

Bureau of Land Management bat study aims to find roosts

Where do bats spend their days?

By DYLAN J. DARLING
The Bulletin

BEND — In her eight years catching bats, Nadja Schmidt has learned lessons about them.

First, they are fragile. Second, they should not be feared.

“A lot of pictures make them look scary,” she said. “But they eat mosquitoes. They don’t bite that hard, except for the big ones.”

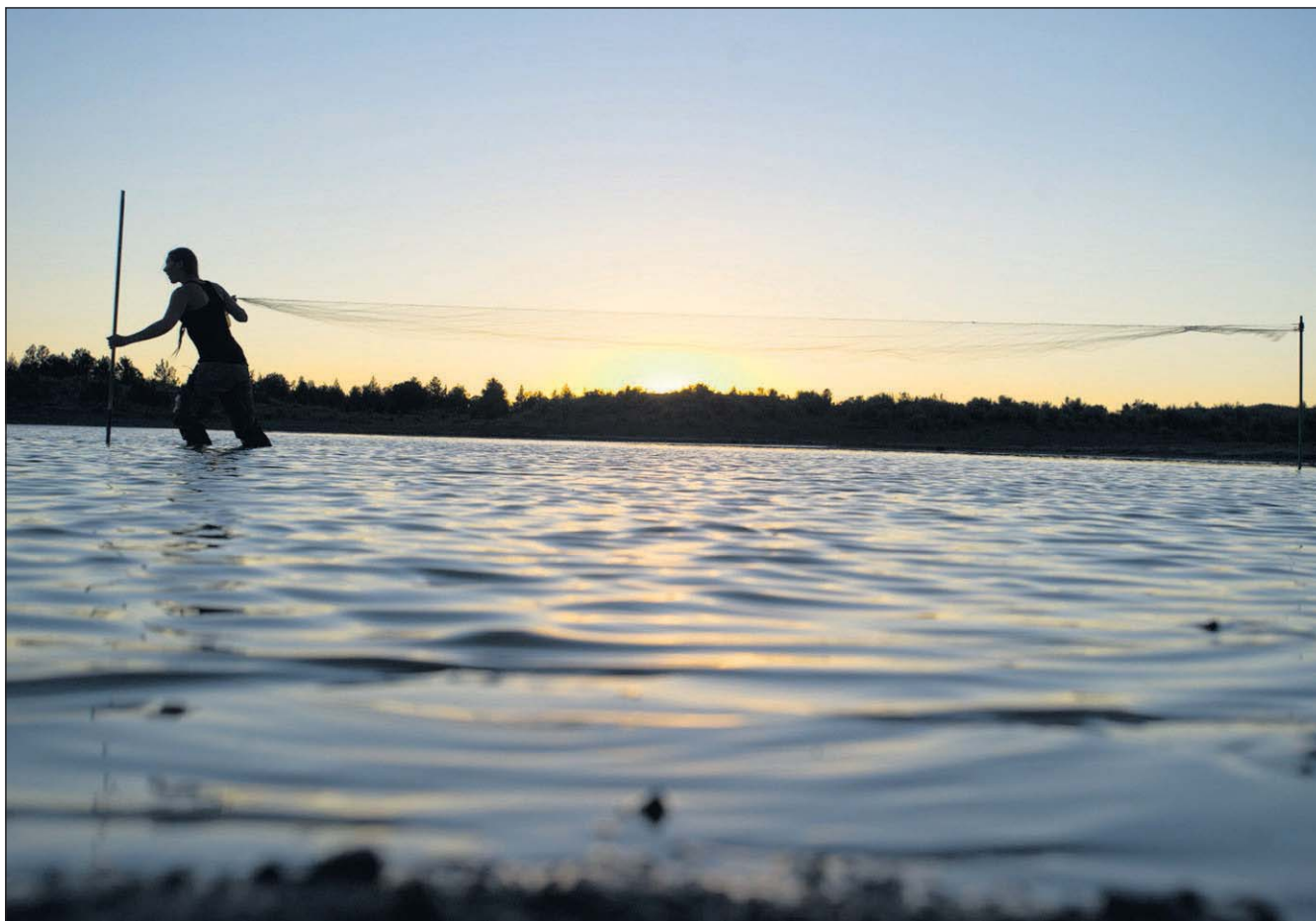
Schmidt, a wildlife technician with the U.S. Forest Service, was among a team of bat catchers that trekked out into the High Desert east of Bend on a recent Monday night. The mission was part of a two-year Bureau of Land Management project trying to determine where western long-eared myotis bats go during the daytime, said Christopher “Digger” Anthony, wildlife biologist with the BLM in Prineville.

“The main thing is to identify their roosts,” said Anthony, who is leading the research as part of his master graduate studies with Oregon State University in Corvallis. Figuring out where the bats go during the day will fill in gaps in knowledge about what habitats are most important for the flying mammals.

Shrouded in mystery

A 2007 study determined there were nine species of bat frequenting the playas — seasonal shallow lakes — south of U.S. Highway 20 between Brothers and Hampton. The western long-eared myotis proved the most common. The small bats, which have a wingspan of 10 to 12 inches and weigh 0.2 to 0.3 ounces, are shrouded in mystery, including where they go in the winter.

For now, the focus is figuring out where the bats roost on summer days, whether they prefer places such as rocks, living junipers, snags or burned-out logs. Juniper-thinning projects are underway near Frederick Butte, in part to



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Nadja Schmidt works on setting up a mist net across a small pond to capture bats near Brothers in July.

help sage grouse by promoting sage brush habitat, so Anthony wants to know if those are affecting the bats.

The study also hopes to determine whether male and female bats have different roost preferences.

Last year, Anthony’s team caught and affixed transmitters to 15 bats — eight males and seven females. This year he hopes to track 17 more bats.

Scientists depend on the tiny transmitters, attached to bats’ backs with surgical cement glue, to figure out where the bats go during the day. But before Anthony and his crew could attach the transmitters, they had to capture the bats. Catching bats requires nets, calm winds and some patience.

At dusk, the bat catchers stretched out mist nets — fine mesh nets strung between two poles like a volleyball net — over a playa near the base of Frederick Butte, about a 20-mile drive from Brothers. As



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Nadja Schmidt places a small transmitter on placed on the back of a bat shortly after the animal was captured in a mist near Brothers in July.

it grew dark, the bats began to bounce around the watering hole but were dodging the nets.

Winds probably were the problem. Bats notice the nets more when they move in the wind, said Lisa Clark, BLM spokeswoman in Prineville, who was also part of the bat-catching team.

blue rubber gloves, Cassandra Hummel, another BLM wildlife biologist, untangled a bat from the net. Then, she tucked it into a brown paper bag and put the bag in the pocket of her waders.

Bagging and pocketing bats does three things: keep them from flying off, keep them warm and keep them separated to avoid spreading illness among the bats. Bat researchers are particularly concerned about white-nose syndrome, prevalent in the northeast part of the U.S., spreading west. So far, there have not been cases of the disease, a skin infection caused by a white fungus, in Oregon.

Brought to the tailgate of a pickup, which serves as an outdoor lab table, the bats caught Monday night were identified, weighed and measured. While some bats tried to wiggle free while being examined, most calmed down when held snugly.

“They can see it as a barrier and avoid it,” she said, noting that the bats “see” something using echolocation.

Fly into the trap

After a change to a less windy part of the playa for one of the nets, bats started to fly into the trap. Wearing

Living up to their name, the bats have long ears.

Bat burrito

Anthony glued transmitters on some of the bats after snipping away a patch of their fur using nail scissors. About the size of half of an AAA battery, the transmitters have a 5/8-inch wire antenna, which dangles from the back of the bat. Members of the bat-catching team said the transmitters do not affect the bats’ flight. Anthony said the transmitters run for about 12 days, which is also about how long it is until the glue gives way and the device falls off the animal.

“So you have a really short window to collect as much data as you can,” he said.

The glue takes 10 minutes to dry, so once a transmitter is on a bat, Hummel wraps the animal in nylon and then folds it into a washcloth, hoping to keep its body temperature up.

“We call it a little bat burrito,” Hummel said. Active bats often have a body temperature around 102 degrees. If they cool down, they can quickly become lethargic. When this happened to bats, she would put a hand warmer next to them. Soon the bat would be warmed up and take flight, seemingly not bothered by the hardware glued to its back.

A day crew comes out at 7 a.m. the morning after the bats were captured. Using radio gear, they locate the bats, pinpointing where they are and what they have chosen for a roost.

“We are try to get visuals on the bats in the roosts,” Anthony said.

Despite the winds around sundown, Monday night turned about to be a good time to catch bats — the team caught eight in all. The end of a hot day often is a good time to catch bats, Anthony said. It is when bugs may swarm. Rain and cool weather keeps insects from buzzing around, which also keeps the bats from flying.

“They are not going to waste energy,” he said. “If there is not a food source out they won’t be out.”

Barge brings tons of buoys, other ocean debris to Seattle

By BECKY BOHRER
Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — Hundreds of tons of marine debris have been collected from the shores of Alaska and British Columbia as part of an unprecedented cleanup effort that an organizer says barely made a dent in the rubbish that remains on beaches.

A barge heaped with white, heavy-duty bags and loose piles of Styrofoam, bottles, commercial fishing gear, thousands of large buoys and floats and other debris arrived in Seattle on Thursday, three weeks after picking up its first load in Kodiak, Alaska.

Some of the debris collected likely was swept to sea by the 2011 tsunami in Japan, which killed thousands of people. But marine debris in general, including rubbish such as plastics and fishing nets, is an ongoing environmental problem.

In Seattle, volunteers will have to pick through the piles, sorting what can be recycled or returned and what must be taken by train to a disposal site in Oregon. Sorting isn’t expected to begin until next month and could take a couple weeks to complete, said Janna Stewart, tsunami marine debris coordinator with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation.

Still, project organizers were relieved when the barge docked in Seattle after a largely uneventful journey. There were no major weather delays along the way that would have racked up costs, and the bags held up as they were hoisted by helicopter to the barge from often remote, rocky beaches.

“Having it come in was just incredibly gratifying,” Stewart said.

Officials say the project, unprecedented in scale in Alaska, was spurred by the amount of material that has washed ashore; the high cost of shuttling small boatloads of debris from remote sites to port; and



Alan Berner/The Seattle Times

Tsuyoshi Ohtsuka, Consulate-General of Japan in Seattle, reaches out to a Japanese float (large, pink at left) that reads “white beach” Friday in Seattle. This debris was brought from Alaska on a 300-foot-long barge contain floats, building materials, fishing equipment from Japan, Korea, China and about half of it estimated to be from the tsunami. It’s part of a two-year, multi-national shoreline cleanup project.

a demand by the Anchorage landfill that fishing nets and lines — common debris items — be chopped up, a task that Stewart called impossible.

The mass of debris collected and loaded onto the barge, which is roughly the size of a football field, represents just 1 to 2 percent of the cleanup work that remains in Alaska, said Chris Pallister, president of the cleanup organization Gulf of Alaska Keeper, which coordinated the project.

Alaska has more coastline than all other coastal states combined, and Pallister estimates that crews could fill the barge three more times from what remains on one island alone, Montague Island in the Gulf of Alaska.

The area on Montague that needs to be cleaned is 74 miles long, Pallister said. Over the past three summers, cleanup crews have covered 10 miles of that stretch and filled at least 1,300 heavy-duty “super-sacks,” he said.

Many of sites that have been cleaned are remote — not the kind of beaches that attract tourists. But it’s important to clean the areas since disintegrating foam can seep into salmon streams or be ingested by birds, Stewart said. There is

also concern with the impact of broken-down plastic on marine life.

Pallister worries about securing funding to continue the cleanup work. The barge project was funded in part with \$900,000 from the state’s share of a \$5 million gift from the Japanese government for states affected by tsunami debris. Pallister’s group committed \$100,000. The total cost of the project was still being tallied.

The barge arrived in Kodiak on July 15, where it loaded debris collected in that region in 2013 and 2014. Most of the collection sites were in Alaska, with the last stop in Alaska near Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve. There also was a pickup site in British Columbia.

It can be hard to distinguish tsunami debris from run-of-the-mill debris without identifiable markers.

Before the tsunami, a lot of old fishing gear would land on beaches. But afterward, there was an inundation of Styrofoam and urethane foam used for things like building insulation that has continued to be found, Pallister said. Property stakes and crates used by fishermen in coastal Japan also have shown up.

LEGAL NOTICE

You Could Get \$164 or More If You Bought Gas in Oregon at an ARCO or ARCO *ampm* Station and Paid a Debit Card Fee

Case Update You may have seen a previous notice in this case. The Oregon state rule on unclaimed money in class actions has recently changed, and your rights may be affected.

People who did not previously receive a letter about this case, file a claim, or opt out of this lawsuit may need to take action. If this applies to you, you must file a claim or opt-out of this lawsuit to preserve your rights. Any money that is not claimed will be paid to Oregon Legal Services and an entity (or entities) chosen by the Court.

What is this case about? An Oregon jury found that BP West Coast Products LLC (“BPWCP”) charged more for gas than the amount registered at the pump and failed to properly disclose its prices when it charged a 35-cent fee to consumers who used debit cards to pay for gas at Oregon ARCO stations and *ampm* locations. BPWCP has denied the claims in this case and plans to appeal the jury verdict.

Am I eligible to file a claim? You can file a claim now if:

- You purchased gas at Oregon ARCO or ARCO *ampm* locations between January 1, 2011 and August 30, 2013 and paid a 35-cent debit card transaction fee,
- You did not receive a letter about the lawsuit,
- You did not already file a claim, and
- You did not opt-out.

If you already received a letter about this case, do not file a claim because you will receive an automatic payment.

How can I file a claim? File a claim online or by mail by **September 21, 2015**. If you file a valid claim, you will be eligible to receive \$164.85 or more, and you will give up your right to individually sue BPWCP for the claims in this case. The previous notice talked about a \$200 payment, but the fees required to pay Class Counsel will reduce payments by \$35.15.

What are my other rights? If eligible, you may also:

- Exclude yourself (or opt-out) online or by mail from the lawsuit by **September 21, 2015**. You will keep your right to sue BPWCP yourself.
- Object to the notice or claims process (or the fees if you file a claim now) by **September 18, 2015**.
- Do nothing. If you did not previously take action and now do not file a claim or exclude yourself, you will give up your right to get any money from this lawsuit and your right to sue BPWCP yourself.

For More Information
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