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Young Ambassadors of BCI
Various Authors

By Sara McCabe

Walking through the BCI mail room, I ignore the professional-looking letters in my mailbox and reach instead for a bulky envelope with childlike handwriting on the front. I can't help breaking into a giant grin as I pull out a magic-marker drawing on construction paper from Alex Parrish of Omaha, Nebraska, one of BCI's many young members. The heartfelt letters, poems, and drawings sent by children and teenagers are one of the nicest things about working at BCI.

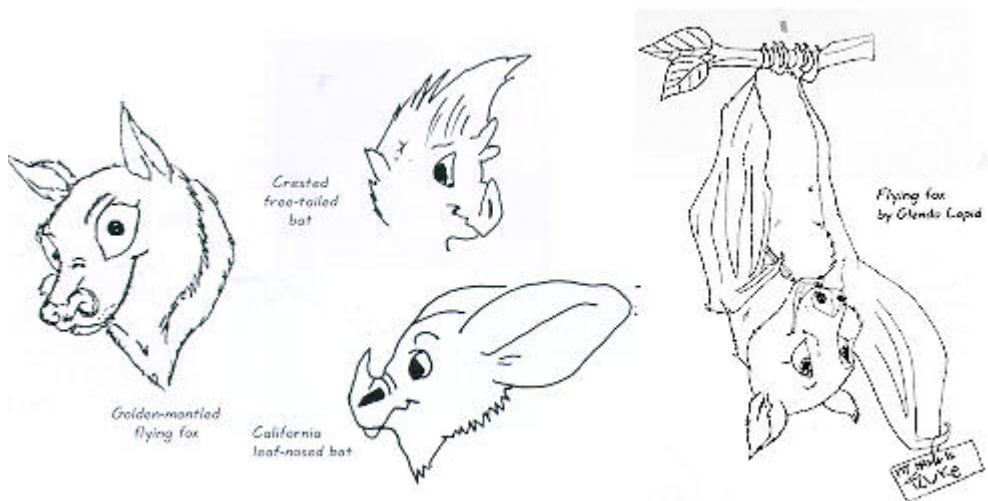
This past spring I received a personal favorite from 12-year-old member Glenda Lapid of the Philippines. In her remarkably mature style, Glenda told us of her bat studies and included a poem as well as the imaginative bat drawings seen on this page. "I am impressed with the articles and topics in your magazine," she wrote. "...I suggest that you could display some of the artwork and projects students have made so other members may be able to see what they have accomplished."

Good idea, Glenda. We have a stack of such treasures sent by our under-18 readers that I've been planning to share for a couple of years now. I'm sorry to report, though, that we somehow lost track of what was possibly the most creative one: the photo of an eight-year-old member who dressed up as BCI founder Merlin Tuttle to teach his classmates about bats. With fake blonde moustache, glasses, headlamp, and field vest, he could have fooled even Tuttle's best friends—except, perhaps, for the missing two feet in height.

On this page and the four that follow are drawings and notes from my pen pal Glenda and others, as well as profiles of a few other remarkable kids who have made us smile. It's refreshing to think that in as little as 15 years, some of these young conservationists could be running the cities, countries, and companies of the world!



Along with flying fox photographs and a report titled "Flying Foxes of the Philippine Islands," Glenda Lapid sent this picture and wrote, "These photos were taken on a drizzly day in the Subic Bay National Forest Reserve (SBNFR), a long way from my place. Here I am at the SBNFR Bat Kingdom, which is an attractive tourist spot. . . . By the way, my teacher in English said I was weird because I love bats!"



"Honestly, I drew the bats myself," Glenda responded when I wrote in disbelief at her remarkable talent. "I studied art and drawing for two years, and I love watching Disney cartoons. My favorite character is Bartok the Bat from Anastasia. I think he's a Kitti's hog-nosed bat or a Honduran white tent bat. But whatever he is, he's cute."

Canadian Teen Ahead of Her Time

By Joan Ivy, Associate Editor



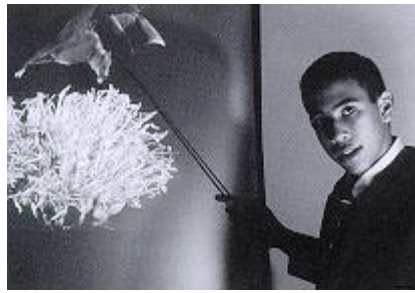
A quick glance down the halls at L.V. Rogers Secondary School in Nelson, British Columbia, reveals one locker that stands out from the others. Instead of the latest photos of teen heartthrobs, this one is covered with bat pictures. Bats of all descriptions are the passion of 15-year old Morgan Anderson, and she's proud of it.

"It all started in July of 1993 when my family and I found a little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) covered in tar from a roofing project in town," Morgan wrote us. Despite the help of bat researchers, the little bat, who had been named Fangor, died of kidney failure from ingesting the tar. After 10 days of insect-catching for Fangor, Morgan was inspired to find out all she could about bats and their habits.

In the six years since, Morgan has become a one-person bat education phenomenon. "I've been giving presentations since grade four," she explains, estimating that she has directly educated more than 1,000 people. Students from preschool to high school, adults and young people in service clubs, science classes, library groups, and nature interest groups have all benefitted from Morgan's impressive knowledge of chiropteran biology and behavior. Using an interactive format of crafts, games, and transparencies, she tailors her presentations for each audience. Sometimes she includes a bat house-building session and teaches participants how to attract some of British Columbia's 16 bat species. As a result of features about her in local newspapers, Morgan is always on call to help with bat issues.

Morgan's hard work has not gone unnoticed. She was honored last spring by the Y-TV Canadian kids' channel as a finalist in the environmental category of their national Y-TV Achievement Awards—an impressive recognition considering only 5 of 50 nominees for that category were chosen. She was also profiled in the spring 1999 issue of the Canadian magazine *Kidsworld*. Fortunately for bats, Morgan has set her sights on a career as a bat biologist. Thanks, Morgan, and all the other young people out there working for bats in ways big and small.

Bat Educator Finds His Habitat



"I have been a member of BCI for more than seven years," writes 16-year-old Gerald Carter of Warrenburg, New York. "Last year I attended BCI's Educator Workshop in Pennsylvania. The workshop gave me the confidence to teach people about bats, but I wasn't sure how to start. This year I began my first job working at a summer camp. As a nature instructor, I decided to give a slide presentation on bats. The bat show was such a hit with both kids and adults that the camp leaders named me best staff member on their evaluations, and the camp director gave me a bonus! Each week about 30-40 youths and adults go to the bat show, as we receive new campers. I finally feel like I am making a difference. I plan to use the money I earned this summer to buy some more educational materials, including a bat detector for the bat-watching portion of the show. I have always wanted to be a Bat Educator, and now I feel that I live up to the name."

Scouting for Bats



Many scout troops across North America write to BCI about creative bat-related projects—for example, building and selling bat houses to raise money for their camping trips. Girl Scout Troop 1107 in Central Texas—where people can view wild bats at several public locations—decided to design their own "bat watching" badge, complete with detailed requirements for earning it. The regional Girl Scout council liked the idea so much that they are now offering the badge for all local troops to earn.

Brandon Robertson of Burke, Virginia, is one of many Boy Scouts who chose bat houses as the focus of his service project for earning the rank of Eagle Scout. With donated materials, Brandon built 13 houses and enlisted fellow scouts and neighbors to help paint and install the houses so that they, too, might learn about bats. Lastly, Brandon hosted a community bat presentation.

Webelo Scout Pack 312 in Monticello, Georgia, held a Halloween "bat camp-out," and invited BCI member Betty Jean Jordan to give a bat presentation. As a thank-you from the scouts, Jordan received a camp-out patch and honorary "bat patrol" patch (right).

Loud and Clear Message

A group of students at Lamar Middle School in Austin, Texas, formed a club called the

"Bat Pack," which makes a bat-fact announcement every day over the school loudspeaker.

Bat-ty Mitzvah

Thirteen-year-old Charlene Marshall of Menlo Park, California, sent the following note with her application to become a BCI Bat House Research Associate: "I am Jewish, and for my Bat Mitzvah I wanted to do a good deed for bats in my area by building bat houses and educating people about how useful they are to my community. Most kids for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah give money to the SPCA or the homeless, but I wanted to really put the "bat" into my "Bat Mitzvah." In Hebrew, a mitzvah is a "good deed," so I guess doing a good deed for bats really deserves a "Bat Mitzvah," yes?"

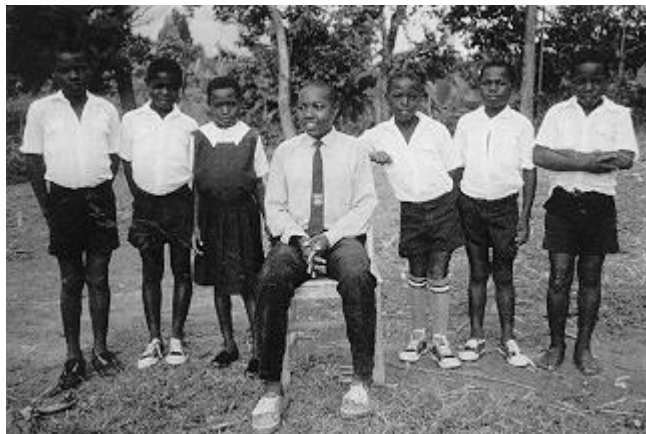
A Class Act

Several times a year, BCI receives Adopt-a-Bat applications from teachers whose students have raised money to adopt a bat for the whole classroom. Recycling cans, selling handmade crafts, and hosting car washes are just a few of the children's resourceful fund-raising ideas.

Door-to-Door Dedication

Seven-year-old Stewart R. Bissell of Spring, Texas, sent BCI \$27.00 last year with the following note: "Dear BCI, I love bats. I am worried about the bats. This weekend after seeing pictures of two bats in an exhibit of America's Most Endangered Species, I decided that I wanted to do more to help bats. I made a list and asked my neighbors on Summerfield Lane to sign it if they would like to contribute to help save the bats. They have contributed \$27.00. . . . Thank you for the work you do."

A Loyal Ally in East Africa



Omanyo Godfrey, seated, organized a club he calls "Small BCI" with more than a dozen fellow students at his school in Kakamega, Kenya. Omanyo has written BCI twice with news of his club's progress, and although he's never given his age, his dedication shows a maturity well beyond his years. This past summer he wrote to tell us his BCI membership contribution might be a little late due to financial concerns. "But, Sir," he added, "that can't interfere with my love of bats, especially when I consider their major role in the ecosystem, which I am trying my level best to transfer my knowledge about to other people's minds." BCI membership manager Amy McCartney has made a special provision to keep sending *BATS* magazine to Omanyo.

A "Rosie" Year for Seven-Year-Old Bat Fan

By Nancy Lucas

Recently, while in the cashier's line at a local store, I ran into an acquaintance I hadn't seen in a while. "So, is Jillian leading the normal life of a first-grader?" she asked about my daughter. I had to answer, "Honestly? No, she's not. And it's all because of bats."

In the spring of 1998, local puppeteer Paul Mesner presented a play at Jillian's school based on the popular storybook *Stellaluna*. "Jillian's eyes were so big," her teacher later told me, "I could hardly watch the show myself. She was absolutely mesmerized." Jillian came home from school that day talking about the "adorable" fruit bats and hasn't stopped talking about bats since.

She soon began a collection of bat items, and her enthusiasm took our family vacations in a whole new direction. From our home in Leawood, Kansas, we traveled to tourist caves in Missouri and to Austin, Texas—all in the hopes of glimpsing a bat or two. No such luck. Even in Austin, bad weather kept the Congress Avenue bridge bats from view.

Nevertheless, while in town, we picked up a BCI membership form. After joining, Jillian eagerly awaited her "Adopt a Bat" photo of a Mexican free-tailed bat (*Tadarida brasiliensis*), which she named "Tad." In the meantime, Grandpa built a bat house, and Jillian formed the "Bat Team" with several girlfriends (no boys!) at school. In addition to singing songs and practicing plays about bats, the Bat Team attended a "Creatures of the Night" presentation at the Kansas City Museum, where they got to see a live hoary bat (*Lasiurus cinereus*) and big brown bat (*Eptesicus fuscus*).

In March of this year, two exciting things happened. First, Jillian's bat collection, now up to about 80 pieces, was selected to be in the "Even More Things People Collect" exhibit at Crown Center/Hallmark Cards World Headquarters. Then, after we responded to a notice on the web site of the "Rosie O'Donnell Show," Jillian was invited to be a guest on the popular program (touted as a "seven-year-old bat expert").

Despite Jillian's first question about her impending appearance— "Do I get a limo?"—she truly hoped to educate the viewing audience about bats. She was prepared to discuss mega- and micro-bats, echolocation, and even rabies and histoplasmosis. In the end, her five-minute segment only allowed her to mention that bats don't get tangled in hair and vampire bats don't suck blood, they lap it. As a gift to Jillian, Rosie O'Donnell presented her with more than 100 new bat items to add to her collection. (Who knew bat switchplate covers and belt buckles existed?) Ms. O'Donnell's amazing generosity also included an original *Stellaluna* puppet made by Paul Mesner and a trip to Texas to see the emergence of 20 million Mexican free-tailed bats at Bracken Cave!

In addition to the national television appearance, Jillian made front-page coverage of three local newspapers and was interviewed on two local newscasts. Her collection of bats was on view at the Hallmark headquarters the entire summer, along with 99 other exhibits, and she was able to discuss bats with the general public on several "Meet the Collectors" days.

When asked by a news reporter what she wants to be when she grows up, Jillian answered, "A wildlife rescue person, so I can save bats!" With many years ahead, her interests will change time and again. But for now, she's just excited that the second-grade curriculum at her school has a unit on bats.



Jillian gets a closer look at a non-releasable hoary bat held by BCI member and wildlife rehabilitator Mike Haynes.



Talk-show host Rosie O'Donnell (right) joined Jillian and her parents, Nancy and Todd Lucas, for a photo after Jillian appeared on her show.

Lyrical Lessons

Students in Rosemary Troxel's fifth-grade class in Mundelein, Illinois, have a fun way to reinforce what they learn in Troxel's annual bat lesson: they write songs incorporating their favorite bat facts. Here are a few from a "Bat Tunes" book Troxel put together for BCI.

What You Find in a Bat Cave

by Greg Jansen

(sung to the tune of "Take Me Out to the Ball Game")

Take me out to the bat cave,
Take me out in the night.
Bats are the only mammals that fly.
They can see, they aren't ever blind.
For it's a myth that bats attack humans.
Vampire bats drink cows' blood.
For it's five fing-ers in a bat's wing,
At the old bat cave!

Bats

by Lesley Babb

(sung to the tune of "Supercalifragilistic")

Bats they hibernate in caves just like the grizzly bear.

They hibernate for six months without a day to spare.
They can die if woken up during hibernation.
If you go inside a cave, you'll see a congregation.

Bats skim lakes and ponds so they can quench their batly thirst.
Bats don't fly into your hair—that thought it is the worst.
There are a bunch of rumors, but none of them are true.
I don't think that bats would like it, and neither would you.

Many bats communicate with chattering and shrieks.
Human beings hearing this are often filled with "Eeks!"
Big-eared bats can roll their ears and tuck them in like wings.
This helps them to save their heat but maybe block their hearing.

Antarctica is bad for bats because they'll surely freeze.
In the United States there are forty-five species.
Baby bats called pups are always born alive.
Baby bats have their own sound in order to survive.

Fruit-eating bats can eat three times their weight in just one night.
They can pollinate flowers so the flowers can grow right.
Bats have hair like all mammals so they can stay warm.
Bats roost upside-down in caves to protect them from harm.

Oh Microbats! Oh Megabats!

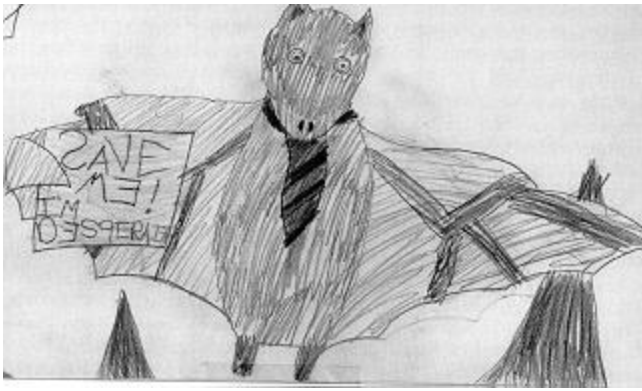
by Heather VerLee

(sung to the tune of "Finiculi, Finicula")

Some people think that bats are com-plete-ly blind
But they can see! But they can see!
Some think that bats get caught in their nice hair
Oh my, oh me! Oh my, oh me!
But bats are really quite helpful to people
Oh tell me how! Oh tell me how!
Bats pol-linate flowers and eat lots of bugs
Oh microbats! Oh megabats!

Microbats catch food with their wings and tails
That's really neat! That's really neat!
The bones in bats' wings are like human hands
They're just like me? They're just like me?
Lots of bats die because they're disturbed while sleeping
That is too bad! That is too bad!
They lose fat and may suffer from starvation
That's really sad! That's really sad!

Kids and parents,



Please understand that BCI staff can't respond to every letter received at our office. We are very grateful, however, for the special notes and drawings sent by our young members. Most get passed around or pinned up on our office bulletin board for everyone to enjoy. It certainly makes our work more gratifying to see children and teenagers' enthusiasm, concern, and creativity!

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- ▶ [Member Alert: *BATS* Movie is a True Horror](#)
- ▶ [Look for "Masters of the Night: The True Story of Bats" at these locations:](#)
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