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Outdoors

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100 Attend Southeastern Bat Blitz

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The 6th Annual Southeastern Bat Diversity Network Bat Blitz held July 29-August 2, 2007, was attended by more than 100 bat enthusiasts. The blitz focused this year on the mountains of northeastern Tennessee and northwestern North Carolina where participants from 8 state agencies, 5 federal agencies, 17 colleges and universities and 13 other organizations converged on Roan Mountain State Park, headquarters for the event.

The bat blitz involved 4 nights of intensive surveys on about 50 different sites to look at the various bat species in the Cherokee and Pisgah National Forests and adjoining state lands. Survey techniques included mist netting and acoustic sampling. Captured bats were measured and then released. Each night the scientists and volunteers packed up bat detectors, nets, lights and plenty of insect repellent. At dusk, several mist nets were set up at each location, usually near or over water. After bats flew into the nets, they were quickly removed and examined. Researchers recorded species, sex, age, weight and measurements.

The blitz netted 462 bats of 7 species including big brown bat, Eastern red bat, Eastern small-footed bat, little brown bat, Northern long-eared bat, gray bat and Eastern pipestrelle bat.

An intense blitz is an efficient way to provide land managers with information about local bat communities and the importance of forests to their populations. The volume of surveying and data collection during a bat blitz is significantly greater than the work a single biologist can accomplish during an entire season. The blitz also provides an opportunity for researchers and management biologists to exchange information and develop strategies for studying bat communities. Through the blitz, information is gathered about the needs of bats to incorporate into land management planning efforts.

The event was hosted jointly by the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cherokee National Forest; Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency; Southeastern Bat Diversity Network; Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation; Tennessee Bat Working Group; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Roan Mountain State Park; The Partners of the Cherokee National Forest; National Forest Foundation; Wal-Mart of South Cleveland Tennessee and many other agencies and non-profit organizations.

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