

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Bat Blitz

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The first bat was caught just as night set in, nearly immediately after biologists set the fine net designed to ensnare bats before they could sense its presence. Biologists immediately pulled the bat from the net and began the process of collecting data from it. Species, gender, and general age were determined. It was weighed. Wings were checked for damage – a sign of the deadly bat disease white-nose syndrome. It was tagged, then released. The scene was played out continuously from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. on an early August night, and this was but one of ten stations set up that night and the next two nights.

The effort was part of the 2011 Bat Blitz. Each year, biologists from across the United States converge on an area in the Southeast to spend three nights collecting data that would take local biologists weeks to collect. This year the effort was based in Crossnore, North Carolina, with biologists working sites at state parks, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and Pisgah National Forest.

An annual, and much anticipated event among bat biologists, excitement has been somewhat tempered recently with the rise of white-nose syndrome, a disease that has killed more than a million bats in the Eastern United States. Extensive precautions and decontamination procedures were taken to ensure the biologists working to learn more about bats did not themselves become vectors for the spread of this dreaded disease.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.