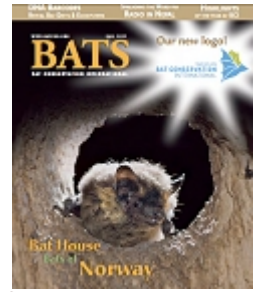



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The Year of the Bat

This is the International Year of the Bat. And so is next year. The United Nations Environment Programme declared 2011-2012 as the official, worldwide celebration of the amazing flying mammals, and Bat Conservation International is among the Founding Partners. BCI has a key leadership role in encouraging bat-awareness events around the world. The Year of the Bat offers an unprecedented opportunity to educate millions of people about the benefits of bats and the threats they face.



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On August 27, the first International Bat Night drew crowds across the United States, as a 15-year European tradition arrived in the New World. Thousands of people braved triple-digit temperatures to celebrate Bat Night in BCI's hometown of Austin, Texas. More than a dozen similar events were held around the United States as BCI helped organize and promote simultaneous festivals, lectures and bat-watching forays.

In downtown Austin, Bat Night was combined with the seventh annual Batfest at the Congress Avenue Bridge, summer home to about 1.5 million Mexican free-tailed bats. Visitors learned about bats from BCI staff and volunteers at the bridge, were able to see a live fruit bat at a nearby hotel and enjoyed live music and arts, crafts and food booths during the free, city-sponsored celebration. Then the bridge bats staged an especially dramatic emergence as the sun was setting.

International Bat Night was also celebrated at BCI's Bracken Bat Cave near San Antonio. Other events were held in Georgia, Indiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Virginia, Washington and elsewhere.

Bat Night began in Europe 15 years ago under the auspices of EUROBATS (the Agreement on the Conservation of European Bats). Increasingly popular across the continent, it is now celebrated in about 30 countries – as it was on August 27. Now Bat Night has gone intercontinental as a result of BCI's efforts for International Year of the Bat.

Activities really began about two weeks earlier, when BCI and Lake Superior Zoo in Duluth, Minnesota, presented Bat Week. Events included a daily "Bat Breakfast" with children's activities, a bat-house workshop and several speakers who discussed bat myths, benefits and research.

BCI is also organizing an important bat symposium, hosted by The Field Museum of Chicago on October 15. The keynote speaker will be BCI Founder Merlin Tuttle, with presentations by BCI Executive Director Nina Fascione, BCI Director of Education James Eggers, as well as Endangered Species Manager Joe Kath of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Director Cory Holliday of The Nature Conservancy's Tennessee Cave & Karst Program, educator Scott Heinrichs and representatives of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service White-nose Syndrome team and the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center.

Among Year of the Bat events next year, BCI is organizing the first U.S. Bat Appreciation Week beginning April 9, 2012. BCI and the Houston Zoo are planning a bat symposium on

April 14, and local conservation groups are planning a wide range of events, from bat-related crafts and games to bat walks, talks and viewings as part of the weeklong celebration.

The number of International Year of the Bat festivities is growing constantly throughout the United States and the world. Visit BCI's Year of the Bat webpage (www.batcon.org/yotb) to keep track of upcoming events, download free resource materials and learn how you can sponsor, organize or partner with BCI on your own celebration of the world's bats.

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