

Bat Books for Schools

The South Dakota Bat Working Group is dedicated to fostering accurate information, sound science, and responsible management to benefit bats in South Dakota. One of the group's education efforts is the "Bat Books for Schools" program, where 12-volume sets of books about bats are donated to elementary school libraries and public libraries serving smaller schools. The set features information about twelve fascinating kinds of bats from around the world to help provide young students with facts rather than myths about these interesting mammals.

Prior to applying for Wildlife Diversity Small Grants funding, the SD Bat Working Group and participating sponsors had already donated book sets to 43 elementary schools. Wildlife Diversity funding more than doubled the previous results, allowing donations to 61 additional schools in 34 counties, reaching more than 15,000 students. Young students and teachers have been delighted with this resource.

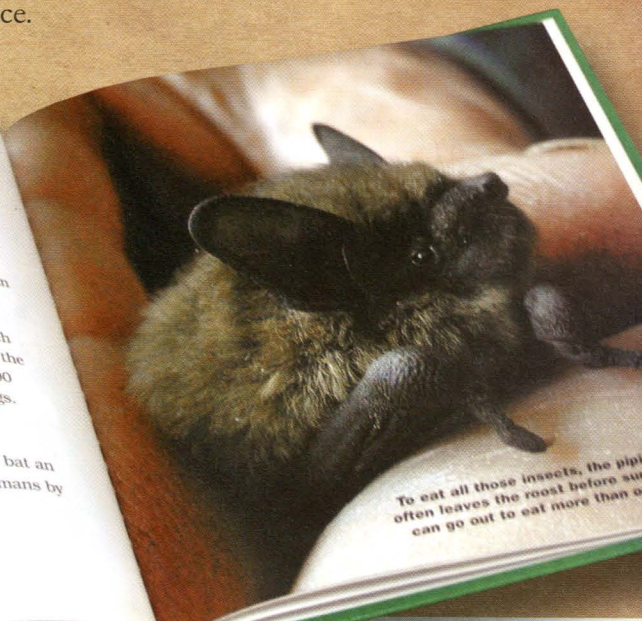
FOOD

Bumblebee bats are **prey** for hungry predators. But, they are also predators themselves. Bumblebee bats eat insects and spiders. They find them around the tops of trees. They can hover in the air to catch their food if necessary. Or, they can fly after it and catch it in their wings. For this, they have a special flap of skin behind their wings.

Bats can catch an amazing number of insects each night. The tiny pipistrelle bat is slightly larger than the bumblebee bat. However, it can eat more than 2,000 insects a night. Larger bats can eat even more bugs. Some northern bats have been found to eat 1,000 mosquitoes per hour.

Their big appetite makes the little bumblebee bat an important part of the **ecosystem**. They help humans by reducing the number of insect pests.

18



To eat all those insects, the pipistrelle often leaves the roost before sunrise to go out to eat more than a

Thank you for the books
They are really good

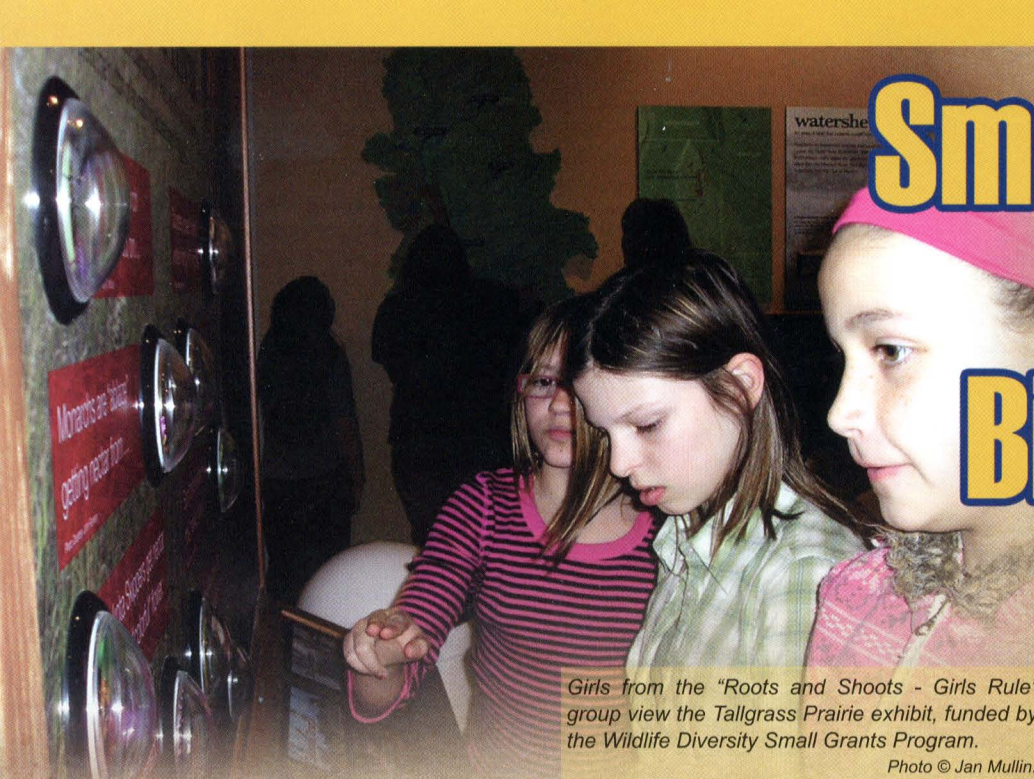
From: Robyn

SD Game
Fish and
Parks
Thank
you



Small Grants Yield Big Results

by Eileen Dowd Stukel



Girls from the "Roots and Shoots - Girls Rule" group view the Tallgrass Prairie exhibit, funded by the Wildlife Diversity Small Grants Program.

Photo © Jan Mullin.

One challenge the Game, Fish and Parks Department faces is to match funding with the wide array of monitoring, research, conservation, recreation, and education needs.

Former Game, Fish and Parks biologist Doug Backlund was looking for a way to assist groups and citizens around South Dakota with their efforts to improve the health and diversity of South Dakota's wildlife.

So, in the mid-1990s Doug suggested that a small portion of Wildlife Division funds be set aside and used for a Wildlife Diversity Small Grants Program. It wasn't an original idea, but it had the potential to make a big impact on our state.

The GFP Wildlife Division's mission provides guidance for our agency's work with wildlife management:

The Wildlife Division will manage South Dakota's wildlife and fisheries resources and their associated habitats for their sustained and equitable use, and for the benefit, welfare, and enjoyment of the citizens of this state and its visitors.

The program would offer competitive grants up to \$5,000 to individuals or groups for projects that were local in nature, required a limited amount of work; or could be completed in a short time, such as over one summer or field season.

The Wildlife Division regularly conducts and sponsors projects that rely on matching federal funds. Many of these are relatively inexpensive and last for several years. Our federal fund match projects target specific resources, such as sport fish, birds and mammals, rare species, or federal threatened or endangered species.

But what about fulfilling the increasing interest in outdoor education and nature interpretation?

What about information gaps with invertebrates, amphibians, and reptiles?

How can we learn more about

some unique wildlife habitats, aside from general knowledge gained from broader wildlife research projects?

To help with those answers, we began funding small projects through the Wildlife Diversity Small Grants Program in 1997. Since then, we have seen 111 projects completed. A pleasant surprise has been the high quality of products and the level of expertise we experienced with our participants.

Like residents in all states, South Dakota citizens take a strong interest in wildlife and natural habitats. Some are willing to take their interest to the next level by becoming a biologist, or ecologist, or as a citizen scientist. These active citizens with their passion for wildlife and nature have contributed to the success of the Small Grants Program.

Seed money in this program has helped produce scientific publications and field guides, and has led to larger more complicated projects.

It would be difficult to point to the best and brightest of the projects that have been launched with the help of this funding; they are all worthwhile. For a complete list of small grants projects completed through 2010, visit: <http://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife/funding/wildlife-diversity-small-grants.aspx>

The project theme rotates between education, monitoring, and research. Three projects are highlighted to show how these grants have yielded big results for the diverse wildlife resources of our state.