments of Interior and Agriculture stood together to read proclamations for Bat Week. That evening, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) hosted a reception on Capitol Hill that featured bat-inspired foods (those that are made possible by bat pollination or the pest control offered by bats). Over 300 congressional staffers, federal agency folks, and members of the public attended the reception and interacted with seven educational stations.



Figure 1. Senator Leahy receives a personalized bat house to thank him for his leadership in bat conservation during the Signature Event held on Capitol Hill.

Why Celebrate Bats?

Bats are good for people and are essential to our environment and economy. Bats in the U.S. eat thousands of tons of insects nightly including



mosquitoes, moths, beetles, crickets, and much more. Many of these are serious crop or forests pests or spread disease to humans or livestock. Every year, bats save us billions of dollars in pest control simply by eating insects.

In addition to insect control, bats serve other important ecological functions. From deserts to rainforests, nectar-feeding bats throughout the world are critical pollinators. Over 500 plant species rely on bats to pollinate their flowers, including plants of great economic and ecological value such as bananas, peaches, mangos, cloves, carob, balsa wood, and agave.

In the tropics, fruit-eating bats disperse seeds that are critical to restoring rainforests that have been cleared for agriculture, logging, ranching, or other uses. The recovery of these forests requires seed-scattering by birds, primates, bats, and other animals. Bats are so effective at dispersing seeds into these devastated forestlands that they've been called the "farmers of the tropics."

Bats also play a significant role in science and medicine. Research conducted on bats has led to advancements in sonar, vaccine development, blood anti-coagulation, and more.

And, bats need us now more than ever. White-Nose Syndrome, a deadly fungal disease (harmless to humans), has killed over six million bats in the United States and Canada.

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Figure 2. Bat Week provided an amazing opportunity to increase awareness of the importance of bats and to build bat champions of all ages!

World Record Attempt

Bats need places to roost during the summer as they raise their young. Summer roosts include live and dead trees with cracks, cavities, and loose bark. Bats also use human structures such as old buildings, bridges, and bat houses.

Bat houses provide a safe, warm place for mother bats to raise their young. Because most of our bats only have one baby a year, having a safe harbor is especially important. By joining forces, partners were able to host over 60 bat house building events around the world achieving a new World Record - the creation of **1,341 bat houses!**



Figure 3. People around the world helped to set a World Record during Bat Week for building 1,341 bat houses in a single day!

Partnership Power

Partnerships are the key to Bat Week's success. This amazing collaborative builds upon partnerships and strategically leverages resources and networks to reach a large and diverse audience with our key bat conservation messages. Together, we were able to reach over 159 million people during Bat Week!

The Bat Week steering team is comprised of representatives from federal agencies, conservation organizations and business including Bat Conservation International, Lubee Bat Conservancy, Organization for Bat Conservation, The Save Lucy campaign, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, and Wildlife Acoustics.

Bat Week: October 25 – 31, 2015

World Record: 1,341 bat houses built

Social Media Reach:

- 8,432 tweets with #BatWeek
- 4.3 million unique twitter accounts reached
- 14.6 million through tweets
- 3.7 million people reached through Facebook
- 2,508 people added a Bat Week Twibbon
- Over 159 million people reached through 89 news articles in 5 countries (United States, Trinidad & Tobago, Canada, United Kingdom, and Italy)

Videos Created/Released:

- *Getting Batty for #BatWeek* - 2.9 million views
- *White-Nose Syndrome Public Service Announcement* - 51,545 views
- *Bats Across the Country* – 32,000 views

For More Information: batweek.org

