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"The Battle for Bats" drew about 400 people to the prestigious Field Museum in Chicago to hear leading bat conservationists, including a stellar contingent from Bat Conservation International, describe the benefits of bats and their urgent need for protection – especially in this time of White-nose Syndrome (WNS).

The October 15 event was a highlight of International Year of the Bat celebrations. The symposium featured a documentary film from Ravenswood Media about the fight against WNS, a fungal disease that is decimating hibernating bat populations across eastern North America and threatening to spread into the west.

Speakers included BCI Founder Merlin Tuttle, BCI Executive Director Nina Fascione, BCI Education Director James Eggers, Ann Froschauer of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, David Blehart of the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center, Cory Holliday of The Nature Conservancy and Joe Kath of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Funding was provided by Aequus Wealth Management Resources and BCI members Bruce and Mary Feay of Chicago and Verne and Marion Read of Milwaukee.

The United Nations Environment Programme officially declared 2011-2012 as International Year of the Bat. BCI is among the Founding Partners and has a key role in supporting 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.

Eggers is helping partners around the United States and elsewhere to organize educational events, and BCI is providing materials that can be used at Year of the Bat celebrations. These may be downloaded without charge from BCI's website ([www.batcon.org/yotb](http://www.batcon.org/yotb)), where you'll also find a fast-growing list of events around the United States and elsewhere.

A major partner for Year of the Bat, and into the future, is the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. As a member of the AZA Year of the Bat team, Eggers is planning and coordinating a wide range of events, including symposia, live broadcasts, webinars, and a traveling bat-education program.

Meanwhile, the first International Bat Night, on August 27, 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 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, got to see a live fruit bat and enjoyed 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.

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