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Community Bat Awareness Seminars

The Chautauqua Bird, Tree and Garden Club of Chautauqua, New York presented a week-long series of free educational seminars about bats this summer. Organized by BCI members Eleanor Franks and Francesca Rappole, the events also included a "bat breakfast" and the sale of bat-stenciled aprons. The Club invited Dr. M. Brock Fenton, of BCI's Scientific Advisory Board, to conduct the seminars. A professor of biology at York University in Ontario, Canada, Dr. Fenton is a well known biologist who has authored several books about bats.

Dr. Fenton lectured daily to large audiences, on such topics as ecology, echolocation, feeding behavior, conservation, the public image of bats, and health issues. He also conducted evening walks, introducing participants to bats on a first hand basis.

Chautauqua has long recognized the role of bats in insect control and has protected them by raising community awareness through education. In recent years, the renovation of older homes has displaced many bats, causing concern about declining local populations. Dr. Fenton suggested that concerned Chautauquans could help by providing alternative roosting sites, but also noted that there may be other causes for decline, including an increase in pesticide use or a decrease in trees.

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