

Study focuses on bats' hibernation periods

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A U.S. researcher is questioning the conventional theory that bats should maximize their hibernation periods when no insects are available to eat.

Indiana State University researcher Justin Boyles said: "The idea has always been that bats should do everything they can to save energy, which means they should hibernate at a cold temperature. We found that is not really the case. They quite often hibernate at warmer temperatures than they have to, so we think there is something negative occurring during hibernation."

Boyles is conducting his research at Indiana State University's Center for North American Bat Research and Conservation -- one of the largest bat research facilities in the world.

"When bats hibernate they become sleep deprived, proteins break down, metabolic wastes build up, and so a lot of bad things could happen. We are showing that bats are trying to avoid hibernation as much as they can," Boyles said.

The university's bat center will be the site of the Great Lakes Bat Festival, which will be held Aug. 11.

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