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### Bats in Cyberspace

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Ockert, Bryan

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By Bryan Ockert

Many BCI members have gone to great lengths to study bats: trekking through jungles, rappelling down cliffs, keeping all-night vigils in windswept deserts . . . Now, thanks to recent technology, bats are only a mouse-click away. A wealth of information about bats has begun "e-merging" on the "Information Superhighway," and if you have a computer, modem, web-browser, and a connection to an Internet service provider, you can join in the adventure.

You can start by learning about European bats with The London Bat Group (<http://www.compulink.co.uk/~peegee/lbg/lbg.html>). Then jump instantly to the Talk Origins Archive and discover bat fossils (<http://earth.ics.uci.edu:8080/faqs/faq-transitional/part2a.html>). Add a touch of the wild to your trip at the Southeastern Australian Bat Call Library, where you can download and play a variety of bat call recordings (<http://batcall.csu.edu.au/batcall/batcall1.html>).

BCI made its debut in cyberspace a year ago, with our own site on the World Wide Web, the graphic-based segment of the Internet (<http://www.batcon.org>). The BCI web site has attracted roughly 40,000 visitors in just the first year, and we continue to add information. With a few clicks, visitors can view photographs of any North American bat species. Students can read about particular characteristics of each species, then download audio samples of bats echolocating. Teachers can review reading lists and sample classroom activities, then order materials from the on-line catalogue. For bat house aficionados, there are tips on where to locate bat houses and how to install them. For anyone with bats in their house, the web site offers instructions on safely removing them.

BCI's Internet connection not only affords us a presence on the World Wide Web, but also provides an e-mail connection, giving our staff an efficient way to keep in touch with other bat conservationists--scientists, wildlife professionals, BCI members, etc. In addition, e-mail capability has greatly improved turnaround time on the hundreds of information requests we receive each week, and we are able to respond more quickly to mine closures and other emergency conservation issues.

Also thanks to e-mail, BCI staff can keep up with the influx of bat news and questions transmitted through the "BATLINE." This service is just one of thousands of mailing lists (called "listservers") through which Internet users can receive e-mail related to just about any topic you can imagine, from skyboarding to Slavic languages. If you subscribe to BATLINE, your address is added to some 600 other bat-loving subscribers in 25 different countries. When you send an e-mail message to BATLINE ([batline@unm.edu](mailto:batline@unm.edu)), the message gets distributed to all the subscribers on the list. The constant information and idea exchange between subscribers has included such topics as the danger of wind turbines to bats, publication dates for new books about bats, and remedies for nutritional deficiencies in rescued bats. Information about subscribing to BATLINE can be found at [gopher://gopher.unm.edu:70/00/academic/biology/batline/about/BATLINE](http://gopher.gopher.unm.edu:70/00/academic/biology/batline/about/BATLINE).

Many BCI members participate on BATLINE, and some also have personal web pages, or "home pages," where

they share their interest in bats. When Jim Buzbee of Colorado first constructed a bat house several years ago, he probably didn't plan to tell the world about it on-line. But after he began examining how temperature can affect a bat's choice of house, Buzbee decided to place a temperature probe in his bat house and have the readouts sent automatically to his computer. The temperature is sampled every half hour, and a graph is generated on-line. Buzbee's home page displays not only the most current graph, but also temperatures for the last five days.

Buzbee's page has the additional distinction of offering the most "hypertext" links of any bat-related page. Hypertext links allow a user to jump to a related web site by clicking on highlighted text. Buzbee's page is now a clearinghouse of bat information, with nearly 200 of these links to other sites. If you're just getting started on the World Wide Web, or you want a complete list of bats on the Internet, Buzbee's page is the place to go ([http://www.nyx.net/~jbuzbee/bat\\_house.html](http://www.nyx.net/~jbuzbee/bat_house.html)).

BCI's web site has hypertext links as well, offering a quick way to keep up with some of our cooperative projects, such as our joint management of the Eckert James River Bat Cave with The Nature Conservancy of Texas. From our "hypertext links page," you can jump directly to the Nature Conservancy home page. (<http://www.texas.net/users/tnc/bat.html>). Here you will find visiting hours and directions, as well as information about the cave's size, history, and management. The site also contains information on our joint partnership and includes a link back to BCI's web site. Links like this from other sites greatly increase traffic to BCI's web page, thus giving a greater audience the opportunity to discover bats.

The Bat Research Laboratory at Purdue University is another organization with a link to BCI. This research group is developing a bio-sonar model for target recognition and classification based on the sonar system used by the little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*). The laboratory publishes its findings on-line at <http://klington.iupucs.iupui.edu/~bat/>.

Back at the BCI page, another click on a hypertext link will transport you to the Comoros Islands in the Indian Ocean, where past BCI scholarship recipient Kate Clark has been studying Livingstone's flying fox (*Pteropus livingstonii*). The results of Clark's hard work can be seen on the Action Comores home page (<http://ibis.nott.ac.uk/Action-Comores/>), where you will learn that Livingstone's flying fox is one of the rarest of fruit bats, with approximately 400 individuals left in the wild. You can read about the environmental action plans to save this bat, explore other unique wildlife found on the islands, and order T-shirts to help support conservation efforts.

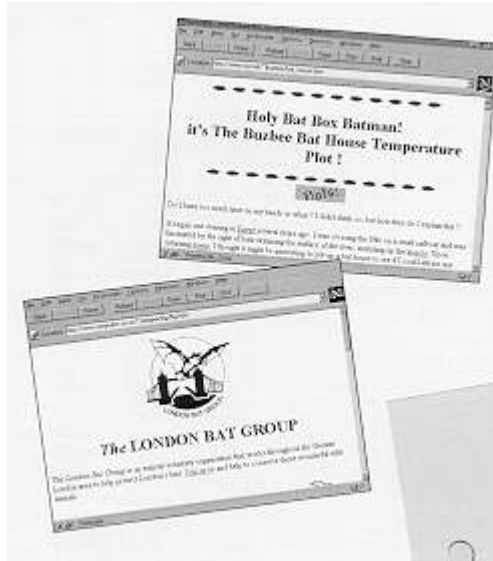
You don't necessarily have to browse the Internet to locate cyber-bats. There are several reference CD-ROMS that feature bats, available at your local book or software store. However, the amount of information included seems relatively small. Although Zane Library's "Survey of the Animal Kingdom" is an extensive multimedia CD-ROM set with five CDs of information on vertebrates, there are only seven bats spotlighted. This seems a meager number given that bat species make up almost a quarter of all mammalian species. Still, the information is current and correct, and with so many different animals featured, it must be difficult to cover any animal group in great detail.

The same may be said for the CD-ROM by ABC World Reference called "Wide World of Animals." Of the 700 species of animals covered, only three species of bats are highlighted. The information is accurate, with clear photos and videos of animals in the wild. Either one of these CDs would make an excellent reference source for students, much like an encyclopedia; but unfortunately, experienced chiropterans may become bored.

Given the lightning pace of the electronics business, we're sure to see more CD-ROMs with improved bat information shortly. What's more, by the time this article is in print, there will undoubtedly be many new bat-related web sites to visit. So if you've been thinking about reviewing your bat facts or finding an answer to some nagging bat question, perhaps it's time to get on-line!

Bryan Ockert is BCI's Information Systems Manager. He designed BCI's web site and keeps it updated. Bryan welcomes your comments at [bryan@batcon.org](mailto:bryan@batcon.org).

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*Jim Buzbee's web site illustrates the power of the World Wide Web--whatever your passion, you can share it with people around the globe.*

*The London Bat Group's web site would be a good place to visit if you're planning a trip to England. You can learn which bat species occur in London and where good viewing areas are located.*



*Allen's lappet-browed bat (Idionycteris phyllotis), is one of the more unusual of the 42 species of U.S. bats whose picture can be seen on BCI's web site.*



*In the past, getting information about bats meant a trip to the library. With the World Wide Web, bat fans can get information at any time. Because users can search for web sites related to certain keywords, simply typing in "bat" will locate BCI's site as well as many others.*

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- [Wish List](#)
- [Look for "Masters of the Night: The True Story of Bats"\\* at these locations:](#)
- [Newly Announced 1997 Workshop and Volunteer Opportunities](#)