

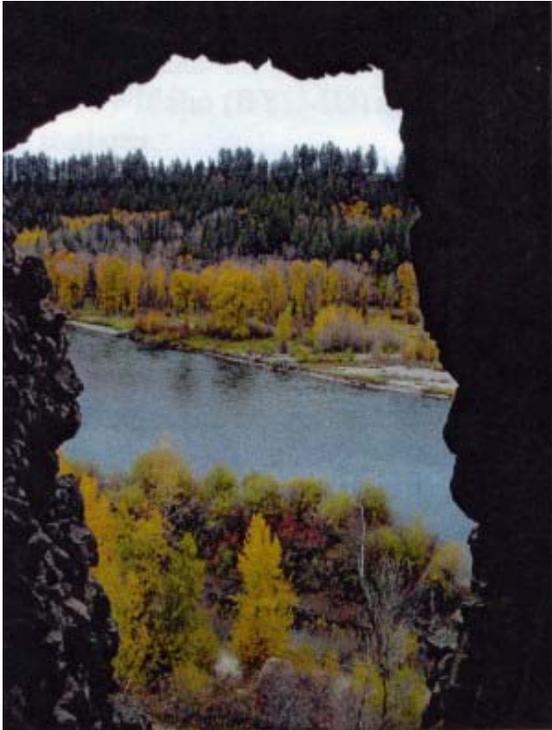
# SUCCESS STORIES

REPORTING EXAMPLES OF OUR PROGRESS IN CARING FOR THE LAND AND SERVING PEOPLE



## Southern Research Station Receives 2008 Wings Across the Americas Award

By [Tammy Mason](#) on Aug 8, 2008



The Outside World from a Bat's Perspective.

*Studies included relationships between bat habitat use and local, stand and landscape characteristics on the Sumter National Forest.*

The chance of a person dying from being struck by lightning is far greater than contracting rabies from a bat. Yet people often associate bats with myths and negative connotations such as this one.

Contrary to popular belief, bats have numerous ecological roles as pollinators, seed dispersers and insect controllers. Their large consumption of insects contributes to healthy forests and agricultural crops; however, bat populations are globally declining mainly due to habitat destruction.

In 2000, to address this issue and the needs of land managers, researchers and scientists whose work affects or is affected by bats, the Southern Research Station initiated a comprehensive research program on the ecology and conservation of southern forest bats. Developed and led by Dr. Susan Loeb, Southern Research Station research ecologist, the outstanding research program conducted by the station and its partners received the 2008 Wings Across the Americas Award (WATA) for its efforts in bat conservation.

"Many benefits have been generated because of the research program including numerous publication and reports to federal and state agencies," said Loeb. "Other benefits include increased visibility and knowledge of bats and their importance, in-depth studies on the ecology of species of special concern, and the dispelling of many myths about bats."

Part of the Upland Hardwood Ecology and Management Research Unit, the research program serves the needs of managers in a variety of ecosystems throughout the southeast. Three main areas of research focus on: the ecology and conservation of endangered and sensitive species; habitat associations of all southern forest bats and the effects of forest

management practices on their habitat use and populations; and development and evaluation of robust methods for inventorying and monitoring forest bats.

Results of the work have been used in several biological assessments on the Sumter and Chatthoochee national forests. Additionally, the research program has funded many graduate research programs, summer internships and has provided volunteer opportunities.

Today, the Southern Research Station is continuing its research on bats in southern forests. Current projects include: the ecology and conservation of Rafinesque's big-eared bats in South Carolina; the effects of oak regeneration techniques on bat activity, habitat use, and the insect prey base; the use of stable isotopes to track migration of bats in the eastern US; and testing techniques to inventory and monitor forest bats.

Wings Across the Americas is a Forest Service program that represents an integrated and collaborative approach to bird conservation across agency program areas. The annual awards ceremony celebrates exceptional work that conserves birds, bats and butterflies and their habitats across the Americas. It recognizes the important roles that these sometimes overlooked species play in the environment and in relation to human concern.

The award was shared with the following national forests in Region 8: Sumter, Chattahoochee, Daniel Boone and Nantahala. The Congaree and Great Smoky Mountain National Parks; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Clemson University and MeadWestvaco also shared the award.

"One of the most rewarding experiences of this project is working with a large, diverse group of partners and cooperators," said Loeb. "I have never seen a more enthused group who shows genuine interest in results."

For more information about this story, please contact Michelle Burnett, public affairs staff officer, at [michelleburnett@fs.fed.us](mailto:michelleburnett@fs.fed.us) or at (803) 561-4091.