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***For Immediate Release***

## **Bat Squad! to launch across North American schools**

Eight kids from across America will spread the message of bat conservation in a four-part webcast series.

*Austin, Texas (September 12, 2016)* – Eight kids from across America are proving that you don't need to be an adult to help our bats. These kids are members of the "Bat Squad!", a group of young people who will be introduced to schools across North America in a four-part live webcast series to be launched online at [BatWeek.org](http://BatWeek.org) during the third annual Bat Week, held this year from October 24-31.

"There's Shark Week. Bats deserve a week, too, that's just all about them!" says 14 year-old Rachael Block, a member of the Bat Squad from Virginia. Bat Week is a growing initiative that seeks to raise greater awareness of bat conservation efforts worldwide.

One major highlight of this year's Bat Week event is "Bat Squad!" This series of four, 15-minute webcasts (*airing on [BatWeek.org](http://BatWeek.org) at 1pm ET from Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> – Friday 28<sup>th</sup> of October*) will dive into the efforts of eight young people to educate others on the benefits of bats, their habitats, the threats they face, and how they're getting more people involved in conservation. Each video is also accompanied by a live Q&A session and educational materials for teachers and parents, each geared towards Next Generation Science Standards and aimed to continue the batty fun offline. The videos aim not only to teach, but also to inspire even more kids to get involved themselves.

"We have eight amazing kids from across the country that have been doing inspiring things for bat conservation," says Micaela Jemison a Bat Week coordinator and BCI's Director of Communications and Public Engagement. "These kids have been conducting bat research, investigating threats to bats like White-nose Syndrome and teaching others about the importance of these amazing creatures. We encourage schools across the country to tune in during Bat Week to meet these amazing kids and learn more about bats!"

The Bat Squad! kids hail from far and wide – from Texas, Virginia, California, Oregon, Michigan, Tennessee and Illinois – and are excited to share with other kids what they have learned about bats.

"We're presenting them as movie stars, and the fact is, they really are," said Cynthia Sandeno, a Bat Week coordinator and a U.S. Forest Service specialist in threatened, endangered and sensitive species "It's absolutely incredible that you have these kids doing work that professional wildlife biologists and communicators are out there doing."

These free online educational webcasts are a Bat Week initiative led by Bat Conservation International along partners from the U.S. Forest Service, National Geographic's Animal Jam and the National Conservation

Training Center. Major funding for this initiative was supplied by the White-nose Syndrome Small Grants Program from the Wildlife Management Institute.

White-nose Syndrome is a devastating disease that has killed more than six million bats in North America since its arrival in 2006. The disease is confirmed in seven different species of bats and is in 29 states and five Canadian provinces.

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