

2015 NASBR Teacher Workshop Report

October 31, Monterey, California

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The 2015 teacher workshop in California was the 20th anniversary of NASBR's annual event in association with the North American meeting. This year's workshop was also special because it fell on Halloween—always a great day to promote bats and conservation. Many groups around the country hold special activities in association with Halloween and this year numerous groups/ organizations came together as part of the “Bat Week” collaboration and promoted a Guinness World Record contest for most number of bat houses built in a single day. NASBR was able to incorporate the contest into the teacher workshop.

Dave Johnston, NASBR meeting co-chair, opened the workshop with his presentation, “Bat Conservation in California: A Review of Species and Emerging Challenges.” His talk enabled teachers to become acquainted with their local bat species. Following his presentation to the group the teachers then moved on to interactive stations.

To facilitate building bat houses with other planned interactive education activities this year's format was designed to rotate groups of teachers around five stations. The 35 educators from the greater Monterey area were divided into five groups and they spent about 25 minutes at each site. A large room enabled this workshop design to work well despite the constant hammering going on in the back of the room.

The five workshop faculty at stations provided exceptionally interesting and informative experiences to groups. Cindy Myers, SD Humane Society/Project Wildlife Bat Team (San Diego) provided an exhibit and hands-on training for teachers at her station, “Bountiful Benefits of Bats.” Janet Tyburec, Janet Debelak Tyburec Consulting (Tucson, AZ) gave a fascinating demonstration, “Exploring How Bats Use Echolocation,” with bat echolocation calls and sonograms displayed on her computer. A key concept at all teacher workshops is bat anatomy and this year Stephanie Remington (bat specialist, Costa Mesa, CA) provided a hands-on presentation using museum study skins, “What Bat is That? Bat Diversity, Structure and Identification.” Teachers are always amazed to better understand bats using a key to identification and diversity. Dave Johnston, Bat Biologist and Wildlife Ecologist, H.T. Harvey & Associates (Los Gatos, CA) provided microscopes for a fascinating station, “What's for Dinner? Using Bat Guano to Identify Bat Species.” Educators were able to identify insect parts attributed to diets of certain kinds of bats. The final and most prominent station was the noisy pounding of hammers used to construct a total of 35 bat houses as part of a Guinness World Record



contest for the most number of bat houses made in a single day (record was 1,341 built). The “Make and Take Home a Bat House” activity was possible thanks to sponsorship dollars. Pre-cut bat house kits were purchased and only needed to be caulked and nailed together. Masterminding the bat house building—5-6 at a time—was Lee Mackenzie (Austin Bat Refuge, Austin, TX).

Following the completion of round-robin stations teachers all came back together for a final presentation, “Batman, Bananas and Bugs,” given by Rob Mies, Executive Director, Organization for Bat Conservation (Bloomfield Hills, MI). Rob is a regular presenter at the NASBR Teacher Workshop and provides a lively program using live bats including a large flying fox bat. Many teachers were able to take a cell phone selfie with one of his captive bats.



The NASBR Teacher Workshop would not be possible without the much appreciated generous support of its sponsors: Bat Conservation International, Bat Conservation and Management and Janet Debelak Typurec Consulting, Lubee Bat Conservancy, North American Society for Bat Research and member donations, Organization for Bat Conservation, Speleobooks and Wildlife Acoustics. NASBR also thanks the workshop faculty who take time away from the regular meeting to participate in the teacher workshop. Finally, special thanks go to Barbara Ogaard who provides essential volunteer assistance each and every year. This year she also carried a hammer and helped Lee meet the deadline of constructing 35 bat houses in under two hours!