



Bats in Trouble

Pamela McDowell

Illustrated by Kasia Charko

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About the Book

Cricket McKay and her best friend, Shilo, are enjoying the last few weeks of summer vacation when they discover that something is killing bats around Grandpa McKay's farm. Could the new wind turbine be the cause? The kids do some detective work and then jump into action, coming up with a plan to save the bats.

Bats in Trouble is the third book featuring animal-activist Cricket McKay, following *Ospreys in Danger* and *Salamander Rescue*.

About the Author

Pamela McDowell was born in Calgary, Alberta, and has lived almost all of her life there. She graduated from the University of Victoria in British Columbia in 1988, and began her first career in education. Pamela taught junior high and high school in Alberta and British Columbia and she enjoys getting back into the classroom to share her books with students.

Pamela started writing articles for local and national magazines. Eventually she moved to freelance writing for newspapers and has written more than 200 human interest articles for *The Calgary Herald*. Since 2010, she has written more than four dozen nonfiction books for children.

Pamela's fiction focuses on the diverse animals and habitats of Alberta. As a teenager, she chose volunteering at the Calgary Zoo over hanging out at the mall. On weekends at the zoo, she made friends with Peaches the porcupine and spent part of each day cuddling Rosie, the boa constrictor. Her interest in prickly, furry, slimy, slinky animals continues in her stories.

About the Writing

It's hard to miss the giant wind turbines that march across the rolling hills east of Pincher Creek. On a weekend drive to Waterton Lakes National Park, curiosity finally convinced Pamela to take a detour and turn off the highway to explore the closest turbine. It was even more massive close up! Pamela's curiosity grew as she began to wonder about the conflict between the turbines and migratory creatures, and she knew this was an issue Cricket and her friends would want to act on.

Most people know very little about bats—and many are even afraid of them—including Pamela. This meant she had to do a lot of research and talk to a lot of experts to get the details needed for her story. Canada's foremost bat expert and University of Calgary professor, Dr. Robert Barclay, was a wonderful resource and great help in keeping the facts straight. As her research developed within the story, Pamela realized it was important to balance environmental stewardship and responsible resource development. We need energy, but we need bats too!

Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections

Prereading Ideas

- Have you ever seen bats flying at night? Where were you?
- Many people are afraid of bats. Can you think of some of the reasons why people might be afraid? Have you heard stories about bats that might make *you* afraid of them?
- Scientists are working hard to develop alternative energy sources so we can rely less on fossil fuels like gas and oil. What are some forms of alternative energy?

Classroom Discussion Questions

1. Creating power is important for a community, but people need bats too. Why? How do bats benefit people? Have you noticed bat boxes in your community? Why would people make homes for bats?
2. The kids' plan for the parade worked. Can you think of three things they did in the parade that got people's attention? Which of these things do you think was most successful? Do you have other ideas of things they could have done in the parade?
3. Why does Cricket find it difficult to be patient waiting for the power company to reply to her email? Have you ever had difficulty being patient? What were you waiting for? Do you have some suggestions for Cricket that could help her stay patient?

Suggested Activities

- Using information from the book, draw a map of Grandpa McKay's farm. Be sure to include the farmhouse, garage, fire pit, new wind turbine and service road, old hay shed, old windmill and fences.
- At the beginning of the story, Shilo is terrified of bats, but slowly changes her mind. Find out if your classmates' opinions changed by asking how they felt about bats before reading the book and after. Use a tally chart to record your data and then draw a graph to show the results.

- What do you think Cricket wrote in her email to Ms. Lee in chapter 8? How would you convince the power company to stop the wind turbines to save the bats? Write the email in letter format, including salutations.
- Research project: What is echolocation? Create a poster showing how echolocation works. Be sure to include pictures of different animals that use echolocation.
- Divide a piece of paper in half lengthwise. Label one side “hoary bat” and the other side “little brown bat.” Research to find information for each about appearance, food, habitat, etc., and create a chart.
- Research the night sky. Choose your favourite constellation, draw a map of it, label the stars, and write a short paragraph explaining what you have learned.
- Draw a food web for the hoary bat. If bats suddenly disappeared, what changes would we see in the environment?
- Origami is the traditional Japanese art of paper folding. Use the internet to find instructions on how to fold an origami bat.

Websites of Interest

www.batcon.org

www.arkive.org/hoary-bat/Lasiurus-cinereus

www.biokids.umich.edu/critters/Lasiurus_cinereus

Origami instructions: www.howcast.com/videos/324-how-to-make-an-origami-bat

Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

Ospreys in Danger

Salamander Rescue

Reviews

“Effective in delivering an environmental message and encouraging action.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Ospreys in Danger

“This story fits well within the Orca Echoes theme of social responsibility, and teaches readers about osprey and what can happen when wild animals and human infrastructure intersect. There is also information about the true story that informed the book, and further information about osprey. Interesting and engaging, with a happy ending.”

—*Resource Links*

Salamander Rescue

“Simple, accurate descriptions of specific research methods and of salamander features shine. Unsubtle empowerment for young environmentalists.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

“A great step-into-reading chapter book for younger readers...recommended.”

—*School Library Connection*