



RECENT RESCUES

The Little River Eight

The Little River Zoo in Oklahoma is now closed, and for that we are thankful.

At one time this zoo housed over 100 Egyptian fruit bats (*Rousettus aegyptiacus*), but only 8 bats remained when Bat World was contacted. Sadly, when the zoo closed, the other 92 bats entered the exotic pet trade. They were bartered like carnival toys, then crammed into tiny cages for transport, causing mothers to abandon their babies out of stress. From there they were shipped all over the US to be sold to collectors.

Quite often - on the Internet- you will see pictures of Egyptian fruit bats huddled together with their beautiful faces looking pensive (even to the casual observer). Because of their beauty they suffer greatly as they are prized amongst the exotic pet trade. These bats are capable of living up to 25 years in captivity when provided with the quality of life they deserve. Bats entering the pet trade generally end up kept in small wire cages in someone's living room, with no companions and nothing to entertain their active minds. In these conditions, they are likely to live less than a year. Why is it that people -human beings- feel justified in maintaining these spectacular creatures in such a stark manner when their natural habitat consists of lush forests and they seek refuge in amongst gardens, ancient tombs and temples and caves?

The eight remaining bats were held in reserve by the individual in charge of re-homing the zoo animals because she wanted them for herself. As luck would have it, this individual later decided to relinquish all eight bats to us. It was then that we learned of the fate of the others. Bat World Sanctuary was contacted by both the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries and the American Sanctuary Association to see if we could obtain the bats from their current owner. Amanda Lollar, Bat World's President, spoke with the bat's owner at length over the course of several weeks.



Amanda Lollar

The Little River Eight loaded in the transport carrier for their trip to lifetime happiness at Bat World Sanctuary. Huddled into a corner, only three of the eight can be seen in this photo.

The owner wavered back and forth about the number of bats she was willing to give up, claiming that she wanted to keep at least two for breeding stock. Finally, she decided to relinquish all eight bats. Later that afternoon the bats were issued a health certificate for transportation and arrangements were made to pick them up within the next 24 hours.

Kim, who is bat trained, drove to Oklahoma to pick up the bats for their journey to safety. Although she was not allowed to take photographs, Kim described the enclosure in detail. Entering the zoo required driving through several locked gates. As she drove inside, she noticed a foul odor that grew stronger as she approached the animal cages. Finally there, she realized the stench was that of decay and death. The bats were housed in a small, wire cage that measured approximately 4' x 6' x 6' high. At first glance it appeared the wire of the cage was black in color, but as she moved closer, she realized the wires were actually 'moving', because every single wire strand was covered with roaches. The floor of the cage was also a seething mass of insects. The cage contained no food, no water and no enrichment. The bats were crammed into a corner, trying to hide behind each other. Kim could see in their eyes that they were terrified; she wished she could somehow convey to them that their endless days of misery were finally over.

As the bats were gathered from their cage, one of them panicked and fell on the floor and it was instantly covered in roaches. Kim immediately reached down with gloved hands and began brushing the insects off of the frightened animal. The bats were loaded into a clean mesh carrier with a padded floor where they quickly moved towards the back of the cage to hide behind the synthetic foliage provided for them. The carrier was covered with a dark towel to give the bats a sense of security and to keep them warm. Once at Bat World, we immediately examined the bats, checking for both injuries and parasites. Some of the bats were quite thin. One bat was found to be perhaps 20 years old. He likely had spent his entire life at that zoo.

When the bats entered our 55' long flight cage for the first time, they seemed unsure of their new environment. Their faces portrayed a look of stunned excitement, as if they couldn't believe what they were seeing.



Amanda Lollar



Amanda Lollar

Almost all of the bats attempted to fly, but their wings were so weak that they sailed to the softly-padded floor instead. Within days, however, all 8 bats were able to fly as nature intended, including the oldest male.

The Little River Eight will never go hungry again. They now receive a variety of fresh fruit daily, sprinkled with vital nutrients. Their new expansive home is a simulated, natural environment covered with foliage on the ceiling, grapevines and ropes from which to hang and climb, camouflaged roosting areas with padded hammocks for bats who find it difficult to hang, toy boxes filled with dozens and dozens of toys to occupy their inquisitive minds, nightly fruit kabobs, and new friends they will keep for life.

Amongst all the other Egyptian fruit bats in our care, the Little River Eight are very easy to spot because of the golden brown color of their fur. As attractive as this color may appear, unfortunately, it is due to the unbalanced diet they were forced to endure. With fresh, nutritious food and proper care, in time their fur will return to a more natural coloration of grayish brown.

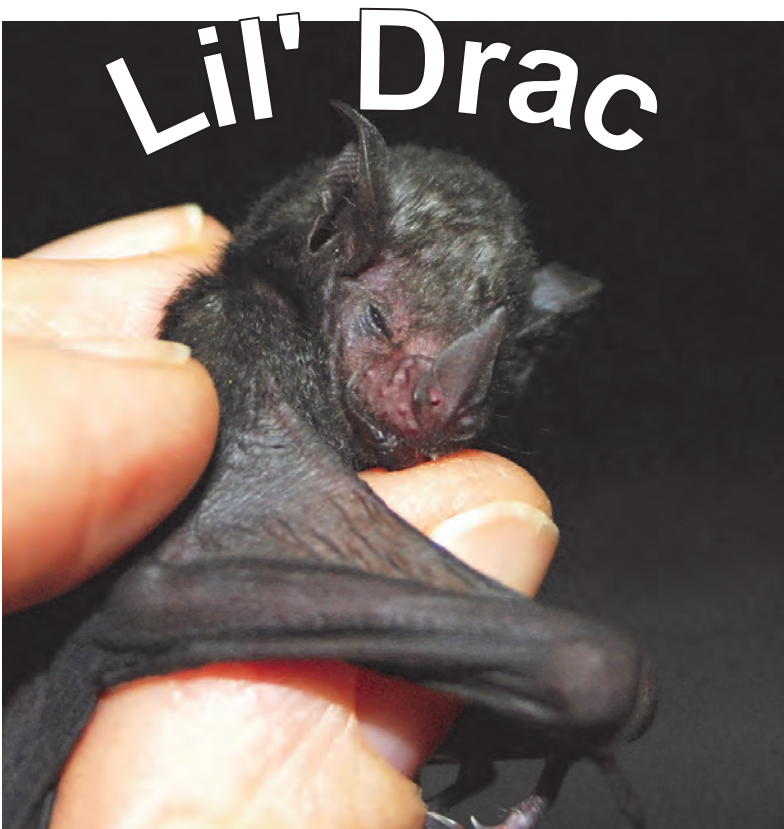
The natural range of the Egyptian fruit bat is from the Middle East through most of Africa, and of course especially Egypt. Very few people are aware that 70% of the fruit in the marketplace today is bat pollinated; not by birds, not by bees, by bats. Egyptian fruit bats born to a colony remain with that colony for life. The Little River 8 did not have that opportunity but they do have a new family who readily welcomed them to a new life where they will always be protected.



Amanda Lollar

Upper left: One of the Little River Eight enjoys a sweet potato kabob while his new roostmates look on. **Bottom left:** A Little River Eight newcomer is caught investigating a basket filled with soft vinyl toys, one of two “toy boxes” in the fruit bat’s flight enclosure at Bat World. **Above:** Two of the Little River Eight are easily spotted among the other sanctuary bats because of the golden brown color of their fur, due to the improper diet they were forced to endure.

See [Little River 8](#) on
YouTube



Lil' Drac is an orphaned short tailed fruit bat (*Carollia perspicillata*) who was affectionately named by our newest volunteer, Brittany Sapp. Lil' Drac's mother was another casualty from zoo closures which are occurring across the US. She is a young mother who was stressed from the conditions in which she was kept, combined with the additional trauma of being captured and transferred to a new and unfamiliar environment. Consequently, she abandoned Lil' Drac after he was born. He was found on the padded floor of the indoor flight enclosure at Bat World Sanctuary, curled up in a little ball.

Lil' Drac is very sweet and has an incredibly strong will to live. He quickly learned to nurse his milk formula from a foam tip, and now grabs the tip with gusto at feeding time. Luckily, through his gusto, it was discovered that he has a tiny hole in his palate that causes milk to come out of his nose. Consequently, Lil' Drac has to be fed very slowly to prevent him from aspirating while he drinks his milk. The hole in his palate is so small that once he is on solid food it should not cause him any problems.

Lil' Drac loves to groom his tiny body and stretch and flap his miniscule wings. One of his most (continued next page)

Left: Lil' Drac falls asleep while resting his head on his caretakers thumb.



charming traits is that he actually rocks himself back and forth after he has eaten.

Upper left: Lil' Drac nursing formula from a foam tip. Upper right: Lil' Drac stretching his wing. Lower left: Lil' Drac grooming the fur on his back.

See Lil' Drac video on



OTHER RESCUES



A raccoon suffering heat exhaustion and three motherless squirrels find relief at Bat World.



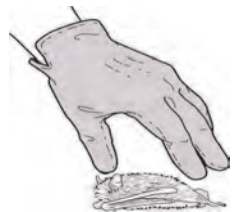
The summer of 2011 brought one of the worst droughts in Texas history. Wildlife suffered greatly, and many ventured into suburban areas in an attempt to find a water source. A raccoon came up to take advantage of one of several food and water bowls we set out for the feral cats in our decade-long Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program in the back of Bat World Sanctuary (BWS).

The raccoon mother (photo left) turned out to have two youngsters in tow, so we bought a kiddie pool for the small family. The three raccoons cooled themselves and played in the pool every night thereafter for the next two months.

Three squirrel siblings were also rescued by BWS when they were displaced during roof repair on a nearby building. The squirrel babies are now safe in the hands of an experienced squirrel rehabilitator, who will hand-raise them until they can be released.

Protect yourself, protect them

**NEVER
RESCUE
A BAT
BARE
HANDED!**



Find help at batworld.org