

# Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

## “Mr. Harold Janecke”

*Not a finer gentleman than he*.....I have had the great honour of coming to know Harold since my involvement with MBTCS. Most of you just joining the group will not know the considerable effort and time Harold Janecke has given over many years. Harold came to the small army of MBT in the late 70's when he took over 8 boxes in the Westcastle area. By the early 80's he had also taken on the Police Lake trail from the warden at the time Gary Walsh, time passed and he improved and increased the amount of boxes on the trail. A great love of banding the birds was needed as the absolutely beautiful area of Police Lake is the home of one “mother load” of mountain bluebirds. In the years Harold was with MBT he banded over 5000 birds – WOW!

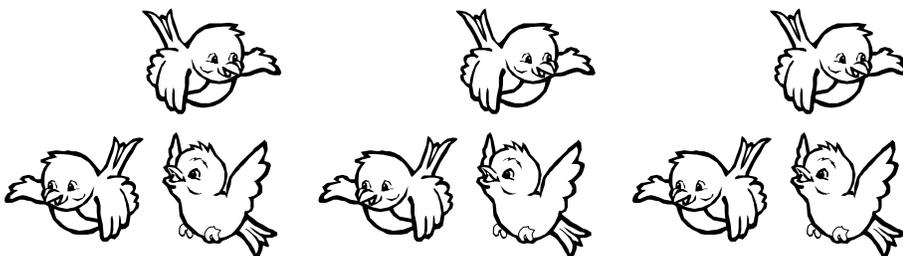
If one asks Harold of his fondest memories the answers are endless. He loved the areas he frequented, the locals would meet him on the road and soon he had more friends as well as a good meal to chat over. He can tell you of the quiet years at Police Lake when winter kills meant the fisherman stayed away yet the artist came to paint the mighty Chief Mountain. Recently the activity at Police Lake has increased due to good camping, fishing and best of views around. Anyone that meets Harold knows of what I speak, he is one of the most knowledgeable “bluebirders” I have ever come to know.

It is time to make a note of the many achievements Harold has been acknowledged for. In the late 90's MBT gave Harold a “Certification of Appreciation” for his outstanding contributions. Let's not forget to mention he was the recipient of the “2000 Blue Feather Award” for continued support and contributions to the MBT cause. A member like this can not receive enough acknowledgement as he is one of the original members and MBT came to be what it is today due to his work as well as many other original members just like him. I can not even begin to attest to the additional awards he has received from other organizations he belongs to.

Very sadly I must report that Harold has chosen to hand his trails to a few “newbies” this year. In his ever giving manner he is willingly assisting us train Shirley and Wendy. You ladies are two very lucky indeed; your teacher is a master at this game.

**Thank you Harold**...we all appreciate everything you have done and will continue to do for MBT. Please do stay in touch with us, and come to our meetings as we love to hear your stories.

*Very sincerely, Gwen Tietz*



Volume Eight ~ Spring 2008

*Editor: G Tietz*



## “Information Seminar/Banding Workshop”

Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

**Basement, MD of Pincher Creek**

**753 Kettles Street**

**Pincher Creek, AB**

**\$10 fee** (lunch & refreshments)

**Limited Seating!**

**Mentors needed!**

**RSVP: 553-2780/**

**345-5806/345-4777**

**Don't miss out!**



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It's time to get those gloves on! Time to check the bluebird boxes to be sure they're clean and in good repair for our blue friends. 2007 was a tough year for the birds due to the prolonged hot spell and the lack of their food supply, insects. These are natural issues from which, with our help, the bluebird population can quickly recover. I never thought I'd be looking forward to some grasshoppers and other insects but not seeing any in June last year just wasn't natural. Don't tell the farmers I wrote that!

It was also a tough year for MBT! We had a number of our banders 'retire' including our long time box-builder, Dave Friebel and our ever ready 'election officer' Harold Janecke. Fortunately Harold wants to show the monitors that will be taking over his trails the location of his boxes. This serves 2 key purposes; none of his boxes will be missed and he will be an excellent mentor for the new monitors. It's going to be tough to find someone as proficient at box construction as Dave. We are lucky that we have a good base of interested people that attended the workshops last year, to take over the many boxes on their trails.

We are also fortunate that Shell came through once again for us and supplied funds for us to buy banding pliers and Pincher Creek Coop will again supply plywood for nesting boxes. We thank them for their continuing support.

Once I've completed this article for Gwen's newsletter I'm heading out with my daughter to check my boxes and hopefully see the true signs of spring - flocks of Mountain Bluebirds.

Sincerely, Joe Michielson

**MBTCS Contact Information:** P.O. Box 401 Stn. Main  
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**Secretary:** Eleanor Thomson  
**Directors:** Ken Mackintosh 345-5806  
Lynn Bell  
Max Goodfellow  
Gwen Tietz

Master Permit/Band Manager Stats/  
Newsletter Editor: Gwen Tietz 553-2780



## Volunteers Needed!

**We still need your help!** If you are an existing monitor OR a bander we are **looking for mentors and trainers** to assist with this continued effort. If you are interested please call us, we need help to grow and in our effort to maintain trails that currently are not maintained. **Can you help us?** Some of our very dedicated banders/monitors need your help! We have one trail that needs "temporary" maintenance and another that needs a permanent replacement monitor/bander in training. We have aligned a few of our members to train new members in effective trail management. **Contact us if you can help!**



*The Board of Mountain Bluebirds Trails Conservation Society wishes to thank you in advance for your continued support. In order to guarantee the future of our efforts we must comply with the strictly enforced regulations beyond our control. Establishing future membership and consistent data remittances has become a long term goal of the Society and is a requirement of the banding permit. We view uniform training methods as a successful solution. Feel free to contact us if you have questions.*

MBT Board of Directors

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Boxes available	2085	2088	2062	2162	1907	1629
Successful nests	676	756	1026	1024	1331	655
Bluebird eggs	5274	4522	6453	7237	5900	3739
Sterile eggs	1810	530	660	579	363	352
Abandoned eggs		405	684	503	241	189
Dead nestlings	462	132	596	1230	352	264
Nestlings fledged	3145	3529	4545	4866	5296	2914
Adults banded	148	116	106	154	77	92
Nestlings banded	2148	2507	2701	2583	3149	1663
Recoveries	73	62	96	103	77	45
Tree swallow nests	535	568	623	788	609	675
Wren nests	14	20	18	49	22	29
Sparrow nests	30	34	36	39	63	54
Stolen/vandalized	35	32	57	52	27	140
Used twice	149	492	302	428	306	216

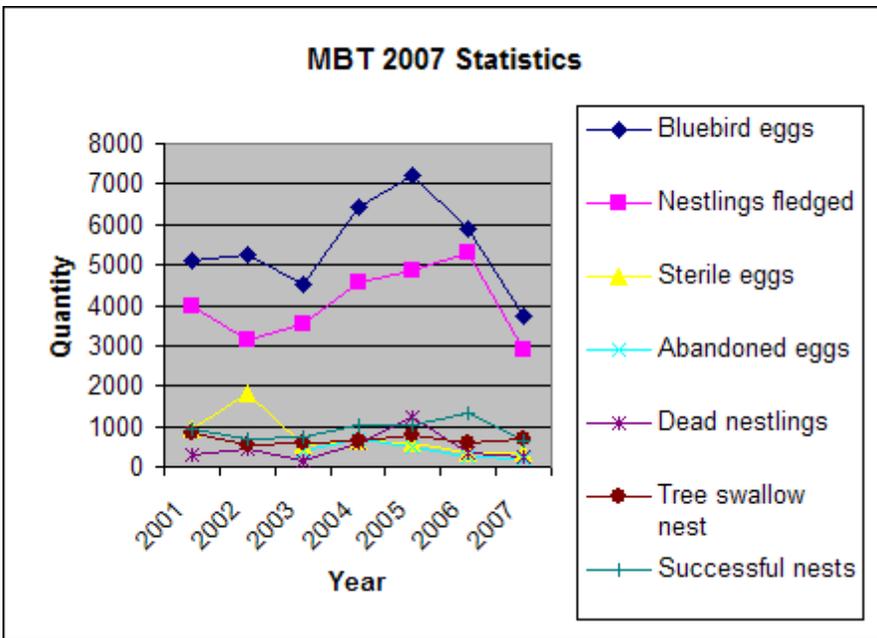
## “Just to Clarify”

In the past few years the same few questions about the statistics continue to be raised by the membership. We would like to address some of these and reprint the 2007 statistics for your consideration.

1) Why does the number of boxes available continue to decrease? This is not the case! The boxes are still out there in the great numbers we have all come to know. Our problem is the number of monitors & banders that remit annual statistics on these boxes continues to decrease. MBT's foremost mission is to make sure all boxes are cleaned and statistics are of secondary importance. In the past few years we have trained many “newbies” to the MBT trail network; our statistics should start to level out as each person comes up to speed on the importance of the annual data remittance. Please give us some time!

2) Why do the number of birds fledged, banded and dead nestlings appear to vary so much from year to year? Several answers to that one! Weather, food availability, frequency of boxes statistic collection, number of banders plus monitors and data remittance volume varies every year. Remember – we are volunteers and the statistics will naturally reflect all the variances listed above.

3) What is the difference between a sterile and an abandoned egg? This is really a judgment call for each bander or monitor. If an egg(s) appears to be unattended for a long period of time it can be considered abandoned. If a female broods a clutch and an egg(s) do not hatch they can be considered sterile.



Please forward additional questions to: [mtnblue@telus.net](mailto:mtnblue@telus.net)



## Your Consideration Is Appreciated!

On a side note, some of you have practiced a method for many years that may not be in the interest of others in the future.....if you remove bands provided from the strands provided, “pre-open” them and place them in/on an independent “container” prior to use you may not be aware of the unintentional weakening of the band. If you do not use these bands and rework the band, a second time, in order to return them at the year end you have stressed the material in the band.

Most of you will notice the poor material of the bands provided to us in 2006 by the banding office. When these bands in particular are opened, closed and reopened multiple times they rarely close properly. Remember, a band can not be placed on a bird if it inhibits movement in any way, hence it is destroyed.

Each of our banders is provided with *complete and new* packages each year. All “left over” bands on strands returned are used the following year by two banders. “Used” defective bands are reported as destroyed and can not be used. Hence, until the banding office can rectify the reported issues with the poor material, please do try not to revert to the previous methods considered a time saver.

Band supply is of concern and all of us wish to continue to band in the future. Please help us reduce the amount of destroyed bands to insure all of us the right to band in the years to come.

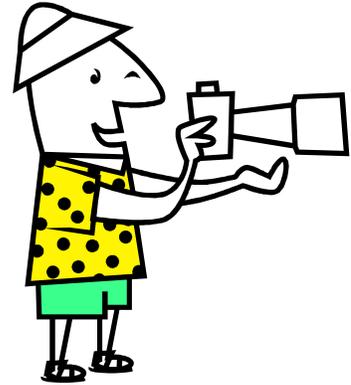
**Thanks once again for all your tireless efforts.**



### *Donations Graciously Accepted*

*In order to cover the cost of the postage and newsletter productions we would like to request all those that receive it to donate. Mountain Bluebirds Conservation Society is a non-profit Society and we do issue receipts for amounts over \$10. Please mail your donation to:*

**MBT  
P.O. Box 401  
Lethbridge, AB  
T1J 3Z1**



## Calling all Photographers!

**MBTCS is accumulating pictures and videos to create a PowerPoint template for the use of Education and Informative Presentations.**

**Do you have photos or videos that others could use for educational presentations?**

**We will have a copy of the template for all MBT speakers as soon as we can. Call us or email your pictures and videos to:**

[mtnblue@telus.net](mailto:mtnblue@telus.net)

**Thanks for your help!**



# Bluebird Trails Bluebird (MBT)

## Annual Convention in Missoula, Montana

Quality Inn 3803 Brooks Street

Call 1-800-424-6523 or 406-251-2670

(Be sure to tell them "MTB" for special room rate)

[Click here to print your Registration Form](#)

### 2008 Mountain Bluebird Trails Convention Speakers

\***Gary Burnett** – “Blackfoot Challenge” a citizen – initiated land conservation effort.

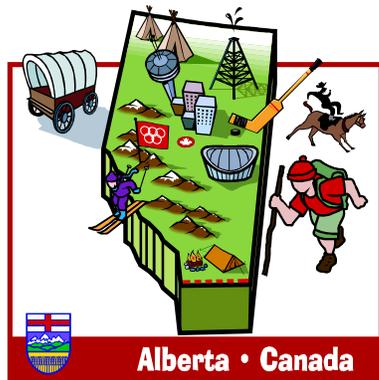
\***Kathy Heffernan & Leo Dougherty** - will showcase Sentinel High School students efforts to support bluebird population near Missoula.

\***Dr. Harry Power III**, PhD, – Professor Emeritus of Behavioral Ecology from Rutgers University on “Mountain and Western Bluebirds”

\***Kristi DuBois** - Native Species Coordinator, MT FWP, – “The Bats of Montana ”

\***Amy Cilemberg** – “The Flammulated Owls” Amy works for the Avian Sciences Center at the University of Montana.

\* **Vince Yannone** – retired MT FWP biologist and educator on “Montana Wildlife”.



## LOOKING FOR A HOBBY?

*Calling all “handy men”!* Currently we have a stockpile of bluebird boxes tucked away to distribute to existing monitors and banders. **BUT**, this will not last forever! Can you help us?

We have the pattern, and gratefully we wish to acknowledge the donation of plywood by the Pincher Creek Co-op of plywood. Now we just need some help cutting and assembling the boxes. Do you know of someone?

Sadly, we lost one of the best box builders when Dave Friebe retired last year. Again, we wish to thank him for many hours of his labour and careful attention to detail.

If you can assist us please call Ken Mackintosh or Joe Michielson and we will arrange to get supplies out to you. Please pass the word on to anyone that might be able to assist our cause.

*Remember!*

*It's for the birds!*





# Mountain Bluebird Trails Conservation Society

Volume Eight ~ Fall 2008

Editor: G Tietz



## *“The Silence of the Songbirds”*

Recently I took some time and read a book written by the Canadian author Bridget Stutchbury called “The Silence of the Songbirds”. The book was awarded the 2008 Governor General’s Award for Excellence in writing. I invite all of you to sample a review I found at the listed website below. I can not convey my recommendation strongly enough. Of course, I read the book whilst extracting some of the most exotic birds on the planet out of nets on a research site in Costa Rica. Yes, it had a great impact on my outlook in general. May you also find some time in your life to read this excellent book by a fine Canadian.

[http://advocacy.britannica.com/blog/advocacy/2008/04/the-silence-of-the-songbirds/#book\\_review](http://advocacy.britannica.com/blog/advocacy/2008/04/the-silence-of-the-songbirds/#book_review)

*“Somewhere in North America, a meadow is silent, a forest without song. Here a pair of mockingbirds has disappeared; their habitat suitable for robins has been bladed. A meadow hospitable to vireos has been flooded; a desert river that acts as a beacon for meadowlarks, cedar waxwings, willow flycatchers, and hummingbirds has gone dry.*

*All over North America, populations of songbirds are declining. They have been doing so for the last couple of decades, to an extent that is alarming because, to make a poor play on words, songbirds are the proverbial canaries in the great coal mine that is the environment.*

*More is needed: more habitat, bigger and unbroken patches of it. More work needs to be done if we are to avert what appears to be a looming biodiversity crisis. York University biologist Bridget Stutchbury writes in her fine book *Silence of the Songbirds*: “We are losing entire groups of animals and plants, not just one species at a time. The migratory songbird declines are not limited to just a handful of unlucky birds; instead, dozens of species are in a chronic downhill slide. They come from every walk of life: grassland birds as well as forest birds, birds that spend the winter in Mexico and those that go all the way to Argentina, insect eaters and fruit eaters, those that breed in the far north and others that prefer the southern states. Their common decline tells us that our environmental problems are sweeping in scale, large enough to affect birds as they travel across two continents.”*

You too can “google” more.....

Gwen Tietz

## ***“MBT Annual General Meeting”***

***Saturday, November 1st, 2008***

**2:00 p.m.**

**1001 9 Ave South**

**Lethbridge, AB**

**Guest Speaker:**

**Gwen Tietz**

**BANDING BIRDS IN COSTA RICA!**

***Informative Slideshow & Video***

***Snacks & Refreshments***

***\$5.00 donation appreciated***

**See you there!**



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2008 was another tough year for our bluebirds. The spring came late and was cold and wet. Despite the late start I thought I had a good first hatch but the many of them perished due to the cold wet weather. I had nestlings from newly hatched to within a day or so of fledging die and I had 2 nests of eggs that were abandoned. I was pleased to hear monitors had better luck out west, but I also heard from some of the monitors around Lethbridge that they had fewer BB nesting than past years.

Fortunately the second brood for me was a different story, all the nests except one were successful, but the total number was down probably because the boxes were taken by swallows. Like usual I'm hoping for a more successful 'next year'.

On some positive notes we as an organization benefited again from a donation that the Pincher Shell Gas Plant gave us for banding pliers and Pincher Creek COOP came through with their usual plywood donation. Special thanks go out to the father of one of our new monitors, Henry Redekop (Shelley Coffey's dad), for building a number of boxes for us.

The article in the spring Lethbridge Living Magazine stirred up a lot of interest and produced some new monitors to take care of trails which were given up for various reasons. Another big plus from the article was, Goldie Weeks, who teaches carpentry at the Lethbridge Correctional Center contacted me to build boxes. His students built about 40 boxes for us and I am hoping they will continue to build more boxes in the future.

Gwen was able to host one BB seminar in Pincher this year which I was unable to attend but understand was very successful. Thanks to Fred Wishneski for booking the room and making all the other arrangements in Pincher.

Of course, special thanks must go out to all our monitors new and old for taking care of the boxes/trails that were vacated.

I hope all of you can make it to our AGM. Gwen will be giving an exciting presentation on her 'bird netting' trip down south. The netting would have gone better had she invited me along.

Remember there's no time like southern AB's 'Indian Summer' to clean out your boxes and fix them up for next year.

*Sincerely, Joe Michielson*

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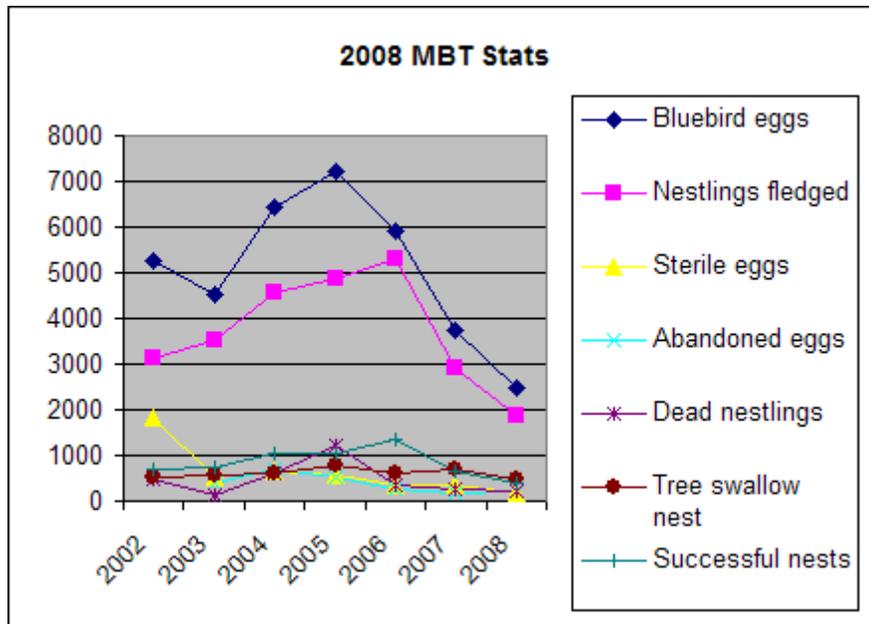


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Sterile eggs	530	660	579	363	352	187
Abandoned eggs	405	684	503	241	189	213
Dead nestlings	132	596	1230	352	264	219
Nestlings fledged	3529	4545	4866	5296	2914	1891
Adults banded	116	106	154	77	92	54
Nestlings banded	2507	2701	2583	3149	1663	1151
Recoveries	62	96	103	77	45	32
Tree swallow nests	568	623	788	609	675	482
Wren nests	20	18	49	22	29	41
Sparrow nests	34	36	39	63	54	29
Stolen/vandalized	32	57	52	27	140	10
Used twice	492	302	428	306	216	171

Band Issuance	MOBL
No/bands issued/2008	3046
No/bands USED/2008	<b>1205</b>
Bands returned in 2008	1841
No/bands issued/2007	3411
No/bands USED/2007	<b>1757</b>
Bands returned in 2007	1654
No/bands issued/2006	4948
No/bands USED/2006	<b>3526</b>
Bands returned in 2006	1422
No/bands issued/2005	5254
No/bands USED/2005	<b>3122</b>
Bands returned in 2005	2132
No/bands issued/2004	3810
No/bands USED/2004	<b>3073</b>
Bands returned in 2004	737
No/bands issued/2003	4467
No/bands USED/2003	<b>2623</b>
Bands returned in 2003	1844
No/bands issued/2002	3838
No/bands USED/2002	<b>2307</b>
Bands returned in 2002	1531
No/bands issued/2001	4107
No/bands USED/2001	<b>2880</b>
Bands returned in 2001	1227



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## Whoa! Dismal Year!

It seems that the overall consensus for 2008 was not that good. The weather attributed to a rather odd "first brood" that was delayed and then the second brood did not occur on many of the trails. As you can see above stats, loads of eggs but not too many successful nests. Banding is falling due to fewer nestlings and the "newbies" coming on board over the upcoming years. Let's all hope the 2009 season will be much better for the bluebirds. Take heart, it is October 13<sup>th</sup> today and there are 3 bluebirds in my yard today!





## Wind Turbines Give Bats the "Bends," Study Finds

Brian Handwerk for [National Geographic News](#)

August 25, 2008

Wind turbines can kill bats without touching them by causing a bends-like condition due to rapidly dropping air pressure, new research suggests. Scientists aren't sure why, but bats are attracted to the turbines, which often stand 300 feet (90 meters) high and sport 200-foot (60-meter) blades. The mammals' curiosity can result in lethal blows by the rotors, which spin at a rate of about 160 miles (260 kilometers) per hour. But scientist Erin Baerwald and colleagues report that only about half of the bat corpses they found near Alberta, Canada, turbine bases showed any physical evidence of being hit by a blade. A surprising 90 percent showed signs of internal hemorrhaging—evidence of a drop in air pressure near the blades that causes fatal damage to the bats' lungs with a condition called barotrauma. In humans, the condition is related to the bends and can affect divers and airplane passengers during ascents and descents.

### The "Bends"

"As a turbine blade goes around, it creates lift—like an airplane's wings—and there is a small zone of [dropping] pressure, maybe a meter or so in diameter, on the tips of the blades," explained Baerwald, a doctoral candidate at the University of Calgary, in Alberta. "Bats fly through this area, and their lungs expand, and the fine capillaries around the edges of the lungs burst." The bats' lungs subsequently fill with fluid, and the animals essentially drown. "We compare it to divers—they are pretty much dying of the bends," Baerwald said. Bats have no natural defense against the unnaturally dramatic pressure changes. "Bats can actually detect pressure changes, but we're talking large-scale, relatively slow changes, like the coming of a storm front," said Baerwald. "This is something entirely different."

Most bats that fall victim to turbines are migrating species, such as hoary bats, eastern red bats, and silver-haired bats. There are not enough data to determine how wind turbine fatalities might be affecting populations of these slow-reproducing mammals. Birds are also killed by blows from wind turbine rotors but their rigid, tube-like lungs can better withstand air pressure changes.

### Curiosity Killed the Bat

"They are the first to have done a large scale look at this barotrauma," Bat Conservation International (BCI) biologist Ed Arnett said of the researchers. "It's fascinating information," said Arnett, who is not involved with the study. "But ultimately it might not matter so much how [the bats] die but what is attracting them to the turbines in the first place." Preventing the bat deaths has challenged experts for years.

"We've partnered with industry and federal agencies to raise and spend about two million dollars looking for a solution," said BCI founder and president Merlin Tuttle. Laurie Jodziewicz, of the American Wind Energy Association in Washington, D.C., said where the turbines are placed may be the key. "Bats are not being [killed] at all the wind projects all over the country—it is happening in some places and not others," she said. "We're trying to determine before construction what areas might be risky."

Turbines create drops in pressure drop during normal operations, so the problem could possibly be addressed by changing when the turbines run, according to BCI's Tuttle. "A large portion of the kills occur at the lowest wind speeds," he said, "and at those low speeds [the turbines] are not generating appreciable electricity anyway." Bats also are at particular risk during migration periods in late summer and early fall, when many turbine-related fatalities occur.

Arnett, Baerwald, and others are currently conducting tests to see if raising the "cut-in" wind speed at which rotors begin to turn will save bats—particularly during peak migration periods. "It won't eliminate the problem, but it's a good step in the right direction," Tuttle said.