

The Story Behind The Famous Yellow Bat Sticker



Buy a sticker, support bat research

You know our favorite, universally-recognized, reflective bat sticker that is used on vehicles, helmets, bicycles, and other items to identify the owner as a caver? It is the brainchild of Missouri Caver Earl “Biff” Biffle NSS 3953L.

In 1962, Earl created the famous bat flight for a letterhead for Middle Mississippi Valley Grotto. Fortunately for us, although the cavers liked the design, the grotto rejected it for official use. This meant it was still available to be put to good use for caves, and eventually adopted by the caver community.

There were some problems with cave vandalism in the MMV area, and cavers were trying to track down who the folks might be. So Earl put his design on a sticker for cavers to put on their cars as a secret ID so other cavers and landowners would know if a car parked near caves was a bona fide caver or a possible vandal.

In 1965 the bat sticker was used to raise money to preserve a tract of land containing Pleasant Valley Cave, near St. Louis. Every donor received a bat sticker. The number of cars seen at caver events with the bat flight on their bumpers increased, and cavers noticed.

The bat sticker really took off among cavers after 1970, when a cave vendor, perhaps Bob and Bob, asked Biff if he could sell it to cavers. Soon the now famous sticker and secret ID become known as the symbol for “caver on board,” and was available from all of the cave vendors and the NSS Bookstore. When he went commercial, Biff donated all the proceeds from his sales to the vendors to cave and bat conservation projects.

Earl decided last year [2007] that he wanted to extricate himself from this project, and he very generously gave the National Speleological Society his design, as well as the responsibility for producing and distributing emblems using the design [[Click to see the contract](#)]. The NSS of course will continue to wholesale the bat flight design items to purveyors of fine speleo-items, and sell them through the NSS Bookstore.
[<https://members.caves.org/store/>]

The good news is that Earl’s bat flight design will continue to support bat research and conservation. The NSS created a new **Bat Research and Protection Grant** at the March [2008] Board Meeting, **and a special restricted fund** to support the grants. **The Society will donate a portion of the profits from sale of stickers, magnets, pins,** and other items incorporating the bat flight design to the fund.

Additionally, **members may donate to the Bat Research and Protection Fund**, allowing it to grow even faster, and provide money for the first grants more quickly. **Donate online** at [<https://caves.org/donate/>] or on your membership renewal form. Particularly considering the **threats to bats** that the White Nose Syndrome has indicated, **contributions to the Fund can’t come too soon.**

So the famous yellow bat sticker will continue to show that its owner is a caver, but now also will show that he/she is supporting a program to protect bats. In fact, Bif requested that the sticker be called the "**Conservation Bat Sticker.**"

A small idea and simple drawing from 46 years ago, has grown from a secret ID to a national caver-recognition symbol and now the catapult for the NSS to set up a specific program to support bat research and protection. Thanks Biff!

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