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Voices for Wildlife

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[How to Catch a Bat](#)

Posted by [Guest Blogger](#) in [Voices for Wildlife](#) on December 7, 2016

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[A Bat Released](#) from [Becky Beamer](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Bat Research Kasanka National Park, Zambia, 2016

Videographer: Becky Beamer, Fulbright Scholar Zambia

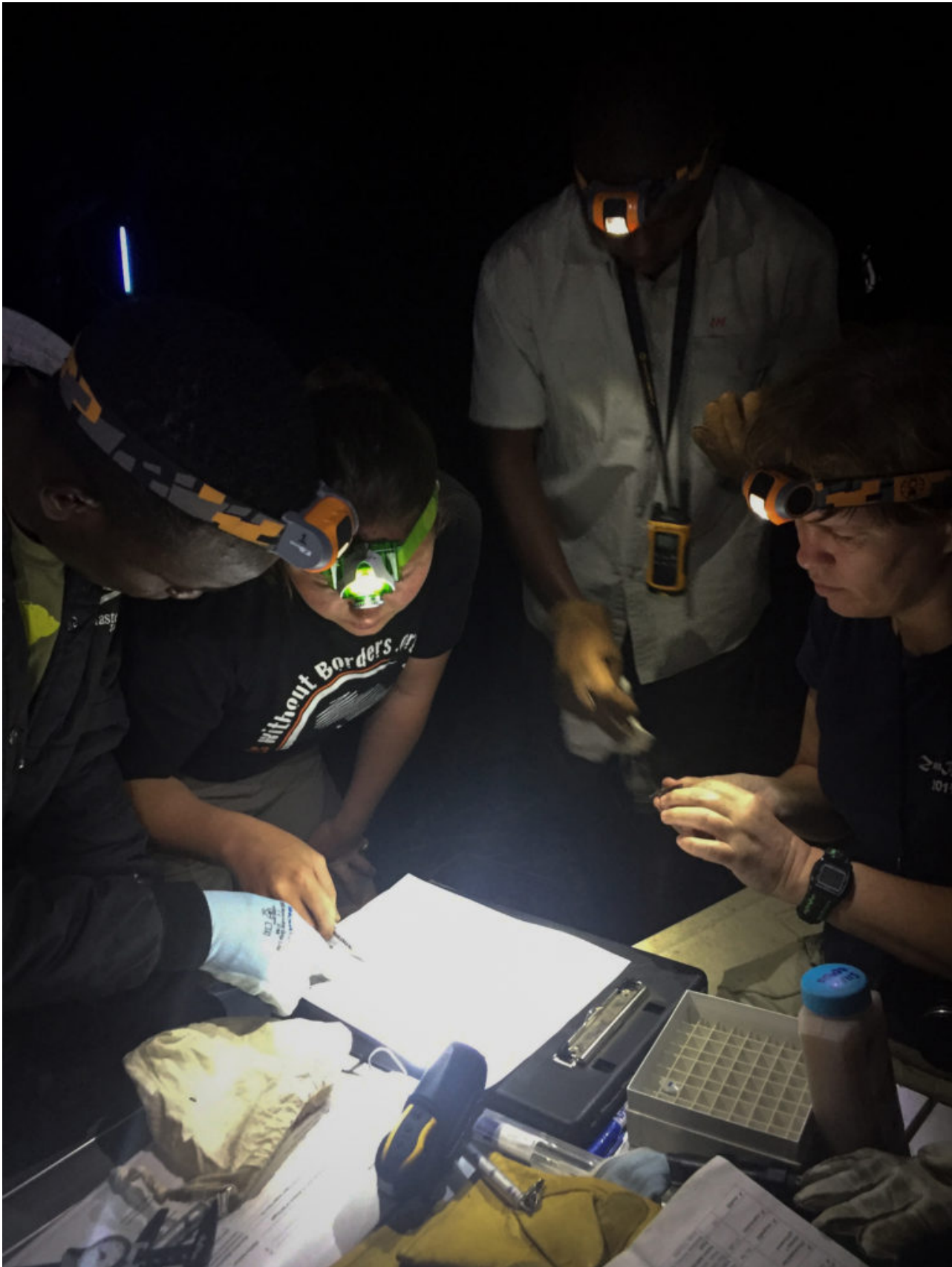
By Becky Beamer

Kasanka National Park, Zambia From late October through mid December, the largest migration of mammals on the planet, Straw-colored Fruit Bats (*Eidolon helvum*), join the already diverse cross section of bats in Kasanka National Park.



Bat Migration in Kasanka National Park. Credit: Becky Beamer

This *bat hot spot* attracts attention from bat researchers around the world including Helen Taylor-Boyd, Rob Mies, and Fiona Reid. Helen works closely with the Zambian Department of National Parks and Wildlife and Bats without Borders to gain access to the best bat research locations. She's leading an expedition of assistant researchers and bat enthusiast through Zambia. They are gathering data on primarily insect eating bat species. The newbies are being trained on the proper processes including netting, identifying, measuring, and properly releasing each bat. Bats are largely misunderstood and the data on Zambian bats is miniscule. They are documenting much needed information on species residing in Zambia as they spread the word about bat education and conservation.



Helen Taylor-Boyd and Research Team
Credit: Becky Beamer



Credit: Becky Beamer

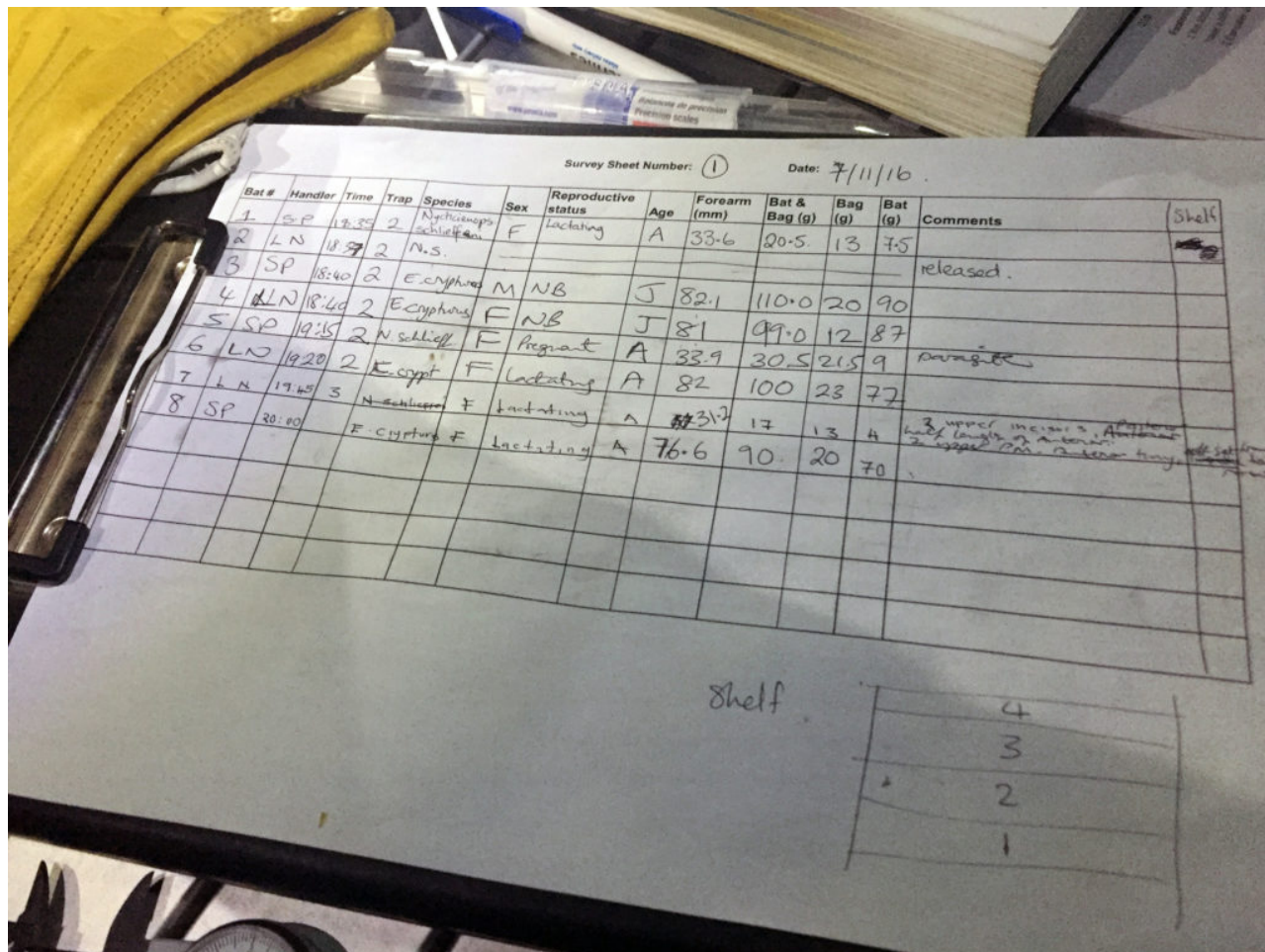
The first step to catch a bat is to put up a net. But, not just any net. These are nearly invisible nets that must be placed right before dusk. If a bat can determine that the net is an obstacle, it won't fly into the netting. The goal is to capture insect eating bats as they venture out to feed for the night. At the same time, the researchers also want to avoid capturing other species like birds or bugs in the nets.



KaRob Mies educating group on data collection. Credit: Becky Beamer

Next, the nets are checked every 3 -15 minutes. This involves walking quietly to each location and quickly checking the net. But, the netting areas are filled with unpredictable wildlife, so one must be joined by a guard. If a bat is captured, it is important to pull it out of the net very carefully because both it and the net are delicate. Also, you don't want the bat to struggle unnecessarily for extended periods of time.

Then, the bat is placed in a clean cotton bag while it awaits data collection. The documentation can continue into the night as each collected bat is weighed, measured, and observed. The wings are measure. The ears are measured and even the teeth are counted.



Data research collection sheet for the field.
Credit: Becky Beamer



Becky Beamer records bat research in Kasanka. Credit: Rob Mies

Finally, the bat is released back into its environment.

Helen's team was in Kasanka National Park for only 3 nights, and they captured at least 8 different species of bats. For more information or to get involved with your local bat conservation project contact the [Organization for Bat Conservation](#) #SaveTheBats.



Becky Beamer is currently residing in Lusaka, Zambia as a journalism Fulbright Scholar. Her motto is : “Every adventure supplies new inspiration for artistic expression, content and process. With so many stories to tell, there’s no reason to stay in one place.” See more of Becky Beamer’s work on her [website](#).

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1. Lisa Windflower
Philomath, Oregon - USA
December 8, 2016, 12:27 pm