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"Masters of the Night" Exhibit Opens

Although attitudes toward bats have changed a great deal in recent years, many people still believe old stereotypes. To help change this, BBH Exhibits of San Antonio, Texas, got together with Bat Conservation International to produce a new interactive exhibit dispelling the myths and replacing them with fun-to-learn facts.

"Masters of the Night: The True Story of Bats" opened on June 19 at the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Detroit, Michigan, for a three-month stay. The hands-on teaching exhibit is comprised of 20 displays and interactives designed to help children (and their parents) understand and appreciate bats all over the world. Photographs by Merlin Tuttle show visitors what bats really look like.

In a fun-house atmosphere, visitors walk into different worlds, many of which try to get them to see things from a bat's perspective: from an upside-down gothic castle where they walk on the "ceiling" to a rain forest where they can crawl inside a hollow silk cotton tree and see "bats" roosting above them. Interactives let visitors experience sound through a giant pair of bat-shaped ears and help a mother bat find her pup through its unique cry in a "bat nursery." Designed to appeal to many ages, each interactive teaches through participation.

As people leave the exhibit, many exclaim that after learning about bats, they are no longer afraid of them. Children, for whom it was primarily designed, are giving it rave reviews. The exhibit has attracted a great deal of attention both in Detroit and nationally, including an article in *The Christian Science Monitor*.

Covering over 5,000 square feet, "Masters of the Night" is the largest and most thorough conservation exhibit about bats ever produced and the first to emphasize their values and conservation needs. The exhibit will travel for six years to approximately 40 museums in the United States and Canada and will expand to tour Asia and Europe next year. Over 100,000 people are expected to walk through during its first three months alone.



Merlin Tuttle (center) displays a pallid bat as workshop participants look on. From left to right: Christi Baldino, Janet Tyburec, Gary Halbing, and Dianna Simons. The group netted 14 species in a single night.

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