

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

Bat monitoring on the Davidson River

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

We sat in the darkness on the edge of the Davidson River in North Carolina's Transylvania County. Every few minutes someone would turn on a bright headlamp and scan the net that was suspended across the river, searching for a bat that had gotten tangled in the net's thin threads.

It was part of an effort, led by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, to monitor the state's bat populations and keep a lookout for signs of the deadly bat malady known as White Nose Syndrome.

Every bat captured in the mist net - so named because of its thin, nearly invisible threads - was taken from the net to a table where biologists collected a host of information on the animals, including species, sex, weight, and forearm length, and wings were checked for scarring that could've come from white-nose syndrome. Then each bat was tagged and released.

In the end, biologists worked the Davidson River until 1:30 in the morning, catching and releasing 68 bats representing a handful of species, none of which showed obvious signs of white nose syndrome.

This scene has been played out numerous times across western North Carolina during the summer. Having these data in hand will allow wildlife biologists to track changes in the state's bat populations and gauge the impact of white nose syndrome should it arrive in Western North Carolina.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.