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# Local Teachers Attend Nature's Night Shift

JULY 06TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Nine teachers from southeast Missouri attended Nature's Night Shift, a workshop hosted by the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), specifically for teachers as part of the Discover Nature Schools (DNS) program. The purpose of the workshop, according to Sara Bradshaw, a MDC education consultant, is to help teachers learn how to explore the nocturnal aspects of nature in Missouri and then use the lessons from the workshop in their classroom.

The teachers attended the three-day workshop at MINGO National Wildlife Refuge, where teachers netted for bats, used black lighting to search for nocturnal insects, searched for owls by canoe, visited scent and track stations, went on a night hike and more.

Teacher workshops are directly tied to MDC's mission to educate Missourians about nature and engage them in wildlife management and conservation. Attending teachers were from Puxico, Dexter, Poplar Bluff, Doniphan, Naylor, Ste. Genevieve, and Jefferson City, teaching class ranges from kindergarten to high school.

"Classrooms are the perfect place to start influencing the next generation and help them understand the importance of nature and conservation," Bradshaw said. "We never want to live in a time when people don't value nature. Helping teachers reach their students and get them excited about nature is a great way to ensure the future of conservation."

Bradshaw led the workshop with two other MDC education consultants. She said the attending teachers' students will benefit from these workshops because the content appeals and is relatable to all kinds of students. The lessons taught will also encourage students to be more aware of the nocturnal creatures around their area and their specialized adaptations.

"I loved seeing the excitement and enthusiasm in the teachers through each of the activities," she said. "They were all so excited to see how what we were doing aligned perfectly with their curriculum."

DNS curriculum is available to all Missouri teachers. It emphasizes hands-on learning, teaches problem-solving, and provides authentic and local contexts for learning. DNS teaches students from pre-K through high school about Missouri's native plants, animals, and habitats and connects them with nature. Student books, teacher guides, and training workshops are available at no charge to Missouri educators. Teachers who formally enroll in the DNS program are eligible for additional resources including grant opportunities for equipment and field trips.

Bradshaw said she and the teachers appreciated the partnership between MDC, US Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which enabled the group to mist net bats during the workshop. Mist netting for bats is a capturing technique using low-visibility mesh nets suspended between two poles, usually placed near streams or logging roads, with an overhanging tree canopy above. It's important to mist net bats because it allows biologists to gather various body measurements, attach transmitters and bands, find maternity trees, and potentially give information regarding age and migration routes. This data also helps biologists determine the presence or absence of species in an area, and protect threatened or endangered species.

"While teachers won't necessarily mist net for bats with their students, these activities help teachers understand and get excited about conservation methods and that always translates back in the classroom," Bradshaw said.

Bradshaw said the next teacher workshop opportunity in southeast Missouri is titled Creating an Outdoor Classroom, hosted at the Cape Girardeau Conservation Nature Center July 24 to 26. Teachers should contact the nature center to register no later than July 18 at (573)290-5218 or email [bridget.jackson@mdc.mo.gov](mailto:bridget.jackson@mdc.mo.gov). Find more information about Discover Nature Schools at [www.mdc.mo.gov](http://www.mdc.mo.gov).

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