

S B D N



PARTICIPANT GUIDE



**Fort Mountain State Park
Chatsworth, GA
August 6-10, 2023**

Welcome to the Southeastern Bat Diversity Network 2023 Bat Blitz. This year we return to beautiful Fort Mountain State Park in Georgia, site of the 2010 SBDN Bat Blitz. We will mainly be surveying sites within the Chattahoochee National Forest but also have sites at Fort Mountain State Park and nearby Wildlife Management Areas. We look forward to continuing our work of documenting previous blitz sites post-WNS!

Registration Link: [2023 SBDN Bat Blitz Registration \(Georgia\) - SBDN.org](https://www.sbdn.org/2023-Bat-Blitz-Registration-Georgia)

A note about HQ & accommodations:

All group housing and social activities will occur at Fort Mountain State Park. This includes check-in after netting each night. All blitz meetings and meals will occur at the Fort Mountain Retreat and Conference Center (FMRCC), which is a short drive (less than 10 minutes) from the entrance of the state park. Single-occupancy housing is also located at the FMRCC Inn. Event locations will be listed on the schedule below for your convenience.

Housing & socializing:

Fort Mountain State Park

<https://gastateparks.org/FortMountain>

181 Fort Mountain Park Road
Chatsworth, GA 30705

Headquarters and meals:

Fort Mountain Retreat and Conference Center

<https://www.globalyouthministry.org/fort-mountain-retreat/>

40 Blackhawk Trail
Chatsworth, GA 30705

Chattahoochee National Forest

Ranger District Office: Conasauga Ranger District, (706) 695-6736 3941
US Highway 76, Chatsworth, GA 30705

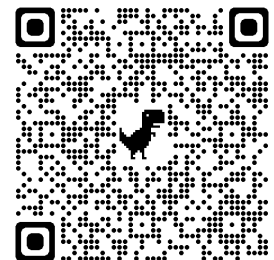
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/conf>

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/recarea/conf/recarea/?recid=10455>

While the Sunday night social is optional, for planning and financial reasons, we request that you please plan to stay for the duration of the blitz, Monday – Thursday morning.

LOCATION

Northwest Georgia is home to The Chattahoochee-Oconee National Forest, which provides the finest outdoor recreation opportunities and natural resources in Georgia. Featuring nearly 867,000 acres across 26 counties, thousands of miles of clear-running streams and rivers, approximately 850 miles of recreation trails, and dozens of campgrounds, picnic areas, and other recreation activity opportunities, these lands are rich in natural scenery, history and culture. Definitely check out the **Local Guide: Things to Do** on our landing page to make sure you're taking advantage of this great blitz location!



Interactive Forest Map

The Blitz headquarters will be at the Fort Mountain Retreat and Conference Center (FMRCC) while regular lodging is at Fort Mountain State Park. The Fort Mountain scenic drive, on Highway 52 near the Cohutta Wilderness, leads visitors to this mountain getaway. Hikers, mountain bikers and horseback riders will find some of the most beautiful trails in Georgia, winding through hardwood forest and blueberry thickets, crossing streams and circling a pretty lake. Hikers at Fort Mountain State Park can also explore a stone fire tower built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and an ancient rock wall, which stand on the highest point of the mountain. The mysterious 855-foot-long wall is thought to have been built by early Indians as fortification against more hostile Indians or for ancient ceremonies. Netting will occur within the Chattahoochee NF, Fort Mountain State Park, local Wildlife Management Areas, and other high priority conservation lands.

HEADQUARTERS

We will be offering lodging at a nearby, but different, location than blitz HQ this year due to some renovations happening at Fort Mountain State Park. All meals and meetings will be at Fort Mountain Retreat and Conference Center (FMRCC), about 5 minutes down the road from Fort Mountain State Park. The FMRCC is an outpost of the Global Youth Ministry and is open to all. **No alcohol is allowed on the FMRCC campus.**

HOUSING & SOCIALIZING

General participant housing is in either 2 or 3 BR cabins or pioneer campsite 1 at Fort Mountain State Park. Single-occupancy, motel-style rooms are available at the FMRCC Inn on a first-come, first-serve basis for a higher registration fee (you must sign up during registration). All cabins at Fort Mountain are double occupancy, therefore you should expect to share a room unless you are staying at the FMRCC. Cabins have fully furnished kitchens and include all necessary linens. If you have a roommate preference, indicate so on the registration form, and we will do our best to accommodate you. The pioneer campsite is also available for those who wish to camp. **Please note: there are no facilities available at the pioneer campsite.**

Wi-fi will be available at the inn and in meeting areas at the FMRCC.

All after-hours socializing will take place at Fort Mountain State Park (no alcohol at the FMRCC please!). Team leaders will check in at the blitz host committee cabin after netting each night, and everyone is welcome to socialize there or at the surrounding cabins. **Please do not carry open containers in the public areas of the park.** If you would like to be housed in a cabin in the “quiet zone”, please indicate so during registration!



Single occupancy rooms at the FRCC available at a higher cost and must be reserved during registration.



Double occupancy 2-3 BR Cabins at Fort Mountain State Park: Included with registration.

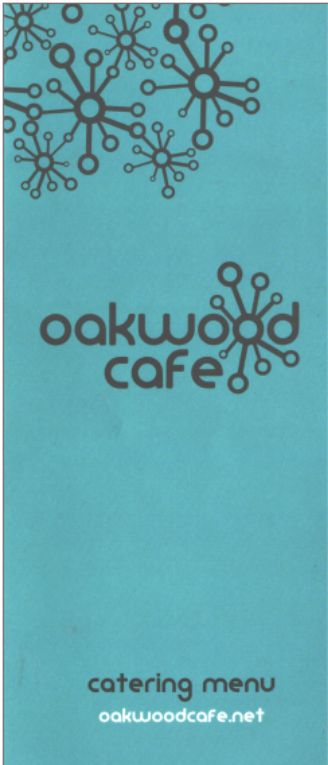
MEALS

Three meals a day will be provided by Oakwood Cafe Catering Monday-Wednesday at the FMRCC Dining Hall (See menu below). Light finger-foods will be provided Sunday evening at the social and breakfast will be served on Thursday morning during awards. Vegetarian options will be available at each meal, but if you have other dietary preferences, you should bring your own food.

- Breakfast is served daily at 10:00am
- Hot dinner is provided at 4:00pm
- A boxed lunch will be available at dinner for you to take to the net site.

In an effort to reduce plastic waste, please bring a refillable water bottle and coffee cup. Large zip style baggies and a personal cooler may also be useful for the boxed lunches to be carried to the field each night.

The menu for the Blitz:



Social Snacks	Spinach artichoke dip*	Meatballs	Bruschetta*
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Breakfast 1	Traditional*	Coffee
Breakfast 2	Assorted biscuits*	Coffee
Breakfast 3	Casserole combo*	Coffee
Breakfast 4	Continental*	Coffee

Meal	Meat Main	Side 1	Side 2	Side 3
Lunch 1	BBQ sandwich	Mac n cheese*	Corn*	Green beans*
Lunch 2	Pot roast	Side salad*	Mash potatoes*	Broccoli*
Lunch 3	Chicken Parm	Steamed vegetables*	Squash casserole*	Roasted potatoes*

Dinner (Bagged to go)	Meat Main	Veg Main	Side 1
Dinner 1	Turkey	House salad wrap*	Chips*
Dinner 2	Ham sandwich	Strawberry spinach salad wrap*	Chips*
Dinner 3	Roast beef sandwich	Caesar salad wrap*	Chips*

*Veggie option/veggie option available

SCHEDULE

If staying Sunday night, please arrive at the blitz prior to 6pm. While the Sunday night social is optional, for planning and financial reasons, we request that you please plan to stay for the duration of the blitz, Monday – Thursday morning.

Sunday, August 6

3:00pm-6:00pm

Registration/Check-In (FMRCC)

6:30pm

Optional Social (FMSP)

Monday, August 7

9:00-11:00

Registration/Check-In (FMRCC)

10:00-11:00

Breakfast and Site Sign-ups (FMRCC)

12:00-13:00

Mandatory Team Leader Meeting (FMRCC)

13:00-14:00

Mandatory Participant Welcome & Safety Meeting (FMRCC)

16:00-17:00

Evening Meal and Site Sign-ups (FMRCC)

17:00-18:00

Teams meet to depart to netting site* (FMSP)

12:00-2:00

All teams must return and check in by 02:00 (FMSP)

*Check the sign-up sheet for specific meet times, locations, or any other site-specific information you might need such as 4 wheel drive, waders, etc.

Tuesday, August 8

10:00-11:00	Breakfast and Site Sign-ups (FMRCC)
11:00-16:00	Conasauga Snorkeling Trip (pre-registration required, see details below)
16:00-17:00	Evening Meal and Site Sign-ups (FMRCC)
17:00-18:00	Teams meet to depart to netting site*(FMSP)
12:00-2:00	All teams must return and check in by 02:00 (FMSP)

Wednesday, August 9

10:00-11:00	Breakfast and Site Sign-ups(FMRCC)
16:00-17:00	Evening Meal and Site Sign-ups (FMRCC)
17:00-18:00	Teams meet to depart to netting site*(FMSP)
12:00-2:00	All teams return and check in by 02:00 (FMSP)

Thursday, August 10, at 12PM

10:00-11:30	Breakfast and awards (FMRCC)
11:30-12:00	Checkout and travel home

FIELD TRIP INFORMATION

We will be meeting at the Cisco Baptist Church (N. 411 Hwy, Cisco, GA) at 11 to caravan to the snorkel hole (34.996050342789516, -84.6407987096381). It is about an hour drive to the snorkel hole from Ft. Mountain. Bring a towel, water/snacks, sunscreen, a change of clothes (if desired), and old tennis shoes or water shoes to wear in the river. This is a popular recreation area, so you probably don't want to go barefoot in the stream. If you have a mask, snorkel or wetsuit, bring it. If not, we will have some that people can borrow. There are some trails nearby so bring hiking shoes if you would like to stick around and hike.

NIGHTLY SCHEDULE OVERVIEW

- Sign-up for survey teams following Dinner at FMRCC
 - Please distribute yourself among team leaders and make sure there are EXPERIENCED handlers at each site. **Do not add yourself to teams that are already full.**
 - Note the leave time listed by the team leader. Be ready on time at the designated departure location with all of your gear. Team leaders will not wait on late participants!
 - While roles (e.g. handler, data recorder, etc.) do not have to be strictly followed, they allow us to assure necessary skills are present at each site.
 - Please note if you are able to handle or not (place "(H)" next to your name).
 - Please put down your phone number in case your team leader needs to get in contact with you.
- Bat Handling
 - Team leaders are ultimately in charge at net/trap sites.
 - All handlers must be rabies vaccinated and have an acceptable titer reading in the last 2 years (please provide a copy when you register).
 - Gloves must be worn whenever handling bats.
 - N95 masks will be provided and must be worn near bats.

- Gear decontamination at FMSP (location TBA)
 - Assure you are 'clean' whenever entering a vehicle
 - You are responsible to decontaminate your personal gear
 - Offer to help Team Leaders decontaminate survey gear
- After-netting socializing will occur at team leader check-in! (Host committee cabin(s) at FMSP)

DISEASE: COVID-19 – Rabies – WNS

We are taking steps to ensure this is a safe, inclusive, disease-free event. The safety of Blitz participants AND wildlife is of paramount importance. We will follow the most recent guidance from the Centers of Disease Control (CDC) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature regarding SARS Co-v2 and wildlife. Participants who wish to handle bats must show proof of a current (within 2 years) rabies vaccination/titer. All participants within 6 feet of bats will wear an N-95 mask. We will follow current USFWS WNS decontamination protocols (see last page of guide for details).

PACKING LIST

Fort Mountain and the Chattahoochee National Forest are in a remote area of north Georgia. The nearest services are in Chatsworth, approximately 15 minutes (7.5 mi) away. While there are stores and gas stations in the area, generally, if you think you might need it, bring it with you. A list of services and local attractions are provided at the end of this document.

Linens and towels are supplied at Fort Mountain State Park and at the Fort Mountain Retreat and Conference Center. For double occupancy rooms, consider bringing an extra towel and washcloth. Please bring your own toiletries. Cabins at Fort Mountain are fully furnished and include a full kitchen with microwave, coffee maker, some cookware, and dishes (for more information [visit Fort Mountain State Park's website.](#)) Rooms at the FMRCC are hotel style and include linens and towels. We strongly encourage the use of reusable containers such as water bottles and coffee mugs. Ice will be available. Coffee makers are provided in all state park cabins if you wish to make coffee for consumption outside of the coffee provided at breakfast. At FMSP There is a 17-acre lake with a swimming beach and nearby swimming holes so bring a bathing suit and beach towel, especially if you signed up for the snorkeling trip to the Conasauga! If you are on the Conasauga Trip, please make sure to have a towel, water/snacks, sunscreen, a change of clothes, and old tennis shoes or water shoes to wear in the river. Optional equipment (we will have some extras for those that do not have their own) mask, snorkel, wet suit.

FIELD EQUIPMENT

Please be sure to bring all equipment necessary for field work. Netting may require walking over rough terrain, across streams, carrying heavy loads, working in the heat and sun. Suggested items include:

Hiking boots/Rubber boots	Waders
Headlamp	Water bottles
Batteries	Zip style bag for boxed lunch
Chair	Rain gear

Insect repellant	Sunscreen
Hat	Personal Cooler
Handling glove(s) if OK to handle bats	Change of clothes (for after netting)

Poison ivy, mosquitos, deer flies, and ticks occur in the forests and around water and will be present day and night. Long pants should be worn for field work. You may want to bring a long-sleeved shirt for additional protection. Insect repellant and Tecnu will be provided for group use - if you need your own, please bring your own! Two species of venomous snakes occur within the Chattahoochee National Forest: timber rattlesnake and copperhead.

Remember, you will be required to change into clean clothes in the field before re-entering the vehicle after netting bats. Bring enough clothing to make a change of outerwear each night in the field (no need to change your undergarments, only articles of clothing that were exposed to bats need to be changed).

COMMUNICATION

Free wifi is available at the FMRCC. There is no WiFi at FMSP. Cell phone reception is spotty at best at the FRCC, FMSP, and throughout the National Forest. Each net team will be accompanied by a Chattahoochee NF staff member equipped with a radio for coordination, logistics, and emergencies in the field.

HOSPITALS

Please know the nearest hospitals to HQ and your net sites before departure for your own safety. A list of area hospitals can be found below.

[AdventHealth Murray](#)

707 Old Dalton Ellijay Rd.
Chatsworth, GA
706-695-4564
Emergency Room Open 24 Hours

[Hamilton Health Care System](#)

1200 Memorial Dr.
Dalton, GA
706-272-6000
Emergency Room Open 24 Hours

[AdventHealth Gordon](#)

1035 Red Bud Rd NE
Calhoun, GA
706-602-7800
Emergency Room Open 24 Hours

[Piedmont Mountainside Hospital](#)

1360 S. Main St.
Ellijay, GA
706-515-4000
Emergency Room Open 24 Hours

WNS DECONTAMINATION GUIDANCE

This year's blitz will be held in a confirmed White-nose Syndrome (WNS) / *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd) positive zone. As responsible scientists we must do our very best to ensure we do not become the unwilling vectors of white-nose syndrome and that we maintain the highest integrity at our field sites. Participants in the SBDN Bat Blitz will comply with the national WNS decontamination protocol located at the following website:

<https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/topics/decontamination>.

In addition to that protocol, the following directions and guidance are stipulated. Summer decontamination procedures are known to limit the spread and exposure through equipment, and this document is designed to serve as clarification and guidance on the best practices for use during the bat blitz.

Required Decontamination Activities and Disclosure

- No gear previously used in a cave is allowed at the blitz.
- All gear and vehicles arriving at the blitz must be decontaminated prior to arrival. This includes tubs (inside and out) that could have come into contact with Pd; poles; nets; scales; and ropes, etc. While the Blitz is in a WNS-positive zone, we seek to minimize the potential of introducing or moving other potential Pd strains.
- The entire Chattahoochee National Forest will be considered one “site” during the Blitz, for the purpose of interpreting and complying with procedures of the national WNS decontamination protocol. Therefore, nightly decontamination of all gear, including nets, is optional and left to the discretion of individual team leaders. Field clothing should be bagged on the field site prior to placement in a vehicle and may be decontaminated or discarded upon returning home.
- All gear, nets, poles, ropes, etc. should be cleaned before next use at any other site away from the blitz. There will be some limited decontamination supplies available at the blitz, but otherwise dirty gear should be isolated/bagged and cleaned by individual team leaders when they return home from the blitz.
- All gear and materials used at this blitz - even if decontaminated - will be considered equipment that has been used at a WNS-positive/Contaminated WNS Management Area site and SHALL NOT be used at an At-Risk WNS Management Area. Contaminated gear should only be used within an Endemic WNS Management Area or an Intermediate WNS Management Areas upon the direction of the responsible state/federal land management agency.

For Team Leaders — Materials Provided by Blitz Organizers

- Insect Repellent
- Tecnu
- Batteries
- Hand Sanitizer
- Trash bags
- Latex and/or nitrile gloves
 - If latex or powdered gloves are used, notify field personnel who may have contact sensitivities.
- Ziploc bags for phones and electronics
- Paper bat bags
 - For holding bats, team leaders may use paper bags or properly decontaminated and chemical-free cloth bags.
 - A new, clean bag shall be used for each captured bat. No re-use of non-decontaminated bags. If team leaders opt to use cloth bat bags, they shall be decontaminated in hot water at the decontamination

station each night.

- 70% Isopropyl Alcohol solution in spray bottles
 - Use for decontaminating processing equipment (rulers, scales, etc), net poles, chairs, tables, and other non-porous items.
 - Can be used in conjunction with paper towels to form a 'wipe'.
- Limited availability of hot water decontamination (at after-netting check-in)
 - Use for any soft gear that contacts bats, to ensure bats are not exposed to hazardous chemicals.
 - Use 55°C/131°F Water for 5 minutes.

Suggested Field Practices for Site Control, Pd Isolation, and Field Decontamination

Setting up a Field Site and Preliminary Information

- Team leaders and participants should arrive at the site field-ready, with a change of clothes or an outer layer that can be shed prior to re-entering the field vehicle. Typically, a changing area at the field site is designated where changes of clothes are kept secure and dry in bags, including a change of shoes. Place spare plastic bags near your clean clothes so dirty clothes can be isolated and bagged once removed. Once clean clothes and shoes are put on, re-entry into potentially contaminated areas should be avoided. Therefore, all cleaned equipment should be loaded and the site "broken-down" prior to everyone changing into clean clothes.
- Prior to working in the field, consider disposable water bottles or expect that non-disposable bottles, along with coolers, will be decontaminated prior to re-entry into the field vehicle. Bring all drinks and supplies needed during sampling with you. Avoid accessing the field vehicle during sampling to minimize risk of contaminating the vehicle. Anything brought into the field needs to be decontaminated before entering the vehicle.
- Designate plastic bags for trash and leave out extra bags for bagging of any gear (ropes, nets, etc) that may need to be transported to the blitz headquarters for decontamination. (The blitz designates black bags for trash and white bags for decontamination).
- Ensure that chairs brought to the blitz are properly decontaminated prior to and subsequent to use. Non-porous chairs are advised for spraying down or wiping with isopropyl alcohol. Plastic folding chairs are durable, easy to decontaminate.
- Consider setting up a tarp as a drying area to stage clean items such as poles and shoes that move from decontamination procedures to clean vehicles after site break-down. Ensuring a clean space where hard, decontaminated items may dry eliminates dirt and debris on equipment and ensures adequate disinfection of Pd spores.
- Consider using mesh bags to hold individual mist nets. This makes post-sampling decon easier. Nets can dry in the bags without having to stretch them out. A good source is here at about \$1 each: <http://www.papermart.com/net-shower-bag-with-loops/id=14330#14330>.
- Avoid processing any bats on the truck tailgate or near the vehicle. Use a non-porous table for field equipment and processing, as it can be easily sprayed or wiped. Park the vehicle an adequate distance from nets and bat processing areas to ensure the field vehicle remains clean.
- If possible, designate a "clean" person—who does not come into contact with bats—to enter data and retrieve any needed "clean" items from hard-sided tubs during netting.

Keeping the processing table as clean as possible is the best method to avoid contaminating gear and/or data sheets.

- Do not use Lysol or Clorox wipes on your skin or hands—always use skin-safe products such as baby wipes. Do not apply Lysol or Clorox products to gloves or other items that may come into contact with bats.
- Consider placing your smartphone or other electronic equipment in clear plastic bags when not in use or text and read through the plastic bag. If accessing these items during mist netting and processing, ensure that hands are clean to avoid contaminating the electronic device.
- Consider using a clothesline to hang bagged bats to keep the processing table free of occupied bat bags and guano during processing.
- Properly sized latex or nitrile gloves should be used when retrieving bats from the net and changed between bats. Note that team leaders or other handlers may deviate from this during situations where bats may be at risk of injury, such as multiple captures or during extreme entanglement. The bat's well-being should always be given priority.

Site Breakdown and Field Decontamination

- Systematically deconstruct net hardware and move toward centralized field decontamination area.
- Collect and centralize soft items such as ropes, bat bags, and clothesline and place in mesh laundry bags for isolated transport to hot water decontamination at blitz headquarters. Place mesh bags in plastic garbage bags and move to “clean” area for staging and transport.
- Place mist nets in individual mesh bags and place bags in mesh laundry bag for isolated transport to hot water decontamination center at blitz headquarters. Place in clean garbage bags and move to “clean” area for staging and transport.
- Spray or wipe all non-porous items (rings, poles, table, chairs) with isopropyl alcohol and place on tarp to dry.
- Load tubs with cleaned, non-porous processing gear. Wipe down outside of tubs and move to clean area for staging and transport
- As items are cleaned, designate “clean” people to load clean items into clean vehicle. Clean people who load the vehicle should change their clothes and begin loading clean items, as directed. Clean people should not come into contact with dirty areas or dirty equipment. Dirty clothes should be bagged for isolation, then moved to clean staging areas for loading and transport.
- As all items are loaded and site is in final stages, the tarp should be loaded, the garbage bagged, and the final field crew changes clothes