



Echoes From SOUTH DAKOTA

SOUTH DAKOTA BAT WORKING GROUP

Volume 4 Issue 1

SPRING

- 2011

GOING, GOING...SAVED!

An abandoned mine near Deerfield Lake on the Black Hills National Forest's Mystic District was in danger of closing...not entirely a bad thing, you might think. But it would have been bad news for at least 6 species of bats that use the site for hibernation. A concerted effort on the part of the Black Hills National Forest and SD Game, Fish and Parks came together last fall to prevent the loss of this important site. Around 100 bats of 5 species were found hibernating in the mine this winter.

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Photo by Patti Lynch



Photo by Paul Schipke



Photo by Paul Schipke



Photo by Brad Phillips

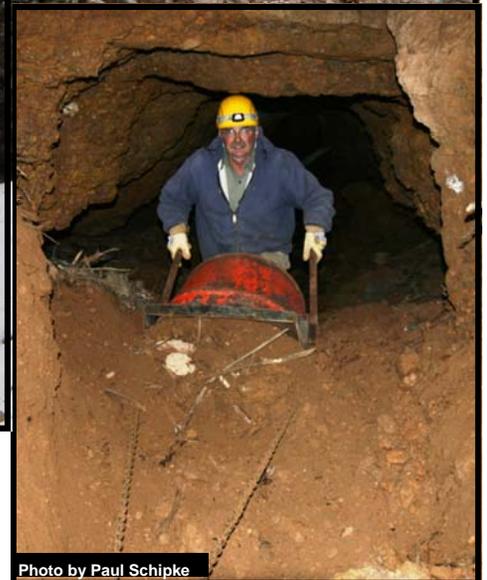


Photo by Paul Schipke

UPPER LEFT: Blown down tree across the portal
 LEFT: Collapse material blocking the mine
 TOP CENTER: Excavator and one of the culverts
 used to stabilize the entry
 TOP RIGHT: Clearing the entry
 CENTER: Bat gate installed!

ABOVE: Clearing what the excavator could not reach



Photo by Paul Schipke

HIP, HIP, HOORAY!

THE FOREST IS SAFER AND IMPORTANT BAT HABITAT WAS PROTECTED!
 THANKS TO EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT!



Bat News From South Dakota...

With funding from SD Game, Fish, and Parks and State Wildlife Grants, two new bat projects are underway across the state. The first is a project of statewide ultrasonic bat echolocation detectors that monitor and record bat echolocation calls. Sixteen monitors will be distributed across SD, cycling on and off daily at sunset and sunrise throughout the bats' active season. The calls will then be analyzed using computer software to identify the species of bats flying through that area and time they were recorded. One of the objectives of this project is to collect information about possible bat migration pathways through the state.



The second project funded is that of SDSU student, Sarah Lewis. This project is designed to compare three designs of bat roosting boxes in differing habitat types found across SD. Additionally, a new design constructed of concrete culverts will also be tested under this project.

While all three roost box designs have been successful in other areas, it is hoped that the project will help determine the best design for our habitat and bat species in SD. Should different preferences between designs be found, recommendations could be tailored to those folks wishing to continue to provide bats with roosting habitat following exclusions from other man-made structures.

Roosting boxes are a good way to provide active season habitat for bats. See our web site for more information on designs, where to place the roost box, and other construction tips.

BAT BOOKS FOR SCHOOLS FEATURED

The SDBWG's Bat Books For Schools was featured in an article by Eileen Dowd Stukel in SDGFP's **Conservation Digest** (Jan/Feb 2011 issue). The article is about the Small Grant program administered by SDGFP of which the SD Bat Working Group was a recent recipient. The article describes our book program and provides information about our goals as an organization.

Thanks again, SDGFP!



Echoes From South Dakota

WHITE NOSE SYNDROME UPDATE

Most people have probably now heard of White Nose Syndrome (WNS), the devastating condition linked to over a million bats dying in the northeastern United States. What is killing the bats remains an unknown. A fungus has been identified as a common threat in areas where bat populations have been hardest hit.

The fungus is what gives the syndrome its current name resulting in the white fungal growth commonly seen on affected bats. The role of the fungus in the syndrome remains an unknown. There is a fear that WNS might spread westward and cause similar wide-scale mortality of our hibernating bat populations.

The fungus that has become associated with this disease has been detected in Oklahoma, and most recently in southern Indiana. It is unknown whether this is a result of its spreading or simply identification of previously occurring conditions.

Until more is known about what is causing WNS, the widening area where the fungus is being found is triggering fears the syndrome might be spreading.

As a precaution, until more is known about the cause of WNS, the Rocky Mountain Region (Region 2) of the US Forest Service (including the Black Hills NF) has issued a closure order for caves on National Forests. The closure prohibits recreational caving in Region 2 (primarily Colorado, Wyoming, and SD). The concern is cavers from eastern WNS areas could inadvertently transport fungal spores to caves in the west. Permits for bat research in SD also require observance of prevention protocols.

Monitoring for WNS in the Black Hills and other western states has begun. It has not been detected in South Dakota. Bat surveys in Jewel Cave National Monument and newly gated abandoned mines were conducted this past winter with no evidence of WNS being noted.

2010 RABIES REPORT - SD

The SD Dept of Health has prepared its 2010 Rabies Surveillance report. The report provides an excellent overview and summary of rabies in SD from 2001 through 2010.

The following paragraph is from the report's introductory summary:

"In 2010, 671 animals were tested for rabies with 32 animals testing positive. This is a 40% decrease from the previous year. The 32 rabid animals included 23 wild animals (20 skunks and 3 bats) and 9 domestic animals (5 cattle 3 cats and 1 dog). South Dakota's last human rabies case was in 1970."

Of the 3 bats that tested positive in SD in 2010, two were from Minnehaha County and one from Yankton County.

It is important to remember that rabies is spread through physical contact with an infected animal. The possibility of rabies should always be kept in mind and precautions taken when dealing with wild mammals or domestic mammals that are unknown to you. You can help do your part by keeping pets current with their vaccinations and reminding children to adopt a hands-off approach when dealing with wild or unknown domestic mammals.

The 5-page report also includes information contacts in SD, other resources, and SD's Rabies Control Laws. The report can be found online at: <http://doh.sd.gov/documents/Rabies2010.pdf>



SPECIES PROFILE: Western Long-eared Myotis (*Myotis evotis*)

The Western long-eared myotis is found only in the western part of South Dakota.

In SD, this species is second only to Townsend's big-eared bat in overall ear length. Similar in size to our fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*). This bat typically has a longer ear length and lacks the fringe of hairs along the free edge of the tail membrane common to the fringed myotis.

Although considered to be a year-round resident in South Dakota, surveys of winter hibernation sites rarely turn up this species. Only a handful of locations around the Black Hills have yielded hibernating members of this species. As with the species discussed last issue (*Myotis septentrionalis* (Northern myotis)), this species appears to prefer being tucked back into cracks and crevices for overwintering. They have been found in gated abandoned mines as well as natural caves.

Only one confirmed maternity/nursery roost has been identified in South Dakota. This was located in the attic of a large brick building near Sturgis. As with all of our bats in SD, females give birth only once a year in the spring. Typically, this species gives birth to a single pup.

While generally associ-

ated with forested habitat throughout most of its range, it has also been netted and recorded in open prairie grassland habitat both here and in southwestern North Dakota.

The echolocation call of this bat is often easily distinguished from other similarly sized *Myotis* species making acoustic surveys a reliable tool for determining this species' presence/absence in an area.

With its keen sense of echolocation and exceptional hearing, this species is often referred to as a gleaner, able to pick insects from foliage in flight.



Photo: Joel Tigner

A good photo of the thumbs in this photo. With their sharp nails, bats have an easy time climbing and moving around on all but the smoothest of surfaces.

Myotis evotis
or
**Western
Big-eared
Myotis**



Again, note the very dark (& LONG!) ears and flight membranes of this bat. This species often displays marked contrast between the color of the fur and the color of the ears and wings.



Photo: Joel Tigner



BAT BOOKS FOR SCHOOLS UPDATE



We currently have 8 elementary schools on our waiting list for the 12-volume set of bat books. For more information on the project, visit our web site.... www.sdbwg.org

Two more schools have received sets of books since our last newsletter. These are:

Lawrence Elementary in Canton, SD

sponsored by

Woods Roofing, Inc

and

Eugene Field Elementary in Sioux Falls, SD

sponsored by

Batworks, LLC



Echoes from South Dakota is happy to announce a new section in the newsletter devoted to bat-related themes in poetry. The new section will be compiled by long-time member and supporter of the SDBWG, Cary Roller. Although an elementary school teacher in Rapid City, Cary would like to note the new section is open to poets of all ages.



SEE THE POEMS OF OUR FIRST CONTRIBUTORS ON THE NEXT PAGE...



To celebrate our new poetry section in the newsletter, we are extremely pleased to be able to offer a poem by noted poet and author,
Nancy Willard.

(She was the first recipient of the Newbery Medal for a volume of poetry.)
She very kindly gave her permission for its inclusion here.

The Fruit Bat

Because the air has darkened
like bruised fruit, you creep
down the bare branch

where you slept all light long,
gathered into yourself like a fig.
Little mandarin woman fleeing

under the stars on bound feet,
when your wings spring open
even you look surprised.

What are the raven's slick feathers
beside these pewter sails
raised in the foundry of your flesh,

burnished by light poured
from a wasted moon and a dipper
brimming with darkness?

---- NANCY WILLARD

For more information about the author and her work, visit
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/nancy-willard>

POETS' CORNER

Attention young and old! We are looking for your poems about bats- poems that teach, poems that celebrate, and poems that make us laugh. If you have submissions for future editions of *Echoes of South Dakota*, please send them to me at Cary.Roller@k12.sd.us. You may also send them through the mail to me, C/O Knollwood Elementary, 1701 Downing Street, Rapid City, SD 57701. Just tell us how you would like to be published (first name, grade, and school or first name and city, for example). Please make sure that the poems are original pieces of work and not copyrighted by someone else. **-Cary Roller**

Bats

Bats.

Flying at night.

Eating **BAD** bugs.

That's why farmers like them.

I do too!

**by Jon, First Grader,
Knollwood Elementary**

Bats munch on bugs

And fly when it's dark.

Then...munch, crunch...

It's off to the park.

**by Jordana, First Grader,
Knollwood Elementary**

Bats

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Compact:
Often misunderstood,
Gray, brown, white, or reddish-brown;
Only mammal that flies –
Darting at break-neck speed through ebony skies;
Echo-locating:
Finding insects, fruit, mice,
Nectar, seeds, frogs, or fish
To sate the appetite;
Sleeping upside-down,
Wrapped snugly in the warmth
Of expansive wings;
Gathering in massive clusters;
Protecting crops;
Regenerating rain forests;
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by Colby Christensen, Rapid City

Visit us on the web!
www.sdbwg.org



SOUTH DAKOTA BAT WORKING GROUP

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The purpose of the SD Bat Working Group is to work to protect bats and bat habitat through action, education, and cooperation with Federal, State, Tribal, and private landowners.

Our objectives are two-fold: to raise awareness about the role bats play in maintaining healthy ecosystems; and to work with public land managers and private landowners and provide alternatives that will reduce possible adverse affects to bats or bat habitat.

Everyone is welcome to become a member of the SD Bat Working Group!

The only requirement is an interest in bats and their conservation.

There are no membership dues, so it's priced right for everyone!

Get Involved....because bats need friends.

6th ANNUAL
BAT FESTIVAL
at
Custer State Park
SATURDAY, AUGUST 13, 2011

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!