

Nature Niche

Nature By The Yard – Fostering a Natural Sense of Wonder

Autumn, 2011

**Volume 8, Issue 3
Calendar of Events**
*Please call the hosting
organization for
reservation information.*

Toddler Walk. Sept.
13 10-11am Kids ages
18-36 months with
adult. Buttinger
Nature Center.
Pennington, NJ (609)
737-7592. Fee.

**Walk in the
Moonlight.** Sept. 24.
6:30-8pm. Families
can join me for a
leisurely walk
through woodland
trails as we enjoy
the fall evening.
BHWP. 215.862.2924
Fee.

Toddler Walk. Oct.
21 10-11am Kids ages
18-36 months with
adult. Buttinger
Nature Center.
Pennington, NJ (609)
737-7592. Fee.

**Twinleaf Award #7
Fall Foliage** Sat.
Oct. 22. 3:30-5.
Adults and kids over
(continued)

Let's Hear it for the Bats!

Bats are some of the most feared and misunderstood animals in the world. Through the centuries, they've been equated with witchcraft, evil, blood-thirsty monsters, and vampires, but bats are harmless victims of a bad rap. Thank you, Bram Stoker. Even the feared vampire bats, which hail from Central and South America, aren't the blood thirsty demons they are made out to be. Well, they are blood thirsty, but they don't attack and suck human

blood.

Bats from around the world eat a variety of things from fish to nectar to frogs to fruit to blood. All of the bat species we have here in the mid-Atlantic region are insect eaters though. Insectivorous bats use echolocation to zero in on their prey. By sending out high frequency sound waves that bounce off the insect, the bat is able to hone in on its exact location. They catch prey using

(Continued on back page)

White Nose Syndrome

Our beloved bats are under attack and if we don't do something about it soon, many of them will disappear.

White Nose Syndrome (WNS) is a fungus that affects hibernating bats.

First discovered in New York state in the winter of 2006/2007, WNS has already killed over a million bats along the east coast of the United States and parts of Canada.

By the 2010 hibernating season, the fungus had been reported in 16 states and four Canadian Provinces and it is spreading rapidly.

Named for the white fungus that grows on the muzzle and other parts of hibernating bats, WNS has a 90%-100% mortality in affected hibernacula (bat hibernating sites). Once the spores are in a hibernacula, the fungus quickly spreads from bat to bat, killing the entire colony. The fungus mysteriously causes the bats to wake and move either to the entrance or even outside into below freezing temperatures.

Because hibernating bats have just enough fat reserves to make it through the winter, the bats often starve having used

(Continued on back page)

10 or under 10 and adult can work as a team. BHWP. 215.862.2924. Fee

Toddler Walk Mon. Nov. 14 10-11am. Kids ages 18-36 months with adult. Buttinger Nature Center. Pennington, NJ (609) 737-7592. Fee

Twinleaf Award #8 Seeds Sat Nov. 19 3:30-5. Adults and kids over 10 or under 10 and adult can work as a team. BHWP. 215.862.2924. Fee.

Autumn Reading

Suggestions:

"The Bear Snores On" by Karma Wilson and Jane Chapman
"Leaf Jumpers" by Carole Gerber

Cool Idea:

I can offer a curriculum supporting birthday party in your child's class. Choose from a variety of science topics, your child and his classmates will love, and the teacher will appreciate. Also solves the problem of inviting the whole class to your house. Have the party at school!!! Appropriate up to grade 5. Call me for details. 609.610.6292

We're on the Web

<http://naturebytheyard.com>

Bats (continued)

their wings or the membrane between the feet. The insects are sort of "scooped" into the mouth.

Here in Pennsylvania, we have six year round resident species and three that migrate.

Year round bat species which include: little brown, big brown, tricolored (formally eastern pipistrelle), northern long ear, small-footed, and Indiana bats, are active in warm months, but seek shelter to hibernate through the winter. Migratory

bats include hoary, red and silver-haired bats.

The only flying mammal, these acrobatic fliers can catch and eat over 500 insects per hour and often have several feeding sessions through the night. A large percentage of their diet include moths, grain flies and mosquitoes. Without bats, the mosquito population would explode spreading disease and driving picnics indoors. That's much scarier than Dracula ever was.

WNS (continued)

all their stored energy just to wake up.

More than half of the 45 species of North American bats are hibernating bats. This includes the six native to the mid-Atlantic (see article above).

Many scientists believe the fungus may be spread in part by humans investigating caves either casually or for sport.

So what does this all mean? Little brown bats are our most common bat in the mid-Atlantic region and they can eat 500-

1000 mosquitoes per hour. If they have five, one hour feeding sessions per night, that is up to 5000 mosquitoes per bat. Let's say there are 10 little brown bats in your yard. Now, imagine a warm July evening. You and your family are enjoying an outdoor picnic. Without little brown bats controlling the mosquito population, there could be as many as 50,000 more biting pests than there are today. I think I'll buy stock in Caladryl.

About Our Organization...

Nature By The Yard was started in January, 2001. We offer fun, hands-on nature education programs for schools, scouts, camps, libraries, birthday parties, garden clubs, nature centers, wildflower preserves and other organized groups. We also provide

workshops for teachers on using the schoolyard as a classroom tool as well as offer advice and expertise on designing school yard habitats. For details on our services, visit <http://naturebytheyard.com> or call Pam at (609) 610-6292.