

AFRICAN ECHOES

A quarterly e-newsletter for our supporters!



Heart-nosed bat (*Cardioderma cor*)
Photo credit: MerlinTuttle.org

THIS ISSUE'S NEWS AND UPDATES:

**'Meet' Board member
Dr Cullen Geiselman**

**Updates from the
BwB team**

**AfriPopo Student
Indaba 2024**

**Ways to support
Bats without Borders**

GREETING FROM BATS WITHOUT BORDERS!

2024 is flying by, filled with exciting activities and events! We've already enjoyed an incredible Women in Science Indaba, as part of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science. Our #WingedWednesday webinars have reached the milestone of over 2000 attendees, connecting people across Africa and beyond to share current bat research. Additionally, we're thrilled to announce that planning for the 2024 AfriPopo Student Indaba is well underway, bringing together early-career researchers working on African bats! #AfriPopo2024

Stay tuned for more updates and opportunities to get involved in these exciting initiatives!

We'd like to take the chance to thank all our **Bats** without Borders supporters, volunteers, advisors, and Board members for their continued support.



Meet our Board member Dr Cullen Geiselman

In this issue, we chat with Bats without Borders' Board member **Dr Cullen Geiselman**, a dedicated member of the **Bats** without Borders team.

What got you interested in bats?

When I was about 12 years old, Merlin Tuttle, founder of Bat Conservation International, came to Houston, Texas to speak at the Houston Zoo and he and his African straw-coloured fruit bat (*Eidolon helvum*) Zoe stayed at our home. After hearing his lecture and spending time with Zoe, my mom was immediately hooked on bats and I got to tag along with her when she took trips to see them in the wild. Bats were her passion and plants were mine. However, after finishing my undergraduate studies, I couldn't find a job in botany, but because I knew so much about bats from being around my mom, I was able to get a job with Bat Conservation International.



Which is the rarest bat species you have ever encountered?

The rarest bat I have encountered is the spectral bat (*Vampyrum spectrum*), a carnivorous bat that's the largest bat species in the Americas. We captured it in a giant net full of fruit bats in Belize. The chattering of the fruit bats must have attracted it to our location as other bats are one of its preferred food items.

What is your favourite thing about being on the BwB Board?

Bats without Borders is a dynamic organisation of can-do people developing creative ways to study bats, engage communities in their conservation, and improve situations for people and bats. So my favourite thing about Bats without Borders is the people and being able to work alongside them, each of us bringing our specific strengths to the cause.

What do you think are the most important things that need to change for bats in southern Africa?

Bats need champions everywhere and southern Africa is no exception. We need more people trained in bat ecology, conservation, and taxonomy so that bats are well studied, their habitats identified and protected, and the conflicts they have with humans minimised.

Why is conservation important to you?

Conservation is the cornerstone to my work and involves taking a larger view of the world. It invites us to look beyond the confines of humanity and consider, study, and conserve the biological world in a way that maintains species diversity and ecological and evolutionary function. And it is not just for biologists; all fields are needed for conservation to work.



BWB Team Updates



We're delighted to share an update from Wongani, our Junior Conservation Officer, who joined the **Bats** without Borders colony in May 2022 as a Conservation Intern. Wongani is based at Monkey Bay, Malawi.



"I visited St Louis Primary School, Monkey Bay, to deliver a bat talk to 50+ students from their standard 5, 6, and 7 classes. I talked about the basics: myths and perceptions of bats, why bats are important, things not to do to bats, and the types of bat species. I'm chatting with the school about forming a wildlife club so I can regularly visit the school...watch this space! Thank you for having us, St Louis Primary School.



I have also started the first part of the community sensitisation for my fruit bat project - informing the community that we are doing fruit bat research and asking for their assistance in sharing areas where they have seen fruit bats roosting or any fruit bat activity.



It was fantastic to meet up with **Bats** without Borders volunteer Marisa at Monkey Bay as part of her trip to Africa. Marisa is one of our brilliant volunteers in the **Bats** without Borders research team. Originally from Portugal, she is currently working as an ecologist in the UK and is over in Africa volunteering with African Bat Conservation. We visited Lake Malawi National Park, explored potential bat roost sites with the Park Ranger to explore and met up with locals who have bats roosting in their buildings.

We enjoyed hiking to the top of Mount Nkhunguni and meeting up with Paul Mwesesa to discuss bats, caves and old paintings found on cave walls. We also conducted vegetation surveys and bat trapping in Lilongwe. It was a busy few days together and a great chance to share bat knowledge, experiences and stories!"

BWB Team Updates cont.



In April, Rachael Cooper-Bohannan, Founder and Bats without Borders CEO, started working for **Bats** without Borders two days a week. Rachael set up **Bats** without Borders in 2013 and has run the NGO as a volunteer for over 10 years. It's brilliant she is now a part-time paid member of staff leading the colony with her expertise and passion for bat conservation.

International Bat Appreciation Day reminds us of the importance of bats in the ecosystem. As part of the International Bat Appreciation Day, our Capacity Development Officer (Christopher Imakando) gave a bat talk on the introduction to southern African bats to a group of about 14 people drawn from different places in Lusaka at the Game Rangers International Discovery Centre in the Lusaka National Park, Lusaka - Zambia. Later in the evening, he led a bat walk at the same facility. The bat talk and walk were organised by Game Rangers International.



Affiliated Bat Groups



So far **Bats** without Borders has signed MoUs with four Affiliated Bat Groups across southern Africa. The Bat Groups are the Cape Bat Group (South Africa), Bats in Zimbabwe (Zimbabwe), Lusaka Bat Group (Zambia), and Sapitwa Bat Conservation Group (Malawi). We are expecting more Bat Groups to sign MoUs with **Bats** without Borders in the coming months. With the support of **Bats** without Borders, the Bat Groups have committed to give bat talks and walks in schools and communities in their areas.

Christopher continues to run individual meetings, in-country meetings, and main bat group meetings to share ideas and support the bat group trainees.



#WINGEDWEDNESDAY WEBINARS

Our **#WingedWednesday** webinar series runs on the last Wednesday of the month until November. Each webinar is 1 hour long starting at 3pm southern African time (currently 2pm UK time).

Sign up here: www.batswithoutborders.org/webinars



Don't forget that all 45 of our previous **#WingedWednesday** webinars are available on our **YouTube channel**.



Subscribe to receive notifications when we add new videos.



Join us for the next **#WingedWednesday** webinar taking place on **Wednesday 26 June** with **Dr Dave Waldien** sharing 'Strengthening IUCN Red List Assessments for the World's Bats'.

AfriPopo Student Indaba 2024

We are delighted to announce we will be hosting our second Pan African student indaba - bringing together early career researchers working on African bats! **#AfriPopo2024**

Following on from the success of our first AfriPopo Student Indaba back in 2022 we are delighted to announce we'll be hosting another one.

The AfriPopo Student Indaba (symposium) provides a friendly, inclusive and supportive opportunity for students and early career professionals to network and share their research findings. This event is a great opportunity to connect people working on bats across Africa.



The Indaba is organised by students for students and will take place over two days in November 2024. We have selected the Organising Committee and it was exciting to have our first meeting to start the planning of the Indaba. The committee is made up of a team of students from across Africa studying bats. Details of the Indaba will be added to our website during the run-up to the event. Watch this space!

https://www.batswithoutborders.org/afripopo_student_indaba.html

Thank you to our AfriPopo Student Indaba sponsors



Business Partnership Opportunities

We have recently rolled out a new **Bats** without Borders Business Partnership opportunity that would contribute to the vision that bats and their habitats in southern Africa are valued, protected and conserved for the well-being of bats, biodiversity and people.



We are keen to develop and strengthen relationships with business partners and work collaboratively to ensure our partners benefit from their kind support.

We have a range of partnership packages such as becoming an annual sponsor to support **Bats** without Borders where we need it the most; sponsoring an individual to access bat conservation training; sponsoring a training workshop or another exciting 2024 event; or why not consider sponsoring one of the newly formed bat groups in southern Africa.

<https://www.batswithoutborders.org/businesspartnerships.html>

For further information or to express an interest in partnering with us, please contact:

Ruth Fraser our Admin and Comms Coordinator - info@batswithoutborders.org

Our Latest Batty Clothing and Gifts!

Looking for something unique and sustainable?

Dive into the **Bats** without Borders online store!

Discover a treasure trove of eco-friendly goodies crafted from natural materials. From stylish apparel to charming accessories, we've got it all.

Plus, don't miss out on our latest additions - exquisite bat-themed notebooks and delightful greeting cards!

Every purchase supports our mission for bat conservation, so you're not just shopping; you're making a difference. ❤️

Explore our collection bats-without-borders.teemill.com and add a touch of bat-inspired charm to your life!



www.batswithoutborders.org/shop

Species in the spotlight



Egyptian slit-faced bat (*Nycteris thebaica*)

- is found throughout **Africa** and parts of southern Europe.
- they are most often found in **dry habitat** types, such as savanna woodland areas.
- they use a wide **variety of roost sites**, including caves, mine tunnels, tombs, military bunkers, fireplaces, buildings, ruins, culverts, abandoned wells, pit latrines, root cavities, rock crevices, hollow trees, dense foliage, rocky outcrops, and sometimes the burrows of porcupines or aardvark!
- Their pelage tends to be **long and silky** and their **enormous ears** are longer than their total head length.
- unique from other bats in that they retain their **milk teeth** outside of the womb.



Photo credit: Keith Bohannon

Ways to support Bats without Borders

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Sign up for FREE and select us as your chosen charity



2

When you shop, use Give as you Live Online to visit your chosen retailer



3

Your purchases will generate FREE donations for us!



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We'd like to thank you all for your continued support.





Make a flapping bat shadow puppet

Get creative with your friends and create some shadow puppets!



You will need :

✓ 1 sheet of paper

✓ A pencil

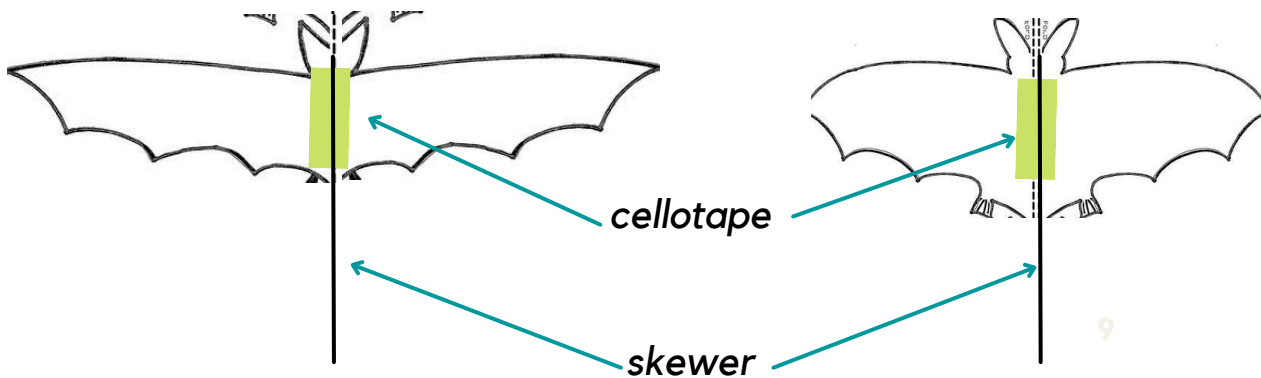
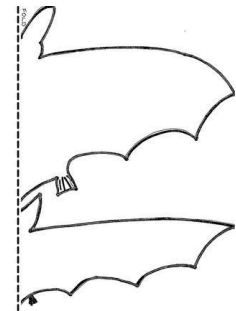
✓ Kebab/skewer stick
(or something similar e.g. thin twig)

✓ Scissors

✓ Sellotape

Instructions:

- 1 Fold your paper in half width ways to mark the middle and then open the paper up again.
- 2 Draw half a broad winged bat and half a narrow winged bat (use template on next page).
- 3 Fold the paper and cut out the bat shapes.
- 4 Lay the skewer along the fold and sellotape in place.



Visit the BwB website to find free, fun resources (in 6 languages) all about bats