

BAT WORLD SANCTUARY

OUR NEW FACILITY



Our New Bat World

By Founder & President Amanda Lollar

Our biggest accomplish in 2014 was, without doubt, our new sanctuary to accommodate more bats in need.

It began in 2007 as a pencil drawing on a scrap piece of notebook paper, created late one night after wrapping up the final day's feeding of the motherless bats that were orphaned that summer. At the time the drawing was just a hopeful dream, something methodically sketched while trying to unwind from an exhausting day. The next morning I put the sketch in a safe place in a filing cabinet, and every so often I'd come across it when looking for a document. I'd always stop and let it take me away for a moment, just thinking about how magical it could be for the bats in our care. Then I'd put it away again for safekeeping.

At the time I assumed that it would take 10 to 15 years to raise the funds to build a new facility. Our Board researched grants and we held fundraisers, with every penny we could spare saved for our goal. Then, in 2010 we had the terrible misfortune to become the victim of a malicious cyber-stalker dead-set on destroying Bat World Sanctuary (see page 46). Because of her defamatory donations dwindled and all of our savings had to be used to merely survive. It was the worst nightmare imaginable. By 2011 our dream of a new sanctuary died when we were down to only \$200 in the bank and we were forced to borrow money to continue operating.

Despite all this, we remained determined and held on. And then, almost magically, we were saved by a tiny being called Lil Drac. I had created a video of him being cared for in Nov. of 2012, and almost overnight his video went viral. Suddenly, we had more support than we'd ever had before, and in less than a month we had enough saved to buy a few acres of land.

We found 13 beautiful acres less than five miles from our old facility. It is heavily wooded,



March, 2013

contains a huge pond and is full of wildlife. Shortly after purchasing the land we built a bat castle for wild bat populations (see page 27) and after the bat castle was built, we scouted the land and decided on the location for the new sanctuary. The photo on the previous page shows red dots that were added to the picture in 2013 to mark the spot where the new facility would be located.

Now that the land and the new wild sanctuary was secure, we needed to raise the funds to actually begin the construction on the new Bat World. The “land that Lil Drac bought” took almost everything we had, so we set about raising money through crowd-funding contests. Thanks to the popularity of Lil Drac and his new fans, we placed 3rd in all three contests, bringing in over \$100,000 toward a new facility. At that point (September of 2013) we made a Board decision to secure a loan to take our dream to fruition. A month later I received a call from Scott Petty, Vice President at First Financial Bank, with the news that our loan was approved. As I hung up the phone I felt tears of gratitude welling up in my eyes. Gratitude for Lil Drac, the tiny bat who literally saved us from financial ruin, gratitude for our incredible supporters who believed in us and helped us survive during the worst possible time of our entire existence, and gratitude for Scott Petty, who took the time to come to Bat World Sanctuary to better understand our mission, and then worked on our behalf to help us secure the loan.

Finally, in November of 2013 that now tattered penciled drawing made six years earlier was retrieved from the filing cabinet, but with a different intention this time—to use it to create reality in the form of a blueprint. Volunteer Larry Crittenden, an engineer, drafted several versions of the original drawing until the plans were absolutely perfect. Then, with the vast expertise of general contractor Mike Santibanez, the drawing came to life. The photos on the following pages show the construction as it occurred.

And the pencil sketch? Well, that treasured drawing is now laminated for protection and it is has been filed away. It now sits safe and secure under the very roof that it was used to create.





Left: In January of 2014 a 60 foot by 120 foot concrete foundation was poured.

Although it was only 30 degrees Fahrenheit the concrete set within a matter of days and allowed the large steel framework to start going up.

Right: By March the steel frame was complete. Metal buildings are unique in that the door and windows go in before the walls are added.

Below: The March winds slowed construction significantly as it didn't allow insulation or walls to be secured. We opted for not adding windows to the North side of the building to aid in keeping the build-





Above: Framing the interior began in April. Two-by-fours were bolted to the concrete floors to form a base -an outline of sorts- for each room. The two bay doors, each 14 feet across, mark the area of the building where the semi-outdoor flight enclosure was built. When completed, the skylights above the enclosure, coupled with the open bay doors, allows the bats a sense of being outdoors without exposure to the elements. Staff and internship quarters were built just past the bay area. **Below:** The wooden framework for the offices and the inner flight enclosures can be seen. This photo was taken from the bay area looking toward the front of the building.



THE SEMI-OUTDOOR FLIGHT ENCLOSURE



Above: By May the interior framing was completed and the two sides of the building were closed off. The inner flight areas, offices, kitchen and clinic are on the left with the staff and intern quarters on the right. The bay area is insulated and not temperature controlled in order to allow ambient temperatures for the bats. **Below:** (Photo taken from the bay doors looking inside.) Framework for the semi-outdoor flight area began in June. The steel cage was covered in stainless steel mesh and the floor was painted with epoxy paint for ease of cleaning. The white double doors on the right lead to the fruit bats' inside flight enclosure. On mild nights, which occur 9 to 10 months out of the year in Texas, the doors can be opened allowing the bats to experience the outdoors.





Above: By late August the semi-outdoor flight area was completed and the bats were allowed to experience their 40' x 32' semi-outdoor area for the very first time. At first they were apprehensive, with only one or two venturing out, but within an hour there were dozens of bats gleefully careening around their new-found playground.

Below: This view shows the security bars on the bay doors, which were also covered in an almost invisible stainless steel mesh called Zoomesh. This allows the doors to remain open all night without fear of predators, or even mice and insects, venturing inside. Clear shower curtains were hung along the sides of the enclosure to allow for easy hosing off and cleaning as volunteer Mark Gilley is doing here. A few of Bat World's rescued dogs can also be seen lounging around in the front of the enclosure.



THE BATS' KITCHEN

Right: Our previous kitchen was functional but very crowded, with only two people being able to work comfortably at a time.

Below, right and left: This sink was our very first purchase for the new facility, obtained on Ebay for only \$150. It sat in front of the bat's flight cage at our former facility before finally being built into a functional cabinet at the new facility.

Bottom: Our new kitchen has ample room for volunteers and enough storage space to hold almost a month of food, which cuts down on errands and also fuel. Volunteers Shannon, Mitch and Angela can be seen making the nightly ration of fruit.



THE CLINIC

Right: Our previous clinic was functional and we were able to save thousands of lives in the small space provided, however, training interns was difficult due to the crowded conditions.

Below: In February the new clinic was just taking shape. The door leads to a small quarantine cage for newly arriving bats.



Upper and middle right: Our new clinic was completed in late July. There is ample room for training interns as well as a separate food prep and storage area for the insectivorous bat's needs.

Below: The photo on the left was taken in May and shows sheet rock being added to the office area. The photo on the right shows the completed new office area, which includes three work stations to fill orders, answer emails and research grants. The large shipping counter in the front allows us to more efficiently handle book orders and bat sponsorships.



THE OFFICE AREA



THE FRUIT BATS' INDOOR FLIGHT ENCLOSURE



Above: Framing of the inside flight enclosures was near complete in May, which then allowed the stainless steel framework for the interior cage to go up. The windows shown in the background lead to the office area (page 35), and the double doors lead to the semi-outdoor flight cage (page 33).

Below: After the framework for the enclosures were welded, polypropylene netting was secured to the frame and a padded vinyl floor -funds provided by the Two Herons Foundation- was added (page 40). A padded floor is necessary for older bats who sometimes have a tendency to fall in their sleep.





Above: In July artist and bat rehabilitator Sarah Kennedy flew from New York to Texas to paint a forest mural on the walls just outside the flight enclosure. This beautiful 30 foot long mural will provide year-round visual enrichment to the bats when they can't make use of their semi-outdoor enclosure due to cold weather. (Sarah is also the illustrator for Bat World's children's book, *Baby See-Through*, see page 44.)

Below: This photo taken in September shows the completed 25' x 35' indoor flight enclosure ready for the nightly activities of the bats. The padded vinyl floor is covered with 25 full-sized sheets to catch the nightly debris while also allowing for easier clean ups (they are washed daily and re-laid after the floor is swept and mopped). The plastic sheeting on the walls catches debris and helps immensely in keeping the netted walls pristine.



INDOOR FLIGHT ENCLOSURE, CONTINUED

It took Mitch Gilley and I several weeks to complete the work on the indoor flight enclosures. We duplicated the simulated natural habitat enclosure the bats were accustomed to, complete with padded floors, food and water dishes, vines, ropes, toys and toy baskets, kabobs and other amenities. Every morning we rescued, fed and cared for orphans, then took care of the permanent sanctuary residents, and made a daily trek to the new facility to work on the flight enclosures. We worked late into the night, only catching enough sleep to do it all over again the next morning. Finally, after two months without a day off, we were ready to move.

But how does one go about catching and moving hundreds of flying mammals? We toyed with the idea of gradually moving a few at a time over several days but ultimately decided to do it all at once. The insect-eating bats were easy to move as they snuggle up in their roosting pouches that hang inside a simulated cave during the day (page 42). This allowed us to just gather the pouches—with the bats inside—and place them into a crate for transport. Their new home had a duplicate cave so the roosting pouches—bats inside—were simply hung inside the new cave.

The fruit bats were much harder because they are very active by day. Crates were readied with padded floors and covers were placed on the outside to prevent any accidents and ease stress. Then, using netting, the 55' long flight enclosure was sectioned into smaller areas to make it easier to catch the bats one by one. As each section was cleared, enrichment and foliage was removed from that area to make sure no bats were hiding behind anything. The bats were loaded into crates for the short 5 mile trip, with us talking softly to them all the while. It took five trips to get all the bats moved, but we managed to accomplish it before noon so the bats had ample time to adjust to their new surroundings and get some rest. By 10:30 pm of the same day we had completed the entire move—bats, dogs, appliances, office equipment, incubators and even the orphans still under our care.





Above: Rescued Egyptian fruit bats (*Rousettus aegyptiacus*) trying out one of several new roosts they found in their new enclosure. **Left:** Mitch Gilley hanging bat roosting cubes and hammocks behind a roosting curtain. **Below:** several species of fruit bats enjoying the fruits of Mitch's labor. Poppy can be seen in the far corner.



THE “FEEDING TREE”



Above: To add enrichment for the bats we created a feeding tree using the stainless steel support beam located in the center of the fruit bats' enclosure. The steel post was painted brown and branches of grapevine were attached to the ceiling to create a tree-like effect. Stainless steel fruit troughs were designed to fit under the tree, and artificial leaves and smaller branches were also added, along with fruit kabob and juice holders.

Below: The feeding tree completed. This photo was taken in August during routine cleaning of the enclosure and shows the completed feeding tree.





Above: Egyptian fruit bats (*Rousettus aegyptiacus*) congregate underneath the feeding tree every evening to enjoy their sweet-potato kabobs, juice and fresh fruit mixture found in the troughs. **Below:** Rescued African fruit bats (*Eidolon helvum*) enjoying a new-found hangout in the feeding tree.



THE INSECT BATS' FLIGHT ENCLOSURE



Above: Construction for the 15' x 35' insect-eating bat's flight enclosure began in May. Although it is somewhat smaller than the fruit bat's enclosure it provides ample flight space for these tiny 2" to 3" long bats.

Center and right: By late July the enclosure was complete. Most insectivorous bats are shy and secretive and prefer to roost in dark crevices. The miniature cave provides a simulated natural environment as well as security and enrichment.

